



Two of the householders in the forecourt of the sample dwelling,  
WiMo (L.) and Wi (R.) 1965



## Part I

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM AND THE SETTING

#### Introduction to the study

This is a report on the content, organization and use of Sinhalese domestic space. It is based on research carried out in 1965 and 1968 in a contemporary but traditional community (hereafter called Rangama, a pseudonym) which is located in a remote area of the Kandyan highlands in central Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon).

The discussion which appears here is set against the background of two complementary bodies of data which are presented in their entirety: a complete inventory (Part II) of the contents of a representative village dwelling catalogued according to dwelling location, origin, owner/user and use, and a detailed sequential record (Part III) of the activities of the householders and their guests which took place in the same dwelling during one waking day. These particular bodies of data were gathered in the course of a wider ranging ethnographic investigation of domestic life in Rangama in which inventories were conducted in twelve of the forty-five village dwellings and observations made of the activities associated with the domestic daily round throughout the community over an extended period of time. The data are therefore intended to provide illustrative detail for findings which emerged from the study of the community as a whole rather than to serve as a case study within which they are the sole basis for generalization. A discussion of domestic space in Rangama in the perspective of these data appears here as Part IV.

The life-ways which are depicted in this monograph are in many respects typical of traditional communities in the rural Kandyan highlands. For present purposes the term 'traditional' refers to certain features of economic and social organization. Residents of such communities are subsistence farmers engaged in the cultivation of lands generally inherited from their forebears as a principal economic activity. They are primarily engaged in the production of staple crops (rice, millet and maize) which are ultimately consumed in their own households. Although a few residents of such communities may tend shop, teach school, or hold minor administrative posts, the occupational diversity and economic stratification which is found in the towns is absent, and nearly everyone is dependent on cultivation for his livelihood. Neighbors in such communities are in turn likely to be close kinsmen among whom there are important and enduring economic alliances. Indeed, entire villages are made up principally of kinsmen and perceived by the residents as a large 'family'.

The term 'traditional' also calls to mind the technological conservatism which is sometimes popularly identified with a lack of change. It is at once a consequence of limited local economic resources and the distances from main roads and markets which characterize the rural agricultural communities in the highlands. In communities like Rangama agriculture remains unmechanized, most dwellings are modest in size and built from inexpensive materials which are easily obtained locally, and the amenities of the towns such as telegraph, telephone, electricity and plumbing are lacking. The impressive network of good roads in Sri Lanka does not extend into communities like Rangama, and as a result, the local distribution of supplies is accomplished by age-old means (in the Rangama area by pack bull or on the heads of men) rather than by motorized transport. Even the bicycle which is ubiquitous in the towns is absent, for it provides no advantage in rocky terrain.

The Rangama area has been depicted as backward (Cooray 1961: 17), and it is easy to imagine that life there has changed little since the nineteenth century. It has, however, been profoundly affected by technological, medical and educational advances which have touched the lives of all Sri Lankans in the twentieth. For example, within contemporary Rangama there is the technological knowledge, largely derived from government extension programs, to grow an adequate local food supply for an expanding population. Because the village population has doubled in the last eighty years and the total acreage under cultivation has increased by only 50 percent during the same time period, Rangama residents now grow high-yielding government-sponsored varieties of rice almost exclusively. They have also adopted, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, such practices as transplanting rice seedlings and green manuring which were not necessary a generation ago. Because of government extension programs and food subsidy schemes, Sri Lankan peasants remain relatively untouched by the starvation and food shortages which have arisen in some other developing nations of the world. In their own judgment and by any objective standard they are adequately nourished. Good nutrition and the early eradication of epidemic diseases such as smallpox have contributed to one of the highest life expectancies in Asia--in 1967, 64.8 years for males and 66.9 for females (Government of Sri Lanka 1974:54). Universal education has been responsible for a similarly impressive literacy rate. In 1968, 93 percent of adult males in Rangama were literate, reflecting near-universal literacy among men nationally. The pockets of illiteracy which remain are primarily female, but even in a traditional community like Rangama where little direct emphasis is placed on the education of women, the adult female literacy rate is 38 percent.

Most of the ethnographic research which has been conducted in the Kandyan highlands has been carried out in traditional



communities like Rangama and concerned in large measure with problems in social organization (Robinson 1968, Tambiah 1958; 1965 and Yalman 1967). This study of domestic life should therefore provide a basis for logically expanding this well established area of Sinhalese ethnography, and it is hoped, supply other investigators with useful descriptive detail for further comparison.

### Research needs in Sinhalese ethnography

This report is viewed as a contribution to the study of the dwelling as a domestic setting, an ethnographic topic which has not been previously investigated in Sri Lanka and which, from the perspective of traditional ethnography, calls for a somewhat unconventional organization of the facts. Studies of the composition and size of the household as well as the division of labor within it are usually treated in more general accounts of social or economic organization, whereas reports on the physical setting in which domestic activities take place are more likely to be found in descriptions of traditional technology, a topic which for Sri Lanka and for many other areas of the world often receives its most complete treatment outside ethnography entirely.

The classic study which provides the most closely related previous treatment and the best detail on the Sinhalese domestic setting is Coomaraswamy's 1908 work on medieval arts and crafts. It has unfortunately not since been updated, and in addition, its treatment of the dwelling is far less complete than that of the smaller-scale manufactures which the dwelling invariably contains. The incomplete coverage given by Coomaraswamy is largely a consequence of the fact that his study was neither specifically domestic in orientation nor ethnographic in nature. It was instead an inventory and description of the entire range of artifacts produced by Sinhalese artisans in the pre-British period which falls within the tradition of comparative art. The survey dealt in part with artifacts which were already museum pieces, and emphasis was placed on the beautiful and rare example. Coomaraswamy's main aim was to preserve a record of the traditional arts and crafts which he felt were being rapidly supplanted by products which were Western in inspiration or in manufacture. "I have tried to make a picture of it," he wrote, "before it was [sic] too late" (1908:v).

Fortunately because of the technological conservatism which persists in the Ceylonese countryside, Coomaraswamy's worst fears have not, in the case of domestic artifacts, been universally realized. It is still possible, even at this late date, to observe their routine use in an ongoing social and economic setting. Regrettably, there is practically no ethnographic precedent for their study in this holistic context. Despite the fact that in



the course of more general accounts of social organization, some attention has been given to the household, there is still a critical lack of detail on the content and physical organization of the setting in which household activities normally take place. Discussions of the domestic setting generally appear as asides in ethnographic literature devoted to other topics. Of the contemporary writers the greatest detail on the physical organization of the household is provided by Yalman (1967:104-107) who includes two sketch plans, one of an 'ordinary' dwelling and another of the dwelling of a wealthy schoolmaster (105). His generalized characterization of the domestic inventory typical of the highland village in which he otherwise conducted research on social organization, religion and economics is admittedly sketchy, but still noteworthy because it is the only comment on the organization of the highland dwelling made by an ethnographer. Yalman writes:

With great differentiation in wealth in Terutenne [the pseudonym given to the highland village in which Yalman worked] the furnishings of the house become important prestige symbols. In the huts of the poor there may be no furniture at all, merely straw mats for sleeping and sitting (Kandyans will not sit on the ground) and perhaps clothes (sarongs and women's clothes and blouses hanging on the walls.) The average hut, however, would have different varieties of such things as cooking pots; a mortar and a pestle for husking paddy (wangedi and molgaha); plows, hoes and knives used in cultivation; water pots (very valuable if made of brass); and almost certainly utensils connected with betel chewing--brass spittoons, betel plates, lime boxes and arecanut scissors (1967:106).

