THE SECOND WORLD WAR AND THE JAPANESE ARMY: MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF THE CHAKHESANG NAGAS

Thesis submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment for the award of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in History

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **"The Second World War and the Japanese Army: Memories and Experiences of the Chakhesang Nagas"** by Ms. Wetsou Medo bearing Regd. No. Ph.D/HAR/00058 dated 18.08.2017 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctoral of Philosophy in the Department of History & Archaeology is an original work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance which is a plagiarism free thesis.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in parts or in full to this or any other University or institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, Ms. Wetsou Medo hereby declare that the thesis entitled **"The Second World War and the Japanese Army: Memories and Experiences of the Chakhesang Nagas"** bearing Regd. No. Ph.D/HAR/00058 dated 18.08.2017; submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Prof. N. Venuh is an original research work which is free from Plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in parts or in full to this University or in any other University for award of any degree.

This thesis is submitted to Nagaland University in partial fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History & Archaeology.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Chakhesang Nagas, a major Naga tribe, are inhabitants of the Phek district of Nagaland. Phek district is situated in the southern part of Nagaland and extends between longitude 94˚35'18" to 94˚38'09" E and latitude 25˚37'37" to 25˚39'47" N (GoN, n.d). Other inhabitants of the Phek district include the tribes of Pochury, Poumai and Sumi. The Chakhesang Naga tribe is also found among the populations of Jessami and Krowemi villages, Ukhrul district, Manipur. Until the early twentieth century, the British called them Eastern Angamis because they were categorized under the same language group as the Angamis. They officially became known as the Chakhesang Naga tribe on 10 January 1946, to become one of the major tribes of Nagaland. The term 'Chakhesang' is derived from the names of the linguistic groups, 'Cha'- Chokri, 'Khe'- Kuzha and 'Sang'-Sangtam. In modern times, the Sangtam are a separate tribal group. The Chakhesang Nagas are mainly land-owning communities who practise terrace and jhum cultivation and agro-forestry (Kire, 2019, pp. 80-81). The Chakhesang Naga region, rich in flora and fauna, contributes significantly to the region's economy through its organic produce, especially fruits and vegetables, which are of demand even at the state level.

The Naga Hills is situated on the southeastern border of Assam. It is bordered by Burma in the east and Manipur to the south. The Assam country was almost without communications until the end of the First Burma War, 1825. Swinson (2016) remarks that in 1830, a Mr Bruce prospected the Brahmaputra and Surma Valleys and started a tea plantation near Sadiya. By 1850, steamers plied the main rivers, and European townships grew. However, Swinson further opines that if civilization flowed up the rivers, it failed to penetrate the hills, and their inhabitants. The Nagas, still went head-hunting among rival tribes and slaughtered intruders (pp.14-15).

The Angami Naga country was first visited by Europeans in January 1832, when Captain Jenkins and Pemberton, along with 700 soldiers and 800 coolies marched from Manipur to Assam. The party was opposed by the Angami Nagas, who, for the first time, experienced the effect of firearms. This was followed by several expeditions into the Naga Hills, reaching the Chakhesang Naga territory in 1851 at Kikruma as the 10th expedition to the Angami Naga Hills led by Captain Reid on 11 February (Mills, 1854, as cited in Elwin, 1969, pp. 114-143). When Captain Reid visited Kekrima (Kikruma) in 1851, the village braves turned out armed with spears and shields and fought a pitched battle with his sepoys and Naga allies (Hutton, 1921, p. 12). Mills (1854) states that Kikruma fell after "one of the bloodiest battles ever fought in Assam" (as cited in Elwin, 1969, p. 144). The result of the battle of Kikruma was the implementation of the British Non-Interference policy in the Naga Hills, which lasted till 1866. The district of Naga Hills was established in 1866, with its headquarters at Samaguting. Naga chiefs were invited to submit to the British Government; those who agreed were, as a token of submission, to pay an annual tribute and, in return, receive all aid and protection. The establishment of the British post in the Naga Hills was a landmark in the history of Anglo-Naga relations. It signified the Government's determination to control the Nagas effectively, and Captain Gregory was appointed to take charge of the new District (Sema, 1991, pp. 10-11).

In 1867, the Bengal Government prescribed rules for the district to be administered by a Deputy Commissioner under the control of the Commissioner of Assam. In 1871, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal de-regularized the district by extending to it Act XXII of 1869, and detailed rules for the administration of civil and criminal justice and police were notified in 1872. In 1874, Act XXII was repealed and replaced by the Scheduled Districts Act XIV and from that year, the district became subject to ordinary regulations and taken out of the jurisdiction of the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, to be constituted into a separate Province of Assam under a Chief Commissioner, vide the Government of India, Home Department notifications, 379 and 380, dated 6 February 1874 (Luthra, 1974, pp. 5-6). The headquarters of the Naga Hills District was shifted

to Kohima in 1878, and effective administration began. In 1881, the Government of India brought the district under a regular administration system. Consolidation of the British rule in the Naga Hills was a gradual process of annexation from 1881-1947. The Naga Hills were divided into three zones: (A) Administered areas, (B) Political control areas, and (C) Areas beyond political control.

1. In the 'A' zone, the Government assessed annual house tax at the rate of ₹ 2 per house and appointed a village headman for the collection of the house tax and also carrying out the orders of the government at the village level.

2. In the 'B' zone, the Government conducted annual military promenades but did not assess house taxes nor protect the area from raids of the tribes from beyond it.

3. In the 'C' zone, the policy of non-interference in internal affairs was followed (Sema, 1991, p. 23).

The Sema and Eastern Angami (now Chakhesang) tribes were categorized under political control in the B2 zone area in 1903 and brought under regular administration in 1906, with the Tizu River as the natural boundary between controlled and non-controlled territory. From 1906, most of the Chakhesang Naga areas came under a regular administration system (Sema, 1991, pp. 23-25).

The tribes of the Naga hills were of interest to anthropologists. While studying the Angami Nagas, some suggest them to be the head hunters of Malaya, others to the Polynesians, and a few, to the races of China. Naga languages have been studied by numerous philologists with varying results. The generally accepted classification arrived by Sir George Grierson in 1911 is that the Angami Nagas are of the Tibeto-Chinese family (Swinson, 2016, pp. 15-17). According to Captain Butler (1873), the Deputy Commissioner in 1873, the Angamis were "by far the most powerful and most warlike of all Naga tribes." Living east and southeast of the proper Angami tribe, he mentions the seven villages of the 'Khezami' and 'Zami' Nagas. Butler observed that besides a few distinctions, they belonged to the same tribe category as the Angamis (as cited in

Mackenzie, 1994, pp. 84-85). The reference made by Butler to the seven villages refers to the seven Chakhesang Naga (*Kuzhami)* villages of Pfuseromi, Lekromi, Kami, Zapami, Lasumi, Leshemi and Khezhakeno. The people of this area were more isolated and had minimal contact with Kohima, where the post of the Deputy Commissioner was stationed, as *Gaunburas* and *Dobashis* often managed government orders and tax collection. Few schools were established, and Christianity was preached through local evangelists. However, traditional customs and practices played a dominant role. To the locals of the area, till the outbreak of the Battle of Kohima, they were left undisturbed as long as the house taxes were paid on time.

Wars are complex events that change the course of history. Man has known war since the beginning but continues to engage in it despite the knowledge of its consequences. The study of war, as well as its causes, courses, and effects, has contributed to historical research and analysis. The greatest drivers in the memory and historiography of the Second World War have been the breadth and depth of its impact and its role as myth. According to Ferris and Mawdsley (2015), great events, especially wars, shape memory as both myth and history (p. 16). In the first work of history entirely distinct from myth, and the founding study for the disciplines of war and society, strategic history and international relations, Thucydides (1916) justified his account of a thirty-year struggle between Athens and Sparta on the grounds that it was "a great war, and more worth writing about than any of those which had taken place in the past… all the evidence leads me to conclude that these periods are not the great periods in warfare of anything else" (p. 15). While recording the accounts of war, Thucydides made it a principle to check the reports with thoroughness and avoided his general impression of the war. He was of the view that war could be understood only by treating it as history.

The Second World War was the greatest cataclysm in modern history as it was a 'world war' in the true sense. While twenty-eight states participated during the First World War, sixty-one fought against each other between 1939 and 1945. The Second World War escalated the

concept of ‘total war’ with varying repercussions. Civilians bore the brunt of the conflict, contrasting unambiguously with the First World War where only 5 percent of deaths were civilians compared to 66 percent in the 1939–45 conflict (Bourke, 2001, p. 2). The Second World War also earned the reputation of one of the most horrifying events in modern history, resulting in dehumanization and calculated killing. Science and technology were also put to the test to its greatest height. For the 85 million men and women who served in the armed forces, and for the vast civilian population caught in the carnage, the war became an unforgettable and defining moment in their lives (Bourke, 2001, pp. 2-3).

To the Nagas, 1944 was a year they could never erase from their memory. It was the year the historic Battle of Kohima was fought. The Chakhesang Nagas inhabited territory served as the main route to Kohima for the Japanese Army. After the battle of Jessami, fought between 28 March and 1 April 1944, the Japanese 31 Division spread in different directions as they advanced to Kohima. The Chakhesang Nagas were suddenly exposed to modern warfare when primarily, life was complacent and undisturbed. What the Nagas, particularly the Chakhesang Nagas, experienced was not just a battle between two great powers of the world but an entry to a new phase that significantly changed almost every facet of traditional life. With the Second World War outbreak, the Nagas, who were under the British Raj, became directly involved in the war on the side of the Allies. The magnitude of the Second World War was so immense that it sent its ripples to almost every corner of the world, not leaving aside the Naga Hills, which was unknown to many then. It is undeniable that the Naga Hills got its name written in historical records. In the Naga hills, the Battle of Kohima was fought in the months of April to June 1944 – the twin battles of Imphal and Kohima being voted in as ‘Britain’s Greatest Battle’ on 20 April 2013 by the National Army Museum of the United Kingdom. The battle is also famously called ‘The Stalingrad of the East’ because of the determined defence and its crucial role in the Asian theatre of the war (Kire, 2019, p. 224). The Battle of Kohima was devastating, with around 4,000 Japanese soldiers perishing there. However, it boosted British morale, enabling renewed offensives to drive the

remaining Japanese forces out of Burma and back towards Mandalay and Meiktila. (Griffiths, 2015, para. 9).

1.1. First World War and the Nagas

With the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, a workforce was needed. India, being under British colonialism got directly involved and participated in great numbers as combatants and non-combatants. Of the 1.4 million Indians recruited, about 5,63,369 were followers and non-combatants. The 'coolies' and 'menial followers' provided the much need workforce to the British (Singha, 2020, p. 3). Unaware of global affairs, Nagas were also recruited to render their service during this great event. The recruited Nagas, called the Naga Labour Corps, were sent to France in 1917 in the reconstituted Companies 35, 36,37 and 38 of the Indian Labour Companies (Singha, 2020, p. 168). J.P. Mills, then the Sub-Divisional Officer at Mokokchung, states how the Nagas, without any hesitance, joined the labour corps:

> For they (Naga chiefs) were the leaders of their people, and in that lay their value. For instance, when Volunteers were wanted for the Naga Labour Corps for France there was no issuing of notices which no one would have understood. Instead, the Chiefs were called in and talked to, and their questions answered. Then they, full of enthusiasm, went home and brought men. They did not send their men, but insisted on accompanying them or, if they were too old, that a relation should go. It was all the natural procedure, and there was no shortage of recruits, but without the co-operation of the Chiefs the result would have been very different (Mey, 2009, pp. 111-112).

2000 Nagas were recruited to the Naga Labour Corps: 1,000 Semas, 400 Lothas, 200 Rengmas, 200 Aos, 200 Changs and other trans-frontier tribes (Reid, 1942, p. 162). There was a sudden contact with advanced civilizations and exposure to new religions through communication with other communities and people. Noting the impact of the Nagas' involvement in the first global

conflict, Yonuo (1984) notes that these Nagas, drawn from different tribes, far from their homes, fostered mutual love, service and a sense of political unity. They agreed to return to their land to work for friendship and unity among themselves (p. 125). The result was the formation of the Naga Club in 1918.

1.2. The World at War

The Second World War began in Europe with Hitler's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. On 3 September, the British Government declared war on Germany, followed by the French six hours later (Hart, 1970, p.16). Eight 'powers' – Britain, France, China, the United States and the Soviet Union among the Allies, and Germany, Italy and Japan among the Axis states – with their grand strategies, shook world politics through the Second World War (Ferris & Mawdsley. 2015, p. 22). After the First World War, the Germans were made to sign the humiliating Treaty of Versailles in 1919. When Germany came under the leadership of the Nazi leader, Adolf Hitler, in 1933, National Socialism held out the promise of a renewed Germanic nation. Although Hitler did not invent many of the ideas that led to war, he promoted the supposed need for *Lebensraum* ('living space'), which can be traced back to the Darwin's promotion of Socialism in the nineteenth century, and was widely accepted in Germany by the early twentieth century (Henig, 1985/2005, p 12). By 1938, the economic outlook in Germany had changed; this recovery was fuelled by the sense of injustice that had arisen in the aftermath of the First World War.

Meanwhile, the Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini was also targeting at establishing Italy as one of the Great Powers. Pursuing a foreign policy for the supposed need for *spazio vitale* (living space), Mussolini was on a similar ideological thought to that of Hitler. Consequently, in May 1939, Mussolini signed the Pact of Steel with Hitler, committing to support each other with all their military forces both "on land, sea and in the air" (Bourke, 2001, pp. 10-13). In August 1939, Soviet Union and Germany signed a non-aggression pact, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, which contained a secret protocol specifying spheres of influence in Eastern Europe that both

parties would accept after Hitler conquered Poland. Accordingly, the Soviet Union would acquire the eastern part of Poland, along with Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia (History.com Editors, 2009).

When Hitler invaded Poland, the Polish resistance was quickly crushed, and the country was rapidly defeated by a combination of German armies from the west and Soviet troops joining in from the east. After five weeks, the fighting was over. The absolute onslaught of the war began in the spring of 1940 when German troops unexpectedly invaded Denmark and Norway, followed by the defeat of Netherlands and Belgium (Henig, 1985/2005, p. 39). Shortly, France was defeated with the victorious entry of the German troops to Paris on 14 June 1940, resulting in France signing an armistice with Germany and Italy (the latter entered the war four days before the Germans reached Paris). By the end of 1940, Greater Germany included Austria, the Sudetenland, much of Poland, Alsace-Lorraine, Luxemburg and two former provinces of Belgium, Eupen and Malmedy, while German governors ruled Bohemia and Moravia and part of Poland, and Slovakia became a protectorate under German control (Henig, 1985/2005, pp. 39-40). The German army also occupied Denmark, Norway, Belgium and much of France. From 1941, German onslaught of Jewish communities was mandated. However, the Axis powers were unable to hold their victory for long. By 1943, the Axis powers were facing massive defeats in the regions where they had previously gained control. Although Mussolini had taken the war to North Africa by launching an attack on British-controlled Egypt in 1940, which was reinforced by the Germans under General Erwin Rommel, the Allies launched Operation Torch, causing a crushing defeat of Rommel's Afrika Korps in May 1943. By the end of 1943, Italy was invaded and was on the verge of its final defeat.

According to Stone (2015), the Soviet-German relation was strained in the Eastern Front. Hitler launched an assault against the Soviet under Operation Barbarossa in June 1941, which witnessed heavy losses to both nations. Soviet troops suffered the most extensive single defeat of the war at Kiev. Emboldened by the initial victories, Hitler urged his troops to move further to

Moscow. The defence of Moscow was left in the hands of Zhukov, one of Stalin's few efficient generals. Concurrently, much of the Soviet government and foreign embassies had evacuated east to Kuibyshev on the Volga. The road to Moscow was left essentially open to German troops. However, nature took its toll on the German troops, who had little knowledge of Russia's uncompromising winter. Seizing the opportunity, the Soviet Red Army achieved imperative victories at Moscow in December 1941 and Stalingrad in November 1942. However, in the summer of 1943, the Red Army absorbed a German blow at Kursk. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1944, the Soviets demonstrated their ability to strike a massive and devastating offensive against Germany, ultimately gaining an overwhelming victory over the German Army (pp. 336-356).

At the home front, the Allies invaded Sicily and Southern Italy, resulting in the fall of Mussolini and his government in July 1943. The Allies also devised a plan to launch an attack on German-held France across the English Channel. Code-named Operation Overlord, the invasion of Normandy began on 6 June 1944, also known as D-Day (Peel, 2022, pp. 99-100). By September, the Allies successfully liberated France, Belgium and Luxembourg. After the Battle of Bulge (December, 1944 to January 1945), the war in Europe rapidly grew to a close, leading to the ultimate defeat and surrender of Germany on 7 May 1945.

In the Pacific, Japan was losing ground. American morale was boosted after their victory against Japan in the Battle of Midway in June 1942. A most devastating defeat of the Japanese was witnessed in the Battle of Guadalcanal in February 1943 against the Allied naval forces, where the Japanese lost more than sixty per cent of its men.

1.3. Japan's War and the Burma Campaign

While Hitler consolidated his power in the Far East, Japan was growing into a great power. Fuller (1948) states that before the awakening of Admiral Perry, Japan was a self-sufficient country, but after it, Japan became Westernized. Lacking primary resources like Germany, Japan

had to seek outside its borders, thus joining the race for imperialism. Between 1875 and 1891, she acquired the Kurile, Bonin and Kyukyu islands and the Volcano group; after the war with China (1894-95), obtained Formosa, Pescadores, and Port Arthur but lost the last due to pressure from Russia, France and Germany. Japan's victorious win in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 proved significant as she not only regained Port Arthur but also received half of southern Sakhalin Island from Russia and obtained control of Korea. Japan annexed Korea in 1910, and in 1919, except for Guam, was granted the Mariana, Caroline and Marshall Islands as mandated territories. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and set up a puppet government called Manchukuo. This brought her into conflict with the Chinese, and on 7 July 1937, Japan invaded China. Like Germany, Japan's aim was to establish a *Lebensraum*- a new economic order called 'The Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', with a purpose of creating an economic system from Manchukuo to Australia and the Fiji Islands to Australia (p. 127). The appointment of Prince Konoe Fumimaro as Prime Minister in 1936 marked a turning point in Japan's international affairs. Konoe was an outspoken imperialist and militarist who talked about a 'new order' in Asia - in other words, the repudiation of the Washington system and the creation of a Japanese Empire in the Asian Pacific (Kitchen, 1990, pp. 142-145).

To build a stronger alliance, Japan concluded the tripartite pact with Germany and Italy in September 1940, which bound the three powers to 'assist one another with all political, economic and military means' (Henig, 1985/2005. p. 40). In April 1941, Japan concluded a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union. Thus, Japan was left free to concentrate its military expansion and naval forces to create a 'single sphere' for the people of the east and south-east Asia. The United States became concerned when the conflicts in Europe and Asia began to come together more concertedly. Japan's policy of southward expansion also threatened America's interests in the Pacific (Henig, 1985/2005, p. 40). Japan decided to cut her enemy's lines of supply, which meant war with Britain and the United States, who had been financing China. France was unable to protect Indo-China due to her defeat, therefore, on 21 July 1941, was compelled to permit its

temporary occupation by Japan. The military invasion of French-Indo China in July 1941 was met by the intervention of the United States when President Roosevelt announced the freezing of Japanese assets in America and a complete embargo on oil exports. Britain followed suit and denounced her 1911, 1934 and 1937 commercial treaties, and soon followed by the Netherlands (Fuller, 1948, p. 128). This was an economic declaration of war and the actual opening of the struggle. On 20 October 1941, the new Japanese Government under Prime Minister Hirohito Tojo proposed lifting the embargo and the United States should supply Japan with oil and cease assisting China (Fuller, 1948, p. 128). These impossible proposals were made because Japan had already decided to break the blockade by force. Japan could not sustain a military campaign without oil and steel; thus, the army and navy leaders resolved to launch a military campaign against the United States. On 7 December 1941, planes from the Japanese fleet struck an audacious attack at the main American Pacific naval base at Pearl Harbour. Hitler immediately reacted to the Japanese attack on Pear Harbour: "We can't lose the war at all… We now have an ally which has never been conquered in 3,000 years" (as cited in Henig, 1985/2005, p. 42, Mack, 2021, para. 2). Simultaneously, Thailand, Malaya and Hongkong were invaded by Japan on 7 and 8 December (Fuller, 1948, p. 128). Japanese invasions of these territories compelled Britain to declare war on Japan on 8 December 1941. The United States too, which had remained neutral, formally declared war on Japan on the same day, to become fully involved in the Second World War. Joseph Goebbels, the German minister of Propaganda, wrote in his diary on 9 December 1941, "Through the outbreak of war between Japan and the USA, a complete shift in the general world picture had taken place" (as cited in Henig, 1985/2005, p. 42). Hitler was elated by the turn of events in the Pacific and declared war on the United States on 11 December 1941. What initially started as a conflict of competing ideologies turned into a horrifying war of two great conflicts; one in Europe and the other in the Far East, which amounted to far-reaching repercussions.

Japan continued to carry out its offensive move by invading the Philippines on 9 December, 1941 and sinking the British Battleships *HMS Repules* and *Prince of Wales* on 12 December. The

first move of the Japanese into Burma was made on 11 December by occupying Tenasserim Province. These invasions were followed by the occupation of Hongkong, Sarawak and the Celebes. Rangoon was first bombed on 23 December, 1941. The British 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry were the only two garrisons in Burma. The garrisons were undertrained, poorly equipped, and unable to defend Burma efficiently. A reinforcement unit of the 17 Indian Division arrived on 9 January 1942, but the united forces were unable to hold Burma (Edwards, 2013, pp. 45- 46).

Meanwhile, the Japan with its ambitious military campaigns formed the 15 Army in November 1941. On 10 January 1942, the Japan invaded the Dutch East Indies and captured Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaya, on 11 January. On 20 January 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma, which was an essential component of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere. According to Warren (2011), the rice industry and other raw materials of Burma were of significant value to Japan. The control of Burma was essential to cover the flank of Japan's envisioned conquests elsewhere in Southeast Asia. Japanese possession of Burma would also isolate China from the outside world, preventing it from receiving external help in its resistance. Burma had been a British-Indian province, and the Indian Army had been responsible for local defence. The new defence department in Rangoon faced insufficient infrastructure. Delhi's military planning had long been focused on the North-west Frontier, Afghanistan, and the Soviet Union, thus, neglecting the need for strategic or commercial routes to Burma. Efficient sea routes to Rangoon reduced the inducement to develop roads or railways through the difficult terrain of Assam and Manipur, which lay between Bengal and Burma. Furthermore, the tracks across the Thai-Burmese border were in poor condition. Burma's landscape was dominated by rivers with few bridges over the largest waterways, however, the intense monsoons often hampered the construction of bridges, making military preparation even more challenging. (pp. 8-9). Slim (1956/1985) observed that the negligence of Burma and the military unpreparedness proved advantageous for the Japanese. The

Japanese forces proved too strong for the British and Allied air and land forces during the Burma Campaign. (p. 10).

