

**SOCIAL HISTORY OF GAMES AND SPORTS IN MIZORAM:
FROM PRE-COLONIAL TO COLONIAL PERIOD**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF
PHILOSOPHY**

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**SOCIAL HISTORY OF GAMES AND SPORTS IN MIZORAM:
FROM PRE-COLONIAL TO COLONIAL PERIOD**

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled '*Social History of Games and Sports in Mizoram: From Pre-colonial to Colonial Period*' submitted by *Lalmalsawmi Thadou* for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The dissertation submitted by her has not formed the basis for the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis to any university. I also certify that the dissertation represents the objective study and independent work of the scholar.

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DECLARATION

I, Lalmalsawmi Thadou, hereby declare that the subject matter of the dissertation entitled '*Social History of Games and Sports in Mizoram: From Pre-Colonial to Colonial Period*' is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other Universities or Institutions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCM: Baptist Church of Mizoram

BMS: Baptist Missionary Society

LPM : Lakher Pioneer Mission

ATC: Aizawl Theological College

Glossary

Aijal: Aizawl

Jhum: A system of cultivation in the hills, in which a tract of forests or jungle is cleared by fire, cultivated for a year or two, and then abandoned for a new tract.

Kawi: Seeds of bean.

Lakher: A particular clan of the Lushai Hills inhabiting the southern part and having their own dialect, also known as Shendu, known as Mara today.

Mizo: Previously known as Lushai, it includes various numbers of tribes under the Kuki-Chin group of tribes.

Pathian: The creator of all living beings, the benevolent God who preserves and blesses life.

Puithiam: Priest

Themlem: A material used by girls to practice weaving.

Upa(s): A council of elders who assisted the chief.

Val Upa: A young adult man who was capable of leading all men in Zawlbuk.

Zawlbuk: Bachelor's dormitory

Thirdeng: Blacksmith

Thangchhuahpa: One who achieved Thangchhuah

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

The present dissertation titled “Social History of Games and Sports in Mizoram: From Pre-Colonial to Colonial Period” analyses the significance and the practices of games and sports in Mizo society in the changing historical space and time.

In the history of Mizoram, the nineteenth century was remarkable. First, the Mizos started to come into contact with two external powerful agents i.e. British colonizers and Christian missionaries. Second, detailed records of the Mizos socio-political life started to be recorded in a written form. Mizoram was declared part of the British-India by a proclamation in 1895 and was known as Lushai hills during the colonial period. Prior to India’s independence, a political awakening among the Mizos in the Lushai hills started taking shape that simultaneously resulted in the formation of the political parties. Tension arose between these parties regarding the future political administration of the hills.¹ In this situation, a proposal of the Mizo Union² i.e. the inclusion of Lushai hills within the province of Assam dominated hill politics. Finally, under the Government of Assam, the Lushai District Council was formed in 1952 that was later changed into Mizo District Council in 1954.

When India became independent from the British Empire in 1947, the colonial officers in the Lushai hills also left the country passing over the administration of the hills in the hands of the Government of Assam. Meanwhile, the Christian missionaries continued

¹ J.V Hluna, *Church and Political upheavals in Mizoram*, Mizo History Association, Aizawl, Mizoram, 1985, p. 64

² The first political party in Mizoram

their missions after the post-interdependence period and only left the hills after the outbreak of *Rambuai*³ in 1966. Though the missionaries probably were not officially collaborated with the colonial officials, they played very important roles in the colonization process in the Lushai hills, which was considerable in terms of cultural and religious domination of the people. ‘Although the task of missionaries was to evangelize the people, Christianity was unnecessarily turned into an ideology which was used to lay the ground for white domination.’⁴ Hence, an attempt is made in this dissertation to trace the tradition and the changing nature of the practices of games and sports in Mizo history from pre-colonial times till the Christian missionaries left the hills in the 1960s.

1.1 Social History

Ever since the institutionalization of historical discipline in the 19th century, unearthing the ‘reality’ of the past through the scientific method of research became the main attempt of historians. As a result, the interpretation of events found in archives that mainly deal with high politics, wars, diplomacy, etc has dominated history writings till today. In this form of writing the lives and achievements of ‘Great men’ or elite section of the population remain the central focus sidelining the perspectives and accomplishments made by common people. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century different new historical approaches emerged on the scene. These new trends of history writing aimed to include a larger section of the society and give importance to the marginalized group who were more or less neglected by early historians.

In the mid-twentieth century, social history as a specialized field of historical research emerged as a reaction to the political history-the history of great men and their ideas-that

³ On 1st March 1966, the Mizo National Front (MNF) party declared independence from the Indian Union that resulted in the political chaos in the hills. As a result of this war of independence the Mizo hills entered a ‘time of troubles’ or *Rambuai* for a period of two decades

⁴ Fidelis Nkomazana, ‘Missionary Colonial Mentality and the Expansion of Christianity in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1800 to 1900’ *Journal for the Study of Religion* 29,2 (2016) pp. 29 - 55

dominated all historical research and discipline in the west. The term ‘social history’ refers to a sub-discipline of the historical sciences on the one hand and to a general approach to history that focuses on society at large on the other hand. It deals with the structures of societies and social change, social movements, groups, and classes, conditions of work and ways of life, families, households, local communities, urbanization, mobility, gender, ethnic groups, etc. In an attempt to introduce a ‘new history’ – a more inclusive form of historical research, social history introduced an alternative view of history with ‘society’ as the main object.⁵

Games and sports are present in every society from early human history regardless of the type of society and the advancement of their civilization. However, historical research on games and sports is rarely to be found in the existing body of historical literature. In its cultural and historical context, the study of sport is an underdeveloped field in most countries around the globe. This leaves ample scope for historians to study the nature and structure of the society using games and sport as parameters and lenses to look at a micro-level of history and what it entails in the larger context. As in the words of Ramchandra Guha, ‘games and mass sport is a sphere of activity that expresses, in concentrated form, the values, prejudices, divisions and unifying symbols of society’.⁶

1.2 Understanding games and sports

Nigel B. Crawther defines games and sports as, “An activity that is done for one’s pleasure or entertainment; it may include some sort of skills and physical fitness. It means different things in different societies and it is an essential part of social history. On the other hand, a game involves only an individual’s skills and performance”.⁷

⁵ Christoph Conrad, ‘Social History’, *Research Gate*, 2015, pp 307-312

⁶ Ramchandra Guha, *A corner of Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport*, Penguin Random House India, 2014. p. 3

⁷ Nigel B. Crawther, *Sports In Ancient Times*, Norman Oklahoma, University of Oklahoma Press, 2007, p.21

Though games and sports had been existed and were practiced in every society, the purpose of practicing games and sports varied from region to region and from country to country. During the ancient times, sports were considered to be a men's activity and society did not permeate the levels of society equally. So, the participation of women in physical pursuits also was far fewer than men. Boys and girls during their younger ages took part in different physical pursuits on equal ground to some extent. But as people were getting older, their physical pursuits started to decline. This could become an important area of study which could highlight various dimensions and issues that prevailed among different sections of the society.

In the words of David Levinson and Karen Christensen:

“Throughout different times and places, sports was used to express people's beliefs and served many purposes: ritualistic and religious expression, military valor, nationalism, community building, character formation while in modern days sports became more professionalized and turnout to become a huge career opportunity and money-making became one of the prime agenda for professional athletes. But during the early times, the sport was viewed as a symbolic expression of core values, ability, and valor. It reflects how society sees achievement, individuality, fairness, cooperation, and teamwork all at the same time”.⁸

In an academic field, scholars often debate the question of the beginning of the sport and regarding this, Gary Chick gives a clear picture of how sports were viewed as he wrote:

“Sport can be seen as a play, a part of nature, or a basic release from stress. Some believed that it arose from instinctive drives or impulses,

⁸ David Levinson and Karen Christensen, 'Encyclopedia of World Sport: From Ancient Times To The Present', London, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp.16-17

or as a result of hunting rituals, or from tests of strength. While others have remarked on the close association between sport and religion during ancient times, few would agree that religion is the source of sport. There are schools of thought that view sport as a means of releasing aggression, while other schools maintain that it causes more aggression than it releases. Some theories suggest that sport is the ritual sacrifice of human energy that is evident in every culture in different ways. Although no single theory for the origin of sport has been widely accepted, it clearly shows that sport is a social phenomenon”.⁹

The kinds of games and sports that are found in different parts of the world have distinctive characteristics and are also connected to the cultures in which they are found as Gary Chick noted:

“An influential classification of different game types comes from John M. Roberts, Malcolm J. Arth and Robert R. Bush who categorized games based on how their outcome, that is, how winning or losing was primarily determined. Thus, they distinguished games of physical skill, games of strategy (not involving physical skill), and games of chance (involving neither physical skill nor strategy). Sports are typically regarded as games wherein the outcomes depend primarily on physical skill. John W.Loy and Jay J.Coakley defined sport as ‘an embodied, structured, goal-oriented, competitive, contest-based, ludic, physical activity’”.¹⁰

1.3 Games & Sports in History Writing

In earlier decades, few scholars worked on the history of games and sports and there were few publications that readers rarely found a book to recommend. Nowadays, scholars

⁹ Crawther,p.23

¹⁰Gary Chick, ‘Games and Sports’, *Docplayer*, 23 July,2015,p. 1-5

focusing on sports history are producing so much information which makes it difficult to limit their recommendations to a manageable number.¹¹ In his ‘Through The Prism Of Sports: Why Africanists Study Sports?’ Bae Vidacs pointed out why games and sports were not taken as a serious subject by academics as he said:

“In the beginning, sports were not considered a legitimate and serious subject of study by academics. Despite people’s interest in sports, they were not accepted and viewed as suspects by academics for several reasons. In the first place, the subject is thought to be trivial and frivolous, only a game that does not deserve any serious attention. Secondly, the fact that it is all around us in everyday life makes it difficult to understand its ‘researchability’. Thirdly, it is the mindset of the academics, that many view sports as an opiate, which diverts something from real problems”.¹²

However, from the 1960s, the perception of games and sports among scholars and academics began to change. In this regard, Wray Vampley wrote:

“In the 1960s, the topic became popular as a result of a general move towards ‘history from below’, which looked at the everyday lives of ordinary people. Almost everywhere, two schools emerged, each trained in physical education and having a background in history. The former focused more on the development of particular sports, whereas the latter studied how sports fit into society and placed sports issues in a wider economic, social and cultural context”.¹³

During the 1960s and 1970s, the “New Social History” brought up a variety of new fields such as African American, women, urban and labor history. A decade or so later, the

¹¹ Background Books: Sports And Society Source: *The Wilson Quarterly* , Vol. 19, No. 1, 1995, p.2 <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40258947> Accessed: 05-02-2020 08:06 UTC

¹² Bae Vidacs, ‘Through The Prism Of Sports: Why Africanists Study Sports?’ *Africa Spectrum*, Vol.41, No.3, 2006, p.336

¹³ Wray Vampley, ‘The History of Sport in the International Scenery: An Overview’, *Tempo*, Vol.19, No.34, 2013, pp.6-7

“cultural turn” enveloped those approaches and pushed them further away from traditional topics and models of studying history.¹⁴ Inspired by works such as *Culture As History* by Warren Susman and *Eight Hours For What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City: 1970- 1920* by Roy Rosen, the view of sports history begin to change. The works of British historians have also produced an array of important studies outlining the cultural, social and economic history of different sports. Most importantly, these historians have shown that sport was an active rather than a passive agent in social and cultural life. Rather than just reflecting the wider structures and ideas of society, it shaped how people thought of the world.¹⁵ Sports historians such as Michael P. Lombardo have raised important questions about the role of sport in human nature: How and why did sport begin? Why are sports primarily a male phenomenon? Why do champion male athletes in some sports often obtain higher status and more reproductive opportunities than do champions from other sports and endeavors? Why has sport attained such cultural importance in modern cultures?¹⁶

The British cultural studies during the 1980s brought a significant and continuing literature on the history of sports, most of which is theoretically informed and empirically robust, with a large number of national historiographies, articles, books and volumes on various themes such as national identity, gender, social class and so on.¹⁷ The early studies of sports, however, primarily focused on the development of modern sports and sports ethics in England and later turned their attention to the diffusion of sports to other continents usually because of colonial contacts.¹⁸ Vidacs continued,

¹⁴ Andrew Mc. Gregor, ‘ A Brief History of Sports History’, *Journal of Sports History*, Vol.44,No.2,2014,p.239

¹⁵ Martin Johnes, ‘British Sports History: The Present and The Future’, *Journal Of Sport History*, Vol.35, No.1,2008,p.65

¹⁶Michael P. Lombardo, ‘On The Evolution Of Sport’, *Evolutionary Psychology*,2012,p.2

¹⁷ Maarten Van Bottenburg, ‘Beyond Diffusion: Sport and Its Remaking in Cross-Cultural Contexts’, *Journal of Sport History*, Vol.10, 1983,p.35

¹⁸ Vidacs, ‘Through The Prism Of Sports’,p.332

“The new focus in British sports studies has a great improvement over earlier works on sports, which had usually stopped at celebrating human achievement through sports. There has been a sharp increase in the number of work on sports since the mid-1990s, which demonstrated that sports cannot be divorced from larger social practices”.¹⁹

Thus, sports historians have made a significant contribution to the study of identities and understanding of the everyday life of past communities by exploring what people did for fun, what mattered to them, and how they behaved.²⁰

1.4 Why it is Important to Study Games and Sports

Sport plays an important role in an individual’s life and society and served as a prominent social institution in almost every society. The space or the arena of sport in a lot of ways is a reflection of a society and where we see the manifestation of a different form of social life, be it the bright side or the dark side of society. It also provides how one feels confident in society, giving them structure and purpose in individual life. For instance, it was through sport that Mohammed Ali made his extraordinary career and accomplishments, his struggle and journey to become the greatest boxer of all time and represent the Black community and his identity as Islam through sport. It is through sport that we could study the position of women in society because sports study is more or less connected to the study of history from below that focused on the lower section and everyday lives of the people where women were also included in it. The number of representation or participation of women in sports also directly reflected the position of women in society.

