CHAPTER IV
KUKI-INA-JAPANESE ALLIANCE
(1942-1945)

The struggle of the Kukis for freedom and independence under the British rule in Manipur continued even after their defeat in the Anglo-Kuki war of 1917-19. Though, they (Kukis) were utterly subdued and crushed by the British, yet the spirit for freedom remained alive in their hearts, with a confidence in their minds that the time would soon come when they would all be freed from the hated British yoke. Thus, the Kukis did not change their avowed anti-imperialist stand; they remained on the look-out for opportunity to drive out the British from their ancestral land, so that their (Kukis) pre-British state of freedom may be restored. About the undying spirit of the Kukis for ‘freedom’ even after their defeat in the Anglo-Kuki war of 1917-1919, Gangte writes, ‘Their (Kukis) virtue of sacrificial spirit prompted them to join the Indian National Army in hundreds in response to the call given by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. They were a gallant and a martial lot who, among the people of the North-East India, could challenge the invincible power of the British Empire. As a matter of fact, Indian nationalism grew through anti-imperialist struggle against the British rule. As the remote Northeastern region was the last to be conquered by the British and even when some sort of administration was sought to be imposed on the backward peoples (tribes) belonging to different races and ethnic groups inhabiting the hilly North-East region, there were occasions of stiff resistance and even when they were ultimately subdued the spirit of independence and dignity of their traditional way of life, did not die down which is true in the case of the Kukis of Manipur too.

After the ‘Quit India Movement’ launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942, the

demand for the freedom of India got a new impetus and the fight was now carried beyond its frontiers. It was spearheaded by the Indian National Army (INA) under its chief Subhas Chandra Bose who fought together with the Japanese troops against the British. Mahatma Gandhi was able to arouse the masses in India and create a country-wide movement for the Independence of India with the widest possible public participation; there were many other organizations outside India which were engaged in garnering support for India's cause in other countries. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army (INA) founded by him had played a vital role in building up public opinion outside India and hastening the process of liberation. Subhas Bose was convinced that the non-violent struggle led by Gandhi could not be an effective vehicle to counter the immense power of British Imperialism. Bose was of the opinion that India should utilize the opportunity provided by World War II to secure her (India's) Independence. The Indian National Army was composed mainly of former prisoners of war (PoW) from the British Indian Army who had been captured by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore and Indian expatriates in South East Asia, who had decided to join Bose's nationalist movement.

About the difference of approaches of Subhas Chandra Bose and the Congress, Harin Shah remarks, "Inside India, great leaders had slaved for decades to rouse the masses into an uprising for Freedom. They took the country forward towards Freedom, but their aspiration to forge into one solid and invincible national bastion the different communities and sections in India in the struggle against the foreign ruler, remained short of realization. Subhas, however, had to create his soldiers out of the surrendering enemy armies. He had to gather resources for his army from amongst a fraction of his country-

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1 K.K.Ghosh (1969), The Indian National Army (INA), Second Front of Indian Independence Movement, Meerut, p. 179
men, disengaged from the motherland for years, and strewn and scattered over the periphery of Indian civilization and economic affinities in South East Asia. He welded into a passionate legion of patriots, Hindus and Muslims, Sikhs and Christians, millionaires and wage-earners, men, women and children, that would ever remain memorable and merge into our heritage.7

The sort of ‘Understanding’ between the Kukis, the Indian National Army (INA) and the Japanese forces was possible for the simple reason that the British were their common enemy and their common goal was to oust the British from the Indian soil.

With the outbreak of the World War II in the year 1939, Japan had also joined the war in favour of Germany. By 1942, Japan had occupied almost all areas of South-East Asia and eventually made their advances into the soil of the Indo-Burma Frontiers. This situation greatly impacted the Kuki population because through their inhabited territories, the INA and the Japanese forces were to invade the British power in India.8 By the year 1942, the Japanese Army along with the Indian National Army had driven the British, Indian and Chinese troops out of Burma. When heavy monsoon rains stopped campaigning, the British and Indian troops had occupied Imphal, the capital of Manipur state. Subhas Chandra Bose sought collaboration with the Axis Powers (namely Germany, Italy and more specifically, the Japanese) in pursuit of his goal for the liberation of India.9 Significantly, the Kukis too, quickly responded to his call. The Kukis had then found a common cause and a goal. So, they extended unflinching support to the INA and the Japanese forces.10 There are about 150 Kuki INA Pensioners, about eighty (80) of them were listed in

7 Harin Shah, (1956), Verdict from Formosa – Gallant End of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose – Foreword by Dr. Hare Krishna Mahtab, Atma Ram & Sons, Delhi, p. 3
8 T. Neihsial, History and Culture of the Zoornis, unpublished PhD. Thesis, Manipur University, 1999, p. 67
10 “The Kuki Rebellion”. Souvenir published by the Kuki Inpi, Manipur (KIM), 1985, p. 30
They (Kukis) welcomed the opportunity to wage another war against the British, following their (Kukis) defeat in the Anglo-Kuki War (1917-1919).

A. The Situation before the Invasion:

The failure of the Anglo-Kuki war (1917-1919) was a severe blow not only to the powers of the Kuki \textit{Rajahs} but also to the Kukis in general. They were now subjected to intensified colonial presence and exploitation. In addition to the \textit{Lambus} there was a hierarchy of colonial officials, the Sub-Divisional Officers, assisted by \textit{Lam-Subedars}, \textit{Mahirs}, interpreters, etc. The erstwhile odd taxes were vigorously collected with certain additional ones. Besides, more Assam Rifles posts were established and stationed in strategic positions.\footnote{LAV. Shakespear, (1929). \textit{History of Assam Rifles - With a New Introduction by Dr. N.N. Acharyya}, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, p.204} The advent of WW II further exacerbated the situation. Being in the militarily operational zone, the hill-men were ‘impressed’ for various military projects as forced labour. By the autumn of 1942, the army employed in the hills alone, up to 5,000 labourers daily, and another 6,500 were employed by contractors.\footnote{Administration Report of Manipur, 1943-1944, MSA, p.3} Rigorous repairing, widening and construction of new roads, bridges, and culverts were taken on a war-footing. The existing tarmac road from Dimapur to Imphal was widened to take two lines of traffic, and road from Imphal to Pallel was also converted into tarmac. The bridle paths from Pallel to Tamu and from Imphal to Teddim were converted into motor-able all-weather roads. Bridle paths to Ukhrul, Khurasom, Sita, Mombi and Jeribam (the Silchar track) were made passable for jeeps. In the Sadar Hills Division (populated by the Kukis), it was recorded that 3,356 labourers were ‘impressed’ and in Tamenglong Subdivision it was 31,409. The hill-men were also used as porters for parties of Assam Rifles of Manipur.\footnote{Freedom Fighters of Manipur. Published in 1985, Congress Centenary Year, by Freedom Fighters’ Cell, MPCC (I).}
Rifles, V-Force and other military and air force formations operating in the hills. 14

Gimson remarked that most of the hill-men complained of excessive labour in repairing roads, crops failure, puthangs for patrol parties and the intolerant behavior of the V-Force. 15 The Kukis, noted Gimson, ‘particularly dislike working for other people’. 16 In fact the very presence of large military personnel itself was disliked: the influx of so many British Indian troops of various classes and by their habit of treating (hill people) strangers, all men and women in the hills, let alone those who knew little education, all feel their differences more. 17

Besides, the influx of refugees (from Burma) and labourers brought several new strains of malaria, dysentery, small-pox and cholera which even affected livestock. 18 Crop failure and loss of livestock were especially severe to the local people. In fact, there was a crop failure in the hills since 1942. 19 The acute shortage of food even compelled the Kukis to resort to wild roots and other forest products. Import of rice was also hampered by lack of vehicles, as most of them were requisitioned for military purposes. This resulted into a near famine situation in the state on the eve of the invasion. Many Kukis fled their homes to various refugee camps set up by some generous Kuki chiefs. Gimson noted, ‘Sita, a Mangvung Kuki village of 50 houses, had a big refugee camp in 1942’. 20 Given this background, the coming of the INA-Japanese forces was considered to be a God-send ‘Saviour’ by the Kukis to free themselves from the colonial yoke. 21

In fact, the very mention of the name of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, the INA and

14 Administration Report of Manipur, 1943-1944, MSA, p.17
15 Tour Diary of C. Gimson, 1943-1944
16 Tour Diary of C. Gimson, 20 November, 1943
17 Reports of S.I (FIB), forwarded by C. Gimson to Central Intelligence Officer, Assam, 25 November, 1944
18 Tour Diary of C. Gimson, 9 Feb, 1944. See also the Tour diaries of Col. H.E. Shortt, CMO, Assam Relief Measures in GSC, File No. 12/C 1945, ASA
19 Tour Diary of C. Gimson, the Political Agent of Manipur, 1943-1944, R-I/S-A, MSA, Imphal
20 Tour Diary of C. Gimson, 9 February 1944
the Japanese forces was enough to arouse the Kukis who had so long been smarting under a
sense of ire against the British. Here, the leaflets which were airdropped for local support
were noteworthy:

'Now is the time for India to get her independence. This is the golden
opportunity to drive the British out of India. The Imperial Japanese forces have full
power and are very sincere in their decision to assist you fight against Britain'.22 Besides,
the rumours of Japanese bravery and their whirlwind success story in the South Asian
countries might also have aroused the feelings of the Kukis. What the Kukis thought
might not be in terms of pan-India freedom, but the fact that the Indo-Japanese forces at
their doorstep to assist them to 'drive the British out of India' was but a clarion call to
their much awaited 'opportune time'.

The Kukis welcomed the arrival of the Japanese and the INA troops. They eventually joined
the rest of India in the struggle against the British. Their attitude is reflected in an immensely popular
song, called LAKOLLA, (Folk song) which came into vogue in 1942. It reflects the sentiments of the
Kukis. Resounding as it does with a sense of freedom and liberty.

_Thelou Koljang toni lep hanna._

_Ging deng deng 'e Japan, lenna huilen kong._

_Pego Lhemlihei saigin bang._

_Mao deng deng 'e van thanjola Japan lenna._

_Amao deng deng'e Japan lenna mongmo._

_Vailon kon sansol selung hem fante._

_Atwi theikhong tabang ging d ding deng._

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22 Leaflets dropped in Manipur during WW II, History of Freedom Movement Papers, R-I, 49/3, NAI.p.86
Gin deng deng e Japan lema huilen konggin.23

Free translation: -

From the horizon of Burma plain;
Like the sweet note of the bamboo flute;
Japanese plane hums in the sky above;
When the Japanese plane floats its sweet note;
The depressed farmer forgets his sadness;
Like the sweet melody of the watermill;
The Japanese plane floats its sweet note.

This song is particularly revealing: Japanese fighter planes (like Zero Fighters, Kawasaki Bombers, etc) symbolized the Japanese power: its thundering sound was delightful as the sweet notes of popular Kuki flutes and watermills. To the Kukis, the Japanese planes and the Japanese themselves came to liberate the depressed Kukis from their state of sadness under the colonial regime.24 This song was so popular amongst the Kukis that almost all of them irrespective of age or sex used to sing it, particularly the youths used to spend their days, humming this sweet song. The song got so deeply rooted in their psyche that threats of bitter punishment or intimidation by the Britishers to those who sang the song failed to produce any effect.25 The action recalls to one’s mind the ban imposed on singing "Bande Mataram..." by the nationalist and patriotic Indians. It was a reunion of the spirit, which found echo in the hearts of millions and millions of people across India. Interestingly only the ‘sweet sounds’ of the Japanese planes were praised by the Kukis at that time, despite many planes of the Allied forces. The

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23 P.S. Haokip, op.cit, pp.198-199, See also, ‘Kuki Rebellion’, Souvenir, 1985, op.cit, p.30
24 J. Guite, op.cit,p.300
25 The Kuki Rebellion, Souvenir, 1985, op.cit, p. 31
proportion of Japanese planes to the Allied forces was 1:10 in 1944 and 1:100 in 1945; not a single song was dedicated to the planes of the Allied forces. In a similar fashion another song dedicated to the Japanese planes, read:

\[\text{Agam thimhu jing nan jong;}\]

\[\text{Huilcn kong chunga lunghem Jangvan ahung lenge;}\]

\[\text{Lunghem ja a na hung len leh;}\]

\[\text{Tolkum tado lungtha gol tongkai sah na ding;}\]

\[\text{Japan Mengpa tolsa in, tol son in;}\]

\[\text{Vankkhup noi mantin cha lonli longlou umponfe.}^2\]

**Free translation:**

In the darkness of the land;

The Japanese plan comes like charming bird (\textit{Jangver});

If you come because of my sorrow;

To the ground, to console your disgraced friend;

Mighty Japan! to the ground! to the ground;

All nations will be overjoyed with tears.

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\(^{26}\) K.K. Ghosh, op.cit.pp.181-182
\(^{27}\) J. Guite, op.cit.,p.301

"\textit{jangva}" is the common name for a variety of singing birds. Literally, \textit{Jang} mean delighted, ‘\textit{Ya}’ mean bird. To the Kukis this bird is feeler and charmer in times of deep sadness.
Haozathang Haokip (See Fig.3,a,b &c), an INA veteran, commented, "The Kukis yearning for freedom was so high in their hearts that’s why, the sounds of the Japanese planes sounds so sweet to them, and the very sound is the ‘sound of freedom’ to them (to the Kukis)."  

It is the general perception in the military history of the British Empire that military mobilization among the North-East frontier tribes has spelled doom to the fate of the Burmese state in the long-run. This applies to India as well. Yet, it must be remembered that not all the frontier tribes collaborated with the British during the WW II as the dominant historiography would make us believe. This is especially true for the Kukis of Manipur, who continued to remain hostile to the Raj (British). The Kukis of Manipur seldom took interest in the military establishment of the Raj. There were no Kukis in the AR (Assam Rifles) until 1920 when four platoons for them were created but without much success until independence. The Kukis trusted the Japanese power as a liberating force and were perceived as the world’s only regime which can liberate them (Kukis) from the bondage of British power; the same were manifested in their songs.

B. Kuki contact with the Indo-Japanese forces in Burma (1942-1943):

The Kukis were one of the first groups to contact the Indo-Japanese forces in the Chindwin Valley (Burma) in 1943. A Central Intelligence Officer (Assam) E.T.D. Lambert, in his report, has noted that the Kukis first contacted the Japanese in and around the area in the

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28 Interview with Shri Haozathang Haokip, on the 29th Sept. 2010 at his Residence at Bethel, Churachandpur. He is the President of ‘All India Freedom Fighters’ Organization or (INA Veterans), Churachandpur Unit, Manipur. He joined the ‘V’ Force of the British under the command of Capt. Barnard & Capt. Moren, during the early part of the World War II. 1939. But, when the news of Kukis joining on the side of the Indo-Japanese forces reached his ear, he along with many other Kukis deserted the V-force and joined on the side of the INA-Japanese forces. He was attached to No.3506 ‘C’ Coy, 4-Platoon, Hikari Kikan and posted in the Indo-Burma Section. He was arrested by the British in the month of July, 1944, and incarcerated in the Homalin Jail (Burma) for six months and 15 days and was set free in January 1945. Though he was set free in Burma, he could not return home, as he was still a ‘Wanted’ man in Manipur. He along with his comrades or the INA Veterans often got an invitation from the Presidents of India, for the ‘Home Function’ at the Rastrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, where gifts and presents were given to them (INA Veterans) in appreciations of their tireless efforts and the sacrifices they made for the Nation’s freedom.

