CHAPTER II

MISHNA
Mukna or Wrestling was one of the oldest traditional games of the Meiteis. In most of the ancient texts, Mukna is described as *HOK MUKNA LENGPHAL CHAN MONGBA TAJIN KHURU YSTMABA*. However, the words *HOK MUKNA LENGPHAL CHAN (ba)* did not mean Meithei Mukna but a game played by the hill tribes which was akin to the former. The origin of this game was closely related with the creation myth of the Meiteis. According to the ancient texts, *Leithak Leikhara*, *Pudug*, and *Yundana Puya* which tell about the creation of the earth, Konglouton Louthiba (Pakhangba) wrestled with *Samaton Ayangba*, a horse deity which had wings. God Pakhangba caught Samaton Ayangba with the help of a trap, *Leikaplang*, and then wrestled with the horse entangling his leg to the legs of the horse. In the fight, he (Konglouton Louthiba) was helped by his wife, Chakha Khongchongnubi. She cut the wings, beard and mane of the horse. Atiya Guru Shidaba, the Supreme God also helped Konglouton Louthiba to arrest Samaton Ayangba, bringing Marjing or Marching out from his intestine. ¹ In the text, Thangmalon describes Thangmani Mara Ningthou (god Marjing) caught Samaton Ayangba using the technique of Mukna. The place where the deity horse was

¹ Leismolon Ariba - a Manuscript.
caught, was known as Leishching alias Sawu Tukeiching alias Leisatching Longmai\textsuperscript{2} situated in the north eastern part of the valley of Manipur.

Later on, during the period of Leinung Lonja Ariba, an incarnation of god Pakhangba, after a Khong-Kangjei match between the gods, Wongseba and Oknarel played an exhibition match showing the sixty-four techniques of Mukna. Favourite technique of Wongseba was Ningong, hip throw and that of Oknarel, his pet technique, Longkhrou, leg entangling throw.\textsuperscript{3}

In Leiharobsa, a religious festival of the Meiteis introduced by Khaba Leirelkhei in the four century B.C.\textsuperscript{4} Mukna was one of the important events. In Kanglei harobsa, there was a programme of Kangleithokpa known as Lai Nupi-Thiba, searching for a wife.\textsuperscript{5} In this programme, Mukna was an important item. Mukna contest for the first time in its history was held between Koriphaba and Tolong-khomba. This culture of Mukna of the Meiteis is inseparable

\textsuperscript{2}Ch.Hemchandra Khaba, 'Thangmailon',19, p.6.
\textsuperscript{3}Th.Kamal Singh, "Mukna Kangjeigi Amasung Sagolkangjeigi Houroakpham",Imphal,1985,p.11.
\textsuperscript{4}E.Nilkanta; "Manipuri Jagoi Seminarji Leiriba Kasak", 1971,p.25.
\textsuperscript{5}Kh.Chandrashekhar Singh; "Umanlai Khunda" 41/42 Issue, 1993,p.2.
from the religious festival. It should be studied in the
religious context. In almost all the haoba of the Mei-
teis, performed in respect of the Umaoais. The number
of which is given as four hundred\textsuperscript{6} including the haoba
of the progenitors of the Salais or clans, the item of
Mukna has become a tradition.

From the beginning, of all the seven clan of
Meiteis, Mangang clan was famous for Mukna Kangjei.\textsuperscript{7} In
Mukna, Khuman clan excelled all of the clans.\textsuperscript{8} Luwang clan
was not, however, inferior to any of the clans in the skill
of Mukna. Like other events, Mukna was also used as a
means to test the strength and skill of the persons. In
the fight between Nongia Lairen Pakhangba and Chingkhong
Poireiton when no one was victorious, they ultimately
agreed to the contest in the traditional style of Mukna.
In the contest Nongia Lairen Pakhangba came out victorious
and thus occupied the vacant throne of Kangla.

During the first part of the third century A.D.

\textbf{Nongban Pombi Luwaoba defeated Khamung Khoiphon Atonba}

\textsuperscript{6} Wahengbam Lukhoi Singh; "Laiharaoba", 1989, p.1.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
and his brother Thongak Lakaba in Mukna one after another using his own techniques of Mukna. As a result he was given back the soul of his beloved wife Koubru Namoiyu by Thongaral, god of death.  