In her ‘State of the Field: Sports History and the Cultural Turn’, Amy Bass noted the importance of the study of sports, she wrote:

¹⁹ Vidacs, pp.332-333

²⁰ Johnes, ‘British Sports History’, p.65

“It is important to understand how the inclusion of sport in the study of history has an impact on the field, by focusing on examples from the field that illustrate this impact, and it is crucial to consider how developments in historical methodology have affected worked on sports rather than trying to examine all works of and approaches to ‘sports history’ in the future. Sports offer a way to discover a society’s past, deeply informed, by the current situation and with an eye to the future. Aside from sports being cultural practice and a tool for social organization, sports scholarship is intertwined in a range of critical fields on a domestic and international scale. Even the most basic questions can be historically explained through the window of sports: Why is the national anthem played before major sporting events? Why do people so passionately believe in the concept of a level playing field with so much evidence to the contrary? Why do millions take part in the production, consumption and remembering of games, teams and athletes? The possibilities are vast, and much is demanded of the sports historian”.²¹

She continued,

“Sport is a commercial industry that deals with concepts of labor and capitalism, often within the landscape of urban studies, a cultural realm that takes in the politics of media and spectacle, constructing and contesting identities such as gender, race, sexuality, class, religion, ethnicity and nationality (and their multiple combinations) a scientific domain with focal points on the psyche of both athlete and spectator, as well as the physical achievements of humans on any given playing field, and an arena for foreign policy and cultural diplomacy”.²²

²¹ Amy Bass, ‘State of the Field: Sports History and the Cultural Turn’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol.101, No. 1,2014,p.150

²² Bass, ‘State of the Field’, p.150

Moreover, sport plays an important role in the development process of a country's economy. For this, different NGOs and development organizations have used sport to restore and stimulate development. It is also an effective tool to bridge the gap of inequality and bring more inclusive development and empowerment for the weaker section of society. Besides, more developed countries give more importance to sports because it is simultaneously entertainment and a career. Everybody cannot follow the path of academics, and sports cannot be followed by everyone as well, but it offers a viable career option for those who are not interested in academics. Although the study of games and sports is neglected by scholars from an academic perspective it can be a useful tool where we can learn the various aspects of society. Like the nature of the social setup, value system, pattern and behavior of people, the sense of community it brings and as a useful tool for transcending the social stratification, especially in today's world. So, it is important to give priority to games and sports and should be an area of concern and study because it is also part of our cultural heritage, just as we give importance to our cultural dances, norms and beliefs, etc. It is a must to give importance to games and sports which reflect many of our cultural practices.

1.5 Games & Sports in Mizoram

During the traditional period, the Mizos rarely practiced sports for their own sake but rather for physical pursuits which were linked with ritual, warfare, entertainment or other external features. Most sports we know today are from ancient times and were extremely old and they have spread around the world as a result of colonialism, commerce, and educational exchange. With the intervention of colonialism, the impact was also visible in the realms of games and sports in Mizoram. Sport has always been a part of the Mizo cultural practices and has existed in society for a very long period. In the context of the pre-colonial Mizo society, the practice of games and sports was more or less connected with warfare and economy and there were no games and sports as we have today but there

were times when a person has to show their strength and might. There are certain types of games that existed in the traditional Mizo society which were meant for children, men and women. Information about the practice of sports in Mizoram was limited while there were several games because they are practiced for amusement or entertainment and could be considered recreational activities. Besides these, games which could be played by both male and female was very few. It can be said that games and sports were more or less practiced by males. However, with the advent of colonialism and the arrival of the missionaries things began to change. Society began to experience many types of new games and sports which were mainly introduced in schools as part of their co-curricular activities. The introduction of new games and sports include women almost in every type of games and sports regardless of gender and they had more freedom than before and were able to achieve their desire and ability and enjoy their life. This means that the arrival of the missionaries- their introduction of education and the conversion of the Mizos into Christianity had a great impact on society.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Written accounts of the Mizos past had been documented only from the British intervention in the late nineteenth century. These records were mostly concerned with the changes and practices introduced by the colonial officials and Christian missionaries. The colonial officers also initiated the documentation of Mizos oral tradition. In these documents, the history of games and sports is barely highlighted. Though the emerging interest in social history led to the recovery of alternative sources, the study of games and sports remains marginal in recent works on the history of Mizoram. Keeping this in mind, it is very essential to have a proper study of the history of games and sports in Mizoram.

The pre-colonial Mizos also had various games and sports but did their understanding of games and sports differ from the colonial period? Did the colonial government introduce new types of games and sports? Were there any particular games more popular than

others? Were games and sports part of social development? In the present Mizo society, sports people are highly regarded and admired, did the same thing happen in the pre-colonial Mizo society? Most histories of sports focus on men, but this research also attempts to place women as one part of the discussion- these are the issues that are addressed in the dissertation. In the light of the above discussion, an attempt is made to study the types of games and sports that existed in the early days and their contribution to the pre-colonial Mizo society as well as development in the colonial Mizo society.

1.7 Review of Literature

To study the history of games and sports in Mizoram, a number of secondary texts are reviewed to attend the study. Several accounts written by the colonial ethnographers and missionaries were reviewed which highlighted the history of games and sports in Mizoram, the introduction of new types of games and sports, and the changes it brought within. Besides, secondary texts were written by scholars (locals and outsiders) also helped in understanding the practice of games and sports in Mizoram.

For the study of history writing of games and sports in world history, *Through the prism of sports: Why should Africanists study sports?* written by Bae Vidacs provides a brief overview of social scientific writing about sports and argues that the field has been understudied on the continent (Africa). It continues by delineating some of the reasons why this is so, ranging from the weaknesses of sports studies to perceptions of academics of what is a fitting subject for scientific inquiry, to seeing sport as irrelevant for solving the problems of underdevelopment. *The history of sports in international scenery: An overview* written by Wray Vamplew analyzes how the sport is a memory of a nation and how it had developed the academic societies, how it published journals and how it had strong amateur research. It also gives suggestions for the research agenda and directions in which the subject may progress. Evolutionary biologist, Michael P. Lombardo also highlights the practice of games and sports in different societies for a very long period and

that it was part of man's survival in primitive societies in his book. *On The Evolution of Sport*. The book offers a rare and valuable perspective on the history writing of games and sports in an academic field.

As games and sports played an important role in shaping the culture and society, books that offer valuable information about how games and sports are part of cultural tradition and how it is connected with society are also concerned. *Sports, Culture and Society* written by Grant Jarvie is a book written for those researchers, students and teachers, who are thinking about the sport as a social phenomenon and the extent to which sport contributes to the very social fabric of communities. It examines critically many of the assumptions relating to sport and questions the extent to which the substantive basis for such claims made by sport exists. The objective of the book is to produce a body of original substantive research from different sports, societies and communities. *British Sports History: The Present and the Future* written by Martin Johnes explores how British historians have produced an array of important studies outlining the cultural, social, and economic history of different sports. It provides how these historians have shown that sport was an active rather than passive agent in social and cultural life. *Beyond Diffusion: Sport and Its Remaking in Cross-Cultural Contexts* written by Maarten Van Bottenburg focuses on the ideal history of European sports in which the history of sport in different European nations is described with comparative analyses. This journal article compares European historical case studies around such themes as international politics, nationalism, and militarism, or tries to integrate an analysis of European sports histories into a study of the wider cultural history and diffusion of sports.

Games and sports also played a huge factor in shaping the lives of an individual in society and two autobiographies have been reviewed to understand what sports contribute to a sportsman to shape their identity in the society as a sportsman. *The Greatest* written by one of the greatest boxers of all time, Muhammad Ali and *Pele: The Autobiography*

written by the famous soccer of all time Pele illustrates their struggles and journey to become one of the greatest sportsmen of all time and how they shaped their identity through sports within the society. Nigel B. Crawther, *Sports In Ancient Times* also offers a fascinating look at the role of sport as practiced in several societies and civilizations of the world. He also explores how athletics figured into cultural arenas that extended beyond rituals, status and politics.

To study the social history of games and sports in Mizoram it is important to look at the colonial accounts who experienced the period and witnessed the events that happened during the period under study. The earliest colonial accounts such as *The Lushei Kuki Clans* can be used as a valuable source for studying games and sports in Mizoram. It is written by Lt, Colonel J. Shakespear in 1912 and is one of the oldest colonial accounts which focused on the lives of the Lushei. In this account, J.Shakespear mentioned the traditional games of the different Lushei clans. Although the account is not solely for games and sports it gives us knowledge about the popular games that were practiced before the coming of the British. Amongst the colonial accounts, *The Lakhers* written by N.E Parry mainly confines with the customs and daily life of the Mara tribe (Lakhers) of south Lushai Hills in which he mentions the traditional games practiced by them.

A.G McCall, the superintendent of the Lushai Hills from 1931 to 1943 also provides detailed information on the history of the Lusei in his book, *The Lushai Chrysalis* which mainly deals with the establishment of colonial authority in Mizoram as well as various aspects of the culture, polity and socio-economic lives. In this account, he mentioned various indigenous games of the Mizo that were still practiced even after the establishment of the colonial government in Mizoram. *A Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* written by N.E Parry is also very informative for studying the culture and tradition of the Mizos. It provides detailed information about the rituals, traditions, ceremonies and many practices of the Mizo where games and sports are also highlighted.

From a missionary perspective, Pi Teii (Gween Rees Roberts) gives a detailed description of the system of female education in her autobiographical memoirs, *Memories of Mizoram: Recollections & Reflections* wherein games and sports were introduced as part of the school curriculum in the northern part of Lushai hills. *Mizo Miracle* by E. Chapman and M. Clark edited by Marjorie Skyes, also gives a lucid picture of the Christian missionizing project in the south Lushai hills. This book gives us a valuable source for tracing the educational system in which new types of games and sports were introduced in the southern part of the Lushai hills.

To trace the history of the Mizo, Rev. J.M Lloyd's autobiographical memory, *On Every High Hill* provides us a little information about the colonial period. In this book, he mentioned the arrival of the missionaries and how the colonizers started to influence the Mizo by opening schools and introducing new types of games and sports.

As the present dissertation studies the history of games and sports in Mizoram, secondary texts such as *Mizoram Sports Chanchin* and *Mizo Infiamna* offer us insight into the history of games and sports in Mizoram. *Mizoram Sports Chanchin* written by Zoliana Royte highlights the history of modern games and sports along with the works of the Government of Mizoram for its development. However this book has not yet been examined from a historical point of view, but it provides a useful insight into the study of games and sports in Mizoram. The only published book by the Government of Mizoram that deals with games and sports are *Mizo Infiamna* published by Tribal Research Institute, Art & Culture Department, Mizoram. It is a detailed account of different traditional games and sports in Mizoram. It elaborates how certain games and sports were practiced in different ways in different parts of Mizoram.

Further, the Mizo authors have considerably enriched our knowledge of the various aspects of Mizo customs and traditions. Several texts are used as valuable sources on the Mizo past written by Mizo authors. In his *Essays on The History of The Mizos* Sangkima deals with different aspects of the history and culture of the Mizo and the development and expression of the inner lifestyles of the Mizo people over time. *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung* written by James Dokhuma and *A Brief History and Culture Of Mizo* by B. Lalthangliana give us information about the practice of Mizo games and sports in the pre-colonial period.

Apart from the above-mentioned books, a few books provided sources and information for the study of games and sports in Mizoram. However, their account of games and sports do not necessarily link with the culture and society mainly due to a lack of theoretical approaches which resulted in the absence of an in-depth study on games and sports.

1.8 Area of Study

The dissertation focuses on the history of games and sports from pre-colonial to the colonial period in Mizoram.

1.9 Objectives

1. To examine the types of games and sports in traditional Mizo society.
2. To analyze the introduction of new games and sports in colonial times.
3. To examine the impact of new games and sports in Mizo society.

1.10 Methodology

From the approach of social history, the present dissertation rereads oral traditions, personal narratives or written memoirs (particularly of old students and teachers of (mission schools), and various official documents and other literary works produced by the colonizers and the Christian missionaries. To supplement all these sources, oral history interviews are conducted with elder citizens having experiences and knowledge about the period under study. All the information and data obtained from the above sources are corroborated and assembled with secondary texts including books, photographs and articles.

1.11 Chapterization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the history writing of games and sports. The aims of the study, approaches, sources, methodologies, and review of literature that threw some light on the history of games and sports in Mizoram are also included in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2: MIZO GAMES AND SPORTS IN EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

This chapter analyses the practices of games and sports and their significance in the pre-colonial times.

CHAPTER 3: COLONIALISM AND GAMES AND SPORTS

This chapter links colonialism and games and sports. It focuses on the introduction of new games and sports by the missionaries.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 2

GAMES AND SPORTS IN EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

2. Introduction

In Mizoram, documentation of the historical past was initiated by the colonial officers in the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, these works are largely confined to semantic studies of language, folktales, and geographical and political conditions that rarely focused on Mizo history in a larger context,²³ in which accounts of the traditional practices of games and sports remained marginal. Despite this, recent works on Mizo oral traditions reveal that the Mizos were well aware of games and sports, which had always been a part and parcel of their culture and traditions. Moreover, the study on the traditional games and sports seems to reflect the varied types of social space occupied by different social groups in the society. Therefore an attempt is made in this chapter to study the traditional practices of games and sports to have a better understanding of the nature, structure, and customs of the pre-colonial Mizo society.