#### Research needs in the comparative study of domestic architecture

This report is addressed to an anthropological audience as a contribution to Sinhalese ethnography and to the comparative study of the dwelling and household. As an ethnographic study it is also intended to fill an illustrative need for humanists in the field of architecture who study the dwelling cross-culturally and who have become interested in the ways in which anthropological methods might be applied in their work. Architects (and planners as well) have played a more important role in the expansion of the ethnographic record on the dwelling than is generally recognized outside their own field of study. In fact, they have produced, generally without benefit of formal training in anthropology, many if not most of the citations on domestic architecture in peasant and tribal societies.

The bodies of literature which have been produced in architecture and anthropology are related principally in the general



sense that writers from both fields have shared a broad, common topic and therefore, contributed independently to the composite record on domestic space. Otherwise, communication between the fields is poor, and collaboration in research is rare. Although architects have looked to anthropology as a logical source of data and methodological direction in the study of the dwelling in other cultures, they have generally been unable, for reasons which are detailed below, to fully utilize its resources. For their part, anthropologists are basically unacquainted with studies in comparative architecture and only dimly aware that there is a large audience with a keen interest in the ethnology of the dwelling outside their own discipline.

### The study of the dwelling within the field of architecture

In our own society most academic disciplines have been organized around the study of Western institutions, and architecture is no exception. With this primary restriction in mind, it may be further observed that architecture lacks the relativistic perspective which characterizes ethnography ideally, and instead has commitments to particular sets of values in design. Although critics may differ on the aesthetic merit of a particular building or tradition, there is an underlying assumption that there are standards by which a judgment can be made. Aesthetic criteria play a part in determining the historical importance of a particular work, and therefore, its worth as an object for study. As a consequence, the history of architecture has been written chiefly in terms of monumental and enduring examples which are recognized as works of art. Third, architecture has been concerned historically with form as a fundamental topic for study, of value in and for itself. Scholars in architecture have sought to discover the organizing principles which underlie the spatial systems in the buildings they study and to make logical statements about the internal relationship of their design elements. These exercises are referred to collectively as formal analysis. The general principles which are extrapolated in formal analysis constitute the essential subject matter of architectural theory.

The central concerns of architecture as a discipline have a contemporary and practical justification as well as aesthetic and historical roots. Academic architecture is intimately linked with architecture as a profession or business in that the former graduates and periodically employs the practicing members of the latter. The flow of personnel between the profession and the academic institutions is judged to be essential to the proper preparation of professionals and the general vitality of the field. Inasmuch as professional architecture is concerned primarily with (a) the formal



organization of (b) important buildings (c) in our own society, this symbiotic relationship has served to define and maintain the traditional boundaries of inquiry.

Within the field of architecture, especially in architectural history, there is a commitment to the study of a wide range of building traditions on the assumption that the study of architecture outside our own culture contributes to an understanding of our own values in design. The study of non-Western and non-monumental building traditions therefore occupies a place within architectural studies, albeit one which is somewhat peripheral to the overall work of the field. However, even though the study of exotic or neglected building traditions is valued (at least in principle) on grounds which are purely intellectual, there is a tendency among those of a more pragmatic turn of mind to see it in applied terms as well. Commonly, there is a clear expectation that the 'simple' forms of traditional societies may eventually serve the Western architectural community as sources of design inspiration. The relative status of the lesser-known and poorly studied non-monumental traditions of the world was consequently enhanced considerably by the informal study of Greek peasant architecture undertaken by the international architect LeCorbusier in the early part of this century. He focused attention on these basic peasant forms as sources of design inspiration for some of his important early works. This single, practical demonstration is responsible, more than any other single development, for the widespread curiosity which has prevailed about non-monumental forms in other societies ever since. It has also provided them with a measure of acceptance as legitimate objects of scholarly inquiry.

In recent times architects have been provided with increasingly better opportunities to examine the building traditions of other societies on a first-hand basis. Often as a respite from government and military service or the professional work which has taken them to developing nations, they have stopped to photograph, sketch and write first hand accounts of traditional forms which have intrigued them. It is a matter of interest that a large number, perhaps the majority, of the citations on houses and house types of traditional societies can be attributed to these brief observations by architects, rather than as one might expect, to studies in greater depth conducted by anthropologists. These efforts and some more extended descriptions which have been inspired by them are in many ways reminiscent of developments in the early history of anthropology. The first anthropologists were individuals who also found themselves in other societies for reasons which were at first nonacademic (they were in some cases government administrators) and who later became interested in the systematic study of life-ways in other cultures and ultimately carved out a new discipline.



The literature on forms throughout the peasant and tribal world which has been produced by architects embodies a number of important limitations which are unfortunately not original with this group of writers, but as we shall see, characteristic of the state of the ethnographic record on architecture in general. For the most part, these investigations have proceeded along traditional lines and focused on the description of dwelling form. Much interesting descriptive detail, especially graphic detail, has emerged on dwelling form as it is perceived by a Western eye. The only major interpretive problem which seems to have posed itself so far is also concerned with form and is basically a variation on a general question first posed by the pioneer anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1881). Architects see themselves as heirs to a "self-conscious" design tradition in which form is largely achieved by the efforts of the designer, which they oppose to "unself-conscious" design traditions in which no designer apparently intervenes. Architects seek to understand the determinants of "unself-conscious" design traditions in particular ethnographic settings and ultimately globally. Environmental factors obviously play a part in determining dwelling form (as evidenced, for example, by the Eskimo igloo), but they alone do not suffice to explain it, since a variety of design solutions can be found under similar conditions. Students of comparative architecture have therefore become interested in the study of cultural determinants and have consequently strayed onto the turf which is normally occupied by anthropologists. Amos Rapoport's House Form and Culture (1969) comes to mind as an example of recent writings in architecture on cultural determinants. It is an attempt to construct a general theory of dwelling form which draws on data from numerous traditional societies.

There is some question, however, as to whether the typical investigation which is conducted in comparative architecture constitutes ethnography by any rigorous definition of the term. Frequently the research design seems to involve basic ideas about the scope of the anthropological literature, the nature of culture and the conduct of ethnography which are at variance with those generally held in anthropology. Inasmuch as these studies often invoke source material from ethnographic studies or anthropological theory and therefore, pass before a new generation of architectural students as examples of ethnography, this is a matter which deserves detailed treatment elsewhere. For the moment, a brief summary of some of the main difficulties will suffice.

