

CHILDREN'S GAMES IN CHIANGSAEN*

การละเล่นของเด็กเชียงใหม่

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to present some children's games in Chiangsaen District, (particularly in Hangwiang village) Chiang Rai Province. The children's games in this district are similar to those of all the northern part of Thailand but different in names and methods of playing, such as mak ba (mà:k bâ:), mak kep mai (mà:k kèp má:y), etc. This paper shows how to play the games as well as the effect of games on children's psychological and physical development.

บทคัดย่อ

การละเล่นของเด็กเชียงใหม่ ผู้เขียนได้รวบรวมจากการละเล่นของเด็กในหมู่บ้านทางเวียง ตำบลเวียง อำเภอเชียงแสน จังหวัดเชียงราย ผู้เขียนไม่ได้ตั้งใจที่จะรวบรวมวิธีการเล่นทั้งหมดของเด็กเชียงใหม่ แต่ต้องการหยิบยกการละเล่นบางอย่างที่น่าสนใจมาให้พิจารณาคุณในแง่ของการเรียนรู้ การปรับตัว และดูความคิดริเริ่มสร้างสรรค์ของเด็กในขณะที่เด็กเล่นกับเพื่อน ผลจากการเรียนรู้ในขณะที่เด็กเล่นมีความสัมพันธ์กับการเรียนรู้ในชั้นเรียนของเด็กอย่างไร

INTRODUCTION

When discussing children, children's games is one of the topics that must be discussed. Children play games to have fun. Their playmates are the boys and girls from school or neighbors. They enjoy playing together on the playground at school.

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If children have neighbors at the same age, their parents encourage them to play together as this kind of experience is the best way for children to learn. When they play together, they feel that they are members of their peer-group. It helps them feel warm and happy and they are not lonely when they play with others. If their parents do not encourage them to play together, because they do not want their children to learn bad behavior from their friends, it will block and not encourage the beginning of their children's life. Environment and friends are factors which affect children's learning and development. They need to be given opportunity to develop physically, mentally and emotionally so they will be able to adapt themselves to the changing situations of their lifetime.

The children's games in Chiangsaen referred to in this paper are only some of all the games. The purpose of this paper is not to collect all of the methods of playing games but to show how some games can be played and how they benefit children's psychological and physical development. We can observe their behavior and creative thinking when children play together. Some things that children learn from playing games are basic to further learning in school.

Children in Hangwiang village, Chiangsaen District, Chiang Rai Province, play the same games as children in other parts of Thailand, but with different names. There are little girls' games such as Re-Re-Khawsan, Chamchi ma khuaproq, (chamchi ma khuap^{pr}?) Pongpang (po:ŋ pa:ŋ) and Mon-sonpha (mɔ:n sɔ:npha:), etc. The children have their toy guns and horses which their parents make from banana branches. Children learn to play with things natural to their environment. Their toys are often common things from around the house. When they grow up and go to school, they have more friends and learn many more kinds of games that they can play because children learn how to play new games from their friends. While growing up, children play games which are good for their health, such as jumping-rope, jumping and hopping games and games of dexterity. Children learn how to adjust themselves to each other when they play together. Playing games helps them to develop their physical and mental health and train them to have good attitudes.

Geography

Hangwiang village is in Tambon Wiang, Chiangsaen District, Chiang Rai Province. The province itself is in northern Thailand on the Mekong River which is the border between Laos and Thailand. The village temple, Pongsanuk Temple, is situated facing the river with some space around the main building where boys and girls can play in the evening. The main street of the village runs along the shore of the Mekong River. The people of this village earn their living by fishing in the river. Pla Buk (pla: buk) is the best known fish in this river as it is the largest fish, and good tasting and sells for a high price. There are rice plantations and tobacco plantations outside the village. Some people work in the tobacco factories; there are three factories in Chiangsaen District. In summer, boys and girls like to work in the tobacco factories after they have finished their examinations. They make money in order to help their

parents and collect some money for their school fees for the next semester. In the tobacco factories there are also large areas for boys and girls to play when they have finished their work.