From 9 to 21 February 1942, the Japanese 15 Army, comprising the 33 and 55 Divisions, under Lieutenant General Shijiro Iida, crossed the Salween River, inflicting several defeats on the Allies, pushing them over to Sittang River, east of Rangoon. On 5 March, General Sir Harold Alexander arrived at Rangoon and took over the Allied Burma Army. He ordered the evacuation of Rangoon to Imphal in India. Momentarily, US General Joe Stilwell became the Chief Staff to Chinese Chiang Kai-shek. Stilwell's 5 and 6 Army, numbering up to 50,000 troops, entered Burma. The first trial flight of US supplies efficaciously flew from Ledo to north-east Assam in less than two weeks, under the operation of the American Volunteer Group (henceforth AVG). Rangoon fell into Japanese hands on 9 March 1942. Simultaneously, the Burma Campaign was taken over by Field Marshall William Slim in March 1942 under the title of 1 Burma Corps or Burcorps (Edwards, 2013, pp. 45-50). Emboldened by their victory in Burma, the Japanese believed that the defeat of Britain was strategic to undermine US morale and prevent the latter from continuing the war. To achieve these goals, the Imperial General Staff (Japan) formulated Operation Twenty-one in 1942; the plan called for an offensive thrust against British military bases in Eastern India. The Commander of the Fifteenth Army, General Iida, viewed the plan as too ambitious and unrealistic; subsequently, the plan was suspended (Crosthwaite, 2016, pp. 24-25). The plan, however, saw its reappearance as Operation U-Go in 1944.

While the Allied unit was retreating and in disarray, the Japanese achieved air superiority in the initial phase, which was provided to the 5 Air Division, commanded by General Hideyoshi Obata. The Royal Air Force (henceforth RAF) and the AVG were forced to evacuate to Akyab in Arakan and China, respectively (Crosthwaite, 2016, pp. 29-30). On land, the Japanese gained upper hand and by May 1942, "the battered scarecrow units of the Corps marched in the end with "proper pride" into India": the 7th Armoured, 48th Gurkha Brigade, 7th Hussars and 2 Royal Tanks

(Colvin, 2012, p. 23). With British defeat in Schwedaung and Japanese air attacks at Magwe and Akyab, the British air forces entirely withdrew back into India.

In March 1943, Japan reorganized its forces under the aegis of the Burma Area Army under commander General Masakazu Kawabe. Accordingly, the Fifteenth Army, under the command of General Renya Mutaguchi, was responsible for the defence of central and northern Burma. The Fifteenth Army was also reorganized by adding the 31 and 15 Divisions to prepare for Imphal operation (Colvin, 2012, p. 32). Early in 1944, the Imperial Japanese Headquarters ordered the 15 Army to "invest the vital areas of north-eastern India in the vicinity of Imphal" (Higgins, et al.,1984, p. 1). As a result, on 8 March 1944, three reinforced Japanese Divisions: the 33, 15 and 31Divisions and a Division of the Indian National Army, totalling 155,000 troops, crossed the Chindwin River and struck out across the mountains under the title Operation U-GO. The Japanese now prepared themselves to face the Allied forces comprising Britain's IV Corps of the 14 Army: the 17 Division near Tiddim in the Chin Hills, the 20 Division in the Palel-Tiddim area, and the 23 Division, consisting of two regiments of the 254 Indian Tank Brigade positioned in Imphal as a strike force, under the command of Field Marshall William Slim, Commander of the 14 Army (Higgins, et al.,1984, p. 1). Operation U-Go soon reached the Naga Hills with overwhelming consequences.

1.4. The Second World War and India

With Britain's declaration of War against Germany, Lord Linlithgow, Viceroy of India, declared that India had also joined the War. The British had been utilizing Indian troops to fight their wars even before the formal declaration of war. India had already dispatched nearly 10,000 troops to Egypt, Aden, Singapore, Kenya and Iraq (Raghavan, 2016, p. 9). It seemed natural that India would be dragged into the war as in the First World War. India, being the largest colony of the British, looked upon its large population to aid in the war efforts of the Allies. The Second World War began to spread far and wide, demanding the deployment of troops from India. In his

letter to the Secretary of State of War, Winston Churchill stated that a "ceaseless stream of Indian units" would pass into Egypt and Palestine via Bombay (Churchill, 1985, p. 146). A total of about 2.5 million Indians were recruited during the Second World War, and Indian troops were seen fighting in Greece, Italy, East Africa, Libya, Iraq, Syria, Persia, Malaysia, Hongkong and Burma, serving as the "largest volunteer force" during the war (Roy, 2010, pp. 259-268).

The second global warfare had great significance to Indian politics as it coincided with the final phase of the Indian National movement. Indians had reached a point where there was a national awakening; they became more conscious of their aspiration to be an independent nation among other nations. As such, India saw the rise of national leaders who led the country towards the goal. 1938 was a crucial year in Indian politics, with Subash Chandra Bose winning the presidency in Congress, but he had to resign shortly, due to conflicting ideology of Gandhi's non-violence. When the British declared war against Germany in September 1939, the Indian National Congress condemned Nazi aggression. However, the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress also simultaneously decided not to associate themselves or offer any form of co-operation until a negotiation was reached. The Working Committee declared:

> If Great Britain fights for the maintenance and extension of democracy, then she must necessarily end imperialism in her own possessions and establish full democracy in India, and the Indian people must have the right of self-determination to frame their own constitution through a Constituent Assembly without external interference, and must guide their own policy (India and the War, 1939, column 1707).

In December 1939, Congress Provincial Ministries resigned as an act of non-cooperation to the war. The Muslim League, on the other hand, moved forward the Lahore Resolution for bifurcation of Pakistan from India in March 1940. The British responded with the August Offer in 1940, which was not accepted by members of the Congress. The Congress agreed to support Britain in the war only if the latter granted independence to India. Furthermore, the Second World

War encouraged national movements among colonial countries. Tokyo, for instance, adopted a political strategy to appeal to the colonial people of Asia by attempting to act as liberators from Western rule. Similarly, Nazis attempted to employ the colonial question in Iraq and Egypt (Greenberg, 1942, pp. 164-165). The Axis strategy of creating such an influence did not work well in other countries. However, Subash Chandra Bose's relationship with the German and Axis powers impacted India. The National Movement gained momentum, and the demands of the Indians foresaw an adamant call for immediate and practical action. In 1942, the Cripps Mission came to India, offering the Indian Union a Dominion status after the war. However, the terms of the Mission were unacceptable to the Congress, which resulted in the launch of a final mass movement under Mahatma Gandhi: the Quit India Movement in 1942, with its famous slogan 'Do or Die'.

The Indian National Congress stood as a powerful organization with a clear ambition of complete national independence and a 'non-violent and non-cooperation' strategy. However, the nature of the Quit India movement was not altogether non-violent. With all prominent Congress leaders, including Gandhi, arrested, the actual movement was spearheaded by the Congress Socialist Party, who resorted to open resistance and clashes (Bhattacharjee, 1989, p. 373). The movement took a new turn in the national struggle, prompting Subash Bose to remark, "In the history of India's struggle, 1942 will remain an unforgettable landmark, indicating the psychological transition from passive to active resistance" (Sailesh Dey, 1939, as cited in Bhattacharjee, 1989, p. 373).

In the meantime, Bose, firmly believing "Britain's difficulty as India's opportunity", escaped to Berlin to fight the Indian cause with outside support (Bhattacharjee, 1989, pp. 370-71). Bose's escape to Germany made an impression on Gandhi. M.A.K. Azad (1959), the Congress President from 1940 to 1946, expressed in his autobiographical narrative:

> He (Gandhi) had not formerly approved many of Bose's actions, but now I found a change in his outlook. Many of his remarks convinced me that he admired the courage and resourcefulness Subash Bose had displayed in his escape from India. His admiration for Subash Bose unconsciously coloured his view about the whole war situation (p. 41).

The next few years witnessed Bose's negotiations with Germany and Japan and taking over the Indian National Army (henceforth INA) from Rash Behari Bose at Singapore. He took up the task of freeing India from British rule with Japanese aid. After much deliberation and negotiation, Bose successfully convinced Japan to include the INA in its invasion of India. The result was the combined forces of the INA and Japanese Army invading Indian soil to fulfil Japan's policy of Greater Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

1.5. The Second World War and the Nagas

While the world was engaged in a horrifying and devastating conflict, the majority of the Nagas, unmindful of the global conflict, never comprehended that a war of great magnitude would soon reach their doorsteps. The Nagas had been warned of a war that might take place in their land but failed to grasp its scale as prior to 1942, the only purpose for the British to visit Naga villages was primarily to settle village disputes and conduct tours for surveys and reports, and thus, the possibility of a foreign war was not apprehended. A few British bungalows were constructed at different points for the purpose of the vigil. On the eve of the Battle of Kohima, the only British defences in the Naga Hills comprised the V Force watching posts in the mountaintop villages and a company of the Assam Regiment at Jessami and Kharasom. During the months of April to June 1944, Naga villages along the Burma-Kohima-Dimapur route encountered the Japanese and the INA. While some of the Naga villages experienced fierce battles, in other villages, the locals assisted both the British and Japanese armies in various capacities.

The year 1944 holds great significance for the Nagas, not only due to the events that occurred but also because, for many illiterate Nagas, it serves as a reference point for calculating a person's age or marking important events of a community, village, or individual's life. Oral narratives have played a key role in describing the events from an indigenous people's perspective. Those who witnessed the war remember it with mixed feelings, but the experience profoundly impacted their lives. The Nagas, who primarily transmitted knowledge through oral traditions such as folktales, legends, and songs, began incorporating tales of soldiers and their war experiences after 1944. The 'Japanese invasion' of the Naga Hills became a pivotal event, evidenced by the fact that different Naga tribes have adapted the term into their respective dialects. To the Angami Nagas, it was termed *Japan kepar tei* or *Japan Rüwho;* the Lothas *Japan Thava or Japan Ritsso*; the Zeme Nagas, *Japan Reuga*; and the Chakhesang Nagas, *Japan Pre* or *Japan Ri.*

Experiences, roles, and opinions differ from place to place, and Naga's voices of the Battle of Kohima can contribute to the global and people's history. There is a pressing need to remind the present generation, and coming generations that an event of global importance took place in their homeland, and the participation of their forefathers should be well acknowledged. The involvement and exposure of the Nagas in the two World Wars as Labour Corps and participation in the Battle of Kohima have directly and indirectly influenced and moulded the fabric of social structure, thoughts and political outlook.

1.6. Oral History and Memory

The study of oral narratives provides valuable insights into history. Cultures have survived through generations by maintaining oral traditions. Thompson (2000) states that "oral history is as old as history itself" and that it was the first kind of history (p. 25). Studies have revealed that cultures with oral traditions possess certain characteristics which make them particularly skilled as oral narrators. While studying African verbal art among the Limba of Sierra Leone, Finnegan (2007) observed that story-telling on varied subjects, was an important mode of transmission of

knowledge and even children mastered the art while spending time with peers. The Limba story teller utilized rhetoric skills like reduplication, repetition, mimicry and gesture to deploy idiophones (pp. 44- 45). Oral narrations require exceptional memory skills as stories, histories and cultural values are preserved and transmitted only in the oral form. Vansina (1985) highlights that oral societies employ techniques of "mnemonic retention" through memorized speeches, songs, and recitations, which in turn promote the development of other narrative forms (pp. 15-16).

Like many other communities of the world, history was handed down orally to the Nagas until the beginning of the colonial period. Oral transmission was the only method known for the endowment of customs and traditions. Among the Nagas, oral tradition is manifested in their rich repertoire of folklore, myths, and legends. The Nagas too developed narrative, listening and retention skills, which are essential requisites of oral societies. The first written records of the Nagas are found in the works of British officials, ethnographers and anthropologists who documented Naga culture and behaviour through personal observation and limited verbal communication. The Nagas gradually began to record and document their own history decades after the introduction of formal education. However, oral transmission is still a common practice, as the traditional lifestyle has been dominant among the rural Nagas till recent times.

In a diverse country like India, there are numerous narrations to be unfolded, and significant efforts have been made to record oral history and traditions in a more academic context. Bharucha (2003) in *Rajasthan: An Oral History – Conversations with Komal Kothari* documented the folk traditions of Rajasthan through his conversations with Komal Kothari, the famous Indian folklorist and ethnomusicologist, who specialized in the orally transmitted folk culture of Rajasthan. In the process of listening and writing, Bharucha realized that there are many other processes and mediations of readings, analysis, and research (p. 2). Among the Nagas, most historical works consider oral testimonies an essential source of data collection. The Naga tradition

and culture is deeply rooted in oral tradition and European ethnographers who brought out the first written records on the Nagas had to rely on oral traditions to highlight the culture and practices of the people. Documentation of Naga history from a Naga's perspective is still a new and developing concept. Sanyu, in his *A History of Nagas and Nagaland: Dynamics of Oral Tradition in Village Formation* (2008), reflects on how oral tradition of the Nagas is indispensable in tracing the origin and migratory routes of the Nagas (p. 8). Naga history is encapsulated in the legends and folklore, making them serve as valuable assets to historians. In her attempt to incorporate oral tradition in archaeological studies in Nagaland, Walling (2023) acknowledges oral traditions as a rich source of knowledge among the Nagas and how, through oral narratives, valuable information on Naga customary practices, development of cultural ethos, migration and formation of villages may be extracted for study. She further explores the various archaeological excavations conducted in the Naga Hills in recent years and expresses how oral traditions have assisted in identifying the excavated sites (pp. 192-196).

Oral tradition is a method of transmitting cultural knowledge from one generation to the next and serves as a vital means for cultures to preserve their heritage. Vansina (1985) defines oral tradition as messages that are "transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them" (p. 13). In recent years, the study of oral tradition has gained momentum as different cultures seek to uncover their identities and histories. Conversely, oral history involves collecting and studying historical information about significant events or everyday life from the accounts of eyewitnesses and individuals who experienced these events during their lifetime. Documenting oral history is especially valuable for studying historic events such as wars, as it provides personal experiences, opinions, and contributions that offer unique perspectives, often absent from official war documents and archival records.

However, historians have made different arguments on the reliability of sources in the reconstruction of history. No doubt, Written documents are essential sources in historical

deduction. Leopold von Ranke asserted that documents created during historical events are the most reliable form of historical evidence. In their search for truth, Ranke's followers trained historians to scrutinize documents while dismissing oral sources as folklore and myth and that oral evidence was subjective and biased. (Ritchie, 2003, pp. 21-22). Langlois and Seignobos, in their opening remark in their classical manual, *Introduction to the Study of History* (1898/ 2009), stated that the historian works with documents and that there is no substitute for documents; "no documents, no history" (p. 1). While it is true that the documentary method is indispensable and offers provision for empirical studies as the base of proof, one has to reconsider the reliability of the source. Recorders of events can be subjective in their writings by documenting and portraying tampered information. In a comment made to A.J. P. Taylor by the former British Cabinet minister, Richard Crossman, Crossman states: "I have discovered, having read all the Cabinet paper meetings I attended, that the documents often bear virtually no relation to what actually happened" (as cited in Thompson, 2000, p. 60). While researching the post-First World War period, Taylor argued that using non-literary sources provided more evidence and questions, thus giving a firmer footing to the desired information. With the transformation in technology, the use of oral narratives to gather information has gained impetus in recent years for diffused local and popular history (Thompson, 2000, pp. 60-61). Historians have recorded the personal life stories of participants, capturing the realities of their conditions, thoughts, and opinions, which may sometimes contradict the perspectives of non-participants

In his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (1916), Thucydides interviewed participants to record the events of the war. During his interviews, he observed scepticism and complained that different eyewitnesses provided varying narrations of the same events. He noticed that partiality for one side or the other or otherwise from imperfect memories was reflected in the narrations. Hence, Thucydides did not consider all the oral testimonies and deduced the outcome after thorough study and observation (p. 24). Despite its limitations, oral narratives have become valuable sources to reconstruct history. Information from oral narrations can be used for historical

research, but like any other source, this source cannot stand alone. Testing, interpretation, verification, and validation with supporting sources are needed to make the data obtained relevant and credible. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, during the Second World War, ordered all military branches and civilian agencies of the government to prepare records of wartime experiences (Ritchie, 2003, p. 21). These sources provided a comprehensive and detailed perspective on the personal experience during war. The use of oral sources has changed the course of history in multiple ways. With the worldwide political changes in the last decades of the twentieth century, historians were confronted with the need for more archival documentation, as these often reflected only one side of the picture. Ritchie (2003) states that the emerging nations of Asia and Africa found that the written documents reflected the views of former colonial masters and neglected the perspective of the natives. Historians from these countries have utilized oral history to revive suppressed national identities and employing it as a crucial tool in addressing issues of repression and fostering reconciliation (p. 23).

Oral history can only be recorded with primary or secondary experience. Memory then, can be regarded as an essential key to the reclamation of one's ideas and knowledge. Oral narrations are recollections of memories. John Locke (1690/1997), in his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* states that all knowledge is derived from experience and that ideas are perceptions of the mind. However, man's narrow mind is incapable of considering all ideas at once, whereby many perceived ideas lie in the repository. The mind has the power to revive the imprinted ideas that have disappeared or were laid aside. Therefore, Locke defines memory as a "storehouse of our ideas". He further suggests that attention and repetition help fix any ideas in the memory and that memories which make the deepest and most lasting impressions are those accompanied by pleasure or pain (On Retention, Para. 2-3). Similarly, Clark (1997) treats memory as retrieval from a stored symbolic database and the body as an input device (p. 83).

In historical research, recording participants' experiences is valuable as their personal experiences and opinions may not be found in officially documented works. In many cases, the unremembered and unheard accounts are the missing pages of history. Frisch (1994) considers collective memory as a new component in understanding historical processes as the so-called "History from the Bottom-up" provides a different approach to vision and a broadened notion of reconceiving historical questions and answers. He further considers memory as an object of study which acts as "a 'living connection' between a celebrated past, a problematic present, and a future requiring complex policy choices on every level, from individual and family to community, state, and nation." The recollections and narrations of wartime experiences have, in recent years, brought the unkempt voices of participants and non-participants to the forefront (Frish, Thomson et al., 1944, pp. 36- 37). Thomson (1944) admits his challenges while working on an oral history project on Australian soldiers' (the Anzacs) experience of the First World War. He realized that the legend of Australian men who went to war neglected and silenced the voices of those who did not go to war, but through oral history, the recreation of the forgotten lives has helped the non-participants to recognize that they, too, have been historically significant (p. 38).

According to Chowdhary (2014), one of the earliest attempts at working with memory and life stories in India was made by the Hindi novelist, Amritlal Nagar, who recorded memories of the 'Mutiny' of 1857, and was published in a non-fiction form in *Gadar ke Phool* in 1957. The only institutional attempt to create archival oral history was undertaken by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, which focused on creating oral histories of the Indian Freedom Movement. With several social, political and academic movements witnessed in the country in the 1980s and 1990s, more works on oral history were published (pp. 40-41). In recent years, the Oral History Association of India (OHAI) was founded in 2013. It is a professional organization that provides "a means of networking, sharing and communication among those working with recording, interpreting and archiving oral history" (Oral History Association of India, n.d., para. 1)

The post-World War II have prompted researchers to conduct in-depth studies on the experiences of war victims. Numerous works documenting the oral accounts of combatants, non-combatants, and civilians have been produced to offer alternative perspectives of the war. Some works which offer a personal approach and analysis to the Second World War include, *Memories of War: Micronesians in the Pacific War* by S. Falgout, et.al. (2008), *Tale of Japanese Soldiers* by K. Tamayama and J. Nunneley (2001), *The War of our Childhood: Memories of World War II, "The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two* by T. Studs (1985), *Never Will We Forget*: *Oral Histories of World War II* by M.M. Culpepper (2008) and *Indigenous Peoples and the Second World War: The Politics, Experiences and Legacies of War in the U.S, Canada, Australia and New Zealand* by R.S. Sheffield and N. Riseman (2019). These works reveal the untold experiences of war and convey valuable lessons to the world. Despite different views on oral history, Thomson, Frisch and Hamilton (1994) are of the opinion that:

> Oral history will continue to explicate aspects of our past in various ways and to shape its expression in our cultures. Indeed, precisely, because, at its best, the oral history relationship facilitates active remembering and interplay between 'historians and communities', 'historical discourse' and 'collective memory' (p. 42).

1.7. Literature Review

Most literary works on the Second World War in the Naga Hills have been penned and documented by Western authors, whose works portrayed the events from a Western perspective and failed to depict the Japanese or local viewpoint adequately. As such, there is a gap in the literature regarding the Burma Campaign in the Naga Hills. Recent works by Naga scholars, on the topic have focused on Kohima, where the actual battle took place. As many Nagas supported the British in the war efforts, they viewed the Japanese and the INA as their common enemies. This perspective is reflected in most literary works. However, during the 1944 invasion into the Naga Hills, the 31 Division of the Japanese Army was inadequately supplied, thereby, heavily

depended on the locals to meet their needs. Some Nagas supported the Japanese Army, but their accounts are not widely represented in literary works.

When the Japanese invaded India, life was never the same and almost every Naga household who encountered them was affected in one way or the other. This is seen in the life of a seventeen-year-old, Mari O'Leary, who narrates the sequence of events and personal experiences of how families separated, including hers, in a diary she maintained during and after the war. Easterine Kire (2010), through her work *Mari,* for the first time, brought out the events of the war from a personal and Naga's eye view besides describing the devastation caused during the battle, especially in Kohima, where the main battle was fought in the Naga Hills.

Charles Chasie and Harry Fecitt (2017) give a detailed account of the Battle of Kohima and the role played by both the Japanese and British armies. Though to the Nagas, the battle lasted a few months, the book describes how the Nagas played a crucial part in the War. It is one of the first extensive literary works on the Battle of Kohima from the Naga perspective. It illustrates the personal stories of those who participated in the war as combatants and non-combatants and how their lives were affected by it. Oral accounts of those who witnessed the events of the battle have been recorded.

In recent years, Naga scholars have taken an interest in documenting various aspects of the Battle of Kohima from a local perspective. In his work, *Battle of the Allied Forces and the Japanese-INA Alliance in the Naga Hills 1942-1945: Response and Participation of the Nagas*, Metha (2018) discusses how the Japanese and INA faced the Allied forces besides giving an account of the Naga relation with the Japanese and Subhas Chandra Bose-INA force. Rhakho (2019), in *The Battle of Kohima (1944) and its consequences on Naga Society*, discusses the consequences of the Battle of Kohima on the socio-economic and political life of the people. He also deliberates on the rise of Naga nationalism while including a local perspective. Nagi's (2019) *Reminiscing the Battle of Kohima 1944* is an extensive work on individual accounts of

those who witnessed and participated in the battle in various capacities. He has attempted to record the voices of almost all villages in the Naga hills that were affected by the Japanese invasion. Ezung's (2021) *A Historical Account of the Battle of Kohima*, is an extensive work that closely examines the events of the battle, scribing how the British and Japanese brought the Second World War to Naga land and collaborating the study with the Naga oral accounts.

The Japanese trained themselves to combat challenging terrains and preferred establishing their bases under thick forests. In a document prepared by the US Military Observers Group in India and the Joint Intelligence Collection Agency in October (1944), in *Tactics and Strategy of the Japanese Army in the Burma Campaign: From November 1943 to September 1944*, information is provided by American officers in the area of operations of the British 14 Army through personal observation, interview and official reports. It gives a detailed account of Japanese tactics and procedures concerning activities such as general positioning, camouflage, ammunition storage, local protection, air defence, communications, gun emplacement and disposal of casualties. It also provides information on terrain analysis, trafficability, and weather.

Japanese counterintelligence successfully concealed the attack against Imphal and Kohima and surprised the British. The Japanese took several measures to maintain this secrecy. They employed natives to work in defence positions, and 'secret operating teams' to spread propaganda. A detailed account of the battles fought in the Imphal and Kohima area from 8 March 1944 to 23 June 1944 was recorded by Major William J. Higgins et al. (1984) from a military point of view in their work, *CSI Battlebook 10-C: Imphal-Kohima*. The battle book gives an overview of the terrain, climate and weather, artificial structures, equipment and supplies and troops. It gives detailed accounts of the British and Japanese armies, their divisions, weapons, air supply and the strategies carried out to fight the battles.