The holistic principle which underlies modern ethnography is basically an assumption that culture is a complex whole and that its elements can only be understood in relation to that whole. This is more than a vision of how the knowledge of a particular people is organized. It is a methodological assumption which has



heuristic value in fieldwork and which is basic to the process of widening generalization which characterizes any true ethnography. In the field, every anthropologist, whatever his particular focus of inquiry, is always compelled to be something of a generalist. In the course of asking questions and making observations, he is often led off in new, unexpected directions and in the process may reformulate his particular problem and possibly redefine the scope of his entire topic. This is basically the process through which the anthropologist gradually abandons preconceived ideas he may have pertaining to 'kinship,' 'religion,' 'architecture' or any other area of knowledge which is based principally on his experience in his own culture and comes to see how knowledge is organized among the people who are the focus of his inquiry.

Architects who conduct fieldwork expect to document form, not to conduct investigations into broad areas of cultural knowledge. Although there is a truism abroad that dwelling form can be explicated with data from other parts of culture, architects generally do not expect to collect these data themselves. There is often no direct evidence that the peoples whose dwellings have been studied have even been interviewed on the subject. Even at the present time, many architects imagine that the data which will round out their studies are available, or ought to be, in the anthropological literature. The assumption that ethnographic studies contain records of information which are so complete that they can simply be reutilized by non-specialists working on new problems is unjustified. The ethnographer draws on his data in a specific and selective fashion which suits the illustrative needs of a particular problem. Furthermore, data which are gathered in one setting, do not necessarily pertain to another in the same society. These data must be collected anew. Expectations to the contrary, however, and the abbreviated field procedures which stem from them, help to explain why studies of the dwelling in architecture are still basically limited to descriptions of form, and why architects have not contributed significantly to the literature on such topics as the 'daily round' which are observationally intimately related to the one which they have staked out as their own.

### The study of the dwelling within anthropology

In contrast with the field of architecture which is organized around the study of a single aspect of culture, the subject matter of anthropology is in principle topically unrestricted. In its broadest sense anthropology is concerned with the study of all peoples as cultural and biological beings throughout the entire course of their history. As ethnographic topics, studies in domestic

architecture properly belong within cultural anthropology, that field of the discipline which examines and attempts to construct general rules about the knowledge which an individual acquires as a member of society. Ideas and beliefs about the design, construction and use of the dwelling as well as those about its perceived place in nature are part of this knowledge and therefore, legitimate topics for ethnographic investigation.

The history of anthropology as a separate academic discipline dates back less than a century. Thus, although anthropology is an ambitious field with a wide-ranging charge, it is a comparatively young one. It has had its favored topics such as kinship and social organization which have been pursued to the near exclusion of some others, and at the present time some ethnographic areas of the world have much better general coverage than others.

The study of the dwelling within anthropology is a tradition whose history is nearly as long as that of the discipline itself. Lewis Henry Morgan's Houses and House Life of the American Aborigines (1881) is an early, now somewhat dated but classic anthropological study which represents one of the first attempts by an anthropologist, or for that matter by any social scientist, to relate the form of the dwelling to the wider cultural setting in which it is found. Although detailed studies of the dwelling and domestic life such as Morgan's, Hart's 1959 monograph on the Cebuan dwelling in the Philippines and Robert's 1956 study of the daily round among the Zuni are still lacking for most cultures, in general ethnographic treatments of any length, a few paragraphs or pages are usually devoted to descriptions of housebuilding, the domestic scene and the daily round. The perception of houses and house life as standard topics in ethnographic description has provided material which often complements the studies of form conducted by architects and planners. Although frequently lacking in detail, this literature has provided a basis for understanding that the range of architectural solutions among living populations is very great and for the conclusion which has proved to be a central theme in community development work that standards for housing are primarily functions of cultural values.

The meticulous description and classification of artifacts, including dwellings and their contents, however, is a tradition which is quite naturally best established within archaeology, that branch of the anthropology discipline in which inferences about life ways are made from cultural remains. Unlike ethnographers working with living populations who may observe artifacts in the context of their routine use and who have access through members of the culture to the ideational system which underlies the production and use of cultural materials, archaeologists have no actors to observe or informants to help them. They are faced



with a most fragmentary picture and hence with interpretive problems. Although the study of artifacts among living populations is much indebted to methods of description and classification which have been established in historical studies by scholars who work with artifacts alone, the accurate interpretation of the historical record is, in turn, dependent on what is known about life ways among human populations in general. For example, the study of recycling patterns for artifacts among living populations contributes to an understanding of why some classes of materials may be poorly represented or absent in a midden. Thus, as detailed studies of the use and meaning of artifacts among living populations become more numerous, they enhance the ability of archaeologists to interpret cultural remains and hence, constitute an invaluable kind of work which might be termed pre-archaeology.

The dwelling is thus a long and well established topic in anthropology in general and in ethnography in particular. Like many other topics, however, coverage is incomplete. As a topic and setting for research among living populations, the dwelling may be given more direct attention in the future than it has been in the past in part because of the increased interest in ethnographic methods in the field of architecture and in part because of the developing interest in women's studies in anthropology itself. Women in anthropology have recently complained that the priorities given to research topics in modern ethnography can be viewed in terms of a bias in favor of the roles and activities of men (cf. Rosaldo 1974). This bias is no more firmly rooted in anthropology than it is in many other academic disciplines, but it is viewed by many as particularly inappropriate in a field which purports to examine the entire range of human knowledge and activity without prejudice. The emerging 'ethnography of women' is at once an attempt to call attention to the fact that topics which have pertained primarily to the activities and role of men have been pursued, in many cases, to the exclusion of those which pertain to women, and an effort to identify neglected areas for ethnographic research. Although it is too early to speculate on the nature of the potential contributions to dwelling ethnography, it seems clear that a serious ethnography of women must give close attention to settings and activities in which women are the main actors.

### The scope and plan of this work

This is an examination of Sinhalese domestic life which is focused on the dwelling and its associated yard as a specific research setting and the waking day as a temporal unit. The restriction of this discussion to a particular space-time frame has seemed to be a convenient way of addressing certain basic questions in the ethnography of the Sinhalese dwelling which are as yet untreated

in the literature: for example, how a typical dwelling is organized spatially so as to accommodate the daily round of work; what activities take place in its spaces and to which householders they are culturally assigned; what domestic articles support household activities and where are they routinely utilized and stored; who owns, manufactures or obtains the various articles in the domestic inventory and who cares for them and repairs them; what features of the contemporary domestic technology can be identified as 'traditional' and what changes have taken place since Coomaraswamy described Sinhalese artifacts in 1908.