It is well known that the local historical documents record the existence of a number of tribes. Among these several tribes, Mangang (Singthouja), Angom, Khuman, Luwang, Moirang, Khaba-Ngamba and Sarang-Leishangthem (Chenglei) became prominent for a few centuries beginning from 33 A.D. The history of Manipur is the history of struggle against each other salais for political supremacy. In the struggle, Mukna fight between two salais was not unknown. As recorded in Chaisarol, Thongbu Wainucha of Khuman Salai challenged Khoiri Tonjaoshu of Moirang in a spear fight at Weykhong. When the fight was ended in draw, they wrestled in the traditional style of Mukna in which Wainucha was killed by Khoiri Tonjaoshu using unfair and dangerous technique.  


As a matter of fact, ** Mukna ** was played by every male member, young and old, in the valley of Manipur. Moreover, it was necessary for military training too. In the villages the young boys were trained in ** Mukna ** by the expert elders and local competition were also organised periodically. The winners were awarded the title of ** Mukna Jatra**. This practice of conferring the title was also known in the Laiharaguva Mukna competition. This title was so high and great that many interested individuals went out of their village in search of better experts of ** Mukna ** for advanced training. ** Mukna ** contest between the villages, were also held in a village or among the villages of a particular province in the festival of ** Laiharaguva ** for the title of ** Mukna Jatra **. State competitions were also specially organised by the king in which the king himself, the queens, nobles were present. It is recorded in the royal chronicle that in 1661, during the reign of King Chandrakriti (1650-1682 A.D.), the game ** Mukna ** held between the two villages namely ** Leimanei ** and ** Ningthounai ** after the boat race and hockey match. In 1674,

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* ** Mukna Jatra**: It is the title given to an individual for a year who secured first position in the Mukna Competition recognised by the king or village authorities.

during his visit to Cachar to attend *Jilla Durbar* with Lord Northbrook, King Chandrakriti took with him many Mukna Jatras. Mukna exhibition was held at Silchar Polo ground after the Durbar. This game of Mukna was so attractive to the British officers that in 1905, on the initiation of Bor Shaheb, Col. J. Shakespeare, the King Churachand organised an exhibition match of Khong Kangjei between Thoubal and Phoijing at Imphal. A competition for Mukna Jatra was also held.  

In a meeting of Nikhil Hindu Manipuri Mahasabha under the chairmanship of King Churachand held on 30th May, 1934 at the Palace hall, the following resolutions were unanimously passed for the promotion of Manipur *Chang-Ta*, Mukna and Kangjei that clubs be established at different places by appointing qualified teachers and that tournaments be organised at the *Brabubahan Jayanti Utsab*.

**RULES**

In the beginning of this game of Mukna, certain rules were laid down. But many changes in the rules were introduced from time to time. In introducing the changes

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13 Ibid., p.540.


*Brabubahan Jayanti Utsab*: Birth day anniversary function of the king, Brabubahan.
in the rules, Laiharaoba played an important role in framing the rules of Mukna which were acceptable to all. In the fight between Pakhangba and Poireiton, Luwang Punshiba brought in certain rules of Mukna, the styles, costumes, grips and positional stance of narrowing down the centre of gravity remained the same, in accordance with the positions, various techniques were also developed and judges were appointed.

In Laiharaoba, Mukna competition between the two teams was held as a regular feature. Each team consisted of seven players, selected its own team players on the basis of their performance in the trial Yendunnara, they were given the positional names as Makok, Mathang, Lancing, Lancing Mathang, Ngamthang, Khomrei and Khomdon. However, the Mukna Jatra of the previous year was normally given the position of Makok without any trial. In most of the Laiharaobas, generally, two teams were competed in different names such as Laroj and Singloj, Lok-Khuba and Loklenba.

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16 This information is given by Khurajam Rabung, Tagol and a Mukna Jatra in Laiharaoba.

17 Ibid.
Mangsook and Phamen etc. Sometimes Mukna competitions among the individuals were also held. Any player or players coming from outside the village where the Laiharaoba was being held could participate in the Mukna Competition.