2.1 Social Institutions

In the traditional Mizo society, village life was very simple. They lived a nomadic life which required the selection of new sites for settlements at regular intervals.²⁴ The Mizo society, like most tribal societies, was segmentary.²⁵ Each village was ruled over by its chief. All matters of the internal village were decided by the chief assisted by his council of elders or *Upas*. Although the role of the chief and *Upas* was very important for the proper function of the village and while all power was theoretically in the hands of the

²³ Hmingthanzuali, *Women in Mizo History: Changing Roles, Status and Participation from Eighteen to Twentieth Century*, Unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Hyderabad, 2010,p.8

²⁴ Sangkima, *Essays On The History of the Mizos*, Guwahati, Spectrum Publications,2004,p.60

²⁵ This type of society has equivalent parts held together by shared values.A segmentary society is a type of tribal society. A close family is usually the smallest and closest segment and will generally stand together.

chief, as long as moulding the social life of the people is concerned two social institutions especially family and *Zawlbuk* played a tremendous role in moulding the social life of the people.²⁶

Every Lushai village possessed a *Zawlbuk* (bachelor's dormitory). It was built in the center of the village, near the chief's house.²⁷ This was done with a purpose because during those times different tribes would often suddenly raid each other. Not only this, to protect the village from the intrusions of wild animals it was extremely useful for all young men in the dormitory in case of emergency. Apart from this, *Zawlbuk* was an important learning centre during those times, it became a place where young boys learned their social skills, and acquired knowledge and was a place where all the information was handed through generations by telling folktales, stories and legends. It was a place where younger boys learned the discipline of being responsible in society from an early age, such as collecting woods for the bonfire at night. *Zawlbuk* also evolved as a space for practicing physical activities like *Inbuan*²⁸ and *Lungden*²⁹. An outsider who visited their village and stay in *Zawlbuk* for the night would compete with the local boys in these traditional games and sports. If a visitor could win in a competition like *Inbuan* he would earn more respect from the locals and would be more welcomed to stay in the dormitory. *Inbuan* was compulsory for young men and boys to wrestle among themselves and it was done to find out who was the strongest.³⁰ The leader in this dormitory was called *Val Upa*.³¹

The family was another important social institution and played an important role in moulding the social life of the Mizo. Like most other societies, Mizo society was a

²⁶ Sangkima, *Essays On The History's of the Mizos*, p.61

²⁷ NE Parry, *A Monograph On Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, Aizawl, Tribal Research Institute (Reprint), 2009, p.8

²⁸ Wrestling

²⁹ Shotput

³⁰ Parry, *A Monograph On Lushai Customs and Ceremonies*, p.9

³¹ Young adult man who was capable of leading all the young men in *Zawlbuk*

patriarchal society. Being a patriarchal society, the husband was the head of the family who exercised autocratic dominance over his wife and other members of the family and was responsible for maintaining peace within the household.³² In traditional Mizo society, disputes which were considered domestic in nature such as disputes over land, marriage and divorce, property, etc. were usually solved within the family. The family structure was also designed in such a manner that emphasis on moral values and standards of the children towards their elders was inculcated from a very young age, therefore children were usually well-mannered towards elders and there was a tremendous amount of respect shown towards elders in early Mizo society. It was also a place where boys and girls learned their responsibilities at home and in society. For instance, boys rendered compulsory services to the society by supplying firewood to the *Zawlbuk* while girls were confined to household affairs.³³ Besides this, the Mizo girl was expected to know how to weave, so from a very early age, girls were provided with a material called *Themlem* where they used to practice weaving at home and every girl was expected to have this material.³⁴

2.2 Games for children

Most of the games enjoyed in the traditional Mizo society were mostly meant for children. Since there was no daycare centre or school during this period, young girls helped their families with household activities within their reach. Also, apart from gathering firewood for the hearth of *Zawlbuk* (a Bachelor's dormitory), young boys were not assigned to any regular activities. After dinner, children gathered to play outside with various games, usually accompanied or inspired by folk songs or lullabies. This form of the gathering was called *pawnto*. Many of the so-called traditional games were from the plays performed in *Pawnto*.

³² Sangkima, p.58

³³ Sangkima, p.91

³⁴ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*, Aizawl, J.D Press, 1992, p.211

Playing with the seeds of beans was also very popular among the children. Girls played *Inkawibah* and boys played *Inkawihnawk* but the method of playing was different for girls. In the case of boys, it was played by standing, holding the bean in one of their hands and throwing it. It could be played by only two people and as a team as well. It was one of the games which could be played during the daytime. But, this type of game was mainly played by boys. The seeds of the creeper bean were modified in such a way that it was made heavier and difficult for the opponent to knock the 'kawi'³⁵ away. There were many sub-rules under this game.³⁶



Fig: 1. Inkawihnawk

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

Another game played by both boys and girls was *Zawnga Leilawn Dim Dim*. It was mostly played during the nighttime. The game was played by several children, standing facing each other their right hand was placed on their left palm and their left hand was placed on the right palm of the person who was standing in front of them. They chose one person

³⁵Seeds of beans.

³⁶ Dokhuma, *Hmanlai Mizo Kalphung*, p. 210

who played the role of *Zawng* and started to walk on their hands. When the person walked over one step, the two persons joining their hands ran over the end and the process went on until they were tired and the *Zawng* fell off from their hands. The persons who participated in this game used to sing a song called ‘*Zawnga leilawn dim dim*’. The song goes like this:

*“ Zawnga leilawn dim dim
Chhim zawng leilawn, zawngchal leilawn,
Zawnga leilawn dim dim ”.*³⁷



Fig: 2. Zawnga leilawn dim dim

Source: Art & Culture

³⁷ Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Infiamna*, Aizawl, Directorate of Art & Culture, 1984, p.101

Sakuh Uilut was also another game practiced by both boys and girls and mainly in the nighttime. The game starts by forming a straight line, holding the waist of the person in front of them with their legs wide apart. The last person standing started to crawl inside their legs and when he reached the front, the next person started to do the same process and it was repeated until everyone in the line crawls under their legs. And when everyone completed, the first person had to crawl once again to do the same process and they used to sing a song:-

“Sakuh uilut uilut e,

*A hnuaiah hnahkhar inkhawr inkhawr e”.*³⁸



Fig:3. Sakuh Uilut

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

³⁸ Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Infiamna*, p.104

One of the original Mizo games was *Inbuhvawr*. It was particularly practiced among the girls, young boys were also known to play such games. *Inbuk* was also another common game among the children. *Inbuk* means to see-saw or to play at a see-saw. For this game, a log, one as large as a male adult's thigh around three to four feet high was used by burying one end in the ground. They gripped it tightly by the edge of the log and around three inches of the centre was spared and they place a wooden plank. Two people sat on both sides of the edge and they started to see-saw (*Inbuk*). It was one of the most common games in traditional Mizo society and the children enjoyed it.³⁹

Ui Sa Lehlin was also a game mostly played by girls but young boys sometimes played it too. It literally means to turn a somersault on a horizontal bar etc.⁴⁰ It is a very good game for exercising the whole body and was considered to be one type of Mizo gymnastics. Children around 10 to 14 years of age mostly tended to practice this game. They used to hang themselves on to a rail by grasping the rail with both their hands and they started to swing their legs back and forth. After this, they put their legs between their arms followed by their body and started to swing again and they did the process in reverse and jumped down.⁴¹ Besides these, hide and seek was also a common game for both boys and girls.

2.3 Games for boys and young adults

Sakhi Bawpbai was a very common game for boys. It is assumed that the game was named *Sakhi Bawpbai* because *Sakhi* (deer) was considered one of the fittest animals. Till today the game is used to find out the fitness of a person. The game was practiced by bending down on the ground. They pushed the ground with both hands lifting one of their legs straight at the back. So, with their hands and one leg on the ground, they started to run. They hopped with their hands and with the other hand they punched their chest. This

³⁹ B. Lalthangliana, *A brief History and Culture Of Mizo*, Aizawl, Financial Assistance of the Mizoram Publication Board, 2014, p.91

⁴⁰ James Herbert Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, Kolkata, The Asiatic Society, 1940, p.211

⁴¹ Tribal Research Institute, p.117

game was commonly practiced among younger boys to compete with one another in their physical strength. In the beginning, the game was practiced in Zawlbuk but later on, they started to practice on the village ground or field.⁴² *Arpa Thai* was also mostly played by young boys and sometimes by young adults. It was a game of two and was played on the floor. Players crossed their arms under their calf and hold their shins with alternate sides. They then crawled on the ground and tried to snap their opponent's grip. Players were allowed to use only their legs, but they were not eliminated, even if they fell to the ground unless they lose their grip. This is a fun-to-watch and entertaining game, which is still popularly played today.⁴³

Kahkhet and *Kahpup* were very popular among the boys. Both were made up of bamboo and the bullet used for both was also different. For *Kahkhet*, small stones and seeds of cotton were used for the bullet and for *Kahpup* nuts were used.⁴⁴ *Arpa Kal* was also one of the most famous games for the boys however not everyone could play this game. It is a game played by using hands for walking instead of legs. One had to push the ground with their hands and their body was lifted up and straightly walked with it. Since the game required loads of fitness, many people were not physically qualified to play this game.⁴⁵

Although it was unlikely a sports activity, *Selem Chaih* was considered to be one of the games played among the Mizo young boys. It was mainly popular among younger boys who were not old enough to play in other outdoor activities. *Selem*, a portrayal of 'Gayal', was made out of clean-cut tree roots, which were then tied by a rope to be dragged around. The game was a portrayal of an event where a gayal was put up for entertainment and staged hunting, before actually killing it.⁴⁶

⁴²Dokhuma, p. 210

⁴³ Tribal Research Institute, p.39

⁴⁴ Tribal Research Institute, p.15

⁴⁵ Dokhuma, p.210

⁴⁶ Tribal Research Institute, p.151

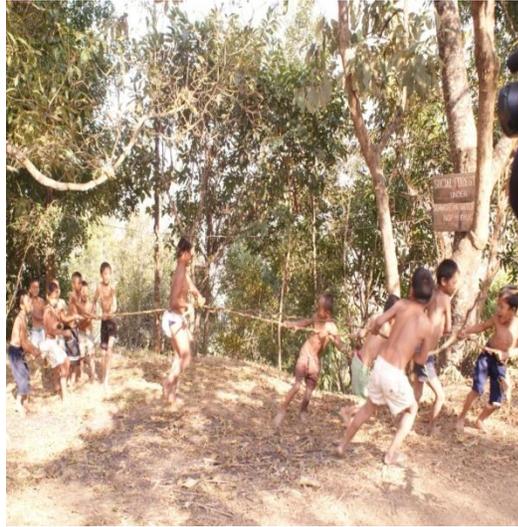


Fig:4. Selem Chaih

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

Apart from recreation, boys and male adults used to compete with *Kalchhet* and a race with *Kalchhet* was the most common game. It was played by using hard bamboo. An area was reserved to place the foot and filled with another small bamboo that could weigh a person's body. Two bamboos were used for both legs and they stood on it and started walking on the bamboo stick. It could be played with any number of players. The material used in this game is called *kalchhet* which was the name of the game itself. It was a popular game and also common in other Asian countries.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Lalthangliana, *A brief History and Culture Of Mizo*, p.91



Fig:5. Kalchhet

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

A game played by our forefathers and considered one of the original games of the Mizos was *In Sesik*. It was a very entertaining game to watch as it showed the might of the player. The game originated from the behavior of one of the domestic animals i.e., a gayal. This game tended to be one of the oldest Mizo traditional games. Since our forefathers admired and appreciated strong men, most of the games they came across were also to find out the physical prowess of a man. The person who performed the game would bow down their head, with their hands pressing the ground and crawling. This was called *Sevah*. They started to knock off one another from the playing area. It was mostly played by young boys, male adults hardly played this game unless on certain occasions.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Tribal Research Institute,p.41



Fig:6. In Sesik

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

In Arpa Sual was also a common game played by boys and male adults. It was a game that required balance and flexibility to a certain extent. Participants of this game would firmly seize their ankle and their other hands holding the arms that held their ankle. Then, they stood and bounced with one leg on the ground. Once the time started, their main aim was to push their opponent with their body, and using a knee was considered foul play. A participant was declared a loser if he would let go of his hand, f to the ground or was pushed away from the playing area.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Tribal Research Institute, p.36



Fig:7. In Arpa Sual

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

A game specifically meant for the boys was *Lirhbiang* which solely originated within the Mizo community. A creeper plant with curled up hook-shaped thorns or a cane was originally used, but sometimes later, a circular steel wheel was used. Also, bamboos were used by splitting the outer layer with a width of about an inch and its end tied together. The hoop, *Lirhbiang*, was then rolled along the ground and driven with a stick about three feet long by striking with the centre of the stick to ensure its balance and speed. The game was mainly for entertainment by simply driving them forward while keeping them upright.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Tribal Research Institute, p.172



Fig:8. Lirhbiang

Source: Dept of art & Culture

When the young boys grew older, the types of games which they played also began to change. As they reached the adolescent stage most of the competition for a young male was to see who had the strongest or the best physical attribute. In traditional societies like Mizo, where inter-tribal conflict often occurred, raiding and attacking each other village was part of their lives. Not only this, the early Mizos were constantly facing a threat from wild animals, so being brave and strong had a lot of currency in early Mizo society. In this manner, the types of games and sports during this period were to highlight and accentuate the physical attributes and athleticism of the young male adults. For instance, *Inchai* which was common among the boys and young adults was one of the oldest and most spectacular games which were also very entertaining to watch. It was a game of two players where they tried to take each other to the ground and pinned their opponent with their backs flat on the ground, trying to stay on top of each other.⁵¹ *Chawilung* was also popular among young adults. ‘*Chawi*’ means lifting, and ‘*Lung*’ stands for ‘stone/bolder’, which translates to the purpose of the game, which was a competition in lifting heavy bolder. It was a game

⁵¹ Lalthangliana, p.91

that showed the strength of the players. It can be regarded as the traditional Mizo weight lifting. Like other Mizo games, it was mainly held in the courtyard of *Zawlbuk*.⁵²



Fig:9. Chawilung

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

Invawkpuiyawr was also very common among young adults. Two players stood face to face with each other, they stepped each of their left legs forward and they both held each other's bicep with their hands and tried to push their opponent away from the ground. The first one to lose their footing tended to lose the match. It was a game that focused more on physical strength rather than the skill of the player.⁵³ Another game that required a lot of

⁵² Sangkima, p.75

⁵³ Tribal Research Institute, p.15

energy and to show up the physical strength of a person was *Inpeh Kan*. The game required two persons, the first person wrapped around a cloth on his waist and lying on the ground. The other person would pick up the one who lay on the ground by biting the cloth from his waist without relying on anything. A person who was able to lift up the same size as he was considered to be very strong. This game was also mostly practiced in the *Zawlbuk*.⁵⁴

Sanghar Ngul Lawn was also another game that early Mizo boys used to compete with each other. *Sanghar* literally means wild cat and ‘Sanghar Ngul’ according to Pu Buanga (J.H Lorrain) is a long bamboo mast set up in a village street from the dropping extremity of which the dried stretch-out skin of a wild cat is suspended.⁵⁵ In early Mizo society whenever a person caught a wild cat in a trap, the person would collect either rice or egg in every house in the village. And while collecting rice or egg they would carry the wild cat along with them with the help of the children. After collecting either rice or egg, the children again collected the longest bamboo they could find and erected it by burying one end in the ground and they hang up the head of the wild cat at the tip of the bamboo. And they started to compete with one another by climbing the bamboo, trying to reach the highest.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Tribal Research Institute, p.110

⁵⁵ Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*, p.198

⁵⁶ Tribal Research Institute, p.117



Fig:10. Sanghar Ngul Lawn

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

One of the most famous and entertaining sports throughout Mizoram was *Inbuan* and it was popular particularly from 1871 to 1940 when youths from different villages participated in this sport every night. Although the sport was under-shadowed by its former glory, it was still considered one of the most prestigious sports. Like other Mizo traditional sports, the origin of this sport is not exactly known. The players, after tying a cloth around their waist, tucked their left hand around their opponents under the armpit and held the cloth tightly and their right hand held the cloth on the front side of their opponent. After they were in position, they both shouted “*aw*” three times and the match started. The game required a particular skill and players who seemed to be physically weak could also become very good players which added to the value of the sport. The players tried to cross each others’ legs using their own to keep them off balance which resulted in a lot of pushing, adding intensity to the game. *Inbuan* was mostly held in *Zawlbuk* but also

in other open areas. The game was also played with a traveler from another village, and also by early teens. After *Zawlbuk* ceased to exist, the game lived on and was commonly held in an event like *thlanlaih* ‘grave digging’.