The Japanese had occupied most of South-East Asia by the end of 1943. The first units of the Japanese 15 Army crossed the inhospitable border of Burma and invaded it on 6 March 1944.

A comprehensive insight into a major turning point in World War II, Edwards (2009), in *Kohima: The Furthest Battle: The Story of the Japanese Invasion of India in 1944 and the 'British-Indian Thermopylae',* describes the Japanese invasion of India. It provides a definite analysis of the battle of Kohima. The book also gives a detailed illustration of the battles fought and is a valuable source for understanding Japanese plans and tactics.

Lebra (2008), in *The Indian National Army and Japan*, a reprint of *Jungle Alliance: Japan and the Indian National Army* , by Donald Moore (1971), is a work detailing the beginnings of the INA and how it was part of the Japanese military intelligence operation under Major Iwachi Fujiwara. It also highlights the political career of Subash Chandra Bose and how the INA was directed and enlarged under his leadership from 1943, with its mission of *Azad Hind,* the Provisional Government of Free India, until the collapse of Japan and INA in August 1945. The volume deals with the interactions between the Japanese Army and the INA, incorporating oral accounts alongside published and unpublished works from India and Japan.

Mutaguchi's elevation of the British position in north-east India revealed that the three strategic targets were Imhpal, the mountain town of Kohima and the huge supply base at Dimapur. If Kohima were captured, Imphal would be cut off, and Dimapur would be secured. Capturing this massive depot would not only blow the British ability to defend Imphal but feed his army. However, the British employed new defensive techniques, which forced the Japanese to withdraw and run short of supplies. Robert Lyman (2010, 2011), in *Kohima 1944: The Battle that saved India* and *Japan's Last Bid for Victory: The Invasion of India 1944* describes how the Battle of Kohima was fought intensely against the tough Japanese, besides sharing the memories of the Nagas of the event. The book also gives an account of Japanese sufferings during the battles through the oral narratives of Japanese war veterans.

In their work, *Tales of Japanese Soldiers* Tamayama, K. & Nunneley, J. (2001), voices of Japanese soldiers during the Second World War are captured, giving a preview of soldiers'

experiences during their campaign. Experiences of soldiers who embarked the inhospitable terrain of Burma, their involvement in the battles of Imphal and Kohima and the horrific scenes during their retreat is well discussed by the soldiers themselves. The oral narrations of these 62 soldiers are invaluable in understanding the Japanese perspective of the Burma campaign.

Every war impacts not only the military but also the majority of the civilian population in the affected area, who often bear the brunt of the consequences. The voices of those who witnessed such events are often put in the background, though their memories of the events trail with them their whole life. Oral narratives have now taken a significant role in research in unfolding their journey as witnesses of the horrid events. Studs Terkel (1984), in his *"The Good War": An Oral History of World War Two,* records the oral narratives of Americans, Russians, Japanese and Germans who witnessed World War II as soldiers, farmers, schemers, factory workers and nurses. His work gives insight into the importance of the voices of wartime experiences in reconstructing the past.

The Second World War brought devastating consequences, and Joana Bourke (2001), in *The Second World War: A People's History,* describes it as a war that affected people of different races, class and status. The War was a 'total war', not sparing civilians who had almost no role in contributing to the causes of the war. The conflicting ideologies brought about drastic suffering to people. Bourke comments, "Today, there is an even more pressing reason to speak and write about such events: a new generation is among us who possess little or no knowledge of this war. We are at risk of 'forgetting'. As the survivors gradually die, their memory is being overtaken by stories told by the victors" (p. 6).

Falgout et al. (2008) found that some sixty years after the end of World War II, Micronesians still spoke about their wartime experiences as a time of profound transition, and the period of "the greatest hardship" their societies have endured. These islands, ruled by Japan for decades before the war, contested in the bloody Central Pacific campaigns of 1943–1945. The

Micronesians were later governed by the United States and its people played a vital role in the military history of the conflict. The story of the northern Pacific theatre, and most of the global war, is archived as the record of the major combatants' experiences. Like other indigenous peoples, Micronesians were "missing in action" from the written accounts of World War II. During 1990–1991, Falgout et al. collected approximately four hundred oral histories from Micronesian elders in their extensive work, *Memories of War: Micronesians in the Pacific War*. Their field research, conducted with the help of Micronesian research assistants and translators, focused on the Marshall and Caroline Islands and included accounts from men and women of different statuses, educational backgrounds, and wartime work assignments. They also used existing oral history collections by other researchers from Palau, Guam, the Northern Marianas, Kiribati, and Nauru.

The Second World War brought immense devastation to people worldwide, and profoundly affected men, women, and children. Despite having no role in the conflict, children were among those most impacted, as they carried the memories of war throughout their lives. Wolfgang W.E. Samuel, who experienced the war as a German child, published his personal war experiences in 2002 under the title *German Boy*. He subsequently recorded the accounts of twenty-seven men and women from across Europe who also experienced the war as children in his collection, *The War of Our Childhood: Memories of World War II*. Samuel (2002) realized that each narrator's experience was distinct and unique. Another significant theme in Samuel's work is the loss of innocence, as children were abruptly exposed to the violence of war, ending their childhoods prematurely. Samuel's work offers a new perspective on the war, amplifying the voices of children to provide a clearer picture of this global event.

1.8.Statement of the Problem

Though much work has been produced on the Second World War and the Battle of Kohima, very few have worked on the topic from Naga's perspective. More so, no proper research nor documentation have been undertaken in the Chakhesang Naga area except for Jessami, in the

Ukhrul district of Manipur, where a fierce battle was fought between the 31 Japanese Division consisting of Divisional HQ 2/138, 3/138, 1/124, 2/124 infantry Battalions and units of 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment against the 1st Battalion Assam Regiment consisting of the 'B' Company, 'C' Company and 'D' Company. After the battle at Jessami, a section of the Japanese Army moved towards the Chizami and Pfutsero range of the Phek district, towards Chakabama as they marched to Kohima. Another section of the Japanese journeyed from Phekedzumi (Phek) towards Nerhema crossing and halting at the Chakhesang villages along the Tizu and Chozuba range of the Phek district.

By the time the Japanese reached the Chakhesang land, there was shortage of supplies and they relied on the locals for their basic needs. It has been estimated that the Eastern Angami area, that is, the present Chakhesang inhabited area, played a prominent role in serving to the needs of not only those who were stationed in the district but also became an imperative supplier of food to those who fought in the actual battle at Kohima. As such, the interactions between the Japanese and the locals in the Phek district were unique from the rest of the area where the battle was fought. The oral narratives of those who witnessed the event reveal extensive interactions between the Chakhesang Nagas and the Japanese troops. Though some served the British and supported them, there were others in the Chakhesang Naga villages who sided with the Japanese and the Indian National Army (INA). Although the Japanese stay in the district was brief, the locals have identified specific sites under Japanese occupation and given a local name to the sites: *Japan Riba* (Japanese battlefield) at Chozuba, a field hospital at milestone 30, Pfutsero, known to the locals as *Japan Bedie* (Japanese headquarters), and a cave called *Japan Cave*, which served as a natural storehouse for Japanese weapons. These and other strategic locations in the Chakhesang Naga area can be further identified and documented.

Charles Chasie and Harry Feccit (2007), in their book, *'The Road to Kohima: The Naga Experience*', describe how the War was experienced and witnessed in the Naga inhabited areas.

However, an intensified and in-depth study of the War can be conducted, particularly among the Chakhesang Nagas, as there are areas and narratives that can further be explored and unfolded. The book's authors have also suggested scopes for the Nagas to study the Battle of Kohima as part of the history of their people (p. 20).

1.9. Significance of the Study

The Battle of Kohima has earned its recognition as a significant event in the history of the Nagas, British and Japanese. Many works have been published on the events of battle; however, most works were written by Western authors who reflected their perspective and attributed the Allied victory to Slim's military prowess and leadership abilities. During the battle, the Chakhesang Nagas rendered considerable logistic support to the Japanese. Extensive research can be conducted among the Chakhesang Nagas, as their contributions have been rarely mentioned, aside from a few individuals who fought as British soldiers. The Chakhesang Nagas who witnessed and played a role in the event, remember it as a significant and extraordinary experience of their lives.

The Chakhesang Naga region, once considered an insignificant area under the British Raj, became a battleground and a Japanese hideout during the Second World War. Almost every household was affected in some way. While some residents were displaced, those who stayed behind became logistical supporters, providing commodities to the Japanese stationed in the area and those who were in the battlefield, besides serving as guides, interpreters, and labourers. Despite the significant logistical support, the people provided to the Japanese during the Second World War, their contributions have not been remembered nor acknowledged. Additionally, with decades having passed since the event, the voices of many have perished unheard. The present research aims to highlight the recollections and memories of the unforgettable event through the oral testimonies of the few living witnesses.

1.10. Objective of the Research

The research aims to study the Japanese invasion in the Chakhesang Naga region during the Second World War through the following objectives:

1. To document the oral histories of the Chakhesang Nagas relating to the events of the Second World War.

2. To identify and locate strategic Japanese occupation and activity sites in the study area.

3. To study the impact of the war on the Chakhesang Nagas.

1.11. Research Hypothesis

1. The Chakhesang Nagas provided material and logistical support to the Japanese when they intruded into their areas.

2. During the Japanese incursion into the Naga Hills, their bases around the Pfutsero area served as an important command base during the Battle of Kohima.

1.12. Methodology

The study area selected for the research included the Chakhesang Naga inhabited region under Phek District, Nagaland and Ukhrul district, Manipur. Historical information was gathered from the primary sources who witnessed and experienced the event. This was done through the documentation of oral narrations using structured and unstructured interview techniques. Personal observation and discussion were also employed during field studies in the data collection process. To incorporate an inclusive approach, experiences of men, women, and children were collected, reflecting the diversity in age among the witnesses. Additionally, the study recorded the experiences and viewpoints of those involved as participants, non-participants or mere observers

of the event. Individuals who served the British and Japanese in various capacities were also identified and interviewed to provide a comprehensive perspective.

Strategic sites of Japanese occupation, such as battle and combat locations, field hospital, patient collection point, defence posts, ration collection and delivery points, and villages that interacted significantly with Japanese soldiers, were identified and thoroughly explored. Any remains or objects related to the study discovered during these explorations were carefully analysed and documented.

Literary sources were obtained from various sources to support and corroborate the primary data. Libraries and Archives were visited to gather relevant data; alongside digital libraries and repositories. These sources included historical works related to the study, military reports and documents, administrative and statistical reports, tour diaries, gazetteers, biographies, and autobiographies. Additionally, journals, articles, newspapers, and audio-visual materials were consulted to provide further context and depth to the study.

STUDY AREA

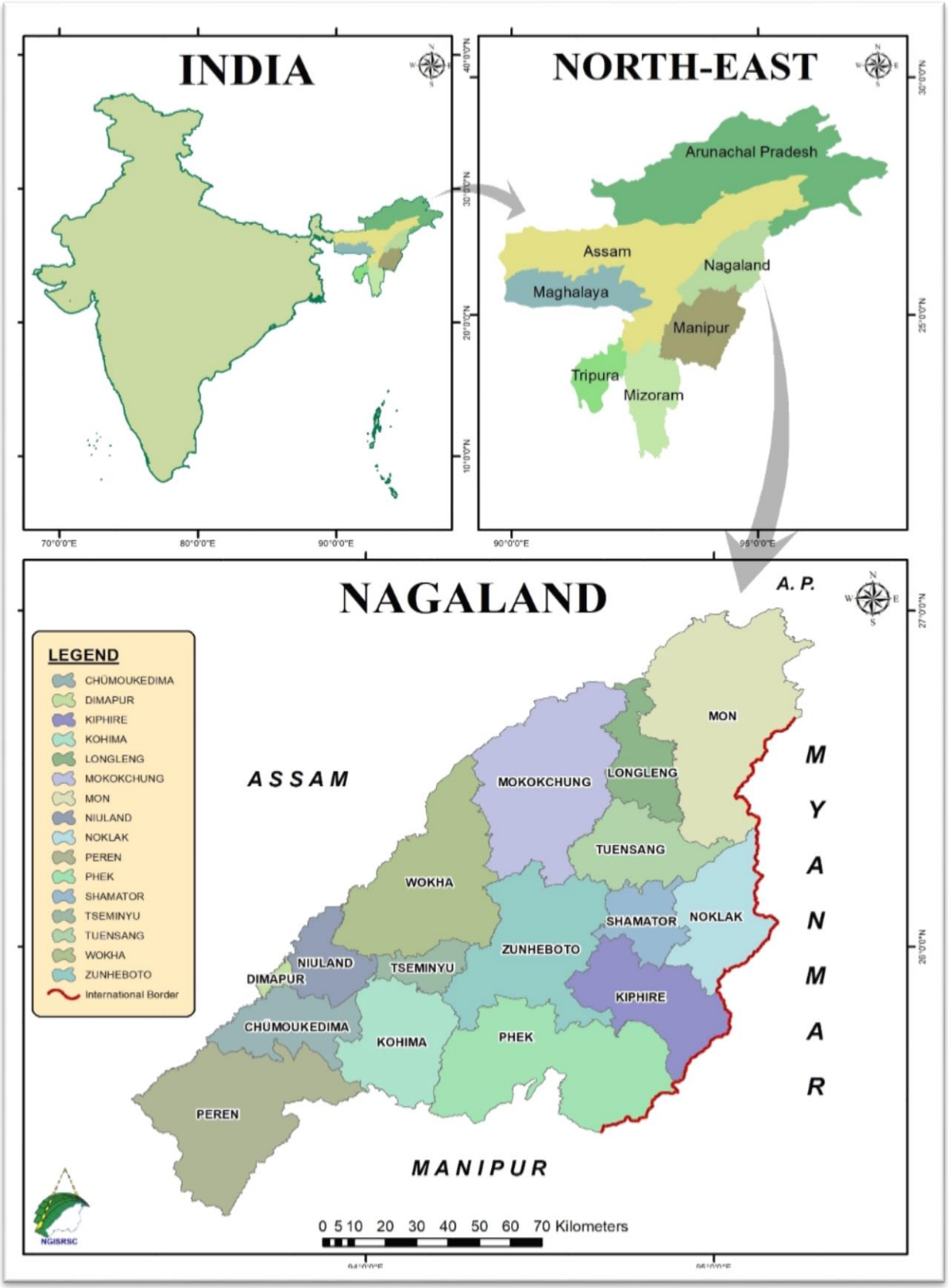

Figure 1: Map showing Districts of Nagaland
Source: Nagaland GIS & Remote Sensing Centre

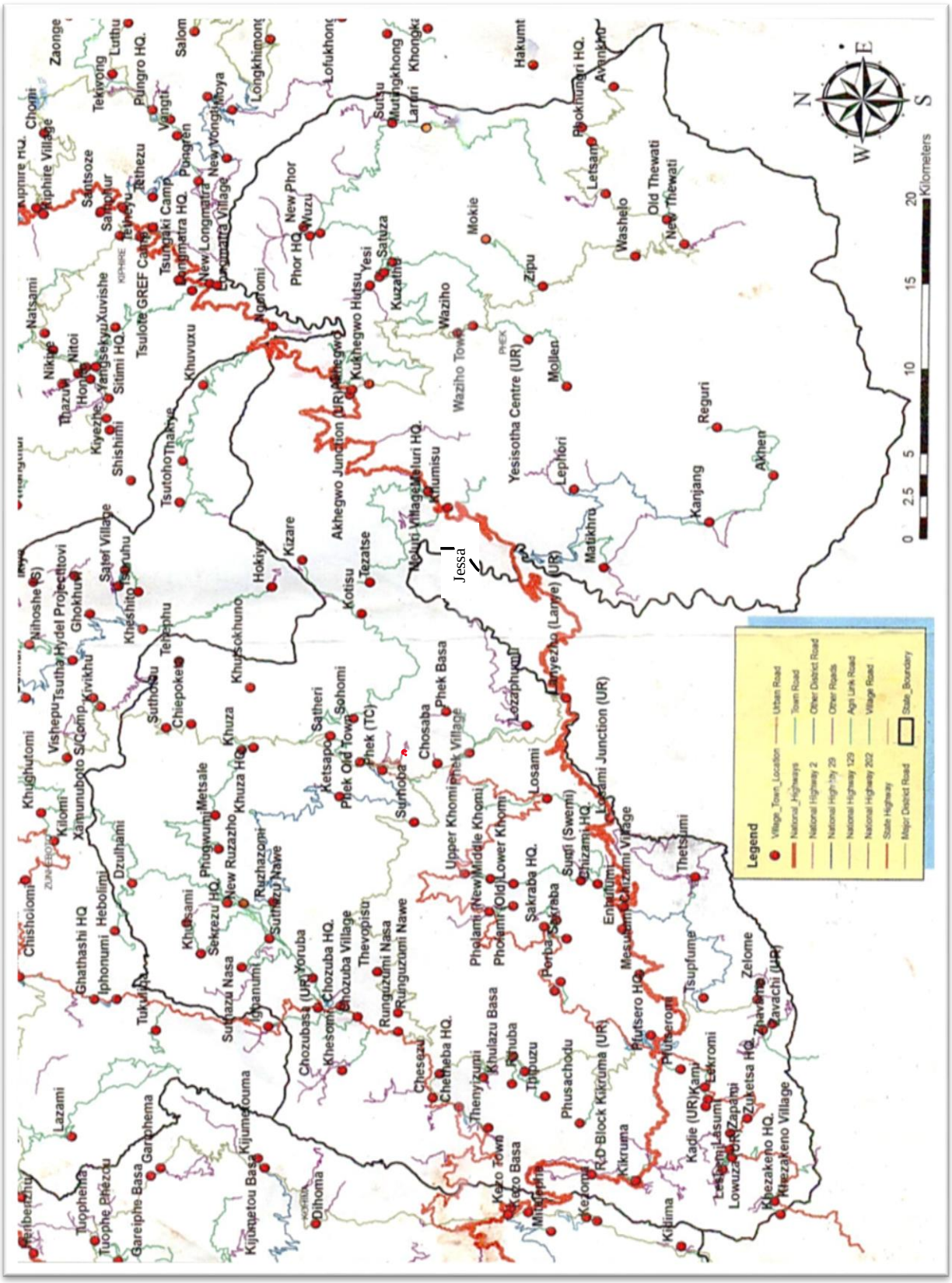

Figure 2: Map showing Chakhesang inhabited areas
Source: Nagaland GIS & Remote Sensing Centre

CHAPTER 2

THE JAPANESE PRELUDE

In a letter written by Lt. Col. G.L. Hyde, District Commissioner of Chittagong Hills Tract to J.P. Mills, Secretary to the governor of Assam, in July 1940, on the Second World War, Hyde noted, “They are certainly totally unaware of its magnitude and its possible repercussions on their own lives, and I have felt that attempts to enlighten them might do more harm than good” (Assam State Archives, 1940 File 184-189, as cited in Saigal, 2022, p. 13). The magnitude that Hyde mentioned was of the developments that were taking place globally and what was to be anticipated. The period between 1940 and 1943 witnessed a series of global events. In the West, encouraged by the success of the German army in Europe, Hitler decided to invade Britain between July - October 1940, which took the form of fighting over the skies of Britain between the RAF and Germany’s Luftwaffe. The RAF eventually defeated the German Air Force in the Battle of Britain, and Hitler postponed his plan to invade. In the east, the relationship between Germany and the Soviets was strained. With its expansion policy of *Lebensraum*, Germany targeted at invading the Eastern countries, including the Soviet Union. In spite of the policy of non-aggression, it was formulating plans to invade Russia. Russia, on the other hand, had occupied the whole of Lithuania, although it had been under the sphere of Germany according to the agreement of 1939. Diplomats from both countries delegated, but during the negotiations, Germany built up an extensive military force in Eastern Europe. By then, Germany had conquered Northern, Western and Southern Europe, leaving Russia alone. In a series of moves, Moscow attempted to appease Germany despite warnings from Britain and Japan.

On 22 June 1941, Germany invaded Russia under the codename Barbarossa (Peel et al., 2022, pp. 33-40). The Soviet counter offence was launched in November 1942 in the battle of Stalingrad, considered one of the fiercest combats of the Second World War. In North Africa, the Italians and Germans carried out offensive moves but were soon defeated by the British and

American armies in 1943. On the other hand, by the end of April 1942 the Japanese military successfully occupied Hong Kong, the Philippines, and the central and southwestern Pacific. Thailand and French Indo-China also came under Japanese dominion as part of its fulfilment of the Greater East-Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Henig, 1985/2005, p.41). After a long string of Japanese victories in the Pacific, the United States, in June 1942, triumphed in the Battle of Midway. Following this, a series of battles were fought in the Pacific from August 1942 to February 1943 through Allied naval aggressive counterattacks against Japan. The war was escalating, as were the involvement of the great powers.

As per Hyde's letter in 1940, Mills was alarmed because the Chittagong district and Naga Hills were incomparable. The Chittagong Hills district was a well-administered territory of the British Raj, while many from the province (Naga Hills) were ignorant of the possibility of the war reaching closer to home. The north-eastern Indian states and the Naga Hills, in particular, were a much more excluded province of the British dominion. If the war was to reach India, there were possibilities for it to enter from the North-Eastern Front, being closely bordered by Burma. The Japanese invasion and occupation of Burma in 1942 increased these possibilities. On the eve of the War, two-thirds of Naga Hills remained unadministered, with large areas such as Mon, Tuensang and half of Zunheboto unadministered and entirely out of communications (Jamir, as cited in Saigal, 2022, p. 14). The British administrative pattern in the Naga hills could not be compared to the system followed in the other Indian provinces. The categorization of the hills into zones, the non-interference policy in the traditional practices of the locals although under administered areas, and the slow acceptance of the British educational policy accounted for a people who were still culturally distinct and ignorant in the modern context. The Nagas were basically unprepared for a war in almost every sense.

While major advances and changes were taking place globally, the Nagas led a life that was secluded from the modern influence and adhering to the traditional system of administration

and religion. Christianity had been brought to the Nagas by the American missionaries, who also introduced Western education. Allen (1905) stated that in the British administered Naga Hills, only 4 per cent of children attended schools in 1903-04. He further commented that the "Nagas have not yet learnt the advantages of education, and a certain amount of judicious pressure is required to induce them to send their children to be taught" (p. 68). In the Chakhesang Naga inhabited areas, the attitude of the locals somewhat reciprocated with Allen's comment even on the eve of the Second World War. While studying the Angami tribe, Hutton (1921) notes how the tribe was divided into several distinct groups. He remarks, "East of the Viswema group and wedged in between the Chakrima, Tengima, and Memi are several villages known as "Kezami" or "Kezama," of which Kezakenoma and Kezabama are the principal villages. These Kezama villages, although in external respects like other Angami villages, have a language and to some extent customs of their own, though the men, at any rate, speak the Angami as well as Kezami tongue" (p. 18). Geographically, the then Eastern Angamis were more secluded from the Angamis of Kohima, Khonoma and Viswema. Being bordered by the uncontrolled areas of Naga Hills, interference and interaction with the other Angami groups or other tribes was an uncommon phenomenon. According to Kedounyi Mero of Lekromi, "Before the 'Japan War', British officials would occasionally visit our village, but their stays were brief. We lived undisturbed, following the traditions of our forefathers. Our lives were carefree before the war."