It should be mentioned here that a complete treatment of the Sinhalese dwelling necessarily includes other ethnographic topics, many of which are not logically related to the sequence of activity within a waking day and therefore best treated by some other descriptive method. Of particular importance, both to the comparative study of the design process and in the judgment of the Sinhalese themselves, is Sinhalese design theory, a set of propositions about the construction of dwellings and other features of the built environment which draws on knowledge embodied in an ancient and revered literary tradition. A discussion of this 'science' (as it is known in Sri Lanka and elsewhere in South Asia) appears elsewhere (MacDougall 1971). Other topics which would be subsumed by any comprehensive ethnography of the dwelling include housebuilding (a process which extends over weeks, months or sometimes even years), comparisons of Sinhalese dwellings from different ecological niches, and a consideration of the developmental cycles of the dwelling and household over time.

As a description of an aspect of Sinhalese life which is basically economic in character, the details which appear in this study and the manner in which it is organized are almost wholly complementary to previous detailed treatments of Sinhalese economic life, as exemplified by Leach's 1961 work on kinship and land tenure in a Kandyan village. In that study, for example, the primary observational and analytic focus was on the cultivation lands and the routinized activities of the agricultural timetable. This study of the domestic life highlights what might be described as the 'other half' of Sinhalese work, and as such, it focuses attention on a new group of actors. The main activities in agricultural settings are undertaken by young, able-bodied men to whom they are culturally assigned. The activities of women, on the other hand, take place primarily in the dwelling and yard, as do those of elderly males who have retired from cultivation and those of young children.

The plan of the remainder of this work is as follows: A discussion of the wider cultural setting of which Rangama is a part, of the economic and social organization of the village and of the



dwelling and households which serve as illustrations here completes Part I. Photographs of the exterior of the sample dwelling (Plate II), a plan and an axonometric drawing showing the contents in situ follow. In Part II there is a preliminary discussion of the conduct, aims and presentation of the inventory which is followed by a description and classification of the domestic articles which are in use in Rangama as a whole. Finally, the inventory of the sample dwelling is presented in its entirety as an example of how the range of materials may be represented in a typical domestic setting. In Part III there is a brief discussion of the conduct and aims of the observation of daily life followed by the complete record of activities. A discussion of the record in the wider perspective of daily life and photographs (Plates III-VI) of the sample domestic setting follow. Part IV is an overview of domestic space in Rangama which includes interior photographs of Rangama dwellings (Plates VII-XII).

### The physical setting

Until British conquest of Sri Lanka in 1815, the Kandyan kingdom was a political entity as well as a subcultural region. Contemporary Kandyans remain distinct from the Sinhalese residing in the Sri Lanka Low Country (an area roughly coincidental with the former Maritime Provinces which includes Colombo, the capital) in social and religious habits, dress, speech and also by virtue of their belief in a common history. The field work on which this monograph is based was conducted in Rangama, a community about forty-five miles from Kandy, the old highland capital. Like other Kandyan communities which have been studied intensively--Terutenne (Yalman 1967), Rambukkoluwa (Tambiah 1965) and Morapitiya (Robinson 1968), Rangama lies in a remote mountainous area of the Central Province. Its economy is organized primarily around the cultivation of rice, although since Rangama like Terutenne and Rambukkoluwa is located in the so-called Dry Zone, there is only one major planting each year. Highland swidden cultivation yielding millets, maize and a variety of other secondary crops is therefore practiced extensively. Rangama (population 296 in 1965) is somewhat larger than Rambukkoluwa, smaller than Morapitiya (population 442) and roughly equivalent in size to the largest of the thirteen hamlets (total population 1203) comprising Terutenne. The village is a stiff four hour walk from the end of the bus line fourteen miles away. Perhaps because of the technological conservatism which derives from its relative remoteness, Rangama is characterized by government officials as typically Kandyan and very old. Although the village has obviously been long established, residents make more modest claims about the antiquity of the village than do residents of some others which have been studied, notably Morapitiya where there is a 'history' dating back to the second century B.C. Rangama is believed by those who live there to have been settled by Kandyan aristocrats late in the 18th century.

The core of Rangama village consists of a densely settled nucleus (gaemmaedə) lying at an elevation of about 1,500 feet, in which the dwelling which is described here and most of the other forty-four dwellings in the village are located. Most of the arable lands at a lower elevation have been brought under cultivation for rice (totalling 107 acres of irrigated paddy land), and those higher in the hills are devoted to swiddens (hereafter, chenas), grazing lands for cattle and forest. The paddy lands are privately owned by village residents, and so are some of the chenas. The rest of the lands surrounding the village, although exploited in one way or another by the residents, are the property of the Crown.

The dwellings in the settlement, like the one described here, are sited on fenced compounds (gedərə wattə) in which cattle are tethered and kitchen gardens are worked. The enclosed yard sometimes contains ancillary structures such as, in the instance of the dwelling which is described in detail in these pages, a haystack and a chicken coop. Food is dried in the sun there, and clothing and mats are aired. If the weather is good, many activities which might take place in the dwelling are conducted in the yard, for example, the husking of grains and the weaving of mats and baskets.



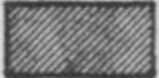

In the Kandyan highland area, dwelling form varies with ecological setting and economic stratum. Some of the main determinants of dwelling form have been discussed elsewhere (MacDougall 1971). In Rangama nearly 90 percent of the dwellings are walled in wattle and daub (the remainder are in locally available stone), and over 90 percent of the dwellings are roofed with thatching made from paddy straw. The remainder have roofs of locally produced tile or corrugated metal (belek), a hard-to-transport and expensive but prestigious new material which is gaining in popularity in Sri Lanka to the extent that it has replaced thatch, and to some extent, tile, along the main routes of transportation on the island. The dwelling which is described here is built of wattle and daub and roofed with thatch. It may therefore be considered 'typical' for Rangama.

As far as plan form in Rangama is concerned, there are numerous variations, both in the number and arrangements of rooms. This variation stems in part from the fact that the architectural spaces in the dwelling seldom all date from the same period, unless they have been constructed recently. The plan form of older (thirty plus years) dwellings in Rangama (which are the majority) is generally the result of one or more additions or demolitions. The decision to alter the plan form of a dwelling was usually part of a wider economic strategy in which residents contrived to shore up claims to undivided and disputed residential lands by expanding the residential space to which they could assert exclusive claim. Ultimately, accounting for plan form in Rangama involves detailed






# Key to Rangama Village Map, Figure 1

## Architectural spaces:



	Interior rooms, including the interior room of the Buddhist temple ( <u>vihaare</u> ) and of the temple consecrated to regional and local supernaturals ( <u>deevaale</u> )
	'Porches', verandahs and open schoolroom
	Village shop
	Vacant room

Unbracketed numbers refer to households existing in 1965. Bracketed numbers refer to households recorded after 1954 but defunct by 1965.