29 L.W. Shakespear, op.cit.p.204
Chindwin belt, south of Homalin, in the Somra Tract and Kabaw Valley in 1943. Lambert has also remarked that some Japanese agents entered the country, east of Ukhrul, to contact the Kukis before the invasion.\(^{30}\) The Indo-Japanese alliance received popular support especially among the Kuki tribesmen inhabiting Upper Burma and the hill areas of Manipur. This is interesting because, while other tribes remained loyal to the British, the Kukis except few who had served in the British army readily joined the Japanese and INA forces\(^{31}\), when the latter occupied Burma, after the expulsion of the British power there.

It was Paokhomang Kuki of Shakok village, who had first contacted the Japanese and was ‘largely instrumental in getting Tongkhothang, Chief of Chassad to visit the Japanese in Burma.’\(^{42}\) When the news of the success of the Indo-Japanese forces in Burma come to the knowledge of the Kukis, many young men went to Burma and enrolled themselves as a part of the invading forces, where they were given military training ranging from three to four months in Burma. It is interesting to note that even before the Indian National Army and the Japanese forces step inside Manipur, the Kukis of Manipur in large numbers rushed in there to get themselves enlisted in the Coalition forces.

The following were the Kukis who joined the INA-Japanese forces in Burma:

(i). Jamthang Haokip of Maokot village, (near Chassad) joined the INA at Jelen Camp in Burma in 1943. He was appointed as intelligence officer. He collected information of British positions in Manipur and gave reports to the INA Headquarters at Jelen Camp. He encouraged many Kuki youth to join the coalition forces.\(^{33}\)

(ii). Otkhosei Haokip of Chassad joined the coalition forces at Kontong Camp, Burma in

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\(^{30}\) "Notes on Kuki Situation", Assam State Archives, Dispur,p.1


\(^{42}\) GSC. SL., No.1663, File No. 45/C, 1945: Frontier Intelligence Branch (Assam), Fortnightly Report No. 2/45, for the Second half of January, 1945,p.1

\(^{33}\) A Tribute to the INA - Freedom Fighters of Manipur, Published by the Department of Art & Culture, Government of Manipur, 2010,p.4
1944. He led the INA-Japanese forces during the Kohima campaign, in the Chassad area. He was also instrumental in recruiting young Kukis for the coalition forces.\(^3\)

(iii). Haozathang Haokip joined the INA in 1943 under Subhas Chandra Bose at Rangoon, Burma. Before this, he served in the ‘V’-Force of the allied forces, but when he heard news of many Kukis joining the coalition forces, he, along with many other Kukis, who had served in the ‘V’-Force deserted the British camp to join the INA-Japanese combined forces.\(^5\)

(iv). Lengkhothang Kuki of Chassad village joined the Chin Hills Battalion of the Burma Army in 1936. He served for five years but deserted the British army to join the coalition forces, in response to the ‘Call of Netaji’ for mass support. Lengkhothang served as a trooper of the Japanese forces under the command of Takhetshang. Their Company stayed at the Koya Camp in Upper Burma for two months and then left for India. He led the coalition forces in the attack against the allied forces at Angoching, Chassad, Maku and Khangkhui.\(^6\)

(v). Ngulkhoht'e Kuki of Gilchingmang (Gilchin-nang) village, Chassad area, joined the INA as a sepoy at Sakok Camp in March 1944, in the Indo-Burmese border. He was instrumental in leading the coalition forces in the Chassad area against the British forces.

(vi). Salet Kuki of Thingiang village, joined the coalition forces of the INA-Japanese forces at Kojia Camp in Upper Burma in May 1944. He was involved in fighting the allied forces at Khangkhui and Shangshak camps. He served under a Japanese Captain Thaichochamiko.\(^7\)

(vii). Lunhem Kuki of Lakhan Khuman village, Ukhrul district was an active member of the INA during the Second World War. He joined the INA at Sakok Camp, Burma. He served under Captain Thaichochamiko, and involved in fighting against the allied forces in Ukhrul.

\(^3\) Ibid.p.8
\(^5\) Ibid.p.9
\(^6\) Ibid.p.12
\(^7\) Ibid.pp.20 & 22
(viii). Ngulzalet Haokip of Ukha Loikhai, joined the INA as a sepoy on 20th March 1944 at Rangoon, Burma with a zeal for freedom. He was instrumental in arousing the minds of the people of the Thangteng Hill ranges, for mass support to the advancing coalition forces of the Indian National Army and the Japanese.

(ix). Vumkhothang Haokip of Lajjang was in the 4th Assam Rifles in 1938 (British Army), but later joined the INA in 1943, when he come to know about the news of Kukis joining hands with the INA-Japanese forces in Burma.

(x). Lamkhothang Haokip of Wayang village, Chandel District, served in the 4th Assam Rifles in 1939. In 1941, he was transferred to the 1st Bn. Assam Regiment. But in 1944, he deserted from the British service to join the coalition forces of the INA and Japanese forces at Mawlaik in Burma. He was given the rank of Captain by the joint forces of the INA and Japanese forces. He was the first high ranking officer among the tribals of eastern Manipur (See Fig.3.d).

(xi). Henjakhup Haokip of Leisi village, joined the INA-Japanese forces in Burma. He underwent training for five months. He entered Manipur under the command of General Thaketas of Hikari Kikan Company. He was involved in the fighting at Finch-corner (a place in Ukhrul District) and Kangkhui Camps.39

(xii). Ngulkholet Haokip of Teiseng, Churachandpur District, joined the British Army in 1942 in Burma. In 1943 he joined the coalition forces under the command of Captain Kashong Washang. He was of great help to the coalition forces in the Churachandpur area.40

(xiii). Nguljangam Haokip of Lanchah village, Ukhrul District, joined the INA-Japanese forces at Koija Camp, Burma, which was under the command of Japanese Captain Engemia
and was involved in fighting the allied forces in the Chassad area.

(xiv). Pumzakam of Tuitum, joined the Indian National Army in 1943, in Burma. He worked under the command of Captain Sempomisa. He along with the coalition forces fought the allies. For his involvement against them, the British arrested him and send to Imphal Jail in 15th August 1944.41

(xv). Holkhotang Haokip of Loni village, Chassad area, joined the INA at Koija Camp in Burma. He underwent training for three months and after that he advanced into Manipur along with the combined INA and Japanese soldiers. He was of great help, due to the knowledge of the local topography.

(xvi). Ngamkhojang Haokip of Maokot, Ukhrul District, joined the INA as a sepoy in Burma in 1943. He was also of great help to the advancing coalition forces in the Chassad area.42

(xvii). Ngamkholun Kuki of Maokot village, Ukhrul District, joined the INA-Japanese forces on 25th October 1943 at Jelen Camp in Upper Burma, under the command of Japanese Captain Nagamise. He underwent training for four months in Burma. He joined fighting against the British forces at Angoching, Khangkhui and Shangshak.

(xviii). Thangsei Kuki of Molvailup village (Indo-Burma border), joined the coalition forces in the month of January 1943. He served in the ‘intelligence group’ under the command of Captain Sempoo.43

(xix). Lunkhoson Haokip of Tollaibung (Torbung) village, Chandel District, joined the INA during the Second World War, as a sepoy at Kalewa Camp, Burma, which was under the of Brigadier Jamaramasta. Lunkhoson was instrumental in helping the combined forces of INA-Japanese soldiers in between Tammu-Pallel region; for his knowledge of the local topography.

(xx). Hemjathang Kuki of Aishi village, Ukhrul District, he joined the INA at the age of 25

41 Ibid, pp.36 & 38
42 Ibid, pp.43 & 45
43 Ibid, pp.47-48
years at Koija Camp in Burma. He underwent military training for three years. He along with many other Kukis accompanied the combined forces of the INA and Japanese soldiers into Manipur, for the liberation war.

(xxii). Mangkholun Kuki of Songjang village, Chandel District, joined the INA at Koija Camp, Burma on 10th January 1944, which was under the command of Captain Nouramasang. After vigorous military training for three months in Burma, he was involved in fighting against the British in the Tammu-Pallel region.44

(xxiii). Thangjadong Kuki of Lakhan Khuman, Ukhrul District, joined the INA-Japanese coalition forces at Kontong Camp in Burma in November 1943.

(xxiv). Janghung Haokip of Waikhong, joined the INA-Japanese forces in 1943, in Burma. He worked under the Department of intelligence called Hikari Kikan of the combined INA and Japanese forces. He worked actively in Burma and in the border areas.45

(xxv). Jamsho Kuki of Maokot, joined the INA on the 1st December 1943, at Koija Camp in Upper Burma. He underwent training for three months. He was involved in the liberation war against allied forces at Angoching, Pushing and Khangkhui areas in the eastern hill ranges of Manipur.

(xxvii). Chungkhosei Kuki of Bongjang village, near Chassad, joined the combined forces of the INA and Japanese forces at Jelen Camp in Upper Burma on 10th December 1943. He underwent military training for three months. He took part in fighting the allied forces at Angoching and Khongkan-Thana area in the Burma border.

(xxviii). Ngamkhotong Haokip of Lamphei village, Chandel District, joined the British’s Army of Chin Hill Battalion in Burma in 1941, when the combined forces of the Indian National Army and the Japanese conquered Burma. Ngamkhotong joined the INA-Japanese

44 Ibid, pp.50-52
forces at the Kalewa headquarters in Burma in 1943. That same year he along with the combined coalition forces took part in many battles with the British forces in Burma and Manipur, under the command of Captain Mazol Eginia Sang.46

(xxvii). Henkholet Kuki, joined the INA at Koija Camp in Upper Burma in the early part of 1944. He took part in the attack against the allied forces at Chassad and Hundung areas of Manipur under the command of Captain Thaichemiko, and also at Shangshak.

(xxviii). Yangkhosei Kuki of Chassad village, joined the British Army and worked as water-carrier during the early part of the Second World War. When he heard the news of INA-Japanese advance into the Manipur border, he deserted the British Camp and joined the INA at the Koija Camp in Burma. He underwent military training for four to five months at the INA Camp.47 (See Fig.3,e)

(xxix). Lhukhothang Kuki of Maokot, he joined the INA at Keija Camp in Burma and underwent military training for three months. After the completion of the training course, he was among the coalition forces in the Chassad region.

(XXX). Haopao Kuki of Kachoubung (Khaochangbong) village, Ukhrul District, joined the INA-Japanese forces at Koija Camp in Upper Burma on 5th November 1943, and underwent military training for three months. He took part in fighting against the British led forces at Angoching, Pushing and Khangkhui battlefields.

(XXXI). Lhunkhosat Kuki of Kashung village, Ukhrul District joined the INA forces at Koija Camp in Upper Burma and underwent military training for three months. He was involved in the attacks against British forces at Angoching, Khangkhui and at Shangshak.48

(XXXII). Tongkholun Kuki of Maku village, Ukhrul District, in 1943, he joined the INA-Japanese forces, at Kontong Camp in Upper Burma. After military training, he led the
coalition forces towards the eastern hill ranges of Manipur. He took part in fighting the British forces at Tilon. Phaisat (Phungyar), Shangshak, and at British Defence Camp at Mahadev, located at the foothills of the Imphal valley.

(xxxiii). **Lhunkhosei Haokip.** of Maku Village, Ukhrul District, joined the coalition forces on 2nd August 1943, at Jelen Camp in Upper Burma. After undergoing military training for four months, he along with the coalition forces of INA-Japanese soldiers marched towards eastern hills of Manipur. He was involved in the attacks against allied forces at Khongkan-Than and Gammom Camps.49

(xxxiv). **L. Thangkhomang** of Gilehin-nang village, Ukhrul District joined the INA at the Jelen Camp in Burma on 12th November 1943. He took part in fighting against the British forces at Angoching and Shangshak.

(xxxx). **Lenghao Kuki** of Zalenbung, Ukhrul District, joined the INA as a sepoy at Saihaphoh Camp in Burma and got enrolment at Koija INA Camp on 8th July, 1944. He was involved in all the battles fought in the Chassad area against the Allied forces.

(xxxxvi). **Onkholct Kuki** of Humlhang village joined the INA-Japanese forces at Kontong Camp in Burma which was under the command of Captain Takhetashang in January, 1944.50

(xxxvii). **Haotung Kuki** of Maku village, Ukhrul District, joined the INA Forces at Koija INA Training Camp in 1944 and served as an interpreter for the INA-Japanese troops during the war.

(xxxviii). **Thongkhomang Kuki** of Kultuh village (Ukhrul District), joined the Indo-Japanese forces as a sepoy at the Koija Camp, Burma.

(xxxix). **H.T. Thongkhomang Kuki.** of Loni village (Ukhrul District) joined the INA at Kontong INA Training Camp, Burma. He led the combined coalition forces from Burma into

49 Ibid. pp. 79-80
50 Ibid. pp. 86 & 88-89
Manipur.

(XXX). Lunkhothang Kuki, of Na-ang village, Ukhrul District, joined the INA-Japanese forces at Mandalay, Burma. He was trained as an interpreter. After completion of his training, he was sent to Manipur along with the INA-Japanese forces.51

Besides, many others joined the INA-Japanese forces in Manipur. They were as follows:

(i). Jamkhochung Kuki of Tusam village (Sadar Hills) joined the INA as a sepoy at Challang village and served the Indo-Japanese forces during its Imphal campaign.

(ii). Semkho Haa Koonp of Ukha loikhai village joined the INA as a Court Master on 15th March 1944. Later, he was arrested at Mandalay, when following the retreating forces.

(iii). Helkopau Guit of Chingdai Kholen, Sadar Hills, joined the INA in 1944. Later he was arrested at Boljang for his alliance to INA-Japanese forces.52

(iv). Jangkholon Kuki of Tuikhong (Tuikong), Chandel District, joined the INA at Ambrese under Brigadier Jamasamasta.

(v). Achnong Kom of Khoirentak village joined the INA as porter. He was arrested by the British army while he was carrying luggage for the coalition forces at Laimaton Camp.

(vi). Ampu Kom, of Khoirentak village, joined the INA in 1944. Later he was arrested at his home by the Allied forces for having an alliance with their enemy (INA-Japanese).

(vii). Rengba Kom of Khoirentak village, joined the INA-Japanese forces as a porter. He was later arrested while carrying the luggage for the INA-Japanese forces at Laimaton Camp53.

(viii). Konkhothong Kuki, of Tilphai village joined the INA at Chahmol Camp (Chandel District) in 1944.

