

Part II

THE INVENTORY

Introduction

Below is the inventory of the contents of the sample dwelling. It is one of three major inventories which were undertaken in Rangama in which an attempt was made to classify every item according to location in the dwelling, origin, owner/user and use. Nine additional village dwellings were also inventoried for comparative purposes, but records were not kept in the same manner nor at the same level of detail. In those nine cases attention was given to items which could be represented on floor plans of the dwellings in an attempt to create a generalized picture of the contents of the dwellings and their arrangements. These plans as well as similar ones of the dwellings which were exhaustively inventoried appear elsewhere (MacDougall 1971). In addition, as the most expeditious method of gathering a wide range of inventory data for comparative purposes, a complete photographic record was made of the interiors of the nine dwellings. Although some of the entries which would appear in an item-by-item inventory are not revealed by this method of data collection since they are concealed within boxes, baskets, pots and other storage containers, if foodstuffs, books and clothing are excluded, most items in the dwelling are in fact in full or partial view. Thus, a reasonably complete record of dwelling contents can be made for comparative purposes with the aid of the camera, and many of the items not visible can be inferred because of the standardized uses of storage containers and their placement in certain locations. The photographs of the interiors which appear as illustrations are drawn from the record made for this purpose. (See Part IV).

The conduct of the inventory

The work on dwelling inventories was begun after we had resided in Rangama for approximately four months. By that time our stated purpose for residing in the village was established as genuine, and the residents had taken a keen interest in the progress of our project. From the outset, much ethnographic information was recorded in graphic form by R. MacDougall who drew sketches of household articles, maps of the settled areas of the village and made measured plans and elevations of temporary structures such as field huts as well as twelve of the forty-five dwellings in Rangama. These activities provided a kind of entertainment which had previously been

unknown in Rangama. They provided a first opportunity for most residents to see their houses and gardens in plan. Thus, the graphic work created a lively interest in at least one aspect of the ethnography, and since it required us to be on location in selected areas of the village for sustained periods of time, it also enabled us to form closer and more informal relationships with a large number of the residents.

The sample dwelling whose contents are described below was selected because it was felt to be representative. The householders were informed of the reasons for singling out their dwelling and the proposed data collection procedures were described to them. They agreed to participate and were most accommodating during the actual data collection. Mr. R.B. Ekanayake, a young schoolteacher who had been born in Rangama and who resided there, assisted in interviewing the occupants on the origin, use and ownership of the domestic articles. He was well liked by most residents and regarded with some affection by WiMo. We feel that his participation in the data collection contributed to the relaxed atmosphere in which it took place and hence to the cooperation we received and to the detailed information we were able to obtain.

The contents of the dwelling were recorded in an ordered fashion location by location and item by item so as to accurately record the arrangements of dwelling contents. Approximately 600 entries appear below. In the course of cross-checking the inventory data with the record of activities presented in Part III, it has become clear that a few items were omitted in the course of the data collection, probably because they were in use when the data on the portion of the dwelling in which they were normally stored was recorded. They include such items as a betel tray, two water buckets, a razor and pumice. Note has been made of them at the conclusion of the inventory. Otherwise we presume the record to be complete.

A comparison of the inventory data with those shown on the plan of the dwelling (Figure 1) reveals some minor differences in dwelling contents and their arrangements. These differences are a consequence of the fact that the plan and the inventory were done several weeks apart, the former in mid-May and the latter in mid-June 1965. There is more paddy stored in the dwelling in June than in May, for example, since the rice harvest had been completed by that time.

