

**SECOND WORLD WAR AND SOUTHERN MANIPUR**

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

**S. LALTHAMUAN VAIPHEI**

**MZU REGISTRATION NO:1900188**

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**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

**JUNE, 2022**

**SECOND WORLD WAR AND SOUTHERN MANIPUR**

**BY**

**S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei**

**Department of History & Ethnography**

**School of Social Sciences**

**Supervisor**

**Prof. Lalingurliana sailo**

**Submitted**

**In partial fulfilment of the requirement of the degree of Master of Philosophy in  
History of Mizoram University, Aizawl.**



**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY  
MIZORAM UNIVERSITY  
AIZAWL: MIZORAM**

Phone: 0389-2330531/0389-2330410

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This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “*Second World War and Southern Manipur*” submitted by **S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original research work done under my supervision and guidance. The dissertation submitted by him 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 in any university. I also certify that the dissertation represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

Date: 24 June 2022  
Place: Aizawl

Supervisor  
(Prof. Lalingurliana Sailo)  
Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University

**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

**JUNE, 2022**

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I S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, hereby declare that the subject matter of this dissertation is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this dissertation did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the dissertation has not been submitted by me for any research degree in other Universities/Institutes.

This is being submitted to Mizoram University for the Degree of Master of Philosophy in the Department of History & Ethnography.

(S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei)

Candidate

(Prof. K. Robin)  
Head

Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University












(Prof. Lalngurliana Sailo)  
Supervisor












Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Manipur – Land, and People

The State of Manipur has its own beauty with the Imphal valley surrounded by a range of Hills and is rightly called 'The Jewel of India' by Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister. Lord Irwin described Manipur as the 'Switzerland of India' due to its exotic landscape, green valley, blue lakes, and dense forest. Along with this, Mrs Grimwood writes,

'Manipur! How well I remember the first time I ever heard the name - a name, to which I was comparatively unknown three short years ago, owing to the fact that it belongs to a remote little tract of country huddled amongst hills and difficult of access, .... A pretty place, more beautiful in its habitable parts, but more beautiful in those tracts covered with forest jungle where foot of the man seldom treads, and the stillness of which is only broken by the weird cry of the hoolock or the scream of a night-bird haunting its prey.' 2

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S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY & ETHNOGRAPHY**

**MIZORAM UNIVERSITY**

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**STATEMENT ON ANTI-PLAGIARISM**

It is hereby certified that the M. Phil dissertation entitled, “*Second World War and Southern Manipur*” is the result of Master of Philosophy research programme and have not taken recourse to any form of Plagiarism in any of the chapters of the dissertation, except for quotations, from published and unpublished sources which are clearly indicated and acknowledged as such. The source material from works such as books, articles, essays, interviews and internet sources are properly acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases are clearly indicated. This dissertation or any version of it has not been previously submitted to any university and the same has not yet been published.

(S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei)  
MZU/M.Phil./608 of 12.06.2020  
Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University

(Prof. Lalngurliana Sailo)  
Supervisor  
Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Manipur – Land, and People

The State of Manipur has its own beauty with the Imphal valley surrounded by a range of Hills and is rightly called ‘The Jewel of India’ by Jawaharlal Nehru, India’s first Prime Minister. Lord Irwin<sup>1</sup> described Manipur as the ‘Switzerland of India’ due to its exotic landscape, green valley, blue lakes, and dense forest. Along with this, Mrs Grimwood writes,

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The word Manipur is made up of two Sanskrit words ‘Mani’ meaning ‘Jewel’ and ‘Pura’ which means ‘land/place’. It is being translated as ‘Jewelled land’. Historically, Manipur was commonly described by different neighbouring people with the various name; to Shans it was known as ‘Kase’, and to the Burmese as ‘Kathe’, a corrupt form of the same word. Ahoms called it ‘Makeli’ and the inhabitants of Cachar called it Moglie, while others in Assam name it Mikli.<sup>3</sup> In the memories of James Rennel it is called ‘Meckley.’<sup>4</sup> The narrative of Symes and the

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Irwin was appointed as the 30<sup>th</sup> Viceroy and Governor-General of India (1926-1931).

<sup>2</sup> Ethel St. Clair Grimwood, *My Three Years in Manipur and Escape from Recent Mutiny*, London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1891, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Yule and A.C. Burnell, *A glossary of colloquial Anglo-Indian words and phrases*, London, Murray, 1903, p. 597. Also see Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma*, London, Trubner & Co. 1883, p. 3. & see R. Brown, *Native State of Manipur and The Hill territory Under its Rule*, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> James Rennel, *Memoir of a Map of Hindustan: The Mogul Empire*, London, Kessinger Publishing, 1793, p. 295.

maps of that period give the name ‘Cassay’ to this country.<sup>5</sup> It is called ‘Maithilaipak’<sup>6</sup> or ‘Kangleipak’ to the Meiteis. However, the word Manipur has become famous and known only in the modern age.

### **1.1.1 Geographical Area of Manipur**

The State’s total geographical area was recorded as 22,347 sq. km. in the 1961 Census. It was recorded as 22,356 sq. km. in 1971 Census however it was recorded as 22,327 square kilometres in 1981 Census. The area of the State has remained the same as 22,327 square kilometres in 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses.<sup>7</sup> The hilly areas cover 90% which is inhabited by the Hill tribes and the other 10 percent by the Meiteis and some portion by tribals. Its State lies between Longitude 94° 47’ East of Greenwich and Latitude 23° 50’-25° 50’ North, covering 8628 square miles. In 1952, the first Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, permanently ceded (as a gift) the Kabaw valley to the Burmese government as a token of peace. But in the olden days the boundary was much bigger than its present size with fluctuations at various stages.<sup>8</sup> The State’s two primary rivers are the Imphal and Barak river, ‘the former with its tributaries draining the valley, the hills immediately surrounding it and the Southern Hills and the latter draining the Northern and Western hills.’<sup>9</sup> The Imphal river flows through the Chin Hills and the Kale Valley into the Chindwin river of Burma, and the Barak river flows through Cachar and the Surma Valley into the lower Brahmaputra.

### **1.1.2 The People of Manipur**

The groups of people who lived in Manipur can be classified into three i.e., Kukis, Nagas and Meiteis. Meiteis inhabiting the valley and 33 tribes in the hills divide into two main categories, namely Kukis and Nagas. Under the Meiteis, Bamons

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<sup>5</sup> Yule and Burnell, *A Glossary of Anglo-Indian Words*, p. 597

<sup>6</sup> Brown, *Native State of Manipur*, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Economic Survey of Manipur*, Imphal, Government of Manipur, 2013-2014, p. 22.

<sup>8</sup> *History of Manipur-an Independent Kingdom (A.D 33-1949)*, [website]

[http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2710/1/11/11\\_chapterpercent203.pdf](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/2710/1/11/11_chapterpercent203.pdf), (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

<sup>9</sup> MSA, *Administration Report of Manipur*, 1937-38, p. 1.

(Brahmins), Meitei Pangans (Muslims) were also included. To the outsider, all the Meities speak Meiteilon or Manipuri. In addition to the Meiteis, the valley is also inhabited by Nepalis, Bengalis, Marwaris, and along with some hill tribes. Col. Shakespear, in his book *'Lushai Kuki Clans'*, has mentioned that Aimol, Chiru, Koireng, Kom, Purum, Anal, Lamkang, Moyon, Monsang, Gangte, and Vaiphei were Old Kukis, while Simte, Paite, Zou, Hmar, and Thadou were listed as the New Kukis. Prior to 1950, the Aimol, Anal, Chothe, Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Koireng, Koirao, Kom, Lamkang, Lushai (Mizo), Moyon, Monsang, Paite, Purum, Ralte, Simte, Sukte, Thadou, Vaiphei, and Zou were placed in the Kuki category.<sup>10</sup> The Naga group consists of Zeliangrong (composed of three related tribes, namely, Rongmei or Kabui, and Liangmei and Zemei or Kacha Nagas), Tangkhul, Mao, Maram, Maring, and Tarao. However, several Kukis communities have identified themselves as Nagas in recent times. For instance, Moyon, Monsang and Anal switch to the Naga identity. According to G. Kabui, the Anal are culturally Kuki but politically Naga. Perhaps, its geo-political advantages and inter-clans' rivalry can be the factor that abandoned their old identity. On the other hand, Hmar (Old Kuki) claimed to be neither Kuki nor Naga, rather a distinctive identity.

Despite being geographically and politically divided by the landforms and the number of tribes, Manipur is strongly united by the typical lifestyle followed across different tribes such as the foods they eat, the core reason of the festivals they celebrate, and the bright colours in the clothes they wear. According to the details from 2011 census, Manipur has a total population of 2,855,794 of which male and female are 1,438,586 and 1,417,208 respectively,<sup>11</sup> out of which 57.2% live in valley and the remaining 42.8% in the hill districts. As per Census report of 1941, Manipur had a total population of 512,069.

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<sup>10</sup> S.P. Vaiphei, 'The Kukis', in N. Sanajaoba (ed.), *Manipur - Past and present: The ordeals and heritage of a civilisation (Vol. III: Nagas and Kuki-Chins)*, Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1995, p. 127.

<sup>11</sup> *Manipur Population 2011-2021*, [website] <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/state/manipur.html> (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

### 1.1.3 Brief Historical Background of Manipur

Manipur remained isolated from the rest of the world for a long time except from her neighbours until the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) mainly due to the absence of good roads and surrounded by hill ranges. E.W. Dun writes, 'The Invasion of Manipur by Alompra must have been most disastrous to the inhabitants of that country. For the first time, they then sought external aid and appeared a few years after as supplicants for British protection. Oogut Shah, having been expelled from the throne two years before the invasion of Alompra, appears from the communications of Mr Verelst, who was then Chief of Chittagong, in the year 1762, to have endeavoured to interest the British Government in his behalf...'<sup>12</sup>

Though contact between Manipur and the British happened a long way back, the British did not have the intention to capture Manipur. The penetration of the British into the interior and frontier parts of Northeast India was partly their (British) desire to explore trade potentialities as well as expansion of their trade relations with China and Burma (Myanmar), and also partly due to the invitation for defence by the local native people.<sup>13</sup> At the initial stage of British rule in North East India, their defence power was not very strong. During that period, Manipur had seen several conflicts among the royal family in a fight for the throne. Consequently, with the death of the ruler of Manipur, Bhagyachandra (Ching-Thang Khomba), Manipur entered into a period of dispute among the sons for succession.<sup>14</sup> During this dispute, Burma took advantage and invaded Manipur in the year 1819 and occupied it for seven years which was known as 'Chahi Taret Khuntakpa' (Seven Years Devastation) till 1826.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> E.W. Dun, *Gazette of Manipur*, Delhi, Manas Publication, 1992, p. 39.

<sup>13</sup> D. L. Haokip, 'The Role of North-East India in the Indian National Movement 1857-1947: With special reference to the contribution of the Kukis' in the Research Update - *An Interdisciplinary Journal of the Manipur University Research Club*, Vol. II, June-November, 2007, p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> P.T. Hitson Jusho, *Politics of Ethnicity in North-East India with special reference to Manipur*, New Delhi, Regency Publications, 2004, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Jusho, *Politics of Ethnicity*, p. 5.

The Burmese occupation is known to be the darkest period in the History of Manipur.<sup>16</sup> With the political authority of Manipur under the Burmese, the British feared that the Burmese forces might attack their position. As a result, tension arose between the Burmese and the British. Gambir Singh took this as an advantage and approached the British for their assistance in fighting against the Burmese. The British declared War on Burma in 1824, and the Burmese army was defeated.<sup>17</sup> The Burmese king has no option but to enter into a peace treaty. In 1826 the Treaty of Yandaboo was signed, and Gambir Singh was recognised as the king of Manipur. With the defeat of Burma, Manipur once again regains its independence.

Succession contest happened again among members of the royal family of Manipur after the death of Maharaja Chandrakirti Singh, which led to the Imphal disaster of 1891. The high-ranking British officers, including J.W. Quinton, the then Chief Commissioner of Assam, and Mr. Frank Grimwood, the new Political Agent, were murdered.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, War was declared and led to the defeat of Manipur by the British. After the loss, Churachand Singh was appointed as the king, and in the following year in 1892, Manipur became a princely state under British suzerainty. Accordingly, the administration of the State came under the influence of a political agent by vesting all executive power in him. Further, 'though Raja Churachand Singh was handed over the administration of the state of Manipur, his jurisdiction was confined to the valley.'<sup>19</sup> The indirect rule system was introduced by the British. They did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Hill tribe's villages under this system. The Hill house tax Rs 3/- per household per year was introduced by them. They made the chiefs or the headmen of the villages responsible for the administration of the villages.<sup>20</sup> Slowly, Manipur lost its independence from the rest of the world from 1891. Eventually, 'The Manipur Merger Agreement', signed on

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<sup>16</sup> *Statistical Handbook of Manipur*, Lamphelpat, Directorate of Economics & Statistics of Manipur, 2017, p. iv.

<sup>17</sup> L.W. Shakespear, *History of Assam Rifle*, Delhi, Cultural Publishing House, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> Jusho, p. 6.; See Geoffrey Evans & Antony Brett-James, *Imphal: A Flower on Lofty Heights*, London, Macmillan & Co LTD, 1962, p. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Brigadier Sushil Kumar Sharma, 'The complexities of Tribal Land Rights and Conflict in Manipur: Issues and Recommendations', *Vivekananda International Foundation, Volume VIII*, 2017, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Sharma, *Vivekananda International Foundation*, p. 5.

21<sup>st</sup> September 1949 at Shillong between Shri V.P. Menon, Adviser to the Government of India, Ministry of States, on behalf of the Dominion of India and the then Maharaja of Manipur Shri Bodha Chandra Singh. The total area which the Manipur merger agreement covered was his territory of 700 square miles or 26,500 paris/hectares.<sup>21</sup> The hill areas was excluded under this agreement. No chiefs among the hill tribes were invited to sign the accession agreement along with the Maharaja of Manipur.

In the post-Independence India, the legislative assembly<sup>22</sup> was dissolved on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1947, and the State was merged into India as a part “C” State on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1949. The president of India administered it through a Chief Commissioner. Thus, it was made a Union Territory under the Union Territorial Council Act, 1956. Manipur along with Tripura and Meghalaya became a full-fledged State in 1972 by the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971.

## **1.2 The Administrative Division of Manipur**

Manipur is comprised of nine districts, namely, Bishnupur, Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, Senapati, Ukhrul, Tamenglong and Thoubal. On 9 December, 2016, the Manipur government issued a gazette notification creating seven new districts by carving out and bifurcating the State’s existing nine districts. This took the total number of districts in the State to 16. The seven newly created districts are Kangpokpi (a long-standing demand made by the Kukis for a separate Sadar Hills district carved out from Senapati District); Tengenoupal District carved out from Chandel; Pherzawl district carved out from Churachandpur; Noney district carved out from Tamenglong; Jiribam district carved out from Imphal East; Kamjong district carved out from Ukhrul; Kakching district carved out from Imphal valley and some parts of Chandel.

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<sup>21</sup> Sharma, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> This Legislative Assembly was initiated by the Manipuris who were influenced with the Civil Disobedience Movement started by Mahatma Gandhi since 1939. The Maharaja also accepted but was dissolved by the Maharaja himself on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1947.

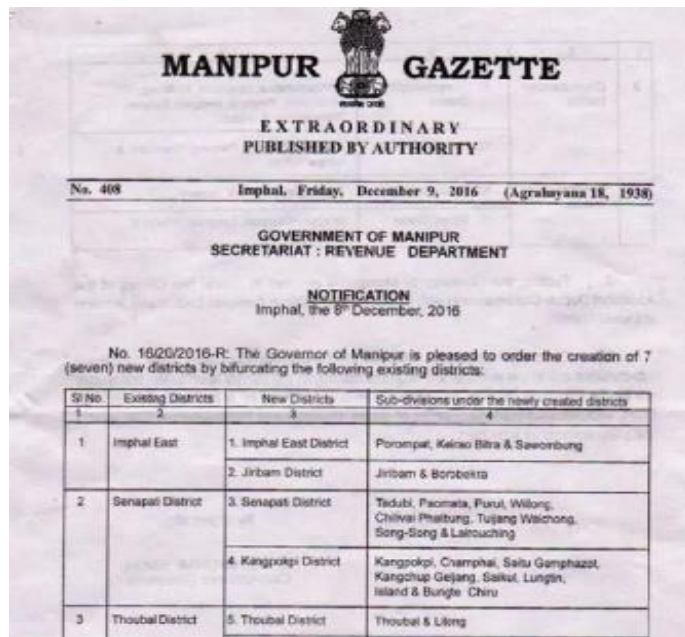


Fig. 1.1 Manipur Gazette notice on the newly created District in the State.



Fig.1.2 District distribution of Manipur before 2016.





Fig. 1.3 Manipur map including the newly created District.

### 1.3 Southern Manipur (Manipur South District)

Southern Manipur was popularly known as Manipur South District which came into existence in the year 1969 along with the district reorganisation of Manipur. Till then, Manipur was a single unit district Union Territory having only 10 Sub-Division. By order of Manipur Government No.20/39/69-D dated 12<sup>th</sup> November, 1969, Manipur was divided into five districts having 25 sub-Divisions. The South District was further divided into 5 sub-division, namely, Tipaimukh, Thanlon, Churachandpur North, Churachandpur and Thinghat (presently known as Singngat). Since than a minor territorial change in the district's jurisdiction was made. During the intervening period, the district's name had also been changed from Manipur South District to Churachandpur district vide Revenue Department's Order No.43/2/81-R(Pt) dated 15.07.1983.

The district derived its name after Sir Churachand Singh, K.C.S.I., C.B.S. the Maharaja of Manipur. The district is bounded on the north by Tamenglong District, on the east by the districts of Imphal and Chandel, on the south by Myanmar

(Burma) and Mizoram and the west by the State of Mizoram and Assam.<sup>23</sup> The district Magistrate-Cum-Deputy Commissioner (District Collector) is the head of the district. He is assisted by an Additional Deputy Commissioner/Additional District Magistrate and Assistant Commissioner by such other officers and staff as are appointed from time to time. Maintenance of law and order, revenue administration, economic development are the main duties of the District Administration. Churachandpur is the largest district in the State and the second town of Manipur after the state capital Imphal. And the second in terms of literacy rate i.e., 82.78%, which is just next to Imphal West (86.06%), according to Census Report 2011. Even after carving out a new district i.e., Pherzawl district, it still holds and maintains her position in the State. The district's total area is 4,570 sq.km (2011 census report). The district has a small valley portion extended from Manipur (Imphal) valley along the Khuga River basin while the rest of the significant part belongs to the rugged hilly terrain. It is mainly occupied by Chin-Kuki-Mizo groups of tribes and were recognised as Kukis by the Bengalis.<sup>24</sup> Southern Manipur, in spite of its hilly terrain came to be a battle ground for the two contending militaries British and Japanese forces

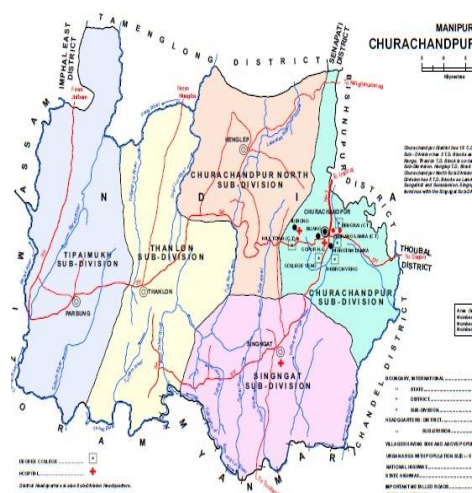


Fig. 1.4 Map of Churachandpur District in Manipur (Source: District Census Handbook- Churachandpur, 2011)

<sup>23</sup> *District Census Handbook-Churachandpur*, Manipur, Directorate of Census Operations, 2011, p. 19.  
<sup>24</sup> E.B. Elly, *Military Report on the Chin-Lushai Country*, Calcutta, Firma KLM-Private Limited, 1978, p. 1.

#### **1.4 Socio-Political condition of Southern Manipur before Japanese Invasion**

As a whole, during 1939-40, just before the arrival of the Second World War in the State of Manipur, a group of women in the valley started agitation against the oppressive economic and administrative policies of the Manipur Maharaja and the Political Agent Mr. Grimson of the British Government (1933-45). This agitation was popularly known as '*Nupi Lan*' or the 'Women's War'.<sup>25</sup> The outbreak's core reason was the exportation of rice at a large scale to the neighbouring state. Trade existed there even before 1891, primarily with Assam, but that was minimal. It has to be understood that rice was the leading trade item of Manipur and was the only means of getting cash from outside State. In short, primarily, the economy of Manipur depended on agrarian economy base on rice cultivation. Due to the mass exportation of rice, the rice trade of women collapsed.

Further, the price of rice rose high that it was difficult to purchase due to high price, and perhaps, no rice was available in the market. The role of women in the economy is so prominent that, even today, Manipur has *Ima Keithel* (mother's market)/*Nupi Keithel* (women's market) which is known to be the largest women market in Asia. Apart from that, there are women/mother's market in the hill districts like, *Nute Bazar* and *Nute Kailhang*. It can be seen that Manipur was in a chaotic situation just before the arrival of the War.

Until 1910 most of the tribes of Southern Manipur were illiterate due to a lack of communication and interaction with their neighbours as they remain isolated. Their isolation and lack of communication prevented them from acquiring knowledge outside of their society/other than their society. Even in the Imphal valley, in 1872, Major General W.E. Nuthal, the Political Agent opened a school with English language as the medium of instruction. The People of Manipur did not appreciate or encourage to the establishment of English School and parents did not send their

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<sup>25</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of the State Manipur, 1939-40*, p. 1.

children.<sup>26</sup> The people of Manipur refused to take assistance by the British to start English School. As a result, the English School could not run for a long time.