Fig:11. Inbuan

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

Inchai was also a Mizo game that was often considered for children and early teens but also played by adults. The origin of the game was not known and was declared one of the oldest games. It was a game of two players where they tried to knock down each other to the ground and pinned their opponent with their backs flat on the ground, trying to stay on top of each other. It could also be played in a group and it was called *inchairawn* where it

was not possible to decide the winner. Despite this, the game was very entertaining and it continued till the colonial period.⁵⁷

Lungden was another game that was used to find out the physical prowess of a person. The history of this game was not known, as to whether the game was played only after the influence of outsiders or not. It resembled the modern game of shot put and the way it was played was also more or less similar. A stone of around 8kgs was used and shot from the ground while standing. The different types are called *awmhmun den*, *awt* and *tlan* respectively. The person who was able to throw the farthest was considered the winner, or the strongest.⁵⁸



Fig:12. Lungden

Source: Dept of Art&Culture

Another game that depended entirely on physical strength was *Insuknawr* or *Insukhawlh*. It was a game played between two players. *Suk* (a wooden club) was the instrument used

⁵⁷ Lalthangliana, p.91

⁵⁸ Tribal Research Institute, p.32

in this game which was a wooden club where each player held the club under their arm on the right side and held the club around their chest with their left hand. A force was then applied from their whole body and they tried to push their opponent backward.⁵⁹



Fig:13. Insuknawr or Insukhawlh

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

A game that could be played in a pair or a group but which required a lot of strength was *Insaihrui pawh*. The players tied a rope around their necks and allowed the rope to go under their bodies between their legs as they faced away from each other and crawled to the ground. They then tried to pull each other towards themselves to a certain distance.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lalthangliana, p.91

⁶⁰ Tribal Research Institute, p.19



Fig:14. Insaihrui pawh

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

The game that is the same as tug of war was *Inhrui pawh*. This game also required a lot of energy and was played by the Mizos even before knowing that it is played in other parts of the world.⁶¹



Fig:15. Inhrui pawh

Source: Dept of Art & Culture

⁶¹ Lalthangliana, p,91

Another sport that involved fighting and which was enjoyed by young adults was *Mizawn Inchuh*. It is not known when the Mizos started to practice this but it is assumed that it was popular from 1890 to 1940.⁶² It was a group fighting that occurred from village to village, over the carriage of a sick person or dead person. When such occasions occurred both the opposing groups met at the boundary line and they began to fight until the other group was defeated.⁶³

Apart from the above-mentioned games and sports, colonial accounts such as *The Lakhers* written by N.E Parry in 1931 mainly concerned with the customs and daily life of the Lakhers, which included their games. Games such as swings *Zizapuapa* were popular with boys and girls. Boys went out shooting small birds with the pellet bow, stalking flies with their blow-pipes, or potting unsuspecting strangers or people they disliked with their pop-guns.⁶⁴ *Bachhawpa* was a children's game that required five to fifteen players. The game was said to be an intimation of war. *Maria-a-cha* or elephant hunting was another game played only by boys. *Seuleucha* was a game played with the seeds of the large creeper bean, both by children and adults. There was no limit to the number of players. The process of the game was quite long and included different steps, the full process was called *Dokha*.⁶⁵ *Longbeu-a-cha* was a game played by men only. The name of this game means 'Stone, hole, game'. Two players squat on each side of the board. Besides this, the favorite games for men were wrestling and putting the weight. The Lakher name for wrestling was *Apiapa* and the rules of the game were different from those of the Lusei wrestling. The wrestling competitions were generally held at weddings or when young men from other villages were on a visit and inter-village competitions were also organized. On the other hand, the young men wrestled every night in the Zawlbuk as a matter of course, and it was rare to pass through the village in the evening without putting the weight.⁶⁶

⁶² Lalthangliana, p.91

⁶³ Sangkima, p.75

⁶⁴ N.E Parry, *The Lakhers*, Calcutta, Tribal Research Institute (Reprint), 2009, p.186

⁶⁵ Parry, *The Lakhers*, p.187

⁶⁶ Parry, p.188

The Mizos were devoted to hunting, which can be translated as *Sapel*, for the sport it afforded and for the meat it provided. Hunting played an important role in traditional Mizo society not only as a source of food but as one of the most important recreational activities both for boys and adult male members of the society. Hunting provided a sense of excellency and pursuit of achievement not only in the present life but also in the afterlife. *Thangchhuah* was one of the main goals every man tried to achieve in early Mizo society. There were two kinds of *Thangchhuah*: *Inlama Thangchhuah*⁶⁷ and *Ram lama Thangchhuah*. The latter had been chosen for those who were more interested in hunting or were less fortunate in jhumming. Almost every male member of the society be it younger boys or male adults opted to become *Thangchhuahpa*⁶⁸ for which it was necessary to hunt the prescribed animals such as the Bear, Tiger, Elephant, Wild Bison, and *Vahluk* (a flying lemur). A person who had achieved *Thangchhuah* was accorded certain privileges and status both in his lifetime and after death. This shows that the notion of *Thangchhuahpa* was also closely related to the spiritual life of the Mizos.⁶⁹ Hunting was the only sport that could offer a person a special title or status in society during the pre-colonial period. In the words of Chhuanliana,⁷⁰

“Hunting placed an important role in the hearts of young men among the Mizo even during our youth days. This was because it was the only sport that could offer a person a special status or title in society. A person who was strong enough and who especially excelled in *Inbuan* was very much appreciated, however, no special title was given to them, we randomly admired them. So, hunting was the only sport through which

⁶⁷ A person who was capable of organizing a feast for the public that involves the whole village.

⁶⁸ One who achieved *Thangchhuah*.

⁶⁹ Benjamin Lalduhawma, ‘Revisiting Thangchhuah’, *Historical Journal Mizoram*, Pre Colonial Mizo Society, *Mizo History Association*, 2021, vol. xxi, p. 33

⁷⁰ Born in 1929, who studied in the Mission schools and later served as an army. He also worked in M.E Boys school.

a person could gain social status in the society, be it rich or poor, every one could attain that position if the person was good in hunting”.⁷¹

2.4 Analyzing early Mizo society through games and sports

In a traditional Mizo society like any other society, there was a simple and clear distinction of roles and responsibilities in the society which was mainly based on age and gender. Generally, traditional Mizo society was often depicted as an egalitarian society characterized by social equality rather than by inequality. Such a depiction of traditional Mizo society by different writers indicated the lack of understanding of the true picture of the social structure that existed. But when we look at the micro-level, it is undeniable that social differentiation existed in the Mizo society which can be seen through the lens of social activities like games and sports.

Through analyzing the games and sports mentioned above, it can be seen that the distinction or separation of roles between boys and girls at least at an early age was not as definite or certain because few games in early Mizo society were played by boys and girls. This scenario could be interpreted as a society not necessarily dividing the role of children at an early age. Not bound by household work and other responsibilities children had ample time for leisure activities, therefore, children would engage throughout the day by playing and inventing some sort of games and sports. However, as they grew in age the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls started to evolve, and this was also clearly visible in the limited time available for playing games and sports and other leisure activities. Since most of the economic activities revolved outdoor, either in the field, hunting, and other activities, adult males and females were busy the whole day with their responsibilities at home and in the jhum. So, children were mostly the ones having leisure time for games and recreational activities. While children were given such a free

⁷¹ Personal interview with Chhuanliana, 93 years, Dated, 6th December, 2021, at Bethlehem Vengthlang, Aizawl.

environment of playtime, unlawful, immoral or mischievous behavior was exceptionally rare during those times. This could be mainly attributed to the *Zawlbuk* that closely monitored the administration of social lives in the traditional Mizo society. Disciplinary actions were always undertaken against any unlawful or immoral activity under the firm supervision of the *Zawlbuk*.⁷²

A few games could be played by girls which might be because girls were very active and helpful to the family in household activities. In his *Monograph on Lushai Customs and Ceremonies* N.E Parry gives a clear picture of Mizo women's position in the society as he says,

“Women did most of the household activities and their roles and responsibilities started before dawn and till late at night. From an early age, she was assigned household duties accordingly to her age. She rose at dawn awakened by the noise of the domestic animals such as Mithun, fowls and pigs that slept under the house. The women at once pound out the rice required for the day in a wooden mortar hollowed out of a block of wood. Having pounded and winnowed the rice, they started the breakfast on the fireplace, let out the fowls, and went off to the spring to draw water. The work of the day began after breakfast was over, men went off to the *jhum* or to hunt or fishing, according to the season of the year. Women collected the firewood and draw the water. If they had nothing else to do, they would weave, but when the crops were growing, they were fully employed in weeding and cleaning the fields, and later on with the harvest. In the evening, the women again fetched water, fed the pigs on bran and broken rice, secured them and the fowls for the night, and then prepared the evening meal. After dusk the women spun,

⁷² Dokhuma, p. 208

they could not see to weave as the only light was that of the fire. The women devoted all their spare time to weaving”.⁷³

Therefore, women were not able to participate much in other social activities apart from jhum and household activities. It will not be wrong to assume that from their teenage years, their participation in games and sports and leisure activities was almost non-existent. The patriarchal structure of the Mizo family considered men as the sole providers and administrators while women's roles were relegated to the role of caregivers and homemakers.

Besides these, what may be noted is the fact that all the games and sports that were practiced and played during this period always had a connection to society and culture. Many of the names of the games such as *Tangkawng Chaw Zawn*, *Inzuan Kahlehsiak*, *Aithal vah*, *Utawk sawh*, *Maimawm rilsak* were also composed of the names (or movements/imitation) of animals and some games are also accompanied with songs that had a connection to the culture. Apart from the *Zawlbuk*, most of the games and sports were played in different ceremonies of the society which reflected that it was part of the culture and played an important role in the society. And most of the games played and practiced by the early Mizo were essentially meant for entertainment and recreational purpose and because of this, there were lots of games and sports enjoyed by the Mizos.

By analyzing different types of games and sports played and practiced in traditional Mizo society, a lot of things can be learned which reflected the society. As mentioned above, most of the games, if not all, were meant for children or to entertain children and for adult male members of society. This shows that children and adult males had ample time for games and sports. However, as they grew older their responsibilities and duties as male and female began to change which was also reflected in the types of games and sports.

⁷³ Parry, pp.73-74

The presence of fewer games and sports for female adults can be attributed to the fact that their duties and roles in society or household did not permit them. So, it is obvious that women were busy with their own lives and did not have ample time for such outdoor activities or recreational activities.⁷⁴ And this might be a major reason why women were largely excluded from the scene of games and sports during the pre-colonial period.

⁷⁴Tribal Research Institute, *Mizo Women Today*, Aizawl, Directorate of Art & Culture, 1991, p. 45

CHAPTER 3

GAMES AND SPORTS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

3. Introduction

Mizoram came under British rule in the 1890s.⁷⁵ The British officials and the Christian missionaries were the two external forces that introduced various changes in the Mizo society. Among these were games and sports as they introduced varied types of new games and sports that were not known before. However, what must be noted here is the fact that the Mizos had written records only from the end of the nineteenth century when the Christian missionaries created the alphabet for them. So, in the context of Mizoram, historical writing is far from adequate, and written accounts that were available were mostly written by the colonizers and missionaries. Till now these accounts have provided primary sources for the majority of published texts on the history of Mizoram. And yet, studies on the changes and the introduction of (new) games and sports in colonial times are still limited. Hence an attempt is made in this chapter to study games and sports in colonial times by re-reading colonial and missionary accounts and conducting oral interviews with individuals having knowledge and experiences about the period under study.

3.1 Colonialism and Games and Sports

Colonialism's impact, whether in the early modern period or the modern age, was direct, disastrous, and drastic everywhere. "By exporting ideas, rules and customs concerning social behavior to different parts of the empire, colonizers proved to be a testament to their power and continued to rule. These ideas, rules, and conventions are called cultural power".⁷⁶ Throughout history, colonial rule was largely successful because its main social

⁷⁵ Lalthanliana, *Ka Thil Tawn leh Hmuhte*, Aizawl, Gilzom Offset, 2008, p.165

⁷⁶ Brian Stoddart, Sport, 'Cultural Imperialism, and Colonial Response in the British Empire, *Comparative Studies in Society and History*', Vol. 30, No. 4 (Oct., 1988), London, Cambridge University Press, p.650

tenets were accepted as legitimate forms of behavior and by the bulk of the population upon which the British based their ruling practices, objectives and ideology.⁷⁷ While the English language and the 'act of writing' played an important role in the process of colonialism and was the medium for the exchange of moral codes and social attitudes, games and sports also played an important role in the process of cultural transfer. Through games and sports, British beliefs such as social behavior, standards, relations and conformity were transferred.⁷⁸ In the context of Mizo society, missionaries played a far greater role in transforming people's lives.