The most detailed information possible was sought in each category (origin, owner and use) for each item or substance in the dwelling with certain categorical exceptions (medicines and tools) which are treated below. The category owner/user did not turn out to be a universally useful one, since some dwelling

contents had no single owner or user. This category is therefore not consistently marked. It did help to establish, however, that articles made in one household and usually utilized there were freely exchanged with the other as needed, and it did serve to indicate the ownership of certain property (clothing, for example) when it was considered to be personal. Perhaps the greatest variation in depth of information is to be found in the category 'origin of item'. This category was set up initially in order to distinguish home manufactures from articles purchased in markets. However, we found that the occupants were often able to recall such details as the price paid even though the article had been acquired some time before and the market or market area where the item had been obtained. This information is therefore included for some purchases and naturally not noted for those articles for which it could not be recalled. In this manner we were able to establish that purchases had been made from itinerant traders as well as from a number of distant market areas including Kandy (45 miles), Mahiyangana (40+), Bintenne (40+), Teldeniya (30+), Rangala (22), Dukwariya (22), Hunnasgiriya (22), Udispattuwa (20), Guruwela (17), Kobonella (15), Pallegama (15), Loolwatte (14) and Corbet's Gap (11). Data gathered in this category also revealed that there were a number of gifts from a non-resident son of WiMo and WiFa, suggesting that even though he was employed by the government, he still maintained an interest in a potential inheritance. It also showed that he continued to store many of his personal possessions in the dwelling. There were also a number of "goodwill" gifts from the itinerant traders from whom the occupants purchased cloth and to whom they sold eggs and fowl. It was interesting to note that very few gifts had been exchanged between the occupants. The exceptions were gifts of clothing from Hu to Wi. It was also interesting to see how little personal property or property of any kind Hu had brought from his natal dwelling to his new one, and that practically none of the household articles (with the exception of one bamboo drum) were gifts for the children.

The detail available here on home remedies and pamphlets pertaining to their preparation is not elaborate. Both male householders in the sample dwelling, like many other men in the village, collected and prepared medicines for their own use and the use of their households. WiFa was known in the village as an expert on magical cures and herbal remedies for snakebite and prepared these medicines for others. To this end he had a stock of decoctions and herbs to be made into medicines and a collection of pamphlets and handwritten formulas on curing, some of which were kept within a locked metal box. Our judgment was that a general dwelling inventory was not an appropriate context in which to initiate work on the particulars of Sinhalese medicine, a specialized and to some extent guarded area of knowledge. We observed that raw materials for medicines were generally carefully covered or wrapped and bound in cloths and that written materials were all concealed within closed containers. Our sense of the situation was that these were articles best left as private matters, and thus we made no attempt to untie

the medicines or to inventory the stock of pamphlets and formulas. However, if the medicine were a raw material more or less in full view (generally because it was intended for household use) we generally obtained the name of the substance and information on its use. In this manner we managed to determine that the householders stored and utilized antiseptics, eye medicines, vermifuges, febrifuges, and remedies for pain, vomiting, diarrhea and snakebite. About a dozen specifics were identified, and they are cited and classified botanically in the inventory. In addition, in the interest of our continuing good relations with the householders, we made no attempt to inventory the contents of WiFa's small boxes of tools. Again our sense of the situation was that the boxes were best left undisturbed.

Transcription and translation of the entries

The entries in the inventory are presented in Sinhalese in those cases in which there is no unambiguous English translation and elsewhere in those cases in which the inclusion of the Sinhalese was thought to enhance the ethnographic record. The transcription which appears here generally accords with that which appears in MacDougall 1973 with the exception that the distinction between nasal plus stop (mb, nd, nD and ng) and nasalized stops (sometimes written Mb, ŋd, ŋD and ŋg or Nb, Nd, ND and Ng) has not been maintained for typographical reasons. Any sequence ae is equatable with /æ/ as in English hat /hæt/. The symbols T and D are retroflex stops which contrast with t and d which are dental.

The spellings which appear here represent standardized spellings which appear in Carter 1924, a comprehensive Sinhalese dictionary. In some cases these standardized spellings differ from the local dialect forms found in Rangama. For example: kurakkan, 'a kind of millet,' (Rangama kurəhan). The transcription of forms here consequently does not always reflect Rangama usage, although differences are not in the main numerous or great. In a few instances, the dialectal forms in use in Rangama are not to be found in dictionaries and in such cases there was no standardized spelling available. For example: aewillə, 'a type of basket,' is not entered in Carter 1924 or in any other dictionary of which we are aware. Elsewhere Vijesekera, who spells it as we do, describes it as a word from the Vedda language meaning 'box' (1964: 127).