And again, in 1885 Johnstone middle English School was opened by the Political Agent of Manipur Sir James Johnstone. The number of students was poor. ‘The number of boys attending to Johnstone School fell off during the year, as there were 100 at the close of March 1889 and in March 1890 there were only 78 or a decrease of 22.’<sup>27</sup> Only a few men could read and write sufficiently well and were useable to keep whatever few accounts are kept in the State, and to transact ordinary business, and beyond that, nothing is attempted.<sup>28</sup> ‘So long as the authorities are contended and even desire to leave them in a state of ignorance, no effort will be made by the lower classes to improve themselves in this respect.’<sup>29</sup> And Johnstone reported that, ‘When I spoke to the Maharaja on the subject, he said what I believe is truth, namely, that the boys of Manipur much preferred playing at hockey to learning to read and write and that their parents did not care to coerce them.’<sup>30</sup> From this, we can understand that the parents and the authorities were not interested in educating their children. The case was similar with the people of southern Manipur. Everyone considered cultivations as a more pressing need rather than sending their children to school. Anyone who went to school was regarded as lazy, and parents prefer their children to work.

Southern Manipur is considered the heartland of Kuki groups as it is purely dominated by the tribes like Thadou, Simte, Gangte, Kom, Vaiphei, Paite, Zou, etc. They were known and considered as Kukis by government of Manipur. The northern Districts were mixed with the Tangkhul, Rongmei, Kabui, etc., who were considered Nagas, Nepalis, and Kukis. The local people of Southern Manipur did not have any political organization that brought them together. Chieftainship was the only political

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<sup>26</sup> L. Basanti Devi, ‘Pre-Colonial Education in Manipur- A Focus on Indigenous Education system since 33 A.D. (A Retrospect)’, *Voice of Research*, Vol.7, Issue 3, 2018, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> As quoted by L. Basanti Devi, *Voice of Research*, p. 14.

<sup>28</sup> J. Johnstone, Political Agent of Manipur, *Annual Administration report of the Manipur Agency, 1877-78*, No. CLIII, p. 12.

<sup>29</sup> Johnstone, *Annual Administration report of the Manipur Agency*, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Johnstone, p. 21.

system they followed, and every village was administered independently. Till today, the people of southern Manipur and the Kukis still continue chieftainship. At the same time, the Naga followed chairmanship following the Manipur (Village Authority in Hill Areas) Act, 1956.

With the primary division of hills and valley in Manipur, the administration in the valley was run under the Maharaja/the king while the hills tribes were under the chiefs, particularly Southern Manipur. The authority and legitimacy of the Kukis chiefs are rooted in the land and its resources.<sup>31</sup> Chieftainship was an integral part of political life among the Kukis. To locate the exact date of the origin of the chieftainship was something of a mystery. It may be mentioned that the right of chieftainship was bestowed upon a person who has a robust physical power or the capability to organise force and defend his people. Chieftainship is hereditary; it passes down from father to son, i.e., it may be to the eldest member of clans in case of not having a son, or it is given to 'Mi-Upa' (Eldest Son). All Legislative, Executive, and Judicial powers are vested in the chief. However, in the actual day-to-day conduct of administration, the chief and his council of ministers are entirely guided by customs. The villagers are to obey the chiefs as local self-government, and the only way they can escape from his control is to migrate elsewhere.

However, after the conquest of Manipur by British, the hills tribes 'were brought under a common administrative system, but they were separated from the administration of the valley of Manipur inhabited by the Hindu Meiteis.'<sup>32</sup> The political agent J. Shakespear's (1905-07) scheme for the future administration of the State deliberately excluded the hill territory. He states the reason for not including

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<sup>31</sup> Asok Kumar Ray, *Authority and Legitimacy: A Study of the Thadou-Kukis in Manipur*, Delhi, Renaissance Publishing House, 1990, p. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Gangummei Kabui, 'Political Development in Tribal North East India: A Historical Perspective', in Budhadeb Chaudhuri (ed.), *Tribal transformation of India: Ethnopolitics and Identity Crisis*, Vo. 111, New Delhi, Inter-India Publications, 1992, p. 209.

the hill; 'the hill tribes are not Manipuri's and have entirely different customs and languages.'<sup>33</sup>

During colonial rule, the missionaries reduced the Chin-Kuki-Mizo language into writing.<sup>34</sup> One cannot overlook the coming of Christianity in the Southern Manipur, in terms of socio-political development. The first missionary to step-in on the soil of Manipur was William Pettigrew, who arrived on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1894. He left England and travelled to India as a mission worker. He did not initially come as American Baptist Missionary but was associated with the Arthington Aborigines Mission, which Robert Arthington founded. Pettigrew came to India in 1891, but due to the political instability because of the Anglo-Manipur war of 1891, he had to wait four years for permission to be granted for his entry to Manipur.

Meanwhile, he started learning the Bengali and Manipuri language while waiting for permission. He arrived at Imphal on 6<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1894. With the permission granted by Alexander Porteous, I.C.S during the absence of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry St Patrick Maxwell, Political Agent of Manipur, he began his missionary endeavour in Manipur. On his return, Maxwell informed Pattigrew that the political turmoil was not in his favour as the Hindu Meiteis living in the valley region had strong objections to his mission work. However, Pattigrew was allowed to continue his mission endeavour among the hill tribes and not in the valley. As a result, his mission work among the Meiteis in the valley lasted only for six months. He moved to the northern hill tribes, particularly among the Tangkhuls, and made Ukhrul his mission center in 1895. Pattigrew was very productive in his mission endeavour, and the number of people accepting the Christianity increased gradually. So, in 1919 with the extension of his mission, another center was established in Kangpokpi (present-day Kangpokpi District).

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<sup>33</sup> Lal Dena, 'Historical Perspective of the process of Marginalization: A Study of the Hill Peoples' Experience in Manipur', paper presented at a seminar on '*The Marginalized Indigenous Hill People in Manipur: Problems and Options*', New Delhi, 8 and 9 December 2006, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup> Chitta Ranjan Nag, *Post-Colonial Mizo Politics*, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd, 1999, p. 19.

Meanwhile, another missionary named Watkin R. Roberts (Born in 21<sup>st</sup> sept. 1886), a young man from Carnaevon, mid-Wales, arrived. Watkin Robert was a medical doctor who came to help Dr. P Fraser a Missionary at Aizawl, and made Mizoram the first medical missionary center on 14<sup>th</sup> October 1908.<sup>35</sup> He started the non-denominational ‘Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission’ and went to the Southern Hill tribes of Manipur from Aizawl. The mission was named as the ‘Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission’ mainly because the chief of Senvon and the people of that area belonged to the Thadou-Kuki tribes. To Th. Lamboi Vaiphei, in those days ‘Kuki’, was a composite name of all tribes, especially in the Southern Manipur. Furthermore, in 1919 Watkin Roberts changed the Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission to North East India General Mission (NEIGM) as the mission expanded even outside the State of Manipur.<sup>36</sup> However, he could not hold long onto the mission due to internal crises among the western missionaries. Watkin Roberts was forced to resign, and H.H. Coleman was made the General Superintendent of the NEIGM. Later in 1928, to avoid conflict Watkin Robert started a new mission called Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (IBPM).<sup>37</sup> Moreover, those local people familiar with Watkin Robert have forsaken the NEIGM and joined the IBPM for their love for him, while some stayed tuned with the NEIGM. Thus, the Western missionaries and their denominations brought a clear division to the Hill tribes for the first time. The supporters of Watkin Robert supported Indo-Burma Pioneer Mission (IBPM). At the same time, the majority of the local people remained in their old denomination, i.e., NEIGM, until the community-based churches division in 1951, under the supervision of Royal C. Paddock.<sup>38</sup>

Unfortunately, the new mission under Watkin Robert could not operate its mission in Manipur anymore, so they organized themselves as an Independent Church in

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<sup>35</sup> T. Zuanlal, ‘Watkin Robert Chanchin’, *Muan Aksi*, Monthly Magazine, 2001, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Th. Lamboi Vaiphei, *Advent of Christian Missions and its impact on the Hill Tribes in Manipur*, Imphal, Published by Author, 1997, p. 97-98.

<sup>37</sup> Lal Dena, *History of Modern Manipur Distributors 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.1826-1949*, New Delhi, Orbit Publisher, 1991, p. 111.

<sup>38</sup> T. Zuanlal, “EOC masawn dan suklatna” EOC Souvenir (2003), p. 2.

1930.<sup>39</sup> However, Political Agent, Higgins issued an order on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 1930, prohibiting the Independent Church from holding any assembly or conferences. However, with the intervention of Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of Assam in support of Watkin Roberts supporters, the Political agent C. Gimson on 11th April 1931 permitted the Independent Church to work in the Southern part of Manipur after eleven years of prohibition.<sup>40</sup> Prior to this, conflict arose between Robert and Pettigrew as Pettigrew did not want any other missionaries to enter the land of Manipur, claiming that it was the mission field of the American Baptist. In opposing the entry of the non-Baptist missionaries, Pettigrew then secured government help, even to the extent of expelling the Christians from their land/area if they were to function separately.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Watkin Robert and his converts were not accepted by the governments or Baptist missionaries. Moreover, the Christians in the southern part of Manipur did not have proper shepherding alongside the termination of Watkin Robert, compared to the Northern Christians who were under Pettigrew and enjoyed the support of government.

The missionaries help the local people of Southern Manipur by providing written language, pioneering education, introducing a new administrative setup, and endorsing a new relevant ideology.<sup>42</sup> Before the arrival of the missionaries, the British already colonise the hills and were brought under the responsibility of the political agent,<sup>43</sup> nothing was done in order to develop the socio-political condition of the people.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps, the hilly region that constitutes 90% of Manipur was a neglected region.

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<sup>39</sup> Dena, *History of Modern Manipur...*, p. 111.

<sup>40</sup> Dena, p. 111-112.

<sup>41</sup> Dena, p. 98.

<sup>42</sup> Frederick S. Downs, 'Christian Conversion Movements among the Hills Tribes of Northeast India in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in GA Oddie (ed.), *Religion in South Asia. Religious Conversion in Revival Movements in South Asia in Medieval and Modern Times*, Delhi, Manohar publications, 1991, p. 155- 174.

<sup>43</sup> Seikhohao Kipgen, 'Land, Identity and Development: Perceptions Focusing on the Tribals of Manipur', in Ch.Priyoranjan Sindh (ed.), *Tribalism and the Tragedy of Commons (Land, Identity and Development: The Manipur Experience)*, New Delhi, Akansha Publishing House, 2009, p. 332.

<sup>44</sup> Dena, 'Historical Perspective of the process of Marginalization', p. 3.



With the help of missionaries, village practices where animal sacrifice and a skull of the animals killed were hung on every post could be rarely seen. As a result, the village's appearance was much better and cleaner than before.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, the church brought together villages and tribes within common structures and brought unity.<sup>46</sup> However, unity among the Southern people was for few years. Not only that, the village chief (*Hausa*) and the Priest (*Thiampu*) have the higher status and leadership in the village. Nevertheless, the influence of formal education introduced by the missionaries gives rise to two types of leadership, i.e., Church leaders and political leaders. As a result, Church leadership comes to those who have managed to acquire more education and training and is not determined by birth. Thus, we can find that the hill tribes of Manipur, particularly the Southern Manipur, were already developing dressing styles and intellectual growth before the Japanese invasion. Some people served or worked as teachers in elementary schools.

Moreover, having a link with the outside world, consciousness arose concerning their identity and to protect their land. The consciousness can be seen in Anglo-Kuki war/Zou Gaal, which was fought between the Kukis and the British (1917-1919) as they feared that their identity would be submerged and land would be confiscated. Furthermore, with the introduction of education by the missionaries, the British could run a better administration as there were local people who could translate English to local dialects. Very interestingly, the local people from the hill district of Southern Manipur could understand one's tribes' dialects compared to the other hill districts. This may be the reason why it made it easier for the British and Japanese forces to mobilize the people in this region. Lastly, it is known that the local people had already left their primitive lifestyle, and they were acquiring new ideologies. Development was seen in the various sphere before the War broke out in the Southern Manipur with the help of missionaries.

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<sup>45</sup> H.S. Luaia, *The land of head hunters became the land of peace: Missionary Herald*, London, BMS, 1960, p. 58.

<sup>46</sup> M Kirti Singh, *Religion and Culture of Manipur*, Delhi, Manas Publications, 1988, p. 61.

## **1.5 Burma- Manipur Relations before the Second World War**

Manipur and Burma did not have good relationship. In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Burmese rose to be an important political power in south-east Asia. As a result, the Burmese had a plan to extend their arms to northeast India. Prior to that, there were several raids from both sides. Often the Manipuris raided upper Burma, and the Burmese equally responded, which led to devastations for both. Though several raidings happened, it was during the reign of King Garib Niwaz (1720-1752) in Manipur that the raiding went deeper into the heartland of Burma. The Manipur king burnt down houses and monasteries that he could find on his way to upper Burma and killed the people who stood against him.

As a response, Burmese emperor Alaungpaya retaliated and plundered Manipur in 1755 and 1758, which the people of Manipur named as 'First Devastation'. In the course of the Burmese operation in Manipur, the Burmese took a large number of men, women, and children from Cachar and Jayantiya to their kingdom on more than one occasions.<sup>47</sup> However, in 1782 Manipur regained its status as an independent kingdom from the Burmese emperor. Not long after, there was a civil war among the Manipur princes who fought among themselves for the throne. Taking this as an opportunity, the Burmese emperor invaded Manipur and ruled from 1819 to 1826, which was known as '*Chahi Taret Khuntakpa*' (Seven years of Devastation). Thus, Manipur and Burma were in constant state of war.

## **1.6 Onset of Second World War in Manipur**

North East India shared a 1600 km international boundary with Burma, out of which 358 km lies in Manipur. Before the British colonization of North East India, Manipur was an independent princely state. It found itself on the war front during the Second World War between the Japanese troops in Burma (now Myanmar) and the British troops in India when the imperial Japanese forces and the Indian National Army

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<sup>47</sup> G.E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to March 1824 The Beginning of the English Conquest*, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1952, p. 249.

launched operation 'U Go' to capture the capital of Manipur.<sup>48</sup> Despite its remoteness and obscurity to the outside world, the state of Manipur became a battleground. A massive fight happened from March to July 1944, globally known as the Battle of Imphal. Furthermore, Imphal, the capital of Manipur, has constituted the most significant concentration camp for the Allied troops.<sup>49</sup>

When the 15<sup>th</sup> Army of the Japanese was put under the command of Lt. General Mutaguchi Renye, he was aiming to capture Manipur and Kohima. The 33 Division under Lt. General Motoso Yanagida was to march from Tedim-Imphal from the south and destroy the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division; the 31 Division under Lt. General Kotoku Sato was isolated from Manipur to capture Kohima; 15 Division under Lt. General Masafumi Yamauchi was to occupy Ukhrul and attack Imphal from the North.<sup>50</sup> According to William Slim (a field Marshal and a commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> British Army in Burma), it was on the Tedim Road on the Silchar-Bishenpur track that some of the heaviest fighting in the entire Battle of Imphal-Kohima took place.<sup>51</sup> Further, William Slim regarded 33 Division of the Japanese troops as one of the toughest divisions in Burma, which Lt. Gen. Yanagida commanded until May when Lt. Gen. Tanaka Nobuo took it over.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps, out of the three divisions set up by the Japanese army to penetrate and invade the North-East India, all divisions were to enter Manipur from Burma. Two divisions were to advance from the south, and one was from the north. One division advanced from Tedim road, passing through the Southern Manipur and leading to Imphal Valley. The total length of Tedim Road from Imphal to Tedim is 256km.

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<sup>48</sup> Hemant Singh Katoch, 'The Battle of Imphal: March–July 1944', *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol.8, No. 3, July–September 2014, p. 101-120.

<sup>49</sup> Berenice Guyot-Réchar, 'When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War and Indian's North East Frontier', *War in History*, 2017, p. 2.

<sup>50</sup> W. Peter Fay, *The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence, 1942–1945.*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993, p. 265-281.; See National Army Museum, Battles of Imphal and Kohima, London, [website] <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-imphal> (Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> March 2021).

<sup>51</sup> J. William Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, London, Cassels, 1956, p. 371-372.

<sup>52</sup> Katoch, *Journal of Defence Studies*, p. 108.

However, if not forgotten, this road is one of the least known that connects the two nations, i.e., India and Burma.<sup>53</sup>

### **1.7 Review of Literature**

To review a work on the related topics before analysing the problems and doing any further investigation is crucial for quality and fruitful outcome. And doing literature review will help in understanding and make awareness to the researcher in various dimension of the current research work. Therefore, review on the existing literature is made in a selective manner which is expected to offer insightful knowledge for the purpose of this thesis.

C. A. Bayly and T. Harper in their book "*Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire*" describe the efforts of the British during the period from 1945-to 1955 and also include the account on which the British lost their Asian colonies after the Japanese War. Though the War was won by the British, this book highlight that the British did not stand a chance to re-establish their empire. This book helps us to understand that after the War, British could not re-establish their empire in their Asian colonies. Further, this book gives us how and when did the decline of British Empire occurs.

B er enice Guyot-R echard, in her article "*When Legions Thunder Past: The Second World War and India's North-eastern Frontier*" has mentioned that Manipur has the biggest concentration camp for the Allied forces in the North East India. And in this article, her view was on the changes brought due to the Second World War in the hilly region of North East India particularly to the Patkai range/mountains in Nagaland. And Khrienuo, in his article "Nagas Role in World War II" mentioned the reasons for the Nagas to support the British in the Nagas Hills particularly during the Kohima war. He further described that one of the main factors for the British victory was due to the contributions and support given by the Nagas.

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<sup>53</sup> Pum Khan Pau, 'Tedim Road-The Strategic Road on a Frontier: A Historical Analysis', *Strategic Analysis*, 36:5, 2012, p. 776.

*How women remember War: Unearthing memories of the Second World War in Manipur* (2019) by Leisangthem Gitarani Devi made an extensive interview among the women in the Valleys and the hills in Manipur. It was more on the experience faced by the women folks in encountering both the Allied/British and the Japanese forces. This book informs that, even though the Japanese were known for their war crimes in South East Asia, they were well behaved, courageous, noble and generous than the British forces when they reached Manipur. And after the post war, many of the local people or the Manipuris' regret, by looking back, at the way they treat the Japanese.

*Imphal: A Flower on Lofty Heights* (1962) by Geoffrey Evans & Antony Brett-James is a book written from interviews with those who were present during the War. It is a semi biographical account of the Battle of Imphal in 1944. This book includes the battle fought in the Tedim road and also the reconquest of Burma which was achieved by the Allied officers.

*The Jungle, The Japanese and The British Commonwealth Armies at War, 1942-1945: Fighting Methods, Doctrine and Training for Jungle Warfare* by T.R. Moreman covers the defeats of British forces in Malaya, Singapore and Burma. It then focuses on rebuilding the same army who were badly defeated in the South East Asian region. This book illustrates how training improved the British soldiers between 1942-45 in the far east. Fascinatingly, it gives us the details on the training of Jungle warfare which enabled the Britisher to defeat the Japanese in 1944-45.

*The Battle for Burma 1943-1945: From Kohima & Imphal Through to Victory*, a book compiled by John Grehan & Martin Mace has contained four dispatches: two from General Giffard, the dispatch on operation in Assam and Burma covering the period from November 16, 1943 to November 12, 1944; one from Vice Admiral Power, covering the naval operations around Ramree Island area (Burma) in early 1945; and finally, one from Lieutenant General Lesse, covering the period from November 12, 1944, to August 15, 1945. Each dispatch is reprinted in its original format, and as a result, they include a pack of valuable information, including battle orders and casualty data in the twins' battle and Burma.

According to Ian Lyall in his book '*Burma: The Turning Point*', Churachandpur was a Japanese staging post rather like a mini-Kohima. Here the supplies coming up the road from Tiddim were delivered to the rear echelon transport of the forward formations. They were carried as far forward as possible in trucks and then switched to mules for the units in the hills. He narrates the battles that happened in and around the southern Manipur.

Gerhard L. Weinberg in his book, "*World War II: A Very Short Introduction*" examines the origin and the key events of War fought during the War along with the end of the War. He further includes the costs and effect of War. This book gives us a general idea about the origin of the War and the end as a whole.

Peter Ward Fay in his book, *The Forgotten Army: India's Armed Struggle for Independence 1942-1945*, gives a detailed account of the formation and operations of the INA during 1942- 45. The author also describes the role of Subhas Chandra Bose and his Indian National Army in the military operations in Southeast Asia under Japanese sponsorship. The book discusses the efforts of INA and the Japanese soldiers in the war front and also the sufferings of INA soldiers during their campaign.

Hemant Singh Katoch in his article, "The Battle of Imphal: March-July 1944" talks briefly about the Manipur state's experience of the Second World War and how it unfolds in Manipur. He also mentions some of the battles which was fought on the Tedim Road.

Deepak Naorem (2019) in his article, "Japanese invasion, war preparation, relief, rehabilitation, compensation 'state-making' in an imperial frontier (1939-1955)" gives an insight into how and when the Japanese invaded the State of Manipur and the Naga Hills. And the book further explains about the relief measure and compensation after the War.

R.K. Tamphasana (2017) in her article, "Oral History of II World War in the North East India (1943-45)" writes about the importance of oral history in constructing the history of North East India as the local people did not maintain any written record

prior to the advent of British colonizers. She also felt that, though many books have been written in relation to World War II, the event and the condition of the local people in North East India was given less focus and not been included as the subject of study in modern Indian History.