The British followed a policy of non-interference in the internal workings of the tribes of Naga Hills. The Naga Hills were categorized as 'Excluded Areas' and thus, omitted from the control of the Provincial Legislature. Bower (1950) states, "The object of this was neither repression nor artificial preservation of primitive cultures; it was designed to protect the hillman from exploitation, to reduce to a minimum the bureaucracy with which he had to contend, and to cushion him against the impact of civilization until he was educated to withstand alone" (p.2). Having the least exposure to the outside world, most of the Nagas were unaware and uninterested in the world's affairs till the initial years of the Second World War. The few educated who were

aware, never comprehended that a war of such magnitude would affect them in the years that followed. Another British policy for leaving the Naga Hills undisturbed was due to the densely forested terrain that defended the British Raj from the east. Haimendorf (1938/2004) comments, "The Naga Hills were for long one of the least accessible parts of British India and until the war with Japan was necessitated the construction of strategic roads, they formed an effective barrier between India and Burma" (p. 2).

2.1. Chakhesang Nagas on the eve of the Second World War

Unlike a few tribes of the Naga Hills, the Chakhesang Nagas, had very little contact with the British in the initial years of the Second World War. Although the area had been demarcated as British-administered, life was much undisturbed and secluded politically, economically and socially. Some changes were brought about in the religious and educational sphere due to Christianity and government initiatives. However, life was fundamentally simple and firmly rooted in the traditional way of life, the only lifestyle known to the people. Haimemdorf (1939/2004), in his travels to the Eastern Angami villages of Thenyzumi, Cheswezumi and Sathazumi with Mills in 1936, remarks how undisturbed these villages were and that villagers communicated with them through gestures. He stated, "the Eastern Angamis come so seldom in touch with outsiders that very few of them know any language but their own" (p.15). Under such circumstances, when war invaded the Chakhesang Naga territory, its people were confused and amazed simultaneously.

2.1.1. Political Life

The period from 1881- 1947 was a period of consolidation of British dominion in the Naga Hills. However, the British did not bring any significant changes to the administrative system. The Nagas were left to administer the villages according to their customs and traditions with only 'Loose Control' (Rustmoji,1983, p. 26). According to Sema (1991), "Loose Control means that the government did not interfere in the internal affairs of areas but controlled headhunting from

time to time and advised the chiefs through Deputy Commissioner Naga Hills to live in peace" (p.26). The village chief and the customary laws played a significant role in all village functions. In the Chakhesang Naga villages, the system of chieftainship was not strictly followed. In times of war, the best and the strongest were chosen to lead the village. All domestic affairs and disputes were settled by a council headed by the oldest member of the village, often selected by the village community. To Quote Sir James Johnson, who served as the Political Agent of Naga Hills in 1874-75, "The Nagas are republicans, and their chiefs, are elected, and though they often have great influence, they are in theory, only *primus inter pares,* and are liable at any time to be displaced. Practically they often remain in office for years and are greatly respected" (as cited in Venuh, 2005, p. 18). The *Mewu/Kemuvo* was the religious and administrative head of the village. He played a significant role in all the functions and activities of the village.

The formation of the Naga Hills district in 1866 necessitated the need to correspond with the hill people. The difficulty in establishing communications resulted in the introduction of the experimental institution of *Dobashias* in 1869-70. They were officially called 'Residentiary Delegates' and were representatives of the critical Angami villages, who resided permanently in the district headquarters and accompanied the Political Agent during his tours (Chankiri, 1999, p. 133). As the institution became useful, the system was made permanent in 1881. The primary function of the *Dobashias* was to act as interpreters; as the Hindi word, *Dobashias* means 'a man of two words'; the common usage of the term among the Nagas was *Dobashis* (Ghosh, 1982, p. 152). The institution of *Gaunbura,* or village headman, was also appointed in 1881 in the Angami area. Sema (1991) states that these chiefs who acted as native leaders, had a role that was "multifarious yet simple". They collected the annual house tax, settled civil and criminal cases according to their respective tribal customs and established practices. They were also responsible for the maintenance of law and order within their respective jurisdiction (p. 32). Although the British introduced institutions for the efficient administration of the Naga Hills, minimal changes were brought in the internal administration system, and traditional customs and practices still

played a prominent role. After the Montague- Chelmsford Reforms of 1919, the Naga Hills were categorized as 'Backward Tracts', according to which the Government of Assam would be responsible for administrative control of the Area. In 1937, the Naga Hills District came to be known as the Excluded Areas of the Government of Assam under Section 91(1) of the Government of India (Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas) Order, 1936. Under Section 92 of the Act, the Governor was given the charge to administer the area through the Deputy Commissioner at Kohima. This Act's provision continued until 26 January 1950 (Luthra, 1974 pp. 8-9). The *Dobashis* began to play a protuberant role at the village level, though they were initially appointed as interpreters. They decided cases according to customary laws at the *Dobashi* courts, and the British administrators often confirmed the decision of the *Dobashis*. This system was prevalent until the Second World War (Sema, 1986, p. 170). The *Dobashis* were an indispensable agency in the administrative system. Mitchell and McGuire (1943) states:

> They (interpreters) are a very important link in the administration generally and in fact are described as the very backbone of the administration. The ability to interpret is the least important of their duties. The interpreter is the eye, ears and tongue of the district officer and is the expert advisor on variations of tribal and customary law… He sets the tone of the administration as the ordinary villager sees it. He is a member of the *corpe d' elite"* (NAI, File No. 21-2/48-O.S. II).

Thus, on the eve of the Second World War, the Chakhesang villages, though under British Raj, lived a life of familiarity, firmly rooted in traditional customs and system of administration. With significantly less exposure to the outside world, the war brought new experiences, and the people were amazed by the technologies of warfare. Relating to their reaction, when they saw a plane for the first time on the eve of the war, they fled from their fields, fearing the 'huge bird' flying over them. The next day was declared as *Genna*, a forbidden non-working day. Living under such circumstances, the Nagas, particularly the Chakhesang Nagas experienced and participated

in one of the fiercest battles of the Second World War; an event they could never erase from their memories.

2.1.2 Socio-economic Life

Like most tribal societies, the Chakhesang Naga tribals lived in a social organisation where norms and values played a potent role. This kept the tribe together, whereby culture, customs and conventions were preserved and passed on through oral tradition from one generation to the next. The sole means of achievement among the men of the villages was to earn a high social status and be responsible citizens. This meant they devoted most of their time to hard labour, accumulating paddy, and preparing themselves to host the Feast of Merit. Hosting the Feast of Merit was the ultimate goal, signifying an upturn to a higher social and economic status. The achiever displayed his achievements through certain privileges like being entitled to wear certain privileged shawls, erecting megalithic stone/s in the village vicinity and adorning his residence with *kechyke* (horned house). Besides these, one had to show prowess in warrior and hunting skills. The social norms were highly valued and adhered to. The three main principles that were strictly followed were *menyie (*shame, indignity), *metha (*dread, fear) and *kenü* (taboo). As the village community was a close-knit society, any disobedience of the decrees and prescribed customary practices was greatly dreaded (Mero, 2012 p.58, Kuzhale Zawe-50 Mehpfo Nie- Seweda).

The Nagas neither practiced caste system nor slavery, but members of the village were divided into several clans that sometimes came into disputes with each other. As most Chakhesang Naga villages constantly engaged in tribal warfare, villages were often located at hill tops, which were heavily fenced with thorny bushes for the purpose of defence. Johnstone (1869) observed that “blood feuds were common among all the hill tribes, but the system was carried to excess among the Angamis. Life for life was the rule, and until each of the opposing parties had lost an equal number, peace was impossible” (pp. 27-36). All men were, thus, expected to be skilled in

warfare. The women were often engaged in agricultural activities, and if they stayed home, they were expected to weave, dry paddy or corn, and carry out daily household chores.

Before the proper function of the Deputy Commissioner's Court, all disputes were settled by a council of elders. They extensively deliberated the matter under dispute among themselves, the parties, and the general public until a settlement was reached. Established customs governed the handling of offences. Captain Butler observed that, "Every man follows the dictates of his own will, a form of the purest democracy which it is very difficult to conceive of as existing even for a single day; and yet that it does exist here is an undeniable fact" (as cited in Hutton, 1921, p. 143).

The economy of the people was primarily agrarian. On the eve of the Second World War, trade was carried in a crude form, and money circulation was barely known. Most transactions were made through the barter system. When the Chakhesang Nagas came under British colonisation, money circulation became visible but only in a small proportion. The need for money was not necessitated due to the people's self-sufficiency. All basic necessities were produced by members of the village. Hutton (1921) observed that other than cultivation, the most important industries were weaving, practised by all Angami women and black smithy among men. Black smithy was practised by individuals (two or three or more in most large villages) and they lived entirely on it or combined it with the cultivation. The principal productions were spear-heads and butts, daos, axes, and spade-hoes and knives besides sickles and a few awls and drill points (p. 11).

The incorporation of the Naga Hills under British administration and establishing authority in Kohima, brought some level of unsophisticated peace and order. This facilitated some progress in trade with markets and *hats* organised in Kohima and Dimapur. However, the percentage of the Naga population participating in trade was minimal. The Marwaris and Mohummadams traders opened a few shops in Kohima, Samaguting and Dimapur, however, the district had no regular markets, *hats,* or fairs (Sema, 1991, pp. 126-129). Allen (1906) remarked that main commodities in the markets included salt, oil, umbrella and thread, however, the Nagas came to the markets

only for salt, thread and brassware. In the initial years of trade, trade was carried through the barter system (p. 60). The participation of the Nagas in the First World War as labourers for the allied forces abroad, paved way for money economy to the Naga Hills. The returnees were remunerated in cash for their services. Furthermore, Nagas were employed in various government services such as *Dobashis*, school teachers, coolies etc., which further accelerated the spread of the cash economy (Sema, 1991, p. 129).

With the construction of the railway in the early 20th century, road connectivity improved, and bridle roads were constructed to connect the districts. However, in spite of the various developmental activities formulated by the government, trade and commerce were in its initial stages, and the money economy was still unpopular. While the colonial administration encouraged the Nagas to engage in basic trade and commerce, there were no large-scale business transactions. Trade activity was limited to a small group of individuals and a restricted range of goods. In a statement by Robert Reid, Governor of Assam, to the Viceroy of India in May 1940, he reported:

> Coinage is fairly plentiful in our Naga villages bordering the plains, but the use of it is only spreading gradually and it becomes progressively scarcer and trade becomes more entirely a matter of barter the further one goes East. In the tribal area there are tracts where coin has never even been seen and even payment to carriers, for expeditions has still to be made in kind. Even in our administered districts, there are areas where coin is so scarce that in order to obtain Rs. 2 for their house tax, crowds of Nagas wander about the plains in every cold weather looking for odd jobs they can do (Linlithgow Papers, 1940, as cited in Sema, 1991, p. 135-136).

As the observation made in Reid's statement, most of the Chakhesang Nagas had very little exposure to coinage on the eve of the Battle of Kohima. Unlike other tribes, who went to the plains to earn money for the house tax, the Chakhesang Nagas were unaware of such opportunities. Opportunities were sought when the British hewed bridle roads in the area, which utilized the local labourers. Around 1942, existing bridle paths were expanded to jeep tracks as the

British made preparations for a possible Japanese invasion through the Naga Hills. Many were employed as labourers for road expansion and porters to carry British supplies up to the Burma border. Villagers were divided and assigned work along designated perimetres. In this manner, almost all Chakhesang Naga villages were also made to engage in the British war efforts. This was the only way most people involved in the money economy. H.J. Mitchell and R.E. Mc. Guire (1943), while surveying the hills of Assam in 1943, reported that were three types of roads in hilly areas: main roads managed by the Public Works Department (P.W.D.), bridle paths or key frontier tracks, and regular village paths overseen by the district officer and the Civil Works Department (C.W.D.). A significant benefit of having villages maintain the tracks and paths in their areas was that they receive funds which helped them pay taxes. They also observed that in poorer villages, cash was scarce or almost non-existent (NAI, File. No. 21-2/48-O.S. II).

2.1.3. Religion and Education

Before the advent of Christianity, the only religion known to the Chakhesang Nagas was a form of animism rooted in traditional beliefs and rituals. The people believed in a Supreme Being called *Rophü,* the creator, giver and righter of wrongs. Agriculture being the primary activity, rituals and festivals revolved around agricultural practices. The *Mewo/ Kemuvo*, was the religious head and also the first performer of all agricultural activities. With social norms closely intertwined with religious practices, drawing a line of distinction between them is challenging. Nonetheless, it is evident that all significant events, whether religious, social, or personal, were connected to rituals and ceremonies.

Before the introduction of formal education, the young were imparted basic learning through the *khroke* and *lüke* (male and female dormitory). Here, the young would be taught the essential skills they were expected to possess. The girls who were expected to be married women one day were empowered with skills that they would require to fulfil as dutiful wives. At the same time, boys were taught the workings of the social structure. They also received education to

improve their hunting and warrior skills and engaged in traditional games like wrestling, which was the most valued sport of all. Life lessons and social norms were taught in the *khroke* and *lüke* through folklore, folk songs and dances, and legends. Concisely, oral and practical transmission of culture and tradition was executed through this institution.

In the Naga Context, western education and Christianity reciprocate with each other. In 1836, Major Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, invited the American Baptist Mission Foreign Society to undertake a 'Mission of Civilization' among the warlike tribes on the Assam Frontier (Bareh, 1970, p. 126). The first missionary to the Nagas was Rev. Miles Bronson of the American Baptist Mission, who also established the first mission school at Namsang (now in Arunachal Pradesh). However, Bronson was compelled to abandon the mission in 1841 due to an illness. It was only in 1869 that Rev. E. Clark came to the Naga Hills to continue the mission of Bronson (Changkiri, 1999, pp. 175-176). Through his initiative, Christianity and education progressed simultaneously among the Ao Nagas. Christianity was brought to the Angami Nagas by Rev. C.D. King, an American missionary who also initiated the Mission School at Kohima in 1881. The Angamis were among the later adopters of Christianity and western education. A. W. Davis, Deputy Commissioner, Naga Hills district, while reporting on the Naga tribes in the Census of India, 1891, commented, "There has been now for many years a missionary at Kohima. The Angamis, however, who are in many respects the most advanced and independent of all Naga tribes, show no disposition towards being converted to Christianity" (p. 250). The acceptance to the new religion was even more unreceptive among the Chakhesang Nagas. The first Mission school in the Chakhesang Naga region was established in 1913 at Chozuba (Chozuba Village Baptist Church 125 years Seweda, 2000). However, the development of churches and schools progressed slowly. In spite of the extended support of the British government towards the maintenance of schools, the growth of government schools remained very gradual. According to the North-East Frontier Agency Report of June 1944:

> No education policy has yet been laid down, and the matter will require very careful consideration. Our present system is clearly gravely defective when applied to primitive tribes, for it tends to affect the individual more fitted for his community, to separate him from it and cause him to search a living elsewhere with the result that such good as he may have received is not ordinarily passed on by example to his fellow villagers (as cited in Changkiri, 1999, p. 195).

Still very accustomed to the traditional lifestyle, majority of the Chakhesang Nagas did not see the significance of formal education till the outbreak of the Battle of Kohima in 1944. In its initial years, Christianity and formal education were viewed as an impediment and an adversary to traditional customs and culture.

2.2. Exodus of Burmese Refugees into Naga Hills 1942

In 1942, the Chakhesang Nagas briefly experienced the effects of the Japanese invasion of Burma. By the close of 1941, Japan extended its war in the Far East, South East Asia and the Pacific by occupying Hongkong, Malayan peninsular, Indonesia, Thailand and the Celebs. Japan's next move was targeted against Burma. The first significant success in Burma was accomplished at Moulimein on 30 January 1942. Following this, the Japanese inflicted several defeats against the British, resulting in the British retreating into India (Edward, 2013, pp. 45-46). In Burma, civilians, comprising non-essential British, Anglo-Indian, Anglo-Burmese, Indians, Burmese who felt vulnerable, and other nationalities left Burma by plane, ship, rail and road, many of whom reached India. Along the Arakan route, about 100,000 to 200,000 refugees reached India (Edwards, 2013, p. 50). However, when the escape routes in the Arakan closed due to the Japanese invasion, the only passage to India was through the Patkai Range. In great hardship, men, women, and children travelled through the Chindwin valley to Tamu, reaching Manipur. In the north, refugees crossed the Chaukan Pass, reaching upper Assam, while some reached India through the Lohit Valley (Tinker, 1965, pp. 1-15). The influx of Burmese refugees was also witnessed in the Naga

Hills, many of whom were of Burmese origin. The refugees came along the route the Japanese were to embark shortly.

The Burmese refugees who reached the Naga Hills were primarily women and children. According to Kelhizulo Mero of Chizami, only a few men guided the women and children. The condition of the refugees was despicable. Escaping Japanese aggression and atrocities, many Burmese reached the borders of north-east India. Aware of the arrival of refugees from Burma, the British set up a refugee camp at Dimapur, the area known as 'Burma Camp' to date. The Nagas who encountered the Burmese refugees were sympathetic towards the women and children who travelled hundreds of miles (about 650 miles between Rangoon and Imphal, India). In the Naga Hills, the people of Kanjang guided the refugees to Jessami, where the latter's men guided them to Chizami. When the people of Phek village heard about the Burmese refugees, they travelled to Jessami, provided them with food and water, and assisted in carrying their belongings for a short distance (Nagi, 2019, p. 88). In this manner, Burmese refugees were rendered assistance to Pfutsero-Kikruma- Chakabama and so forth, continuing up to their camp at Dimapur. Many were too frail to walk, so villagers carried them on their backs to the next designated village. As verbal communication was not possible, the Burmese refugees showed their gratitude by bowing and touching the feet of those who rendered their service towards them.

2.3. Japanese Advance into India

The Japanese offensive against India in early 1944 came as a surprise to the Allied powers. Russia was advancing into Ukraine, Italy was in a stalemate along the Gustav Line, and Germany and Japan were both in retreat but not defeated. While the British and the Americans were preparing for D-Day, Japan launched an audacious offensive deep into India designed to destroy Britain and challenge Japan's hegemony in Burma. The idea of advancing into India took shape in a plan of advancing through the Hukwang Valley (the source of the Chindwin) to Assam under Operation 21, but this plan was rejected. In late 1943, the Japanese command was reorganised with

a new headquarters and the Burma Army Area was created under the command of General Kawabe Masakasu, which included Mutaguchi's 15 Army. Although initially, Mutaguchi opposed Operation 21, he was now convinced that the plan could take action and when he was appointed as commander of the 15 Army, he became adamant in putting the plan into action (Lyman, 2011, pp.14-16, Colvin, 2012, p. 35).

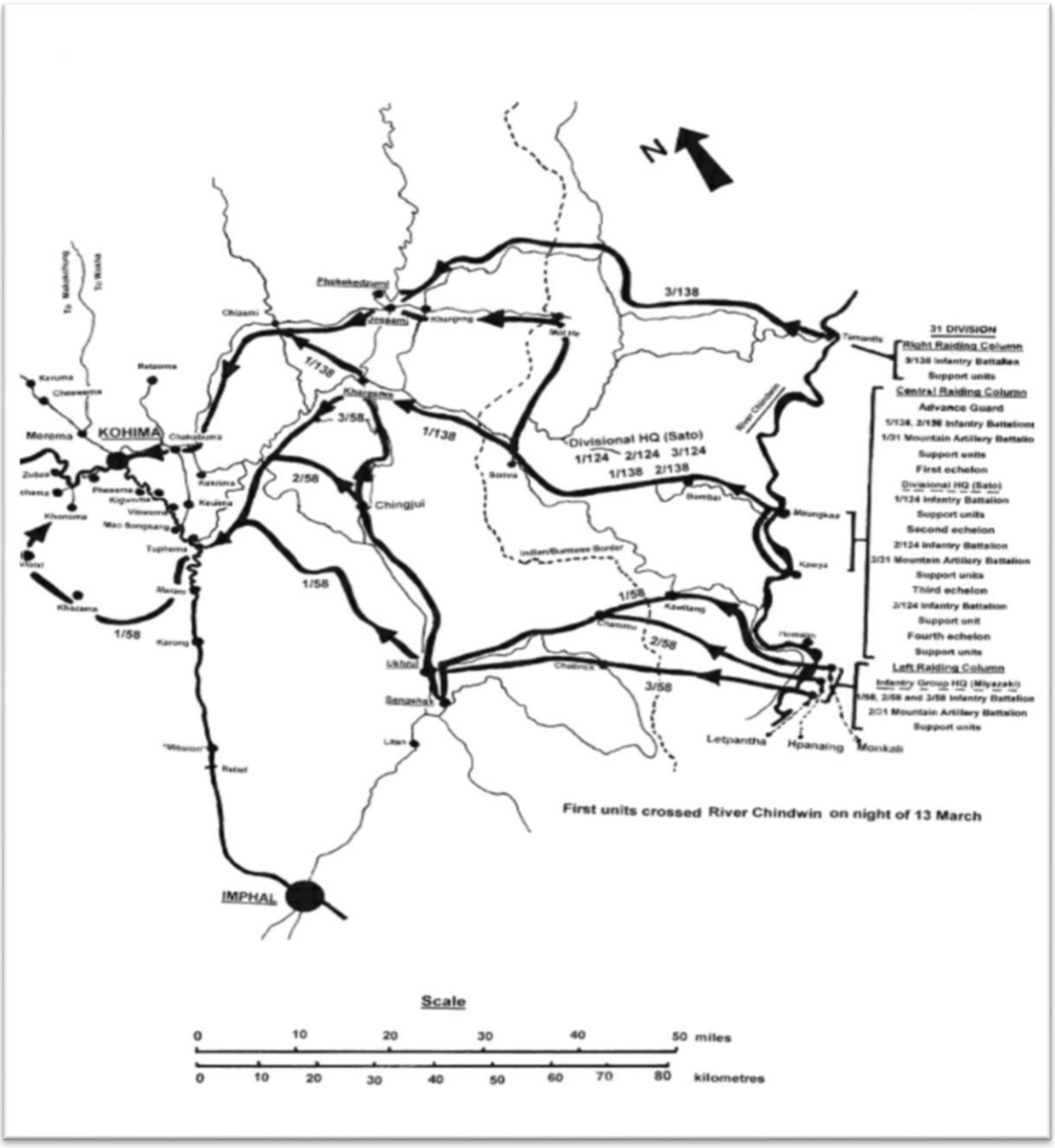

Figure 3: Invasion route of 31 Japanese Division, 1944
Source: Edwards, Kohima: The Farthest Battle

Meanwhile, with the collapse of British resistance in Malaya and Singapore in 1942, about 16,000 Indian soldiers fell into Japanese hands, who eventually joined the Indian National Army (*Azad Hind Fauj*) under Netaji Subash Chandra Bose with the intention of toppling the British Raj with Japanese help (Lyman,2011, p. 15). An anonymous INA corporal remarked that he was inspired to join the INA after listening to Netaji's speech. He also believed that Japan was fighting for Asia's independence and had complete confidence that the Japanese would grant India's independence, just as they had for the Burmese, Malays, and Thais (as cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 215).

Bose met Japanese leaders and was given the assurance by the Japanese Prime Minister that "Japan had no territorial or economic ambitions in India. India would achieve complete independence free from any foreign domination" (De, vol. iii, as cited in Bhattacharjee, 1989, p. 375). On 21 October 1943, the Free India Provincial Government (henceforth FIPG/*Azad Hind*) was formally inaugurated in the island of Syonan (Japanese occupied Singapore) and was duly recognised by Japanese government on 23 October 1943. The Imperial government also stated that it would give utmost support to the FIPG in the achievement of its objectives. The FIPG was also recognised by Germany, Italy, Croatia, Nanking, Manchukuo, the Philippines, Thailand and Burma (Lebra 1971/2008, pp. 128-129). Following the formation of the *Azad Hind*, the Rani of Jhansi Regiment was created to recruit Indian women soldiers living in Southeast Asia. In December 1943, Bose shifted his headquarters from Singapore to Rangoon, Burma. In the meantime, troops were ordered to move to Burma, from where further plans for India's independence would be carried out (Chatterjee, 1947, p. 157). Before the invasion of India, the Japanese Army and Bose made the following decisions in January 1944:

1. The *Azad Hind Fauj* and the Japanese Army were of equal status and respecting each other's authority would be acknowledged. They would also work on a common strategy and be a unified command in the field.
2. Liberated territories would be handed over to *Azad Hind Fauj.*
3. The officers and men of the *Azad Hind Fauj* would be under their own law (The INA Act) and not under Japanese military law and police.
4. The only flag to fly over the Indian soil would be the National Tricolour.
5. Any Japanese or Indian soldier found raping any woman would be shot at once (Chatterjee, 1947, pp. 174-175).

