

**Jinadasa Liyanaratne, *Catalogue des Manuscrits Singhais*, Paris: Bibliothèque National, 1983, 148 pp., index and 4 plates.**

The Sinhala manuscripts at the French National Library first came to the notice of the international community of scholars in 1912 with the publication of the concise catalogue prepared by Antoine Cabaton and, subsequently, the late Fr. S. G. Perera, too, drew the attention of Sri Lankan scholars to their value. This last brief notice appeared more than half a century ago. Jinadasa Liyanaratne's new catalogue contains detailed descriptions of 66 Sinhala manuscripts found scattered in several different collections preserved at the National Library. Among these manuscripts are to be found six historical texts, twenty religious texts, ten literary works, five grammars, three lexicons, three alphabets, three medical texts, seven astrological texts, two compilations of magical formulae, one manuscript described as a panegyric and six others classified under the heading "miscellaneous". Liyanaratne provides transliterations of the initial and terminal portions of each manuscript and, in certain instances, extracts from the beginning and end of each chapter. He also presents detailed descriptions of the folios and the wooden protective covers of the manuscripts. The four plates of colour photographs of a case and selected covers and of decorative motifs found on some of the folios enable the reader to form an idea of the artistic quality of these manuscripts.

It is increasingly becoming clear to scholars, particularly to those from the discipline of history, that the colophon, including the autobiographical details provided by the later copyist, is in many instances not much less important than the main text. The compilation of the colophons of the Kanjur prepared by Bischoff, for instance, has proved to be a rich source of information for historians of Buddhism. In this respect the decision made by Liyanaratne to provide complete transliterations of colophons in his catalogue is particularly laudable and we can only hope that future cataloguists of Sri Lankan manuscripts follow his example. The text of the colophon of a manuscript containing the Sinhala translation of the *Upāsakajanātakāva* (No. 3) provides useful information on the period of the Kandyan kingdom. Additional material on the city of Kandy, the activities of Kirtisiri Rājasimha and the reigns of Rājādhirājasimha and Śrīvikrama Rājasimha, which is also available in this valuable manuscript, will be found to be of considerable use to historians specializing in the study of medieval Sri Lanka. Similarly, the colophon of a manuscript of the *Ummaggaḥītaka* (No. 5), which had been copied in the eighteenth century at a monastery in the Southern Province, throws light on the prominent role that craftsmen of these times were playing as patrons of literary and religious activity.