## Other structural features shown on the map:

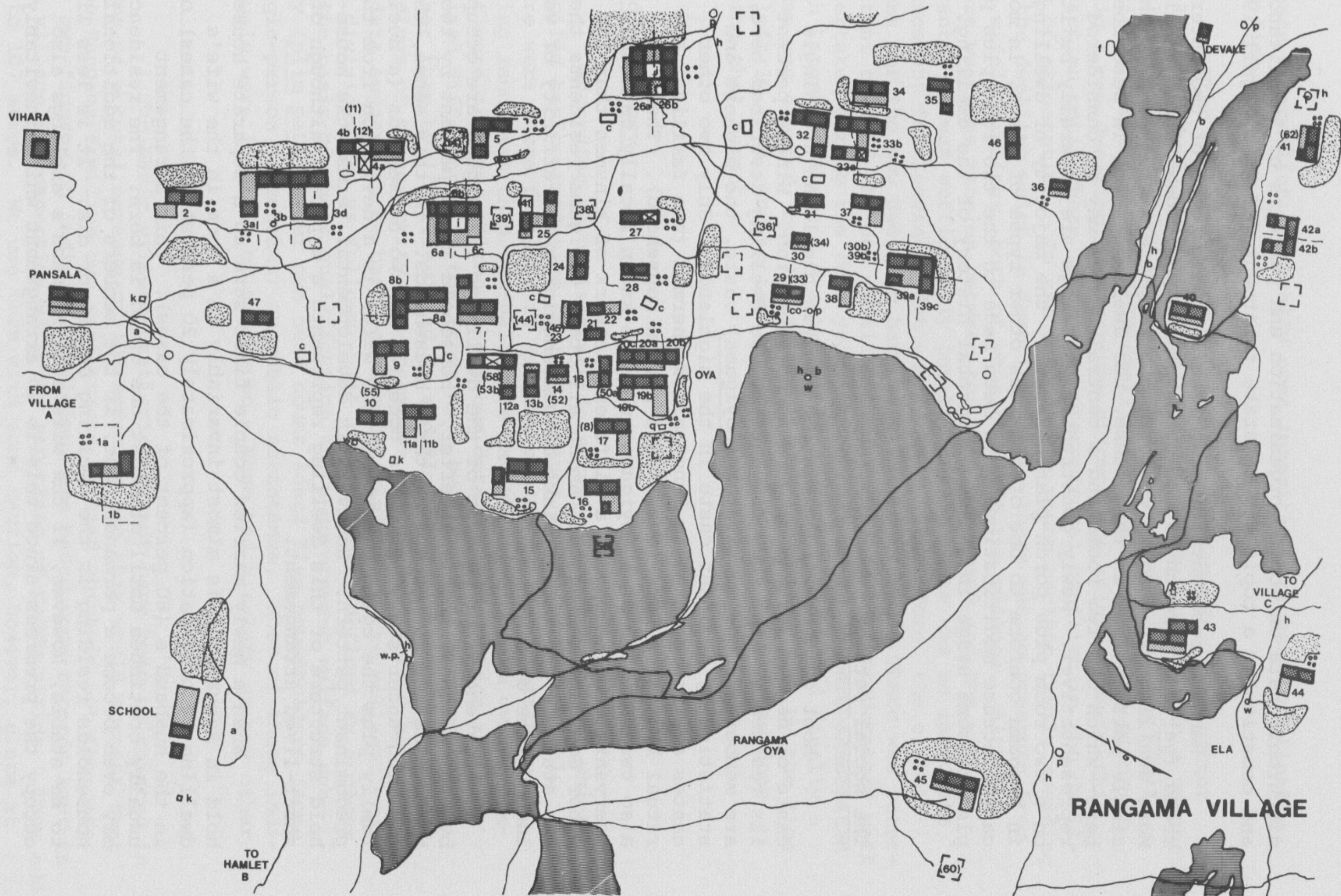
PANSALA	Monk's residence		Haystack platform
co-op	Cooperative Society room	c	Cowshed
k	Latrine	f	Threshing floor
	Former house site	a	Playground
	Former temple site	q	Child's play shop
p	Pure place in the forest ( <u>aDukku polə</u> )	w	Well
r	Stone circle for sitting	w.p.	Water pipe
		h	Water drawing area
		b	Bathing area

## Cultivation areas:

	Vegetable gardens
	Paddy fields*
i	Coconut nurseries

\* The paddy fields have been reduced in width (and somewhat distorted) so that all dwellings can be shown on the map.







diachronic data on social organization and patterns of inheritance and constitutes a topic for separate treatment (cf. MacDougall 1971).

Rangama residents consider dwellings composed of two interior rooms (ge) and a porch of one of several types, ideal and typical. More dwellings in Rangama conform to this pattern than to any other single pattern (and in this sense, the dwelling which is described here--which has two rooms and a central porch--may be considered representative). Newly constructed dwellings are generally built on a two room plus porch plan. However, the majority of dwellings in Rangama conform to one of numerous other types of plans, in most cases because modifications have been made to the two room plus porch plan at some stage in the developmental history of the dwelling.

### The social setting

Most of the villages in the Kandyan highlands are single caste or nearly so, and Rangama is no exception. Ninety percent of its residents, like the occupants of the dwelling described here, are members of the cultivator (Goyigama) caste, the highest and statistically dominant caste in the highlands. Only two other castes are represented in Rangama: Washerman (two families) and ritual bearer or Dura (one single-person household). There are also two families of a Goyigama subcaste known locally as Wahal, 'servant,' who belong to a different network of kinsmen than the other Goyigama residents. Among all other Goyigama residents there are statable and recent links of consanguinity and affinity of varying degrees of closeness.

Seventy-four percent of the dwellings in Rangama are occupied by one commensal unit (hereafter, 'household'), 16 percent by two households and 10 percent by three households. In this sense, the dwelling under study, which is occupied by two households (a nuclear family plus the aging parents of the wife) is a deviation from the predominant pattern. However, in developmental terms, the household structure of this dwelling represents a typical, although often short-lived arrangement.

When a newly married couple first sets up a separate household in Rangama it is almost invariably in a room in the wife's dwelling of orientation (approximately 20 percent of the cases) or in the husband's (80 percent of the cases). This arrangement usually continues until at least one child is born. The residence may even become a permanent one, if the members of the additional households residing in the dwelling depart or die. It is less likely to be stable, however, if the wife's or husband's siblings also occupy the premises since this is an arrangement which inevitably

leads to conflict (generally over inheritance rights) and finally to fission.

When the members of a young family hive off, they either build a new dwelling for themselves, or set up household in a vacant dwelling to which they can assert a claim. Young families still living in multiple household dwellings almost always have plans to build a new dwelling, but serious efforts are seldom made in this direction until there is severe interpersonal conflict in the dwelling of orientation. In the case of the young nuclear family residing in the dwelling which is described here, there was no pressure from the wife's siblings, both of whom had left the village. Although there was some tension between the wife's husband and the wife's parents, it was sufficiently low-keyed that there was no immediate inducement for leaving. Not unexpectedly, therefore, the classic plans for the new dwelling had crystallized slowly. There was intermittent talk of the new dwelling, and there was some preparatory work undertaken during the four year period over which we were associated with Rangama village. A site was eventually cleared and finally a frame was erected, but little other work had taken place by the time we left in 1968, and in fact practically no work at all was done during that summer.