Unlike Mukna competition in Laiharaoba, a great State Pana Mukna Competition was held among the Panas in a year. In a pana team seven different positional names were given to the players as Jatra, Jatra Mathang, Langiei, Langiei Mathang, Langiei Mathang Ahum, Langiei Mari Mathang and Khondon. As was a tradition, the Mukna contest was first held between the Khadem and Leipham Panas. It was followed by the contest between Ahellup and Naherup. The winner of the two finally met for the title of state championship, Mukna Jatra. Under the patronage of the king of Manipur, Mukna game had become very popular. For its promotional activities the king established a minor department called 'Mukna Kanba', to look after the Mukna affairs.

18 N.S.Khalchandra Singh; 'Mukna' in Leilanka, a monthly journal, issued, 199 (ed.),Ch.Jamini Devi.
Since Mukna competition was held in presence of the king, the contestants before the start of the bout paid the traditional respect of the Meiteis prostrating themselves before the king. When a contestant was declared winner he paid salute to the king, leaping in the air, resounding slap with his right hand on his buttocks and crying, *Nahade, Jatrade, Leisang Jatrade* (name) *Shrivutki Maneide....* 21 In the words of the British officers, "The victor over the wrestler who completes with him, before salaming to the Raja, leaps up in the air, alighting on his left foot; as he descends he gives his right buttock a resounding slap with his right hand; having thus asserted his superior skill, he makes his salaam in the usual manner. 22

Outstanding Mukna jatras enjoyed many privileges in the social system of Manipur. They were accorded recognition and other favours such as the exemption from the lallup* duty for the rest of his life. 23 The champion jatra

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*Lallup: Lallup was a military organisation in which ten days regular service out of forty days during normal period.*
Plate No.1(a)
A COMMON LOCAL MUKNA BOUT

Plate No.1(b)
A TYPICAL STATE PANA MUKNA BOUT
was rewarded Pariphee* and Thumbo Namma*. It was also prevalent that even the village authority gave one Sangem* of paddy field as the reward for Mukna jatra till he retained the title for the particular area.  

PLAY FIELD:

In the past, Mukna was played in the open fields having the area of nine square lum (3 lum x 3 lum) approximately. But in the later period it was played at Kangjebung, Polo ground.

DRESS OR MUKNA COSTUME:

To play the game Mukna, a special Mukna costume was required. Ningri-Phijet, a long cloth, was the common Mukna costume. The cloth was tied around the waist as belt and the groin. The two ends of the cloth were tied at the back in a knot called "Huitri Lonjam". The size of the belt was not beyond the grip.

25 This information is given by Khurajam Fabung, Jagolband, Mukna Jatra in Laiharaoba.

*Pariphee: A cloth rewarded by the king instead of giving one pari of paddy field. This system was introduced by King Khagemba.
*Thumbo Namma: One hundred small plates of salt was called Thumbo Namma. It was given as reward along with others.
*Lum: The total length of the both arms including the chest is known as one lum.
*Sangem: One-by-four of a pari. A pari is equal to two and half acres (2.5 acres).
In presence of the royal audiences and in the big festival of Laiharaoba the costume of Ningkham Sam-jin* and Mana-pee* were also worn by the contestants who were entitled to use it. However, in Noirang Haraoba, Ningkham Samjim was allowed to be used by every contestant.

JUDGE:

Mukna experts or elderly retired Mukna jatras were appointed as judges to conduct the bout. There were two judges who checked the costumes and any other unwanted things such as long nails, oversized belt and other things which were dangerous to the contestants.

START OF THE BOUT

When both the contestants were ready for the bout they were brought in the centre of the arena by the judges in the poses that the knees were bending slightly.

*Ningkham Samjim: This costume was introduced by Anuyoi Tompek (154-264 A.D.) from the skin of the snake. It was especially designed to cover the back portion of the body. For every salai or clan had different colours viz. Angom worn white, Nangang and Luwang worn red and Ahuman and Chaba worn black etc.

*Mana-Phee: Clothes rewarded by the King.
their upper bodies were also bending forward parallel to the ground at least one and half feet so that trunks became straight along with the hands. Then they exchanged their hands properly to hold the grips. It was known as "Fhe Shinnaba". Then the judges said "Houro" with it, the bout was thus started.

*Khut Shinnaba* or exchange of hands of the two contestants was very important part of the Mukna bout. It was in this exchange that a contestant always took full advantage of the mistakes made by his rival. This was known as Chakri tounaba* which was never encouraged by the Mukna experts and spectators as well. In presence of the King, Chakri-tounaba was regarded as very improper and it was never done. Their hands were properly exchanged to take a firm hold of the belt properly. 27 This was known as Fhee-Shinnaba. In the bout, the contestant who attacked first with the technique of Mukna was known as Lou-Houba and the contestant who reacted in the defence of the technique was known as Lou-Okpa.