Jangkhomang Guite in his article “Representing Local Participation in INA-Japanese Imphal Campaign: The case of the Kukis in Manipur, 1943-1945” writes about the close contact between the Kukis of Manipur with the Japanese forces and the support given by the Kukis in Manipur to the Japanese-INA forces.

Pum Khan Pau in his article “*Tedim Road—The Strategic Road on a Frontier: A Historical Analysis*” discusses about the least attended road which lies in the southern part of Manipur i.e., Tedim Road. He also mentioned that this road is a lifeline of the second largest town in Manipur and touches the international boundary between India and Myanmar at Behiang Village (Churachandpur District). He also discusses how the Japanese troops penetrated Manipur through this road along with the main battles fought on this road.

### **1.8 Statement of the Problem**

When it comes to the study of the Indo-Burma frontier during the Second World War, scholars or writers prioritize the battles of Imphal and Kohima and comparatively shows less interest in incidents and the problems of the local people of the Southern Manipur area. Mostly, the hilly region was where the troops were concentrated, and encamped /and the people were more or less affected during the War. Moreover, these local people played a crucial role for the Allied forces and the Japanese-INA by serving as labour corps, Village Force, providing help and relief in the area during the Second World War.

The Second World War left the North East region in disorder and stunted growth with regards to socio-economic and political development. However, in most of the existing works on the history of the Second World War, North East India and the efforts and contributions of its diverse population in the British effort to defeat the Japanese remains vastly underrepresented and forgotten. It is pertinent to ask some

basic questions such as-What were the underlying reasons that compelled the people of southern Manipur to engage with the British and the Japanese forces during the Second World War? What was the nature of their engagement with these two contending forces, and what kind of personal and collective sacrifices and sufferings did they endure during this War? In War and conflict, civilian collaboration and cooperation are crucial. They can positively influence the outcome of the War in favour of the party, which can solicit the cooperation and help of the local civilian population.

This research seeks to understand some of these questions and derive meaningful answers. It is also an endeavour to explore plausible and positive responses to the continuing invisibility and lack of adequate understanding and representation of Northeast India and its people, particularly southern Manipur, in the context of the Second World war in mainstream historical works.

### **1.9 Area of Study**

The proposed study will be confined to Southern Manipur inhabited by Chin-Kuki/Zo ethnic groups who have been affected by the Japanese invasion and the subsequent effort of the Allied forces to defeat them and push them back.

### **1.10 Objectives**

- To examine the socio-political context of southern Manipur prior to the Second World War
- To understand the origin/how the Second World War unfolded and its impacts upon the local people of Southern Manipur.
- To study the Nature and its challenges among the local people of southern Manipur during and after the Second World War.

### **1.11 Methodology**

The proposed study would employ a qualitative method. Existing official and non-official accounts of the War in the designated area would be thoroughly examined



and may be extrapolated with the extant local narratives in order to develop a coherent body of understanding on the War and its impact on the local communities. Extensive interviews and collecting of indigenous works on the subject in local vernaculars would be undertaken in order to locate the local populations in this War politically and how this War impacted them.

## **1.12 Chapterisation**

### Chapter 1

#### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will discuss a brief historical and geographical account of Manipur, particularly southern Manipur and its people, including their socio-political conditions prior to the Japanese invasion. It also includes a review of literature, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, methodology and scope of the study.

### Chapter 2

#### **SECOND WORLD WAR AND SOUTHERN MANIPUR**

The chapter will examine how the Second World War unfolded in Manipur particularly in southern Manipur. And brings out the reason for the British to defeated the Japanese. It also briefs the two contending forces' strategies, strength, and casualties. Further, it examined the battle in Southern Manipur and the mysterious mountain.

### Chapter 3

#### **NATURE OF LOCAL PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION AND ITS IMPACTS IN SOUTHERN MANIPUR**

This chapter will try to locate the local people of southern Manipur in the context of the Second World War and also examine the nature and their participation in this

War. It will include the impacts in Southern Manipur. It also highlights the post-war challenges which the local people undergo.

Chapter 4

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter will include a summary of the chapters and analyse the findings.

## CHAPTER 2

### SECOND WORLD WAR AND SOUTHERN MANIPUR

#### Introduction

Southern Manipur shared its international boundary with Burma, and the Chin Hills in Burma remained ‘a lone outpost of the Empire’<sup>54</sup> which connected Imphal, the capital of Manipur. Southern Manipur is mostly dominated by the Kukis/Zo groups of people, which can be classified into clan-based or dialect-based tribes such as Simte, Vaiphei, Gangte, Thadou, Paite, etc. In India, the Kukis/Zo groups can be found in parts of Assam, Mizoram and Manipur. They are also found in the Chin Hills and Sagaing Division in Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh.

This chapter discusses how the land of Manipur was geographically located to be a battlefield for a major war, i.e., the Second World War, which would change the course of the war. Essentially, this chapter highlights the advent of the Second World War and the battle in Southern Manipur. As the villages within the radius of Tedim road were asked to vacate their homes and move to their neighbouring villages, there seems to be a contradiction between how the local people understand the battle that happened in Southern Manipur, notably ‘The Battle of Torbung/Torbung Roadblock’ and the Saidan *tlang*/mountain.

Therefore, this chapter would also highlight the condition of the frontier and discuss how Second World War reached Manipur, particularly in Southern Manipur and the reasons for the defeat of the Japanese and highlight the military strategies.

#### 2.1 Indo-Burma Frontier

Indo-Burma is home to three major groups of people in Manipur, i.e., Meitei, Naga and Zo (Chin-Kuki-Mizo). They were divided when the geographical map of India and Myanmar was drawn. ‘The making of borders in once-colonised regions like

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<sup>54</sup> Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p. 248.

Africa and South Asia was an arbitrary and tortuous process that disregarded ethnic identities, one of the important bases of the modern nation-state.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, the local people who settled on the frontier were not given any priority in drawing the boundaries, and their voices were unheard. This made them settle in two different nations unwillingly. Colonel McCulloch articulates, 'To the east and south, the boundary is not well defined and would much depend upon the extent to which the Manipur Government might spread its influence amongst the hill tribes in these directions.'<sup>56</sup> Despite the remoteness and being little known to the outside world, it supplied roads. It became a bridge for communication, playing a vital role for the British to reconquer Burma and for the Japanese to ensure victory in the battle of Imphal.

Slim described the place as 'some of the world's worst country, breeding the world's worst diseases, and having at least the world's worst climate for half the year.'<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, Leprosy, goitre, scabies and yaws were prevalent among the hills of Southern Manipur.<sup>58</sup> As per the report, during 1873-74, the occurrence of smallpox both in the valley and adjacent hills could be experienced.<sup>59</sup> In 1878-79, an epidemic of fever raged the valley, in which many have died, and several cases of cholera in both hills and valley could be found.<sup>60</sup> Not only the people were effected but also effected the livestock.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, again, Leprosy, Yaws and Goitre were prevalent among the Hill people, and 1,12,560 outdoor and 612 Indoor patients were treated during the year 1937-1938 against 98,491 and 731, respectively previous year.<sup>62</sup> Cholera has been most prevalent disease among the Kukis and further outbreaks was expected.<sup>63</sup> In 1942, a terrible epidemic of dysentery and malaria killed over ten thousand people, and this may be the reason why invaders failed to conquer

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<sup>55</sup> J. Hutchinson and A. Smith (ed.), *Ethnicity*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 13.

<sup>56</sup> W. McCulloch, *Account of the Valley of Manipur*, Calcutta, Bengal Printing Company Ltd., 1859, p. 1.

<sup>57</sup> Slim, p. 172.

<sup>58</sup> Evans & James, *Imphal: A Flower on Lofty Heights*, p. 17.

<sup>59</sup> *Annual Administration report of Munnipoor Agency, 1873-74*, No. CXVIII, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> Johnstone, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> MSA, *Tour Diary of C. Gimson*, the Political Agent of Manipur, 1943-44, R-1/S-A.

<sup>62</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of the Manipur*, 1937-38, p. 20.

<sup>63</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of the Manipur*, 1937-38, p. 21.

Manipur.<sup>64</sup> The harshness and inhospitability of the land are evident in the writings of John Grehan & Martin Mace;

“Malaria is endemic throughout the country below 3,000 feet, but it is worse in some areas than others; for instance, the Kabaw/kaboo Valley is reputed to be one of the worst malarial valleys in the world. There are two seasonal increases in the rate of infection, one at the beginning of the monsoon in May, and the other at the end of the monsoon in October and November. Much has been done to reduce the casualties from malaria during the past two years, and the ineffective rate amongst all troops has fallen very considerably. This is due to much improved personal discipline, efficient draining of bad areas on the lines of communication, training and various medical prophylactic measures which have been introduced. In such a climate, there are other diseases which are products of the conditions; dysentery, the worst effects of which have been reduced by discipline and good hygiene measures, skin diseases of various types, especially during the rainy season, and scrub typhus, which is endemic in various areas”.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, despite its remoteness and thick jungle, it was a land that decided the fate of the Second World War. The war in the far east, i.e., North East India, was fascinating. It was an act of suicidal courage for the Japanese, and for the allied troops, the topography was wholly alien and impassable to them.<sup>66</sup> When the Japanese put Burma under their control, they started invading India, where the North-East India, which also shares an international boundary, became a door or a way for them to march forward. Further, Imphal valley provides an easy route that connects the two countries and whoever controls it holds the key between them.

On the other hand, it was important for the British to reconquer, as Burma was the route through which they controlled China. The loss of the Burma Road meant that China’s only supply line was by an inefficient air transport system over the rugged Himalayan Mountains from India, which was vulnerable to interception by Japanese fighter planes. The amount of lend-lease provided to China between 1941 and 1944 was less than 1 per cent of the United States’ assistance to all its allies. In 1945, with

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<sup>64</sup> Evans & James, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup> John Grehan & Martin Mace, *The Battle for Burma 1943-45: From Kohima and Imphal through to victory*, Great Britain, Pen & Sword Military, 2015, p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> Grehan & Mace, *The Battle for Burma 1943-45*, p. 9.

the defeat of the Japanese in Burma and reopening of the road, the size of US aid to China increases significantly.

Throughout the War in Indo-Burma, the British faced two implacable enemies, i.e., the Jungle and the Japanese. To quote John Ellis: 'Jungle warfare...was carried out in an alien environment, against an enemy whose ability to adapt to that environment, as well as their utterly foreign standards of ethics and chivalry, made them like men from another planet.'<sup>67</sup> As George Forty wrote: 'The climate, the terrain, flora and fauna, all seem to be waging their particular war against the soldiers of both sides impersonally.'<sup>68</sup> Lt. Sam Honor, Signals officer of 1<sup>st</sup> Norfolks, said, 'The physical hammering one take is difficult to understand.'<sup>69</sup> It is estimated that the epidemic diseases caused far more casualties than the action that accounted for 50 per cent during 1942-1944.<sup>70</sup> By the spring of 1943, 'sickness casualties had been dramatically reduced, greatly helped by introducing the mepacrine anti-malaria pill and the rigidly enforce order that all ranks must take one daily'.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, in the far east or Indo-Burma, it was more of a campaign against nature than an enemy invasion with its thickness in the jungle, climate conditions, and the prevalent epidemic in the region. Though the nature of the frontier was disastrous, it served as a battleground between the Japanese forces and the British troops.

## **2.2 Birth of Second World War in Southern Manipur**

World War II, also known as Second World War, was a global war that began in Europe in 1939 and ended in 1945. It was a war fought between the Allies (France, Great Britain, United States) and Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan). This war is known to be the deadliest and most widespread war in human history. Though it is

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<sup>67</sup> Quoted from T.R. Moreman, *The Jungle, Japanese and the British Commonwealth Armies at War, 1941-45: Fighting Methods, Doctrine and Training for Jungle Warfare*, London & New York, FRANK CASS, 2005, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted from T.R. Moreman, *The Jungle*, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Max Hasting, *All Hell Let Loose: The World at War 1939-45*, Great Britain, Harper Press, 2011, p. 585.

<sup>70</sup> S. Woodburn-Kirby, *The War against Japan, Vol. IV: Reconquest of Burma*, London, HMSO, 1962, p. 215.

<sup>71</sup> Ian Lyall Grant, *Burma the Turning Point*, Zampi Press, Chichester, 1993, p. 36.

still debatable regarding the loss of life and damages, it is estimated that around 70 million people perished, which consisted of about 4% of the world's population at that time. The Japanese joined the Second World War in December 1941 and started expanding their territory. One of the main reasons for the Japanese to expand their territory was the quest for natural resources. Japan used to receive the majority of its supply of natural resources from the United States. However, President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull shut off the supplies to Japan in an effort to stop the Japanese with the hostilities against China.<sup>72</sup> Due to this, the Japanese looked southwards for raw materials or resources for their industrial development. As far as India is related, they saw that India had substantial natural resources (copper, iron, fuel) and provided a large number of funds for the war and even for the soldiers. Apart from natural resources, the attack of Imphal was mainly to strengthen their defence in the South East Asia region.

Initially, when the British Indian Army joined the Second World War in 1939, those who volunteered to fight were just below 200,000 men. By the end of the War, India became the largest volunteer army in history, rising to 2.5 million men.<sup>73</sup> After the Japanese captured most of South East Asia, a rumour to invade India by the Japanese troops spread all over India.<sup>74</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1941, the Japanese dropped a bomb at the dock area in Rangoon and the following year, in March, Japanese troops captured the capital of British Burma.<sup>75</sup> They seized Burma from the British partly to secure its oil and natural resources and partly to close the 'Burma Road' to China.<sup>76</sup> General Harold Alexander, commander of all the Allied forces in Burma, retreated on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1942,<sup>77</sup> and the Allied forces who retreated played a 'brilliant delaying manoeuvre' which slowed down the movement of the Japanese forces and gave time

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<sup>72</sup> *A Brief History of the U.S. Army in World War II*, Washington D.C., Center of Military History United States Army, 1992, p. 31, [website] [https://history.army.mil/html/books/072/72-2/CMH\\_Pub\\_72-2.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/072/72-2/CMH_Pub_72-2.pdf), (accessed 13th April 2021).

<sup>73</sup> Ian Sumner, *The Indian Army 1914-1947*, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 2001, p. 25.

<sup>74</sup> Guyot-Réchar, *War in History*, p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Pum Khan Pau, 'Behind the enemy line: British-led guerrilla operations in the Indo-Burma frontier during the Second World War', *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 30:2, 2019, p. 311-312.

<sup>76</sup> Hasting, *All Hell Let Loose*, p. 234.

<sup>77</sup> Pau, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, p. 312.

to the Allied forces to plan for the defence of North East India<sup>78</sup> as well as ‘counter-offensive operation in Burma.’<sup>79</sup> The sudden dispersion faced by the Allied forces was evident in how the Chinese or British Indian troops were retreating faster than the refugees.<sup>80</sup> It has to be understood that Burma in 1942 was a neglected region along with the little military. Unfortunately, the 17 Division who were stationed at Rangoon were unreliable, one half received training for desert warfare, and the other half were not trained or equipped at all.<sup>81</sup> Indeed, the ‘North-East frontier’ was not given any military attention by the colonial authority as Indivar Kamtekar rightly pointed out: ‘defence policy had assumed that the attackers would be Russian and that the attackers would be from the north-west, through Afghanistan.’<sup>82</sup> Their policy was wrong since the Japanese troops started capturing from lower Burma towards the frontier of India. Before this, between 1940 and 1941, the war did not directly impact Manipur, and it had remained one of the world’s peaceful beauty spots.

Manipur, which lies in the corner part of India with few links to the outside world prior to 1942, became a frontline state during the second world war. The Japanese policy to capture Imphal, was more to strengthen their defence in South East Asia. Mutaguchi had never anticipated that he could conquer India but cherished hopes that the spectacle of the ‘Indian National Army’ attacking the British might stimulate a general revolt against the Raj. Instead, the INA performance discredited it as a fighting force.<sup>83</sup> On the 10<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of May 1942, Imphal air-raids occurred; the first bomb fell on the Assam Rifles lines and the second in the area of the Residency and the Bazar.<sup>84</sup>

The state of Manipur became a frontline in the Second World War with the bombing of Imphal by the Japanese air force. According to British records, 48 Manipuris with

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<sup>78</sup> Pau, p. 312.

<sup>79</sup> Pau, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 779.

<sup>80</sup> Guyot-Réchar, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Frank McLynn, *The Burma Campaign: Disaster into Victory 1942-45*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 2010, p. 24.

<sup>82</sup> Indivar Kamtekar, ‘The Shiver of 1942’, *Studies in History*, Vol. 18, 2002, p. 82.

<sup>83</sup> Hasting, p. 588.

<sup>84</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State, 1943-44*, p. 2.



36 Europeans and other refugees were killed. And it also led to the destruction of the city<sup>85</sup> though the bombing was done in 1942, the Japanese did not start their invasion right away. Instead, bombing created a sense of fear in the mind of the British and the local people of the impending war. There also began the preparation for self-defence in case of any offensive. The people were beset with several rumours and propaganda about the coming war.

In 1942, the Japanese reached a situation of whether they should continue their military expansion or defend what they have conquered. In the latter half of 1942, it was suggested by both the Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo and Headquarters in Southern Army in Singapore that they exercise direct control over the force in Burma and they should go forward with their conquest. Thus, the 15<sup>th</sup> Japanese Army was ordered to plan for the operation.<sup>86</sup> Two leading divisional commanders assigned for the operation were against this suggestion due to the thick jungle, lack of roads, railways, and deadly diseases they had to face.<sup>87</sup> One of these two who was destined to play a defining role was Mutaguchi. However, when Mutaguchi, who was just a division commander in the Japanese force, was promoted to Lt. General to command the 15<sup>th</sup> Army, his mentality changed and was in favour of the invasion. Under Mutaguchi, the total forces were around 100,000 men, including all the supply, medical and administrative troops.

In September 1943, the decision was taken to order the 15<sup>th</sup> Army to prepare for the invasion of Manipur and capture Imphal.<sup>88</sup> General Kawabe gave the final order in late January 1944. The troops available to him were the 15<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Divisions, along with the best part of 1<sup>st</sup> Division Indian National Army. Among all, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division, by far, was the best Japanese Division. On the other end of the valley, in the South-East of Manipur, the British 20<sup>th</sup> Division held Palel and the saddle halfway to Tamu. However, the Japanese had established a troublesome roadblock

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<sup>85</sup> Rinku Khumukcham, 'May 10 1942: First Bomb Hit Imphal in World War 2', *Imphal Times*, [website], 2017, <https://www.imphaltimes.com/it-articles/item/8456-may-10-1942-first-bomb-hit-imphal-in-world-war-2> (accessed 5<sup>th</sup> April 2021)

<sup>86</sup> Evans & James, p. 55.

<sup>87</sup> Evans & James, p. 56.

<sup>88</sup> Evans & James, p. 59.

nearby at Tengnoupal.<sup>89</sup> This fighting created another problem for the Civil Administration when lorry loads of refugees from the hill villages in the battle areas were dumped in Imphal without warning and food and were taken care of by the Burma Refugee Organization.<sup>90</sup> A much more severe problem was when a brigade holding a line a few miles south of Moirang on the Tedim road was withdrawn to Bishenpur, 18 miles from Imphal. With this, the Southern people, who were estimated to be around 25,000 villagers, were given two days to move or go to the highlands, and the food they left was burned down.<sup>91</sup> Very soon, the 33<sup>rd</sup> Japanese Division, with one INA regiment, started their operation on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1944 through numerous sectors such as Tamu, Churachandpur and Kohima. With the frequent bombing of the Southern town (present Churachandpur) and its surrounding twice a day, the school could not run for long. Within no time, Col. Shaukat Malik of the INA, set up headquarters in the liberated town of Moirang and hoisted the tri-colour flag at Moirang Kangla on 14th April, 1944.<sup>92</sup> Thus, Southern Manipur was brought within the ambit of Second World War in right from 1942 initially in the form of psychological warfare followed by refugees and bombing. The actual war or battles happened only at the beginning of 1944. The war in southern Manipur is locally known as '*Japan Gaal*' (free translation: Japanese War/ War of Japan).

### 2.3 Strategies, Armies and Casualties

The word 'strategy' is often used in parallel with 'tactics'. Both play an essential role in conducting warfare. According to the great military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, tactics are 'the art of using troops in battle', whereas strategy is the 'art of using battles to win the war'.<sup>93</sup> However, with the passage of time, both terms have been changed basically due to the scope of the nature of war, change in society, and technology change. Both the terms are complementary, and one cannot work well

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<sup>89</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1943-44, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1943-44, p.5.

<sup>91</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1943-44, p.5.

<sup>92</sup> S. Woodburn Kirby, *History of the Second World War: The War against Japan*, Vol. 3, U.K., Naval & Military Press, p. 237.

<sup>93</sup> Ronald E.M. Goodman, *Military Strategy and Tactics*, [website], 1993, <http://www.molossia.org/milacademy/strategy.html>, (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

without the other. Sun Tzu recognised this two and a half millennia ago when he stated, ‘Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy are the noise before defeat.’<sup>94</sup> Therefore, strategy is a long-term action that involves understanding the people and the region and mapping out the road to success. This method was adopted by both the British and the Japanese in the North East Frontier to defend, conquer and reconquer.

With this new environment, the far east (frontier), which was not given any attention before, became a battleground. It was more like they had to face two enemies, i.e., the invading troops and the Jungles. As a result, the British had to prepare tactics or training for the armies to fit in the jungle. By mid-1944, the British and Indian troops were already trained and specialised in Jungle warfare tactics.<sup>95</sup> Field Marshal Lord Carver writes; ‘The transformation of fourteen Army from the force that had withdrawn from Burma and fought in the Arakan in 1942 was truly remarkable, and it is not easy to be confident in attributing credit for it fairly.’<sup>96</sup> Due to high mountains and dense jungle, the movement of a large group at a time was slow. The jungle would make any large-scale deployment of forces difficult and allow the Japanese troops to block the advance of the allied forces. As a result, the construction of roads and airstrips for quick movement of troops and supply their necessity to defend against the advancing Japanese troops was essential. Scoones, also known as ‘Cully’, was a very experienced tank officer. He realised the need to walk himself through the Jungle in Kabaw Valley and on the hills of Southern Manipur. He was convinced that tanks could be used and would provide a valuable contribution.