(ix). Onkhoyang Kuki joined the INA-Japanese forces in 1944.

51 Ibid, p.97
52 Ibid.pp.11 & 18-19
53 Ibid.pp.24 & 26-28
Kamhang Mate of Khankol (Khaokol) village (Churachandpur District) joined the coalition forces at Chikha Camp, near the Burmese border. He served as a civil supplier to the INA and Japanese forces. He followed the retreating armies up to Kalewa in Burma, where he was arrested by the British forces.34

Lhunkholet Kuki of Gelmol village, (Churachandpur District), joined the INA in 1944.

Jamkholct Kuki of Aihang village, Chandel District, joined the INA in 1944.

Letlun Chongloi of Thangkarong village, Saikul Subdivision, joined the INA-Japanese forces in 1944; he served as a volunteer guide and a local interpreter.55

Jamkhoson Kuki of Samukon village (Chandel District) was an active member of the INA-Japanese forces. He greatly assisted the combined forces particularly in the Indo-Burma areas of Molpi, Sita, Tengnoupal, Phaibung.

Seikhup Kuki of Ichaigojang village (Saikul Subdivision). He joined the INA at Laimaton Camp (near Joujangtek) in 1944.

Shohol Kuki of Songjang village (Chandel District), joined the INA at Andre as a sepoy in July 1944.56

Chungtong Kuki of Samukon village (Chandel District) joined the INA at its Chahmol Camp in 1944.

Satkam Kuki of Shaihaphoh village (Chandel District) served in the Hikari Kikan organization of the Indo-Japanese forces during the WW II.

Nungkhopao of Gangpimol village (Churachandpur District) joined the combined INA-Japanese forces when they came to Saikot. He served as a Supply Officer for the combined forces based at Saikot village, he collected ration from nearby villages for the troops.57

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34 Ibid, pp.35,37 & 39
35 Ibid, pp.40-42
36 Ibid, pp.44-46 & 49
37 Ibid, pp.53-54 & 56
(xx). **Bumkhopao (Vumkhopao)** alias Palum of Bunglung villages (near Saikul, Sadar Hills East), served the Indo-Japanese forces during the war as a porter.

(xxii). **Doulam Dimngel** of Ichaigojang (Sadar Hills) served the coalition forces in the Hikari Kikan Company during the WW II.

(xxii). **Mangkholen Kuki** of Jampi (Tamenglong District), joined the 3rd Bn. Assam Rifles as a rifleman in 1939. While serving at Shangshak, heavy fighting took place between Indo-Japanese and the Allied forces. After the battle he deserted the British army to join the Indo-Japanese camp. ⁵⁸

(xxiii). **Yanghem Hangshing** of Khokon village (Ukhrul District) joined the INA-Japanese forces at Ukhrul. He was with the coalition forces during the Kohima campaign.

(xxiv). **Loikhojang Kuki** of Tuidam (Chandel District) joined the Indo-Japanese forces at Chandel Camp in 1944 which was under the command Captain Ichimia.

(xxv). **Hemkholet Touthang** of Khoikai village (Ukhrul District) joined the V-Force in 1943, but deserted in 1944 to join the INA-Japanese forces, when the combined forces entered the hills of Manipur. He took part in the campaign against British forces at Sainaphah, Chamu, Humthang, Pushing, Khangkhui and Shangshak. ⁵⁹

(xxvi). **Nekkhothang Haokip** of Wayang village (Chandel District) joined the INA in 1944. He was trained at Teijang Camp for four months and then he was sent to Twilong Camp to join the war.

(xxvii). **Tolkhothang Kuki** of Maku village (Ukhrul District) joined the Indo-Japanese coalition as a sepoy in 1944, and later worked in the intelligence department called Hikari

⁵⁸ Ibid pp.58-60
⁵⁹ Ibid pp.66,68 & 71
(xviii). **Jamkhojang Kuki** of Maku village joined the INA in 1944 at Chassad INA Camp. Later, he followed the retreating INA-Japanese forces up to Burma, where he was arrested and locked-up at Mandalay.

(xxix). **Onjathang Kuki** of Denglen village (Sadar Hills) met the coalition forces at the Kanglatombi Camp on 25th April 1944. He worked for INA-Japanese forces as civil supplier. He collected rice and other necessary items for the troops; also acted as local guide. For his involvement he was arrested by the British army and put behind bars for six months.

(XXX). **Lunngam Kuki** a resident of Bongmol Tampak village (Chandel District) joined the INA-Japanese coalition forces along with his wife (Hoijakim). He lost his son while in the service of the combined forces, for want of care. These couples were instrumental in bringing INA Pamphlets into Manipur.

(XXXi). **Yangkholet Kuki** of Kultuh village (Ukhrul District) joined the coalition forces in 1944; he was an active member of the combined forces. Later he was arrested by the British forces for his involvement in INA-Japanese activities.

(XXXii). **Thongkhongam Kuki** of Aishi village, joined the INA at Molnoi Camp which was under the command of one Captain Khan. He took part as a soldier in the battles at Molnoi, Angoching, Khangkhui, Kharasom, Jessami and Kohima along with the INA-Japanese coalition forces.61

(XXXiii). **Otkhosei Guite** of Thingjang village (Sadar Hill East) joined the INA-Japanese forces at Joulen Camp in June 1944, and served as a sepoy, besides as an interpreter.

(XXXiv). **Khuppaio Kuki** of Ichaiigojang village (Sadar Hills East) joined the coalition forces at

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60 Ibid, pp. 73 & 78
61 Ibid, pp. 81-84
Tujangwaichong Japanese Camp which was under the command of Captain Takhetasang in 1944. For his involvement he was later arrested by the British forces.

(XXXv). Helkholet Kuki of Denglen village was an active member of the coalition forces during the WW II. He was arrested by the British for his involvement in 1944.62

(XXXvi). Lhunkhojang Kuki of Pihang village (Ukhrul District) was forced to serve as a porter for the British forces in 1942. He deserted to join the Indo-Japanese forces when the latter came to Manipur in 1944.

(XXXvii). Chongjangam Kuki of Pihang village joined the Indo-Japanese forces in July 1944 and served as a sepoy under the command of Captain Thaichohamiko.63

C. Legends about Kuki-Japanese relations:

One of the most important functions of folklore or folktale is that it becomes a vehicle of social protest. Such elements of folklore, though frequently relating to minor events, often have reference to matters of the highest national importance.64 It has also been used for political propaganda and social change. During the emergence of independent nations in Africa, myths, legends and songs have been used to promote ethnic unity, regionalism, nationalism and anti-colonialism. In India B.G Tilak used the ‘Ganesha festival’ to spread the idea of nationalism, similarly the Germans used the myth of the ‘Superior race’ to build their idea of the German nation. The Thadou Kukis included the Japanese in their origin myth for propaganda purposes. In Burma too, the Burmese identified Col Suzuki with their mythical prince who had returned to drive away the British. Although somewhat different, but on a similar line, Gandhi’s name was associated with the existing patterns of popular belief for the social behavior in Gorakpur District.

62 Ibid pp.87, 90-91
63 Ibid pp.93-94
64 M. Islam (1985), Folklore: The Pulse of the People, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, p.383
in 1920's. Such instances of utilizing folklore or Legendary tales, as a tool to win the hearts of the Kukis on to the side of the Japanese forces could be seen from the account of one Thadou (Kuki) Zamkithanga (Zamkithang) by name, a second clerk in the SDO, Tamenglong office who stirred up the Thadou-Kuki people secretly, saying, “The relation with the Japanese is that our clan originated from two brothers (1) Sawngthu (Chongthu), (2) Sawngja(Chongja). The Thadou clans are descended from Sawngthu and the Japanese from Sawngja. So we are very closely related and cannot but help them (Japanese). We must try our level best to help them to come to our countries and those who claimed to be Thado (Thadou) must not refuse.” As a result some Thado men with Zamkithanga (Zamkithang) made friends with the Japanese and informed them of the hideouts of the Allied forces and often showed the way. On 10.4.1944 these men enabled the Japanese to capture some British soldiers on the way between Tamenglong and Imphal at Hauchoung bungalow. Nungkhogin, Chief of Suangsang (Songsang- Henglep Sub-Division within Churachandpur Dist.) also welcomed the Japanese in his house and after locking up the doors and windows and mounting sentries outside, said to the Japanese, “Our generation started from two brothers and we are closely related. We are very glad that you came to us and in commemoration I wish to kill a gayal and as a remembrance of your coming....I wish you to present me with a robe.” Lambert also mentioned that the Kukis considered the Japanese as their half-brother. He was given a robe and a flag and he promised to exert himself to help them (Japanese) in every way. He then collected all the guns in his village with an intention of waging war against the British. He also threatened the headmen of the other neighboring villages, with his revolver, to obey his orders to assist the Japanese. He was also in possession of the following

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67 Copy of translation of Lalzuai’s report dated 17.7.44 forwarded by SL, FIB, Aijal, under his (Secret) Memo. Dated 26/7/44, to Central Intelligence Officer, Assam, File No.XLI, Manipur Secretariat Library,(hereafter cited as MSL) Imphal
68 Ibid
69 Ibid
70 Lambert, ‘Notes on the Kuki Situation’,p.3 (Assam State Archives)
71 Copy of translation of Lalzuai’s report, op.cit
items (i) a flag given by the Japanese, (ii) a rifle and a revolver, and (iii) Japanese pamphlets. According to Paojalen Singson, “Nungkhogin welcomed the Japanese forces by killing a mithun and made them to stay at his village for three days. The Japanese asked him for what reason they were being treated so well? To this question, Nungkhogin pleaded them (Japanese) to restore back his freedom, if they won the war”. One Nungkhothang of Lungba village was also said to have announced to the people close to the roads and nearby villages, “We are closely related to the Japanese, being generation of two brothers….their enemy is our enemy”. He was one of the greatest agents of the Japanese.

The truth of the story is open to question, but the point to be noted is that the creator of the story skillfully interwove myth with the then prevailing situation of that time, to find authority to legitimize Kuki co-operation with the Japanese. The legendary tale indeed serves its purpose, in bringing the Kukis to the side of the INA-Japanese forces.

The collaboration between the Kukis, the Indian National Army and the Japanese was mutually beneficial in which each sought to use the other as an instrument to accomplish their own goals. For instance, Japan helped the Indian National Army so that they could oust the British who were threatening their hold over Burma and the Indian National Army in turn used the Japanese for their country’s (India’s) Independence. The INA expected that Imphal could be used as a springboard for a country-wide revolution and it was also expected that once they (INA) entered Indian soil they would be given a warm reception. Perhaps they were not wrong in their estimation. Furthermore, the Kukis collaborated with the two, with a view to oust the British from their (Kuki) ancestral land, so that their lost freedom may be restored once again.

71 Report on my Trip to Songsang – S.J.Duncan, Esqr, Copy of No.216-B (C), dated 3.6.44. File No.XLI, MSL, Imphal.
72 Paojalen Singson, age 85, of Chingmei Kuki, Henglep Subdivision, Churachandpur District. Interviewed on 25th October 2010
73 Copy of translation of Lalzuaia’s report, MSL, op.cit
D. Co-ordination of the Kukis with the INA-Japanese forces, (1943-1945):

As the plan of the Imphal Campaign developed from July 1943 onwards, the Japanese worked hard to win the support of the local people. The two intelligence organizations which were instrumental in securing the co-operation of the local people were Hikari (light) Kikan and Nishi* (western) Kikan. Hikari Kikan's (it succeeded the Iwakuro Kikan in 1943) was expanded and reorganized for the Imphal operation and Lt. General Isoda Saburo was appointed Chief of the Kikan and Col. Yamamoto Chief of Staff. Nishi Kikan (it succeeded the Minami Kikan) was a parallel organization to Hikari Kikan. The latter was concerned with Indian FIC's while Nishi Kikan worked in Burma and with other Indo-Burma border tribes. Its headquarters was at Myamyo and there were two branches, one in the Kalemyo-Falam area and another in Homalin-Thamanti. At the Homalin-Thamanti branch, Captain Izumiya was the OC and Jamthang (a Kuki) was the force commander. According to the INA Records available at the National Archives of India, there were at least fifty-five Kukis working under the Nishi Kikan. Some of them were, Yamhol, Pabem of Tonglhang, Photji of Kawltuang, Jamthang, Pawkholal (Paokholal), Pawkhosei (Paokhosei), Jhantin of Denting, Yangkholet. The Intelligence Organization actively participated in the collection and dissemination of information for the Indo-Japanese forces. Apart from intelligence service, they had to canvass local people and collect rations for the soldiers.

The Kuki INA Pensioners memorandum to the Chief Minister of Manipur stated, that the

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75 File No.18, INA Records, National Archives of India (NAI) New Delhi
76 Ibid
78 Ibid, see Appendix ‘A’.
79 Ibid.

*Hikari & Nishi Kikans were Japanese Intelligence Organizations.
Kuki chiefs of India and Burma met the Japanese officers twice at Kojia and Molly Camps, in Burma respectively on the 5th and 12th November 1943. The meetings were solemnized by a feast on *Nalin-Salung* (liver & heart of a killed animal) (also called *Saba*) as a mark of friendship. Altogether 145 people (55 chiefs and 88 others) were present at Kojia Camp Conclave and a larger one at Molly, in which 165 people were present (135 chiefs and 30 others). According to Jamthang Haokip, in these meetings, “An agreement was solemnized according to the Kuki traditional custom of taking vows by biting the Humpi ha (Tiger-Tooth).” The Agreement was, ‘if the Japanese won the war, their (Kuki) lost freedom be restored again.