Sports can be viewed as a powerful, but a largely informal institution that can create shared beliefs and attitudes between rulers and ruled while at the same time strengthening the social distance between them. This is particularly the case in the British imperial setting, where sports became a strong determinant of social relations, from which the code of the game was exported.⁷⁹ Like elsewhere, British India also experienced the introduction of new types of games and sports from the colonizers. The introduction of football, cricket and hockey into the school curriculum all over the empire was imposed in the 1880s.⁸⁰ During the colonial period in mainland India, football and cricket were usually played by professionals (Europeans and a few Indians). At the same time, amateurs (Indians) coming from the middle classes either played these two sports or trained others. Cricket and football were looked upon as exclusive European preserves while indigenous sports like wrestling were confined to the lower classes.⁸¹ Looking at the history of these two sports in India, one can only see an imitation of Europeans on the part of Indian sportsmen. Imitation apart, there were also changes in moral values, views of standards, and social

⁷⁷ Brian Stoddart, Sport, 'Cultural Imperialism', p.650

⁷⁸ Stoddart, p. 651

⁷⁹ Stoddart, p.652-653

⁸⁰ Boria Majumdar, 'The Vernacular in Sports History', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37, No. 29, 2002, p.3071

⁸¹ Boria Majumdar, 'The Vernacular in Sports History', p.3069

behavior. It appears that games and sports were one of the weapons for the colonizers as a means of creating a cultural bond.

3.2 Introduction of New Games & Sports in the Lushai Hills

In India, the imperial order was served by two agencies in particular. The first was education. Just as the elite English schools embraced the game ethic, so did similar institutions throughout the empire.⁸² Secondly, the church was a major agent for spreading the cultural power and values of games throughout the British empire. Due to the close relationship between church and education, people naturally saw a connection between healthy sports and the civilizing attributes of Christianity.⁸³

The different factors such as the introduction of western education, the World Wars, the influence of the colonial administration and most importantly, the coming of the missionaries had a major impact on the socio-cultural life of the Mizos. In this context, the different types of games and sports in Mizoram underwent a significant transformation and the Mizos also experienced the introduction of new games and sports from the colonizers. However, it must be noted that once the Europeans arrived, things did not change instantly. In the word of Rev. J. Meirion Lloyd:

“The pattern of Lushai life even today is very much like what it must have been a long time ago. Also, the routine of life for men and women is much the same as it has been for generations. Cultivation did not change and modern methods have not been introduced to a large extent. The occupation, industries and amusements are the same in every village so that a Lushai quickly finds himself at home wherever he goes”.⁸⁴

⁸² Stoddart, p.654-655

⁸³ Stoddart, p.655

⁸⁴ Lloyd, *On Every High Hill*, p.10

The British officials tried to develop Lushai Hills according to western standards. They introduced many Western values and practices and were against a number of traditional Mizo rituals and practices which had no Western values and preserved some that were acceptable to them. In short, the British officials tried to shape the Mizos to fit into the British ideal of what a ‘man’ should be.⁸⁵ The colonial officials used games and sports as an important tool for their ‘civilizing mission’. It is evident that it was used for peace settlement against the Mizo chiefs in the early years of colonization. On April 1, 1891, Captain J. Shakespear, Superintendent of South Lushai Hills joined his post. To have peace settlement among the Mizo chiefs in the South Lushai Hills district he gathered sixteen Mizo chiefs and discussed issues that related to the administration in which the first-ever Lushai Hills sports competition was held. In this competition, however, all the sports items were traditional Mizo games and sports such as *Inchai*, *Inzuansiak*, *Lungden* and *Feikhawh*. This shows that even during the colonial period or at least at the beginning of a colonial rule, the traditional Mizo games and sports were still valued and still practiced commonly. Another significant event was that on June 3, 1924, Empire Day or Coronation Day was started to celebrate in Mizoram as in England where traditional games like *Inbuan* and *Inhruipawh* were used to be practiced as part of the entertainment.⁸⁶ In the words of Edward Said:

“At the heart of European culture during the many decades of imperial expansion lay what could be called an undeterred and unrelenting Eurocentrism. This accumulated experiences, territories, peoples, histories; it studied them, classified them, verified them; but above all, it subordinated them to the culture and indeed the very idea of white Christian Europe.”⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Sameulson, *Love Mizoram*, p.18

⁸⁶ Zoliana Royte, *Mizoram Sports Chanchin*, Aizawl, Directorate of Sports & Youth Services, 2008, p.1

⁸⁷ E. W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p.72

The above statement is also evident in the case of Mizoram where the Mizos started to change their attitudes towards games and sports- they began to think of games and sports in terms of competitions rather than entertainment. So, they started to organize regular tournaments that included prizes. The result was that winning prizes came to mean gaining social status. Such success in games and sports also guaranteed government jobs. The changed values and standards, therefore, is most evident in the newly acquired competitive spirits among the youth. Lalsiama in his book *Mizo leh Sipai* mentioned that 50 persons from the Mizo team were recruited to be army by the Assam I.G.P in the year 1933 and also stated that the Mizos would not represent a separate team anymore other than the army team.⁸⁸

As long as the introduction of new games and sports was concerned, badminton, hockey and football were the first to be introduced and were more popular than other kinds of sports practiced in the hills. From the beginning, competition and prizes (both ingredients of modern western sports), were essential features. How the Mizos became acquainted with these modern games and sports was through the following:

- a) In the schools
- b) Colonial officials and missionaries used to practice in their private compound
- c) In the community playground the Mizos used to play with them.

Before the advent of the British, games and sports were regarded and practiced as part of entertainment and amusement during their leisure time or on some special occasions without no serious competition but in a short period after Mizoram was colonized, tournaments for badminton, hockey and football started to be organized regularly from

⁸⁸ Lalsiama, *Mizo leh Sipai*, Delhi, Jeffson Publishing House, 1993, p.9

the year 1927 and most of the earliest tournaments were organized under the supervision of the colonizers and the understanding of games and sports was also gradually changing.

3.3 Roles of missionaries in the introduction of new games and sports

The idea of the British Empire or the British world was an idea of setting territories as much as possible. However, for the free Christian churches of the people of Great Britain, it was also a mission field. It must be noted that Church played an important role in the expansion of colonial power and provided ideological support for imperial expansion.⁸⁹ The Charter of 1813 granted missionaries permission of teaching their religion. Yet, missionaries were only one aspect of the religious character of the empire. Besides giving support to missions and uplifting the morale of native people, the idea that the “British empire should itself be subject to moral governance was also promoted”.⁹⁰

The year 1898 marked the beginning of a settled administration in the Lushai Hills which also paved the way for the missionaries for their missionizing project. On 20th March 1891, William Williams who was the first to set foot on the Lushai Hills arrived at the Lushai Hill and remained till April 17th, 1891. In 1903, Rev J. H. Lorrain and Rev. F.W. Savidge under the sponsorship of the London Baptist Missionary society arrived in the Southern Lushai Hills and were saved to be called the pioneer missionaries in Mizoram. They started to learn the local language and translated the gospel according to Luke and John and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles with the help of two natives. They were also credited with ‘Grammar and Dictionary’ which contained seven thousand words.⁹¹ The works and efforts of the two pioneer missionaries were advantageous and paved the way for the next missionaries in their missionizing project.

⁸⁹ Hillary M.Carey, *God’s Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World,c.1801-1908*,New South Wales, Cambridge University Press, 2011, p.39

⁹⁰ Hillary,God’s Empire, p.10

⁹¹ C.L. Hminga, *The Life and Witness Of The Churches In Mizoram*, Lunglei, Baptist Church of Mizoram,1987, pp.49-50

It is not possible to understand the growth of the Christian mission in Lushai Hills without considering the contribution made by the missionaries in education. According to the beliefs of the colonizer, men and women to a lesser degree needed to be educated about sports because it was a source of pleasure, prestige and sometimes profit.⁹² Games and sports both served as important educational tools and as behaviors that need to be taught among the people.⁹³

The accounts of the missionaries provided a handful of knowledge and history of new games and sports in Mizoram during the colonial period. Through the accounts of colonial ethnographers, there was ample evidence to show that different types of traditional games existed before the coming of the British. The concept and idea of modern sports had not developed until the arrival of the British in the Lushai Hills. At the same time, the arrival of the missionaries and the introduction of social institutions like Sunday schools and schools gave the Mizos a new idea about games and sports that developed the concept of modern sports.

For instance, in North Lushai Hills, the works and efforts of the Welsh missionaries were remarkable, through the introduction of Western education and schools, new games and sports were incorporated into the school curriculum of mission schools and this led to the development of non-indigenous games and sports in Mizoram. Through the account of one of the most remarkable and prominent Welsh missionaries, Mrs. Qwen Rees Roberts (Pi Teii) who served as the Headmistress in one of the Mission schools, *Hmeichhe Sikul* (presently known as P.C Girl's School) from the year 1945-1965 in one of her books *Memories of Mizoram, Recollections and Reflections* mentions the introduction of new

⁹² Nancy L.Struna, 'Sport and Colonial Education: A Cultural Perspective', *Research Quarterly For Exercise and Sport*, Vol.52.No.1,1981, p.118

⁹³ Struna, 'Sport and Colonial Education', p.119

games and sports as a part of co-curricular activities in the school. At the same time, she commented that while new games and sports were introduced many of the traditional games were still played especially in girls' schools.

New types of games and sports such as hockey and badminton were the first to be introduced at the school level and were included in the co-curricular activities. Girls also took an active role in playing, at least on the school premises. According to Pi Teii, it was from this time onwards that the Mizos started to do sports, especially girls at the school level⁹⁴. This was because during the pre-colonial period almost all of the activities that people did for fun were more or less regarded as games, not as actual sports because it was a practice only for entertainment and on some special occasions. Besides, the term itself was not only unknown in traditional societies but also the content and meaning connected with this term differ from the modern understanding of games and sports.⁹⁵

E.M Chapman and M.Clark were the two pioneer missionaries in South Lushai Hills who took an active role in opening schools for the girls. It must be remembered that different schools for boys were already established such as the Christian school at Serkawn in 1922. But education for girls was neglected and seems unworthy in the minds of the Mizos, as girls were never educated in the very beginning. To change Mizos attitude toward education, the missionaries tried to introduce education for girls that would be acceptable to the whole society. So, the missionaries initiated a form of education that would help them in their household activities and daily life wherein games and sports were also included.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Qwen Rees Roberts, *Memories Of Mizoram: Recollections & Reflections*, trans. C.H Thangkhuma and Pu H. Ngurthansanga, Mission Veng, Synod Press, 2003, p.64

⁹⁵ Peter Mählmann, 'Sport as A Weapon Of Colonialism In Kenya: A Review Of The Literature', *Transafrican Journal of History* ,Vol. 17, 1988, p.153

⁹⁶ E. M Chapman and M.Clark, *Mizo Miracle*, Madras ,The Christian Literature Society, 1968, p.33

The works and initiatives of E.M Chapman and M.Clark were also truly remarkable for the introduction of new games and sports in the schools. They believed that school must not be all work and that there should be a play too. So, they started to introduce different types of games and sports such as badminton, volleyball, hockey, and other traditional Mizo games were also continued to be practiced. Chapman and Clark noted:

“On the exhibition day hosted by the school, there was a great deal to see on the girl’s playground. The girls did wand-drill with bamboo wands which could not be got in any village. In this exhibition, the traditional Mizo games were also played in which the indigenous game, played with beans (*inkawibah*), was very much liked by the girls. It was netball that they learned to work as a team and in the beginning since the Mizo did not know much about how to work and play in teams there are times that the children disappoint each other but gradually they learned to play in teams and not only to play with teams but to work in teams”.⁹⁷

This shows that in the eyes of the colonizers before the coming of the British or the missionaries the Mizos did not know how to play and work in teams however it may be assumed that the Mizos had a lot of games that could be played in teams. Even before the coming of the colonizers, games such as *Inkawibah*, *Sakuh Uilut*, *Zawnga Leilawn Dim Dim*, *Pang aw Inzial*, *Sakeibuk Ka Luah*, etc. were all played in a team.

In the beginning, most of the schools that were opened up in the Southern Lushai Hills were basically for boys. Since education for girls was considered unworthy in the minds of the Mizos so the students consisted of boys only. However, right from the beginning of the opening of schools, the missionaries gave importance to games and sports. They

⁹⁷ Chapman and Clark, *Mizo Miracle*, p.37

believed that mental health and physical health should go hand in hand. Rev F.W Savidge and Rev. J.H Lorrain also mentioned in their official report:

“In the year 1912, to make the school interesting we started to introduce physical exercises such as the construction of roads, houses, maintenance of school compound, digging soil, cutting down of grass and weed in the surrounding campus. These activities helped them enlarge their muscles and enriched their appetite.”⁹⁸

It also stated:

“In the year 1914, there was an increase in the number of students, and they started to practice new sports like Hockey. The students were divided into two teams and compete with each other and it was done on the afternoon of every Monday and Friday”.⁹⁹

The above statement shows that the Mizos were familiar with hockey for a very long period by the influence of the missionaries. By 1923, boarding schools were started to be established in which games and sports were actively run on the school premises. School annual sports was started to be organized every year in July. The sports item consisted of race, long jump, high jump, hockey and showcasing of hunting and Mizo traditional lifestyle. In these particular annual sports, villagers were welcomed as audience and enjoyed the sports.¹⁰⁰ The report also showed that boys started to enjoy the school a lot because of the activities that the school allowed them to enjoy and because of the prizes they could get in competitions as rewards. The students particularly in the south started to be familiar with badminton from the 1930s as badminton was included in the sports item

⁹⁸BMS.Rawngbawlina Reports (1901-1938), translated by Rev. Dr. Raltawnga, Lunglei, Baptist Publication Board,2014, p.104

⁹⁹ BMS, Rawngbawlina Reports (1901-1938), p.162

¹⁰⁰ BMS, p.250

in the ‘School Sports’ held at Serkawn in 1935. It was from this year that the participation of girls along with boys in school sports both in indoor and outdoor activities became evident.¹⁰¹ The life of society as a whole began to change after the openings of schools in different parts of Lushai Hills. Not only education was promoted, but games and sports also occupied an important place in the educational system. It motivated the students to go to school and to have more interest in their studies as well.