#### Land and money

According to an island-wide survey conducted in 1962 which compiled basic statistics on landholdings at the village level, there were three families in Rangama owning no land, thirty-seven owning land less than one-half acre in extent, and nine owning one-half acre or more. Although our own data on landholdings are organized differently in that they have been compiled by households rather than by 'families' and in addition indicate that the landholdings of the majority are in excess of one-half acre,<sup>1</sup> both sets of data suggest three basic economic divisions in the village. Our own divisions are as follows: (1) the indigent, defined as a class on the basis of their qualification for a government welfare subsidy (piim paDi). Our own head count found five householders (some single-person households) on public assistance. Most of these individuals were landless or nearly so. None had a salary or any other

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<sup>1</sup> The basic village statistics cannot have been calculated in terms of a total acreage of 107 acres, since this would suggest that some Rangama families own vast tracts of land which is not the case. Our own figures on individual holdings are based upon records kept in the village in connection with the reporting of paddy yields. They add up to 107 acres. We use them with some caution, however, since at least one study (Leach 1961) has shown such figures to be exaggerated. If the total Rangama acreage is exaggerated, our assumption here is that individual holdings are inflated proportionately.



significant source of cash income. (2) the wealthy, defined as a class on the basis of a sustained, regular and major source of cash income usually from shopkeeping (two individuals) or from a government salary. In 1965 there were nine residents of Rangama on the government payroll, all drawing salaries of between 100 and 200 rupees per month, and there were two other individuals who had drawn such salaries but had retired. The salaried residents included two village headmen (gram sewakas) at work in other villages but maintaining households and families in Rangama, a postmistress, a postal clerk, a mailrunner and two assistant schoolteachers and two headmasters. Two of the teachers taught in a neighboring village but resided in Rangama. A regular salary for any sustained period is reflected directly in sizable landholdings since Kandyan peasants have no tradition of investing their money in other ways--in gold, for example. The salaried, therefore, coincide roughly with the group of nine families owning extensive paddy lands. (3) the 'middle class' of Rangama, all landowners and recipients of cash income in minor amounts derived mainly from the sale of cash crops such as mustard. This class is defined negatively. All householders in this broad middle range own enough cultivation land to meet their own nutritional needs, although paddy land holdings vary in extent (generally from one to three acres) and some households rely more heavily than others on cereal crops from the *chenas*. None of these households has a regular source of cash income derived from a salary or from shopkeeping. None, however, is so poor so as to qualify for public assistance. The householders in the sample dwelling fall within this broad middle range. The holdings to which the householders actually have title are in the two acre range and some additional lands are likely to be acquired through inheritance.

When the economic stratification in Rangama is viewed against the vast differences between the very rich and the very poor in Sri Lanka as a whole, the gap between the rich and the poor in the village does not seem very great. The largest landowner in Rangama owns only sixteen acres of paddy land (ten of which are actually in a neighboring village). However, within the village context these differences reflect basic differences in economic behavior and also in the content of the domestic material environment.

Although the lands of the wealthy are, in absolute terms, not very extensive, they are too extensive to be worked by their owners alone, in part because many of the owners are primarily engaged in non-agricultural work such as schoolteaching. Some of their paddy lands are therefore cultivated by other village residents on ande, a type of sharecropping. Approximately 20 percent of the residents of Rangama work at least some fields on ande. Paddy lands belonging to nonresident kinsmen (generally absentee siblings or cousins), to widows and to the wealthy generally account for the holdings worked in this manner. In addition, for present purposes

it should be noted that these differences in wealth are also directly reflected in the content of the domestic setting. In every Rangama dwelling there is a mixture of traditional and non-traditional domestic articles, but the incidence of non-traditional substitutes rises in proportion to wealth. Western-inspired or imported items are more highly valued than traditional ones, and the extent to which the latter have been replaced in the household setting varies in direct proportion to the amount of cash income which has been available. Galvanized buckets, aluminum cooking vessels and glazed earthenware dishes are some of the items which are more heavily represented in the household as more cash becomes available. Then too there are some costly items which only the very prosperous can afford: pressurized kerosene lamps, kerosene cookers and radios, for example. A further discussion of variation in the content of the domestic inventory appears in Part II.

#### The specific research setting

The dwelling and the households which are described in these pages for illustrative purposes exhibit characteristics which make them typical for the village at large. The householders themselves are like most others in terms of caste affiliation, economic status and means of livelihood. The dwelling, like most others, is built from wattle and daub and thatch, materials which are relatively inexpensive since they require no direct cash expenditure and are easily obtained locally. The plan of the dwelling conforms to the two room plus porch scheme which residents find ideal and typical. These were the major considerations in choosing this particular dwelling as an example. In addition, the composition of the resident households presented another illustrative advantage in that it permitted observations of individuals at numerous stages in the life cycle. In this dwelling, there was a married couple still in their reproductive years with three small children as well as the aging parents of the wife. This generational spread permits us to draw out some of the implications of age as well as sex for patterns of activity in the daily round of work.

The dwelling described here has two interior rooms (ge) and a central porch (manDu ge). The larger of the two rooms (Room B) is 452 cm. x 233 cm. and the smaller (Room A) is 248 cm. x 222 cm. The porch (Room C) is 336 cm. x 251 cm. A plan of the dwelling appears as Figure 1. An axonometric drawing appears as Figure 2.

The dwelling is occupied by a conjugal pair (household A) utilizing Room A, and by their daughter's nuclear family (household B) which utilizes Room B. Both households utilize Room C, the porch. The occupants are hereafter designated as follows:



<u>Individual #</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Designation</u>
1	60+	M	WiFa
2	60+	F	WiMo
3	30	M	Hu
4	25	F	Wi
5	4+	M	ElSo
6	2+	M	YoSo
7	9 mo	M	InfSo

The ages of the adults given above are approximate. They are the ages the occupants give for official purposes on the rice ration lists which are usually compiled biannually by the government. Adults are not overly concerned with calculating their ages precisely, and as they grow older, they are likely to exaggerate them. Whereas the ages of the children are exact and those of their parents (Wi, Hu) nearly so, those of WiMo and WiFa can only be characterized in general terms since neither could recall the year of birth, and official records indicate wide variations in perceived age over the years. In 1965, for example, their perceived ages were 70 (WiFa) and 68 (WiMo). In 1962, however, WiMo was 45 and WiFa 65. Going back over the eight preceding years we found the following quotations: 1960: 60 (WiMo) and 68 (WiFa); 1959: 45 (WiMo) and 65 (WiFa); 1958: 50 (WiMo) and 65 (WiFa); 1956: 52 (WiMo) and 55 (WiFa); and 1954: 52 (WiMo) and 54 (WiFa). Our judgment based on their birth order among their own siblings residing elsewhere in the village and on the ages of their own children was that they were in their mid sixties.