On the other hand, the Japanese were very aware (experienced in Arakan battle) of the British tanks and considered them as their primary enemy on the ground. Their main defensive tactic was to get close to the tanks and place a sticky bomb on the side.

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<sup>95</sup> T.R. Moreman, *The Jungle, The Japanese and The British Commonwealth Armies at War, 142-1945*, p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> J. Allan, *In the Trade of War*, Tunbridge Wells, Parapress, 1994, p. 159.

## 2.4 British Defensive Tactics against the Japanese

With the help of the British-run local administration, the Anglo-American forces not only organised intense anti-Japanese-INA propaganda to refrain the local people from providing any supplies, information, and shelter to the Indo-Japanese. The British often resorted to forcible collections and burning of food grains so that the Japanese-INA force did not get sufficient supplies.<sup>97</sup> Despite such policies, the Japanese-INA group achieved initial success with the help of local supporters. At the beginning of 1942, when the Japanese started the operation to capture Burma, they declared that they would give independence to Burma if the Burmese supported Japan's War. This was a strategy to isolate the British from Burma and India by promoting Burmese independence and instigating the Indian Independence movement.<sup>98</sup> And in 1942-43, when combined forces of the INA and the Japanese Army were stationed at the Chindwin Valley of Burma, rumours spread all over Manipur that the day had come for the realisation of the local prophecy: *Nongpok Thong Hangani* (eastern gate will open).<sup>99</sup> This was very convincing for the local people as there had been a long ill-feeling towards the British after Anglo-Kuki War of 1917-1919. Similarly, the Meiteis in the valley were also having their fair share of conflicts and troubles with the British as briefly mentioned in Chapter One.

Perhaps, to block the advancing Japanese troops, 4 Corps (Lieut.-General G.A.P. Scoones), composed of 17 Indian Division and 20 and 23 Divisions with Headquarters at Imphal, had been responsible for the defence of the Indian frontier east and south of Manipur since 1942.<sup>100</sup> It may be said that the battle on 4th April 1944, was a long drawn out battle as Briggs' 5 Division, split between Kanglatongbi and Kameng, was holding off the Japanese from the north and north-east; 20

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<sup>97</sup> R.K. Tamphasana, 'Oral History of II World War in North East India (1943-45)' Vol.22, *IOSR-JHSS*, Issue 8, Ver. 15, 2017, p. 35.

<sup>98</sup> Ryochi Tobe, Tojo Hideki as a War Leader, Briand Bond & Kyochi Tachikawa (ed.), *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far Eastern War 1941-1945*, London & New York, Frank Cass, 2004, p. 33.

<sup>99</sup> Jangkhomang Guite, 'Representing Local Participation in INA-Japanese Imphal Campaign: The Case of the Kuki's in Manipur 1943-45', *Indian Historical Review*, 37 (2), 2010, p. 291.

<sup>100</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 19 & 32.

Division was firm at Shenam<sup>101</sup> and the approaches into the plain from Tamu and southeast; 23 Division kept the enemy at bay in the south; while 17 Division was in reserve after its withdrawal from Tedim.<sup>102</sup> In the south, under the command of Cowan, 33 Division had suffered many casualties in their retreat. However, by giving adequate reinforcement, it would be shortly ready to come forward again.

## **2.5 The Japanese Army and Non-Japanese forces raised in Burma**

On the other side, the Japanese raised some non-Japanese forces in Burma to oppose the British. Some were the Japanese-inspired Indian Fifth Column, Indian National Army (INA) and Forces of disaffected Burmans. The first applies to Indians working for the enemies who were not a part of INA. They worked as intelligence and mainly on propaganda and espionage tasks. Secondly, INA comprised of prisoners who were taken into Singapore though civilians were also recruited. It was founded by Subhas Chandra Bose, a Bengal revolutionary. Many who were not traitors joined INA to escape from inhuman torture in the hope of getting back to India. Thirdly, Forces of disaffected Burmans were chiefly employed for communication duties.<sup>103</sup>

Looking back from 1943, the strength of the Japanese Army in Burma at the beginning of March was, therefore, eight divisions and one independent mixed brigade, giving a total of seventy-six infantry battalions.<sup>104</sup> In May, a new division made its appearance: the 53<sup>rd</sup>, coming from Japan via Malaya. It was located in the Mogaung area. Thus, the total Japanese strength in Burma had gradually been augmented from four divisions to nine in the twelve months ending June 1944.<sup>105</sup>

## **2.6 Casualties suffered in the Battle of Imphal and Kohima**

The outcome of the twin battles of Imphal and Kohima was the heaviest defeat ever suffered by a Japanese army: out of 85,000 men committed, 53,000 became casualties. Among their 30,000 dead, as many perished from disease and

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<sup>101</sup> Shenam is a corrupt form of Senam

<sup>102</sup> Evans & James, p. 207.

<sup>103</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 50-51

<sup>104</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 50.

<sup>105</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 49-50.

malnutrition as Allied action.<sup>106</sup> Mutaguchi's forces lost all their tanks, guns and animal transport, which were irreplaceable. The total strength of INA forces was about 8000, whereas the Japanese had 87,000 combatants and the Allies had 155000.<sup>107</sup> The total strength of 33 division of the Japanese was about 25,000, out of which 21,000 were casualties, and only 4,000 survived.<sup>108</sup>

## **2.7 The Soil that Changes the Wave of War**

Before the conquest of Burma (Myanmar), the Japanese Army had enjoyed a sequence of victories in the battles they faced. With the defeat of Malaysia, Singapore and Burma, North East India was inevitable to the invading Japanese troops. However, after capturing and holding supremacy in Burma, the Japanese-INA Army was about to face its biggest defeat in history. It has to be remembered that the British troops involved in Burma were too small and not trained or equipped for their task. It was in this situation that the so-called invincible Japanese entered the scene. The Japanese plan was bold, typical of their readiness to take risks, and its execution went smoothly for the first thirty-six hours.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, the Japanese soldiers were brave when ordered to succeed or die, yet they were in panic when surprised or in doubt. They were aware of the pandemic in the frontier like malaria, dysentery and during the rainy season, scrub typhus was endemic in various areas, and two seasonal increases in the rate of infection, one at the beginning of monsoon in May and the other at the end of monsoon in October and November.<sup>110</sup> Therefore, they planned to capture Imphal before the monsoon began, which was impossible. The Economist, in on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1944 reports, 'The monsoons are on their way, and it would be turning a new page in military history if either side campaigned through the rain-sodden and malaria-ridden months ahead.'<sup>111</sup> That 'new page in military history has been turned.'<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Hasting, p. 588.

<sup>107</sup> Lal Dena, 'INA Movement: Myth or reality', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 365-369, pp. 367

<sup>108</sup> S.N. Prasad et al., 'The Reconquest of Burma, Vol. I, Bisheshwar Prasad (ed.), *Official History of Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War*, Combined Inter-Services Historical Section, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1958, p. 312.

<sup>109</sup> Evans & James, p. 26.

<sup>110</sup> Evans & James, p. 21.

<sup>111</sup> SUPPLEMENT TO THE LONDON GAZETTE, 2 APRIL, 1951, p. 1712.

With the medical services unable to cope, tropical disease, hunger and exhaustion soared high among the invading troops.<sup>113</sup> By the end of April, the monsoon began, which put both sides in an extreme condition, and the Japanese administrative position quickly went from bad to worse when the rain transformed the tracks into rivers or thick mud.<sup>114</sup>

## **2.8 Reasons for the Defeat of the Japanese**

According to Mutaguchi's views, the commanders of the three Divisions were responsible for the defeat. Firstly, Yanagida, the commander to attack from southern Manipur (of 33<sup>rd</sup> Division) allowed the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division to escape from Tedim road when the line of their retreat had been blocked. We can see that the commander in the south, 'Yanagida' was overruled. Even Mutaguchi sent a secret signal to Colonel Murata asking him to disagree with Yanagida's orders as he would be replaced after the battle of Imphal. Likewise, he was also considered to be a womaniser and a bully.<sup>115</sup> But Yanagida saw that his troops were not ready for the attack of Bishnupur from the south and were misguided to attack. He was removed and General Tanaka took over. Secondly, Yamauchi (15<sup>th</sup> Division) was regarded as a 'blockhead' and unfit to be in command of an army.<sup>116</sup> Thirdly, Sato (31<sup>st</sup> Division) did not pay attention to Mutaguchi, as Sato/31<sup>st</sup> Division was instructed to join the 15<sup>th</sup> Division for one last attack, which would hold the fate of the Empire.<sup>117</sup> As the 31<sup>st</sup> Division had undergone severe injuries and the order was too late, they retreated towards the Chindwin. In short, it can be said that Mutaguchi's poor connection and trust with the commanding officer led to the failure of his plan.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, Mutaguchi was also described as a 'heavy-bodied, bullet-headed officer with hard eyes and thick lips who fiercely overrode the intractable supply problem and whose

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<sup>112</sup> Evans & Brett-James, p. 80.

<sup>113</sup> Moreman, *The Jungle*, p. 141.

<sup>114</sup> Moreman, p. 141.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Lyman, *Bill Slim: Leadership, Strategy, Conflict*, Osprey Publishing, 2011, p. 54.

<sup>116</sup> Lyman, *Bill Slim: Leadership, Strategy, Conflict*, p.54.

<sup>117</sup> Evans & Brett-James, p. 323.

<sup>118</sup> Hemant Singh Katoch, *Imphal 1944: The Japanese Invasion*, Great Britain, Osprey Publishing, 2018, p. 11.

wrath was so feared by his staff that they did not press their doubts.<sup>119</sup> Therefore, his subordinates were afraid to give bad news to him, which was another advantage for the Allied troops as Mutaguchi was not aware of the actual situation.<sup>120</sup>

Contributory factors to the failure of the Japanese were the successful use of tanks overground by the British, much of which was regarded as ‘unthinkable’, the use of medium artillery, and the continual harassing from the air of the Japanese water-borne and road communications. The Japanese under-estimation of their enemy and their conviction that they would capture large quantities of supplies in the first few days led them to neglect their arrangements for the supply of food and ammunition, and their troops carried only five days’ food. The British managed to defeat all their attempts to bring food or ammunition forward. Consequently, the Japanese troops soon began to suffer from hunger and starvation and a shortage of ammunition. Their casualties amounted to 4,500 killed and wounded out of 7,000 men.

The Japanese were equipped with infantry but poorly supported by armour and artillery. They built only light tanks, and the soldiers carried a 1905 model rifle. Though the Japanese navy and Army were better equipped from 1941-42, the allied weapons decisively outclassed it.<sup>121</sup> As quoted by Max Hasting; ‘Japan had not participated in a land campaign during World War I. The Japanese Army entered World War II quite unequipped to fight a modern enemy. From 1941 onwards, frontline soldiers urged the importance of developing more advanced weapons. Unfortunately, their voices were not heeded at the top.’<sup>122</sup> Likewise, staff officer Maj. Shigeru Funaki said: ‘We were far too influenced by our experience in China. There, we had no need of modern equipment and tactics. Because we kept beating the Chinese, we became

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<sup>119</sup> W. Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China 1911–1945*, New York, MacMillan, 1970, p. 438.

<sup>120</sup> John Hudson, *Sunset in the East: Fighting against the Japanese through the siege of Imphal and alongside them in Java 1943-46*, Great Britain, LEO COOPER, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>121</sup> Max Hasting, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan, 1944-45*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p. 71.

<sup>122</sup> Hasting, *Retribution: The Battle for Japan*, p. 71.



over-confident.’<sup>123</sup> On the other hand, the Fourteenth Army at Imphal had better arms and access to a broader range of weaponry than the Japanese.<sup>124</sup>

## **2.9 The British Advantage in the War**

The British possessed an advantage in better direction or resources, and language. Through the education brought by western missionaries, many of the locals could speak and understand the language, which made it easier for the British to have a dialogue quicker. Intelligence was another weak point for the Japanese as they did not take it serious enough, in the words of Japanese historian Kazutoshi Hando; ‘Strategic decision-making was concentrated in the hands of perhaps twenty people, military and naval. Even if our intelligence services had gained access to important information, it would have remained unexploited if it ran against the convictions of the decision-makers. They would not have wanted to know.’<sup>125</sup> Maj. Shoji Takahashi, a staff officer in the intelligence department of South Asia Army HQ said, ‘...at South Asia Army HQ, we had no proper system, no analytical section, no resources that’s how bad it was. Perhaps our attitude reflected Japan’s historic isolation from the rest of the world. We had no tradition of being interested in other societies and what they were doing. It came as a shock to realise how powerful the Allies were becoming and how much they knew about our actions and intentions.’<sup>126</sup> Such was the condition of the Japanese commander during the war.

More than anything else, perhaps the most critical reason for the Japanese defeat at Imphal was their underestimation of their opponent’s capabilities.<sup>127</sup> Especially in southern Manipur, the 17 Indian Light Division had already been defeated in Burma (Arakan battle) in 1942 was not the same as they thought and believed. At most, 17 Division was better trained and equipped after its failing in the Arakan.

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<sup>123</sup> Hasting, p. 71.

<sup>124</sup> Katoch, *Imphal 1944: The Japanese Invasion*, p. 16.

<sup>125</sup> Hasting, p. 72.

<sup>126</sup> Hasting, p. 72.

<sup>127</sup> Katoch, p. 89.

However, the primary reason for the British victory was the refusal of the troops, or any portion of them, to waver and their unflinching courage in exceptionally trying circumstances.<sup>128</sup> However, it is worth mentioning the effort taken by Slim during the Second World War in the far east to overthrow the invading troops. He took 'command after a more clear-cut and humiliating defeat; his area of operations never enjoyed a high political priority, and conditions-in terms of geography, climate and logistics were terrible almost beyond imagination.'<sup>129</sup> Mountbatten appointed Slim to the command of the newly created Fourteenth Army soon after he arrived at SEAC (South East Asia Command) headquarters, and his continuing support was crucial throughout the campaign. When Slim took the role as a commanding officer, he saw that the Allied forces were in a terrible lack of preparation as no one in the higher authority expected an invasion from Burma. Consequently, the Allied troops defending the country were an inexperienced Division. Slim believed that the key to victory would be possible only through fighting the enemy soldier to soldier on the ground.<sup>130</sup> He adopted a tactic that every individual soldier must learn to move and fight in the jungle. He improves the health of the soldiers and their diet to combat jungle diseases and evacuation of the casualties. 'Unlike Mutaguchi, he shared a good rapport with his corps and division commanders, so Slim was able to rely on commanders who shared his vision and stood ready to implement it.'<sup>131</sup> With the arrival of Slim, not only defending Indo-Burma but the reconquest of Burma was achieved. With his achievement in the reconquest of South East Asia, Slim was considered the best Army Commander in the Second World War, and later Slim was universally known as 'Uncle Slim'.

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<sup>128</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 29-30.

<sup>129</sup> Brian Bond, *The Army Level of Command*, Brian Bond & Kyoichi Tachikawa (ed), *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far Eastern War 1941-45*, London & New York, Frank Cass, 2004, p. 39.

<sup>130</sup> Bond, *British and Japanese Military Leadership in the Far Eastern War 1941-45*, p. 44.

<sup>131</sup> Katoch, p. 12.

## 2.10 Battle in Southern Manipur

Southern Manipur or Churachandpur was later known as a Japanese staging post rather like a mini-Kohima.<sup>132</sup> The battle in Southern Manipur was likely confined only to the Khuga Valley and the Tedim road. Perhaps, the other neighbouring villages in the corner of the southeast and west were mainly used for the concentration of camps. Nevertheless, the villages in the southwest were functioning as a refugee camp by welcoming each of their relatives who resided in the Khuga Valley. More or less, the entire region was affected. Local narratives still prevailed within Southern Manipur that the Japanese troops were so large in number that, when we look at the mountains, it looks like '*Patung Kek*', which means 'Mushroom grows' or blooms on the mountains. It refers to the invading troops, which were so huge in number that they occupied every mountain.

In 1943, with the completion of Tedim Road, 17 Indian Division moved to Chin Hills, and division headquarters were set up. However, the Japanese armies had already penetrated parts of Chin Hills. In order to stop the Japanese advancing troops, the local officer in Chin Hills made an effort to mobilise the indigenous support and form local levies.<sup>133</sup> And on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1943, the Chin Hills Battalion and the Chin levy performed a decisive attack and killed most of the Japanese troops, including their commander.<sup>134</sup> Though the Chin Hills Battalion badly attacked the Japanese troops, they could capture two major villages, i.e., Haka and Falam, in late 1943. The battle involved Japanese and INA units attacking Manipur from three broad directions in March 1944: the 15th Division from the north/ north-east; Yamamoto Force (part of the 33rd Division) from the southeast; and the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division from the south.<sup>135</sup>

According to Ian Lyall Grant, the Japanese 33<sup>rd</sup> Division and the British 17<sup>th</sup> Division fought seven decisive battles on Tedim Road, out of which three were in

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<sup>132</sup> Grant, *Burma the Turning Point*, p. 141.

<sup>133</sup> Pau, *Strategic Analysis*, 36:5, 2012, p. 781.

<sup>134</sup> Vum Kho Hau, *Profile of a Burma Frontier Man*, Bandung, Indonesia, Kilatmanju Press, 1963, p. 25.

<sup>135</sup> Slim, p. 371–72.

Chin Hills and the rest in Southern Manipur. Though most of the fights were relatively small, it was a fight to the death between the two best fighting forces of the British and the Japanese armies.<sup>136</sup> Broadly, these battles were an attempt to block the road of the retreat of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division. Some British commanders describe the fighting in this area as village and paddy field fighting due to the road which runs through paddy fields and villages.<sup>137</sup>

Cowan, the commander of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division started to retreat on 14 March 1944 from Chin hills towards Southern Manipur and was facing a difficult task. He had to move 16,000 troops who fought steadily, accompanied by 2,500 vehicles and 3,500 animals, and growing numbers of sick and wounded about 150 miles in a thick jungle-covered mountain.<sup>138</sup> The worst faced by Cowan was that the Japanese troops who moved ahead of them were already in a position to cut the line. Consequently, the Japanese troops of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division, commanded by Lieutenant- General Yanagida Motozo were responsible for cutting off the line and destroying the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Light Division in the Chin Hills before advancing to the South.<sup>139</sup> Though the Japanese could do roadblocks with cover fire, in due time, the retreating troops, with the help of 23<sup>rd</sup> Indian Infantry Division (a reserved Division in Imphal), could reopen the road with heavy loss suffered by the Japanese. Indeed, the 17<sup>th</sup> Division from Southern Manipur to Imphal was fighting for each and every inch of their life on their way back. By the end of March 1944, 17<sup>th</sup> Division, although at high cost, had fought its way up the Road from Tedim and reached the southern section of the Imphal perimeter. However, the 17<sup>th</sup> Division could reach Imphal after three weeks on 4<sup>th</sup> April and heavy casualties, but after a few days of rest, they were ready for action.<sup>140</sup> The 33<sup>rd</sup> Division advanced from Southern Manipur gave intense pressure through Tedim road and the Jungle during April-May. However, after resting for a few days, the 17<sup>th</sup> Division and the 32 Indian Infantry Brigade were given the

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<sup>136</sup> Pau, p. 781.

<sup>137</sup> Katoch, p. 52.

<sup>138</sup> T.R. Moreman, *The Jungle, The Japanese and The British Commonwealth Armies at War, 142-1945: Fighting Methods, Doctrine and Training for Jungle Warfare*, London, Frank Cass, 2005, p. 127.

<sup>139</sup> Moreman, p. 125 & 126.

<sup>140</sup> Allen, *Burma: The Longest War*, London, Dent, 1984, p.425.

responsibility to defend the Silchar-Bishenpur track and Tedim road in the Southern Manipur.<sup>141</sup> Both sides had a heavy loss, and the fight continued through May. Mention may be made that the 17 Indian Division and the Brigade of 20 Division had a hard resistance from several bases in the Southern Manipur, namely Yaiyok (zezo); Thingkangphai; Yellang & Torbung (presently all in Churachandpur District).<sup>142</sup> However, the name Yaiyok and Yellang is unheard of among the local people. Yaiyok is to be identified as Zezaw Village, which is located in the south near Singngat, approximately 27 km from the town of Churachandpur.

## **2.11 The Battle of Torbung/Operation ‘AYO’**

Torbung lies in the northern part of Churachandpur and shares a district boundary with Bishnupur District. At present, tracing the exact location of Torbung Roadblock is difficult as the villages that lie along Tedim Road were asked to evacuate their houses and move to villages in the hilly areas. The difficulties possibly lie with the new demarcation and establishment or setting up of a new village after the war. Surprisingly, what today’s generation understands about Torbung Roadblock/the Battle of Torbung is very different. It may be due to their negligence or not paying attention to the war in the area by the younger generation, or it may be that the hardship faced by the local people was neglected and were not given any recognition. As a result, the local people intend to forget. Seeing the picture taken/collected by Hemant Singh Katoch in his book ‘Imphal 1944’, it came to be noticed that Torbung Roadblock at that time was now located between Vajing village in the South and Tollen village in the North. The land administration is under the jurisdiction of Vajing village, which was established in 1947. On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2014, the event of 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Torbung was Commemorated at Tollen village Community Hall. The commemoration was organised by Manipur Tourism Forum and the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War Imphal Campaign Foundation. As per the interviews,

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<sup>141</sup> Moreman, p. 133.