Aizawl Theological College, the first theological institution in Mizoram established in 1907 is an institution to train Mizo Christians for various ministries of the Church. Right from the beginning of the establishment of the institution, games and sports were included in the curriculum. According to one of the interviewees, Vanlalruata,¹⁰²

“The institution gives priority to both physical and mental health of the students so they included games and sports in the curriculum and also in their daily routine. The most popular games and sports were football, badminton, table tennis, draft board, Chinese checker, chess and sepak takraw were practiced for a very long time and table tennis was the first to be introduced among them. The institution used to organize Annual Sports every year in November which lasted for one week. At the time of its establishment games and sports were already very popular among the Mizos. Hence, to make the institution more interesting and less boring for the students, such games and sports were introduced in the Aizawl Theological College.”¹⁰³

The missionaries also believed that Christianity and physical health goes hand in hand which was also good for mental health. They believed games and sports increased their

¹⁰¹ BMS, p.343

¹⁰² An ex-student of Aizawl Theological College and present Dean Of Graduate Studies in Aizawl Theological College.

¹⁰³ Personal interview with Vanlalruata, Dated, 20th October 2021, at ATC, Durtlang.

ability to learn, built relationships among the students and also enriched their appetite, so students are encouraged to play indoor and outdoor games.



Fig: .16 ATC Boys playing Sepak Takraw

Source: ATC Archive

3.4 The natives as the agents of change in the field of games and sports

Although the missionaries were very successful in their mission by introducing games and sports as part of the school curriculum, their works and efforts would not be a success without the ‘natives’ whom they trained to be the agents to continue their mission (even after they left Mizoram). So, the natives, who studied and continued to work in the mission schools served as agents for the completion of the missionizing projects that consequently enabled them to popularize new games and sports and preserve Mizo traditional games and sports. For instance, in the *Centenary 1903-2003 Souvenir of Hmeichhe Sikul*,

Presbyterian Church Girl's School, Pi Liani who studied in *Hmeichhe Sikul* during the 1930s and later served as a teacher in the same school from the year 1955 narrates her memories:

“Especially in primary school traditional Mizo games were still very popular, children would often sing Pawnto (one of the traditional games) hla (song), ‘Kinga lu thlelekeh’ and also recite ‘Kaihkuah den den’ while playing games. This used to be one of the most popular and entertaining activities that the children had in school. Sports activities such as volleyball and badminton were mostly played on Friday. Even when it rained, they would still play indoor games. Especially under Pi Teii, who was one of the most prominent figures in the school. We would celebrate Parents Day at the end of every year. On this day not only the students but also the parents used to be eager to play those games. It was the activities which entertained the whole school”.¹⁰⁴

Pi Sapbawii, who was the former student and former Assistant Headmistress in *Hmeichhe Sikul* also narrates her memories:

“During our school days, particularly in the primary and middle stage, we used to practice physical exercise like arm exercise and different types of drill, for this, we would use a small bamboo by cutting into 3feet length and a small stone was tied along with it to maintain the weight. We would show different types of games and drill on certain school functions and we enjoyed it a lot”.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Hmeichhe Sikul, *Presbyterian Church Girl's School, Centenary: 1903-2003 Souvenior*, Mission Veng, Synod Press, 2003, p.94

¹⁰⁵ Hmeichhe Sikul, *Presbyterian Church Girl's School Centenary*, p.113

Pi Chhingpuii¹⁰⁶ who was a former student and former Headmistress in Hmeichhe Sikul also narrates her memories:

“Our education system was planned and designed by the missionaries. During my school years and even when I started to work in the school most of the games and sports that we practiced were traditional Mizo games such as *Tira Mei Kaia*, *Sakuh Uilut*, *Inkawibah*, etc. Ribbon dance was very popular in our school which I introduced to the school from my encounter during my school years in St. Mary’s school, Shillong, the dance was performed by a song called ‘*Kan Zotlang Ram Nuam*’. There were teachers in charge of games and sports and our school had Bulbul and guide where children learned many games mainly outdoor games. However, outdoor games such as badminton and netball were usually played by the teachers. Annual sports were held in Mission Vengthlang with Boys School and during this time boys already played football, hockey, race and jumping while girls still competed in traditional games. Apart from school, girls did not enjoy many games and sports because we did not have much time for that. And as long as the administration of the school was concerned, Pi Zaii and Pi Puii taught us how to run the school administration and to pass it on to the generations to come”.

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¹⁰⁶ Born in 1929, finished her primary school in 1934 and started to work in Hmeichhe Sikul from 1947-1987.

¹⁰⁷ Personal interview with Chhingpuii, 92 years, Dated, 20th November 2021, at Khatla, Aizawl.



Fig: 17 Sakuh Uilut

Source: ATC Archive

While the ‘natives’ served as the agents of the missionaries they also preserved the traditional games and sports. Although different types of games and sports were introduced, most of the Mizos still enjoyed and practiced traditional Mizo games, at least in the early years of colonization. It is also clear that most of the games played by the girls were still traditional Mizo games while boys to some extent also played new types of games and sports. In the word of L.N Tluanga:¹⁰⁸

“During my childhood days and even in my youth days, we played a lot of games and sports. *Inkawihnawk*, *inbuan*, *kalchhet*, *kaihbu* and others were very popular among the boys. Football and hockey were also familiar among the Mizo but hockey was more popular than football in rural areas since people did not afford the actual football. Most of our teachers were Mizos who were trained by the colonizers. So the education system was well planned and designed under the supervision

¹⁰⁸ Born in 1933, finished his Primary School in 1942, Middle School in 1942 and High School in Mizo High School in the year 1947.

of the colonizers where physical activities such as games and sports were part of the school curriculum. Sports like badminton and ping pong were also already in practice however not everyone could afford them. So basically the most common games and sports among the boys were also traditional Mizo games and sports.”¹⁰⁹

Chamliana¹¹⁰ also narrates his recollection:

“During my school days, we used to have annual sports with Hmeichhe Sikul and competed with each other in football, hockey, race, tug of war and jumping while girls mainly competed with each other in Mizo traditional games. We got to know all these types of games from school as most of our teachers were ex-students and teachers of mission schools. Apart from school, traditional Mizo games were also still very common among the Mizos and children like us used to *Pawnto* at night. And during our teenage days' badminton started to be popular and our locality (present-day Mission Vengthlang) had a badminton court which continued to be named ‘Court Zawl’ till today. However, hockey was the most popular sport in rural areas and tended to be more excelled than the urban.”¹¹¹

Even though games and sports were very popular among the Mizos during the colonial period, it is not known to what extent games and sports were carried out and how they affected the lives of the people in society. C.Hmingthanga¹¹² narrates his recollections:

¹⁰⁹ Personal interview with L.N Tluanga, 88 years, Dated, 24th November,2021, at Mission Veng, Aizawl.

¹¹⁰ Born in 1939, finished his primary school in 1945 from Hmeichhe Sikul and later education from other Mission Schools.

¹¹¹ Personal interview with Chamliana, 82 years, Dated, 10th December,2021, at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl.

¹¹² Born in 1938, former student of a Welsh missionary school during the 1940s and later education from other mission schools.

“Back then, we had a school timetable which was strictly followed and the games period was usually on Friday afternoon and that is how we came to know about foreign games and sports. We were familiar with football and hockey and played them the most. The traditional Mizo games like *inbah* and *inhnawk* were not played in schools and we were also familiar with badminton and basketball. Despite being familiar with the rules of the games, just a handful of students could play them because of the lack of facilities. So we would improvise our facilities and use them happily. E.g., the hockey stick was not available, in fact during those days there was no hockey stick for purchase too. Therefore, those games were only played within the school premises”.

He also stated:

“The youth during my days were very enthusiastic in playing games despite lack of facilities. The ball was available in schools especially when we joined the middle school, we would play football regularly. After school hours or on holidays, we would get a few pomelos, and bounce them until they turned soft enough to kick. And while playing if the fruit cracks into two, the bigger piece would be continued to be used as a ball”.¹¹³

During this period, games and sports offered a person a social status in the society and favoritism seemed to exist towards a person who was good at playing sports and from a well-to-do family as C. Hmingthanga narrates:

“Who excelled in sports certainly were recognized and favored immediately outside the school and apart from this economic background indeed played a role. Children of government employees

¹¹³ Personal interview with C. Hmingthanga, 83 years, Dated, 20th October 2021, at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl.

and economically sound families indeed were given extra favors. And selection for school representatives and even state representatives was quite biased. The poor students had to give double effort to be recognized for their talents”.¹¹⁴

He also mentions that any tournaments organized by the local people were called ‘Cup’ such as *Bawngtuthlawh* Cup, *Istiri* Cup and others. All these tournaments were influenced and inspired by the colonizers but since they did not afford the actual Trophy or Cup, they used to bet on items such as Iron (*istiri*) or Plougher (*Bawngtutthlawh*).

The influence of the colonizers was also seen in the realms of the attitude of the Mizos toward women. The introduction of education with games and sports as part of its co-curricular activities led women to participate in a larger area or more often as compared to the pre-colonial period. Girls, even when they reached their teenage years played a lot, either outdoor or indoors, for example, hockey was very popular among the girls. The increase of participation of women in games and sports also reflected a few changing attitudes of the Mizos towards women. Biakdiki¹¹⁵ stated:

“Hockey was very popular among the girls apart from traditional Mizo games. I also used to play hockey a lot and even participated in tournaments. However, we did not wear pants instead we wore skirts, but the attitude of society towards us was not negative. Neither did they consider it unfeminine nor did our parents ever stop us from playing it. But our duties and responsibilities at home did not change and for that, we did not have much leisure time for playing outside regularly.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Personal interview with C. Hmingthanga, 83 years, Dated, 20th October 2021, at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl.

¹¹⁵ Born in 1938, studied in Mission schools and wife of former Chief Minister of Mizoram.

¹¹⁶ Personal interview with Lalbiakdiki, 84 years, Dated, 6th December, 2021, at Tuikhuahtlang, Aizawl.

Chamliana also stated:

“Even teenage girls played a lot during our youth days but we never considered them as unfeminine, however, their duties and responsibilities at home did not permit them to play many sports apart from school and on certain occasions, unlike boys.”¹¹⁷

Regarding this statement, Chhuanliana¹¹⁸ also added:

“Boys as a whole were very much into games and sports during our childhood and youthful days, but girls also participated a lot in physical activities especially in hockey even outside schools. However, girls playing hockey with pants was very rare, maybe people were still conservative of what a girl should wear or dress, but girls involved in sports were never considered as non-feminine”.¹¹⁹

Zoliana Royte, a prominent figure in the field of sports in Mizoram provides a detailed account of the history of modern games and sports along with its development in *Mizoram Sports Chanchin*. In his book, he mentioned the first-ever games and sports competition in Mizoram which was held in Lunglei in the year 1892 where sixteen Mizo chiefs came with their village participants and competed in four types of games.¹²⁰ The establishment of the different associations, organizing, and participation in different competitions and tournaments was also provided in the book which will be discussed later in detail. From this account, it can be seen that in the beginning there was not much achievement from

¹¹⁷ Personal interview with Chamliana, 82 years, Dated, 10th December, 2021, at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl.

¹¹⁸ Personal interview with Chhuanliana, 93 years, Dated, 6th December, 2021, at Bethlehem Vengthlang, Aizawl.

¹¹⁹ Personal interview with Chamliana, 82 years, Dated, 10th December, 2021, at Mission Vengthlang, Aizawl.

¹²⁰ Royte, p.1

the different fields of sports but later on different sports started to have huge achievements even in national-level competition.

3.5 Early Records and Activities of Games and Sports During Colonial Period

Right after Mizoram was under British rule, Mizoram underwent many changes in social and cultural life which were also evident in the realms of games and sports. Ever since Lushai Hills came under colonial administration games and sports became an important activity in the lives of the people which was evident from the establishment of different sports associations and tournaments were started to be organized by the colonizers and the Mizos. The first sports association that ever existed in the history of Mizoram was ‘Aijal Sports Association’ which was founded in the year 1945 wherein Mr. Sangliana was the first President of the association. The association was mainly formed for Football and Hockey. ‘Aijal Amateur Athletics Club (AAA Club)’ was founded in 1965.¹²¹ The efforts and initiatives of these early sporting clubs are remarkable and paved the way for the people of Mizoram in their pursuit of sports. The results of their works and efforts can be seen during the colonial period and even in contemporary Mizoram. This can be seen through the establishment of different sports associations and clubs, organizing different tournaments and participation in different sporting events (inside and outside of Mizoram).