The Japanese and INA bolstered their soldiers through powerful speeches. On 15 February Bose addressed the INA with a 'Special Order of the Day': "Comrades, Officers, and Men of India's Army of Liberation. Let there be one solemn resolve in our hearts – "Either Liberty or Death." And let there be but one slogan on your lips- "Onward to Delhi"…Victory will certainly be yours" (as cited in Swinson, 2016, p. 30). Three days later, on 18 February 1944, Mutaguchi also issued his own Order: "The Army has now reached the stage of invincibility and the day when the Rising Sun shall proclaim victory in India is not far off" (as cited in Swinson, 2016, p. 30). Ayer (1972/ 2002) calls Subash Chandra Bose a "Man of Destiny" and the INA, a revolutionary army "born in the storm of World War II". The INA was organised in foreign soil and had to depend on foreign powers for all its military operations. It also depended on the scattered Indians all over east Asia, however, "its greatest asset was the spirit of self-sacrifice" of men who volunteered to uphold the cause of "*Chalo Delhi*" even in their death (p.1, p. 61).

In March 1944, the Japanese designed an operation called Operation U-Go, an invasion of India through Manipur and the Naga tribal hills north of the Chindwin River. According to the plan, the 15 Army would carry an offensive against Imphal with its main force and the INA, while the 31 Division would launch a full-scale offensive against Kohima and hinder the reinforcement

stationed there (Colvin, 2012, pp. 37-38). By 7 March, the 15 Division and 31 Division of the Japanese Army were across the Chindwin, a total of over 100,000 men, "trained, equipped and burning with a fanatic desire for victory" (Swinson, 2016, p.10).

While these developments were ongoing, the Nagas were being warned of a Japanese invasion. Message reached the villages of the Chakhesang Naga tribe was that a fierce enemy would soon invade their land and extort them of their grains and animals. Villagers were given instructions to take precautionary measures and be prepared for what was to follow. Villages identified along the probable route of the Japanese Army trail were directed to store their grains in nearby forests, with high possibilities of the people having to evacuate their villages during the forthcoming crucial period. As such, efforts were made in the months that followed in hardship to simultaneously store paddy and toil unceasingly for the next cultivation season (April to July being the primary months of growing paddy). What the villagers were unprepared for was that, many of these villages would soon be destroyed through British air strikes to deprive the Japanese any access to the local supplies.

2.4. Japanese Entry into the Naga Hills

The Japanese 31 Division entered Indian soil through the Molhe Pass (India-Burma border). Soldiers from the Assam Regiment stationed at Jessami were mostly tribals, some of whom were from the Chakhesang Naga tribe. They socialized much with the villagers and, upon learning that the Japanese Army was approaching the vicinity, warned the villagers to evacuate the village and prepare makeshift camps in the nearby jungle. They were also instructed to take their livestock along with them. The people of Jessami lived in the nearby fields and jungle for about four months. Meanwhile, Japanese soldiers of the 31 Division were moving along the rough terrain, most of them in their twenties, willing to withstand any hardship. In the words of Edwards (2013):

> The 15,000 men of the Division had to be self-supporting for 20 days and that including transporting all ancillary equipment, artillery, mortars, shells etc…This meant that during the advance, a typical infantryman carried about three weeks' ration, 120 rounds of ammunition, shovels, clothes etc, a total of 40-50 kilograms. This proved to be so heavy that once a man sat down to rest, he needed assistance to stand up again (p. 105).

On 19 March 1944, the left column of the Japanese 31 Division under Miyazaki, consisting of the 3 Battalion of the 58 Infantry Regiment, attacked the Allied outpost at Sangshak and the adjacent area, forcing the Allied forces to withdraw to Imphal. According to the original plan, Miyazaki was to move through Ukhrul to Mao, on to the Kohima-Imphal Road, and then turn to Kohima. Having fought the battle of Sangshak, he was behind schedule and later discovered he had made a blunder in engaging his men at Sangshak (Swinson, 2016, p.36).

When describing the journey of the Japanese Army into the Naga Hills, the Chakhesang Nagas stated that while crossing the rugged terrains from Burma to Naga Hills, the Japanese soldiers, for the first time came across an unforgiving plant- the stinging nettle. This plant is found in abundance among the thick vegetation of the Hills. It grows up to eight feet and its leaves and stems are covered with trichomes. When it comes in contact with human skin, the trichomes turn into needles and inject several chemicals, causing sharp pain and burning sensation, which can last for long hours. To the Chakhesang Nagas, this was an essential plant as the fibres of the stem were indigenously woven into shawls and blankets. However, to the Japanese, this was a dreadful plant, and it was said that there was a popular saying among soldiers that even the vegetation of these hills had turned hostile towards them. This further added misery to their journey into the Naga Hills.

Despite the warnings, villagers who first encountered the Japanese in the Chakhesang Naga villages developed sympathy towards the Japanese when they saw the conditions in which they reached the region. They looked hungry and exhausted from the long march. Soldiers' boots were

torn and tattered, with blisters and bruises all over their feet. The traditional social values of being kind to guests and showing sympathy towards people in need were essential factors that were responsible for this attitude. While crossing the Chakhesang Naga villages, General Sato made efforts to establish ties with the locals for support. Knowing that his large troop would depend on the locals, especially for food, he was seen addressing the public in many villages to convince them that they were culturally connected to each other.

2.5. The Japanese Army under Renya Mutaguchi

In March 1943, Lieutenant-General Renya Mutaguchi, who initially commanded the 18 Division of the Japanese Army during the Burma campaign, was promoted to command the Fifteenth Army. Mutaguchi was described as a "heavy-bodied, bullet-headed officer with hard eyes and thick lips who fiercely overrode the intractable problem of supply and whose wrath was so feared by his staff that they did not press their doubts" (Tuchman, 1970, p. 438). When the Japanese High command decided to strike the Allied forces at Imphal, Mutaguchi was authorised to undertake Operation U-Go. The 15th Army consisted of three divisions: 15 Division under Lieutenant-General Masafumi Yamauchi, 31 Division under Lieutenant-General Kotoku Sato and 33 Division under Lieutenant-General Motoso Yanagida. The three divisions at full strength numbered 70,000 men. In addition, the 15 Army called upon the support of the 1 Indian National Army Division to join the mission (Edwards, 2013, p. 88). The 15 Army, joined by the Indian National Army in its operation for the invasion of India, revealed that the three strategic targets in north-east India were Imphal, Kohima and the main supply base in Dimapur. Mutaguchi presumed that if Kohima were captured, Imphal would be cut off from the rest of India by land. It would also enable him to feed his army. The capture of Dimapur would allow Bose and the INA to reach Bengal and launch the long-awaited anti-British uprising (Lyman, 2011, p. 16).

However, Mutaguchi failed in accomplishing his strategic ambition in the Operation U-Go of March -June 1944. According to Diamond (2016), had success come to Mutaguchi, the British,

Chinese, and American forces operating in Burma would have been completely cut off from the West. Mutaguchi was an outstanding commander, but incorrect logistical and supply decisions led to the mission's failure. Launching the offensive with only a month's ration and supply, expecting to capture the stores of Dimapur, became the significant factor in its ultimate failure (p. 14).

2.6. The Japanese Army under Kotuku Sato

Following the plan of Operation U-Go, Lieutenant General Kotuku Sato, commander of the Japanese 31 Division whose headquarters was at Homalin, a town on the River Chindwin, crossed the Chindwin between Homalin and Tamanthi, heading northwest from 15 March 1944 onwards. According to the plan, the division would move in three columns and by early April 1944 reach Kohima. The Right Assault Unit consisted of a battalion of the 138 Infantry Regiment, with a battery of the 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment, engineers, signals and medical attachments. The mission was to cross the Chindwin at Tamanthi, then advance to Periphema, west of Kohima via Layshi, Pakhedzumi, Nerhema and Khabvuma to block the Dimapur- Kohima Road. The Centre Assault Unit consisted of an advance guard of the 138 Infantry Regiment, which consisted of the divisional headquarters, the 124 Infantry Regiment, a battalion of the 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment, engineers, signals, a field hospital and a transport unit. They were to cross the Chindwin between Maungkan and Kawya, then advance on Kohima through Fort Keary, Somra and Jessami. The Left Assault Unit consisted of the 58 Infantry Regiment and the remainder of the 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment. Its mission was to cross the Chindwin south of Homalin, then advance to Kohima via Ukhrul, Kharasom and Mao-songsang (Higgins et al., 1984, p. 53). When Operation U-Go was launched, Sato was deeply cynical about the campaign plans. He and his men were promised 250 tons of supply before 25 March and 10 tons per week afterwards. None of these supplies actually arrived. Aware of the struggles ahead, Sato toasted with his fellowmen by remarking: "I'll take the opportunity, gentlemen, of making something quite clear to you. Miracles apart, everyone is likely to lose his life in this operation. It isn't simply a question of the enemy's

bullets. You must be prepared for death by starvation in these mountain fastnesses" (as cited in Roberts, 2011, p. 458).

The Division under General Sato's command faced a most challenging journey. Vehicles could not be made use of in such a terrain and loads had to be carried on mules, oxen and elephants. The engineers could not carry heavy equipment and were compelled to improvise making rafts and bridges, and improving the track along the way. The Division was allocated with 3,000 horses and 5,000 oxen to carry ammunition and ration for the troops. Every man had to carry as much ammunition as he could. "Personal effects," Sato ordered, "must be kept to the minimum" (as cited in Swinson, .2016. p 8). Their mission was Kohima, and Sato estimated they could reach it in fifteen days.

Manabu Wada of the Japanese 31 Division describes that they were sent "into the mountains without any proper climbing equipment or clothing, and hampered by large herds of cattle which could not climb the steep, rocky paths which even we soldiers found hard enough" (Tamayama & Nunneley, 2001, p. 175). The 31 Division reached the Naga Hills in deplorable conditions. General Sato, aware of the inadequate supplies, made efforts to win the favour of the Nagas. The Battle of Kohima was fought with limited supplies, which proved most challenging. Sato had been pessimist about the operation and true to his assessment, the mission failed with several of his men dying in battle and during retreat.

2.7. Allied Preparation

The occupation of Burma became strategic for Japan in establishing a firm hold in Far East Asia. By the end of May 1942, the Japanese had achieved all its primary objectives of cutting the Burma Road. In Burma, the Japanese had organised three Japanese 'armies' (each equivalent to Allied Corps strength) and an Air Division, under General Kawabe, based in Rangoon; the 33 Army under General Honda in North Burma; 28 Army with 54 and 55 Divisions under General

Sakurai in the Arakan front and the 15 Army with tree Divisions under General Mutaguchi (Edwards, 2013, pp. 68). Meanwhile, the South-East Asia Command was created by the First Quebec Conference in August 1943 by the British and American commanders. Accordingly, a unified command was established under Admiral Mountbatten as Supreme Commander and under him were three Commander-in Chiefs: Admiral Sir James Somerville, General Sir George Giffard and Air Marshall Sir Richard Peirse (Swinson, 2015, p. 23-24). Under Sir Giffard, the 14th Army was created on 15 October 1943 with General Slim as its commander, comprising of General Scoones's 4 Corps consisting of the 17th Indian Light Division and 20th and 23rd Indian Division in Imphal and 15th Corps under Lieutenant General Philip Christison comprising of 5th and 7th Indian Division in the Arakan and 8 West African Division, to be deputed to Kaladan Valley. In addition, the 3rd Indian Division under Wingate, the 26th Indian Division in Chittagong, the 33rd Indian Corps as a reserve in Bombay and the 25 Indian Division, which could become available later. Slim also got support from Stilwell, Air Chief Marshal Sir John Baldwin, commanding the 3rd Tactical Air Force and Brigadier-General William Old, who commanded the US Troop Carrier Command. (Edwards, 2013, pp. 67- 68).

Aware of the Japanese movements on the Burma side of the border and the Chindwin River area, it was felt that the Kohima area had to be firmly secured as it was estimated that the Japanese were likely to advance there. The 'V' Force, a network consisting of local tribesmen, operating as 'watch and ward' scouts under British Army officers with wireless transmitters, were to provide warnings by watching jungle tracks leading through the Somra Hills at various locations (Edwards, 2013, p. 88). Vigilant mirrors were positioned at various points along the India-Burma border for instant signal messages. According to Lonyo Mero of Pfutseromi, a mirror was positioned at a hilltop at Pfutsero, which was received at Lozaphuhu and further signalled to Akhwego (India-Burma border) and to Burma. While the 'V' Force and vigilant mirrors represented the only two means of security in the area, the 1st Assam Regiment was formed by the British. British officers commanded it, and sepoys were recruited from among the Nagas, Lushais, Khasis and Assamese.

After undergoing thorough training in Assam, it came under the command of Lieutenant Colonel 'Bruno' Brown. The Assam Regiment was to command a Burma Regiment company under Major Norman Giles of the Black Watch at Phakedzumi (Phek). They were to liaise with the forward screens of 'V' Force and Assam Rifles units watching Japanese tracks. They also had to establish defensive bases at Jessami, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel 'Bruno' Brown and Kharasom ('A' Company) under Captain Young, which sent out mobile patrolling in the surrounding area (Swinson,2016, pp. 31-32).

By March 1944, the British were confident that the Japanese offensive was soon approaching. Slim (1956/1986) observed:

> Enemy activity and strength all along 4 Corps front were noticeably increasing. Documents, diaries, marked maps, and even operation orders taken from Japanese killed in patrol clashes were being brought daily… All these clues painstakingly fitted into the mosaic of our intelligence at 4 Corps and 14th Army Headquarters and began to give us a general picture of the Japanese intentions (p. 279).

What they were unaware of was that troops of the Japanese army were moving in larger columns and at a faster pace than the British had calculated. Slim flew to Imphal to discuss the plan with Scoones. In their discussion, it was estimated that the Japanese offensive would first attempt to capture Imphal and then proceed to the Brahmaputra valley to cut off the Northern front. Another regiment would target Kohima to cut off the main Imphal- Dimapur road. According to their calculation, the Japanese would begin their offensive by 15 March 1944 (Edwards, 2013, p. 93). This miscalculation enabled the Japanese to take advantage of the situation in its initial offensive warfare. Major Harry Smith, Officer Commanding HQ, 4th Battalion, Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment, stated, "No one imagined at the time that Kohima was in danger. We were told that only scattered Japanese forces were in the area. We thought that Kohima was unapproachable from Burma because of the huge jungles intervening" (as cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 211).

2.8. The Battle of Jessami

The Japanese forces were moving in all directions. The Assam patrols were to keep watch of Japanese movements along Merluri to prevent any surprise attack on Phekedzumi from that direction. By 25 March, the Japanese Right Column of the 31 Division was 25 miles away in a direct line from Jessami (Edwards, 2013, p. 138). The next day, Colonel Hugh Richards, Commander of Kohima Garrison, met Deputy Commissioner Charles Pawsey at Chizami, who was returning from Phek after collecting invaluable information. Richards went to Jessami, inspected the defences and returned to Kohima without visiting Kharasom and Phek. Two days earlier, the 4th Corps had been given the order to fight 'to the last round and last man' to those stationed at Phek, Jessami, and Kharasom. During Richard's visit, Brown enquired if the order still stood, as he had expected at least a Japanese battalion to attack the following day. Richards confirmed the standing order; however, he was troubled by it since there was no intention of engaging the primary battle with the Japanese as far east as Jessami, nor was there any plan to reinforce Brown's positions. In the morning of 27 March, Richards received news from Jessami that a large column of Japanese army had arrived at Kharasom and had begun open firing. The telephone wire was cut, and no further contact or instruction could be deliberated after that. However, it was now confirmed that the Japanese were moving in large columns and not as the British had estimated. (Swinson, 2015, pp. 46-48))

The forces at Jessami were alarmed and expected to be attacked at any time. In the morning hours of 28 March, about 25 Japanese soldiers from Kharasom approached Jessami. They stopped to consult a map about 40 metres away from the defences. A patrolling platoon opened fire at them, killing 23 of them while the other two took cover. More Japanese arrived by day and opened fire on the whole Jessami perimeter with small arms and mortars. It became clear that the Japanese had surrounded the Assam Regiment, and the garrison did not respond (Edwards, 2013, p. 152). The locals of the area noticed that the Japanese did not attack in daylight and the nights were

engaged with the Japanese charging the Assam Regiment at short intervals. When daylight came, the Japanese sprawled around the dead bodies. To the wounded, they said, "O, Indian soldiers, stop fighting for the British and come and join us. We are freeing your country from domination" (as cited in Swinson, 2016, p.52). However, the sepoys of the Assam Regiment did not respond to the Japanese and continued their struggle.

Meanwhile, on March 29, Richards discussed the order with General Ranking and Brigadier Warren (assigned for the defence of Kohima), stating that the Jessami forces were attacked by a more significant number than expected, confirming Pawsey's information from the Nagas that a whole division was advancing. The British planned an operation to extricate all three garrisons from Phek, Jessami and Kharasom. Accordingly, the 4th/7th Rajputs would lead the first two and the 1st/1st Punjab would look after the latter (Swinson 2016, p. 53). With communications cut off, it was decided that an R.A.F plane would be engaged the next day from Dimapur to send a message to the garrisons under the guidance of an officer named Wemyss; however, Wemyss was unsuccessful in his mission as the first message was dropped outside the perimeter, and the second went into Japanese hands (Swinson 2016, p. 54).

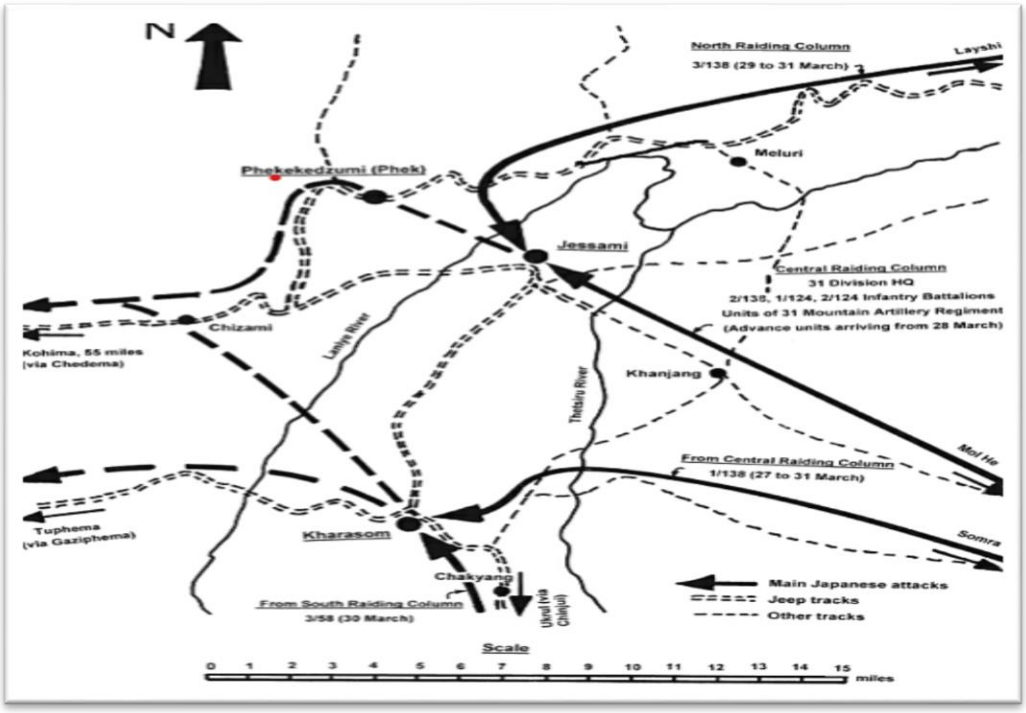

Figure 4: Jessami- Kharasom- Phek area, 1944
Source: Edwards, Kohima: The Farthest Battle

The Phek garrison started to withdraw to Kohima after receiving orders. An officer in Phek, Lieutenant John Colbert, became concerned about Jessami not receiving the withdrawal order and decided to make one last attempt to convey the message. While his troops retreated, he personally went to Jessami to give the information. With just a revolver and a compass, on the night of 31 March, Colbert moved towards the sounds of battle. An officer described:

> At about 22:00 hours we heard a lot of shooting and shouting outside the perimeter on 'B' Company's southern sector and all at once all posts were alert as we naturally expected another attack…but very soon we heard John Colbert shouting like mad at us to stop firing. The message instructed to us to withdraw to Kohima at 3:00 hours on 1 April. Due to the lateness of the hour… the orders were not carried out that night (cited in Edwards, 2013, p. 164).

Following the withdrawal order, the garrison at Jessami evacuated in sectors. Amidst relentless Japanese attacks, the withdrawal was marked by intense hand-to-hand combat between the two forces. Brown gave orders to disengage themselves and move out after dark. Those who had the opportunity destroyed documents and hastily collected a few possessions, food and water before moving out. The Command post was evacuated around midnight after all remaining documents were destroyed. The Japanese heavily guarded the roads and tracks along Jessami, and often, the soldiers were ambushed, so they had to split up into smaller groups and move in different directions to reach Kohima (Swinson, 2016, pp. 59-60). Colbert was also among the returnees. About 260 Assam Regiment troops arrived back at Kohima from various outposts by 3 April, not all fit for immediate active service (Edwards, 2013, p. 166). After driving out the British forces from Jessami, the Japanese army proceeded towards Lanye, from where they were divided into two sections as they proceeded towards Kohima. The Central Raiding Column and sections of the North and South Raidng Columns made contact with almost every Chkhesang Naga village during their march to the Kohima battlefield.

In the case of Kharasom, as the communication lines failed, the withdrawal message failed to reach Young and his troops. They fought gallantly, but the number of Japanese troops attacking them was underestimated. Noticing that he was losing his men but with the order of fighting till the last man, he was helpless. However, he took the bold step of disobeying the orders and made plans for withdrawal. The company split into three groups for withdrawal. Young, still obeying his orders, announced that he would stay behind and fight the Japanese alone. The Nagas reported that Young waited in the bunker, and when the enemy approached him, he singlehandedly faced them with his machine gun and grenades, till he could fight no more (Swinson, 2015, pp. 60-61). The 1st/1st Punjab battalion, which was assigned to Kharasom, encountered and engaged a detachment of Myyazaki's column along the Tuphema – Kharasom road. The whole operation was called off with the knowledge that the Japanese were in considerable strength, and sending just a battalion to Kharasom to handle the situation proved futile. Between 16 and 26 March, Miyakazi's 3 Battalion of 58 Regiment launched a fierce attack on the 'C' Company of the 152 Parachute Battalion at Sangshak. (Colvin, 1994/2012, pp. 48-52). Although the Sangshak sector was assigned to the 15 Division, Miyakazi justified by stating that the offensive had to take place to prevent the British from interfering with his advance. Both armies suffered heavily in this battle. To the Japanese, the battles of Kharasom and Jessami proved costly. It was estimated that about 250 Japanese were killed in the battle of Jessami alone. According to information revealed by Colonel Yamaki, Senior Intelligence Officer to 31 Division, on the actions at Jessami and Kharasom:

> He (Yamaki) says that the reason why the Assam Regiment was attacked in such strength is that Major Shibasaki, commanding the troops on the extreme right flank of the Japanese advance, 'marched to the sound of the gun' and joined in the battle. When Sato came forward and heard this, he was furious and reprimanded Colonel Torikai, the column commander. He said: 'Your correct course was to leave enough troops to contain the garrison here and push on to Kohima.' Some months later, Sato remarked sorrowfully: 'If Miyazaki hadn't delayed at

Sangshak, and Torikai at Jessami, the face of the Kohima battle might have been very different.' How right he was! (as cited in Swinson, 2015, p. 61).