Games presented in this paper cover all kind of games: outdoor, indoor, played by boys or girls. Sometimes insects are included in some game such as stag beetle in Chon Kwang.

Umlum-Umlum Khaw

This game is an elimination game.

Place — outside

Players — boys and girls.

Method of playing —

Two older girls stand face to face and hold their hands up making an archway. The other children stand in line and hold on to each other's waist or shoulders. Then the line of children goes through the arch; while they are walking they are chanting together this rhyme

ʔúm lúm ʔúm lúm kháv	Become round, become round + enter,
câw câw mĕ : man ʔò:k	“câw câw” mother gives birth
ʔò:k pen sip pen sa:w	Born are ten or twenty
to: niŋ ró:ŋ bĕ : bĕ:	one cries “bĕ be”
to: dam dam ʔò:k ma: kò:n	black black is born first
to : ʔò:n sú: ʔò:n sò:n num lăy	pretty one comes after.

When the rhyme is finished, the two girls bring their arms down, catching the last one. Both of them will ask the last one to choose, “whom would you like to live with?”. Then they let her go free and the game will begin again.

The children try to avoid being caught, but the object is for the two older children to catch everybody at least once. When they have caught the last one, the game is finished.

The children enjoy this game; they sing while they play together and they are all happy.

Itak

The object of this game is for each girl to try to accumulate the greatest number of seeds.

Kind of game — game of dexterity

Place — inside the house

Players — girls

Necessary items — tamarind seeds

— piece of paper

Method of playing—

The girls bring equal numbers of tamarind seeds and collect them together, before they start to play. They choose the playing order by drawing straws (sticks) of various lengths.

Sitting on the floor, the first player takes all the seeds in her hand and gently tosses them on the floor. She takes a small piece of paper and folds one end, forming a scoop and then scoops up the seeds one by one. She must avoid touching any other seed than the one she is trying to get. If she touches any others the turn goes to the next person, and she keeps those seeds which she successfully scooped up.

The winner is the girl who has the most seeds at the end of the game.

Variation for playing Itak

The first player gently tosses the tamarind seeds on the floor, selects one seed and uses it to flick with her finger (or thumb), trying to touch each seed, one by one, picking up each one when successful. If the player misses hitting any seed or hits more than one at a time, she loses her turn.

Another variation is to use one hand as a substitute for a hole in the ground. After tossing the seeds on the floor, the player cups her hand on the floor forming a half circle. Then she flicks the seeds one by one with a finger (or thumb) into the hole. She must be careful not to move her hand, as she will lose her turn if the seed bounces out of the hole or if she touches another seed.

This game helps develop dexterity and patience.

Mak kep (Mai)

Mak kep is a Thai folk game using marbles which girls like to play. When they play they sit on the floor like in Itak and begin by one girl tossing five marbles on the floor. Using one marble to throw up in the air, the player quickly picks up a marble from the floor before catching the marble. If she misses getting any marble or can't catch the one she is throwing, she loses her turn.

Mak Kep Mai is a stick game.

Place	— inside
Players	— girls
Items needed	— 10 sticks (about 1 ft length)
	— one lemon

Method of playing —

The first girl tosses the sticks on the floor, throws the lemon up in the air and before catching it, picks up one stick. After successfully picking up the 10 sticks one at a time, she tosses the sticks on the floor again and picks up 2 sticks at a time. She increases the number each time until doing all 10.

For the 3rd test, she tosses the sticks on the floor again, throws the lemon up in the air, and before catching it, picks up one stick and places it between 2 fingers. This is continued until the free hand is holding sticks between all the fingers. Then the next 2 sticks picked up are placed and held under the armpits. At this point, when the player throws the lemon, she takes one stick from under her arm and quickly throws it under one leg (which she has stretched out) before catching the lemon. She repeats until all 10 sticks have been collected.