Similar meetings was also held in the south-eastern part of Manipur at Khengpi village, in the presence of some Japanese officers, one Manipur officer, Lamkhothang Kuki, where eight headmen offered R.10 each and others Rs. 5 each. The headmen in this area were reported to send men ‘for training with the Japanese’ and all the villagers gave their thumb impressions on a paper for the Japanese. In the north and north-west area of Manipur, another meeting was also reported, which took place at Mechangbung village (Naga Hills) in which a number of Kukis from Manipur, Naga Hills and North Cachar Hills were present. The meeting was to decide what should be done in view of Jampi’s declared policy of aid for the Japanese. It was reported that when Japanese were at Tujangvaichong, emissaries were sent to Mangkhokai, Chief of Jampi, ‘acknowledged suzemin of the Thadous’, to negotiate for assistance, and who as a result visited the Japanese Camp, accepted Rs.100, and ‘agreed to throw in his weight on the side of the Japanese’. In a typical Kuki war declaration he killed a *mithun* and sent pieces to all the lesser chiefs, which they were to consume in token of having endorsed Jampi’s decision and as a

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81 A Memorandum of the Joint Action Committee of Kuki INA pensioners, submitted to the Chief Minister of Manipur dated 23rd December 1999,p.4
82 Jamthang Haokip, *Manipur a Gospel Leb Kuki ho Thusin* (History of the Kukis and the Gospel in Manipur), Published by the Author, KCA, Churachandpur,p.69
83 Assam State Archives (ASA), Governor’s Secretariat (Confidential) (GSC), 140/C, 1944: Frontier Intelligence Branch (Assam) Fortnightly Report (FIBFR), No. 7/44; For the first half of November 1944,p.1
promise of support.\textsuperscript{83}

After these meetings, in almost every Kuki village the headmen took the initiative, in mobilizing the people in support of the Indo-Japanese forces. One captured Japanese document noted:

‘The Kuki contact is increasing and was about sixty in thirty villages in the middle of October 1943. The Kukis living east of a front line company of enemy line outposts in Ukhrul area are co-operating with us (Japanese), including the headmen. We expect everyone’s cooperation when we advance, as these people are helping our agents by concealing them and assisting in their infiltration at the risk of themselves...our agents find it easier to travel through the district 25km wide, along the west bank of Chindwin river, where majority of the natives are of the Kuki tribes’.\textsuperscript{84} As far as popular support was concerned, one account estimated that 2:1 majority of the Kukis was on the side of the Indo-Japanese, and almost all the headmen would report about the movement of the Allied troops. One INA Field succinctly noted that the Kukis were ‘pro-Japanese and INA’ and ‘many of them are now working with us in buying us our rations’.\textsuperscript{85}

The Kukis under the leadership of Onkholet (Otkholet) Haokip alias Japan Pakang extended their full support to the INA and the Japanese forces, as the future fate of the Kukis depended on the outcome of the war.\textsuperscript{86} In his report on the Hill people of the North-East who helped the Japanese and the Indian National Army, ETD Lambert stated that ‘the Chief of Chassad, Tongkhothang\textsuperscript{*} and the Japanese held three meetings at Chassad, Maokot and Nungse

\textsuperscript{83} ASA, GSC, 140 C, 1944: Confidential D.O. No. 58/A, 24.11.1944, From SDO, NC Hills to DC, Cachar, as enclosed in Secret memo No.160 – I/C, 14.03.1945 of Commissioner of Division Assam to DC, Naga Hills & Secretary to Governor of Assam

\textsuperscript{84} INA Records, INA/255, p.16, NAI, New Delhi


\textsuperscript{86} S.Haokip, “National Integration”, in the Tri-Millennium Souvenir of the Kuki Students’ Organization, General Headquarters,(2000).p.73

* Tongkhothang was the son of Lhukhomang alias Pache, Chief of Chassad, who was one of the most influential leaders during the Anglo-Kuki War (1917-1919)
and urged people to supply men and guides to the Japanese and to arrest the men who helped the British and to inform the Japanese of such men. In November 1943, Tongkhothang, Chief of Chassad crossed the Chindwin River, where he contacted the Japanese requesting four hundred (400) rifles to fight the British. The Japanese officers dressed in Kuki clothes reconnoitred the position of the British. During WWII, in accordance with the above pact, the Kukis aided Japanese engineers (disguised as Kukis) to survey the terrain, where several strategic roads were constructed. First, from Thamanti near the river Chindwin in Burma to Phoilen, Khotuh, Kongsailong, Leijum, Molheh Camp, Akhen and Kanjang stretching to Jessami near Kohima. Secondly, from Homalin to Phoilen, Khongkan-Thana, Chassad to Imphal. Thirdly, from Kalemyo to Tamu, Moreh and from Palen to Imphal. From Falam, Behieng, Singhat, Bishenpur to Imphal. The Japanese trained Kukis and relied on their espionage amongst the British to gain vital information regarding their movements. The knowledge of the local topography by the Kukis was of great help to the INA-Japanese forces. In terms of assistance given to the invading forces (INA-Japanese), the Kukis rendered not only the immediate needful services like, porters (coolies) and a bulk of labour forces, collecting rations, or as guides, interpreters, informants and other intelligence services but many of them have also participated in the ensuing war as ‘men of war’. Conditions that necessitated the participation of local men in the battle front line was that, thousands of the Indo-Japanese soldiers were inflicted with diseases and starvation, and many more died in the encounters; considered one of the main reasons for the failure of the campaign. Shah Nawaz recollected that 70% of his men were stricken ill, medicines, already in short supply ran out, and

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87 Special Branch Papers. ASA, Dispur. See also, ETD Lambert dt.25.10.1944, ‘A Note on the Kuki situation in Manipur State as a result of the Japanese Invasion,’ File No.XLI, Cabin No.29, ‘Japanese war, MSL, Imphal, p.3
88 ASA, GSC, Sl. No. 1591, 140/c, 1944; E.T.D. Lambert Secret Memo. 21/Police (5)-II/428-30, F.I.B, C.I.O. Shillong, 15.11.1944 to RCR Cumming, IGP, Assam
89 File No.XLI, Cabin No.29, MSL, Imphal
90 Report of ASI K. Ringshi of Chassad, File No.29, Cabin No.XLI, MSL, Imphal
many of his men died in the jungle. It was also reported that 70% of No. 1st Regiment of the INA at Kalewa (Burma) suffered from malaria; small camp hospitals at Moreh and Tamu were overflowing; Maymyo hospital was full; about 50-100 sick soldiers arrived daily from battle front; and clothing, medicines and equipments were needed everywhere. Almost all accounts in the frontline recorded acute shortage of food, arms, ammunitions, medicines, and excessive illness and death. Such gruesome situation required heavy re-enforcement and supplies that actually never arrived. Therefore the role of local men became necessary. We have just cited that Tongkhothang, Chief of Chassad asked for 400 rifles from the Japanese army. He is also said to have formed a V-Force for the Japanese forces, probably armed with such weapons. The fact that many Japanese rifles and pistols have been recovered from the houses of several Kukis in the later period is a case in point. The accounts of seventy-eight (78) Kukis, published in Freedom Fighter of Manipur are a living testimony. Besides, Kuki involvement in intelligence services, supplying ration and spreading pro-INA-Japanese propagandas, provided great help to them (INA-Japanese) to cross the border areas without much difficulties. ‘Look Out’ Notices were distributed by the No.1 Forward Intelligence Centre, to the following SS Groups of JIFC’s from Penma. Jemadar Puran Singh, Hav.Mohamad Akham and others, and from Kuantang Lt.Khan Zaman and Thangpao Kuki. Thus, the border areas and beyond were properly surveyed by the INA-Japanese espionage network. The cooperation rendered by the Kukis was such that K.R Palta, in his book ‘My Adventures with the INA’ recounts that “Young girls of the Kuki tribe were forced by the British Military Authorities to work as spies for them against the INA. But these girls occasionally approached our (INA-Japanese) commanders with all the

92 INA Records. INA/3: Field Report No. 1 Div. Azad Hind Fauz, 3 July 1944, NAI
93 ASA GSC, File No. 45/C, 1945. FIBFR No. 2/45, for the second half of January 1945, p. 1
94 ASA GSC File No. 45/C, 1945. FIBFR No. 2/45, for the second half of January, 1945; Enclosures Chart I & II. Recovered & Unrecovered Arms and Ammunitions
95 Part 2. File No. 250, INA Records, NAI, New Delhi
Even some of the ‘V Force’ employed by the British to spy against the INA-Japanese turned against the British and joined the INA-Japanese forces. One such person was Paokhomang Haokip who joined the ‘V’ Force in 1942 in what was classified as ‘Operation Black’. According to the information given by Capt. Khathing, he (Paokhomang) took the leading role in arranging a Kuki guide for the Japanese. He also forced a good number of villagers to hand over their rifles and guns which had been issued by the ‘V’ Force. Several times he came to Bongba (Bongbal, Sadar Hills East) with the Japanese. British Intelligence also noted an increase in the number of civilian supporters in Manipur. It may be noted here that not only the Kukis but also the Meiteis welcomed the INA and Japanese forces when they landed on the soil of Manipur, as they were seen as ‘Liberators’. The posters and pamphlets of Subhas Chandra Bose appealing for mass support to the INA-Japanese forces were brought in for the first time into Manipur by one Kuki, named Lunngam Lhungdim and his wife, Hoijakim, from a remote place in the southern side of the valley of Manipur, who handed it to Dr. Gularchand Singh, then Medical Officer posted at Sugunu, which was passed on to Thokchom Angou Singh, Vice-President of the Praja Sanmelani on 7th March 1944. As a result, many (Meiteis) joined the INA-Japanese forces in great numbers. When it was learnt that many civilians in the border areas had extended their support to the advancing INA-Japanese forces, the British began to send ‘intelligent agents’ to all such areas.

In the course of their surveillance exercises, they (British) came to understand that there existed some sort of ‘Understanding’ between the INA, the Japanese and the Kukis, and because of this, the Kukis gave unflinching support to the INA-Japanese forces.

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96 K.R Palta. (1946). My Adventure with the Indian National Army, Lion Press, Lahore, p.144
97 *V-Force was an irregular force of locally-raised levies and guerrillas working for the British & her allies.
98 GM /206/1/7 of 18/8/44, File No.29, Cabin No.29, Japanese War, MSL, Imphal
99 Freedom Fighters of Manipur: Who’s who, Congress Centenary Year 1985, Freedom Fighters’ Cell, MPCC (I)
Starting from the Chin Hills in Burma (Myanmar) to the hills of Manipur, the combined INA-Japanese forces received a warm welcome from the Kuki people. Pumzamang, Chief of Tonzang (Chin Hills, Myanmar) supplied rice to the Japanese forces. It is interesting to note that the Japanese forces behaved well with the locals unlike the Allied troops. In this regard, Vumson, observed, "When the Japanese first reached Chin (Kuki) villages they behaved politely, and they never took anything by force. They came to sit around the fire places and share food the villagers cooked." Thus, a cordial atmosphere existed between them; out of sympathetic feelings, the Japanese were allowed to build a large camp at Tuikhiang in the Chin Hills. As soon as the Japanese occupied the Chin Hills, they formed a local army known as Chin Defence Army (CDA). The main objective of CDA was to drive away the remnants of the British troops in the Chin Hills. The followings were some of the leaders of CDA:

1). Kimungin, 2). Vungsuan, 3). Ngozam, 4). Pumzakam, 5). Khupsavung, 6). Teldolian, 7). Cinthang, 8). Luahcin, 9). N. Bil, 10). Ngawcin pau, 11). Thangzahau. However, later they were captured by the British troops, accusing them of helping the Japanese and were put in various jails in India.

One Lunkhopao, Chief of Mata, sold about Rs.1000 worth of paddy to the Japanese between miles 40 and 41 of the Tedim Tract; also one Thongo, Chief of Songdo established good relationship with the Japanese. Thus, in this way the friendly attitude of the local people (Kukis) towards the invading coalition forces enabled them to clear the Tiddim line of the British forces, without much difficulty.

The Indo-Japanese forces entered the Khuga valley of Churachandpur and occupied it for five months during the Second World War from April 7 to August 29, 1944. A comparatively less known yet equally important historical fact is the untold story of the Indo-Japanese occupation of the Khuga valley which is a key to understanding the relationship of the INA-

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100 Vumson (1980), Zo History – With an Introduction to Zo Culture, Economy, Religion and their Status as an Ethnic Minority in India, Burma and Bangladesh, Published by the Author, Aizawl, Mizoram, p.175
101 Ibid
102 File No.XLI. Cabin No.29 “Jap War” MSL, Imphal
Japanese forces with the local Kuki population. Well aware of the rapid penetration of the Indo-Japanese forces deep into the southern side of Manipur bordering Burma, local officials (British) hurriedly convened an emergency meeting with the tribal chiefs of Churachandpur at Gangpimou near old Churachandpur mission headquarters in March 1944. It was decided that all civilian population residing within the radius of about seven kilometers from the Tiddim road should be evacuated. The American missionary, Rev. Paul Rostad, and his family, had already evacuated the mission compound. On April 7, 1944, hundreds of Indo-Japanese soldiers, their faces covered with branches of green leaves, suddenly streamed down from the deep jungles of Lentlang ranges into the Khuga valley and then encamped in several places, in and around Churachandpur, such as on the southern part of Pearsonmun village, probably at Songpi and other places with Saikot as their headquarters. Zema Hmar, son of Kawlvetthang, said that the commander of the Saikot camp was Bujia Musta Hasbe who was a very good and kind-hearted man with whom he later on became close friends. Soon the INA-Japanese forces constructed an observatory post at the ‘Saidan Peak’ (See Fig.3,f) from where they could have a good view of the Imphal valley.

The British unleashed a reign of terror on the Kuki villages, which were found to be in the list of villages helping the INA-Japanese forces. S.J Duncan, the Central Intelligence Officer, Assam, had strongly recommended that Saikot area (about 3km from Churachandpur town) be bombed. As a reliable report stated that the Khuga valley comprising of Phailen Dala, Gangpimol, Ngathal, Ngurte, Molkot, Saidan, and Saikot (all these villages fall in the vicinity of Churachandpur town) villages welcomed the INA-Japanese forces and supplied them with food.

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104 Ibid
105 Ibid
106 Ibid
108 Ibid
109 Ibid
provisions like rice, egg, meat, Chicken, etc. According to Lal Dena, "Unable to get continuous supply by air, the INA and the Japanese 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 engaged in 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". The Japanese conversed with the local people through the Gurkhalı sepoy serving in the INA. Later, one Vungthanga was used as the official interpreter. The Chief of Saikot, Kolvella (See fig.3,g) was accused of, serving the Japanese up to July 1944, he was also charged with supplying over 2,000 mounds of rice to the Japanese. Also, the Japanese encouraged him and they (Japanese) opened a village school at Saikot, in which people were taught the Japanese language and Japanese script. "It was compulsory for those attending the school to memorize the Japanese national anthem. Some of those who attended the school remember the anthem as:

_Aronga Khitah._
_Aronga Khitah._
_Kokhoni Khitah._
_Jammani Khitah._
_Nanimo Khitah._

But, because of frequent bombings on Churachandpur town and its surroundings not less than two times a day, the school could not be continued for long." According to Ramlanthang, the youngest son of Kolvella, "His father (Kolvella) greatly assisted the Indo-

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109 Trip Report of S.J Duncan; File No. 29, Cabin No. XLI, Japanese War, MSL, Imphal
110 Lal Dena. In Search of Identity, op.cit,p.91
111 Ibid,p.90
112 File No. XLI, Cabin No. 29, MSL, op.cit
113 Zatanga, op.cit,p.6
114 Lal Dena, In Search of Identity, op.cit,p.90
Japanese forces: they felt at home at Saikot due to the abundance of food grains and livestock, and may be due to the friendly attitude of my father (Kolvella). Pu. Ramtlanthang, further stated that, his father’s co-operation was appreciated by Subhas Chandra Bose. He further stated that, Subhas Chandra Bose promised not to forget Kolvella’s good works, if he won the war.\textsuperscript{115} One of the high ranking INA commanders came and met Kawlvel (Kolvella) 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 many of them are suffering from malaria and dysentery, we are leaving soon. When India achieves her freedom, you folks will never be forgotten”.\textsuperscript{116} Who was this officer? Kawlvel (Kolvella) claimed that this officer was no other than Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.\textsuperscript{117}

Analyzing all these reports, the British came to the conclusion that because of this conducive environment the INA-Japanese forces were in a position to fortify their positions in and around Saikot. Although, the droppings of bombs were ineffective, machine-gunning appeared to be more effective.\textsuperscript{118} Besides, many granaries and livestock were destroyed to starve the enemies.\textsuperscript{119} However, the destructions caused and the bombings did not dampen the spirit of the Kukis nor cause them to give up their desire to get back their lost freedom.

