

**SINHALA DISPLAY TYPEFACES;  
VISUAL CLASSIFICATION OF SINHALA BOOK TITLE**

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

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Date

The above candidate has carried out research for the Masters thesis under my supervision. I confirm that the declaration made above by the student is true and correct.

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for their legacy and inspiration.

## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** *Sinhala Display Typography, Sinhala book title, Visual classification*

This thesis is a systematic documentation of letterform variations in Sinhala display typefaces through a visual classification in early Sinhala book titles. The research primarily focuses on documenting and classifying letterform variations of Sinhala book titles used in early printed books in Sri Lanka (from 1890 to 1960).

Historical research and documentation is essential for the growth and development of any subject domain including design. Under the major subject domain of graphic design, Latin typography has a long history in its historical studies. As a result, the subject has grown to a substantial level. Since design education in Sri Lanka is nearly two decades old, subject areas such as graphic design and typography lack documented knowledge of early Sri Lankan typographic practices. The historical data that contributes to these subject areas are found at archival locations in Sri Lanka. In Colombo National Museum Archive, we found a collection of early Sinhala book cover design as primary data for historical studies in graphic design. Some of these data have been already lost due to inadequate preservation, conservation procedures, and lack of interest in preserving graphical material. Therefore we identify the research gap as the need of documenting primary data for graphic design; typography in Sri Lanka.

Thesis introduces classification as a method of systematically documenting the primary data. It investigated Latin and Devanagari typographic classification systems and confirmed the importance of the variables for classifying data. We identified variables and values for the main study by conducting a literature survey on display typefaces and classification systems. We selected a random sample of early printed book covers from the Colombo National Museum Library and scanned a total of 1,410 book covers published between 1872 and 1960, along with their meta data including cover size, publisher, author, and so on.

We uncovered 17 categories (variables) and 77 subcategories (values) under the visual variations of Sinhala book titles in early printed book covers in Sri Lanka. We

classified all the book cover titles within the variables. We conclude the research by presenting the findings and interpretations in a series of tables and graphs. This thesis primarily contributes towards fulfilling a key requirement for the development of the subject of typography and graphic design in Sri Lanka: the documentation of historical data.

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