Chapter V
Conclusion

The present study hinges on the fact that the emergence of history as a discipline in the southern and northern parts of India took place under colonialism. Analysing in detail as to how the past was defined in different regions of the sub-continent during the pre-colonial period, the study discovers that there existed a series of *genres* and modes of pan-Indian character for representing the past. The central argument developed in the study is that the coming into being of 'history' as the most authentic mode of representation of the past, was part of the colonising strategies too that involved the steady process of invalidation and replacement of the pre-colonial forms and *genres* current in the sub-continent.

Focusing specifically on of the pre-colonial forms of representation and modes of realisation of the past in the southern regions of India, the study shows that all of them enjoyed equal authority, authenticity and credibility. What turned out to be curious in the context is that across their variety existed a kind of unity in terms of the structure, composition and strategies of *genres*.

In the study of the *Vedic, Itihastic, Puranic* and *non-puranic* modes of representation of the past, which evolved over the centuries through various stages, what became explicit is the fact that they embodied idealised reflections of societies where the notions of *varna*, *vamsa* and *dharma* dominated.
Following the leading scholars in the field the study could reaffirm that the traditional modes of conceiving the past in the pre-colonial societies of India underwent constant restructuring in tune with the changing political, social and cultural needs of their times.

There are numerous non-puranic traditions, which are categorised into mahakavya-s, laghukavya-s and carita-s. Selected samples such as Raghuvamsa kavya, Gaudapaho, Hammiramaha kavya, Rajatarangini, Harshacarita, Vikramankadevacarita, Rama carita, Vikramankabhyadaya, Prithviraja vijayam are reviewed as classical examples. From this it is concluded that these kavya-s and carita-s were reflections of the transitions to the medieval society which was characterised by the rise of feudal aristocracies. These forms of representation combined mythology and fabricated genealogy with the heroic deeds of their patrons in contemporary socio-political and cultural universe. It is clear that in the southern Indian regions also vanśavali-s and oral traditions were used as sources of legitimisation until the colonial genre of history dominated.

As regards the representation of space and time in the pre-colonial constructions of the past, it is concluded that the concept of space and time is expressed through symbols of peoples’ lived time. This representation mixed up cosmogeny, sacred ideas and the events of immediate past. Yet this was sensible as it was rooted in the cultural practices of the society.

Besides the pan-Indian models there were specific forms of representation of past in Tamilakam and Keralam. They differed from each other.
In Tamilakam *ula*, *parani*, *kathaipadalkal*, *nattupadalkal*, and *pallupadalkal* were the genres of literature that constructed and realised the past. The forms of realisation of the past that were current in pre-colonial Keralam were closely related to the pan-Indian model. In addition to the *ulpatti* pattern, *kavya-s* and *carita-s* there existed different categories of songs such as *Padaipattukal*, *Teyyam pattukal*, *Tottam pattukal* and so forth enabling us to conclude that in these enshrining the past was only one among the multiple functions. Often what dominated were the socio-ritual roles of tradition in regulating, legitimising and authenticating rights and privileges of inheritance, maintaining status and ranking besides binding the people together. Such people seldom think about understanding the past as a part of intellectual pursuits and naturally societies in pre-colonial India never considered past as a domain of study to be pursued through scholastic rules.

The present study by mapping out the making of the past in Tamilakam and Keralam in the colonial period concludes that the issues in the historiography of the far South primarily sprang up from the conflicting loyalties to brahmanism and anti-brahmanism. It is found out that the feelings of anti-brahmanism led to the counter historicisation of Tamilakam. At the same time the historiography of Kerala reflected loyalty to the brahmanism, for the political authority and social power relations of the region was largely subservient to brahmanical caste tradition. It is obvious that the basic premises in the historiography of India such as antiquity, continuity and civilisation were employed by the historians of Tamilakam and Keralam to write the history of their regions.
In examining the relationship between the interpretations of historians and the sources they used, no single scientific criterion is found for the construction of geographical and historical units. These are not absolute. This is illustrated through the geographical formulations and political definitions of South India. It is concluded that interpretations played a major role in the colonial historiography. The historians exercised autonomy though they disqualified the autonomy of the author in the pre-colonial forms of representation.

In tracing the roots of Tamil identity in the historiography of Tamilakam, it is interesting to note that the Tamil heroic poems and the different genres such as Ula, Parani, Nattupadalkal and others did not define who is a Tamil. It is argued here that the historicisation of Tamil identity is realised through the studies in the disciplines of anthropology, Dravidian languages, epigraphy, archaeology and so on that were initiated by the power regime of colonialism. It is also concluded that the Saiva sidhanta literature of the medieval period, the local narratives by the Tamil writers and above all the Dravidian movement of the 19th century were the determinants in the creation of cultural/regional/racial identity of Tamilakom.

In tracing the formation of cultural/regional/racial/identities in the colonial historiography of South India it is concluded that this has methodological errors. The problems of omission/partial representation of southern India in the historiography of India are repeated. The historians of southern India treated this as methodologically unproblematic. These notions of 'whole' and 'part' are illustrated
through the arguments put forward by the colonial historians of Tamilakam for excluding the westcoast, in the definition of Tamilakam. The trend is visible in the historiography of Keralam also.

The studies of the historiographical reflections reveal the absence of the notion of southern India as an entity. Similarly, the differences between the historiography of Keralam and Tamilakam reveal that historiographic non-unity is the characteristic of colonial historiography of South India.

In studying the role of traditional narratives, travelogues, missionary literature and anthropological writings it is concluded that the notion of Keralam as a unit was absent in the historiography of Keralam. The political atmosphere of Keralam motivated the historians to undertake the study of history of regional kingdoms.

In the critique of historical methodology in the colonial South it is found out that the native historians discarded the pre-colonial forms of representation of past as false. From the discussions on the methods and concepts of history by colonial historians, it is clear that they adhered to the theoretical norms of positivism. The hierarchical ranking of sources by historians is studied. It reveals that in spite of the general agreement on elements essential for the writing of the 'scientific history', even historians who followed the same method brought-forth contradictory findings on certain issues which were defined by them as 'historical questions.' From the examination of the attitude of historians to
Sangam literature, Sanskrit literary works, and Tamil epics it is concluded that the historians attempted to write history within a framework of their choice.

The historicisation of the nature of state reveals one of the dilemmas of historiography whether or not to fall into pan-Indian social framework of the *jati*, *varna*, *vamsa* and *āśrama*. This is revealed through the discussions of historians on Aryanisation in South India. Similarly, the characterisation of the Cola state as highly centralised and bureaucratised, at the same time combining the local institutions within this paradigm is one of the themes of reassessment. It is concluded that adhering to theoretical models and concepts of the West without adhering to original documents is one of the limitations of history.

In examining the nature of historiography it is seen that the sentimental attachment to the regions around Kaveri and Tamilakam emerging prominent. Similarly it is seen that historians focused their studies on specific kingdoms. What is striking here is that though the early historians of southern India criticised the inadequate representation of southern regions of India in the national history, they highlighted the nationhood significantly. But later, there was a change. Though several historical works were titled after South India, of course a few exceptions apart, many of the historians meant only their own linguistic regions.