Their (INA-Japanese forces) aim having been, to capture the Imphal town, in the process they were being led by the Kukis as guides, through the thick and dense jungles of the western hill ranges known locally as the Thangting Lhang (Thangting Hill ranges). Like in the case of the

\textsuperscript{115} Source: Ramtlanthang, S/o. Pu. Kawlvelthang alias Kolvella, at his Residence at Saikot on 28\textsuperscript{th} September, 2010. See also, Lal Dena, In Search of Identity, op.cit,p.92
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid. See also, Rosiem Pudaite (2002). Indian National Struggle for Freedom & Its Impact on the Mizo National Movement (1935-1953), Printed at Diamond Offset, Churachandpur, pp.73-74
\textsuperscript{119} Zata.iga, op.cit,pp.7 & 12
Khuga valley, the local Kuki people assisted the coalition forces, halting at one village or another. According to Pi Nemkim Haokip, “The Japanese established their Camp at Laimanai Kuki village: (a village on the western foothills near, Phubala & Thinungei, Bishnupur district) also established a big hospital at a place called Bol-Len (Big-pond) within the village, where the wounded soldiers were treated”. She further narrated that, “Before the Kuki-Naga Clash in 1990’s, a team of Japanese visited Laimanai village at least thrice. The visiting team, assisted by the villagers dug out many relics of the war such as human bones, skulls, etc., which were supposedly of their men who had died during the war, and the same were carried home. Among them was an old man, who wept uncontrollably, looking at the spot, where the hospital, once stood. He was one of the war veterans. As a token of gratitude to the Laimanai villagers, for the help rendered to them, during the war, the visiting team proposed to build a hospital”. According to Pu Jangkhosei Haokip, an INA Veteran, “Like the help and assistances rendered by the Kukis in the western hill ranges (Thangting hill ranges), to the coalition forces (i.e., the Tiddim Column) the Kukis in the Chassad area also extended help to the Kohima Column of the Indo-Japanese forces”.

Soon the British become aware of the presence of the INA-Japanese forces in the western Hill ranges, which resulted in bombing of many Kuki villages, causing lots of sufferings to the local people. Due to unabated British air raids, many left their homes and hid in the jungles for their own safety. Fierce encounters took place in the Laimaton Hill ranges, (western hill ranges, near Bishnupur District) which included villages, Thangbu, Joupi, Lambung (Joujantek), Tingkai, Loibol etc. and a base camp was constructed on the top of Laimaton Hill, near Lambung.

120 Source: Nemkim Haokip, wife of Shri. Jamkang Haokip, Chief of Laimanai Kuki. Interviewed on 25th October 2010
121 Ibid.
122 Source: Jangkhosei Haokip, age 95, Chief of Pihang village, Ukhrul District, an INA Pensioner. Interviewed on 21 September 2011
The British or the Allied forces destroyed and burnt down several Kuki villages for sheltering their enemies (INA-Japanese), mention may be made of Kolchung and Nabil villages, which were razed to the ground due to Allied bombardments. Besides, the Allied forces killed and destroyed many of their (Kukis) livestock and Jhum fields to starve them (Kukis) and their enemies. Trenches, Tunnels and bunkers built by the INA-Japanese forces during the war, still exist. Besides, the war materials of the coalition forces, such as Japanese helmets, knives (Khukris), ammunition boxes, and Japanese rifles etc. are still found in the possession of many of the households in the above mentioned villages. (See Fig.3,h)

The alliance of the Kukis with the British enemies (Japan & INA) caused much anxiety and apprehension about a possible Kuki Uprising in Manipur, for the second time, on the lines of 1917-1919 Rebellion. In this context, D.K. Palit writes, “Many of the Kukis had, unlike the Nagas, collaborated with the Japanese, come into contact with the elements of the Indian National Army (INA) and above all, now had access to large numbers of modern arms – both of British and Japanese origin -- in jungle caches and hide-outs”. In the words of L. Thongkhomang, “The Kukis alliance with the Japanese can be testified by the following lines; the Gorkhas who looked exactly like the Kukis were sent into Japanese occupied areas disguised in Kuki garb”. One such event, “Typical of these returning parties (Gurkhas) were one under N.K. Kalur Gurung, who returned with four riflemen all disguised as Kukis. The NCO and his four men had been captured by the Japanese at the start of the offensive, but managed to escape... they remained in hiding in the jungle until the advancing enemy echelon had passed. They then bought Kuki clothes from the villagers and, once in disguise as Kukis, tried to make their way back through the Japanese

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123 Source: Thanglun Haokip of Lambung (Joujangtek village). Interviewed on 21st December 2010
124 Source: Songgin Haokip, Chief of Kolchung Village, Henglep Sub-Division, Churachandpur. Interviewed on 24th July 2011
125 Source: Lunkhogin Haokip of Tingkai (Tingkai Kholen). Interviewed on 5th October, 2010
126 D.K. Palit, op.cit. p.168
127 L. Thongkhomang Khongsai, op.cit.p.291
lines. Again they were captured, and this time they were produced before a Japanese officer. During
the interrogation, they (Gurkhas) pretended not to understand Hindi, merely repeating ‘Kuki’ ‘Kuki’
in a wailing voice. Satisfied that they were only local tribals (Kukis), the Japanese let them go.\textsuperscript{128}

The main reason for the Kukis joining the INA-Japanese forces was their desire to be
free. As stated by Pu Hemkholet and Pu Tongkholun, “We were irritated and fed up with the
way they (British) behave, collecting Khasana (taxes), constructing roads; making us build
Para (bungalow) for the British officers, carrying their loads, sometimes, without
remuneration, and sometime for just 25 paise a day. As a result of these impositions, we have
been waiting for the day, when we would get back our lost freedom”.\textsuperscript{129} The idea of freedom
received tacit support from the Japanese propaganda; “We have come to your country to set you
free from the British bondage….They (British) seek their own good and satisfaction. Their aim
is to get all for themselves…leaving the other tribes, races and nations hungry. They regard you
and we (Japanese) to be lower than dogs, swine, cats and animals…we being of the same race,
we shall equally lift you up in the same level of civilization in which we are living, we shall not
rule over you, but you will rule over yourselves…we shall be brothers and friends as we are all
Mongolians. We shall help one another…the help you have given and will give us, we shall
never forget, you will get back all things in double after Imphal is fallen”.\textsuperscript{130} However, these tall
promises were never kept because of the failure of the Imphal campaign.

It would be wrong to assume that the Kukis were completely swayed by the Japanese
propaganda; rather their unreserved co-operation to the INA-Japanese forces was the outcome of
their accumulated grievances against the oppressive rule of the British. The INA-Japanese
coalition exploited the desire of the Kukis for freedom. By the turn of the second half of the
twentieth century, it was clear that they could not drive away the British, all by themselves. Like

\textsuperscript{128} Palit, op.cit.p.143
\textsuperscript{129} Source: Tongkholun Kuki of New Lambulane, Imphal. Interviewed
on 19\textsuperscript{th} August 2010 & Pu.
Hemkholet Kuki on 1\textsuperscript{st} Sept.2010, respectively, who are both INA Pensioners.
\textsuperscript{130} Japanese Propaganda, File No. 29, Cabin No. XLI, Manipur Secretariat Library, Imphal.
the South East Asians, they (Kukis) were looking forward to external help. So, the support given by the Kukis, in particular and the local people in general to the INA-Japanese forces was rooted in their anti-British sentiment and their ardent struggle to regain their lost freedom.131

E. The INA-Japanese advance into Manipur:

The Japanese occupation of South-East Asia had converted Manipur into a buffer zone between Japan and British India. The event had brought the war to the doorstep of the British Empire and Manipur became the last bastion of the Allied counter attack. After the conquest of Burma (Myanmar) in the early part of 1942, the Japanese were planning for their next move, whether to defend what they had conquered or to push on to India.132 It was not the original plan of the Japanese to fight the war on Indian soil nor did they think that was feasible when they declared war against the Allied Powers on 8th December 1942. This was modified later on the assumption that since the British defenses in Manipur and Chittagong were probably unprepared, the capture of Imphal would rob them (British) of the base for launching a counter-offensive against Burma.133 The plan was abandoned in December 1942 partly because of the impassable jungles of Burma and partly because of the fear of anti-Japanese feeling which the attack was likely to provoke among Indians.134 As early as in May 1943, the invading Japanese forces entered into the Chin Hills (Upper Burma). Then after crushing the 17th Division of the British Army, the Japanese forces advanced towards India from three directions:

(i) The west bank of Chindwin river

(ii) The Tamu area; and

132 Laishram Churchill, (2009), Situating Manipur in the Geopolitics of Imperial Powers, an Article in-Alternative Perspectives, Economy, Polity, History & Culture, Published by Centre for Alternative Discourse, Manipur, p.14
134 Ibid, p.175
(iii) Midway between Imphal-Kohima roads (See Map IX)

The focal objective of the Japanese forces was to beleaguer Imphal and gain mastery over the Imphal plains. The Japanese plan of the Indian campaign was code-named U-Go, or Operation C. The U-Go offensive, or Operation -C was the Japanese offensive launched in March 1944 against forces of the British Empire in the North-East Indian region of Manipur. Aimed at the direction of the Brahmaputra valley, through the two towns of Imphal and Kohima, the offensive along with the overlapping Ha Go (relates to the Japanese operations in the Arakan offensive) was the last of the major Japanese offensives during World War II. The offensive culminated in the Battles of Imphal and Kohima where the Japanese and their allies were first held and then pushed back.

The following was the strategy pursued by (See Map X) the Indo-Japanese forces:

(a) The Japanese 33rd Infantry Division under Lieutenant-General Genzo Yanagita would surround and destroy the 17th Indian Division at Tiddim, then attack Imphal from the south.

(b) Yamamoto Force, formed from units detached from the Japanese 33rd and 15th Divisions under Major-General Tsunoru Yamamoto (commander of 33rd Division’s Infantry Group), would destroy the 20th Indian Division at Tamu, then attack Imphal from the east. The force was supported by the 14th Tank Regiment, equipped with 66 assorted tanks, under Lieutenant Colonel Nobuo Ueda and the 3rd Heavy Artillery Regiment under Lieutenant Colonel Kazuo Mitsui.

(c) The Japanese 15th Infantry Division under Lieutenant-General Masafumi Yamauchi would surround Imphal from the north. This division was still arriving from road-building duties in Thailand and was below its strength at the start of the operation.

(d) In a separate subsidiary operation, the Japanese 31st Infantry Division under Lieutenant-General Kotoku Sato would isolate Imphal by capturing Kohima on the Imphal-Dimapur road, then exploit his success by advancing to Dimapur.

135 Yunckohau, op.cit.p.28
137 Ibid.
Map - IX

War Operation (1943 - 44) in Burma and Assam
(From Slim)

Courtesy: Suhas Chatterjee
Map showing the Japanese advancement towards Indian border

**Map-X**

- **Key**
  - C: Area of Chindit operations
  - ↑: Chinese offensive
  - ←: Japanese offensive
  - --: Front line at end of stage
  - Japanese occupied at start of battle
  - Area captured by Japanese at their greatest extent
  - /: Allied supply route

- Tibet
- India
- China
- Burma
- Arakan
- Kohima
- Imphal

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At the insistence of Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the Azad Hind, the Indian National Army made a substantial contribution. (Originally, the Japanese intended using them only for reconnaissance and propaganda.)

(a) Units of the First Division (initially the Subhas Brigade or 1st Guerrilla Regiment, less a battalion sent to the Arakan) covered the left flank of 33rd Division's advance.

(b) The 2nd Guerrilla Regiment was attached later in the battle to Yamamoto Force.

(c) The Special Services Group, re-designated as the Bahadur Group, acted as scouts and pathfinders with the advanced Japanese units in the opening stages of the offensive. They were tasked to infiltrate through British lines and encourage units of the British Indian Army to defect. During the early part of the offensive, the Bahadur Group of the INA apparently achieved some success in inducing British Indian soldiers to desert.

F. The situation in 1944:

At the start of 1944, the war was going against the Japanese on several fronts. They were being driven back in the central and south west Pacific, and their merchant ships were under attack by American submarines and aircraft. In south East Asia, they had held their own lines over the preceding year, but the Allies were preparing several offensives from India and the Chinese province of Yunnan into Burma. In particular, the town of Imphal in Manipur on the frontier with Burma was built up to be a substantial logistic base, with airfields, encampments and supply dumps. Imphal was linked to Dimapur in the Brahmaputtra River valley by a road which wound for 100 miles (160 km) through the steep and forested Naga Hills.

Imphal was held by the IV Corps, commanded by Lieutenant-General Geoffrey Scoones. The corps was in turn part of the British Fourteenth Army under Lieutenant General William Slim. Because the Allies were planning to take the offensive themselves, the corps' units were thrown forward almost to the Chindwin River and widely separated, and were therefore vulnerable to being isolated and surrounded.

139 Peter W. Fay, p.296
140 The Situation in 1944, on the eve of the Indian Invasion, free encyclopedia
(a) 20th Indian Infantry Division occupied Tamu. The division was untried but well-trained.

(b) 17th Indian Infantry Division occupied Tiddim, at the end of a long and precarious line of communication from Imphal. The division, which had two brigades only, had been intermittently in action since December 1941.

(c) 23rd Indian Infantry Division was in reserve at Imphal. It had served on the Imphal front for two years and was severely under strength as a result of endemic diseases such as malaria and typhus.

(d) 50th Indian Parachute Brigade was north of Imphal, conducting advanced jungle training.

