



Origin and Development of Sports Historiography: A Comprehensive Study between Western Countries and India

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Abstract:

As a result of efforts to expand the content of history writing, the field has gradually grown over time. In the twentieth century, this effort to expand the scope of the study of history became widespread, and history began to be written about various aspects of human activity. In addition to writing political history, economic, social, and cultural history began to gain importance, and history began to be written focusing on science, public health, women's position in society, etc. In the second half of the twentieth century, the study of sports history emerged as a new field of historical inquiry in Britain and other Western countries. Gradually, this new trend of studying history began to attract Indian historians and researchers, and the history of sports in India began to be written. Sports are a crucial aspect of human life. Just as the surrounding social and cultural environment influences sports, sports also influence it. The history of sports is essential for highlighting the importance of sports in society. In this article, an attempt has been made to highlight how the study of sports history began in Western countries and in India, and the trends and characteristics of this field.

Keywords: Historiography, Sports History, Western Countries, Britain, India.



Received: 17.10.2025

Accepted: 10.12.2025

Published: 31.12.2025

CJHSSC, Volume: 1

Issue: 2, December 2025

Page: 113 - 120

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18258649>

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Published by: Seth Soorajmull Jalan Girls' College,
Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

Available at: www.ssjalangirlscollege.org.in/journal.php
Email: confluence.sjgc@gmail.com

Introduction

History is the past story based on the information of the people associated with it. But the activities of socialized people have various aspects, and not all aspects of these early-stage activities have been included in history. Since the beginning of history, the political activities of the people have been the main subject of historiography. The evolution and order of the content of history have been achieved through various debates and evolutions in different historical periods, as a result of which, with the progress of time, various areas of human society and human experience have been included in the institutional structure of history practice, making the field of history practice broad and rich. One of the most interesting and innovative fields that has been incorporated into the practice of history through this evolution is the history of sport. In the second half of the twentieth century, sports historiography began in Western countries. It was not too late to start this new style of history writing in India, too. The history of sports in India started in the late twentieth century. The beginning and evolution of sports historiography are important events in modern historiography.

Sports historiography in Western countries:

This effort to broaden the scope of historical practice throughout the twentieth century led to the inclusion of new areas of organized human life in history. As part of this larger process, the history of sport is also linked to the institutional framework of the practice of history. Historian E.J. Hobsbawm called sports one of the most important new social practices of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 2013). But sports have not been given enough importance in the framework of traditional historical studies. In the early stages, mainly anthropologists took the initiative to include sports in the framework of traditional knowledge (Sen, 2015). Edward Burnett Taylor, who is often credited as the father of anthropology, discussed various types of games in his essay “The History of the Games” written in 1879. American anthropologists James Mooney and Stewart Culin discussed the sports common among Native Americans (Blanchard, 2000). Frederic Paxson describes the role of sports as an important part of American society in his book “The Rise of Sports” (Paxson, 1917). “The North-American Society of Sport History” [NASSH] was established in 1972 to discuss sports in the United States, and since 1973, this organization has published a journal called the “Journal of Sport History”. Dutch historian John Huizinga discussed sports in his book “Homo Ludens” written in 1938 (Huizinga, 1960). In the 1960s, the French anthropologist Roger Caillios, opposing Huizinga's views on sports, presented his own statement on sports in the book “Man, Play and Games” (Cailliois, 2001). Sociologists Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning describe the development of sports as part of the civilizing process, stating that sports are a non-violent, non-military form that evolved from the violent, military competition of ancient societies (Elias & Dunning, 1986).

In the practice of sports history, as in the practice of the history of science, the idea was ingrained that only the player, or anyone associated with the game, can accurately present the history of the game. In opposition to this idea, historian James Walvin said, “Such claims to exclusivity are intellectually crippling and depend ultimately for their rationale on the belief that there is, or ought to be, only one particular approach or interpretation of historical experience. It is to be hoped that sports history will avoid such factional fights, although this is not to claim that sporting practitioners have nothing to tell us. Far from it. What is

quite clear, however, is that one does not need to be a player, spectator, or aficionado of any sport- to appreciate its broader social or historical significance.” (Walvin, 1984). From the second half of the twentieth century, sports history began to gain its proper place in traditional historical practice, and sports historiography emerged in Britain at an early stage. The practice of sports history in the Western world, including Europe, began in the 1970s and became especially prosperous in the 1980s because the practice of sports history gained an organizational form with the establishment of the “British Society of Sport History” in 1982. The research journal of this association of sports historians began to be published by Frank Cass Publications, which is now known as “The International Journal of the History of Sport”. Sociologists J.A. Mangan, Tony Mason, Allen Guttman, Richard Holt, and others study sports history, and because of their efforts, the field has become richer. The practice of sports history gradually spread beyond Britain to other European countries, such as Denmark, Sweden, and Finland, and sociologists from Asian countries, including China, Japan, and South Korea, also joined this effort in the late 1980s. One of the founders and promoters of sports history in Europe, J. A. Mangan's initiative, the “International Research Center for Sport, Socialization and Society” (IRCSSS), was established at the University of Strathclyde of Scotland, which was later transferred to De Montfort University in England. Under the editorship of J. A. Mangan, three research journals, namely “Culture, Sports, Society”, in 1998, “European Sport History Review” in 1999, and “Soccer and Society” in 2000, were published under “Frank Cass” publication, including the journal “Culture, Sports, Society”, which is currently published as “Sport in Society”. During this same period, a number of monographs and edited volumes were published under a series called “Sport in Global Society”, published by “Frank Cass”, which was later acquired by “Routledge” (Bandyopadhyay, 2019).