2.9. Military Tactics and Strategies of the Japanese Army

The Japanese Army, between 1939 and 1945 was divided into two main branches: the *Heika*, or line branch, including the infantry, cavalry, artillery, engineers, air service and transport, while the *Kabuku*, or service branch included medical, veterinary and clerical services (Warner, 1973, pp. 3-4). A Japanese soldier was driven by a strong spirit of dedication and will. As a son of Japan, he saw his highest fulfilment in death on the battlefield. The iron discipline of the Japanese has surprised its enemies at different instances. Kire (2019) observed that the Japanese had a remarkable fighting ability, which could be traced back to the culture of the bushido code of 'the ancient knightly samurai caste which defined, almost religiously, the life, purpose, motivations and ultimately the death of the Japanese soldier.' The soldiers' unflinching loyalty to the monarch was regarded as a spiritual and moral duty. "The bushido code entailed a philosophical, intellectual, intensely practical and even religious commitment to a set of obligations that led inevitably to death in the service of a heroic ideal." To surrender was regarded as a cowardly act, but to die in service of his country and emperor was considered great honour (p. 235).

2.9.1. Offensive Warfare

Since the conquest of Manchuria, the main principle of fighting in these areas for the Japanese had been: "Maintain the offensive, move with great rapidity, keep the command well forward so that the most utmost flexibility in order is available, and keep all plans simple" (Warner, 1973, p.10). The Japanese leveraged the element of surprise and attacked its enemies when they least expected it as demonstrated in the initial attacks of Jessami and Kohima. Another tactical doctrine as observed by Warner (1973) was deep infiltration. This technique was effective only in mobile situations or when the front lines were too extensive to be fully manned. The Japanese

Field Service Regulations consistently emphasized on maintaining the offensive. However, this strategy resulted in significant casualties for the Japanese and overlooked the vital military principle of concentrating maximum force at the required time. The Japanese would often advance in two or three columns. While one or two columns moved along the enemy flank, the other would persistently engage in frontal attacks. The flanking would then try to force its way round to the rear. Another manoeuvre involved was advancing until resistance was encountered, and while the main offensive appeared to be concentrated at one point, large numbers would initiate an encircling movement. If cut off, Japanese soldiers would sometimes engage in suicide attack. The Allies term this as the 'Banzai' attacks. These tactics, when successful, were highly effective, but when they failed, they were extremely costly as the Japanese. The Banzai attacks were witnessed at Jessami. Lhikemu Wezah of Jessami states:

> They (Japanese) surrounded the Assam Rifles, many of whom were in trenches taking defence. The Japanese displayed their unwavering bravery by shouting a battle cry (Banzai! Banzai!) in unison and charged. Soldiers of the Assam Rifles opened fire but that did not stop the Japanese from moving forward.

As observed by the Nagas of Jessami who witnessed the open combats between Assam Regiment and the Japanese Army, the battle was very fierce and have noted on the courage of both. Many of the trained soldiers of the Assam regiment consisted of the tribals of north-east India. The tribal communities of northeast India, particularly the Nagas, belonged to warrior tribes where warfare between villages or other communities had been a common phenomenon. Being accustomed to wars, the soldiers of the Assam Regiment exhibited their daring bravery in the Battle of Jessami. Countering the tribespeople of the Assam Regiment were the Japanese Army, who, according to oral witnesses, had been equally intense and brave. When met face to face with the enemy, hand-to-hand combats were also observed. Those who witnessed the battle of Jessami

have expressed amazement at the strength and courage of the Japanese soldiers, despite the harsh conditions faced during their entry into India across the impenetrable terrain.

2.9.2. Defensive Warfare

The Japanese warfare strategy was along offensive lines, but the need for defensive warfare was forced upon them. As seen in the Pacific and Burma, the Japanese developed considerable expertise in it. They made use of whatever material was available locally to defend themselves. The Japanese were experts in camouflaging themselves by utilizing natural vegetation. The Allies too were amazed by their camouflaging techniques. In the Chakhesang Naga region, sentry points were heavily covered with tree branches. In the patrols along the potato fields, villagers noticed them uprooting potato plants to cover themselves when warplanes flew over them. The Chakhesang land was heavily forested, and the Japanese often set up their bases behind steep hills and under thick forests. For instance, the base at Milestone 30, Pfutsero, is situated at such a location. The locals recorded that the British sent their planes several times to conduct air strikes on the base at Pfutsero but never managed to hit the target. They speculated that the location was such that the adjacent hill might have acted as an obstruction, even after the British had identified the base's location. The foxhole was the simplest form of a defensive position, and the Japanese constructed it in unsuspected places. According to oral sources, such structures were constructed in the Chakhesang inhabited areas.

Witness accounts reveal that a partly underground structure was built using massive logs and earth, resulting in a smooth surface. After the Japanese retreated, a beeping sound was still heard from the structure at Milestone 30. However, the locals were afraid to inspect it; some believed the Japanese had planted a bomb, while others thought it might contain treasure. The structure's true purpose remains unknown, as when it was searched for it later, the exact location could not be determined. Nevertheless, it is assumed that the structure was built for defence purposes.

A structure created by laying boulders on a cliff facing north has also been identified at Pfutsero. This structure, made by the Japanese, stands out because the Chakhesang Nagas do not place boulders on steep cliffs, and their method of laying boulders differs significantly. The Chakhesang Nagas arrange larger boulders at the bottom and smaller ones at the top in a symmetrical pattern. Boulders are often laid for agricultural purposes or to demarcate boundaries. In contrast, the structure identified at Pfutsero features a random arrangement of boulders and is located in an area unsuitable for agriculture. Thus, it is believed that this was a Japanese creation, used as a sentry point. The structure is strategically positioned to overlook the main base and jeep tracks along the Pfutsero-Chizami road.

At Chozuba, no direct confrontations occurred in the area, however, the locals witnessed the Japanese Army's clever tactics. The Japanese forces defended from a lower hill and used a tunnel to move to an adjacent hill, where they set up a fire and returned to their defensive positions. Dunuyi D. Keyho of Chozuba notes that the British, deceived by the Japanese Army, bombarded the area under the false impression that it was a Japanese base. The defensive position, locally known as *Zacako*, and the bombarded area known as *Japan Riba*, remains preserved to this day.

It has been estimated that no other nation fully used caves like the Japanese. The caves served different purposes: storage, depots, observation stations, and administration headquarters. A cave utilized by the Japanese army has been identified in the Chakhesang Naga region. The *Japan Cave*, which locals now call it, likely served as a natural repository for Japanese weapons, as a substantial number of arms were recovered from the cave by the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) in the 1960s while they were conducting bombing operations in the area for boulders. Its strategic location also makes it ideal for monitoring movements.

Japanese soldiers exhibited bravery and courage in their offensive and defensive encounters with the British army. Chakhesang Nagss, who came in contact with the Japanese, mentioned their courage and enthusiasm. The Japanese soldiers were extremely energetic that

Vezo Swuro of Cheswezu, have compared them to frogs. It has been observed by the natives of the Chakhesang Nagas villages that the Japanese followed a strategy that was clever and valiant. The main obstacle faced was the need for more food supplies and with no guarantee that they would be supplied with an adequate amount of ration. Due to the rough terrain, the Japanese also had to minimise their arms and ammunition. Accounts left by Japanese soldiers state that they were always hungry and out of ammunition in most of their missions during the Battle of Kohima. Captain Shosaku Kameyama of the 58 Infantry Regiment, 31 Division, described the experience as "lonely and miserable" to be isolated in a foxhole on the mountain with slim chances of victory. With the short supply of ammunition and food, they launched nighttime attacks on enemy positions. After the enemy retreated, they gathered rations, bullets, and grenades to use the following day (Tamayama & Nunneley, 2001, p. 170). During the Battle of Kohima, the Japanese fought in in very harsh conditions. Despite their challenges, the local population observed their determination to continue the fight. According to Lyman (2011), the British too were astonished at the fighting determination of their enemy, despite their suffering. While the British army was well supplied with food, the Japanese were living off leaves, roots and grass, yet they continued to strife (p. 240). The valour and daring attitude displayed by the Japanese soldiers in the Battle of Kohima is commendable.

2.10. Japanese Deployment of Comfort Women

The Japanese Army deployed the "comfort women" system, through which women from Japan, Korea, China, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Thailand, East Timur, the Dutch East-Indies and European women in Japanese occupied territories were made to accompany the Japanese Army in their military operations during the Second World War. According to Milner, et al. (2019), the term "comfort women" "refers to the system of sexual slavery created and controlled by the Imperial Japanese government between 1932 and 1945" (p. 58). Although the term "comfort women" appeared by the early

20th century, it began to be treated as an academic subject by Asian communities only in the 1990s. The Japanese term for comfort woman, *ianfu,* implies, "a woman who gives ease and consolation", while the Japanese term for Korean women who joined the service, were referred to as *jeong-sin-dae,* or "volunteer corps" (Wang 2019, p. 1). Recruitment to the system was conducted both forcefully and voluntarily. While the Japanese Army employed native women in other parts of Asia and Asia Pacific, Korean and Chinese women were brought to Burma, making it an exceptional case (Hirofumi, 1998, p. 2014).

Oral testimonies of the Battle of Kohima confirm the presence of women soldiers accompanying the Japanese troops. The Naga Hills offers an unconventional situation when it comes to involvement of women in Japanese military operations. While many Japanese comfort stations were set up in other parts of Asia, its existence is unknown in the Naga Hills and the role of women soldiers (comfort women) in the Naga Hills is also an unexplored facet. When Grimaldi (2020)**,** an Italian freelance journalist visited Nagaland in 2020, to document the oral histories of the Battle of Kohima from the Naga Hills, he was shocked to learn the mention of women soldiers. Upon consultations with historians and experts, they all agreed that there were no records of women soldiers in any of the military operations of the Japanese army during the Second World War. Grimaldi highlights the theory of Professor Fujii of Tokyo University, who stated that these could have been Korean comfort women, who closely associated with high-ranking military officials. Fujii further opined that due to the "downward spiral" of the Japanese Army, in desperation, might have given weapons and military clothes to fight in Japanese lines of combat. Grimaldi admits the narratives from the Naga Hills valuable as these voices have "shed light on a significant piece of history that so far has remained buried" (para. 5-22)

The presence of comfort women is noticed in the Kohima-Imphal operations. Lyman (2011) comments that Mutaguchi "refused to be separated" from his "geishas" even during

the army's operation. He even ordered the dispatching of the entire complement the 15 Army's comfort women, ten days after the initial advance into India (p.258). With no official record of comfort women being recruited in the Japanese army, the Naga Hills indeed, offers scope for extensive studies on the role of the comfort women in the area. Was this forced upon them or was it a voluntary gesture due to emotional attachments developed with soldiers of the 15 Army and did they take part in the open combats? Oral narratives of the Chakhesang Nagas suggest that they accompanied the troops, behaved and suffered like them. Soldiers' empathy towards the women soldiers were also reflected in the presence of the locals. However, whatever be the circumstances, the role and sacrifices of these women have been silenced and overlooked.

CHAPTER 3

REMINICSENCE OF THE WAR

Japanese offensive against India targeted British bases in Assam, particularly on Imphal and Kohima. Lieutenant General Mutaguchi planned to attack across the Chinwind on nine routes between Tamanathi in the north and Kalewa in the south. Following his plan, fighting at Imphal and Kohima took place concurrently. To the British, Kohima served as the civil administrative centre for the Naga hills and a military supply depot, hospital and staging point (Thompson, 2006, p. 209). The Japanese attack came as a surprise to the British, as they were unprepared for an early assault. This was evident in the Battle of Jessami. With the withdrawal of British troops from Jessami and Kharasom, the 31 Division marched to Phek, where Sato established his first headquarters in the Naga hills. The headquarters later shifted to Naga Village in Kohima. The majority of the Chakhesang Naga villages, starting from the Battle of Jessami till the time of the Japanese retreat, came under the influence of the Japanese troops, the period being one of the most extraordinary episodes for the people. The 31 Division marched through the Chakhesang Naga villages to the main battlefield at Kohima. As per oral accounts, in the Chakhesang Naga area, the Japanese troop arrived from two directions and again, after the Battle of Jessami, was divided into two: one which took the Phek-Chizami -Pfutsero-Kikruma- Chakabama jeep track, and the other, Phek- Chozuba-Chesezumi- Chakabama jeep track, enroute Kohima.

3.1. Kohima 1944: The Battle

Kohima, home to the Angami Nagas, is located at 25˚40 N 94˚ 7 E and 25.66˚ N 94.117˚E and stands at an elevation of 1,444 metres above sea level. Now, the capital of the state of Nagaland, India, Kohima first came under modern administration as the Headquarters of Naga Hills (under Assam) in 1879. In 1944, the Kohima Ridge was heavily forested with scattered support depots and stores, necessitating a small peacetime garrison since 1942 due to the pressures

of war in Burma. Charles Pawsey had been the Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills since 1936, residing in a bungalow on the northern slope (Lyman, 2011, pp. 72-73). Geographically, mountains rise to 10,000 feet towards Mao Songsang to the south of Kohima, while to the northwest, the valley drops towards the plains of Dimapur. To the west, the Aradura spur runs towards Mount Pulebadze and Mount Japfu. To the east, rising hills run through Chedema and Jessami to the wild untrodden region to meet the dense forest of Burma.

From May 1942 till March 1944, there had been a rumour among British officers that the right wing of a large Japanese force stretched from Tiddim to Homalin with Imphal as its central and immediate objective. On 20 March 1944, troops in Kohima were ordered to get into defensive positions, while other units comprising non-combatant personnel were evacuated to Dimapur. Kohima was left with a small, isolated unit to take defensive (File. No.155, NSA). General Giffard assigned Colonel Hugh Richards the charge for defending Kohima. Richards' operation order stated that he would have operational control over all troops in Kohima and the 1st Assam Regiment, and be directly under the 4 Corps command. His mission was to hold Kohima and prevent the enemy from advancing in the Jessami-Kharasom-Kohima area using the 1st Assam Regiment (Swinson, 2016, pp. 38-39). Stating on the events, Edwards (2013) discusses that on reaching Kohima, Richards was briefed by General Ranking, commander of the 202 Administrative area, to whom Slim assigned a temporary charge for the defence of Dimapur. He also met Brigadier Hayne, commander of 235 Military Sub-Area and Borrowman, the senior combat officer in Kohima. He further learned that with the Assam Regiment Battalion located at Jessami and Kharasom boxes, a few rear units of the Assam Regiment, some Assam Rifles and the State Shere Battalion were the only potential fighting units in Kohima (pp. 129-130). Richard, who had just taken charge of Kohima, needed clarification. Swinson (2016), described the military situation in Kohima as disarrayed and confused. On 24 March, the 2nd Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment arrived in Kohima from Arakan. Richards' fighting force was now quadrupled, and the defence of the main box was possible. However, to Richards' dismay, the newly arrived Battalion

was transferred out of Kohima on 25 March. The order was again withdrawn, and the Battalion was ordered to return to Kohima the following day. Nevertheless, on 27 March, they were dispatched to Imphal (p. 43).

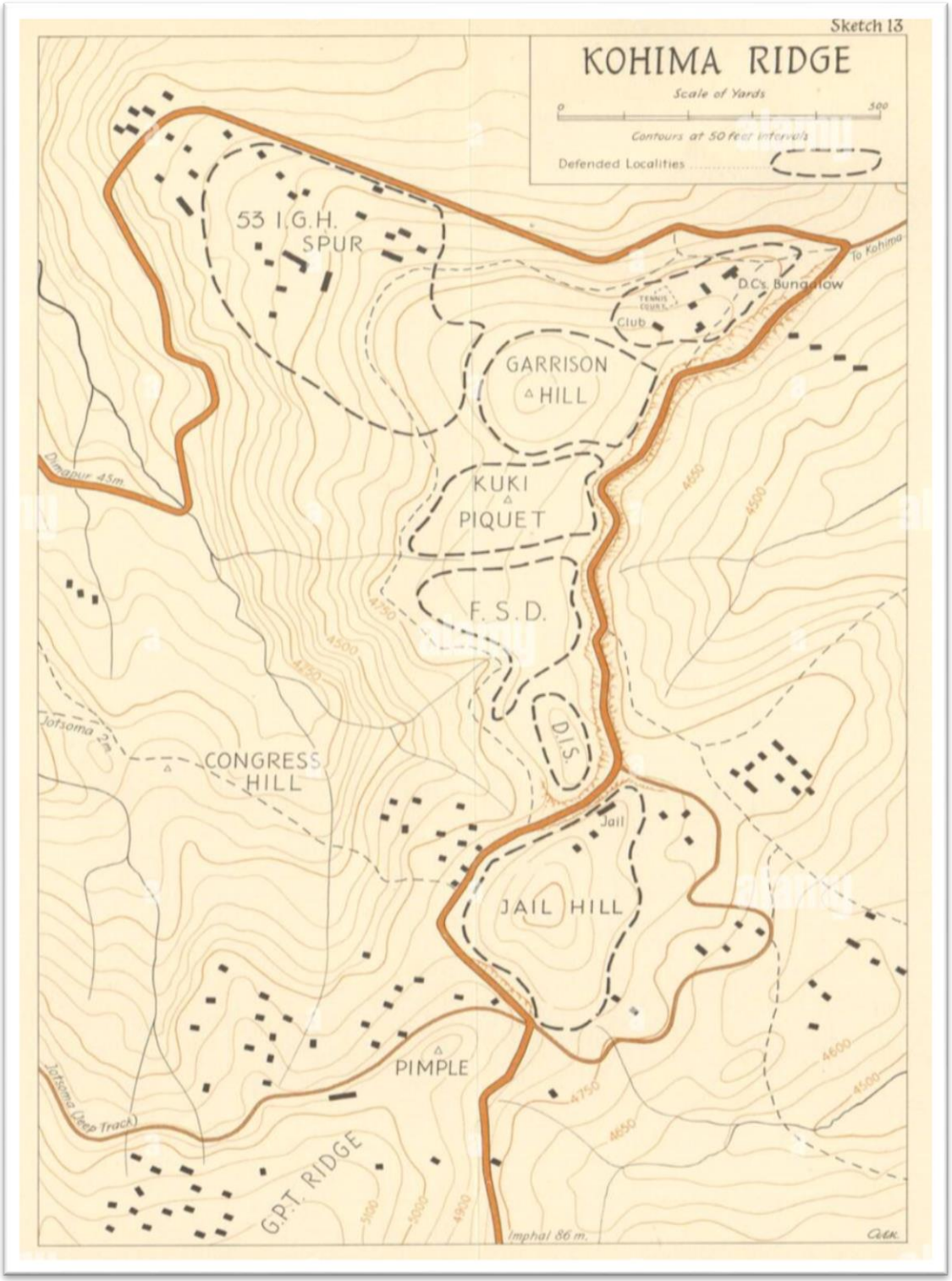

Figure 5: Kohima Battle locations
Source: alamy.com

On understanding the gravity of the situation in Kohima and Dimapur, Mountbatten began to prepare for reinforcements. Lyman (2010) while describing the events notes that the 161 Brigade (1/1th Punjab, 4/7th Rajputs, and 4th Royal West Kents), under the command of Brigadier Warren, was ordered to defend Kohima. Slim was promised Major General Grover's 2nd Division, which was part of Stopford's XXXIII Corps. In full strength, the Corps consisted of the 5th and 7th Indian Division and the British 2nd Division. The British expected the Japanese to wage a full-scale offensive in Dimapur and most preparations were targeted at Dimapur. As such, Stopford concentrated on moving his Corps HQ to Jorhat and acting as reinforcement once Dimapur was attacked. However, with troops coming and going and orders being given and rescinded, even the day before the Japanese invasion, the British seemed unprepared for the Japanese offensive. On 3 April, much to the shock of Warren, Richards and D.C. Pawsey, Stopford ordered Ranking to withdraw the 161st Brigade from Kohima immediately (pp. 33-36).

When chaos and confusion of troop deployment reigned in Kohima, on 26 March, reports reached Richards that Kharasom was under Japanese attack, soon to be followed by an attack on Jessami. It became evident that a battle in Kohima and beyond was inevitable, however, it was too late to properly organize positions or fix barbed wires. As per the Record of the Kohima Battle, with Japanese forces approaching Kohima, the British were improperly prepared with the Sub-Area Commander strategically withdrawn to Dimapur. Reports reached Kohima of the Japanese attack of the Assam Regiment in Jessami on 28 April. It was also reported that the Japanese were approaching Kohima through jeep tracks from Gaziphema (Laii) to Mao, a strength of not more than 200. Reports became more frequent about the movement of Japanese troops reaching Viswema, Jakhama, Kigwema and Phesama (File no. 155, NSA). Following the withdrawal of the 161st Brigade, the evening before the Japanese attack, Kohima was defended by a weak garrison, two companies of the Nepalese Shere Regiment and about 260 men of the Assam Rifles under the command of Major 'Buster' Keene (Lyman, 2010, p. 36). In the afternoon of 4 April, Kohima was attacked. At the time, the only places well-defended in Kohima were the hills behind DC's

bungalow, Jail Hill and M.T. Ridge (the ridge stretching up towards the forest reserve, opposite Jail Hill). Pawsey later commented, "Needless to say, complete confusion reigned" in Kohima (File. No.155, NSA).

The Japanese 31 Division advanced swiftly towards Kohima. After crossing the Chindwin, the Japanese 31 Division advanced in three columns, the southern under Miyazaki via Ukhrul and the other two through the Somra Hills to Kohima and Dimapur (Colvin, 2012, p. 47). Operation U-Go, Japan's audacious offensive into India with an entire 115,000-strong 15 Army, was in full-scale operation as planned. Progress of the operation was witnessed both at the Imphal and Kohima front. From 16 to 26 March, General Miyakazi's 58 Regiment engaged in a fierce battle at Sangshak.

Meanwhile, General Sato's Japanese 31 Division was approaching Kohima. On the right, the 138 Regiment had overthrown Jessami and Kharasom between 26 March and 1 April. By 4 April, they were on the peripheries of Kohima, ready to "fall on it and annihilate the enemy" (Colvin, 2012, p. 89). On the left, the 58 Regiment (Colonel Fukunaga) cut the road at Mao Sangsong and turned north to join 138. Tuphema was captured on 2 April, while the 1/38 Regiment at Maram cut the Imphal-Dimapur road. The 2 Battalion of the left column approached Kohima via Mao Song Sang and Kikruma (Colvin, 2012, p. 89). The British were unaware that a Japanese Division was marching towards Kohima then. Along the Chizami track alone, about 8000 Japanese marched the route to Pfutsero and Kikruma; they split into two columns at the latter to envelop Kohima (File no. 707, NSA). Kelhizulo Mero of Chizami, 13 years old at the time of the Japanese invasion, reflects:

> Around 4 April, we heard sounds of shrill and shout. We rushed out of our homes to see 7 Japanese men, 4 with swords and 3 with rifles raising their arms, marching towards our village. Looking straight, they crossed our village bravely, not once distracted by the onlookers. That night, a large number of Japanese soldiers crossed Chizami. The Japanese marched only at

night. They marched in uncountable numbers across our village for about a week every night. Despite the warnings, we waited every night for their march and watched them with excitement.