<sup>142</sup> H.C. Shobha, ‘The Indo-Japanese only Base (HQS) on Indian Soil,’ in Mrinashree Mairembam (ed.), Y. Madhu Singh (ed.), M. Jugindro Singh (ed.), T. Mangle Singh (ed.), *Souvenir: Platinum Jubilee Celebration of the Government of Free India*, Moirang, The Department of Art and Culture, Government of Manipur, 2018, p. 15.

narratives prevail within the areas of Torbung that, after the war ended, the Japanese reached out to the villages to collect the bones of the Japanese soldiers.<sup>143</sup>

Further, many children and youth went to see them as the Japanese ate food with two bamboo sticks, which were different for them. However, a record of the exact time and date was unknown. In fact, from the early 1950s, the 'Japanese Government held a memorial service engaging in recovering the remains and repatriation for the dead soldiers based on the information from retrieved soldiers and local Government authorities where the war took place.'<sup>144</sup> Perhaps, even after 70 years of the war, it was estimated that some 1.13 million individuals' remains were never recovered, that is, nearly half of those who died overseas (2.4 million soldiers in all).<sup>145</sup> Those who were engaged in collecting the remains changed over a while. With such a circumstance, from 2012 onwards, the Association decided to start the project positively to collect the remains of Japanese soldiers in India.<sup>146</sup> On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC) visited Vajing village and met the village chief. The Association told the village chief that they would come and visit once again when they were given permission from the Indian Government.<sup>147</sup> It is clear that the geographical location of Torbung was not something which could be neglected or forgotten by the Japanese though the local people were not concerned about it.

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<sup>143</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Kangvai Village, Churachandpur. Kaitinkhup, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, Torbung Village, Churachandpur. Pautinlam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, Kangvai Village, Churachandpur. Semjakai, T., interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Vajing Village, Churachandpur. Soitinmang, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Penjang Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>144</sup> Retrieved from Pamphlets of 'The Japanese Government is searching for the remains of former Japanese Servicemen'.

<sup>145</sup> Beatrice Trefalt, 'Collecting Bones: Japanese Missions for the Repatriation of War Remains and the Unfinished Business of the Asia-Pacific War', *Australian Humanities Review*, 61, May 2017, p. 148.

<sup>146</sup> Retrieve from Pamphlets of 'The Japanese Government is searching for the remains of former Japanese Servicemen'.

<sup>147</sup> T. Semjakai, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 12<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Vajing Village, Churachandpur.

Sadly, the villagers of Torbung were asked to vacate their homes by the British as they feared that the invading troops would use them for shelter. As told by Ginlalthuam, Thangkhawkai (Chief of Torbung at that time) was a government servant working as *Mensol* (personal assistant to Sub-Divisional Officer) and was responsible for asking the villagers to leave their houses and move to the remote southwest villages.<sup>148</sup> Therefore, they burned down each and every houses. When they returned to their home after the War, Torbung area was ‘*Vuibu ki tung*’, i.e., smoke covered the whole area, and it was said that not a single leaf on a tree was left after the war.<sup>149</sup> This may be one of the main reasons why the Local people’s understanding of the Torbung roadblock/the Battle of Torbung is different from the existing literature. The local people understood that the Japanese troops blocked the retreating troops of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division at Torbung. Similarly, this was also told during the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of the Battle of Torbung that, ‘Torbung was one of them where a fierce battle was fought to dominate the route. 48<sup>th</sup> Allied Infantry brigade was called in from the Shugunu (South East) area to counter the roadblock at this MS 34 at Torbung. Ultimately, the Allied Forces succeeded in destroying the roadblock and proceeding towards Imphal plains.’<sup>150</sup> This seems contrary to what Hemant Singh Katoch wrote about; the roadblock (Japanese blocking the road) in the Tedim road happened near the Indo-Burma frontier. Furthermore, on 28 March 1944, 37<sup>th</sup> Indian Brigade came into contact with the 17 Indian Division at a milestone 102 (164km) after facing a roadblock.<sup>151</sup> Further, 17 Indian Division reached Imphal on 4<sup>th</sup> April. However, 49 Indian Brigade under the commander of Mackenzie, a defensive position was taken at Torbung, and on 10<sup>th</sup> April the 17 Indian Division could overtake the defence.<sup>152</sup> Below will be a brief

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<sup>148</sup> Ginlalthuam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Mualngat Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>149</sup> Pautinlam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, Kangvai Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>150</sup> 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of Battle of Torbung, [website], 2014 [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.Press\\_Release.Press\\_Release\\_2014.70th\\_Anniversary\\_Commemoration\\_of\\_Battle\\_of\\_Torbung\\_20140520](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.Press_Release.Press_Release_2014.70th_Anniversary_Commemoration_of_Battle_of_Torbung_20140520), (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

<sup>151</sup> Katoch, p. 29

<sup>152</sup> Katoch, p. 29; also see Grant, p. 121.

discussion on the Torbung roadblock/The Battle of Torbung or what is militarily known as the operation 'AYO'.

The first battle of Bishenpur, from the beginning of April till early May, was fighting in and around the Tedim road. This was the period in which the 33 Division came up to attack the British Division defending Imphal in the south. Despite the heavy loss from the Japanese side, they could clear up most of the Tedim road and be stationed not very far from Imphal, a couple of miles away from Bishenpur. Both the commanders were aware that the monsoon would arrive very soon and the climate would be unbearable for both the forces. So, with just a few days left, the dry season was crucial to be used to the fullest. General Mutaguchi's troops were in a critical situation; the 31 Division had blocked the Dimapur road but failed to capture the supply depot at Kohima. As a result, their rations were in a critical position. '15 Division was now fighting an offensive/defensive battle north of Imphal. Yamamoto Force could not break through the Shenam pass, and 33 Division had been held on the Bishenpur-Silchar track line'.<sup>153</sup> Mutaguchi, after knowing the situation, resolved to make a final attack to reinforce the 33 Division and capture Imphal from the South and concluded that the fate of Imphal depended on the outcome. He, therefore, 'reinforce 33 Division with all his tanks, more heavy field artillery and the four battalions of infantry which were all that Kawabe could offer as reinforcement' and started their moves from Tedim/South to capture Imphal.<sup>154</sup> Scooners (commander of 17 Indian Light Division) also concluded that the 17<sup>th</sup> Division should launch an attack against the 33 Division and destroy it. He knows that the main threat lies in the Bishenpur area.<sup>155</sup> Therefore Scooners intention was to cut the supply line and forward unit of Japanese forces. Scoones passed an emergency plan to Slim for his approval, i.e., 'to hold Imphal plain'; 17 Division was ordered to move as quickly as possible and not hold any position until it got somewhere between Milestone 40 and 50 on the Imphal- Tiddim road. It was approved, but the time was to be decided by Scoones. Soon, 48 Brigades were entrusted to make the operation or do roadblocks at Torbung,

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<sup>153</sup> Grant, p. 137.

<sup>154</sup> Grant, p. 137.

<sup>155</sup> Grant, p. 137.



while 63 Brigades would attack from Potsangbam and crush the Japanese between these two bridges (see map: the battle of torbung).<sup>156</sup> 48 Brigades took a broad sweep eastward past Loktak Lake and crossed high steep hills through the very dense jungle but reached their objective, Torbung, on 16 May a little than their expectation.<sup>157</sup> The battle was fought for a week, and the Japanese suffered a heavy loss. 48 Brigades could destroy some tanks and then destroy several convoys of trucks that brought up food, weapons, ammunition and reinforcements for the forward units. When the Japanese got information about the roadblock, a swift encounter-attack was imposed, and the 48 Brigades were beaten off.<sup>158</sup> Though the 17 Division was unsuccessful in Operation 'AYO', it was a very close thing. 'British casualties in 48 Brigade's battles were 120 killed and 301 wounded. Japanese casualties were estimated at the time as 450 killed, some 700 wounded and 6 tanks destroyed.'<sup>159</sup> General Cowan sent a message of congratulation:

'We are justifiably proud of your great achievement. The fine fighting spirit shown by all officers and other ranks has inflicted a major reverse on the enemy. The enemy on this front are disintegrating fast as the result of the heavy blows struck by all the troops. In the near future we shall advance and throw the enemy back. I know I can again call on 48 Brigades to play a leading part. I congratulate you all. I regret the casualties but they have not been in vain'.<sup>160</sup>

Causality Clearing stations were expanded at Pallel and Torbung in Southern Manipur to hold four hundred patients each. This made the medical authorities avoid the loss of sick men as they could treat them without sending the wounded to some far hospital.<sup>161</sup> At the end of June, 17 and 23 Indian Divisions were still at the severe battle in Southern Manipur i.e., Tedim Road/Churachandpur District and Pallel in the southeast. As monsoon had already broken out, the battle was fought under a difficult condition of rain and mud in the mountains and jungle. By 10<sup>th</sup> July, the commander

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<sup>156</sup> David Rooney, *Burma Victory: Imphal, Kohima and The Chindits*, March 1944 to May 1945, Oxford, Osprey Publishing, 1992, p. 136.

<sup>157</sup> Rooney, *Burma Victory*, p. 136.

<sup>158</sup> Rooney, p.136.

<sup>159</sup> Grant, p. 158

<sup>160</sup> Grant, p. 158.

<sup>161</sup> Evans & James, p. 34.

of the Japanese had withdrawn from three main locations, Churachandpur, Pallel, and Ukhrul. They could not capture Bishnupur in the South of Imphal and Pallel in the South East.

Thus, under the commander of Yanagida, the 33 Division of the Japanese force was successful in their operation in the Southern part and could pass through the road in several places, one of which was the Torbung roadblock on the Tedim road. By the end of May, it was clear to Tanaka, a newly appointed commander of the 33 Division, that it would not be possible to break through to Imphal. However, with the reinforcement from the 53 and 54 Division, a renewed attack was made towards Bishenpur and Silchar Track during June. Only a little progress could be achieved, and on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 33 Division had lost 70 per cent of its original strength – 7,000 killed or wounded and 5000 sick.<sup>162</sup>



Fig. 2.1 Map showing the battle of Torbung (Source: Ian Lyall Grant, *Burma the Turning point*, p. 134).

<sup>162</sup> Allen, *Burma: The Longest War*, p. 248.



*Fig.2.2* (Author collection) The above image shows the present location of the Battle of Torbung.

## **2.12 A Mysterious Mountain/Rock Cave in Southern Manipur**

The Saidan Mountain, locally known as ‘Saidan *tlang*’ in the native Hmar language, is the highest of its kind in the area. It is located in the Saidan Village and 3 km away from the town of Churachandpur. One can have a bird’s eye view of the town and the Khuga valley. Though Southern Manipur is covered with hills, Saidan Mountain plays a vital role in the study because of its physical features and the belief that Lt.Gen.Sato, one of the commanders of Japanese forces, slept there. However, a question arose: Is it true that Lt. Gen. Sato arrived in the Southern Manipur?

Indeed, during the Second World War, the Japanese set up an ‘Observatory Camp’ with massive rocks organised in the shape of a perfect cave for hiding. The cave is locally known as ‘Japan *Lungpui*’ and is said to be the hideout of Japanese General Sato during the Second World War. ‘Lt. Gen. Sato retreated in obscurity inside a rocky cave on the eastern side of the peak.’<sup>163</sup> It is engraved on the rock itself as ‘General Sato slept here, 1944 April’. The cave is believed to be the hideout of Sato after the Japanese lost their ground in Manipur. This seems to be untrue when looking at the commanders of the Japanese forces and their roles. It is known that Lt. General Mutaguchi was the commander of the 15 Army and under which 31 Division

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<sup>163</sup> <https://inpui.blogspot.com/2014/06/saidan-tlang-saidan-peak.html> (Accessed on 15 February 2022)

was led by Lt. Gen. Sato, who was given a responsibility to attack the North of Manipur and Kohima, Lt. Gen. Yanagida led 33 Division and later was replaced by General Tanaka and were responsible for advancing from southern Manipur, i.e., Tedim Road and 15 Division was led by Lt. Gen. Yamauchi to march from Tamu-Pallen Road. Among the 33 Division, we can find a similar name like Sergent Saito and Captain Saito. However, according to the Japanese account, Sergent Saito and three sappers of his friends died on 14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> April 1944, and Captain Saito, who was a battalion commander, was killed in April 1944.<sup>164</sup> Further, it is known that the 31 Division under the commander of Lt. Gen. Sato took a decision unilaterally and withdrew from Kohima area in June. Further, Sato (31<sup>st</sup> Division) did not pay attention to Mutaguchi, as Sato/31<sup>st</sup> Division was instructed to join the 15<sup>th</sup> Division for one last attack, which would hold the fate of the Empire.<sup>165</sup> The 31<sup>st</sup> Division had undergone severe injuries and the order was too late, they retreated towards the Chindwin. It is clear that Sato did not reach the Southern part of Manipur.

Lt. Gen. Yanagida, the commander of the 33 Division, was later replaced by General Tanaka, and apart from that, the commander of the 15 Army, Gen. Mutaguchi, took the overall charge to make a final blow from the southern part of Manipur. Apart from the 31 Division commander Sato, there was no Gen.Sato in the Japanese 15 Army. Perhaps, we can argue that the 33 Division commanders or Gen. Mutaguchi himself would be more suitable rather than Sato.

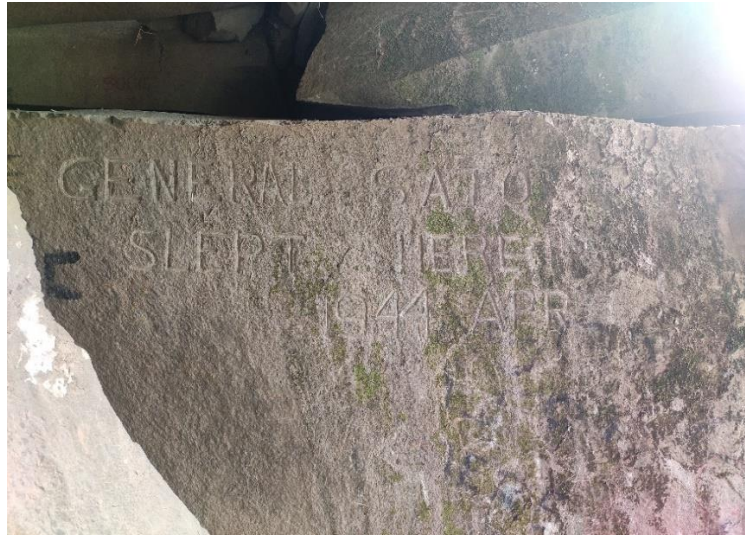


*Fig 2.3* (Author Collections) Saidan Cave/Japan Lungpui

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<sup>164</sup> Grant, p. 123&130.

<sup>165</sup> Evans & James, p. 323.



*Fig.2.4 (Author Collections) Saidan Cave/Japan Lungpui*

## **Conclusion**

In spite of its remoteness and obscurity to the outside world, Manipur became a battlefield between the two contending forces, i.e., the British/Allied troops and the Japanese-INA. Having a huge terrain and a thick forest along with prevailing deadly diseases and almost impenetrable jungle it became a battlefield. Not only that, it became a region which decided the fate of the Second World War it was a war that the local people never expected to happen nor wanted it. Moreover, even the British did not believe that the attack would come from this region, and as a result, their military strength and strategies were weak and unprepared. This can be seen in the battle of Arakan and the other battles in Burma, where the British could not withstand the invaders and were even considered to be retreating faster than the Indians and non-Burmese who settled in Burma. Indeed, Second World War in Manipur, particularly in Southern Manipur, began not with the invasion. Instead, the local people were asked to evacuate their homes and villages. They were asked to evacuate their villages; not because of their courage and possibly due to their ignorance, some chiefs and villagers remained in their village while some others mainly went to their relatives in the southwestern parts. Further, in the valley or the capital of Manipur Second World War began with refugees, i.e., those exodus from Burma, which was followed up by bombing in 1942. Whereas in the Southern

Manipur, Second World War began with the internal exodus among the local people, which was followed by the burning down of their houses and livestock that were left behind.

With the Japanese holding supremacy over Burma, they planned a strategy to invade Imphal, the capital of Manipur. At the same time, the British, who were thrown out of Burma, were preparing a strategy for reconquest. It was like the Japanese played an offensive role and the British as a defending force. For the Japanese, the plan to attack Imphal was more to strengthen their defence in South East Asia, and the British wanted to reconquer Burma as it was the Road to China. It can be seen that the battle only began at the beginning of 1944 and lasted for several months. By the end of that year, the British could drive the invading forces from Burma and reoccupy South East Asia. It is observed that the defeat of the Japanese was mainly due to their under-estimating of the British force, personal enmity among the commanders of the Japanese troops and the critical situation of strategic supply of rations.

## CHAPTER 3

### NATURE OF LOCAL PARTICIPATION & ITS IMPACT IN SOUTHERN MANIPUR

#### Introduction

With the outbreak of the Second World War in Southern Manipur, the local people also experienced war in the form of psychological battles. Due to the fact that the British and Japanese used various methods to mobilise the local people in order to gain their support. Yet, among the historians or the writers, the nature of the local peoples' participations seem to be very confusing when looking back at war. Therefore, this chapter seeks to examine the nature and role played by the local people. Further, this chapter also would highlight the post-war challenges faced by the local people after the war.

Every aspect of human doing has its effect on society. The Second World War has its own effect on the life of the local people, which will also be discus in this chapter. Some individuals or people recorded about their memories of Second World War in Southern Manipur. At the same time, for some, it may be the experience they want to forget, as most people were not keen to remember the arms groups.<sup>166</sup> Many individuals or most of the masses felt that others would not be interested in their experiences as they were not heroes who fought the war.

#### 3.1 Nature of the Local People

Though the physical war was fought and experienced on the land, another war fought among the local people was a psychological battle between the British and the Japanese to mobilise the local people and gain their support. Pro-Japanese and Pro-British propaganda were circulated by both the contending parties among the people of Southern Manipur which created a dilemma in the minds of people as to what was be believed and or not. The question on which side they were on and to whom they

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<sup>166</sup> Hugh Tinker, 'A Forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma, 1942', *Journal of South-east Asian Studies*, 6, 1975, p. 1-15.

supported becomes a debatable controversy among the Historians. As excerpts from Desmond Kelly's *Burma Campaign*, the policy adopted by the British to win the hearts of the Local /Zo People were:

In the first place the British brought you peace and freedom. Freedom from fear, freedom from want. . . I cannot believe that after fifty years of peace and progress, you will surrender your homes, your women and your lands to the Japanese who will burn your villages, plunder your houses, rape your women, steal your crops and make you slaves.<sup>167</sup>

On the other side, the Japanese used racial antagonism as propaganda. Japan's slogan 'Asia for Asians' was intended to counter the so-called 'White man's civilisation'.<sup>168</sup> And in 1942-43, when the combined forces of the INA and the Japanese army were stationed at the Chindwin Valley of Burma, rumours spread all over Manipur that the day has come for the realisation of the local prophesy: *Nongpok Thong Hangani* (eastern gate will open) which meant 'Western rules and culture would be replaced by the Eastern rule through Japanese invasion'.<sup>169</sup> The Japanese promised the local people that, 'if you give us good information, we will pay you a lot of money. If you were to shoot and kill a British, we would give you a substantial sum of money.'<sup>170</sup>

Both the British and the Japanese propaganda were convincing and enticing for the people of Southern Manipur. According to Aiko Kurasawa, 'Japanese-style propaganda seems to have been more effective among the uneducated mass of population, especially those living in rural areas isolated from other information sources.'<sup>171</sup> In contrast, the British Governor of Burma Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith remarked, 'Those Hill people were the rocks against which the tide of invasion by the "Invincible Japanese Army" broke. He further said, I can only envy those who

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<sup>167</sup> Desmond Kelly, 'Kelly's Burma Campaign', *Asian Affairs*, 39:1, 2008, p. 25.

<sup>168</sup> Pum Khan Pau, 'Situating Local Events in Geo-Political Struggles between the British and Japanese Empires: The Politics of Zo Participation during the Second World War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42:4, 667-692, 2014, p. 680.

<sup>169</sup> Jangkhomang Guite, 'Representing Local Participation in INA-Japanese Imphal Campaign: The Case of the Kuki's in Manipur', 1943-45, *Indian Historical Review*, 37 (2), 2010, p. 291; Also see M. Kirti Singh, *Religion and Culture of Manipur*, p. xxii.

<sup>170</sup> Kelly, *Asian Affairs*, p. 26.

<sup>171</sup> Aiko Kurasawa, 'Propaganda Media on Java under the Japanese 1942-45', *Indonesia No. 44*, 1987, p. 94.



had the privilege of fighting alongside the Hill people of Burma, without whose courage and determination the whole history of our generation might have been changed.<sup>172</sup> Another account recalls: 'I wish to pay tribute to the tribesmen of the Naga, Chin and Kachin Hills, who have remained staunchly loyal to us in spite of all the enemy's efforts to suborn them.'<sup>173</sup> Khrienuo writes 'when the Japanese arrived at the soil of Naga Hills, they were friendly in nature and paid for all their supplies. At first, the Japanese distributed Rs 10/- Indian Currency notes along with worthless Japanese Currency among the Villagers.'<sup>174</sup> Khrienuo further mentioned that, 'at the later stage, it was not the same anymore as their supplies were finished and the ways to receive were cut off. Hence, they killed and ate a large number of chickens, pigs, cattle, etc., and they destroyed all their livestock and even household items.'<sup>175</sup>

Pum Khan Pau mentions that the contribution of the indigenous Zo was significant. They worked against the Japanese in the guise of friendship. They gathered intelligence which they passed on to the Allied forces. They acted as local levies under the British command, but when the British left them to their fate, they continued to be loyal to them.<sup>176</sup> J. Roy maintained that the Indo-Japanese force was getting full support from the local people.<sup>177</sup> Lal Dena argued that the Japanese-INA force did not gain much local support in terms of moral or material.<sup>178</sup> M. Kirti Singh mentioned that the Chief of Kukis and Nagas, along with a large number of Manipuris, joined the Japanese as the Japanese promised a happy life to the local people once they captured Imphal.<sup>179</sup> Prof. Lal Dena writes:

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<sup>172</sup> As Quoted from Pum Khan Pau, 'Behind the enemy line: British-led guerrilla operations in the Indo-Burma frontier during the Second World War', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 30:2, 2019, p. 308

<sup>173</sup> Grehan & Mace, p. 51.