Although sports studies began in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, the practice of sports history originated in Britain, as sports studies in the United States were based on the concepts and theories of physical education and sports science. In contrast, the practice of sports history in Britain was based on social history practice and related theory. The history of sport in Britain has seen different trends in its evolution. Changes and evolution in the content of sports history can be observed across different time periods, broadening the scope of discussion. In the first phase, sports history was influenced by British social historiography. The tendency to see and write history from below, in social historiography, extends to sports history, making class concepts and discourses central to sports history. Richard Holt describes the importance of sport as part of working-class culture. In the book *Sport and The British: A Modern History*, Richard Holt provides a detailed account of sport in the British Isles since 1800, in which he compares traditional sports, Victorian amateur games, and popular sports among the working class, and he also describes how sports are connected with empire, national identity, and violence (Holt, 1989). Historian Tony Mason, in his book “Association, Football and English Society, 1863-1915” has highlighted the game as part of working-class culture. He describes play as both a means of class control and a means of class expression. He shows that through the game of football, on the one hand, the administrators wanted to develop moral consciousness among the people and control their behavior, and on the other hand, it became the field of expression of the own consciousness of the players and spectators (Mason, 1980). Historian J.A. Mangan describes the practice of sport in Victorian and Edwardian public schools and how it became an integral part of middle-class and upper-class culture (Mangan, 2000). Historian J.

Hargreaves described sport as a sophisticated means of social control of the masses (Hargreaves, 1986). In the second stage, the influence of Marxism and economic history consciousness is observed on the practice of sports history. Historian Wray Vamplew, in the book “Play Up and Play Game” applied Marxian theory to the history of sports. According to him, although professional sports were organized on a commercial basis, they were not all about profit (Vamplew, 1988). In the third stage, historians engaged in the investigation of how self-identity develops through sports, that is, how regional and national consciousness is formed through sports. The description of how regional identity is expressed through sport has also become a subject of sports history in Britain, and a number of studies have examined sport at the regional level. In this regard, the historian Richard Holt said, “Supporting a club and assembling with thousands of others like himself, a man could assert a kind of membership of the city, the heart of which was physically and emotionally his for the afternoon.” (Holt, 1988). Similarly, how the national spirit is expressed through sports or how sports become a symbol of nationalism is also an integral part of sports history writing. In the case of Wales, the games of rugby and football emerged as a means of forming national identity against the unified umbrella of England (Johnes, 2005). Similarly, football became integral to the formation of national identity in Scotland (Jarvie & Burnett, 2000). Analyzing the deep link between British imperialism and sport in the fourth phase becomes an interesting area of sports historiography. For the servants of the British Empire, the sports of their motherland were a means of maintaining a connection with the culture of the homeland and a way of enjoying their leisure. At the same time, efforts were made to spread British sports in the colonies so as to develop the British spirit among the people of the colonies. Later, however, nationalism developed in the colonies around these sports and became a cultural arena for protest against British superiority (Mangan, 1992). The study of British sports history has mainly revolved around important sports such as cricket, football, and rugby, and the multiplicity of these sports can be seen in the study of sports history. Barring some exceptional instances, women's participation in sports has also been neglected.¹

Sports historiography in India:

The study of the history of sports in India has largely focused on the games practiced during the colonial period. The traditional knowledge practice framework is the first Indian research on sports we know of, dating back to 1988. That year, Soumen Mitra presented his paper on the role of football in colonial Bengal at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, where he described how the historic Indian Football Association (IFA) Shield victory by Mohun Bagan in 1911 became a symbol of nationalism (Mitra, 1988), which was later published as a book (Mitra, 2006). Since the 1980s, Indian historians and sociologists have studied the history of cricket, perhaps the most popular sport in India. Ramachandra Guha has discussed the game of cricket during the colonial period in several of his essays, showing how the game became a means of expressing anti-colonialism and nationalism. He shows that cricket was initially taken up by India's upper classes, but later it gradually became an integral part of Indian society and culture. However, his discussion mainly focuses on Bombay and Madras, and despite the fact that Bengal was one of the main and important centers of sports culture during the colonial period, he ignores it. Although he has given a remarkable account of the impact of cricket on the public mind (Guha, 1992; Guha, 1998). He also describes the history of Indian cricket in the book *A Corner of a*

Foreign Field (Guha, 2014). Mihir Bose in his book *The Magic of Indian Cricket* (Bose, 2006), and Ashish Nandy in his book *"The Tao of Cricket"* have highlighted the history of Indian cricket (Nandy, 2000). Mario Rodriguez describes the political life of cricketer Ranjit Singh, which illuminates the history of cricket in India to a large extent (Rodriguez, 2003). Edward Docker (Docker, 1976) and Richard Cashman have researched the history of cricket in India (Cashman, 1980). Boria Majumder describes the social history of Indian cricket in his book *"Twenty Two Yards to Freedom"* (Majumdar, 2004).