(e) 254th Indian Tank Brigade was stationed in and around Imphal. 141

G. The Imphal Campaign, 1944:

Reconsidering the task of capturing Imphal, their (Japanese) initial hesitation was overcome and the planned attack was revived in April 1943, because of an impending Allied offensive142 and the repeated assurance of the INA that they and their allies would be welcomed as liberators of India. The Japanese strategists had procrastinated too long taken too long this gave the Allied powers enough time to intensify their war preparations in Manipur. The official decision which was taken on 12 August was revealed to Bose on 26 August by Major Gen. Todai Kunomora. Bose was perhaps not consulted because he was touring most of the time in East Asia. 143 In the course of his (Netaji) preparation for the Imphal Campaign he shifted the headquarters of his Provisional Government from Singapore to Rangoon on January 7, 1944. For the Liberation of India from the British tutelage, he insisted that the INA should spearhead the Imphal operation, but the Japanese General Kawabe objected to give an independent role to an army which was very small in size in relation to its Japanese counterpart and its credential as a

141 Ibid.
142 Laishram Churchill, op.cit.p.15
143 Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit.p.175
fighting force was largely untested.\textsuperscript{144}

Bose also thought that the capture of Manipur and Chittagong which were considered strategically important was a necessity for starting and Indian revolution. These areas according to him were Britain's Maginot Line in India. He, therefore, planned that the capture of Imphal would be followed by the installation of the Provisional Government of Free India which would have offered it an opportunity to organize Indians for an anti-British revolt. He said, "Thereafter the repercussion inside India and within the ranks of the British Indian Army would be so great that nothing will then prevent the outbreak of an Indian revolution".\textsuperscript{145} To create revolutionary conditions, Bose was prepared to unleash an intensive propaganda which would urge Indian civilians to sabotage British war efforts and Indian armed forces to withdraw their loyalty to British.\textsuperscript{146} The bases in liberated areas would then be strengthened and such bases must, Bose hoped, "bear an unblemished record of healthy nationalism and robust patriotism".\textsuperscript{147}

Bose had to consider other important aspects, as for example, – the basis of co-operation between the Japanese and INA forces. In his negotiation with General Kawabe, Commander-in-Chief of East Asia, he insisted that the Japanese and the INA would enjoy equal status in all respects. This was at first not acceptable to the Japanese for the Japanese troops looked down upon the INA men and abstained from showing the INA officers the usual military courtesies. It was however later on agreed between the two that the INA was to enjoy equal status with the Japanese army. But this agreement did not have binding influence on the Japanese army which had earned notoriety for its cruelty and high-handedness.\textsuperscript{148}

As regards the administrative arrangements for the liberated areas, Bose envisaged two

\textsuperscript{144} Prof. Hari Hara Das & Be Nath (1997), Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: Reassessment of his Ideas and Ideologies, Pointer Publishers, Jaipur, p.174
\textsuperscript{145} Lal Dena, op.cit,p.75
\textsuperscript{146} V.S Patil, (1988); Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose- His Contribution to Indian Nationalism, Sterling Publishers, Private Limited, New Delhi,p.152
\textsuperscript{147} Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit,p.176
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid
phases of civil administration: (I) the Azad Hind Dal, which was to follow on the heels of the military vanguard, and perform urgent tasks such as handling of refugees, feeding the people in newly occupied areas, restoration of essential public services, maintenance of law and order and reconciliation with the Indian population; (II) as soon as an area ceased to be operational, a provincial administration would take over, and this would function until the future government of Free India was established.  

Bose and Gen. Kawabe also agreed that territories liberated on Indian soil must be handed over to Major-General A. C. Chaterjee, Governor-designate of liberated areas. But the Japanese High Command in Tokyo was not inclined to accept the agreement. Bose had taken more time and spent a great deal of effort in procedural wrangles than he could reasonably have afforded, at a time when the Pacific war was raging and a decisive victory was necessary. What was most important was how these agreements were to be carried out in practice. Bose did his best to enthuse his soldiers with his own patriotic ardour. Undoubtedly, the INA’s enthusiasm was unbounded. They were motivated by high patriotic feelings, whereas the Japanese were motivated more by their strategic interests than their concern for India’s freedom.

The Japanese and the INA forces started the operation on 4th February 1944. The INA troops, to whom the task of liberating India was assigned, were to fight with the Japanese division and an independent role was assigned to the Subhas Regiment. The INA forces had captured Tiddim, crossed the Indo-Burma frontier and set foot on Indian soil on 18th March 1944 amidst scenes of jubilation. “The uncontrollable urge to press forward and plant the tri-colour flag on the soil of India was so great that by the early hours of the morning of 19 March, INA troops were rushing down the hillside, racing with one another to be the first to cross the border and fall prostrate to kiss mother India’s”. By 19th March, the powerful Japanese formations of the 31st
Division were ferociously attacking the Indian Parachute Brigade and a British battalion covering Ukhrul. Desperate fighting ensued for two days and two nights with heavy casualties on both sides, and eventually Ukhrul was captured on 21st March. Simultaneously, a bitter ten days fighting ensued at Shangshak, eight miles south of Ukhrul; and on 30th March, Shangshak also fell into the hands of the INA and the Japanese forces and eventually all the roads into Imphal were effectively blocked. Buoyed by this rapid success, the supreme commander in Tokyo announced the fall of Imphal. In fact, from the second week of April to the end of May, 1944, the Japanese controlled the Dimapur road from Kanglatombi to Mao. Fighting on this sector was, however, mainly done by the Japanese forces, with the INA playing only an auxiliary role.132

In April, the Gandhi Brigade under col. M. Z. Kiani, and the Azad Brigade under Col. Gulzara Singh with Gen. Yamamoto’s force rushed to the Imphal front via Tamu-Pallel road, their immediate target being Pallel airfield. According to Pu Sonkholet Haokip, “This Column was greatly assisted by the local Kuki population. The Indo-Japanese forces were being guided and fed by the Kuki villagers”.133 Like the help and assistance rendered to the Indo-Japanese forces (Uklim Column) in the Thangting Hill Ranges. On 28th April, 1944 the Gandhi Brigade established the Brigade’s headquarters at a village named Khengjoi (a Kuki village in the Indo-Myanmar border) which was 18 miles from Chahmol, the divisional headquarters of the INA’s 1st Division.134 There was no close co-ordination between the two forces, the Japanese planned a thrust from the east on 1st May and the INA forces were to attack from the south on the same date. The INA forces eventually prepared for the night attack as agreed upon. It was Bose’s hope that in the actual encounter with the British Indian Army, propaganda, not fire-power, would decide the day.

132 Ibid. p.178. See also, Louis Allen, op.cit.p.216
133 Pu. Sonkholet Haokip, Chief of Wayang (Chandel District) son of (L) Lamkhothang Haokip, who was a Captain in the INA. Interviewed on 31st July 2011
134 H.N Pandit, op.cit.p.273
Pritam Singh, leader of the Bahadur Group, was to follow his instruction in letters and spirit and he actually tried to induce the Gurkhas not to fire. Failing in the endeavour the post was attacked and the slogan ‘Chalo Delhi’ was raised. Things would have been different if the Japanese had not betrayed their Comrades, and had attacked according to schedule. Col. Kiani attributed this defeat chiefly to the Japanese failure to support the INA force.  

The Hikari Kikan (Japanese intelligence organization) which was responsible for supplying whatever the INA required was not immediately available. In spite of poor equipment and hardships the INA forces had fought gallantly but since prompt assistance either from Col. Kiani or Gen. Yamamoto was not forthcoming, they ultimately surrendered.

On the South front the INA and the Japanese troops fared comparatively better. Their rapid northward advance along Teddim road into the valley of Manipur indeed upset all British military calculations. In this region, the local population (Kukis) greatly helped the INA-Japanese forces to a great extent as a result of which Saikot and its surrounding areas were bombed by the Allied forces. L.t. Col. Motozo Yanagida’s unit reached Torbung, some kilometers (50 Km) from Imphal on 10 April and Churuchandpur was captured on 12 April.

The Japanese and the INA forces further advanced towards Bishenpur (through the western hill ranges, locally known as the Thangting Hill ranges) and occupied a southern stretch of fertile land for five months from the 2nd week of April to August, 1944. The question here arises when Moirang was captured. The fact that Moirang Panchayat still continued to function till 21 April, 1944 would seem to suggest that normal life at Moirang was not so much disturbed. John A. Thivy, who gave an eye-witness account of the Azad Hind movement, maintained that

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155 Ibid
156 Ibid.
157 File No.29, Cabin No.XLI, “Jap War”, Manipur Secretariat Library, Imphal
158 Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit.p 179

* The Special Services Group, re-designated as the ‘Bahadur Group’ acted as scouts and pathfinders with the advanced Japanese units in the opening stages of the offensive. They were asked to infiltrate through British lines and encourage units of the British Indian Army to defect.
Moirang was captured on 18th April. M.S Kiani recorded in his book that the event took place on 23rd April. He claimed that this was the most authentic account of the INA and the Azad Hind Government based on the original official records. Whatever might be the truth; this much is clear that Manipur and Nagaland had not been liberated yet on 14 April, despite the fact that Imphal had been encircled almost on all sides by the INA and their allies. However, 14th April has been observed as INA Day since a longtime back. (See fig.3,i)

The fate of the Japanese offensive in South-East Asia was much dependent on the outcome of the 'Battle of Imphal'. This can be gleaned from the Special Order of the Day issued by General Mutaguchi: which reads as- ‘This operation will engage the attention of the whole world and is eagerly awaited by 100,000,000 of our countrymen. By its very decisive nature, its success will have a profound effect on the course of the war and may even lead to its conclusion. Our mission is thus of greatest importance and we must expend every energy and talent in the achievement of our goal’. By April 1944 the Japanese were on the verge of capturing Imphal, but the British troops with support from Royal Air Force, Indian (British) Air Force and American Air Force withstood the Japanese offensive.

The Japanese had realized that operations ought to be broken off as early as May. Lieutenant General Kawabe had travelled north to see the situation for himself on 25 May. Several officers whom he interviewed expressed confidence in success if reinforcements could be provided, but actually concealed their losses and the seriousness of the situation. At a meeting between Mutaguchi and Kawabe on 6 June, both used *haragei*, an unspoken form of communication using gesture, expression and tone of voice.

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159 Ibid, p.180
161 Laishram Churchill, op.cit.p.16
voice, to convey their conviction that success was impossible\textsuperscript{162}, but neither of them wished to bear the responsibility of ordering a retreat. Kawabe subsequently became ill with dysentery and perhaps physically unfit for duty. He nevertheless ordered repeated attacks, stating later that Bose was the key to Japan's and India's future.\textsuperscript{163} As the result, siege of Imphal was lifted because of the failure of Japanese Air Force to reinforce its army and the INA troops.\textsuperscript{164}

The Battle of Imphal took place in the region around the city of Imphal, the capital of the state of Manipur in North-East India from March until July 1944. Japanese armies attempted to destroy the Allied forces at Imphal and invade India, but were driven back into Burma with heavy losses. Many historians consider it to be the biggest Japanese defeat of the war on land.\textsuperscript{165}

However, the most important contribution to the Allied victory was made by both British and American transport aircraft. The Allies could fly men, equipment and supplies into the airstrips at Imphal (and Palel also, until the onset of the monsoon rains), so although cut off by land, the town was not without a lifeline. By the end of the battle the Allied air forces had flown 19,000 tons of supplies and 12,000 men into Kohima and Imphal, and flown out 13,000 casualties and 43,000 non-combatants. Among the supplies carried during the siege was over a million gallon of fuel, over a thousand bags of mail and 40 million cigarettes. Several thousand mules, many shipped from the Argentine, were used to supply outlying outposts, for example 17th Indian Division up the Bishenpur trail, so animal fodder was also flown in during the siege. The Allied aircraft could also parachute ammunition, rations and even drinking water to surrounded units.\textsuperscript{166}

\textsuperscript{162} Louis Allen, op.cit. pp.265-266
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid.p.310
\textsuperscript{164} Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit.p.180
\textsuperscript{165} The Battle of Imphal, March-July, 1944, Free Encyclopedia
\textsuperscript{166} Louis Allen, op.cit.p.244
Besides, during the sieges of both Kohima and Imphal, the Allies relied entirely on resupply by air from British and American aircraft flying in from India and over 'the Hump' (Himalayas) from China until the road from the railhead at Dimapur was cleared. At Kohima, due to the narrow ridgelines, accuracy in the dropping of air delivered logistics proved to be a considerable problem and as the fighting intensified and the defended area decreased, the task became harder and more dangerous. The increasing dominance of Allied airpower by this stage of the Burma campaign was a major contributor in helping the Allies turn the tide of the war in this theatre. Allied air supply enabled British and Indian troops to hold out in positions that they might otherwise have had to abandon due to shortages of ammunition, food and water, as reinforcements and supplies could be brought in even when garrisons were surrounded and cut off. Conversely, the Japanese found their own supply situation harder to resolve and in the end it was one of the deciding factors in the battle.

The suspension of the offensive was inevitable. It should be pointed out that the offensive was carried out mainly by the Japanese. The total strength of the INA forces was about 8,800, whereas the Japanese had 57,000 combatants and the Allied forces had 155,000.

The painful yet inevitable decision to suspend the offensive was at last taken on 26 July. In his special order of the day on 14 August, Bose talked of the suspension as a tactical withdrawal. Bose asserted that the loose conduct and corruption of his officers was responsible for the sad state of morale in which desertion was possible. True, the desertion had been a clear failure of leadership. Apart from the low standard of the INA officers, the origin and manner of their training also greatly counted. Very few of them had received even a three months course at

167 Ibid.
170 Louis Allen, op.cit, p.288.
171 Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit,p.180
172 Ibid, p.182. See also, Peter W. Fay, op.cit, p.287
the INA Officers' Training school. Even the sympathetic Fujihara comments: “As a revolutionary army, its morale was high and it was quite well organized, but the standard of its tactics, training and leadership was low. It lacked in particular, offensive strength and tenacity”. Another serious drawback was that the INA in action had no wireless sets, no telephones, no transports, and no weapons other than light machine guns. It would seem that while one cannot question Bose's patriotism, one has to see whether in such a sophisticated war 8,800 men without much training, equipment, ammunition and transport supplies could have been a force to reckon with.174

The timing of the campaign also coincided with the 'weakening of Axis' Power position in the Pacific. Bose faced many handicaps. Most important, he was not able to enlist the cooperation of the nationalist leaders deeply involved in the struggle for freedom through non-violent means under the leadership of Gandhi. It was also difficult for him to make the nationalist leaders in India see eye to eye with him since he had allied himself with Fascist forces who were viewed as hostile and antagonistic. Another serious setback was that the INA leaders were unable to get adequate support, moral, or material, from their own countrymen.175 Also the Imphal Operation failed because of the weakness of the Japanese army. Mutaguchi said, “I still believe that Imphal could have been taken had the three divisions been as good as my 18th Division (which he commanded in 1941-42).”176 Cooperation and coordination among the Japanese commanders of the three Divisions failed.177 Besides, shortage of supplies, equipments, aeroplanes etc. was another reason for the defeat of Indo-Japanese army at Imphal.178 A Japanese writer, Toshikazu Kase gives the following account of loss to Japan in the war:

172 Lal Dena. INA Movement, op.cit.p.182
174 Ibid
175 Ibid
177 Ibid.p.208
178 V.S Patil; op.cit.p.154
“Our expeditionary force of 2,70,000 men which had marched to the gates of Imphal in India met defeat. Most of this force perished in battle, or later died of starvation. The disaster of Imphal was perhaps the worst of its kind yet chronicled in the annals of war”. One of the regimental commanders, who survived the retreat called me in Tokyo, “He told me how the ranks had thinned daily, as thirst and hunger overtook the retreating columns and how the sick and the wounded had to be abandoned by the hundreds. In order to avoid capture, these men were usually forced to seek death at their own hands. Only 70,000 of the original force survived”.179 The INA also lost about 4000 soldiers in the Imphal operation, and the remaining comprised the sick and wounded. Its role played by the INA was indeed heroic. A Japanese newspaper wrote when Netaji visited Japan, (3rd time on 1 November 1944):