<sup>174</sup> Khrienuo, 'Naga Role in World War II', *Journal of North East India Studies* Vol. 3(2), Jul.-Dec. 2013, p. 63.

<sup>175</sup> Khrienuo, *Journal of North East India Studies*, p. 63.

<sup>176</sup> Pau, p. 784.

<sup>177</sup> J. Roy, *History of Manipur*, Calcutta, Eastlight Book House, 1973, p. 123.

<sup>178</sup> Dena, 'INA Movement: Myth or reality', *Proceedings of Indian History Congress*, 365-369, p. 367.

<sup>179</sup> Singh, p. xxii.

“One of the top-ranking INA commanders came and met Kawlvelthang<sup>180</sup> One evening and thanked him profusely, saying, I have come all the way from Rangoon and met many people who have been supporting us. I am so thrilled and particularly grateful to you for what you and your villagers have done for my soldiers. In fact, it is only because of your help and co-operation that my soldiers could survive till today. But now many of them are suffering from malaria and dysentery, we are leaving soon.”<sup>181</sup>

The Manipuris were very loyal to the British, and the slightest reason was ‘as far as the young men were concerned, the Japanese had sold their poor bicycles which kept on breaking down.’<sup>182</sup> In fact, it is known that the Maharaja of Manipur collected funds from the local people in preparation for the war and assisted the British in defending against the Japanese-INA.

According to Mrs. Gimson, in July 1944, the Japanese behaved well ‘both in the hills and valley towards the civilian population’ but have ‘failed completely to win over the hillmen’. The words of Mrs Gimson seem to be true because the Japanese army never mobilised the civilian in the fashion of the British. Instead, the Japanese possess a mindset of energetic inquiry, frank analysis and expression.<sup>183</sup> Leisangthem Gitarani Devi also mentioned that the local people were made to believe that the Japanese were their enemy. In contrast, some men and women changed their views, believing that the Japanese had come to rescue them from the British government. Moreover, later those men and women seemed to change their loyalty retrospectively and, looking back, regret the way they treated the Japanese.<sup>184</sup> Further, during a public lecture and interactive session with the war veterans from Kuki community in the then Indian National Army (INA) held at KIC (Kuki Innpi Churachandpur) Conference Hall, Tuibong, Churachandpur 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022, it was highlighted that

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<sup>180</sup> Kawlvelthang is the Chief of Saikot Village at that time. Saikot is located on the east side of Churachandpur town, approximately 2-3km distance away.

<sup>181</sup> Lal Dena, *Indo-Japanese Soldiers in The Khuga Valley of Churachandpur, April to August, 1944*, *Hueiyen Lanpao* (English Edition), March 28, 2014. [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History\\_of\\_Manipur.Indojapanese\\_Soldiers\\_In\\_The\\_Khuga\\_Valley\\_Of\\_Churachandpur\\_April\\_to\\_August\\_1944](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History_of_Manipur.Indojapanese_Soldiers_In_The_Khuga_Valley_Of_Churachandpur_April_to_August_1944), (accessed 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>182</sup> Evans & James, p. 13.

<sup>183</sup> Hasting, p. 72-23.

<sup>184</sup> Leisangthem Gitarani Devi, *How women remember war: Unearthing Memories of the Second World War in Manipur*, New Delhi, Zubaan Publisher Pvt., 2019, p. 34.

more than 600 Kuki freedom fighters had joined the INA to fight against the Allies Powers. In the same session 8 (eight) INA freedom fighters who are still alive also graced the occasion sharing their memories. The eight war veterans were Lunkhoson Kuki, Sankhohen Kuki, Tongkholun Kuki, Paojang Kuki, Helkhopau Kuki, Khuppao Kuki, Doulam Dimngel and Ngamkholun Kuki,<sup>185</sup> respectively.

According to local narratives, Thangkhawkai, the Chief of Torbung who was working with the British as a translator and guide became a very prominent person during the war. This may have been happening due to the fact that he was constantly consulted by the British in any affairs of Sothern Manipur. Thangkhawkai remained faithful to the British even after the war.<sup>186</sup> Mairembam Koireng Singh the local leader of Moirang and an active member of Nikhil Manipuri Mahasabha along with Kuman Kanglen Singh, Meinam Mani Singh and Laiphrapam Sanaba met with the INA military Colonel Soukat Hayat Ali Malik and Naki Ahmad Choudhuri (Naki Ahmad Choudhuri is a Manipuri Muslim, born in Keikhu Muslim Village) at Tronglaobi. On the same day, with the help of M. Koireng Singh, Col. S.A Malik hoisted the Indian Tricolour Flag on 14<sup>th</sup> April 1944 at about 5 pm at Moirang Kangla.<sup>187</sup>

In fact, an examination of some of the available oral evidence proved that a number of local people, particularly the Kukis, the Nagas and the Meiteis, provided a lot of supplies and information to both the Anglo-Americans as well as the Japanese-INA forces and perhaps the changing local responses were crucial in the later success of the Anglo-American forces. Perhaps, among the local historians, there is always a tendency that the Naga, mainly inhabiting the North, sided with the British and against that, the Kukis, mainly inhabiting the Southern part, joined the Japanese-INA as they both were in a constant battle over the land claims. As per a comment made

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<sup>185</sup> During a public lecture and interactive session with the war veterans from Kuki community in the then Indian National Army (INA) held at KIC (Kuki Innpi Churachandpur) Conference Hall, Tuibong, Churachandpur 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022.

<sup>186</sup> Kaitinkhup, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2022, Torbung Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>187</sup> Mairembam Prithviraj Singh, '14<sup>th</sup> April,1944; its significance and impact on the freedom movement of India,' *Sangai Express*, 15 April 2021. Available from: E-PAO, (accessed 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022).

by the British in recognition of the service rendered by the local people in the *Statesman*: ‘These sturdy hill people are important to us now as fighters, scouts and labourers. They may be much more important as reconquest approaches.’<sup>188</sup> Both the British and Japanese felt the need for the local people’s support to win the battle. This resulted in mobilising the local people and later created confusion among the historians. Thus, one can conclude that both the British and the Japanese gained support and loyalty from the local people and later, it turned out that the British mobilised better and gained much more support than the Japanese.

### **3.2 Participation of Local People in Southern Manipur**

In July 1942, the condition of the State returned to normal after the end of the *Nupilaan* agitation and works had been resumed. It was estimated that by the autumn of 1942, the army employed in the hills alone reached up to 5,000 labourers daily, and contractors employed another 6,500.<sup>189</sup> The local people, including men, women and the youths, joined in the construction of roads to earn money. Thawngzagin of Kangvai was given charge (Tophodar) for the construction and widening of roads in Torbung area (Oksongbung-located in Moirang)-Leisang Village (it was under Torbung jurisdiction during that time).<sup>190</sup> They were paid one and half Rupee for a mature man and one Rupee for young men and women for their daily wages.<sup>191</sup> Both Henkholam and Pautinlam joined the construction of Tedim road. However, Gimson remarked that most of the hill-men complained of excessive labour in repairing roads, crops failure, *pothangs* for patrol parties and the intolerance behaviour of the V-force.<sup>192</sup> This show that the local people were heavily exploited as a labour.

During the spring of 1942, there came into being the ‘V Force’, an organisation raised with the help of the Assam Rifles, a force of guerrillas by distributing arms to Nagas and Kukis. They were also responsible for forming a screen of local scouts

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<sup>188</sup> Quoted in Desmond Kelly, no.13, p. 127.

<sup>189</sup> MSA, *Administration Report of Manipur*, 1943–44, p. 3.

<sup>190</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Kangvai Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>191</sup> Pautinlam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021.

<sup>192</sup> MSA, *Tour Dairy of C. Gimson*, the political agent of Manipur, 1943-1944, R-I/S-A.

that was intended to intercept enemy agents attempting to infiltrate India.<sup>193</sup> However, there is no precise knowledge of how the 'V' sign originated. Some say it was named because it was the V<sup>th</sup> Force which was raised during the war. Another holds that 'V' stands for 'Village', which means 'Village Force' who were the 'local scouts' raised by the Assam Rifles in 1942.<sup>194</sup> Whatever it may be, V-Force played a crucial role in gathering information about the Japanese intention. Their main job was to intercept enemy agents and keep surveillance over the local people.<sup>195</sup> In this regard, a British Army intelligence Stated that: 'The quantity and quality of operational information received from the local inhabitants have been a major factor in our success to date. A high percentage of our successful airstrikes have been the direct result of local information.'<sup>196</sup> As per the interview, 'Hentin narrates that they were used as transport to carry ammunition, food and other needs along with the Japanese soldiers. Further, Hentin asserts that some local people escape on the way, fearing they will be taken to the war zone, and the chances of returning home are less. At the same time, some reach their destiny and return home. Henin was one among those who escaped on the way.'<sup>197</sup> Thangvung said, during those times, it was a custom that if a person who carried news/information/goods had to cross one or more villages to reach his/her destiny, upon reaching the first village, he/she had to return. Again, a group of people from that village has to pass on to the next village until it reaches its destination.<sup>198</sup> This was not understood by the Japanese, which can be one of the reasons why the people of southern Manipur escaped on the way after crossing different villages.

M. Kirti Singh was also of the view that many young Manipuris and the chiefs of Kukis and Nagas helped the Japanese in distributing INA leaflets, and serious

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<sup>193</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur*, 1943-44, p. 2.

<sup>194</sup> Jangkhomang Guite, 'Representing Local Participation in INA-Japanese Imphal Campaign: The case of the Kukis in Manipur, 1943-45', *Indian Historical Review*, 37(2), 2010, p. 294.

<sup>195</sup> Guite, *Indian Historical Review*, p. 294.

<sup>196</sup> Quoted in Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *The Forgotten Armies*, Penguin Books, London, 2005, p. 386.

<sup>197</sup> Hentin, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021, Saipum Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>198</sup> Thangvung, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Torbung Village, Churachandpur.

meetings were held with the Japanese.<sup>199</sup> Not only that, in a personal account of Satinkung, she said that when the Japanese were in short of rations, the villagers of Saikawt<sup>200</sup> were asked to supply their local food.<sup>201</sup> Satinkung further said that her husband (German Lien) was taken by the Japanese-INA to work for them as an interpreter and guide until they were forced back to retreat to Burma by the British. Since the Japanese front line faced an acute shortage of food, medicine, illness and death, with such a critical situation, a heavy re-enforcement and supplies were needed, but they never arrived. At the peak of their struggle for survival, the role of the local people became crucial. The Japanese troops who came with only a few rations had to depend entirely upon the local people and resources at the later stage of the war. According to Prof. Lal Dena, as a result of falling supplies in the Churachandpur area:

‘The Japanese and INA personnel had to depend more and more on the ration and livestock of the local people. An eye-witness account maintains that all the male folk and young women in the occupied villages were pounding rice day and night to feed the soldiers. At other times, the male folk also served as coolies and porters carrying ration and ammunition to different camps. Zathuoi, a volunteer, also testified that he and his two friends one day carried a wounded Japanese soldier whose leg was completely torn asunder just below his knee from the Saidan peak to the Saikawt camp. Deeply impressed by his forbearance, Zathuoi further Stated that not even once did the soldier groan.’<sup>202</sup>

Similarly, Soitinmang (born in 1935) has told that at Chawngkhawzo village (southwest), while the Japanese were in shortage of supplies, they started killing pigs, cows and hens without even asking the owners.<sup>203</sup> Soitinmang added that the Japanese paid the prices for the livestock they consumed with a Japanese currency that was of no use to them. Perhaps, it was the local livestock on which the Japanese

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<sup>199</sup> Singh, p. xxii.

<sup>200</sup> Saikawt & Saidan villagers were the two villages just 1-3km away from Tedim road and were not allowed to leave their village by the Japanese.

<sup>201</sup> Satinkung, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 15<sup>th</sup> March 2021, Saikawt, Churachandpur.

<sup>202</sup> Lal Dena, ‘Indo-Japanese Soldiers in the Khuga Valley of Churachandpur’, *Hueiyen Lanpao*, Imphal, 28 March 2014, (accessed 01/12/2021).

<sup>203</sup> Soitinmang, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Penjang Village, Churachandpur.

depended in the latter part of the war where some youths would help prepare their meals. As narrated by Minpi, the chief of Maite village (far southwest), his father was a prominent chief in the South West of Manipur during that time and was constantly in touch with the British officials. His father works as an interpreter and intelligence. He further asserts that; his father was given the title ‘Young Chief’ by the British after the war for his dedication and service to the British during the war.<sup>204</sup> Further Ginlalthuam (Chief of Mualngat, Estd. 1927), a Japanese Camp was set up at Mauvom (located at the starting point of Thangting Mountain) just a few kilometres away from their village, where the villagers of Mualngat usually went to supply foods.<sup>205</sup>

Hillmen worked not only as labourers on the Dimapur, Tamu and Tiddim roads and the Kharasom, Ukhrul, Sita, Mombi and Bishenpur-Jiribam Jeep-tracks but also as porters for parties of Assam Rifles, V Force and other military and air force formations operating in the Hills.<sup>206</sup> According to Jangkhomang Guite, many Kukis who joined the British deserted to Japanese-INA forces. Like ‘Hemkholet Touthang Kuki joined the British V-Force in 1943 and later deserted to join the INA Battalion No. 8, as sepoy No. 43820. He was arrested and put in jail for six months. Somkhai Haokip and Chongjadem Haokip, who were serving the V-Force, also later deserted and joined the Japanese army.’<sup>207</sup> Further, Guite mentions several Kukis who left the British and fought along with the Japanese-INA. On the 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Torbung, the two veterans from Sothern Manipur- Kaikhai Kuki (92 years) of 1st Assam Regiment and Kaijakap Kuki (91 years) of 2nd Assam Regiment as Special Guests shared their personal accounts where they said that they took part in various battles and fought the retreating Japanese troops.<sup>208</sup> Khupkholam Vaiphei (95 years), a former sepoy of the Assam Regiment, also fought in the Battle of

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<sup>204</sup> Minpi, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022, D. Phailen, Churachandpur.

<sup>205</sup> Ginlalthuam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

<sup>206</sup> E.F. Lydall, *Administration Report for the Manipur State for the Year 1943–44*, Imphal, State Printing Press, 1945, p. 17

<sup>207</sup> Jangkhomang Guite, *Indian Historical Review*, p. 294.

<sup>208</sup> 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemoration of Battle of Torbung, [website], 2014 [http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.Press\\_Release.Press\\_Release\\_2014.70th\\_Anniversary\\_Commemoration\\_of\\_Battle\\_of\\_Torbung\\_20140520](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.Press_Release.Press_Release_2014.70th_Anniversary_Commemoration_of_Battle_of_Torbung_20140520), (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

Imphal/Kohima. He was among the British forces and took part in pushing back the enemy from where they came.<sup>209</sup> To the Kukis who joined the Japanese- INA, as P.S. Haokip Stated, ‘after an agreement was reached between the Kukis and the Japanese forces, the Kukis were given training in the art of warfare by the Japanese army’.<sup>210</sup> The training was done without recruitment as it was only to substantiate the shortage of men on the battlefield.

As narrated by S.T. Lalson,<sup>211</sup> his father by the name Songzalam joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment and earned Rs. 35/- and later it was Rs. 49/- per month. In the initial stage, Songzalam fought against the Japanese forces in the Naga Hills and later, he joined in Pallel-Shenam (South-East of Manipur)-Burma. While reaching Shenam, they were given new training. In one incident, while they were retreating (in the Naga Hills), Songzalam met his relative by the name Soitin of Penjang Village (Churachandpur District) at the curved road sitting with a heavy injury on his body. Songzalam was shocked to see that Soitin had joined the regiment. After a short conversation, Songzalam was in a dilemma and not willing to go without Soitin, and at the same time, the Japanese forces were behind them. Finally, Songzalam made a decision that;

*Nunglam ah meithal git in ei hung phak leh ‘U Soi thasia kin’ ti ah nutsia mai di, ahinlah galte’n ei hun del phak lou nak uleh theidan dan ah hung sawmdawl ham ham di ti’n lung ka gel tai, nunglam ah mi tam tak ahung nau in, ahung ahung lo uh hiatmaw hipuana kitawn pi phawt mai ingka ti’in ka lung gel in ka lawipa kiang in ka gen leh aman le pha eisak piin, ziphat achun ka hung kipan dawk un, inn dung chan vel achia tak leh akitung zel in.*

Free Translation:

*If the sound of guns could be heard at our back, I will tell him in this way ‘Elder Brother Soi do not feel bad’ and left him, but if our enemy could not reach us, I*

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<sup>209</sup> Shamik Bag, The Forgotten Frontier, <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/rmJa4bPHcCzXjBYpUZ7cBN/Theforgottenfrontier.html>, (accessed 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

<sup>210</sup> P.S. Haokip, *Zale’n-Gam: The Kuki Nation*, Manmasi, 1998, p.196.

<sup>211</sup> S.T. Lalson, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022, B. Aijalon, Churachandpur.



*will help him as much as I can. I told my friend (Soitin) that let's walk together as some of our regiments were still behind us, and therefore, we could identify our enemy's movement. Soitin agreed, and both started walking together. After walking for about the length of a house, they continue to rest.*

During 1945-46 a, permission was granted to the army for retirement for any willing individuals. Songzalam was also granted and retired on Date 10/6/1947 from the army. He returned to his home from Mandalay-Rangoon-Madras by boat to Shillong and to his home town. Since he and his friend retired early, they did not receive Independence Medal. Sadly, his parents passed away during his service in the army. From the unpublished biography of Songzalam, we can identify that Vaiphei Lalneilam died in the war, Liankhai of Kawlhen Village died along with the first commander of 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Assam Regiment, Pauzakhai of Leisang Village, and one of his friends named Thakunga Lushai also passed away during the war.

### **3.3 Impacts of Second World War in Southern Manipur**

Every aspect of human doing has its effect on society. It can be positive or negative, but it renders some contribution to the ongoing developmental process in the life of the people. Notably, in the case of Southern Manipur, which became a battleground during the Second World War, the people's lives were affected in many ways. John Parratt writes: 'By the time the war ended, Manipur had been forcibly dragged into the modern era.'<sup>212</sup> Moreover, in a 1993 paper for the Manipur State Archives, Dr. N. Lokendra Singh explained that Manipur's experience of the Second World War brought rapid changes in terms of socio-political and economic, and the land of Manipur had changed forever.<sup>213</sup> Though the coming of Christianity and western education had already changed the local people in various spheres, the people were much confined to their regions, and growth was in a slow process. Eventually, the aftermath of the war brought fast growth, and the people were more exposed to the outside world. John Parratt observes that there was a transformation from an agrarian

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<sup>212</sup> Hemant Singh Katoch, *Manipur and WWII*, [website] <https://www.battleofimphal.com/manipur-and-wwii>, (accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021).

<sup>213</sup> *Manipur and World War II*, [website] <https://www.battleofimphal.com/manipur-and-wwii>, (accessed 20 April 2021)

society to a 'modern era' by the end of the Second World War.<sup>214</sup> Thus, development can be seen in southern Manipur in the aftermath of the Second World War.

### **3.3.1 Positive Impacts**

After the war, it can be seen that many local people took up wet rice cultivation apart from the old tradition, i.e., Jhum Cultivation, through which they have obtained their livelihood. Mainly, a large number of Kukis left the interior hills and settled in Khuga and Chakpi valley, where wet rice cultivation could be developed.<sup>215</sup> However, Jhum Cultivation continues to be the main livelihood till today. Below will be a discussion on some other positive changes which can be seen and experienced after the war in Southern Manipur.

#### **3.3.1.1 Roads & Transportation**

It is worth mentioning that, after the suppression of the Kukis by the British during Anglo-Kuki War/Kuki Rising<sup>216</sup> also locally known as Zou Gaal from 1917-1919,<sup>217</sup> in addition, the areas who rebelled were 'being fined for their share in the rising and the imprisonment or deportation of all the prominent leaders, the Kukis were now made to open up their country by constructing fair bridle paths through their hills connecting with points in the Manipur and the Chindwin valley, and also connecting the various posts with each other'.<sup>218</sup> Although bridle paths are constructed, they are not meant for motor vehicles. Yet, the road southwards over the frontier to Tedim was seldom used except for an occasional meeting of the Political Agents of Manipur and British Administration officials from the Chin hills.<sup>219</sup> Eventually, before Second World War broke out, the Allied force made strategic undertaking by constructing

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<sup>214</sup> John Parratt, *Wounded Land: Politics and Identity in Modern Manipur*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 2005, p. 93.

<sup>215</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State, 1945-46*, p. 3.

<sup>216</sup> See details on Jangkhomang Guite and Thangkhohal Haokip (ed.), *The Anglo-Kuki War, 1917-1919: A Frontier Uprising against Imperialism during the first World War*, India, Taylor and Francis Books India Pvt.Ltd-Manohar, 2018.

<sup>217</sup> S. Thangboi Zou, 'Emergent Micro-National Communities: The Logic of Kuki-Chin Armed Struggle in Manipur', *Strategic Analysis*, 36:2,2012, p. 315-327.

<sup>218</sup> L.W. Shakespear, *History of Assam Rifle*, Delhi, Cultural Publishing House, 19290, p. 237.