If she misses catching the lemon, she loses her turn. (This step is very difficult to achieve.)

Results of this game are that the player trains her eyesight and her hand to catch something correctly and learns to make quick decisions.

Mak Khang

Mak Khang or Luk Khang is a toy that spins on a point, the same as a top.

Boys like to play with tops. Playing with tops is a popular Thai folk-game as evidenced by the many different shapes of tops and methods of playing found throughout Thailand.

Boys usually make tops by themselves. (Sometimes adults make them for their sons). They are always hand-made toys.

Kind of game	— game of dexterity
Place	— outside
Players	— boys
Necessary items	— tops and string
Objective of playing	— develop dexterity and patience

Method of playing —

The players draw a circle on the ground before they start to play. They choose the playing order by spinning their tops round and round, then quickly retrieving them. The last one has to put his top down as a target for everybody else's top to hit. The boys aim their tops at the target top until it is knocked out of the circle. If someone misses, his top will be the target the next turn.

All boys know the rules of the game and should follow them. Sometimes they play with much emotion and become upset or angry when their top is being hit. Everybody wants to be a winner in this game.

While a boy practices alone, spinning his top round and round, he has more time to think about how to become more skillful at it. He improves in his ability in pulling the string in manipulating the top. He just knows about spinning it. However, specific scientific principles of physics will be easier to understand when he grows up.

If we observe children's behavior when they are playing, we can see their creative thinking process, like when they draw a circle by using a long stick and then walk backward. Their next step is knowing how to draw a circle by using a long string as a radius. Then when they grow up they understand the principles of arithmetic very clearly.

Mak Ba

Mak Ba or Saba means "The nut of snuffbox bean", a pitch-and-toss game played with these nuts. The following folk-tale named "Hong-Hin" in Lumpang Province tells of the history of this game.

"Once upon a time there was a king of Paranasi City. He had six sons. When they were children, the King told the goldsmith to make golden nuts (called golden saba) for his sons.

The six princes used to play outside with the other children outside the palace. One of them was a young boy who was the King's son from the first queen (but she was driven out of the palace).

When this young boy saw the six princes playing with their golden nuts, he wanted to play with them but he had no nuts. So he went home and asked his mother to find some for him. His mother found some snuffbox bean nuts growing in the forest for him. He brought the nuts to play with the six princes, but they would not play with him, because his nuts were not made of gold. Then the young boy took his magic sword to show them and they agreed that if he were the loser, he would give the magic sword to the six princes. The six princes wanted the magic sword so they agreed to play with him. But the princes lost their golden nuts in playing the game all the time. Since that time this game is the best known game in Paransi City.

Saba (sábã) is a Thai folk game. Boys in the northern and northeastern part of Thailand are fond of playing this game. They get the seeds from the forest.

Kind of game	— game of dexterity
Place	— outside
Players	— boys
Items needed	— nuts or seeds
Objective of playing	— develop dexterity and patience

Method of playing —

The boys bring equal numbers of seeds (more than 3) and pool them together before they start to play. They choose the playing order by tossing up a coin.

They line up the seeds close together on the ground, each boy keeping one seed. The first player stands about 3-4 ft away from the line. He aims his one seed at the others on the ground. He must use the fingers of both hands to send the nut spinning towards the line of nuts. This requires much practice and skill. He collects the nuts which he hits successfully. If he does not hit any he loses his turn, and the next boy plays.

Mai Hung

Mai Hung is a game played with sticks in the country. Children play it during daytime because they needed the light to see.

Place	— outside
Players	— boys and girls play together
Items needed	— 1 long stick about 12" — 1 short stick about 6"

Method of playing —

Boys and girls play together, divided into two sides, each side having at least 5 players. One side begins to play and the other side catches the stick.

