CONCLUSION
CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis enables us to outline some of the broad conclusions regarding the community formation of Mappilas of Malabar.

As the introductory chapter shows, there is a general consensus among modern scholars that it is doubtful whether a Hindu or Muslim identity existed anywhere in India prior to 19th century in any meaningful sense. Most of the scholars of Modern India feel that pre-colonial Indian society was too fragmented by castes, sub castes and local loyalties to have larger alliance to emerge. The common thread that links these new studies is the perception that community identity is not fixed or given but a political construction. In other words, community identity was neither natural, nor intrinsic to Hindu Muslim relations, but rather it was a modern political construction, which took place during the colonial phase in India. Communities in pre-British India had only vague boundaries, which do not admit of discrete, either/or divisions.

A community is formed when a group of people share something in common which distinguishes them from members of other groups and the shared elements become the primary referent of identity. The origin of Mappila community could be traced back to 8th century AD or even earlier to the period of prophet Muhammed in 7th century AD. But we cannot assume that right from 8th century onwards, the Mappilas formed themselves into a well-knit community. As per the scheme of classification of Keralolpathi, an 18th Century Brahmical work, Mappilamar (Jonakar) was one of the 72 Kulams (lineages) of pre-modern Kerala. Within such indigenous mode of enumeration and taxonomy, which were live up to 18th century, most of modern social identities were not obtained. Or, it cannot be assumed that they
were descriptive of religious communities. This compel us to argue that the Mappilas of Malabar was transformed from the status of a Kulam into the present form of a self-conscious and well-knit community, only towards the middle of 20th century. In other words, modern community of Mappilas of Malabar was a product of colonialism or specifically of colonial modernity. This community of Mappilas was an imagined entity and this imagination could not have been possible without the socio-territorial base of Malabar. Prior to 20th century, though the Mappilas shared a common religious ideology, it alone could not provide them a common identity. For instance, the ideal of 'Ummath', the pan-Islamic community of Muslims around the globe, which lack territorial base, was not at all a meaningful community. Such symbolic community consciousness might have existed in the imagination of Muslims around the world, but could not be articulated in any meaningful way.

In a similar vein, a collectivity of people, who adhered to Islam, divorced from the realities of life and culture of Malabar, cannot be considered as a clearly de-marcated community. Though united by a set of common rituals, it could just be a brotherhood of believers, lacking a common identity because beyond the core of Islamic symbols, all other symbols were divisive and even in conflict with the core symbols. The caste like features, the status divisions, the practice of matriliney, the sale and consumption of liquor, belief in witchcraft, belief in divinities of unknown origin etc. which were part and parcel of Mappila life prior to 20th century, were in conflict with the scriptural Islam, they believed in. Hence, prior to 20th century, the Mappilas did not understand themselves as part of larger North Indian Muslim identity nor did they understand themselves as a solidarity- Malabar Muslims. A feeling of 'communitas' cutting across divergent forms of distinction, did not emerge among the Mappilas prior to 20th century. In other words, a self-conscious community of Mappilas, defining itself
primarily as Muslims emerged in Malabar only by the early decades of 20th century.

Various factors, both discursive and non-discursive, were at work behind the formation of such an identity. They include the colonial Governmentality and its classificatory strategies, colonial educational policy the propaganda of Islamic revivalist's and reformists, the technological developments like the introduction of Printing Press, the increased tension between 'Hindus' and 'Muslims' in the wake of Malabar Rebellion and the mediation of Nationalist and communal politics. All these factors, directly or indirectly contributed their own share in forging a separate identity for the Muslims of Malabar. Due to the play of these divergent forces, a collectivity of people called Mappilas achieved some kind of a seemingly enduring social identity, solidarity and boundedness by about the middle of 20th century.

The Islam practiced by Mappilas during the pre-reformist phase was not in conformity with the scriptural Islam and it could be described as popular Islam. Mappilas, during this phase, adopted many of the customary practices of their non-Muslim brethren in Malabar, sometimes even contradicting the social norms of Islam. Stratification in terms of wealth, descent, profession and even system of succession was rampant among Mappilas of Malabar during this phase. In short, prior to 20th century the masses of Mappilas were so fragmented from within by caste like features and so widely separated from their elite co-religionists that the notion of a community could hardly exist.

The technologies of power of the colonial state had a major role to play in shaping the community identity of the Mappilas. The colonial government, through its discursive and non-discursive mediation imagined in to existence a specific Mappila community in Malabar. Among the various strategies of colonial government, the census or enumerative strategy helped to ignite
communitarian identity among Mappilas. The census, rather than being a passive instrument of data-gathering, by its practical logic and form created a new sense of category identity as against the fuzzy and popular nature of Mappilas during the pre-census period. It induced the Mappilas to participate in public sphere in terms of collective identities defined by the colonial government. The census was instrumental in igniting community sentiments among the Mappilas and Muslims print began to demand special consideration for Muslims in various domains. Along with census, other colonial discourses like gazetteers, ethnographic surveys counter-insurgency reports, etc. perpetuated and conjured up stereotypical images about the Mappilas and this in turn got embedded and found a place in the indigenous discourses. Selfhood of Mappilas was also shaped by the ways in which others viewed them. The strategies of representation of the other (Mappilas) by the English also played a crucial role in the solidification of communitarian identity among the Mappilas. In short, the colonial government classified the indigenous people in to community categories and knowingly and unknowingly the subject people were also trapped in to that discursive framework. Similarly, the non-discursive mediation of the colonial government in the form of communal educational system and separate electorate for Muslims also led to the sharpening of communitarian identity among the Mappilas.