In the period immediately preceding the marriage of Wi there was only one household in the dwelling. Wi and WiMo then slept in Room B and prepared all food there. Room A was utilized for the storage of produce and cultivation tools and for sleeping by the household head and his two sons while they were still residing in the village. The porch was used, as it still is, for receiving visitors, husking grains and for sleeping by males during the warm weather. Neither of Wi's male siblings was a resident of Rangama during the period in which we were associated with Rangama village. One was described by his parents as a hermit who lived in the forest and was believed by other village residents to be pissu, 'crazy.' While we were residing in Rangama in 1968, he made a rare visit to the village, and we interviewed him. We judged him to be about forty years old. He was not very coherent, and we were unable to determine how he supported himself. His own account of his situation was that he lived in the forest alone. A second sibling was employed by the Public Works Department and had worked on projects in a number of distant parts of the country. He returned to visit occasionally. His numerous gifts to his parents which appear in the inventory below suggest, however, that he has probably not

abandoned his hopes for inheritance or his claims to their property even though he is not residing in the village.

After Wi's marriage, Room B was given over to her and her husband. Room A was made into quarters for her mother and father, and a separate hearth was established there. The porch continued to serve as a place for sleeping, visiting, storage and household work.

The dwelling appears as dwelling #1 on the village map (page 15).



Description of Plate II

- a. The site looking north (1968). (The structure in the foreground to the right is the chicken coop.)
- b. The dwelling looking northeast (1968). (Room A is to the right; Room B to the left. The porch (manDu ge) is between them. A bamboo frame covers the roof to keep the thatch from blowing away during the windy season.)





a



b



Key to Dwelling Plan and Axonometric  
Figures 1 and 2

a. Architectural elements and permanent fixtures

1. stoop (piilə)
2. half wall (koTə piilə)
3. window
4. step at front entry (broken rotary quern)
5. gutter
6. corner pole (koon karuwə)
7. pole (karuwə)
8. cross beam (talaandə) supporting a king post (kurupaawə)
9. top plate (daevee)
10. ridge pole (yaTə liiyə)
11. hip rafter (koon paraale)
12. hearth (liipə)
13. salt stand (lunu karuwə)
14. saddle quern (miris galə)
15. muller for saddle quern
16. stone set in floor for pounding grains (wii koTanTə galə)
17. rotary quern (kurakkan galə)
18. smoke rack (dum maessə)
19. storage shelf
20. lamp shelf (laampu laeaellə)
21. line for clothing and other articles
22. fence

b. Baskets and woven articles

- |                          |                                      |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>peTTiyə</u> basket | 5. <u>waTə peTTiyə</u> basket        |
| 2. <u>aevillə</u> basket | 6. woven bag ( <u>mallə</u> )        |
| 3. <u>waTTiyə</u> basket | 7. mat ( <u>paedurə</u> )            |
| 4. <u>taTTuwə</u> basket | 8. winnowing basket ( <u>kullə</u> ) |

c. Wood and wooden articles

- |                                      |                               |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. box                               | 6. stool ( <u>kolombuwə</u> ) |
| 2. large mortar ( <u>wangeDiyə</u> ) | 7. table                      |
| 3. large pestle ( <u>moolgaha</u> )  | 8. charpoy                    |
| 4. small pestle ( <u>undu mate</u> ) | 9. lumber                     |
| 5. bench                             | 10. stirrers for porridge     |

d. Articles made from shells, gourds and leaves

- |   |                        |
|---|------------------------|
| 1. arecanut leaf                        | 5. coconut shell half  |
| 2. <u>goTuwə</u> basket                 | 6. coconut shell spoon |
| 3. wrapping leaf ( <u>kolon kolee</u> ) | 7. pot cradle          |
| 4. <u>labu</u> gourd vessel             |                        |

e. Unglazed earthenware

- |                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. <u>appəle</u> pot  | 4. <u>naembiliyə</u> pot |
| 2. <u>muTTiyə</u> pot | 5. potsherd              |
| 3. <u>korəha</u> pot  |                          |

f. Metal articles

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. <u>sembuwə</u> vessel               | 6. <u>kaləgeDiyə</u> vessel   |
| 2. betel tray ( <u>bulat taTTuwə</u> ) | 7. kettle ( <u>keetəlee</u> ) |
| 3. griddle ( <u>roTi kabələ</u> )      | 8. lamp                       |
| 4. <u>muTTiyə</u> pot                  | 9. teapot                     |
| 5. <u>naembiliyə</u> pot               | 10. metal box                 |

g. Foodstuffs and medicines

- |                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <u>kurakkan</u> millet | 5. arecanuts        |
| 2. rice                   | 6. <u>kitul</u> sap |
| 3. maize                  | 7. mango seed       |
| 4. chillies               | 8. medicine         |

h. Clothing

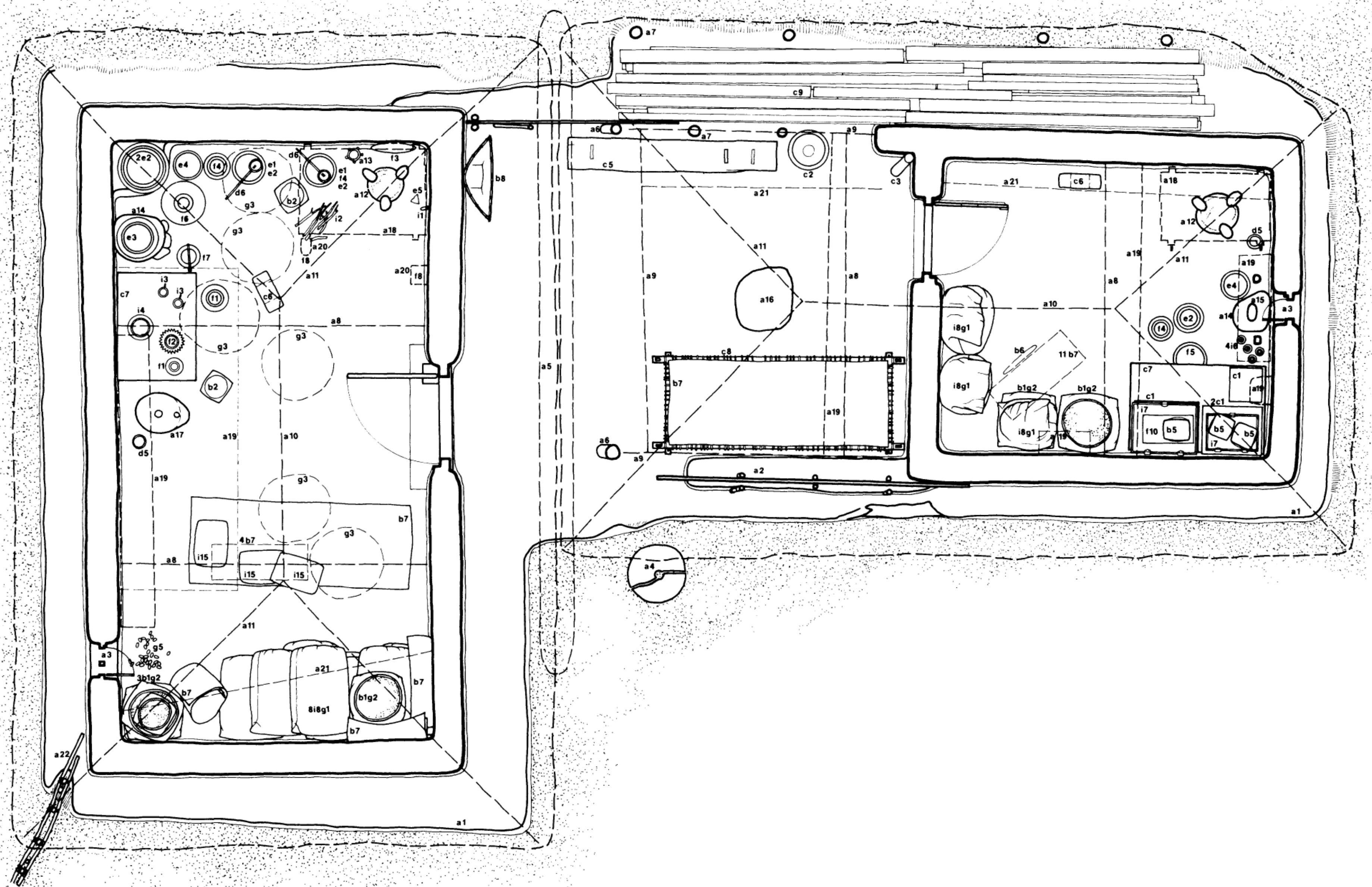
- |                 |           |
|-----------------|-----------|
| 1. sarong       | 5. bra    |
| 2. shirt        | 6. blouse |
| 3. belt         | 7. cloth  |
| 4. chintz cloth |           |