¹²¹ Royte, pp.20-29

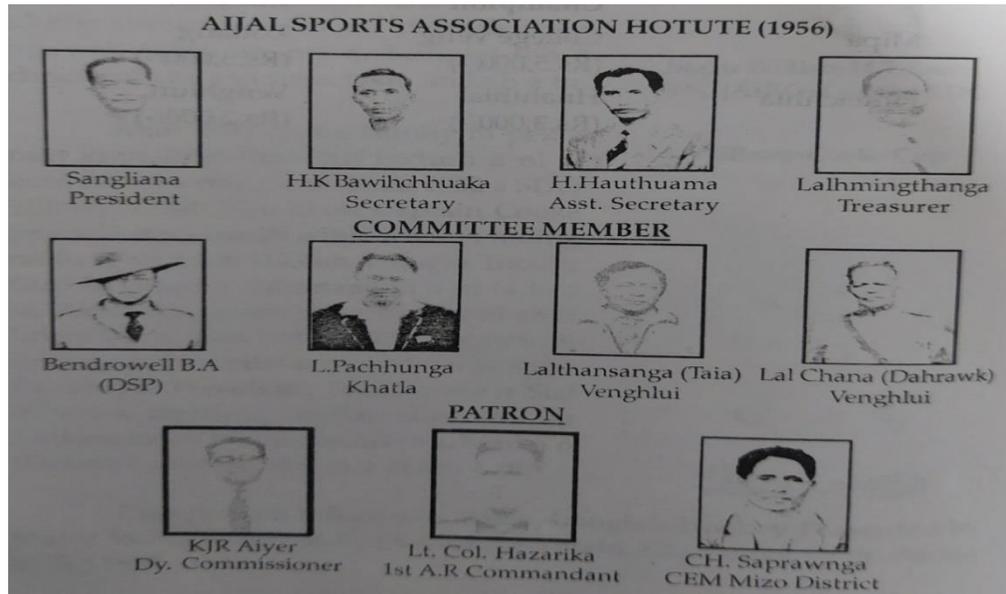


Fig: 18 Aijal Sports Association Hotute(1956)

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

The first organized tournament during the colonial period was held in 1927 and was called the ‘Hrawva Badminton Tournament’. In the history of sports in Mizoram, Vankhuma, Chuauthuama, Sawmaithanga, L.H Liana, Lalhmingthanga and Lalhlira can be called pioneers of sports. With the initiatives of these people, the ‘Hrawva Badminton Tournament’ was able to be organized from 1927-to 1930 on the ground of Synod Bangla and Babutlang. The ‘Cup’ was donated by Hrawva which was worth Rs.75. During this time, shuttle cock cost Re. 1, racket Rs.7 – Rs.11 which was mainly purchased from Haudala Dawrpui, the first sports goods store in Aizawl. Missionaries were also welcomed in this tournament and often distributed the prizes. In this tournament, Chawngzika teamed up with Vankhuma who represented Synod Press and won the Cup for three consecutive years.¹²²

¹²² Royte, p.3



Fig: 19 Hrawva Badminton Tournament, Champion 1927- 1930

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

The first organized Hockey tournament was 'Helm Cup Hockey' in 1929 under the guidance of Assistant Superintendent C.G.G Helm. In this tournament, Lunglei team was also invited and played the final match with the Aizawl team in which the Aizawl team won the Cup. Another remarkable hockey tournament was the 'Chawnga Cup' which was held on October 11, 1933. In the beginning, the tournament was meant for the village *Sentlang* and its neighboring villages but as time went on, other villages began to participate. The tournament was conducted every year till 1948.¹²³

¹²³ Royte, p.6

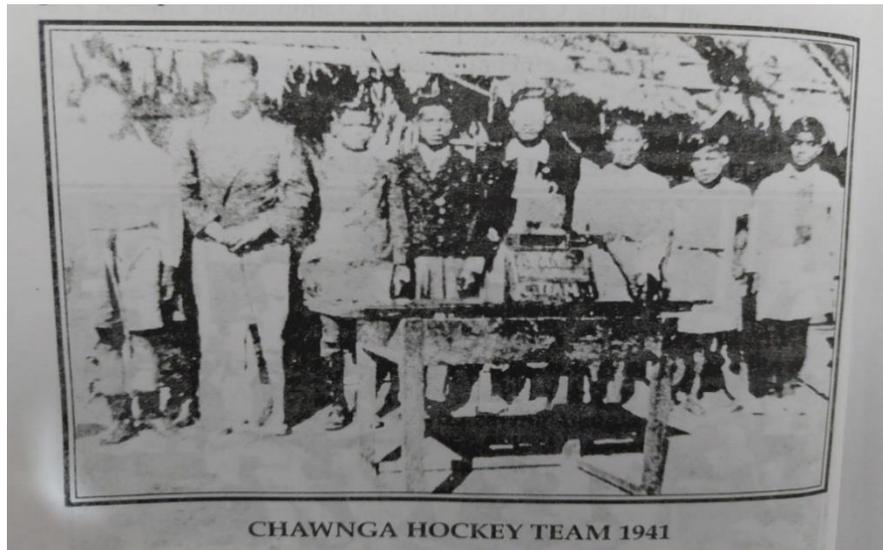


Fig: 20 Chawnga Hockey team,1941

Source: Zoliana Royte

In the year 1933, the then Superintendent Bell organized his own tournament known as ‘Bell Cup Hockey’. In this tournament, Bell’s team consisted of members who served in the government’s office and many considered it a tournament for government employees and the Assam Rifles. This tournament lasted for a long time till 1951 when Mission Sporting Union won the Cup.¹²⁴ Before the coming of the British, it is safe to say that the Mizos were not familiar with football since no trace of football is evident in the history of pre-colonial Mizoram. Even though this was the case, the Mizos were very fond of football as tournaments were regularly organized during the colonial period. Pachhunga Football Tournament, the first football tournament in Mizoram was organized in the year 1929 and it was continued until the year 1958. In this tournament, the Assam rifles were believed to be undefeatable but were defeated by Aizawl Dawrpui Blue in the year 1946 and Aizawl School Team in 1947. Besides this, Chhotelal Seth Football Shield (1933), and Charity

¹²⁴ Royte, p.8

Football Match (1948) were the earliest remarkable football tournaments in the history of Mizoram.¹²⁵

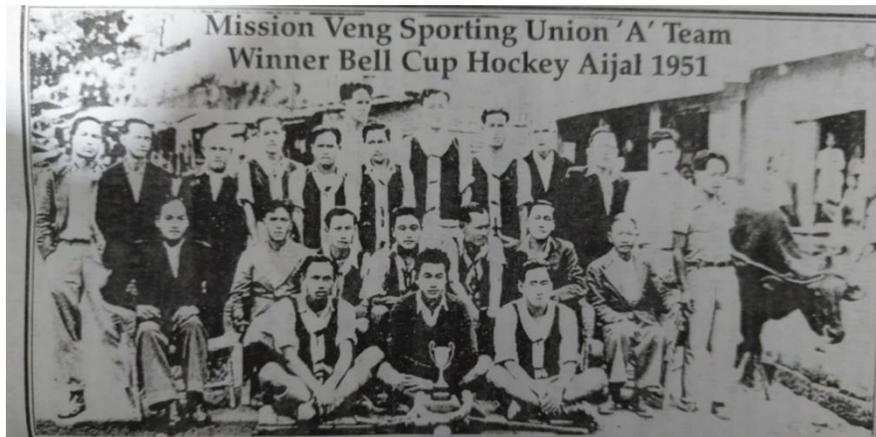


Fig: 21. Mission Veng Sporting Union 'A'

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram



Fig: 22 Aijal Dawrpui Blue Team

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

¹²⁵ Royte, p.8-12

Apart from the above-mentioned tournaments, many tournaments in the Eastern and Southern parts of Mizoram were conducted during the colonial period. The most remarkable on the Eastern side of the hills was the ‘Hanga cup’ started in the year 1946 (the first football trophy in Lushai Hills) ‘Chengai Memorial Football Shield’ in 1948, ‘Thangzuala Football Shield’ in 1960, ‘Saithangvunga Belpui’ in 1960. And in South Lushai Hills, tournaments such as ‘Anderson Hockey Cup’ in 1912, ‘F.W Savidge Cup’ in 1929, ‘Badminton Cup’ in 1930, and ‘Tilbury Cooke Cup (Hockey)’ are the earliest and most remarkable tournaments during the colonial period.¹²⁶



Fig: 23 Pachhunga Football Cup

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

¹²⁶ Royte, p.15-17

With the establishment of different associations and organizations for different tournaments, the Mizos started to gain more confidence in their skills which even leads them to participate in tournaments outside Mizoram. The first participation was in the year 1965 in the Inter-District Hockey Championship, which was held in Imphal, where the Aijal Sports Association won the Cup. In 1962, N.E State Football Tournament was organized in Karimganj in which the participants tried to take over the R.K Jain Memorial Shield. During this time, there were a few Mizo players who were good at playing football so the team comprised of Mizos and non-Mizo players from the Assam Rifles. The team managed to win the trophy and it was the first football trophy Mizoram had ever been able to win outside Mizoram.¹²⁷

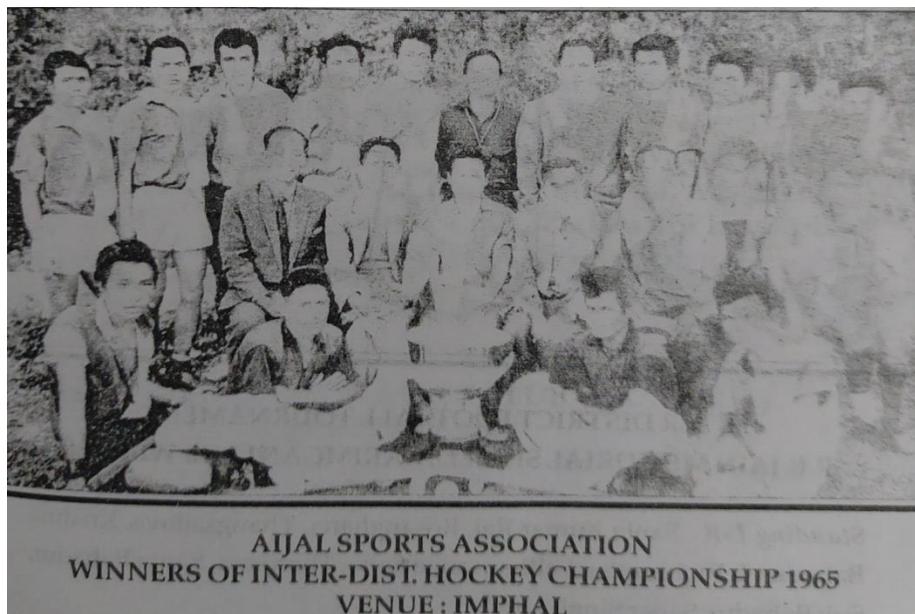


Fig: 24 Aijal Sports Association

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

¹²⁷ Royte, p.25



Fig: 25 Inter-District Football Tournament, Karimganj,1962

Source: Sports Council, Mizoram

3.6 Concluding remarks: Changing nature of games and sports

The coming of the British indeed brought changes in the Mizo society in many ways and this could also be evident in the realms of games and sports. It can be observed that the colonizers wanted the Mizos to be educated and more civilized following western ideas and culture. From the beginning, when the British controlled India as a whole, education, and physical training especially in its military form called drill, football, cricket and hockey was part and parcel of the educational system. Official reports of that time hardly contained the detailed records of the school curriculum and the method of teaching practiced by the teachers. Despite the dearth of detailed official records, one may assume that the British educational system was the most dominating form of education.¹²⁸

¹²⁸ Mählmann, 'Sport As A Weapon', p.159

The different factors such as the introduction of western education, the influence of the colonial administration and most importantly the coming of the missionaries had major impacts and changes in the socio-cultural life of the Mizos. It changed their traditional customs, beliefs and value system. The outlook of the people of the Mizos had been changed which was apparent in the larger participation of women in contemporary games and sports. Unlike the traditional games and sports which existed before the arrival of the British, where there was a clear differentiation of the types of games played by males and females. The new types of games and sports that were introduced during the colonial period were not necessarily differentiated based on age and gender. s

The introduction of a new education system and changes in the administrative system that took place as a result of British rule continued to affect lives in Mizoram even today. This was also the case during the colonial period itself. As mentioned earlier, although traditional Mizo games and sports were still in practice during the colonial period, the new games and sports were more popular and people tended to be more interested in them. This is evident in the different tournaments that were organized during this period. Traces of traditional games and sports were less to be found apart from the school premises and it was practiced on some special occasions as part of the entertainment. It is also evident that the British government was very successful in winning the favor of the Mizo people or the Indians as a whole by introducing new types of games and sports. However, it would be wrong to attribute all the credits to the colonizers because their ‘civilizing mission’ would not have been achieved without contributions made by the ‘natives’.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The present research analyses the practice of games and sports in Mizoram from the pre-colonial to the colonial period and how it was connected, and thereby, shaped the socio-cultural lives of the people. Games and sports are present in every society from early human history regardless of the type of society and the advancement of the civilization. Despite this, the study of games and sports from a historical perspective is still limited. This leaves a gap for historians to study the nature and structure of society by using games and sports as a benchmark and what it means in a broader context.

The practice of games and sports was also evident in Mizo society. In the context of pre-colonial Mizo society, people seldom practiced sports for their own sake but rather for physical pursuits which were sometimes linked with entertainment or fun. Sports were considered the domains of men while women appeared to have been largely absent. Boys and girls during their younger ages took part in different physical pursuits on equal grounds to some extent. There were many games *such as inkawihnawk, inkawibah, sakuhuilut, zawn-galeilawn dim dim*, and so on which were specially meant for children. But as they grew older, and as a result of the eventual distinction of roles and responsibilities based on age and gender, they started to pursue different activities. While the adult male members of the society practiced different types of games and sports, it could not be the same for females. The nature of games and sports during the pre-colonial period also lacked an organized structure and competitions like today. Hunting played an important role in society for a person to attain social status and was given considerable attention as physical activity or sport among the Mizos. Unlike today, bravery and strength were considered to be among the most important qualities for climbing up the social ladder.

The intervention of colonialism and factors such as the introduction of western education, the World Wars, the influence of colonial administration and most importantly, the coming of the missionaries had a major impact on the socio-cultural life of the Mizos. The colonial government and the missionaries were the harbingers in the introduction and implementation of new games and sports. The educational system that was implemented tended to be very effective. School curricula were created in such a way to make the school interesting for children. It also became an important tool for the success of games and sports in Mizoram. The colonizers especially the missionaries played an important role in changing the attitudes and outlook of the Mizos. Unlike the pre-colonial period, in sharp contrast, people now took sports as a serious matter. It was during the colonial period that different competitions and tournaments were started to be organized. Participation or involvement of women in games and sports was also increasing. The 'natives' served as an important agent for the success and popularity of new games and sports. However, sports itself also indirectly created economic differentiation among the Mizos. This was because sports equipment was not affordable for everyone, but many people would improvise the equipment. This alone also shows how enthusiastic the Mizos were into games and sports. On the other hand, during this period, sports afforded people to gain status and recognition in the society. A person who excelled in sports was highly regarded and would even get government jobs. It can, therefore, be assumed that games and sports in colonial Mizoram created social mobility and were directly linked to social change. Both men and women were able to play the sport they wished to play, unlike in the pre-colonial period. Lastly, if Mizoram had not been subjected to colonialism, probably today the benefits of games and sports could not have been realized to the same degree.