The reformist ideology which began to spread in Malabar in the closing decades of 19th century and the early decades of 20th century led to a gradual disappearance of many of the features of the popular Islam of 19th century Malabar and the slow but steady emergence of a scriptural Islam. The Reformist emphasis on differentiating Islam in Malabar from local cultural traditions, much of which came to be identified with Hinduism and Polytheism, was an important factor that brought about a separate identity to the Mappilas. By emphasizing personal adherence to the basic tenets of
Islam, the reformists were not merely attacking the foundation of conceptual system of rural Islam; they were also defining Islamic identity and shaping up the public standards of this identity formation. Due to the propaganda work of the Reformists, both through oral and print media, even the traditional Sunni Ulemas, who tried to resist the reformist onslaught, were forced to get rid of some of the age long customs and set their religious life according to the tenets of the scriptures. The traditionalist's apathy towards Madrasa systems, translation of Quran, adoption of print and even to secular education was given up and the stage was set for the emergence of a Muslim public sphere, where the Muslims, irrespective of doctrinal differences, could imagine a monolithic Muslim community in Malabar. Since the Muslim reformist movement was confined to their community alone, it turned to be a movement for the solidification of community identity. Thus, the victory of the Reformists was also a victory of an orthodox great tradition of Islam over a heterodox, heteroprax little traditions of Malabar Islam.

In contrast to Benedict Anderson's focus on print in the formation of National Identity, the print capitalism that emerged in Malabar by the end of 19th century also facilitated the community imaginings among Mappilas. Printing made possible the publication of cheap religious texts and books projecting the Islamic image of the community. As Francis Robinson observed in the national context, the Muslim print played a major role in fashioning Muslim identity in Malabar. The large production of literary works grounded in Islam provided the Mappilas a separate identity. Along with this, umpteen Muslim journals helped to project the Muslim cause and continually fed their readers with the developments in the Muslim world and there by created a Muslim public sphere in Malabar.

Similarly, the 1921 Rebellion and the Khilafath Movement precipitated this ongoing process of community formation of Mappilas. The Rebellion was a watershed in this process as the centuries old communal amity in
Malabar was destroyed, at least for a temporary period and this was the period in which communitarian identities, both Hindu and Muslim, began to emerge in Malabar. The representation of the Rebellion, both in vernacular press as well as the nationalist narratives, did serve to sharpen the community identities in Malabar. Very often the violence (Rebellion) itself became a symbol for communitarian mobilization. As reports of aggression and victimization were remembered and embellished, Rebellion became an instrument for marking and consolidating community identities. Both types of chauvinistic reports about the Rebellion had its impact on the rise of an exclusive Muslim and Hindu identity in Malabar. Again, it was the covering of the Rebellion by the print media, which led to the entry of all India players like Hindu Maha Sabha, Arya Samaj and JDT Islam in to the social landscape of Malabar and they helped to organise their respective communities in terms of religion. Similarly, the Khilafath Movement in Malabar, for the first time, linked Malabar Mappilas with their brethren in other parts of India and they began to be influenced by the reverberations in Islamic world outside. Prior to the Khilafat movement the Mappilas did not identify strongly with the Muslims in the rest of India. The pan-Islamic sentiment also had given an additional fillip to the emergence of a separate Muslim identity.

Thus, through the play of various factors and through a steady and slow process, Mappilas, who had not attached much significance to their distinct identity, were transformed into a community with an awareness of a common identity and then into a political community. This political identity of Mappilas was manifested in the form of a political solidarity called Muslim League. Though the Muslim league was formed in 1906, it was only in late 1930's that Mappilas drifted towards a separatist political ideology of Muslim League.

In short, a self-conscious community of Mappilas, defining itself primarily as Muslims emerged only in the first half of 20th century. Though
the members of the community never knew most of their fellow members, met them or even heard them, in the minds of each lived the image of their communion. A feeling of unity, cutting across all distinctions in terms of wealth, status, succession, lineage etc., developed during this period. It was the developments within the colonial context of Malabar; colonial governmentality and its various discursive practices, improved means of communication like printing press, modern education, Islamic reformist intervention and post-Rebellion tension between communities that facilitated the emergence of a concrete community identity among Mappilas. Thus the changing colonial context did provide the primary backdrop for the formation of a community identity among Mappilas of Malabar.