By 5 April, the 11 Company of 3 Battalion of the 58 Regiment entered Naga Village. General Miyazaki reached the hill station on 6 April. The main body and HQ of 31 Division was 9 miles away from Kohima on 7 April, with 138 Regiment and 31 Mountain Artillery to the north-east. A company of 124 Infantry Regiment (Colonel Miyamoto) was sent to Runguzumi to guard the divisional flank against any attacks from the north, while the bulk of this Regiment was in reserve at the rear of the central column (Colvin, 2012. P. 90).

3.1.1. Phase I: The Siege

4 April 1944 marked the initial Japanese attack on Kohima. The Japanese 1/58 Regiment attacked the southern edge of Kohima at General Purpose Transport (henceforth GPT) Ridge. As the Japanese accelerated their advance towards and around Kohima, on the evening of 4 April, at Dimapur, it was agreed that the whole of 161 Brigade, which had withdrawn from Kohima the previous day, would return to Kohima at the earliest (Edwards, 2013, p. 178). Meanwhile, the Japanese 2/58 and 3/58 Regiments advanced to Kohima from the east. On their entry to the Naga Village, Captain Tsuneo Sanukawe (as cited in Swinson, 2016) of the 11 Company remarked:

> We entered Naga Village at 4 a.m. on the 5th. The town was fast asleep. After dealing with the sentries, we occupied seven depots. The enemy had not noticed our advance and at 9 a.m. came to the depots to draw rations. We got them and made them prisoner. At 10 a.m. I was prepared to attack the town but at that moment we were fired on by artillery. At 1300 hours we informed our main body that we had occupied Kohima Village, and an hour later they arrived. We could not say we had won until we had gained the hill beyond and the road junction, so we attacked…Praying to God, we rushed into action, under cover of light machine-gun fire, throwing grenades as we went (p. 74)

As the D Company Royal West Kents arrived at Kohima on 5 April, while passing Hospital Spur, they came under fire from Japanese troops of the 3/58 Battalion. The Company left its truck and took positions, allowing the rest of the Royal West Kents to pass through (Edwards, 2013, p. 186). The 161 Brigade managed to rejoin the Kohima garrison on the Ridge, stretching from Detail Issues Stores (henceforth DIS) to the Indian General Hospital (henceforth IGH) (Lyman, 2011, p. 82). The Japanese 58 Regiment had occupied Naga Hill in the early hours and, by day, had virtually surrounded GPT Ridge and Jail Hill with the arrival of increasing Japanese troops. They then moved into Kohima and Treasury Hill to the Traffic Control Point (henceforth TCP). Warren, who never considered Kohima to be at serious risk, made quick decisions. He positioned two of his remaining battalions, the 1/1st Punjab and 4/7th Rajputs, two miles to the rear on Jotsoma Ridge at one of Pulebadze spurs. Pulebadze, located at a high altitude, was a logical position from which Kohima could be observed. The relentless attacks of Colonel Fukunaga's 58 Regiment overwhelmed the 1/3 Gurkhas and Burma Rifles on Jail Hill and GPT on 6 April. With the capture of Jail Hill, the Japanese dominated the southeastern edge of Kohima Ridge (Lyman, 2010, pp. 40-42). By this time, the Japanese had gained possession of British water supplies and "thirst was added to the other horror" (Slim, 1956, p. 316). On the night of 6 April, the 6/58, 2/58and 5/58 Companies launched their attack on the DIS and Field Supply Depot (henceforth FSD). The guns of Jotsoma caught them, but the Japanese came in four waves, ultimately reached the stores on the hilltop. The next day, the Royal West Kents carried a series of explosions in the area where many Japanese soldiers died. Lance Corporal John Harman discovered a panorama of the 58 Regiment, which indicated Japanese artillery. Major Shimanoe later commented that the attack on DIS and FSD caused a "crushing defeat for the 58th Regiment" (Swinson, 2016, pp.82-85). On 7 April, Japanese 1/58 infiltrated northwest of Jotsoma and cut the Jotsoma Box off Dimapur on the 8 April.

By 8 April, more Japanese troops were pouring in. Miyakazi's remaining Left Raiding Force and the 3/58 Regiment arrived at Kohima from Cheswema. By noon, the 1/183 Regiment, the

leading unit of the Central Column, was arriving. The Japanese now had control of Jail Hill, GPT Ridge and TCP, thus controlling the entire main road near Kohima (Edwards, 2013, p. 239). On the same day, Warren's Jotsoma base was cut off by Sato's 138 Regiment, who had marched towards Zubza (36 miles from Dimapur) from Merema. On the night of 8 April, the 3/58 attacked the north-eastern sector of the perimeter for the first time, above the TCP, where the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow and the tennis court were located. At the DIS Hill, heavy Japanese infantry attacks were witnessed (Lyman,2011, p. 51). The Kohima battle scene was horrific, with Japanese, British and Indian corpses scattered along the Kohima ridge. Some were buried in shallow graves, while the Japanese, whenever they could, burnt bodies, causing an obnoxious smell everywhere (Edwards, 2013, p. 242). Around 9 April, the Japanese charged both Pawsey and Keene's bungalows, driving the garrison troops back to the twenty-yard-wide terrace to the asphalt tennis court, running north-south above the two bungalows (Colvin, 2012, p. 133). Simultaneously, the Japanese operated attacks at Jotsoma, IGH Spur and DIS area (Swinson, 2016, pp. 93-94).

On 10 and 11 April, the Japanese continued their attacks at Jotsoma, Bungalow Sector, Supply Hill and Detail Hill. The 5th Brigade, Worcesters and Camaron Highlanders travelled from Dimapur to 'Bunker Hill' at Zubza but were repulsed. By this time, the Japanese 1/138 Regiment reached Kohima, and the 124 Infantry was on their way to Kohima from Chakabama. The 5 Company of 2/124 Battalion came under the direct command of the 31 Division and was ordered to protect the right flank against the enemy from the direction of Mokokchung. The 1/58 Regiment reached Konoma from Pulomi and headed east of Jotsoma (Shrewsbury Hill). By 11 April, the Japanese held the area east of the tennis court and the Deputy Commissioner's Bungalow (Edwards, 2013, pp. 255-275). Attacks on the Royal West Kents B Company continued at the Bungalow Sector till the dawn of 12 April. The Japanese secured their positions by creating a series of fortified bunkers at critical points. The Japanese send messages in English to the British and Indian fighters to surrender through a loudspeaker. Messages of Japanese and INA intentions

of liberating India from British tyranny were also announced in Hindi and Urdu (Swinson, 2016, p. 87). The Japanese carried their attacks along the slopes of Hospital Ridge simultaneously. Report reached the British that Sato was directing his troops to Dimapur to disrupt the railway line, however, this did not happen (Edwards, 2013, pp. 277-278). Edwards (2013) remarks that when Sato was interrogated on the matter, he stated that he never saw any possibility, given the circumstances, of his division being able to cut the Assam Railway or capture Dimapur. He explained that they had expected Imphal to fall shortly after the initial attack, which would allow supplies and ammunition to be sent to the 31st Division via the Imphal-Kohima Road, along with reinforcements from the 15 and 33 Divisions. He indicated this was the only way their objectives could have been achieved (p. 280).

Meanwhile, on 13 April, the United States Army Air Force dropped British supplies but mistook the dropping zone and delivered them outside the perimeter. Later that day, the RAF spotted the accurate zone and dropped medical supplies intended for Jotsoma. On 13 April, there was severe fighting at Zubza and Kohima, the FSD area, and the Bungalow Sector (Swinson, 2016, pp. 103-105). On the other hand, Japanese deployment arrangements were being made in the north of Kohima; the 124 Regiment moved from Chakabama to Cheswema, and the 1st Company of the 1/124 Battalion was sent to Phekekrima along the Bokajan track (Edwards, 2013, p. 290). On 14 April, the 1 Cameron Highlanders destroyed a small Japanese force at ‘Bunker Hill’ in Zubza. By the night of 17 April, the Japanese finally captured FSD Ridge and Kuki Piquet (Lyman, 2010, p. 58). However, amidst the immense struggles of the Japanese, the biggest problem posed by the troops was the lack of food supplies and ammunition. Senior Private Manabu Wada, Trasport Section, 3 Battalion, 138 Infantry Regiment described the Japanese situation:

> Throughout our long siege of Kohima, enemy fighter aircraft flew along the face of the valley in front of us, and cargo planes dropped arms and water to their leading troops. Without meat, rice, rifle and machine- gun ammunition we could only watch. Occasionally our own fighters,

marked with Japanese Sun, flew in support of us against heavy anti-aircraft fire but quickly disappeared beyond the mountains (as cited in Edwards, 2013, p. 103).

Lyman (2010) notes that for over two weeks, intense hand-to-hand combat continued, with the battlefield shrinking into a gruesome mix of exhausted soldiers, mud, corpses, and trees stripped of their leaves by constant shellfire (p. 51). The siege of Kohima proved most devastating for both armies as they suffered heavy losses. The Royal West men lost 199 out of 444; and out of the 800 men who fought at Jessami and Kharasom, only 260 reported to Kohima. The British garrison lost a total of about 1,375 men, which included the dead, wounded and missing, by the end of the siege of Kohima (Edwards, 2013, p. 359). The total number of men Sato lost was even more significant.

3.1.2. Phase II: British Offensive

While the bloody Battle of Kohima was being intensely fought, the Allied made preparations for an offensive. Lieutenant General Montague Stopford arrived at Jorhat and had established his headquarters there on 3 April 1944. He took control of the operation from Ranking. His immediate task was to concentrate his Corps as forward as practicable, secure the Dimapur base, reinforce Kohima, and protect Assam Railways and the China route airfields in Brahmaputra valley. By 11 April, two brigades of the 2nd Division reached Dimapur; the third was arriving soon, and by 12 April, the Chindit 23 Brigade arrived at Jorhat. Stopford immediately sent two 5th Brigades of the 2nd Division towards Kohima. On 15 April, the 5th Brigade joined the 161 Brigade (Slim, pp. 312-316). With reinforcements from the British 2nd Division, Grover formulated a plan to recapture Kohima and destroy the 31 Division. According to a discussion between Grover and Stopford, who had come to Dimapur from his headquarters at Jorhat, it was decided that the right flank would be established to extend the area held in Kohima and carry a major operation of seizing Kohima Ridge from the enemy; at the same time, the 2nd Division would control the Merema Ridge (Swinson, 2016, p. 121).

Amid the British planning an offensive operation, around 17 April, Sato received a wire from Mutaguchi, ordering him to send reinforcements to the 15 Army's attack on Imphal. Sato made preparations, directing Miyakazi to concentrate the 124 Regiment, 1/138 Regiment and 31 Mountain Artillery at the Aradura Spur (Colvin, 2012, p. 194). However, he decided that the date for Miyakazi's departure to Imphal would be kept in abeyance. On 20 April, aware of the 31 Division's situation and with a continuous flow of British reinforcements, Sato changed his strategy from offensive to defensive. While Miyakazi and his men were to concentrate on the Aradura Spur, the Right Raiding column, comprising the 138 Regiment, 1 Mountain Artillery Battalion with an engineer platoon and a medical company, was ordered to take defensive positions on the Merema-Cheswema-Chachama line. The Central Defence Unit, with its 31 Mountain Artillery Regiment, 3/124 Infantry Regiment and one engineer platoon, were responsible for the defence of Kohima. Concurrently, the 31 Infantry Group Headquarters, 58 Infantry Regiment, 2/58 Mountain Artillery Regiment and 2 Engineer Company (Central Defence Unit) was ordered to continue its attacks on Garrison Hill (Edwards, 2013, p. 365). Lyman (2010) discusses that on 23 April the Central Defence Unit attempted a final assault against Garrison Hill. The British launched a fierce counterattack around the tennis court to open the road at TCP, to enable access for Lee Grant tanks and provide support to Victor Hawking's left flank, 5th Brigade, as they advanced from Merema. The plan was to get the tanks back of Naga Hills. On the other hand, Brigadier Shapland's 6th Brigade was battling at the Kohima Ridge, and the right flank under Brigadier Willie Goschen's 4th Brigade was ordered to march south of Kohima to cut the Imphal road below the Aradura Spur (pp. 67-71).

Lyman (2010) further describes the events from 25 April as slow but steady progress of the British in recapturing Kohima. The 4th Brigade pushed through the rough terrain of Pulebadze and occupied Oak Hills, then secured the upper part of GPT Ridge from Japanese hold on 4 May. The GPT was finally cleared on 11 May. The 2nd Division, by 4 -5 May, obtained a small part of the FDS Hill on the Kohima Ridge, and on 12 May, the Hill was cleared by men of the Royal

Berkshire. On 13 May, the Dorsets captured the remains of the inflamed Deputy Commissioner's bungalow on the northernmost edge of Kohima Ridge. They succeeded in getting a Lee Grant tank onto the tennis court. The capture of the Kohima Ridge was a remarkable feat for the British 2nd Division and the 7th Indian Divisions. Point 5120 on Naga Hill and the Aradura Spur were the only two barriers on Japanese hold. Allied attacks on Naga Hill began on 15 May (pp. 71-84). Heavy offensive attacks were made on 24 and 25 May, but the Japanese remained entrenched. The monsoons that started by mid-April were now experiencing heavy downpours. Grover ordered simultaneous assaults on both redoubts.

With no support from the 15 Army of Mutaguchi, Sato lost several of his men and he could not tolerate seeing the few remaining in further misery. Although on 23 May 1944, he addressed his soldiers to fight to the death, he realised he could not force the British out from Kohima or even hold on indefinitely. On 25 May, he sent a signal to Mutaguchi that men of the 31 Division were exhausted and had run out of ammunition. Sato also stated that he had decided to withdraw his troops from Kohima on 1 June; however, Mutaguchi replied with a threat of court martial (Colvin 2012, p. 358). On 31 May, knowing that his position was despondent, Sato acted on his own initiative to save his battered division from inevitable destruction. He signalled Mutaguchi, "We have fought for two months with utmost courage and have reached the limits of human fortitude. Our swords are broken and our arrows spent. Shedding bitter tears, I now leave Kohima" (as cited in Lyman 2010, p. 214). Sato was dismissed from command on 7 June 1944.

3.2. The Japanese Retreat

By the end of the battle of Imphal and Kohima, Japan had suffered the worst land defeat in their history (Higgins et al., 1984, p. 79). Lyman (2011) remarks that when the 15 Army initiated its campaign for Imphal and Kohima, it had a total of 115,000 troops: 65,000 fighting troops and 50,000 support, line-of-communication, and administrative personnel. Of these, 15,000 non-combatants and 53,000 fighting troops (30,000 killed in action and 23,000 wounded) perished. A

total of about 65,000 lives were lost, resulting in an unprecedented casualty rate of 81 percent among combat forces and 46 percent of the 15 Army total strength. 600 were taken prisoners, 17,000 pack animals perished, and no heavy weaponry was brought back to Burma. (p. 254, p. 288).

The Japanese Divisions, which undertook Operation U-Go with much enthusiasm and firm determination, failed in its mission to become an Asian power. Japanese journey to Burma was extremely despondent as they lost more men during the retreat due to starvation and disease. To add more misery, by 8 July, General Slim's forces pursued the remnants of the 15 Army up to the Chindwin (Higgins et al., 1984, p. 79). The scene of the Japanese retreat to Burma is beyond human comprehension. The monsoons by this time were displaying its unforgiving force, and the rough terrain, which was almost inaccessible even at the time of their initial entry, became worse. Yuwaichi Fujiwara, a Japanese soldier reported that by the end of May, they were aware that that they were bound to lose the battle but withdrawal orders were officially issued only in July. By then almost all the soldiers were suffering from malaria and starvation which cost many lives during the retreat (Thompson, 2009, p. 293). Staff Sergeant Yasumasa Nishiji of the 20 Independent Engineering Regiment describes:

> During the retreat, these men (sick and wounded) were joined by many others who were unable to keep up with the main body and were left to look after themselves. Almost, tens of thousands, perished. We called the road the 'Human Remains Highway'. What happened here was beyond the bounds of human behaviour. It was a vision of hell (Tamayama & Nunneley, 2001, p. 197).

After the Battle of Kohima, the 31 Division Japanese Army retreated along the Chakabama, Kikruma, Pfutsero, Tsupfume, Zhavame, Gaziphema (Laii) and Kharasom route to Burma. As the 31 Division was retreating to Burma, desperate Japanese soldiers appealed to the men of some Chakhesang Naga villages to marry their women soldiers, saying that they were well-educated and that they could support the villagers in multiple ways. Soldiers were aware that it would be

impossible for many of these women to return to their homes, as the journey that awaited them would be filled with peril and uncertainty. The villagers, however, were apprehensive about the consequences from the British and declined the Japanese offer. Although locals later expressed regret for not accepting the offer, the situations of the time compelled them to decline the offer despite being sympathetic to their condition.

Among the Chakhesang Naga villages, the villages of Tsupfume, Zelome, Rezaba and Zhavame played a prominent role in offering their assistance during the Japanese retreat. These villages were located along the main route of retreat, and in close proximity to the Japanese First Field Hospital site (Milestone 30). The people of these villages aided the Japanese Army by carrying the sick and wounded to the neighbouring village of Liyai Kullen (Manipur), from where they were carried to Gaziphema (Laii) and so forth. P. Paul of Zhavame records that many of these men died on the way to Liyai Kullen. He further states that soldiers who could not keep up with the rest of the division were seen singing Japanese songs as they awaited death. Along the forests of Laii and beyond, numerous Japanese corpses were left to decompose or be consumed by wild animals. Horrific scenes were also witnessed in the Chakhesang Naga villages. Milestone 30 became one of the most unpleasant places to visit. Japanese corpses laid across the plains of *Japan Bedie*. Although some dead soldiers were buried in the vicinity of the field hospital, the number of dead was too large that the corpses were scattered everywhere. In the early years after the Japanese retreat, when the villagers of Pfutseromi crossed this area to go to their fields, many were said to have tripped over the bones of dead soldiers.

3.3. The Battle of Kohima and the Nagas

The Second World War, coinciding with the colonial period, witnessed colonial authorities taking maximum advantage of the colonized people in the war efforts. As a result, many tribal societies found themselves caught in the War. Until recently, the study of the Second World War had been about the roles played by the major powers of the world, their strategies, and their actions.

However, much of their achievements would not have been accomplished without the contribution of the indigenous people's support. Sheffield and Risemen (2019), while examining the role of Indigenous people in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand states:

> On one hand colonizers generally denigrated Indigenous people's beliefs, practices, skills, languages and technologies as inferior to Europeans'. On the other hand, especially on the frontiers, colonists relied on Indigenous knowledge and sometimes technologies to traverse, adapt to and survive on the land… That is why it seems remarkable that, in the Second World War, settler governments turned to Indigenous knowledge to fight the war (p. 133).

Taking advantage of the large territory and population, British colonizers in India recruited Indians to assist them in their war efforts, not sparing the tribes of northeast India. The Assam Regiment was officially inaugurated on 15 June 1941 to become the youngest unit of the Indian Army. Recruitment to the Regiment was drawn from the indigenous people of northeast India, including the Nagas (Saigal, 2022, p. 43). In an attempt to secure the India-Burma border and prepare for a probable Japanese invasion, Nagas were employed in large numbers in clearing jungles to construct bridle roads and expand existing bridle paths to jeep tracks and other wartime establishments. Singh (1998) notes that with the effort of the Naga tribesmen, a jungle was transformed into a runway in 60 working days, using minimum mechanical equipment. The physical labour performed by the Naga labourers was immense (p.30). These achievements were possible as physical labour was in sync with their work culture, and Nagas were also looking for opportunities to earn.

When war came to the Nagas, villages in and around Kohima were affected the most. Kohima, being the actual battle site, witnessed grave devastation and displacement. A tribal people who were only getting used to the changes of colonization witnessed a horrifying battle of the Second World War. The oral narrations of those who experienced the Battle first-hand give an

overview of the horrors of war. The traumatic memory of the event has been testified in the works of recent researchers.

For most of the Chakhesang Naga tribe, the Battle of Kohima was the first time they were exposed to foreign people and culture. When discussing the events of the Battle of Kohima among the Chakhesang villages, they deliberate more on their experiences with the Japanese soldiers rather than the actual events of the Battle. Though the Japanese activity in the area was short-lived, the memories and experiences of the people, even after almost eight decades, are still robust and vivid. The oral narrations of those who witnessed the events indicate that the months between April and June 1944 were the most striking and unforgettable moments of their lives. Memory has played a significant role in connecting the events of history, and its impact is seen in the social, cultural, economic and political spheres of the present and the future. However, the traumatic impact of memory is not observed among the Chakhesang Nagas, as in the Angami Naga region, the memories of the former have played a potent role in establishing significant linkages. Those who witnessed the coming of the Japanese Army disclose pleasant and unpleasant memories. Narrators of the events share intense memories because the experience had been unlike anything they had seen or comprehended. Though numbered in age, they have given valuable recollections that connect the strings of history.

It is often argued that ageing inevitably brings a generalized decline in memory. While this is invariably true, Schacter (1996) discusses that older adults with normal cognitive function are better at recounting stories of the past than young adults due to their ability to call on vast networks of facts and associations, thus convey a more coherent sense to the story. Schacter conducted various studies on retention in older adults and concluded that as one age, details of recent experiences are less remembered; therefore, they prefer to focus on events from the past (pp. 291-300). Experience has played a vital role in the recollection of events. Experiences of war differ from individual to individual and place to place. Recording the participants' accounts, such as

combatants and volunteers, differ significantly from those of non-participants. In many cases, the role and contributions of non-participants are 'missing in action' cases. In the Naga context, non-participants of the war have unvaryingly contributed as the unnoticed voices of the War.

When war came to the Naga Hills, the Nagas encountered an 'advanced race' crossing their land with the latest technologies of the time. To the locals, the number of Japanese soldiers seemed countless, often compared to a colony of ants or sometimes referred to as a moving forest, due to their camouflage. For many oral witnesses, the date and time edged in their memories is 04 - 04 - 44 and 4:00 p.m., marking the beginning of the Japanese assault on Kohima at the famous 'Battle of Kohima'. Although the Battle did not unfold directly in the Chakhesang Naga region, the area experienced sporadic combats and bombing. Air strikes during the Battle were visible from some Chakhesang Naga villages, and the constant sound of gunfire throughout the night left the people disturbed and living in fear.

3.4. Attitude of the Chakhesang Nagas on the Second World War: A Question of Loyalty

During the Second World War, the British utilized different modes of mass communication to spread British propaganda in India. Newsreels proved to be an efficient means of reaching people, as did newspapers and radios. Newspapers, although widespread, could be accessed by the literate only, while the use of radios was minimal as they were possessed only by the wealthy few. Fielding (1978) defines *newsreels* as a regular, weekly or bi-weekly production covering several subjects in a reel of about one thousand feet or ten minutes (pp. 75-76). Woods (2007) notes that the first copies of newsreels appeared in India in 1940, and they were called *British News*. Indian-based newsreels like *Indian Movietone News* and *Indian News Parade* appeared in 1942 and 1943, respectively. The main focus of British policy was to gain Indian support in the War and reflect the roles of Indians in the British war efforts. The Defence of India Act Rule 44-A, 1943, required Indian and foreign newsreels to "include a sufficient length of Indian material and show activities of Indian fighting forces." A popular footage of Indian soldiers was reflected in the item called,

‘Chappattis by Parachute for Indian troops in Italy’ by the *Indian News Parade*. With the British being alarmed by the dangers posed by the Japanese threat on the Burma front, newsreels displayed pictures of Japan’s daylight air raids of Calcutta in December 1942 and reported Japanese atrocities in the Arakan battle (pp. 95-105). Newsreels became a valuable adjunct to the British government as it could reach many Indian cinemas and convey messages. It became a popular mode of communicating with the masses on global and Indian events even after the British exit.