Several research articles and books have also been written on football, another popular sport in India. Historian Tony Mason, in his article, *"Football on the Maiden: Cultural Imperialism in India,"* analyzes the role of football in British cultural domination of India and highlights the role of schools established by the British in spreading football among the upper-class people of India. He shows that the British army, mainly stationed in India, introduced the game of football to relieve the monotony of the army camp, to maintain their physical strength, and to instill discipline. Various football competitions were started in India around these army teams, and these army teams dominated all the competitions (Mason, 1992). Boria Majumder and Kaushik Banerjee, in their book *Goalies: The Story of a Unique Footballing Nation*, highlight the interrelationship and tension between the national, provincial, and regional levels in Indian football and also describe the reflection of imperialism, nationalism, communalism, and commercialism on the football field (Majumdar, 2006). Attempts to explain the role of football in South Asian societies in the 21st century were also observed among Western historians. One of the most brilliant reflections of this effort is the book *Soccer in South Asia*, edited by Paul Dimeo and James Mills. The book contains several essays on Indian football, through which an attempt has been made to find out the reasons for the popularity of football in Bengal, especially in the city of Calcutta, and the history of football between 1880 and 1947 has been highlighted (Dimeo & Mills, 2001).

J.A. Mangan describes the arrival of Western sports in colonial countries, their background, and their evolution in his book, *The Games, Ethics and Imperialism*. According to Mangan, the British regime tried to make Indians loyal subjects to the British rulers by introducing sports like cricket and football in government and missionary schools and colleges. According to him, sports, especially cricket, were seen as an ideal means of spreading British ideals among Indians (Mangan, 2003). Ronojoy Sen, in his book *"Nation at Play"*, presents a series of descriptions of various sports in India from ancient times to the post-colonial era (Sen, 2015). The book *"Subaltern Sports"*, edited by James Mills, sheds light on the subaltern trends and participation in the history of Indian sports (Mills, 2005). Most studies on the history of sports in India have mainly been confined to two popular sports, namely cricket and football. But now some bright exceptions are being observed in this field, as a result of which important issues like India in the Olympics or India and the Commonwealth Games have also been included in the practice of sports history. Joseph Alter has done the most significant research on indigenous sports in India. In the book *"The Wrestlers Body"* (1992), he presented the history of wrestling in India, especially in North India, from an anthropological perspective (Alter, 1992). Another example of this trend is the book *"Olympics: The Indian Story"*, written by Boria Majumder and Nalin Mehta, which discusses various indicators of India's success in Olympic competition (Majumdar & Mehta, 2008).

In the 21st century, several research projects on the history of sports can be found at various universities in West Bengal. Kaushik Bandyopadhyay chronicles the history of Bengal football from Mohun Bagan's historic IFA Shield victory in 1911 to the 1980s in his research, highlighting issues such as nationalism, communalism, and provincialism through the game (Bandyopadhyay, 2008). Suparna Bhattacharya has described women's contributions in her research (Bhattacharya, 2007). Amitabh Chatterjee discusses the sports culture in colonial Bengal in his research work (Chatterjee, 2014). Debashis Majumder, in his research, highlights the development of football in Bengal between 1858 and 1990, although his discussion mainly focuses on Kolkata (Majumder, 2016).

Conclusion:

Although various types of sports have been practiced in human society since ancient times, their inclusion as a subject of history is relatively new. Sports are an integral part of the cultural life of any society, which characterizes that society. Denying the importance of sports in today's society makes it impossible to gain accurate knowledge of society and culture. In a globalized society, they have taken on an international form, encompassing economic, political, social, and cultural issues. The game became a symbol of communal, regional, and national conflict. Also, various social divisions and cultural characteristics are reflected in the game. Sports have also become important in the television, film, tourism, and labour migration industries. Even violent incidents and anti-social or illegal acts are seen to take place around the game (Jarvie, 2006). Sport has social, cultural, political, and economic significance that can only be adequately understood if we go beyond the framework of traditional leisure or entertainment and interpret its significance in the context of broader history and culture.

Notes:

1. Some of the texts that have discussed women's participation in sports- A. Guttmann, *Women's Sports: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), J. Hargreaves, *Sporting Females: Critical Issues in the History and Sociology of Women's Sport*, (London: Routledge, 1994), Fan Hong and J.A. Mangan, eds., *Soccer, Women, Sexual Liberation* (London: Frank Cass, 2005).

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