<sup>219</sup> Evans & James, p. 15.

roads, airstrips, and widening roads for quick movement of troops. Furthermore, to supply their necessities during wartime and in order to defend against the advancing Japanese troops in the hills and valley of Manipur development of infrastructure was taking place, which beyond the imagination of the people. As A.S. Arthur says, ‘...roads were built. Before that, we just had foot tracks and bridle paths. It was only after that vehicle could play in the area (around Ukhrul).’<sup>220</sup> According to Lieutenant-Colonel Towers, ‘In September 1942, the “Great Ones” decided there should be a road between Imphal and Tiddim, and in the manner of the “Great Ones” someone took a rule, drew a line on the map between the two places, and said: “Let there be a road”.’<sup>221</sup> ‘This was the genesis of the Tiddim Road’,<sup>222</sup> remarked Ian Lyall Grant, a Major General in the 70 Light Field Company, Bengal S & M of the 17<sup>th</sup> Indian Division, which was entrusted to construct the road. In Southern Manipur as Tedim road was widened and improved during the course of the war for movement of troops and essentials connection between the border areas in the south of Manipur and Imphal, the capital of the state eventually witnessed improvements. At present, this road has become the lifeline of Southern Manipur, which links it to the capital city and beyond. The Tedim road connects not only the two-nation states of India and Burma but bridges the scattered *Zo* descendants who today are separated by an international boundary. Although the road from Imphal (capital city) to Churachandpur is well maintained and developing, the condition of the road on the side of Myanmar is not well maintained.

Under the organisation known as General Reserve Engineer Force (G.R.E.F.) and with the help of labour forces, the roads were made, and the bridges were built in such a way that when the time came, it was fit to take even heavy tanks.<sup>223</sup> Moreover, without the help of good roads, it would not be possible for the ARM (Assam Relief Measures) to initiate relief and rehabilitation, especially in the hills of Manipur.

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<sup>220</sup> As Quoted from Singh Katoch, p. 44.

<sup>221</sup> Desmond Kelly, *Kelly's Burma Campaign*, Tiddim Press, London, 2003, p. 124.

<sup>222</sup> Ian Lyall Grant, *Burma the Turning Point*, Zampi Press, Chichester, 1993, p. 35.

<sup>223</sup> Evans & James, p. 64.

### 3.3.1.2 The rise of a sense of Nationalism

Since Second World War, nationalism has created a renaissance, a political force, because this European concept fired up millions of colonised peoples in Asia and Africa and their emergence into independence.<sup>224</sup> Consequently, the idea of nationalism arose among the local people of Manipur after the war. As the local people who joined the war and experienced the sacrifice made by courageous Japanese-INA to fight for their nation. This instils the hearts and minds of the local people and gave a new beginning in defending their land. Yet, though Christianity/Missionaries had transformed the life of the Southern Manipur people, the sense of nationalism was still in a slow process. And with the arrival of war in the land, the Japanese-INA gave a new impetus to a growing consciousness among the people, which led to the importance of nationalism. After the war, the local people felt the need to have a common platform to achieve their political goals and aspirations. Therefore, a political organisation known as KNA (Kukis National Assembly) came to be formed on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1946.

Nationalism is generally defined as an ideology embodying the feeling of belonging to a group united by shared history and a combination of ethnic/religious/racial/linguistic identity, which is identified with a given territory and entitled to its State. Gandhi wrote this remarkable achievement with the following words ‘Although the INA failed to achieve its immediate objectives, they have a lot to their credit of which they might well be proud. Greatest among these was together under one bannermen of all religion and races of India and to infuse into them the spirit of solidarity and oneness, to the utter exclusion of all communal parochial sentiments. It is an example which we should all emulate.’<sup>225</sup> This was assimilated by the local people of Southern Manipur by awakening and began to cry for democracy and independence.

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<sup>224</sup> Brij B. Khare, ‘Indian Nationalism: The Political Origin’, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 4, 1989, p. 533.

<sup>225</sup> Shridhar Charan Sahoo, ‘Mahatma Gandhi-His Attitude Towards Netaji and Indian National Army’, *Odisha Review*, 2019, p. 62

Further, the ideas of self-determination which they enjoyed under their chiefs were also reflected in their mind. Though the sense of nationalism was aroused positively, it became one of the factors that disunited the local people, particularly in Southern Manipur.

### **3.3.1.3 Better relation with the outside world**

John Parratt puts it rightly: 'By the time the time the war ended, Manipur had been forcibly dragged into the modern era'.<sup>226</sup> Before the war broke out in Manipur, they were already in contact with the foreigners, particularly the British and mainly the missionaries. Mention may be made that the first missionary who came to Manipur was William Pettigrew, who landed in Imphal on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1894, and the other was Watkin R. Robert, who came a long way from Aizawl across the border and reached Southern Manipur on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1910. As a whole, for the first time, the War in Manipur brought many groups of people in the State and was known to be the last time that the land experienced many foreigners at a particular time. Among those arriving included the British, Japanese, Canadians, Australians, and Americans and what was fascinating most was the presence of East African men from the then British-ruled Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika (now Tanzania) and Nyasaland (now Malawi).<sup>227</sup> After the end of the Second World War, Manipur again remained a quiet corner of the world though it could receive few foreign visitors, mainly in the valley after the war. However, Manipur began to be known by outsiders, and even the change can be witnessed among the local people in terms of their appearance and dress code. In relation to this, M. Kirti Singh wrote:

... Second World War paved the way for a chance of change among the local people in a way of life and their social outlook and change for a new idea - ideal of equality and justice- hailed by modern mind. The people who were orthodox

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<sup>226</sup> Parratt, *Wounded Land*, p. 93.

<sup>227</sup> Hemant Singh Katoch, 'The Battle of Imphal: March–July 1944', *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, July-September 2014, p. 118.

before the war were radically changed. Inter-dining, going to hotels, new dresses, cinema, theatre, etc., have increased.<sup>228</sup>

M. Kirti Singh concludes that the war brought changes in the life of the people. Further, bridals paths were turned into motorable roads along with airstrips. And due to the arrival of many soldiers requiring all sorts of needs, businesses flourish in Manipur. Not only that, with the establishment of the Manipur Congress party in the year 1946, which was undoubtedly laid under the basic foundation of the All-India Congress Committee. This gave the Manipur people to join hands with the mainland Indians to free India. Whereas for the local people of Southern Manipur, the formation of KNA (Kuki National Assembly) gave the opportunity to fight for new socio-economics and political changes in the State. Thus, the war made the local people exposed to the ongoing process of nation building in India and international trends.

### **3.4.1 Negative Impacts**

Though the war had nothing to do with the people of Southern Manipur in terms of their livelihood and other existential needs and those who participated and sacrificed their life in the war may or may not know what they were fighting for. In such a pathetic situation, the war creates difficulties even among the people who reside in the villages. And since the heaviest fighting was in heavily populated areas, one of the big losses (aside from the civilians themselves) were homes. Many of the homes were centuries old, and often the loss of a family's home led to some of the residents dying of exposure.<sup>229</sup>

#### **3.4.1.1 Refugee**

According to Hugh Tinker, more than any age before, the twentieth century is the age of refugee. He wrote that, the nature of refugee was spontaneous-

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<sup>228</sup> M. Kirti Singh, *Religion and Culture of Manipur*, Delhi, Manas Publication, 1988, p. xxxi.

<sup>229</sup> James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *Dirty Little Secrets of World War II: Military Information No One Told You About the Greatest, Most Terrible War in History*, Michigan, William Morrow, 1994, p. 49-50.

unpremeditated-disorganised, whether families or individuals. Nobody directs their ways nor do any organisation assist them on their way.<sup>230</sup> It has to be understood that, most part of the borderland of Manipur was uninhabited and no relief organisation were set up to receive the refugee. Diseases and malnutrition were the major issues on their way back and for some Manipur was not India, they had to go farther beyond Brahmaputra in search of safety.<sup>231</sup> As a whole, Imphal, the State Capital of Manipur received as many as 200,000 refugees in January and February 1942 which could not be handled by the Raja of the State.<sup>232</sup> Mostly refugees were the ‘Indian coolies, dock labourers from Rangoon, household servants, and their women and children’.<sup>233</sup> It is also known as the longest ever retreat carried out by the British Army, 1,000 miles (1,600km) from Burma to India.<sup>234</sup> Prof. Lal Dena writes,

“... the local officials hurriedly convened an emergency meeting with the tribal chiefs of Churachandpur at Gangpimuol near old Churachandpur mission headquarters in March 1944. In this meeting, it was decided that all the civilian population residing within the radius of about seven kilometres from Tiddim road should immediately be shifted en masse to Guwahati and some other places in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam.”<sup>235</sup>

Some 25,000 villagers who live within a radius of 7 km of the Tedim road were given two days to move or leave their houses.<sup>236</sup> However, the majority of the people fled to the southwest Manipur and Mizo/Lushai Hills while some chiefs and villagers chose to stay not because of their bravery but because of their equanimity and ignorance.<sup>237</sup> Sadly, not a single refugee camp was set up in the Sothern Hills. In

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<sup>230</sup> Hugh Tinker, ‘A forgotten Long March: The Indian Exodus from Burma 1942’, *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Volume 6, Issue 01, March 1975, p. 1.

<sup>231</sup> Evans & James, p. 24.

<sup>232</sup> Deepak Naorem, ‘Japanese invasion, war preparation, relief, rehabilitation, compensation and ‘State-making’ in an imperial frontier (1939–1955)’, *Asian Ethnicity*, 2019, p. 3.

<sup>233</sup> Evans & James, p. 23-24.

<sup>234</sup> Lyman, p. 5.

<sup>235</sup> Lal Dena, ‘Indo-Japanese Soldiers in The Khuga Valley of Churachandpur, April to August 1944’, *Hueiyen Lanpao* (English Edition), 28<sup>th</sup> March 2014,

[http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History\\_of\\_Manipur.Indojapanese\\_Soldiers\\_In\\_The\\_Khuga\\_Valley\\_Of\\_Churachandpur\\_April\\_to\\_August\\_1944](http://epao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=manipur.History_of_Manipur.Indojapanese_Soldiers_In_The_Khuga_Valley_Of_Churachandpur_April_to_August_1944), (accessed 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>236</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of the Manipur, 1943-1944*, p. 5.

<sup>237</sup> Dena, *Hueiyen Lanpao* (English Edition).

relation to this, some moved to Chawngkhawzo, Tonglon, Maite and other villages in the Southwest and stayed at their own relatives' houses. Further, Henkholam, a local villager relates that after abandoning their village and before reaching Chawngkhawzo village they stayed at Luaikhai village for a day in which the chief of that village distributed a bottle of Rice Beer to each household and in exchange he asks for rice to feed their own people/refugees.<sup>238</sup> Feeling that Luaikhai Village was also not safe, they flee towards the Southwestern part where the war could not reach. Soitinkhai said that as there was no vehicle to carry their household items, they took what was possible for a person to carry.<sup>239</sup>

Another account of Kailum told that, 'after the people were asked to vacate their home, some of the people from Kangvai village dig the ground and kept their food grains and the people moved out with what they could carried. And upon reaching Luaikhai village, some strong youth went back for taking the food grains which they hide.'<sup>240</sup> Pautinlam told that, due to the thickness in jungle and hilly terrain, the people along with children could not move fast. And before reaching one village, they ate half of the rice which they carried.<sup>241</sup> However, after leaving Luaikhai village, it was not possible to go back for taking the rice. Thus, internal exodus among the local people occurred, and they were made refugees in their own land.

#### **3.4.1.2 Economic instability/fluctuation**

Not only the arrival of the Allied forces in Manipur created difficulties for the people in the region. The refugees who flee from Burma creates a problem. Between October 1942 and September 1943, the military administration purchased/confiscated 78,014 maunds (mds) of vegetables, 3,177,744 mds of firewood, 3,177,426 mds of milk, 622,343 mds of fish, 26,963 mds of potatoes, 131,940 baskets of eggs, 109,991

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<sup>238</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at Kangvai Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>239</sup> Soitinkhai, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 at Kangvai Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>240</sup> Kailum, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022, Kangvai, Churachandpur.

<sup>241</sup> Pautinlam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021, Kangvai, Churachandpur.



mds of fruits, 10,991 mds of charcoal and 82,322 ducks and chickens.<sup>242</sup> This resulted in creating a shortage of essential commodities as well as increasing in the prices of commodities. The price of rice rose from about Rs. 1.5 to Rs.7 and then Rs. 10/- per maund and was extremely scarce, atta, daal, flour and sugar being almost unobtainable.<sup>243</sup> The prices of commodities increase so high that it was beyond the capabilities of the war-torn people. One aspect which the hilly regions faced was the coming of Japanese troops with just few rations which created another difficulty. They had to depend on the local resources in order to sustain themselves. At the same, the people from Khuga Valley were asked to move to the far south west. Therefore, the villagers in the southwest had to look after their relatives by providing food and shelter along with the Japanese-INA.<sup>244</sup>

In fact, some of the local people who were involved in constructions of roads or working with Japanese-INA/British could earn more wages during the war time situation. But this does not give a solution to their needs because there was a lack of goods and commodities to purchase. Many food grains and life stock were devastated before and during the war. Largely, it was estimated that one-third of the world population was under starvation during that time.<sup>245</sup> Whereas the local people who were asked to vacate their homes returned back, they have witnessed their house and livestock which was left behind were burned down and the land/soil which the hill people depend for their survival until now was destroyed and unfit to be used for agriculture for several months.

Yet, the southern people of Manipur who went in the far as a refugee in southwest where the actual battle did not happen help the people/relatives in cultivation. As per the interviews, though cultivation was possible, it was not like a normal day. As the planes flew regularly above the mountains, the people feared that the planes will drop a

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<sup>242</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1943–44, p. 3.

<sup>243</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1943–44, p. 2.

<sup>244</sup> Minpi, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 12<sup>th</sup> February 2022, D. Phailen, Churachandpur and Thangvung, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 25<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Torbung Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>245</sup> Susan Estabrook Kennedy, 'Herbert Hoover and the two great food crusades of the 1940s', in Lee Nash (ed.), *Understanding Herbert Hoover*, Stanford CA, Stanford University Press, 1978, p. 98.

bomb, as a result whenever the plans flew over them, they hide where ever they can.<sup>246</sup> As noted by C. Gimson, in Chairel village, only 13 buffaloes for 140 houses could be seen.<sup>247</sup> This case was similar in the southern hills. As narrated by Soitinmang, after the war, domestics animals like cows, pigs, and chickens could be rarely seen and even its was hard to find for buying.<sup>248</sup>

### **3.5 Post-War Challenges**

Even after the war, the local people of Manipur particularly the Southern Manipur were not done with the war as they continued to struggle for recognition for their participation in the war and the kind of political articulation that was emerging.

#### **3.5.1 Commemorations**

After the war, the victorious British government was in the mood for celebrations and commemorations of soldiers. Officers or the leaders who led the people were considered heroes, and the dead as martyrs. In remembrance of the battles and the soldiers of both British and Japanese-INA, museums and monuments were built in the region. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission took over the graves of the allied soldiers in the region.<sup>249</sup>

“The Commonwealth War Graves Commission was established by Royal Charter of 21 May 1917, the provisions of which were amended and extended by a Supplemental Charter of 8 June 1964. Its duties are to mark and maintain the graves of the members of the forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two world wars, to build and maintain memorials to the dead whose graves are unknown, and to keep records and registers. The cost is shared by the partner governments - those of Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, South Africa and the United Kingdom - in proportions based on the numbers of their graves. The

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<sup>246</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021 at Kangvai Village, Churachandpur and Soitinkhai, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 at Kangvai Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>247</sup> MSA, *Tour Diary of C. Gimson*, 16 December 1943.

<sup>248</sup> Soitinmang, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Penjang Village, Churachandpur.

<sup>249</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7DX, England, [website] [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org), (accessed 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021).

Commission acts for its member governments in all matters concerning their war graves of the two world wars.”<sup>250</sup>

Not very surprisingly, Manipur and Nagaland have erected more memorial places than the other neighbouring states of North East India as the heaviest fighting took place in these two states. Second World War Cemeteries and Monuments in Manipur are: Imphal War Cemetery, located at the center of the city for the western soldiers, next is the Imphal Indian Army War Cemetery and Cremation Memorial which is just 2km away from the previous Cemetery and was a graveyard for Muslim soldiers along with cremation memorial for Hindu and Sikhs soldiers. The third, Indian Peace Memorial, located at *Maibam Lokpa Ching* or Red Hill area, was apparently the Japanese camp. In Tedim Road, one of the heaviest fighting happened in this area, considering this was the stopping point for the Japanese troops to enter Imphal valley from the South. It was a symbol of reconciliation and honouring the death of Japanese Soldiers. The fourth, INA Museum, located at Moirang, was built in remembrance of Subhash Chandra Bose, who led the INA in fighting against the British. The Fifth Kanglatongbi War Memorial commemorates the boldest battle the British were involved in during the Second World War, as 221 Advance Ordnance Depot of the British Army could stop the advanced Japanese troops by three days. Though the frontier areas, particularly Southern Manipur, were hugely affected, not a single museum and stone has been erected in remembrance of the battle in Churachandpur District. Yet a memorial site recognising the suffering and the hardship endured by the people of Southern Manipur during the Second World War was not given attention or consideration.

Interestingly, Shri Semkhohao Haokip, born in 1920 at Ukha Loikhai, Churachandpur District, Manipur, ‘joined INA as a Court Master on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1944 at Chahmol Camp. He was arrested by the British Army from Mandalay (Burma) and detained at Jilgal Kacha for about six (6) months. After arriving in

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<sup>250</sup> *Commonwealth War Graves Commission*, 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire, SL6 7DX, England, [website] [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)

Manipur on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1946 he joined the Congress Party in 1946.<sup>251</sup> His bond with the Japanese-INA was unforgettable to him that he established INA Memorial Middle English School (now converted into INA Memorial Highs School at Ukhatampak, Churachandpur District.<sup>252</sup> Likewise, another worth mentioning is that the chief of Saiden village preserved Saiden *Tlang/tang* (Saidan Peak), 3kms away from Churachandpur town. This was the place in which the Japanese-INA set up their camp during the war. It is known that in the year 1990, Dr. Rochunga Pudaite came all the way from the USA and built a giant silver cross right at the Japanese Observatory post. He also marked the rocky cave by engraving “Lt. Gen. Sato slept here, 1944” on the rock that had sheltered the great patriot warrior. Today, it is popularly known as *Cross Moul/Mual* and attracts visitors from various places. Despite these efforts to commemorate some battle sites and other general commemoration efforts under local initiatives there seems to be no commitment from government to either fund them or set up such memorials in southern Manipur.

### 3.5.2 Compensation

After the war, many petitions reached the Allied administration seeking money for compensation for the loss and destruction of property. According to F. F. Pearson, Political Agent and the President of the Manipur State Durbar, war compensation began to dominate the affairs of the Manipur State from 1944.<sup>253</sup> Some demands were small and others at large. The first notice was issued on 22 December 1945, fixing 31 Jan 1946 as the deadline for submission of petitions.<sup>254</sup> Then it was extended to 31 May 1947 for widows and government servants.<sup>255</sup> And finally, the Allied administration made 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947 the last date for submission by providing a sufficient reason for failing to submit before the first deadline.<sup>256</sup> Though

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<sup>251</sup> I.N.A. Martyr’s Memorial Complex, Moirang

<sup>252</sup> I.N.A. Martyr’s Memorial Complex, Moirang

<sup>253</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of the Manipur State, 1944-1945*, p. 15-16.

<sup>254</sup> MSA, Memo no. 341-Claims/Inv, Letter dated 31 August 1950, written by Claim Officer U. N. Deka to the Chief Commissioner of Manipur.

<sup>255</sup> MSA, Memo no. 341-Claims/Inv, Letter dated 31 August 1950, written by Claim Officer U.N. Deka to the Chief Commissioner of Manipur.

<sup>256</sup> Naorem, *Asian Ethnicity*, p. 15.

most of the petitions were timely submitted, compensation to the hills of Manipur was denied, particularly the Southern Manipur. One of the reasons given was that the region occupied by Japanese-INA was considered an 'Enemy Territory', and the hills people were asked to wait for compensation from the Japanese.<sup>257</sup> As written by Deepak Naorem,

'Compensation for the hills where intense fighting between the Japanese and the Allied forces took place was even more complicated than Manipur State. The colonial State had various intentions regarding the political future of the hills in the region, such as converting the region into a crown colony... In spite of nearly 18,000 petitions from the region, the administration did not begin the process of assessment as quickly as in Manipur State.'<sup>258</sup>

Further, Shri G. Goswami, the secretary to the Governor of Assam pointed out that compensation could be paid only after receiving war reparation from Japan, particularly in those areas where the actual fight happens.<sup>259</sup> This shows that the state was reluctant to provide compensation to the Hills people. However, these claims were settled by the Indian government by signing the Treaty of Peace between the Government of India and Japan peace treaty on 1952. It is worth mentioning the gratitude of the people, especially for the Hills areas, to Dr. Bor and Mr. Butter who were instrumental in the administering of the scheme for Government assistance. Without their help, the Hill areas could never have come through the chaos created by the war or returned to peaceful enjoyment of their land.<sup>260</sup>

Yet, under the aid of ARM, the Government of British India was directed to compensate the household items which were burned down or looted during the war. In case of destruction by the Allied military forces, household effects worth not more than Rs. 400 should be given, while a maximum of Rs.200 was fixed for villages looted by the Japanese forces.<sup>261</sup> Relief measures were also taken up for the construction of damaged houses. As many as 5,503 houses in 409 villages were

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<sup>257</sup> Naorem, p. 18.

<sup>258</sup> Naorem, p. 17.