Findings:

During the pre-colonial period, games and sports were practiced mainly to pass time and to entertain themselves, especially children. And for young adults, it was mainly to show their ability and strength.

In the pre-colonial Mizo society, being a strong person both physically and mentally was one of the most important attributes a person had to have. Being strong was highly revered days because most of the economic activities and lifestyles such as hunting, jhum cultivation, fishing, and the like revolved around outdoor activities.

A great deal of the games and sports during this period was about determining a person's strength and courage. However, the only sport which could provide a person with social status was hunting, which could only be attained by becoming a *Thangchhuahpa*.

The colonial officials used games and sports for a peace settlement with the Mizo chiefs. In this regard, Captain J. Shakespear, Superintendent of South Lushai Hill, gathered sixteen Mizo chiefs and discussed the issues related to the administration in which the first-ever Lushai Hills sports competition was held.

Competitions and tournaments started to be organized which were purely under the influence of colonialism.

Games and sports were introduced into the education system to make the school interesting. The missionaries believed that school should not be all work alone, and in the beginning, the Mizos did not find the importance of education, and especially for girls, it was considered unworthy. So, to attract the Mizos, the missionaries introduced games and

sports into the education system and this, in turn, had a good impact both on the physical and mental health of the students.

The 'native' agents who studied and worked in the mission schools were the driving forces and the main agents of the missionaries for the success of the new games and sports.

Sports offered a person social status and recognition in the society. People who excelled in sports secured government jobs during the colonial period.

The sport itself also indirectly created economic differentiation among the Mizos. There were no facilities and not everyone could afford them, so despite being familiar with the rules of the games, they would improvise and use them.

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ABSTRACT

SOCIAL HISTORY OF GAMES AND SPORTS IN MIZORAM: FROM PRE-COLONIAL TO COLONIAL PERIOD

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INTRODUCTION

The present dissertation titled “Social History of Games and Sports in Mizoram: From Pre-Colonial to Colonial Period” analyses the significance and the practices of games and sports in Mizo society in the changing historical space and time.

In the history of Mizoram, the nineteenth century was remarkable. First, the Mizos started to come into contact with two external powerful agents i.e. British colonizers and Christian missionaries. Second, detailed records of the Mizos' socio-political life started to be recorded in a written form. Mizoram was declared part of the British-India by a proclamation in 1895 and was known as the Lushai hills during the colonial period. Before India's independence, a political awakening among the Mizos in Lushai Hills started taking shape that simultaneously resulted in the formation of the political parties. Tension arose between these parties regarding the future political administration of the hills. In this situation, a proposal of the Mizo Union i.e. the inclusion of Lushai hills within the province of Assam dominated hill politics. Finally, under the Government of Assam, the Lushai District Council was formed in 1952 that was later changed into Mizo District Council in 1954.

When India became independent from the British Empire in 1947, the colonial officers in the Lushai hills also left the country passing over the administration of the hills in the hands of the Government of Assam. Meanwhile, the Christian missionaries continued their missions after the post-interdependence period and only left the hills after the outbreak of *Rambuai* in 1966. Though the missionaries probably were not officially collaborated with the colonial officials, they played very important roles in the colonization process in the Lushai hills, which was considerable in terms of cultural and religious domination of the people. Although the task of missionaries was to evangelize the people, Christianity was unnecessarily turned into an ideology that was used to lay the ground for white domination. Hence, an attempt is made in this dissertation to trace

the tradition and the changing nature of the practices of games and sports in Mizo history from pre-colonial times till the Christian missionaries left the hills in the 1960s.

Ever since the institutionalization of historical discipline in the 19th century, unearthing the ‘reality’ of the past through the scientific method of research became the main attempt of the historians. As a result, the interpretation of events found in archives that mainly deal with high politics, wars, diplomacy, etc. has dominated history writings till today. In this form of writing the lives and achievements of ‘Great men’ or elite section of the population remain the central focus sidelining the perspectives and accomplishments made by common people. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century different new historical approaches emerged on the scene. These new trends of history writing aimed to include a larger section of the society and give importance to the marginalized group who were more or less neglected by early historians.

In the mid-twentieth century, social history as a specialized field of historical research emerged as a reaction to the political history-the history of great men and their ideas-that dominated all historical research and discipline in the west. The term ‘social history’ refers to a sub-discipline of the historical sciences on the one hand and to a general approach to history that focuses on society at large on the other hand. It deals with the structures of societies and social change, social movements, groups, and classes, conditions of work and ways of life, families, households, local communities, urbanization, mobility, gender, ethnic groups, etc. In an attempt to introduce a ‘new history’ – a more inclusive form of historical research, social history introduced an alternative view of history with ‘society’ as the main object.

Games and sports are present in every society from early human history regardless of the type of society and the advancement of their civilization. However, historical research on games and sports is rarely to be found in the existing body of historical literature. In its cultural and historical context, the study of sport is an underdeveloped field in most countries around the globe. This leaves ample scope for historians to study the nature and structure of the society using games and sport as parameters and lenses to look at a micro-level of history and what it entails in the larger context. As in the words of Ramchandra Guha, ‘games and mass sport is a sphere of activity that expresses, in concentrated form, the values, prejudices, divisions and unifying symbols of society.’

Sport plays an important role in an individual’s life and society and served as a prominent social institution in almost every society. The space or the arena of sport in a lot of ways is a reflection of a society and where we see the manifestation of a different form of social life, be it the bright side or the dark side of society. It also provides how one feels confident in society, giving them structure and purpose in individual life. For instance, it was through sport that Mohammed Ali made his extraordinary career and accomplishments, his struggle and journey to become the greatest boxer of all time and represent the Black community and his identity as Islam through sport. It is through sport that we could study the position of women in society because sports study is more or less connected to the study of history from below that focused on the lower section and everyday lives of the people where women were also included in it. The number of representation or participation of women in sports also directly reflected the position of women in society.

Just like any other society, the sport had always been a part of the Mizo cultural practices and had existed in the society for a very long period. Nigel B. Crawther defines games and sports as, “An activity that is done for one’s pleasure or entertainment; it may include some sort of skills and physical fitness. It means different things in different

societies and it is an essential part of social history. On the other hand, a game involves only an individual's skills and performance". However, the kinds of games and sports that are found in different parts of the world have distinctive characteristics and are also connected to the cultures in which they are found. In earlier decades, few scholars worked on the history of games and sports and there were few publications that readers rarely found a book to recommend. Nowadays, scholars focusing on sports history are producing so much information which makes it difficult to limit their recommendations to a manageable number.

People in the earliest times rarely practiced sports for their own sake but rather for physical pursuits which were linked with ritual, warfare, entertainment, or other external features. In the context of the pre-colonial Mizo society, the practice of games and sports was more or less connected with warfare and economy and there were no games and sports as we have today but there are times when a person had to show their strength and might. There were certain types of games that existed in the early Mizo society which are meant for children and male adults. However, with the advent of colonialism and the arrival of the missionaries, things began to change. The introduction of education and new types of games and sports had a great impact on society.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Written accounts of the Mizos' past had been documented only from the British intervention in the late nineteenth century. These records were mostly concerned with the changes and practices introduced by the colonial officials and Christian missionaries. The colonial officers also initiated the documentation of Mizos' oral tradition. In these documents, the history of games and sports is barely highlighted. Though the emerging interest in social history led to the recovery of alternative sources, the study of games and sports remains marginal in recent works on the history of Mizoram. Keeping this in

mind, it is very essential to have a proper study of the history of games and sports in Mizoram.

The pre-colonial Mizos also had various games and sports but did their understanding of games and sports differ from the colonial period? Did the colonial government introduce new types of games and sports? Were there any particular games more popular than others? Were games and sports part of social development? In the present Mizo society, sports people are highly regarded and admired, did the same thing happen in the pre-colonial Mizo society? Most histories of sports focus on men, but this research also attempts to place women as one part of the discussion- these are the issues that are addressed in the dissertation. In the light of the above discussion, an attempt is made to study the types of games and sports that existed in the early days and their contribution to the pre-colonial Mizo society as well as development in the colonial Mizo society.

AREA OF STUDY

The dissertation focuses on the history of games and sports from pre-colonial to the colonial period in Mizoram.

OBJECTIVES

1. To examine the types of games and sports in traditional Mizo society.
2. To analyze the introduction of new games and sports in colonial times.
3. To examine the impact of new games and sports in Mizo society.

METHODOLOGY

From the approach of social history, the present dissertation rereads oral traditions, personal narratives or written memoirs (particularly of old students and teachers of (mission schools), and various official documents and other literary works produced by the colonizers and the Christian missionaries. To supplement all these sources, oral history interviews are conducted with elder citizens having experiences and knowledge about the period under study. All the information and data obtained from the above sources are corroborated and assembled with secondary texts including books, photographs, and articles.

From the perspective of ‘Social History’ the research analyses the practice of games and sports in Mizoram from the pre-colonial to the colonial period and how it is connected with the society and culture of the Mizo and helped shaped the social life of the Mizo. It also studied the introduction of new games and sports and the changes it brought about in society.

Chapterization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The first chapter analyzed the introduction of games and sports in history writing. Games and sports had existed almost in every culture and society, however, the writing of sports history, in history writing was more or less neglected. It was only during the 1960s that the topic became popular among scholars as a result of a general move towards ‘history from below’ which looked at the everyday lives of the people. In the beginning, scholars mostly focused on the development of particular sports and how it fits into society. It was, however from the 1980s as a result of the British cultural studies that there has been significant and continuing literature on the history of sports.

CHAPTER 2: GAMES AND SPORTS IN EARLY MIZO SOCIETY

The second chapter reflected the practices of games and sports in early Mizo society. There are several games which are specially meant for children and some sort of sport that were mainly practiced by the adult male members of the society on certain occasions. This chapter highlighted the distinction or separation of roles between boys and girls. However, this distinction or separation of roles and responsibilities at least at an early age was not as definite or certain. This scenario could be interpreted as a society not necessarily dividing the role of children at an early age. Not bound by household work and other responsibilities children had ample time for leisure activities, therefore, children would engage throughout the day by playing and inventing some sort of games and sports. However, as they grew in age, the roles and responsibilities of boys and girls started to evolve, and this was also clearly visible in the limited time available for playing games and sports and other leisure activities. Since most of the economic activities revolved outdoor, either in the field, hunting, and other activities, adult males and females were busy the whole day with their responsibilities at home and in the *jhum*. So, children were mostly the ones having leisure time for games and recreational activities. While children were given such a free environment of playtime, unlawful, immoral, or mischievous behavior was exceptionally rare during those times. This could be mainly attributed to the *Zawlbuk* that closely monitored the administration of social lives in the traditional Mizo society.

The nature of games and sports during the pre-colonial period also lacked an organized structure and competitions like we see today. Hunting played an important role in the society for a person to attain social status and was given considerable attention as physical activity or sport among the Mizos. However, to attain this social status, one has to become *Thangchhuahpa* (a person who achieved *Thangchhuah*). Unlike today, bravery and strength were considered to be among the most important commodities for

climbing the social ladder and *Zawlbuk* was the lone institution to practice sports which also excluded women during the pre-colonial period.

CHAPTER 3: GAMES AND SPORTS DURING THE COLONIAL PERIOD

The link between colonialism and games and sports is examined in this chapter. The colonial government and the missionaries were the harbingers for the introduction and implementation of new games and sports. However, the 'native agent such as former students and people who worked in the mission schools also took an important role in the success of the introduction of new games and sports. They are one of the weapons of the missionaries in their missionizing project. Football, badminton, and hockey were supposed to be first introduced and the most popular sports during this period. Tournaments and competitions were started to be organized on a regular basis and unlike in the pre-colonial period, there was evidence of a large number of women participating in games and sports. The types of games and sports that were introduced were also enjoyed by both males and females. The efforts and initiatives that were implemented for the education system were also fruitful and become an important tool for the success of games and sports in Mizoram. The missionaries believed that school should not be all work alone and in the beginning, the Mizos did not find the importance of education, and especially for girls, it was considered unworthy. So, in order to motivate and make the school interesting, games and sports were introduced in the schools.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study.

Findings:

During the pre-colonial period, games and sports were practiced mainly to pass time and to entertain themselves, especially children. And for young adults, it was mainly to show their ability and strength.

In the pre-colonial Mizo society, being a strong person both physically and mentally was one of the most important attributes a person had to have. Being strong was highly revered days because most of the economic activities and lifestyles such as hunting, jhum cultivation, fishing, and the like revolved around outdoor activities.

A great deal of the games and sports during this period was about determining a person's strength and courage. However, the only sport which could provide a person with social status was hunting, which could only be attained by becoming a *Thangchhuahpa*.

The colonial officials used games and sports for a peace settlement with the Mizo chiefs. In this regard, Captain J. Shakespear, Superintendent of South Lushai Hill, gathered sixteen Mizo chiefs and discussed the issues related to the administration in which the first-ever Lushai Hills sports competition was held.

Competitions and tournaments started to be organized which were purely under the influence of colonialism.

Games and sports were introduced into the education system to make the school interesting. The missionaries believed that school should not be all work alone, and in the beginning, the Mizos did not find the importance of education, and especially for girls, it was considered unworthy. So, to attract the Mizos, the missionaries introduced

games and sports into the education system and this, in turn, had a good impact both on the physical and mental health of the students.

The 'native' agents who studied and worked in the mission schools were the driving forces and the main agents of the missionaries for the success of the new games and sports.

Sports offered a person social status and recognition in the society. People who excelled in sports secured government jobs during the colonial period.

The sport itself also indirectly created economic differentiation among the Mizos. There were no facilities and not everyone could afford them, so despite being familiar with the rules of the games, they would improvise and use them.