“The fact that the Indian National Army fought side by side with the Japanese Army on the Indo-Burma border under the handicap of shortages of all kinds of supplies should go down as a glorious chapter in the history of the Indian Independence movement”.180

Even as the Japanese army retreated, the INA dared to advance. Colonel Kiani refused to obey Japanese orders for evacuation and insisted that he would continue the march deeper into India.181 Even after the disastrous Imphal campaign and the subsequent retreat of the Japanese forces from the region, Bose wanted to stay close to the Indian border and refused to retreat to any place south of Mandalay under any circumstances. But he could not have his way due to the general war situation which had become too disadvantageous to the Axis Powers in general and Japan in particular.182 The revolutionary spirit of Bose was never dampened even after the surrender of Japan. After hearing the shattering news he first broke into a smile and said:

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179 Toshikasu Kase; Eclipse of the Rising Sun, p.92
180 Hayashida Tatsuo; (1970), Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose: His Great Struggle and Martyrdom, Allied Publishers, Bombay, p.96
181 V.A Patil; op.cit.p.135
182 Hari Hara Das; (1983), Subhas Chandra Bose And the Indian National Movement, Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi, p.292
"So that is that. Now, what next"\(^{183}\)

"Japan’s surrender was not India’s surrender. Japan’s surrender was not the surrender of the Liberation Forces fighting for India’s freedom. He would not admit defeat"\(^{184}\). Even after a decisive Anglo-American victory in Europe and the surrender of Japan, the bitter-struggle against the British in East Asia had to be continued.\(^{185}\) Netaji had not given up his hopes of victory. He encouraged his men to prepare for final victory and he worked towards that end.\(^{186}\) He (Bose) asked his soldiers not to be disheartened. He was conscious that 38 crores of people living in India were looking to him and the INA as to what would be their next step:

"Be, therefore, true to India, let not your faith in India’s destiny be shaken. There are many roads to Delhi. And Delhi is still our goal. The sacrifices of your immortal comrades and yourselves will certainly bring us victory. There is no power on earth which can keep India in bondage. India will certainly be free and, that too, soon, Jai Hind".\(^{187}\) As the war (WW II) was coming to a close with a decisive Allied victory on almost all fronts, Bose was forced to leave Burma with a heavy heart, but his faith in the destiny of India remained unshaken:

"I am leaving Burma with a heavy heart. We have lost the first round of our fight for Independence. But we have lost only the first round. There are many more rounds to fight. In spite of our losing the first round. I see no reason for losing heart".\(^{188}\)

H. End of the Indian National Army (INA), 1945:

With the re-occupation of Kohima and Imphal, coupled with retreat of the Japanese-INA forces in the region, the allied forces began the Burma campaign the following year; however, the INA remained committed to the defence of Burma, and was

\(^{183}\) Ibid. See also Hugh Toye, The Springing Tiger, p.179
\(^{184}\) Ibid
\(^{185}\) Ibid, pp.292-293
\(^{186}\) V.S Patil, op.cit. p.155
\(^{187}\) Huge Toye, op.cit. p.169
\(^{188}\) Selected Speeches of Subhas Chandra Bose, p.240
a part of the Japanese defensive deployment. The second division, entrusted with the
defence of Irrawaddy and the adjoining areas around Nangyu, was instrumental in
opposing Messervy's 7th Indian Division when it attempted to cross the river at Pagan
and Nyangyu during the Irrawaddy operations. Later, during the Battles of Meiktila and
Mandalay, the 2nd division was instrumental in denying the British 17th Division the
area around Mount Popa that would have exposed the Flank of Kimura's forces
attempting to retake Meiktila and Nyangyu. 189

However, as the Japanese withdrawal from Burma progressed, the other remnant
soldiers began a long march over land and on foot towards Bangkok, along with Subhas
Chandra Bose. The withdrawing forces regularly suffered casualties from allied airplanes
strafing them, clashes with Aung San's Burmese resistance, as well as Chinese guerrillas
who harassed the Japanese troops. Even before the end of the war in South Asia, the INA
prisoners who were falling into Allied hands were being evaluated by forward
intelligence units for potential trials. 190 A small number had fallen into Allied hands in
1943 around the time of the Imphal campaign and subsequent withdrawal, while larger
numbers surrendered or were captured during the 14th Army's Burma Campaign. A total
of 16,000 of the INA's 43,000 recruits were captured, of whom around 11,000 were
interrogated. 191

At the time of Japan's surrender in September 1945, Bose left for Manchuria to
attempt to contact the advancing Soviet troops, and was reported to have died in an air
crash near Taiwan.

Thus, in this way, the heroic struggle of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Indian

Publications, Delhi, pp 67 & 87. See also, L.P. Mathur Kala Pani, (1985) History of the Andaman & Nicobar
Islands with a study of India's Freedom Struggle, Eastern Book Corporation, Delhi, pp249-51
190 Peter W. Fay, op.cit, p.436
191 Ibid,p.459
National Army came to an end. Hence, Bose dreams of liberating India from the British domination vanished to the thin air, with his untimely demise, in 1945.

Even though the movement failed, the trial of INA men in the Red Fort evoked considerable emotion even among those sections of the nationalist leadership which had no sympathy for Bose's alliance with Fascist forces. India owed to them debt because their spirit of sacrifice hastened the process of freedom of the country.\(^{192}\)

I. Retrospection of the Battle of Imphal, 1944:

The siege of Imphal and the resulting failure of the Japanese to take Imphal in 1944 was to have a major impact on the war in the Far East. Imphal, along with the unsuccessful attack on the nearby garrison town of Kohima ended the INA-Japanese drive to Delhi. The failure of the Japanese to take Imphal and Kohima also signaled the start of the Allied re-conquest of Burma.

The failure of the Indian National Army and the Japanese forces in capturing Imphal from the British, completely distorted the calculations of Netaji, about his 'vision' of a country-wide revolution against the British rule after the capture of Imphal. He was of the opinion that getting a foothold in Imphal was necessary even without the annihilation of the enemy, as it would have helped the Provisional Government of Free India because from there the INA could have sent out batches of guerrillas into India to start partisan warfare all over the country. Again, in case the Japanese managed to conquer Imphal, the surrender of the Indian personnel in the British Indian Army would have certainly led to joining the INA.

The INA with its three divisions strengthened by the joining of the prisoners would have become the largest single force, bigger than the Japanese Army, and beyond doubt, larger than the

\(^{192}\) Lal Dena, INA Movement, op.cit,p.182
British element in the forces deployed in eastern India. Netaji knew very well that the result of
the Battle of Imphal concerned India much more than Japan. Whatever happened here, Japan was
sure to be defeated in the War (WW II), as shown clearly by the results of the fighting in the
Pacific.

With Imphal in its control, Netaji’s Provisional Government could have stirred up an anti-
British revolt in eastern India after widespread sabotage of the British military installations and
means of communication. But the Japanese military ruined all these hopes by consistently
keeping the INA away from the real battlefronts until defeat began to stare them in the face.
Originally, the Japanese intended in using them (INA) only for reconnaissance and
propaganda, but due to the insistence of Subhas Chandra Bose, the INA men were used
in combat operations against the British positions in Manipur and Kohima, but, as an
auxiliary force.

It may be noted that, till the middle of April, only the first regiment of the INA’s First
Division (Subhas Brigade) had seen action. Though, Netaji had been pressing Kawabe since
March to let the 2nd and 3rd Regiments face the enemy on the field after the INA’s battle-
worthiness had been proved in the Kaladan valley. It was only on 30 April that the 2nd Regiment
(Gandhi Brigade) was brought up to the front and saw action for the first time at Pallel. The 3rd
regiment was not employed until the end of May when the battle was almost lost for Japan with
the onset of the rains in the valley.

The Indian National Army’s relationship with the Japanese was an uncomfortable
one. Bose wished to establish his political independence from the regime that

193 H.N Pandit,(1988), Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose-From Kabul to Battle of Imphal, Sterling Publishers
Private Ltd.p.267
194 Ibid
195 Ibid
196 Ibid,p.268
197 Louis Allen, op.cit.pp.221-224
198 H.N Pandit, op.cit.p.271
sponsored (Japan) him (he had, in fact, led protests against the Japanese expansion into Manchuria, and supported Chiang Kai-shek during the 1930s), but his complete dependence on them for arms and resources made this difficult. On the Japanese side, members of the high command had been personally impressed by Bose, and were thus willing to grant him some latitude; more importantly, the Japanese were interested in maintaining the support of a man who had been able to mobilize large numbers of Indian expatriates—including, most importantly, 40,000 of the 45,000 Indians captured by the Japanese at Singapore. In spite of all these odds, Netaji could not go against the Japanese because this would deprive him of the means to the realization of his objective; the opportunity to fight the British.\^\footnote{Ibid., p.268.}

The INA retreat has been described as "one of the most difficult retreats that any army in the world had to face."\^\footnote{K.K. Ghosh; op.cit. p. 188. See also Shah Nawaz Khan to Bose, April 1944. The papers of the Defence Council of the first INA Court-martial, All India INA Relief and Enquiry Committee, Delhi. According to the official figures of the Indian Army G.H.Q., about 400 INA men were killed in the Imphal Campaign and fifteen hundred died of disease and starvation.} The Kukis who preferred to retreat along with INA followed them as far as Burma where many of them died of disease, hunger, and in action.\^\footnote{Kuki Rebellion, Souvenir 1985, op.cit., p.31} Many of them were also arrested by the British troops and were sent to INA Prisoners' Jail in Calcutta; among the list of prisoners we find the names of some brave Kukis. They were - (i) Lamkhothang Haokip of Vajang, (ii) Lethkhothang Lhungdim of Dampi, (INA No. AZ85132, Sep'10), (iii) Semkhohao Haokip of Ukha (Loikhai) (INA No.5174), Rank Civilian movement order, No. I.A.O. 67/45 arrested in Rangoon and imprisoned at Gilgal Kacha Staging Camp Calcutta, till the end of the war), (iv) Palet Mate of Lamjang, (v) Lotkhothang Lhargum of Joupi, (vi) Paokhomang Haokip of Chahsat (Chassad), (vii) Jangkholet Haokip of Na-ang, (viii) Tunghao Haokip of Joujang (Burma), (ix) Onkhothang Haokip of Hengjiang (Burma), (x) Toljasei Haokip of Maku, (xi) Jamkhunol Haokip of Khengjoi, (xii) Nungkhogin Singson of Songsang, (xiii) Mangkhokai Sithou of Jampi, (xiv)
With the defeat of the INA and the Japanese forces, the Kukis were forced to fend for themselves. The Kuki soldiers and leaders felt humiliated. Onkholet Haokip (Japan Pakang) retreated along with the Japanese and preferred to follow them even up to Japan, as he could not bear to stay in his own land in the face of enemy’s domination.

Pu Japan Pakang composed a dirge to mark his departure for Japan:

\[
\text{Kahi. leh. toni. pha. likhat.}
\]

\[
\text{Kalhi. leh. janglei chung. eon ding.}
\]

Free-translation:

If I die, it is destined for me,
If I live I shall be exonerated worldwide.

The meaning behind the elegy is that Pu Japan Pakang planned to embark upon great deeds for the Kukis after he reached Japan. To this day Kukis refer to World War II as ‘Japan Gal’ (Japanese War), not ‘British Gal’ (British War).

Though some section of the Kukis had shown loyalty to the British during the war, the majority gave unflinching support to the INA and Japanese forces. It may also be noted that the

\[\text{[202] Memorandum of the Kuki Political Sufferers Association, Manipur submitted to the Prime Minister of India in December 1958. See also, Souvenir of Kuki Rebellion, 1985, op.cit, pp.31-32}\]

\[\text{[203] Onkholet Haokip was a Kuki chief who developed love and affection with the Japanese soldiers for which he was nicknamed as Japan Pakang. The affix Japan in his nickname- Pakang itself suggests a strong bond of relationship connection with the Japanese. His name is widely known among elders of the ‘Thadou-Kukis’. He followed the Japanese up to Japan during their retreat and refused to come back to his forefather’s land. The story about Japan Pakang is collected from Pu. Mangpithang Kipgen and confirmed by Pu. Seikbo Kipgen on 25th June, 2010. See also, P.S Haokip’s Zalengam- The Kuki Nation, op.cit, p.201} \]

\[\text{[204] The participation of the Kukis in the World War II was due to political reasons, but some section of the Kukis who accepted Christianity remained loyal to their colonial masters. Even they were also influenced by the fact that Christianity was the religion of their conquerors. But to most of the conservative and traditional minded Kuki chiefs and warriors the preaching of a religion of love so far at this stage was anathema to them. This new religion was introduced at a time when the traditional and age-old culture was threatened by the British administration. No wonder, after World War II and by 1950, the Kukis had become one of the major Christian groups in Manipur. (F.S. Down 1971:172) The Kukis accepted Christianity for economic reason in the beginning.} \]
Government of Independent India decided to honour the Kuki warriors who had taken part in the war with the title of "Freedom Fighter". This could also be evidenced from the fact that the (Kukis) were the largest group in the whole of North East India to receive "Tamra Pattra" in recognition of their services to the cause of India's freedom. Even in defeat the INA-Japanese soldiers earned the respect and admiration of the simple tribal folks (Kukis). Their unfathomable patriotism, their spirit of sacrifice and their long forbearance are still the talk of every household in the Khuga valley of Churachandpur in particular and every Kuki village in general, even today. The following are the names of the Kukis holding the distinction of Freedom Fighters:


205 Freedom Fighter Cell/Dept. Of Manipur Pradesh Congress Committee MPCC (1) has published a book entitled "BANDE MATARAM" - Freedom Fighters of Manipur who's who in its Congress Centenary year 1985. Among the 120 INA pensioners (with their photographs), 75 of them were Kukis. Besides, in connection with the receipt of "Tamra Pattra", a booklet was also issued by the INA Committee in which the names of the recipients were given.
206 Lal Dena, In Search of Identity, op.cit,p.93
Through careful analysis, one can observe that, there exist a lot of dissimilarities between, the First Kuki war of Independence (1917-1919), and the Second Kuki war of Independence (1942-1945). During the former, there was effective leadership, under which, war preparations, inclusive of manufacturing of arms and ammunitions, fortifying of villages, making of stone-traps etc. were conducted. Besides, the Kuki were also confident of success; whereas, in the case of the latter the Kukis waited for an opportune moment to avenge themselves against the British with the help of outside assistance i.e., with the INA-Japanese coalition.

