

Modern Sports and Imperial Solidarity: Sports, Mutiny and British Army in Colonial Malabar (1900-1930)

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Abstract : The British administration at Malabar, the southern coastal commercial outpost in the Indian Subcontinent, faced with a series of perpetual revolts from the Mappila Muslim peasants during the last decades of the 19th and early decades of the 20th century. The control of Malabar region was a concern for the British administrators as the region was a prime centre of spice trade and plantation products. The Madras government set up a special police battalion called the Malabar Special Police in 1884 and summoned different army battalions to Malabar to crush the revolts. The setting up of army camps in the rural Malabar led to the diffusion of modern sports as the army men played different games in the garrisons and with the local people. For the imperial army men deployed in Malabar, sports acted as a viable medium to strengthen solidarity with other European settlers. They actively participated in the 'Canterbury Week', an annual sporting event organized by the European planters and organized tournaments among themselves. This paper would argue that, sports enabled the imperial army men, European planters and British administrators to build camaraderie that enabled them to manifest their imperial solidarity during the time of these constant revolts. Based on newspaper reports and colonial memoirs, this paper would look at how modern sports enabled the imperial army men to be 'good in health' and create a feeling of 'being at home' during this period.

Keywords : imperial army, Malabar, modern sports, mutiny

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