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Declaration

The work described in this thesis was carried out by me under the supervision of Senior Professor Nandasena Ratnapala of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and a report on this has not been submitted to any University for another degree.

Kingsley Wickremasuriya

Declaration

I certify that the above statement made by the candidate is true and that this thesis is suitable for submission to the University for the purpose of evaluation.

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Policing Sri Lanka:
In Quest of a New Strategy

By

Kingsley Wickremasuriya

Thesis submitted
To the University of Sri Jayewardenepura
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Policing Sri Lanka:

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ABSTRACT

Before the advent of the colonial powers, Sri Lanka had a highly legitimised system of governance more than 2000 years old, fashioned after a value system that was essentially Eastern in tradition, and Buddhist in philosophy. But the four and half centuries of colonial rule, first by the Portuguese and then by the Dutch and the British respectively, systematically paralysed it by stifling the old institutions through acts of omission and commission. The institutions they imposed on the indigenous population were directly in conflict with the local values. Lacking in moral authority they did not carry the stamp of legitimacy. In this Colonial setting the police developed into an organization, coercive in character, and oppressive in reputation, and continued to expand and develop under an impetus unaffected by public opinion. The status quo remained even after Independence. The outcome was the alienation of the police from the community and consequent public apathy. This is one of the great drawbacks for effective police work in Sri Lanka, in modern times.

Public apathy, however, is not an inherent defect of the

indigenous population as demonstrated by the police experiments in Kegalle, North Western Province and in Jaffna discussed in this work, but rather the result of long alien rule. With community support, Police can still be effective. The initiative, however, must come from the Police. It is time the police discarded this 'Colonial Model' that has proved to be dysfunctional and adopt a more people-friendly 'Service Model'.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The word 'Police' originally had the widest possible connotation in relation to organised society for it was used as a synonym for organised governments and even for civilisation itself (Coatman, 1959). In earlier history it was synonymous with all non-ecclesiastical administration (Whitaker, 1979). *Police* is derived from the Greek word *Politeia*, meaning citizenship and connoting the control and regulation of a political unity such as a nation or a state (Niederhoffer and Blumberg (1973) and then from the Latin *polita*. However, in its original context it referred to the general instruments of government, the wider administration of the state (Mawby, 1990).

It is also said that the word 'police' stems from the Greek word *polis*, the Greek word for a city-state. The word had a much wider meaning in the Greek city-states, including all the institutions of government (Alderson, 1979). The Greek *politea,* like the Roman *politia,* meant the art of governing the city-state for its comprehensive good, including the power to regulate in the public interest, security, order, supplies, morality and welfare (Whitaker, 1979). The *polis* was that part of civil administration for maintaining health, safety and good order.

Although the Greeks provided the word it was the Romans who provided the great bureaucracy of police administration. The *politia* eventually became the strong