<sup>259</sup> MSA, Correspondence between Moon and Tiangkham, 7 May 1951, p. 7.

<sup>260</sup> MSA, *Administrative Report of Manipur State*, 1945-46, p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> Naorem, p. 12.

destroyed. The worst affected areas were Moirang (550 houses), Bishenpur (26 houses), East area (2,100 houses in 160 villages), Valley area (1,463 houses in 59 villages), Sadar area (1,636 houses in 163 villages), Mao area (137 houses in 8 villages) and West area (209 houses in 19 villages).<sup>262</sup>

According to Pautinlam (Born in 1933) of Kangvai, a sum of 500/- was received by the chief of Kangvai, 450/- by some few groups and the rest were 300/- per household in lieu of a house burned.<sup>263</sup> The amount they received was not equal. According to Henkholam (Born in 1927) of Kangvai, when a team of disaster management department came and enquired about the loss of property, those who were smart enough to influence the authorities could get more compensation while the others got lesser amounts.<sup>264</sup> However, a minimum of Rs. 300/- was given to each household. It can be seen that compensation at the initial stage after the war was rejected by the Allied Administration, and later though the local people were given compensation, it was not received in accordance with their losses. Some received a larger amount than what they actually lost, and the others received much less than the value of what they had actually lost.

During a 'Public Lecture & Interactive Session with Kuki INA War Veterans' held at KIC (Kuki Inn Pi Churachandpur) at Tuiboung Churachandpur, on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022, a war veteran by the name Ngamkholun Kuki along with his fellow veterans addressed their grievance over the removal of their name as a prisoner which made their pension fund suspended. They were paid initially and were surprised that their names were removed from the records of prisoners. They argue that the government should acknowledge and give importance to their contribution to free India. They want the government to give proper treatment for their sacrificial act as they were at the stage of waiting for their deathbed.

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<sup>262</sup> Moirangthem Shanti Devi, 'Relevance of Manipur in INA Movement: A study on Socio-Economic and Political Impact', *International Journal of Social Science and Economic Research*, Vol.3, Issue:12, December 2018, p. 6560.

<sup>263</sup> Pautinlam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021.

<sup>264</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

### **3.5.3 Rebuilding of Houses and Livelihood**

The remote southwest villages were unprepared to receive their relatives/refugees and had to adjust with the food they had along with the Japanese-INA. Since the far southwest was free from bombing and battles, they could do cultivation and depend on the forest. They continue to live but not like how they enjoyed before the war. However, when the local people from the Tedit roads areas returned after the war, they could hardly recognise the landscape as their houses and crops had been burnt, and the entire village was in ruins. Compensation was denied at the earlier stage, which intensified hardship among the local people. The local people had to rebuild their houses; on the other hand, they had to look for their living. As Siaktinhen said, ‘not everyone returns as soon as the war ends. Some remained till the end of the year (1944) and moved out slowly, while some returned just a few months after the war. Those returnees brought some amount of rice which could feed them for weeks and were lucky enough that there were some paddies which grow naturally.’<sup>265</sup> Perhaps, the houses were mostly constructed like small huts at that time. As per Henkholam, they had to look for bamboo and trees in the forest to rebuild their house.<sup>266</sup> Though the local people had the skills and talent to construct their house, it was not very easy as the region was covered with deadly diseases like malaria and dysentery.<sup>267</sup> And so many people had died even before the war. With a lack of medication, the people had to find a way for their shelter.

### **3.5.4 Political Consciousness**

Manipur was never the same after the end of the Second World War. A spontaneous political consciousness arose among the people of Manipur, including the hill people. Due to public pressure, the Maharaja of Manipur introduced two important legislations: the Manipur State Constitution Act and the Manipur Hill People’s

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<sup>265</sup> Siaktinhen, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

<sup>266</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

<sup>267</sup> Henkholam, interviewed by S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2021.

Regulation in 1947.<sup>268</sup> The British first recognised this aspect of Manipur's social dynamics and used it for their purposes. Accordingly, the Kukis, Nagas and Meiteis were used as a buffer group in the war against the Burmese.<sup>269</sup>

Among the Kuki-Chin tribes in Manipur, there was no politics in the name of tribes until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, they were attached and loyal to their clans, dialects, village and the Chief.<sup>270</sup> A political organisation known as Kuki National Assembly (KNA) was formed after the war on the 24<sup>th</sup> October 1946, with Zavum Misao and T. Kipgen as its founding President and General Secretary, respectively.<sup>271</sup> The KNA was later converted into a political party and was the earliest political unit of the Kuki-Chin tribes consisting of Thadou, Paite, Vaiphei, Simte, Anal, Kom, Gangte, Hmar, Koireng, Zou, etc. Within the framework of the Indian constitution, the KNA made a demand for Kuki Statehood in the 1960s.<sup>272</sup> However, in the following year, Khulmi Union (KU) was formed as the non-Thadou ethnic groups were not pleased with the Thadou dominance and arrogance over the other tribes who were smaller in number and looked for a more democratic pan-tribal organisation as an alternative to KNA. However, the Khulmi Union did not last long due to a lack of clear and well-defined objectives. Further, Khulmi Union failed to gain recognition from the government, and none of its members went back to the Kukis fold. Thus, communal feeling and the aspiration to maintain their linguistic dialects arose among the local people and they sought recognition of their own separate identities. The Paites formed the Paite National Council (PNC) in 1949. The Hmar National Union (HNU) came into existence in 1962. Apart from these groups, different communities also began to set up their organisations. The Zou tribe formed

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<sup>268</sup> Gangmumei Kamei, 'Hill Area Committee (HAC) of Manipur Legislative Assembly: An assessment' *Hueiyen Lanpao* (English Edition), 12<sup>th</sup> December 2012, [http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news\\_section.opinions.Politics and Governance.Hill Area Committee of Manipur Legislative Assembly An assessment Part 2](http://e-pao.net/epSubPageExtractor.asp?src=news_section.opinions.Politics_and_Governance.Hill_Area_Committee_of_Manipur_Legislative_Assembly_An_assessment_Part_2), (accessed 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021).

<sup>269</sup> Kailash S Aggarwal, *Dynamics of Identity and Inter-Group Relations in N.E. India*, Shimla, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, 1999, p. 184.

<sup>270</sup> Zou, *Strategic Analysis*, p. 316.

<sup>271</sup> Ngamjahao Kipgen and Th. Hethang George Haokip, 'Locating the History of Kukis Nationalism', *Kukis International Forum*, [website], 2008, <http://Kukisforum.com/2008/09/locating-the-history-of-Kukis-nationalism2/>, (accessed 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021).

<sup>272</sup> Zou, p.317.



the United Zomi Organisation (UZO) in 1958 in an attempt to unite all the Zomi tribes under its umbrella. However, the UZO succeeded only in getting the Zou community together. The Gangte in Manipur established the Gangte Tribe Union (GTU) in 1958, while the Vaiphei set up the Vaiphei National Organisation (VNO) in 1960. The last to be given recognition was the Mate Tribe Council (MTC), recognised in the year 2012.<sup>273</sup> Eventually, due to internal dissensions among the Kukis group, the Modification Order of 1956 accorded recognition to selected tribes of the Kukis group on a linguistic basis: Aimol, Anal, Chiru, Gangte, Hmar, Kom, Maring, Any Mizo/Lushai, Paite, Simte, Sukte, Thadou-Kuki, Vaiphei and Zou. Today, only the Thadous are willing to use Kuki as their identity, while the other tribes prefer their own tribes/clans as identity. S.P. Vaiphei also acknowledges the division of Kuki identity:

*‘Though they may disown the term Kuki now, all of them were once known as Kukis to the outside world. Nobody can change the past, they cannot change the history of the past; the time in which they were known as Kukis as it was and in the old records.’<sup>274</sup>*

T.S. Gangte lamented the disintegration of Kuki identity, feeling that denying Kuki would signal the political declines of the Kukis.<sup>275</sup> Though there seems to be a positive aspect in the rise of political aspirations among the local people, the feeling of commonness witnessed before the war was lost, and disunity continues among the people of Southern Manipur today.

## **Conclusion**

Second World War in southern Manipur created not only a physical war but also a psychological battle among the people as both the Japanese and British spread propaganda to win the hearts of the local people. This became historically controversial and led to confusion even among the present generation. From the

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<sup>273</sup> The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill No. 108 Of 2011, Serial No.34.

<sup>274</sup> S.P. Vaiphei, ‘The Kukis’, in N. Sanajaoba (ed.), *Manipur-Past and present: The ordeals and heritage of a civilisation, Vol. III: Nagas and Kuki-Chins*, Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1995, p. 129.

<sup>275</sup> T.S. Gangte, *The Kukis of Manipur: A historical analysis*, Delhi, Gyan Publishing House, 1993, p. 10, 25 & 233.

above study, it can be seen that both sides got the support of the local people and at the same time there were people who worked against the Japanese and the British. And under the 'Operation AYO' a ferocious battle was fought at Torbung with a heavy casualty from both sides. At the initial stage, the Japanese seemed ready to capture Imphal quickly by approaching through the Tedim road but later it turned out to be in favour of the British. By the end of June 1944, the Japanese retreated from Southern Manipur after suffering heavy casualties, starvation, monsoon and even the road was considered as 'Road of Bones'. However, every human doing has its effects, whether the outcomes may be good or bad. In the same way, the War in Manipur and particularly in Southern Manipur has far-reaching effects positively and negatively on the local people. Mentions may be made that; the Hills in Manipur were a neglected region, and links with Imphal were minimal. In fact, an internal exodus was experienced by the local people, and they were made refugees in their land. Further, a dramatic change with the arrival of war could be experienced as the unmotorable road was turned into a motorable road. And the outsiders/foreigners, of which the local people were not aware, could be seen. Thus, after the war, the peaceful environment enjoyed by people of Manipur particularly southern Manipur, turns into a chaotic place.

## Chapter 4

### 4.1 Conclusion

Manipur was basically divided into two administrations, i.e., the Valley, under the rule of the Maharaja of Manipur, and the Hilly regions, under tribal leadership. Southern Manipur, inhabited mainly by the Kukis/Zo groups, held the chieftainship tradition while the northern Manipur inhabited by the Naga groups were under the administration of the Village Authority. Before the coming of the Second World War in Manipur people in the hills and the valleys were living peacefully without enmity. Primarily, their relations with the British were not always smooth and peaceful, and several conflicts or wars had been fought against the British. In spite of its remoteness and obscurity to the outside world, Manipur became a battlefield between the two contending forces, i.e., the British/Allied troops and the Japanese-INA. The vast terrain and thick forest, prevailing deadly diseases, and almost impenetrable jungle of Manipur became a battlefield. Not only that, it became a region which decided the fate of the Second World War.

The British did not anticipate that the Japanese-INA attack would come from the region, and as a result, their military strength and strategies there were not prepared and weak. This can be seen in the battle of Arakan and the other battles in Burma where the British could not withstand the invaders, and they were retreating faster than the fleeing Indians and non-Burmese who had settled in Burma. For a year before the actual invasion came about there were frequent rumours spreading in southern Manipur of an impending invasion from the Japanese-INA which prompted the inhabitants of this area to evacuate. However, some chiefs and villagers remained in their villages while others mainly went to their relatives in the southwestern parts to seek shelter from the impending war. Further, in the valley or the surrounding areas of Imphal, the Second World War began with the coming of refugees, i.e., those fleeing from Burma, which was followed up by the Japanese bombing in 1942. Whereas in the Southern Manipur, Second World War began with psychological warfare, internal exodus followed by the burning down of houses and

live stocks they left behind in order to deprive the invading forces anything to salvage from.

With the Japanese holding supremacy over Burma, they planned a strategy to invade Imphal, the capital of Manipur. At the same time, the British, who were pushed out from Burma, were preparing a strategy to reconquer it. Thus, the Japanese played the offensive role, and the British became the defending force. The plan to attack Imphal was more to strengthen their defence in South East Asia, and the British needed to re-conquer it due to the blocking of supply routes to China which was also waging the war against Japan.

It can be seen that the actual battle only happened in southern Manipur at the beginning of 1944, which lasted for several months and by the end of that year, the British could drive the invading forces away not only from Manipur and Nagaland but also from Burma and regained their losses in South East Asia. It is observed that the defeat of the Japanese was mainly due to their underestimation of the British force, personal enmity among the commanders of the Japanese troops, the ability of the British to mobilise the local populace better and more effective than the Japanese and the critical situation of rations.

The war in Manipur and particularly in Southern Manipur had a far-reaching affect both positively and negatively on the people. The Hill areas of Manipur were neglected region, and the road linkage with the capital, Imphal was minimal thus rendering it almost inaccessible. However, the situation changed with the arrival of the war as the existing roads were improved upon and turned them into roads fir for motor vehicle transport. This improvement in road infrastructure resulted in better transports and connectivity for the people residing in southern Manipur. The war also presented an opportunity for the people of southern Manipur to have direct contact with people from outside the state as well as the country who came to the region as soldiers and war contractors. The interaction with these outsiders served as an eye opener about the reality on the war as well as the outside world for the people of southern Manipur. The Second World War manifested not only in its physical form but as well in its psychological dimension where by the people of southern Manipur

were caught between the British and the Japanese-INA who are vying for the local support. Historians who studied about the war in Manipur and its related issues seem to have contested views about the role of the people in the war. Some argues that it was the Japanese who gained better support from the local residents, while others argues that it was the British which gained the upper hand in terms of securing local support. It is however, interesting to note that both the British and Japanese-INA seemed to be happy or satisfied with the support they received from the local people who played an essential role in spreading their respective propaganda and gathering information for the two belligerents and not only that, there were people who fought the battle on both sides. And yet, after the war, soldiers from both sides were highly commemorated while the suffering and hardship faced by the local people were not duly recognised and ignored. Many local residents were denied recognition as war victims despite their huge losses during the war. Even for those who received compensations for their material losses during the war it was not commensurate to their losses and was not satisfactory.

#### **4.2 Findings:**

Though Manipur had enjoyed peaceful existence prior to the Second World War, the war changed everything and turned it into a conflicted spot. The relations between the British and the people of Manipur, be it Meteis, Nagas or Kukis, was not always harmonious and peaceful as indicated by the sporadic episodes of rebellion against the British that arose from time to time such as *Khongjom* War 1891, Anglo-Kuki War 1917-1919, *Nupi Lan* in 1939. However, conflict amongst them was minimal, and mutual harmony prevailed within the princely State among the different social groups until 1941. Due to its remoteness and hilly terrain, the British did not expect that the Japanese would choose southern Manipur as its route to penetrate India via the Indo-Burma border. This may be the reason why the British did not deploy well-trained troops in that region and made little strategic preparations. However, the Japanese invasion spread like wildfire, and within no time, southern Manipur at the Indo-Burma border became a war zone to fight against the British. In spite of the

remoteness of the region, it became a battleground which decided the fate of the Second World War.

The war was preceded by propaganda from both the sides as it was crucial for the Japanese-INA to gain support from the local people as well for the British too. This was followed by foreign and Indian refugees who were fleeing from Burma due to the Japanese invasion. The war did not only affect the soldiers who fought each other, but it also drastically affected the socio-economic and political lives of the local people.

Positively, the war resulted in improvements in road infrastructure particularly the Tedim Road to facilitate quick and easy deployment and transport of goods and troops. The improvement in road transportation linking southern Manipur with the capital Imphal resulted in improved communication, connectivity and transport facilities for the people of southern Manipur even in the post-independent period becoming the life line for the region. It also acts as a bridge connecting the inhabitants of southern Manipur with their ethnic brethrens who are located in the Chin Hills, Burma. Another important outcome of the war was the rise of political consciousness among the people, which gave new impetus to protect their land and identity. This emergence of political consciousness resulted in the creation of a pan-Kuki organization called Kuki National Assembly (KNA) for the future realization of the political and social aspirations of the people.

Negatively, the people of southern Manipur were made refugees in their land. The villages within seven (7) kilometres radius of Tedim Road were forced to vacate their homes and moved to neighbouring villages where the war could not reach them. The people of southern Manipur not only became refugees in their own land, but they also experienced economic hardships both due to the inflation caused by the war as well as the inability to cultivate the land during war.

Contesting views were expressed by historians regarding the support gained by the Japanese and the British forces from the people of southern Manipur whereby some argues that it was the British which got the upper hand in eliciting public support in

their war efforts, whereas some also contends that the Japanese-INA may have received comparable support from the local populace in southern Manipur. Nevertheless, both sides, i.e. the British as well as the Japanese-INA forces acknowledged and expressed their gratitude to the local residents of southern Manipur for their support and assistance. It can be inferred from this evidence that the people of southern Manipur in fact rendered their support and assistance to both the forces and even take part in the war on both sides as combatants as well. Perhaps, many Kuki groups who were in the British forces deserted to join the Japanese-INA for a political motive, while there were others who were faithful to the British till the end of the war. Therefore, a pertinent perception which claims that the Kukis or the people of southern Manipur purely support the Japanese is not entirely correct.

The ‘Observatory Camp’ of the Japanese located at Saidan peak, with massive rocks organised in the shape of a perfect cave for hiding is locally known as ‘Japan Lungpui’ and is said to be the hideout of Japanese General, Sato during the Second World War. However, there is no Sato in the 15<sup>th</sup> Army other than Lt.Gen. Sato the 31<sup>st</sup> Division commander of the Japanese forces. It is clear that, Sato did not reach southern Manipur. It has to be either General Tanak who took charge as the 33<sup>rd</sup> Division commander in the end of May 1944 or the 15<sup>th</sup> Army commander Lt. Gen. Mutaguchi himself. Further, it is hard to identify a particular name of the commander who hide in the cave. Therefore, we can conclude that, one of the Japanese commader hide in the cave.

The people of southern Manipur who returned after the war had to rebuild their houses and find a way for their livelihood under deathly diseases prevalent in the region. There was no immediate relief measures and compensation among the hill tribes for their losses caused by the war. Compensatory funds for the loss of properties incurred by the war were given to the public only in the 1950s, and that too was not satisfactory to the people and not commensurate with the kind of losses they incurred due to the war.

In the post-war years southern Manipur had witnessed a number of challenges. One of these was the remembrance and memorialization of those who have made

sacrifices during the war. The soldiers or combatants who fought the war on either side, received due recognition and appreciation from the British and the government of India in the post independent era especially to those from the INA in the form of medals and construction of war cemeteries and memorials the general public who bore the brunt of the war and had lost so much of their properties were neglected and their war time support rendered to the British forces or the Japanese-INA went unnoticed and unrecognised.

The war also engendered political awakening among the people leading to the formation of political organisations among the people of southern Manipur such as Kuki National Assembly (KNA) and the majority of the non-Thadou speaking who were not happy with the dominance of the Thadou in KNA form another political organization called Khulmi National Union (KNU). Since then, the Kukis/Zo ethnic groups in Manipur, particularly in the southern region have witnessed ethnic fragmentation leading to proliferation of myriad ethnic political organizations based on differences in their dialects.



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## GLOSSARY

<i>Chahi Taret Khuntakpa</i>	Seven Years Devastation
<i>Hausa</i>	Chief of the Village
I.C.S	Indian Civil Service
<i>Japan Gaal</i>	War of Japan/Japan War
<i>Mi-Upa</i>	Eldest Son
<i>Nongpok Thong Hangan</i>	eastern gate will open
<i>Patung Kek</i>	Mushroom grows' or blooms on the mountain
<i>Phung-Upa</i>	Eldest Clan
<i>Road of Bones</i>	Tedim road was also considered as 'Road of Bones'
<i>Shenam</i>	is a corrupt formed of Senam located at Chandel District
<i>Thiampu</i>	Priest
<i>Tiddim</i>	is a corrupt formed of Tedim, a village located in Burma
<i>Vuibu ki tung</i>	smoke covered the whole area
<i>Zo</i>	The word <i>Zo</i> is considered to be the genetic term Chin-Kuki-Mizo
<i>MSA</i>	Manipur State Archive
<i>Ima Keithel</i>	mother's market
<i>Nupi Keithel</i>	women's market
<i>Nute Bazar</i>	mother's market
<i>Nute Kailhang</i>	mother's market
Lt. Gen.	Lieutenant General
<i>Tlang/tang</i>	hill
<i>Moul/Mual</i>	Mountain

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## BIO-DATA

NAME: S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei  
FATHER'S NAME: S.L Thanga Vaiphei  
SEX: Male  
DATE OF BIRTH: 10, January, 1996  
NATIONALITY: Indian  
CATEGORY: ST  
CONTACT NO: 9089558571  
EMAIL ID: illasantak@gmail.com  
ADDRESS: B. Phaicham, Tuiboung  
Churachandpur, 795128, Manipur

### Details of Education Qualification:

Sl.No	Name of Examination	Subject	Division	Board/ University
1.	HSLC	-	Second	BOSEM
2.	HSSLC	Arts	First	COHSEM
3.	B.A	Political Science	Simple Pass	NEHU
4.	M.A	History	First	PAHERU



## **PARTICULARS OF THE CANDIDATE**

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE:	S. Lalthamuan Vaiphei
DEGREE:	Master of Philosophy
DEPARTMENT:	History & Ethnography
TITLE OF DISSERTATION:	Second World War and Southern Manipur
DATE OF ADMISSION:	18.07.2019
(Commencement of First Sem)	
COMMENCEMENT OF SECOND SEM/ DISSERTATION:	15.01.2020
(From conclusion of end semester exams)	
APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL	
1. D.R.C:	21.05.2020
2. B. O. S:	09.06.2020
3. SCHOOL BOARD:	12.06.2020
4. MZU REGISTRATION NO.:	1900188
5. M.Phil. REGISTRATION NO. & DATE:	MZU/M.Phil. /608 of 12.06.2020
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(Prof. Lalngurliana Sailo)  
Supervisor  
Department of History & Ethnography  
Mizoram University