i. Miscellaneous

- |                             |                        |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. tuyere                   | 8. gunny sack          |
| 2. firewood                 | 9. umbrella            |
| 3. glazed earthenware cup   | 10. cloth shopping bag |
| 4. glazed earthenware plate | 11. box of matches     |
| 5. tin can                  | 12. scissors           |
| 6. bottle                   | 13. needle             |
| 7. suitcase                 | 14. thread             |
|                             | 15. pillow             |

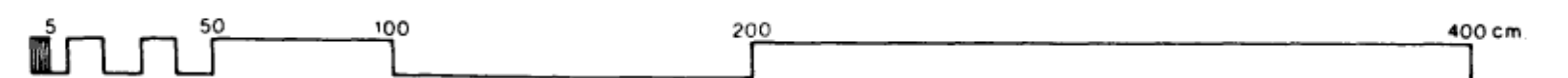






# PLAN

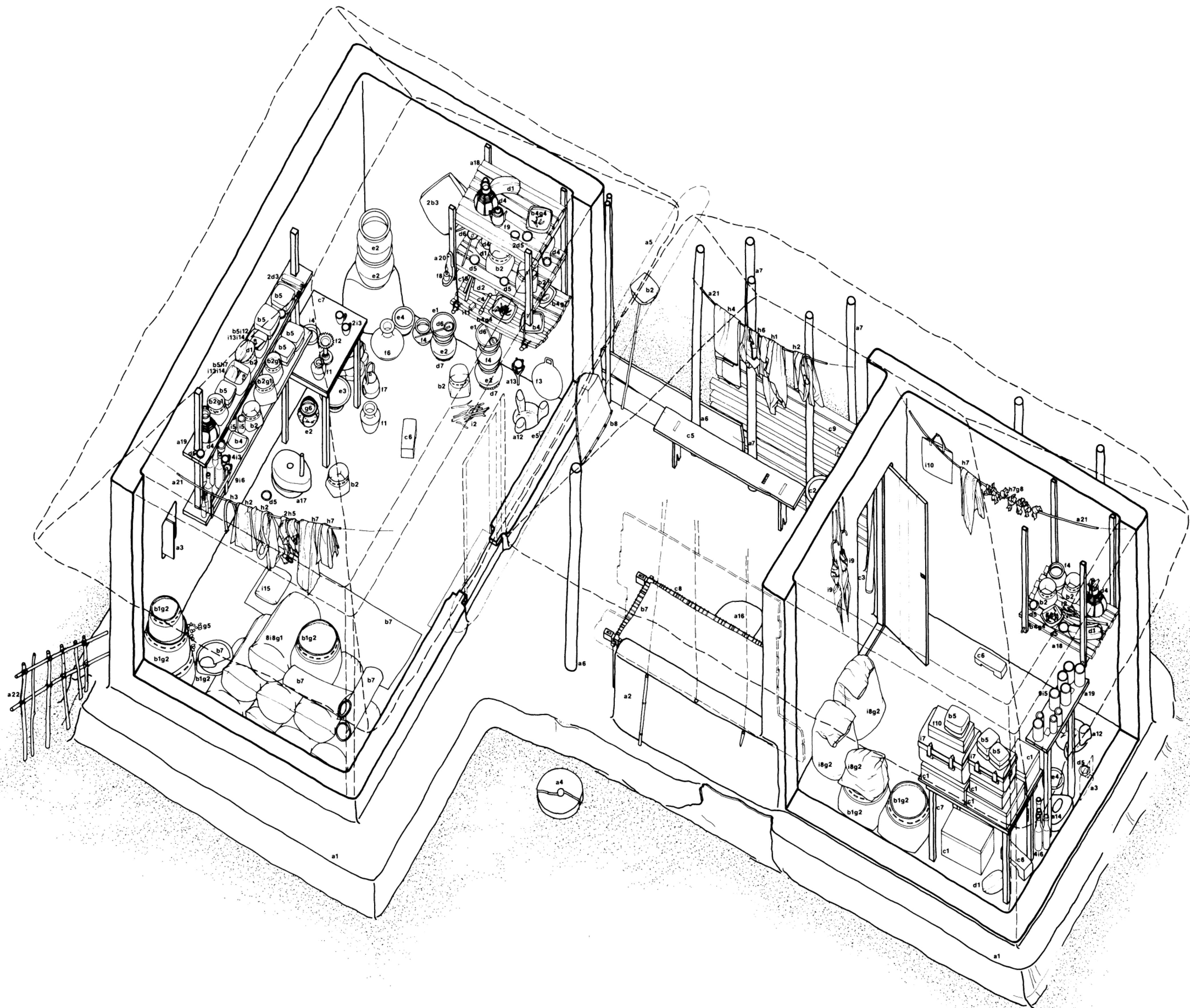
DWELLING #1, RANGAMA, SRI LANKA



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AXONOMETRIC  
DWELLING #1, RANGAMA, SRI LANKA





