

Artefacts of Culture: Christmas postage stamps of Sri Lanka

Abstract – Postage stamps are a fundamental part of a communication system, the postal service of a country. Although postage stamps are less encountered in daily lives today, as official documents designed, printed and issued by states, they remain primary sources of global material and visual culture. Produced by people of a specific community for purposeful communication, a postage stamp is inherent of symbolic visual content, therefore can be viewed as an artefact of the culture that it was produced in. When looking at philatelic practices of Sri Lanka, Christmas marks a notable commemoration. Christmas is celebrated religiously by over 2 billion Christians in Sri Lanka, as well as culturally by many non-Christians. Such festivals of national importance are an ideal time to promote the ethnic, cultural, social, and historical characteristics of the nation through commemorative stamps. Complementing the National Christmas celebrations, Sri Lankan government issues a Christmas postage stamp, annually. Since its inauguration in 1980, there has been a total of 35 issues of Christmas stamps. In this study 5 issues of Christmas postage stamps were analyzed to learn how the information intrinsic to culture is inscribed within them. The Christmas postage stamps of Sri Lanka have its roots in Sri Lankan Christian culture. Through this study it was found that Christmas postage stamps of Sri Lanka are planned as carriers of material as well as conceptual elements of Christian culture, to the audiences.

Keywords: Culture, Artefacts, Postage stamps, Sri Lankan Postage stamps, Christmas Postage stamps

