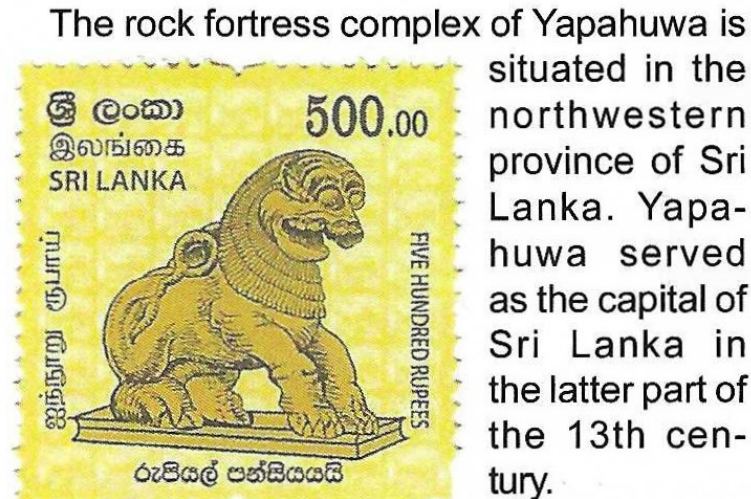


# ARTY CATS, con't

## The Yapahuwa Lion, Sri Lanka

by GREG BALAGIAN



**Yapahuwa Guardian Lion, Sri Lanka (2021)**

the palace and fortress built in 1273 on a huge, 90 meter high rock boulder in the style of the Sigiriya rock fortress against foreign invaders.

The most impressive part of the structure is the magnificent staircase which features the marvelous guardian lion statue.

A hybrid creature, the Yapahuwa lion has the head of a lion and the body of a dragon. Legend has it, that although the sculpture was made by local craftsmen, its design was influenced by Chinese culture.

Several other archaeological excavations have proven that Buvanekabahu's kingdom had close diplomatic ties with the Chinese. During early excavations, several Chinese

ceramics have been found, known to be some of the finest specimens located on the island.\*

Historically, imperial lions were used by the Chinese as a traditional architectural ornament.

Usually made of stone, these lions, or *shishi* in Chinese, became popular in Chinese Buddhism, as a mark of protection to guard buildings against harmful spiritual influences or people.

Originally used in imperial Chinese palaces and tombs, the lion concept soon spread to other parts of Asia including Japan, Korea, Tibet, Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Nepal, Singapore, and Sri Lanka.

The famed Yapahuwa guardian lion statue appears stylized on the 2021 definitive stamp from Sri Lanka issued on March 16, 2021, denominated at 5000 rupees. 🌸

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\* The island nation of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka was formerly known as Ceylon until 1972.