The first side digs a small hole in the ground, puts the short stick across the hole and uses the long stick to fling the short one out. The second side tries to

catch the short stick by using their hands. If they cannot catch the stick they may try kicking it back to the hole. A player puts the long stick across the hole. The second side throws the short stick trying to hit the long one which is over the hole. If it misses, continue the second step, a player flings the short one out, and tries to hit it back when the second side throws the short one to the hole, if the short one is more than 10 ft far from the hole, the second side will be a loser. The first side punishes them by hitting the short one out from the hole, the members of the second side run from the place that the short one falls into the hole and from the hole to the place that the short one falls one by one.

Then continue to the next game, the second side puts the short stick across the hole and uses the long stick to fling the short one out. The first side tries to catch the short stick by using their hands. If the first side is successful, the second side loses their turn.

The benefits of this game are:—

1. to train the player to be an active person.
2. to develop his skill in catching sticks with his hands.
3. to develop ability to focus his eyesight.
4. to improve quick decision-making ability.
5. to nurture a spirit of unity in playing with other.

Sue Kham Huay

Sue Kham Huay is a game which helps develop skill in jumping. Boys and girls both like to play this game, however they usually play separately. Three to eight children usually play this game together.

Kind of game	— jumping game
Place	— outside
Players	— boys and girls

Methods of playing —

One child acts as a huay (a brook) and the others are the sue (tigers). The “brook” goes through a series of steps making it increasingly difficult for the “tigers” to cross successfully.

For the first step, the “brook” sits on the ground, stretching his leg out for the “tigers” to jump over one by one.

In the second step, the brook places his second leg on top of the first one.

In the third step, he stretches out his left arm on top of the legs.

In the fourth step, he stretches out his right arm in the same manner.

In the fifth step, he changes his position and sits crouching like a frog.

In the sixth step, he raises and lowers his left elbow up and down.

In the seventh step, he moves his other elbow up and down the same way.

In the eighth step, he stands up and bends over until his fingers touch his toes.

The “tigers” continue jumping across the “brook” throughout these eight steps, being careful not to touch the brook. If somebody touches the brook, he then becomes the brook immediately.

If all the tigers are successful, at the end of the game they get to punish the brook by carrying him off. Then they all try to run back to the original site without getting caught by the brook. While they are running they yell, "Who can be caught by the brook?" whoever gets caught becomes the next brook.

Chon Kwang

Kwang (kwà:ŋ) is a kind of insect or stag beetle. There are various kinds of stag beetles but the two kinds used for fighting are kwang song (kwà:ŋ sò:ŋ) and kwang sam (kwà:ŋ sa:m).

Owners of stag beetles must take special care of them. They tie one of its legs onto a piece of sugarcane. These beetles like to eat sugarcane, bananas and certain kinds of gourds.

Every morning the owners spray water on the beetles by blowing some on them. This helps make the beetles strong. Some boys have been known to use tricks to try to win beetle-fighting contests. One such trick is mixing tobacco with their opponent's beetle's water, causing it to become drunken and weak.

In the cooler months of October and November boys in northern Thailand are fond of fighting their beetles.

Insect fighting is a game of chance which boys like very much.

Place	— outside
Players	— 2 boys
Items needed	— 2 stag beetles (male) (a female stag beetle — optional) — sugarcane

Method of playing—

Two beetles are fighting on the fiber plant, the beetles use the legs in fighting. Two beetles try to push each other back. During fighting, if the owner sees that his beetle is not fighting he will bring a female beetle near for his male beetle to smell, it will gain strength. Hopefully the male beetle will be inclined to fight again.

CONCLUSION

The writer hopes that through this study of children's games in Chiangsaen, there will be increased understanding of children's behavior in general and of the children and culture of Chiangsaen District in particular. Children's games in this district are similar to those of all parts of Thailand but different in names and words used in each game. Learning about children's games helps us to understand their culture, family life and their behavior.

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