*Chakri Tounaba* : Excessive defence.
Techniques of the indigenous game of Mukna were invented in Manipur. No doubt, Longkhrou (leg entangling throw) was the first ever technique of Mukna. It was for the first time used by the god Konglouton Louthiba. Mongda Lairen Pakhangba defeated Poireiton in Mukna in defence of Khudong Avangba (lifting up high in the air and throw). All the Mukna techniques were known as Mukna-Lou or Lou. As stated above, there were sixtyfour techniques of Mukna but among them the following techniques can be mentioned.

1. Longkhrou (leg entangling throw)
2. Longkhrou-thak-in (leg entangling with shoulder pushing throw)
3. Kaplak Kotpi (Outer leg reap throw)
4. Khongchep-haibi (leg sweeping throw)
5. Khuk-U-theibi (knee blocking throw)
6. Ning-gong Langba (hip rolling throw)
7. Ning-gong hunba (hip spring throw)
8. Chep-ching (Floating throw)
9. Khudong machet (lifting up slightly in the air and throw)

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10. Khudong Haipu (Lifting up in the air and turning around and throw)
11. Khudong Awangba (Lifting up high in the air and throw)
12. Houdong Lou (Outside leg clip and throw)
13. Khut-ki-Ningong (Hand supporting hip throw)
14. Namei Yanba (Pulling up the goin belt and throw)
15. Heibong Kaba (Stamping toes above the knees and throw)
16. Khut-Shatpa (Hand holding throw)
17. Mukna Lengchup (Shoulder seizing throw)
18. U-nap-lou (Leg blocking throw)
19. Khudong Pung Yan (Body pressing throw)
20. Khong-chep Haipu (Orthodox leg sweeping throw)
21. Ngakthi Chappe (Neck holding throw)
22. Shuptek (Body crushing throw)
23. Chaokot (Body side drop)
24. Leng chep (Body corner drop)
25. Kok-Changbi (Body inverting throw)
27. Manung Khongchep (Sweeping legs from inside and throw)
28. Khong Shatpi (Leg removing throw), etc., etc. 29

Each technique has its own significance. Besides, there were many un-named techniques which can practically be used in the Mukna competitions. Leng-Louba, taking the advantageous position inserting the shoulder in the chest and Piraincaoko, resisting of the hips coming for close fight with the help of the hands keeping straight were also technically used in Mukna.

FOULS

The use of fouls was strictly prohibited. The following methods were contrary to the Mukna rules.

1) holding below the hip or thigh or any other parts of the leg,
2) attacking the opponent's face with fist, nose with knee and
3) Chokking the neck and pulling the hair etc.

In the contest no player caught hold of the groin of the rival as the opponent might react to him in the same manner or it might lead to another start if he gave up the grip as a protest. Kicking inside the inner thigh by in-step and holding the neck with hand were permitted.
DURATION

There was no time limit in Mukna. It depended upon the superiority of the contestant to his rival in techniques and strength. In an unusual lengthy bout, the judge or judges only cautioned the contestants. But the system of awarding penalty to any of the contestant was not known in Mukna.

HOW TO WIN

The contestant, who successfully threw his opponent to the ground was declared winner. In case of falling of the two contestants together with the sides of the bodies on the ground, in the application of Mukna technique, the contest was decided from the position of the legs or in favour of the contestant whose head was above the head of his rival. If they fell apart, the contestant who fell with his back on the ground was declared defeated and thus the decision went in favour of the other contestant who fell with his chest on the ground. Sometimes, a contest was decided without any fight if one of the contestant touched the ground with his palm or with his knee. In Manipur, it was a custom among the contestants that the winner pulled the defeated around and encouraged him in his techniques of Mukna in the best interest of the sport.
DRAW

Sometimes the contest ended in a draw if the two contestants fell together with the sides of the bodies or with the backs together on the ground. This kind of falling was known as Pheida. After Pheida, another start was made. If the contestant failed to throw his rival to the ground throughout the contest, it was declared as ended in a draw. In the competition between the Mukna Jatras there was no question of a restart after Pheida. Both of them were declared winners or joint winners.