The botanical names which appear here are drawn for the most part from Carter 1924 which contains a detailed botanical index. We know this work as well as the standard works on the botany of Sri Lanka (Trimen 1885; 1893-1900) to be outdated, and therefore we have drawn on more contemporary sources (Senaviratne and Appadurai's

1967 work on field crops, for example) whenever possible. The University of Sri Lanka in cooperation with the Smithsonian Institution embarked on a project in 1968 to revise Trimen's comprehensive handbook on the flora of Sri Lanka (1893-1900). The completion of that work will eventually provide an invaluable resource for non-specialists such as ourselves.

An overview of domestic articles in use in Rangama

Before proceeding to the inventory data from the sample dwelling, we should like to place that particular record of dwelling contents in the context of the wider range of articles from which it is drawn. Although there are some domestic articles which are represented in every household (mats and certain types of baskets and cooking pots, for example), we know of no house in which there is a complete representation of the entire range of materials.

The domestic articles which are in use in Rangama are organized below according to material and method of construction. Although the list of articles discussed below may not exhaust the materials in use in the village, it is probably nearly complete. This list includes all articles found in the course of inventorying twelve dwellings, as well as articles subsequently named by residents which were not found there. The latter were elicited after dwelling inventories were completed in the interest of drawing up a complete list. The materials of construction for wooden and woven articles which appear here were elicited from residents experienced in their manufacture. Specific measurements of domestic articles produced in Rangama and details of their construction appear here when known. However, they are not complete since the careful description of the morphology and manufacture of Kandyan artifacts was not the central aim of this project.

Basketry (plaited and coiled) and other plaited articles

Basketry is the one major topic in Sinhalese arts and crafts which is not treated in any detail by Coomaraswamy (1908), and there are otherwise no satisfactory treatments of the subject in the literature. Weaving techniques and basket types may vary from region to region, but there is no good information on this subject. It seems likely, however, that basket nomenclature and the uses to which baskets of given names are put vary considerably, which may account for the absence of generalized accounts of basket terminology. For example, Yalman reports that in the village in which

he conducted research the names of Sinhalese measures (amunə, pəeaele, timbə, kuruniyə)..."are actually baskets of different sizes used to measure rice" (1967:37). There is no measure in Rangama which is of amunə capacity (5-6 bushels), and no basket going under this name. Although the largest peTTiyə baskets are made in pəeaele measures (approximately 1-1/4 - 1-1/2 bushels), they are not known by the term pəeaele. There is a basket made in Rangama which is called a kuruniyə (traditionally one-tenth of a pəeaele), but this term refers to a basket type, not to the traditional measure of the same name. The kuruniyə is in fact made in two sizes and used to carry special foods such as oil cakes and plantains on festive occasions. Two other traditional measures, the naeliyə (one-fourth of a kuruniyə) and the kuDDə (one-fourth of a naeliyə) are found in Rangama as named baskets, but the former is absent in most households and the latter in many. Thus, although baskets (generally aewillə and peTTiyə rush baskets) are made to conform roughly to some standard Sinhalese capacities, the correlation which Yalman found between baskets of a given name and Sinhalese measures is far from complete in contemporary Rangama.

Woven articles are generally made in the village by the householders who use them. Only rarely are baskets purchased in markets. Both men and women weave, but young men generally only have the time to devote to it during the slack period in cultivation activities which occurs before the summer rice harvest. Men fashion all articles which are made partially or entirely from cane, whereas women work with more pliable materials such as rush.

The basketry and plaited articles which are manufactured in Rangama are given below. An asterisk (*) marks the preferred material of construction where appropriate. The terms given are the ones commonly in use for the basket types. It should be noted that although the term peTTiyə figures in the names of several baskets (and some other containers as well), it is not an equivalent for English 'basket', and in fact, when it is used without a preceding attribute, it refers to a large basket of a particular type of construction.

