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Judicial administration in ancient Sri Lanka

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Laws and Legal institutions are of vital importance for the security and progress of any society. Laws restrain members of a community from involving in crimes and acts of violence. There are prescribed punishments for specific offences. The present legal system consists of two parts, namely Civil Law and Criminal Law. Criminal law relates to crimes such as theft and murder. It consists of two parts, namely iniquitous and non-iniquitous crimes. Grave crimes carry the penalty of death or life- imprisonment. In the case of less serious crimes, the punishment is light. Civil Law pertains to matters relating to commerce, health, marriage, lands, property, water management, etc.

The administration of laws requires the maintenance of courts, and tribunals and the appointment of judges at various levels. In the present study, attention will be focused mainly on courts and judges of Pre-modern Sri Lanka with special emphasis on the administration of civil and criminal laws. Courts and judges occupy a very important place in the modern legal system. There are many references in literature and inscriptions to courts of law and judicial administration in ancient and medieval Sri Lanka

The research will be mainly based on primary sources; Pali chronicles, commentaries, *Samantapasadika*, *Vamsatthappakasini*, and Sinhala texts such as the *Pujavaliya*, *Saddharmarathnavaliya* and *Saddharmalankaraya*. Epigraphic notices are also significant as sources of information. Wherever necessary, material will also be obtained from limited secondary sources published on the ancient legal system of the island.

Key words: Judicial administration, Legal institutions, Violence, Courts, Judges