207 Freedom Fighters of Manipur, op.cit, pp.4-97. See also - Memorandum submitted to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India, Shri. P.V. Nara Simha Rao – by the All India Kuki Women Organization on Human Rights in the early 1990s. During the Naga- Kuki ethnic tension in Manipur. See also LHANGSAM, June, 2004, vol. II No. 6, p. 18. The monthly bilingual Newsmagazine Edited by Paotinthang Lupheng
208 P.S. Haokip, op.cit.p.29
209 Ibid.
J. The Establishment of the I.N.A Memorial High School, 1953:

Pu. Semkhohao Haokip founded a school in the year 1953, - 'The I.N.A Memorial High School', at Ukhatampak (formerly, Ukha Gate) Churachandpur District (See Fig. 3j). The naming of the school was meaningful. Semkhohao founded it in remembrance of the Indian National Army (INA) its chief Subhas Chandra Bose, and Semkhohao's beloved comrades in the Indian National Army, those who died and those who survived. He donated the land in recognition of the support given to the Kukis by the Indian National Army. Semkhohao Haokip (See Fig. 3k&l) was an Indian National Army veteran (INA No. 5174 Rank Civilian movement, order No. I.A.O. 67/45), who, like any other Kuki, was waiting for an opportune time to get rid of British domination. A young man endowed with good a physique, he could not waste time to reach the Indo-Burma border, when the appealing messages of Subhas Chandra Bose calling for mass support in the fight against the British, reached his ear. He joined the Indian National Army on 20.3.1944, somewhere in the Khengjoi area, (Chandel District). According to Letkhopao, Semkhohao joined the INA in 1944 to avenge the British for burning down his village (Ukha-Loikhai), and the destructions caused by the British during the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919). During the Kuki Rebellion (1917-1919), Pakang Haokip, Chief of Henglep and Semchung Haokip, Chief of Ukha, took the leading role in the Henglep Area, the British were of the opinion that killing and destroying their villages, would bring them to submission. So, Ukha village (Semchung's village) was razed to the ground on 7th January, 1919.

Initially, whereabouts of Semkhohao Haokip were unknown to his elder brother

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210 Interview with Shri Letkhopao Haokip S/o (L) Nguljalet Haokip, Chief of Ukhatampak, (formerly, Ukha gate) Churachandpur District, Manipur on 20.9.2010. Semkhohao is the younger brother of Nguljalet Haokip.
211 Ibid.
212 Ibid.
214 Ibid.
Nguljalet Haokip. (See fig.3,m) who in search of him (Semkhohao) landed in the INA Camp at Chahmol where he was told that his brother had joined the INA and was with the INA forces in Burma. After learning this, Nguljalet Haokip too enlisted himself in the Indian National Army.  

Semkhohao Haokip was later arrested in Rangoon by the British and was taken to Eagle (Gilgal) Kacha Staging Camp, Calcutta (Kolkata), and was kept confined there till the end of the war. The establishment of the INA Memorial High School is a living symbol of unfailing bond of friendship between Semkhohao Haokip, the Kuki people, and the Indian National Army. Thus, the INA Memorial High School has, indeed become the legacy of the Kuki-INA relationship.

K. Fate of the Kukis:

So far there is no tangible estimate of the members of the Kukis who had actively assisted the Indo-Japanese forces, but the memorandum of the Kuki INA War veterans submitted to the Chief Minister of Manipur has put them as follows:  

(i). Kuki INA killed by the Allied forces – 24 persons.
(ii). Arrested in Rangoon and other places in Burma and later deported to Calcutta Jail-15 persons.
(iii). Arrested and imprisoned in India by the Allied forces – 586 persons.
(iv). Not arrested but went underground – 5,377 persons.

This means that altogether there were almost 6,000 Kukis who had actively helped the Indo-Japanese forces in various capacities. Considering the testimonies of the War veterans and also that many Kukis had undergone brief military training before the Indian campaign, it can be inferred from the above figures that many of them must have served as auxiliaries in

215 Interview with Letkhopao Haokip, op.cit
216 Ibid.
217 JAC Memo of the Kuki INA Pensioners, op.cit.p.8
the battle fronts. In any case it may not be too hasty to conclude that almost the entire Kuki community stood behind the INA-Japanese forces in one way or the other. The best and simple illustration of popular support, and indeed their consciousness is represented from their folk songs and notes, which were composed during and after the war. The Kukis felt that no nation could withstand Japanese forces in battle, with this sentiment they used to sing:

\[ \text{Pummei chang dang ijet in hatjongleh;} \]
\[ \text{Japan meipum chang sanga hatfo ding unlo;} \]
\[ \text{Hungkon uvo Japante;} \]
\[ \text{Thingmang damnoi sunsoi hijong leh Kangah uve}^{218} \]

**Free translation:**

Of all the cannons;

Japan cannons are the strongest;

Japanese! March on;

We are waiting for you in the deep forest.

With these expectations, they used to challenge the British forces and make fun of them. They also used to sing:

\[ \text{Hungvo Sapkangte;} \]
\[ \text{Ndaito ding Japan galhat meltheisa;} \]
\[ \text{Tulai Sorkar mangkang in tho non;} \]
\[ \text{Lunglei gol angkoi pome}^{219} \]

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218 J. Guite, Op.Cit.p.301
219 Ibid.
Free translation:

March on Britishers;

Japanese soldiers are here to kill you;

Japanese bravery is known to all;

British power wants to imitate; but it will be impossible.

Hearing of the defeat of the Indo-Japanese forces in the war, the Kukis composed a tragic song:

Thimu benga:

Vunlajola pummei choiteija;

Gol lol dinga.

Mel a lom nam?  

Free translation:

Like a Hawk in the sky,

Destined to win foes.

Is it thinkable to be defeated?

The Kukis being thoroughly dejected started cursing the Allied forces, through their song, which run as:

Japan selang asoleh:

Ki-aan hih o sarmangpa:

Kikhulsino setleijah

[220] This tragic song was supplied to me by Pi. Nemkim W/o, of Pu Jamkang, Chief of Laimanai Kuki.
Free translation:

British forces do not hold high of yourself;
Because of Japanese defeat;
Dig your own grave too.

Even when the War came to an end, about seventy Kukis were charged with assisting the Indo-Japanese forces. But most of them were either dismissed or referred for further investigations as reports were found to be without substantial evidence. Yet eight principal cases having sufficient evidence of helping the Indo-Japanese were finally recommended for trial. They were Tongkhothang, Chief of Chassad, and his mantri Otkhodem (Otkhodem), Lamkhothang of Vajang. Palet and Jamshei of Lamjang Tombi, Pakang (Otkholet) of Tonglhang, Kolvel (Kawlvelthang, or Kolvella) of Saikot and Seilet Kuki. The various cases against Tongkhothang as summarized by Gimson were that he in November 1943, he crossed the Chindwin to contact the Japanese and asked for 400 rifles to wage war against the British, took an oath of friendship with them by biting the sword of a Japanese officer and was given a gold ring. The Japanese authorized him to raise two gunmen each from every village and collect house-taxes. He held three meetings at Chassad, Maokot and Nungse, and urged people to supply food, men, and guide to the Japanese and to arrest those who helped the British. He was also reported to have formed a V-Force for the Japanese. He was assisted in all these affairs by Otkhodem, his mantri. Palet, leader of the Kukis in the south-eastern ranges, assisted by Jamshei, was said to have acted as a scout for the JIFs (Japanese Indian forces) and planted landmines on the road to Sita village as a result of which some Allied jeeps were
destroyed.\textsuperscript{225} Kolvel (Kolvella) supplied rations to the Japanese and was rewarded, he and his villagers refused to vacate his village, when order was served by the British during the advance of the Indo-Japanese forces in the Khuga valley (Churachandpur area) south of Manipur.\textsuperscript{226} Seliel was behind the formation of Tangkhul Co-ordination Committee.\textsuperscript{227} He was the second clerk of the SDO office at Ukhrul and secretly engaged with the alleged 5\textsuperscript{th} Column works even before the invasion. He campaigned among the Indian soldiers of the Allied forces stationed in the Ukhrul areas to join INA.\textsuperscript{228} Lamkhothang of wayang (Chandel District) deserted the 4\textsuperscript{th} Assam Rifles and joined the INA-Japanese Camp. He moved about the Kuki villages, passing off under various names, and was one of the chief Kuki 5\textsuperscript{th} Columnists and went off with the Japanese during their retreat.\textsuperscript{229} But he was arrested in 1946 and confined at Imphal jail for one and half years.\textsuperscript{230} The charges put against Pakang (Otkholet) was, he joined the Japanese forces before the invasion. He was one of the V-Force Home Guards armed in 1942, and knew about the V-Force layout in the Somra Tract as a result of which some vital information passed into the Japanese establishment. He accompanied the Japanese 31\textsuperscript{st} Division and helped them as a local Liaison Officer in the Somra Tract, and in the area north and east of Ukhrul. He is said to have held the rank of Lieutenant in the S.T.A (Somra Tract Area).\textsuperscript{231} After the war he followed the retreating Japanese army and did not come back.\textsuperscript{232}

In May, 1945, another Order was issued against some more accused Kukis with sanctioned penalty. They were Nungkhopao of Gangpimoul village, Churachandpur, penalty for four months rigorous imprisonment, Lunsei of Tolphei (two months R.I), Khupkhothang

\textsuperscript{225} ASA, GSC, 140/C, 1944: C. Gimson Secret D.O, No.5566 – GA, 29.11.1944 to R W. Geoffrey
\textsuperscript{226} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{227} Letkhoseli Kipenen, ‘Notes on Tangkhul Co-ordination Committee’, February 1945, ASA,p.1
\textsuperscript{228} ASA, GSC, 45/C, 1945, FIBFR No. 2/45, for the second half of January, 1945,p.4
\textsuperscript{229} ASA, GSC, 45/C, 1945, FIBFR, No. 2/45, for the third half of January, 1945,p.1
\textsuperscript{230} Freedom Fighters of Manipur, Op.Cit,p.32
\textsuperscript{231} ASA, GSC, 45/C, 1945, FIBFR, No. 7/45, for the first half of April, 1945,p.1
\textsuperscript{232} P.S. Haokip, Op.Cit,p.201
of Songphung (one year R.I.), Thangsavung of Leilon Vaiphei (four months R.I. & two months u/t in jail), Paokholam pf Laijang (six months R.I. & four and half months u/t in jail), Chiefs of Jampi (Mangkhokai) and Dulen villages and others (one year R.I.), while the case of Nungkhogin, Songsunlam and Lunngul were kept pending. Yamkholet and Demhen of Maohing were warned. The villages of Tonglhang and Waijang Khuman were referred to SDO for disposal.213

Thus, the defeat of the Axis group in general and Japan in particular, in the war and the subsequent collapse of the Indian National Army dashed the hopes of the Kukis for freedom. This left them deeply demoralized and vulnerable. They were however hopeful of a suitable acknowledgement from the Government of India, as the Kukis extolled and joined the massive movement for the independence of India as the most viable form of attaining their own freedom. However, their expectations were not fulfilled even though in September 1949, they become a part of the Indian Union, when Manipur was merged with India. The expectation and the sentiment of the Kuki people is reflected in the Kuki National Assembly’s demand in 1946:

‘Taking into consideration the various aspects of the vexing problems of the hills and the valley it is the desire of the Kuki National Assembly to announce that the Kukis should come under the Durbar provided the conditions are satisfactory, but failing to obtain satisfactory conditions, the Kukis regretfully, have to follow the footsteps of their hill brethren in demanding for full secession’.234

Their (Kukis) participation in the freedom struggle was indeed a magnificent contribution and is recorded in golden letters. Their sacrifice was a supreme sacrifice. Thus, as far as the political history of the Kukis is concerned they must be given their rightful place in India’s freedom struggle for they had contributed their might in no small measure and unequivocal

213 ASA, GSC, 140/C. 1944: Asst. PA in Manipur to Secretary to Governor of Assam, Memo No.1194 – GA, 17 May, 1945.
234 Resolution of the Annual Kuki National Assembly Conference, October, 1946.
terms for the attainment of India's independence like any other community in India.

After India was liberated from the British yoke in 1947, the Kukis rather than pursue independence opted to becoming loyal citizens of India, in anticipation that Kuki history would be recognized and the integrity of their ancestral lands restored. In the post-independent era the Kuki National Assembly proposed a separate state for the Kukis within India, but received no response from the Government.\(^{235}\)

In pursuance of their demand for a 'Kuki State,' the Kuki National Assembly sent a Memorandum to the First Prime Minister of free India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on 24/03/1960, that stated:

"The only solution for the Kuki problem is the Kuki state, where the Kukis will have their own government to take care of their needs within the Union of India. A separate state for the Kukis with Manipur as the bastion will also give them the full opportunity to attain full growth. The Kuki state, as demanded, will enable collection of the Kuki minorities elsewhere together in a place where their lives and properties can be secure and their due share of development ensured."\(^{236}\)

\(^{235}\) Seilen Hockip, op.cit.p.24
\(^{236}\) Memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru on 24/03/1960 vides the Kuki National Assembly (KNA) resolution adopted in its General Meeting at Thingkangphai, Churachandpur District, from 19th to 22nd January, 1960.
Fig. 3(a). Pu Haozathang Haokip, President, All India Freedom Fighters' Organization, Churachandpur Unit, Manipur

Fig. 3(b). Pu Haozathang Haokip receiving a presentation from the President of India, Smt. Pratibha Patel, New Delhi

Fig. 3(c). Pu Haozathang Haokip receiving a presentation from Hon'ble President of India

Hon'ble President of India Shri A.P.J. Abdul Kalam presented a gift to Haozathang Haokip INA Pensioner on 9th August 2008 at Rastapati Bhavan Home Function, New Delhi.
Fig. 3 (d) (Late) Capt. Lamkhothang of Wayang village, Chandel District.

Fig. 3 (e) Pu Yangkhosei Haokip, an INA Veteran, Ukhrul District, Manipur

Fig. 3(f). Saidan Peak, in Churachandpur District, which was used as an observatory post by the Indo-Japanese forces during the World War II.
Fig. 3 (g). Pu Kolvella (1895-1992), Chief of Saikot, who helped the INA-Japanese forces during the Imphal Campaign 1944

Fig. 3 (h). INA-Japanese tools, water container and ammunition box found in most of the Kuki villages.
Fig. 3 (i). Life-sized statue of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose at INA Complex, Moirang, Manipur.

Fig. 3 (j). The INA Memorial High School, Ukha Gate, Churachandpur District. Founded by Pu. Semkhohao in Memory of the INA in 1953.
Fig. 3(k) Pu Semkhohao Haokip, founder of the INA Memorial High School, at Ukha Gate

Fig. 3(l) Freedom Fighter (Tamra Pattra) Medal of Pu Semkhohao Haokip, an INA Veteran
Fig. 3(m) Nguljalet Haokip, an INA Veteran, of Ukha Gate, Churachandpur District, Manipur

Fig. 3(n) Freedom Fighter Medal (Tamra pattro) of Pu Nguljalet Haokip