The Naga Hills, being one of the most inaccessible regions of British India, did not have any access to the means of communication promoted by the British in mainland India. The first vernacular newspaper in Nagaland was the *Ao Milen*, initially called the Naga Messenger, and it was first published in 1933. However, since it was written in the Ao Naga dialect, its circulation was limited to the Ao inhabited area. In the Kohima region, the quarterly newspaper *Ketho Mu Kevi*, appeared only in 1957, in the Angami language. Hence, on the eve of the War, the only means of communication with the Naga inhabitants for the British was through the *Dobashis*, who played a dominant role in spreading British propaganda. Another means of British propaganda was adopted in schools. Keduthsu Kupa, who was studying in Class five at Kohima Mission School recounted teachers telling students of a ‘cruel dictator’ named Adolf Hitler of Germany and that he was an enemy of the British. Students were often updated of the world events since the beginning of the Second World War. As the war spread to Burma, the possibility of war spreading to the Naga Hills was also deliberated to students and drills were conducted. Rev. Zupelhi Mero, who was a student of the school recalls being taught of how to utilize trenches as part of the drills. *Dobashis* and *Gaunburas*, who had direct access to villages of the Nagas Hills, were responsible for public propaganda. They warned the villages of the arrival of a large army that would invade their land and demand food and services. Instructions were directed to the people to abstain from any assistance on the arrival of the enemy.

The British strategy towards the Chakhesang Naga villages involved using air strikes to target the villages along the suspected route that the Japanese would embark. As such, villages of Jessami, Chizami, Sumi, Enhulumi and Mesulumi were instructed to set up makeshift homes in the nearby forests. The warnings were alarming, and all necessary precautions were taken to store grains underground. When the evacuation orders came from the British, the people evacuated to the nearby forest with their livestock and necessities. The British, aware of the hardships faced by the Japanese Army in their march through the rough and almost impenetrable terrain of the India-Burma border, carried out these steps to inflict further misery upon the enemy. Thus, when the Japanese troops arrived in the Naga Hills, many villages were deserted and destroyed, depriving them further. However, throughout the Battle of Kohima, the Japanese maintained communication with the Chakhesang Naga villages. In areas where the villagers were displaced, a few villagers whose homes were not destroyed returned home. These people often interacted with Japanese troops.

The attitude of the Chakhesang Nagas towards the Second World War, as seen in the Battle of Kohima, was mixed. Propaganda carried out in the Naga hills by the *Dobashis* was pro-British, which made the locals develop a hostile attitude towards the 'enemy', even before encountering them. The Japanese were unable to carry out any propaganda directly among the Nagas before entering its land. Nevertheless, despite their inability to do so, a few people eagerly waited upon the Japanese entry. The people of Jessami, for instance, on the eve of the War, anxiously looked forward to the coming of the Japanese Army. Warnings of a Japanese force had been well spread among the hills, however, many people of Jessami developed an attitude that was pro-Japanese. They regarded the Japanese as their saviour, and word spread among them that '*Afu Japan*' or 'Father Japan' was coming to their rescue. Kelhikwenyi Wezah of Jessami states that there was a popular saying among the village elders that when the Japanese come to their land and win the war, they would start using steel plates and cups. The development of this attitude can be attributed to the feeling of nationalism which developed among the Nagas since the formation of the Naga

Club in 1918. The memorandum submitted to the Simon Commission indicated the desire of the Nagas to be an independent nation. Noting on the impact of the Naga Club, Horam (1988) comments:

> They were preparing themselves politically in the event of India gaining her Independence from the British—a happening they then visualized as being imminent. Thus, their chief concern was the political future of their homeland after the exit of the British. The Naga Club was still in its infancy then, but the pattern of the future had already been installed in their minds (p. 37).

Another reason was also expressed in the frustration of the people having to pay annual house taxes to the British in the administered areas. Due to limited circulation of money, opportunities were sought when developmental activities were sanctioned in the area and villagers were compelled to work as labourers or porters. Thus, taxation, though minimal in the British context, was a heavy burden to the people. The people also believed that the Naga national leaders were working closely with the Japanese Army and anticipated that the Nagas would be free from foreign dominion once the war was won by the Japanese.

In most of the Chakhesang villages, the *Dobashis* successfully spread British propaganda in their respective villages. It became clear to the people that the Japanese were to be regarded as enemies of the British Raj. However, when encounters with the Japanese Army occurred, people realized that the so-called enemies looked and behaved like them. When the Japanese Army arrived in the Naga hills, they were exhausted and famished. In the villages where air strikes did not occur, the Japanese came to the people's houses asking for food. A few Chakhesang Naga villages willingly complied to Japanese demands. In Mesulumi, when the Japanese requested for cattle to be slaughtered, the village, lacking cattle of their own, approached the nearby village of Porba. The latter provided the cattle for free and fed the Japanese soldiers stationed in Mesulumi. In Lozaphehu, the Japanese were warmly welcomed and offered food during their short stay in the village. A similar attitude was witnessed in Kikruma village and a few other villages.

In the initial stage of their arrival, the Japanese made efforts to maintain cordial relations with the locals. As warned, they asked villagers for food and livestock. Initially, all commodities were paid in Japanese printed paper money (Plate 1). With the circulation of money being minimal, there was a common belief that Japanese activity could spur economic development in the region. Powerful speeches were made in many of the Chakhesang Naga villages, describing how the Japanese and the Nagas had the same ancestry. The Japanese, understanding the necessity of establishing a pattern of loyal locals for guidance in unfamiliar territory and deliberate their instructions to the villages, selected a few local men as interpreters (*Soncho)*. These men played a prominent role in mobilizing the villagers, and their contribution to the war efforts of the Japanese Army cannot be undermined. Assistance in different forms were offered by the Chakhesang Nagas to the Japanese Army. This can be summarized as the people's contribution to the war efforts.

The treatment of the Japanese towards the locals can be studied in two phases, in similar lines with the events of the Battle of Kohima. The first fortnight of the Battle of Kohima witnessed the rapid siege of Kohima by the Japanese Army. This success was reflected in the troop's cordial treatment towards the Chakhesang Naga villages. With reinforcements of the British 2nd Division reaching Kohima, the Japanese-occupied areas were slowly recaptured by the British, forcing the Japanese to take a defensive position. These turns of events saw consequences in the Japanese treatment towards the Chakhesang Nagas. The Japanese became persistent with their demands for supply, resulting in insolence in their approach. Cases of violence have also been reported in the area. This change in reaction and treatment can be attributed to the mounting pressure the Japanese faced at the Battle of Kohima. The Japanese had lost their men with many casualties in the Battle of Kohima. The 31 Division, who were expecting reinforcement and food supply from General Mutaguchi's 15 Army, never reached them. There was also a standing order to fight to the death. The only option left for the frustrated 31 Division was to get its supplies through any means possible, which meant consistent demands from the Naga villages. Many Chakhesang villages became hostile towards the Japanese, and brutal acts of injury were inflicted on the locals to the

extent of threatening villagers at gunpoint if they did not give in to their demands. Defending their homes and villages, some locals carried out brutal acts against the Japanese soldiers. The local population, whose main occupation was agriculture, solely depended upon the hard labour they toiled in their fields throughout the year without any supplies from outside except sea salt. To the Chakhesang Nagas, it was shameful to beg for food; thus, even the poorest toiled hard to cultivate enough to sustain the family. The self-sufficiency enjoyed before the invasion was becoming at stake. Another reason why the locals turned hostile was the forceful labour the Japanese Army demanded. Many young men were made porters for the Army, some of whom did not return for weeks. There was a growing fear that the men of the villages would be taken to the battle site. Those who returned narrated the horrors of war, which was alarming to its listeners.

In spite of many people turning hostile towards the Japanese soldiers, there were some who were loyal and rendered selfless services to the Japanese soldiers by befriending them. There were cases of the locals who willingly volunteered to become their coolies and labourers. The Japanese appointed a few men to assist them in collecting food supplies and act as interpreters. It has been recorded that even the Japanese soldiers regarded the few local interpreters appointed by the Japanese officials as imperative and showed them respect. As most villagers could not communicate verbally, communication was carried out through gestures. The Chakhesang Nagas, in their interactions with the Japanese soldiers, learnt a few Japanese words, and communication in a minimal form was established. For instance, the word *Soncho* became a 'dominant word', which they understood as a superior command. It has been noted that many times when the locals used the word *Soncho*, the Japanese soldiers would instantly behave and not pose a threat to the villagers. In the Japanese language, *Soncho* means village head. To the Japanese, the local interpreters (*Soncho*) were regarded as leaders of the villages and thus respected their authority. This gesture of respect was important to the Japanese, who became dependent on the Chakhesang villages for food and labour.

The Military Observer Group (US) in India and Joint Intelligence Collection Agency (1944, Report 9082), while studying the tactics and strategy of the Japanese Army in the Burma Campaign, reported that the Japanese did not treat the native population and Asian prisoners of war well. Their arrogance and general brutality antagonized the natives. However, the treatment of the Japanese Army towards the Chakhesang Nagas can be reviewed as an exceptional case. While comparing the Japanese attitude and treatment with natives of other Asiatic nationalities, reports of atrocities carried upon the locals in the Chakhesang Naga villages can be stated as minimal. A major contribution towards this attitude can be attributed to the role played by Subash Chandra Bose. While in Burma, Bose informed the Japanese Commander-in-chief, Lieutenant General Kawabe that he had instructed his men (INA) to "uphold the honour of all Indians- men and women" and a shooting order was issued if any Indian or Japanese was found looting or raping in Indian soil. The Japanese commander was much impressed by Bose's statement and a similar order was issued to his own Army (Chatterjee, 1947, p. 165). The few brutal acts reported in the area were mostly meted out by the Indian soldiers of the INA.

Another notion for such treatment mentioned by Khrienuo (2013), describes Phizo's support to the Japanese during their invasion of the Naga hills (p.67). Chasie (2017) observed that there was a popular saying among the Nagas that a pact was concluded between the Japanese and Phizo in Burma. He further states that "Whether such a pact included good Japanese behaviour towards Naga women is not clear. But Japanese behaviour during the entire time they were in the Naga Hills was quite remarkable in this area, particularly given their reputation elsewhere" (p. 70). The treatment of the Japanese especially in the Chakhesang Naga inhabitant area can be summarized as an exceptional case as in most villages, women were well regarded and treated with respect. At Pfutseromi village, it was observed that Japanese soldiers abstained from entering a house if a woman was seated inside.

In their experience during April to June 1944, the Chakhesang Nagas voiced diverse views towards the Japanese Army. While some enunciate insolences, others proclaim that the Japanese's attitude was expected and unavoidable, given the situation. Kedulhinyi Mero of Lekromi village opines, "If Chakhesang Nagas had not been influenced by the initial British propaganda and had met the Japanese in a different situation, the picture could have been different." He further testifies that there was a realization after the Japanese retreat that they should have given support to the Japanese soldiers as there were certain traits of the Japanese that were similar to the local populace. Chasie (2017) mentions a comment by Havildar Sovehu Nienu of the 1st Assam Regiment, who fought the Japanese at Jessami, Pulie Badze and Burma. Nienu opined that the Japanese were great fighters and that if supplies had come, they would have probably won the War. Another notion mentioned by Chasie was that of Pukoho Rolnu of Jakhama who stated, "The Japanese became cruel and our people turned against them. But we must understand that desperate people begin to do desperate things" (as cited in p. 68).

Studies on Japanese operations through Burma and the Naga Hills have detailed accounts of battles and combats. However, the Chakhesang Naga area offers another side of the Battle less explored by scholars. The Chakhesang Naga area, provided an opportunity for the Japanese to experience an uncommon situation. According to Brown (2022) Japanese soldiers were young, and their encounters with other nationalities brought new experiences. A typical 'Heitai' or Japanese infantryman or gunner, like most servicemen worldwide, was not a professional soldier but a civilian drafted for military service. Most Japanese men enlisted were well-educated compared to their counterparts elsewhere. After months of rigorous training, they were sent on missions (The Japanese Soldier section para 1-3). Japanese soldiers who came to the Naga Hills, were typically young and adventurous. Therefore, when they witnessed the lifestyle of the Chakhesang Nagas, they enthusiastically participated in village activities. They were said to have mingled easily with the local population. During such interactions, they tried to imitate the villagers and, in turn, taught them to shoot guns or sometimes taught certain etiquette. The

Japanese also conducted shooting and wrestling competitions in a few villages. The Nagas and Japanese shared a common interest in wrestling as both cultures had a strong connection to it. The Japanese fascination with wrestling is observed even in their treatment towards the Prisoners of War (POW). John Hinkle, an American POW stated that the Japanese were often interested in making the POWs wrestle, even though they were not interested in it (Culpepper, 2008, p. 132). However, in the Naga Hills, this common sport became a source of entertainment, thereby, fostering a sense of camaraderie. Although the Japanese were constantly aware of the critical situations faced, in their interactions with the Chakhesang Nagas, they took brief moments to pause and relieve their intense stress.

While hostilities against the Japanese developed in the later part of the Japanese occupation of the Chakhesang Naga hills, it cannot be asserted that the locals became loyal to the British. The question of loyalty or neutrality can be summarized in the connotation of White (1965), in his observation of the natives of New Guinea:

> While it is true that some natives did show the qualities for which they were praised, it is equally true that the majority did their work only because the white men in command bullied them into doing it. Few if any were serving voluntarily and most would have deserted if possible. At this stage they knew of no reason and felt no desire to fight on the side of the Australians against the Japanese (and vice-versa) but the habit of obeying white men, inculcated by about sixty years of colonization, was hard to break. In some cases, of course, loyalty was a factor, but it was usually a matter of personal attachment between master and servant, not a spontaneous expression of gratitude by the brown race for benevolent leadership and protection from the whites (p. 129).

3.5. Making Affinity Ties

In the Naga Hills, the Second World War saw its military engagement in one of the remotest colonies of the British, like that of the Micronesian islands, where the Japanese and the Americans extended the War to the islanders of the Pacific. In both cases, indigenous warrior tribes got entangled in a war that was not theirs. The Micronesians were "caught in the middle of a foreign war one initiated, designed, and led by others…Micronesians were simply in the way" (Falgout et al. 2008, p. 104). The same can be said for the Nagas, who became victims of a most technologically sophisticated warfare. The reflection of the events among the Chakhesang Naga tribe is seen in the illustrated memories of men, women and children as participants, supporters or rivals, and bystanders. Various observations were made on the Japanese, who travelled thousands of miles away from their homes to defend and bring victory to their country.

The Chakhesang Nagas closely examined Japanese behaviour during their constant visits to the villages. One of the first observations of the Chakhesang Nagas on the Japanese was the physical appearance of the soldiers, their uniform, weapons and the condition in which they entered the villages. Lhikemvu Wezah of Jessami, who was about 14 years old at the time of the Japanese invasion, comments:

> They (Japanese) looked like us in stature and facial features, but their skin had a lighter tone. Their journey to the Naga Hills must have been rough, as by the time they reached Jessami, many wore torn and tattered boots. In their exhaustion and starvation, we were surprised to see that they consumed anything that seemed edible. Despite their difficulties and challenges on the way, they exhibited untold valour and bravery during the Battle at Jessami.

Another observation made by the people was the presence of women soldiers. It was difficult to identify them as they dressed like men but the locals recognized them by the rifles they carried,

which were shorter than the men's and boots which were different from men's. Women soldiers' behaviours were closely examined by the locals, who exhibited certain feminine traits.

At Chizami, after most Japanese troops had left for Kohima, a defence position was set up in an area close to the village. A few Japanese soldiers were assigned to defend the area. The village's children watched and freely mingled with the soldiers stationed there, who became friendly with the villagers. Kelhizulo Mero comments:

> We were not afraid of the Japanese soldiers. They were kind to children, and I spent a lot of time with them. The British were stationed at Sumi village (4 miles away); we watched with excitement as the British and Japanese exchanged gunfire. As children, we tried to examine whose weapons were better and who aimed better. After these small-scale combats, the Japanese would come to the village and spend time with the children of the village.

Tsulo Therie of Lasumi village, a young boy then, interacted much with the Japanese soldiers. He states:

> The Japanese came to our village and asked for labourers. About 30 men from our village served the Japanese and travelled to Chakabama. In our village they were stationed here at a place we call *Bu-theza*. The soldiers were kind towards us. In fact, when they saw sick or injured villagers, they treated them with their medicines and ointments. After the Japanese retreat, a Japanese soldier who failed to follow his comrades was brought to this village from Chakabama by Lhichilo, who allowed him to stay in his home for a few months. He was known as Hashi to the villagers. He adapted well and became like a fellow villager, helping Lhichilo and his family in their agricultural activities. Another soldier of the British Army, probably a Nepali, whom we called Kemvu, having lost his way, also came to this village and lived here for some time. Hashi and Kemvu, belonging to opposing armies, often fought each other. The villagers sometimes organized wrestling competitions and made the two compete with each other. Hashi

was a good wrestler and often won the bouts. Reports of the soldiers came to be known to the British authority, and they were taken to Kohima. We never heard of them again, but we hoped that Hashi was treated well by the British because he had bonded well with the villagers and became more like a village citizen.

As the Battle of Kohima was not fought in the Chakhesang inhabited area, the Japanese could spend some time knowing the people along the route to Kohima. Japanese base camps were established in different parts of the region, resulting in much communication being ascertained with the locals. In their effort to gain support and establish better communication, the Japanese Army established rudimentary schools in some Naga villages. One such school was set up at Phek village. Sipohu Venuh is among the last surviving pupils of the school. Japanese alphabets were taught and he vividly remembers Japanese numerals from one to twenty. Although Japanese schools were not set up at many villages, some villagers learned rudimentary Japanese words through the daily interactions. For instance, when soldiers came asking for food, the villagers understood the Japanese words of *khomi* for rice *or mhomi* for paddy, *niwotari* for chicken *or buta* for pig. The Japanese word for rice (*khomi*) is similar to the Chakhesang Kuzhale dialect, *ehkhune* meaning cooked rice, making it easier for the locals to associate with the word. The Japanese often asked young boys to bring them tobacco leaves in exchange for Japanese notes and coins. Initially, locals understood the word tobacco for the local word *thubakoh,* which implied the muscle of the human rear end. This side-splitting implication often led the locals to banter with the soldiers in the local dialect.

Some Japanese words Eneipelo Thopi of Chizami recalls are:

Japanese word with English meaning

1. *Soncho* …… village headman
2. *Kutsü* …… ……. shoe/boot

3. *Kutsüshita* …….. socks
4. *Buta* …….. pig
5. *Khomi* …….. rice
6. *Niwotari* …….. chicken
7. *Momhi* …….. paddy
8. *Kodasa* …….. little/ less
9. *Arimasum* …….. not available/ no more
10. *Arimaska* …….. it is available/ have

Similarly, Hutsonyi from Phusachodu village, who was in his youth at the time of the Japanese invasion, learned Japanese numerals from the soldiers. He recounts:

Japanese numerals and English numerals

1. *Echi* …… one
2. *Ni* ……... two
3. *Sa* ……..…… three
4. *Shi* ……..… four
5. *Go* ……..… five
6. *Roko* ……..…… six
7. *Nana* …… seven
8. *Echi* ……..… eight
9. *Gong* ……..... nine
10. *Ju* ……..... ten.

During the Second World War, the Japanese employed messages of brotherhood in the Naga Hills as in other tribal societies in their effort to convince people of the Mongoloid race to gain empathy and support from the indigenous tribes. When they occupied Madang, New Guinea, the Japanese regularly told:

> We Japanese have been sorry for you natives of New Guinea for a long time. We have thought of you a great deal and now have come to help you…your skins and our skins are the same. Will you help us with our cargo and show us roads and tracks? (Monk, 1944, as cited in Kituai, 2008, p. 183)

The same strategy was operated in the Naga hills. Japanese officers also called for public meetings, delivering similar messages in the Chakhesang Naga villages. This was done to gain the leverage of the local population. The Japanese made much effort to establish amiable relations with the locals and convince the people that they were familiar with their customs and practices. Whether the Japanese attempted these gestures to prove a shared identity or gain the people's support has yet to be discovered. However, a cultural tie was established in some of the Chakhesang Naga villages. At a public meeting at Phek village, Sipohu Venuh recounted the speech of General Sato. In the General's speech, he spoke on the similarities of the physical features and food habits of the Japanese and the Nagas and compared it with the diverse British race and culture. He called upon the Nagas as brothers and sisters and that they should unite against the common enemy. When one such speech was delivered at Phusachodu, according to Husayi, the villagers instantly agreed with the General and enthusiastically supported the Japanese soldiers. However, when no external help reached the Japanese soldiers, the villagers began questioning how long they could offer logistic support to this foreign army, which depended heavily on the local resources for food and manpower. Nevertheless, the Chakhesang Naga villages continued to make efforts to meet ends for the Japanese and themselves till the end of the war.

Another Japanese adoption in establishing ties with the local population is noticed in their efforts to display fair and just dealings with their soldiers. In an incident at Lekromi village, when a villager refused to give in to the demand of a soldier, he was struck in the head. When reports reached the Japanese commander, the soldier responsible for the injury was publicly punished in the presence of villagers and assured them that harm in any form would not be perpetrated upon them. The Japanese, bolstering ties with the local population, provided free medical treatments to sick villagers. For many Chakhesang Nagas, this marked their introduction to modern medicines, and they were astounded by the rapid pace of recovery. While it is true that the natives of the Chakhesang Naga villages struggled to meet the demands of the Japanese Army, villagers bonded with some soldiers and bestowed humanitarian help to the Army as well. A noteworthy instance is seen among the villagers of Tsupfume and Zhavame at the time of the Japanese retreat. The First field hospital of the Japanese Army, which admitted many injured soldiers, was located in the vicinity of Tsupfume. With retreat orders from Lieutenant General Sato, the sick and wounded were also made to join the retreat. Villagers from Tsupfume aided the Japanese Army by carrying the suffering soldiers to Zhavame, from where the villagers from the latter carried them to Gaziphema (Laii) and so forth.

By nature, the Chakhesang Nagas hold specific characteristics which the British themselves have appreciated. While studying the Angami Nagas, Hutton (1921) remarks:

> One of the first characteristics that strikes a visitor to the Angami's country is his hospitality, a hospitality which is always ready to entertain a visitor and which forms a curious contrast to the very canny fragility of his domestic economy…great kindness and consideration is shown to mentally and physically deficient…Another striking trait of the Angami is his geniality. Both men and women are exceedingly good-humoured and always ready for a joke. They will, moreover, break into merriment under the most adverse circumstances and on slightest provocation (p. 39).

This trait is especially true among the Chakhesang Nagas, who displayed these characteristics even when the Japanese Army invaded Indian soil. Despite the knowledge of a foreign invasion, when thousands of Japanese soldiers flooded their lands, the Chakhesang Nagas, without any disregard, treated the Japanese soldiers as British counterparts. Their actions towards the British and the Japanese reflected assistance and aid, especially to the suffering. For instance, British Flight Lieutenant Ray Jackson was rescued, nursed back to health and helped in escape by the people of Phek during the Battle after his plane crashed in 1944 (Khrienuo, 2013, p.68). A similar incident occurred at Thetsumi village where villagers assisted a British pilot. Moreover, when a Japanese soldier fell ill, the people of Lekromi transported him to Pfutseromi. However, the soldier succumbed to his illness and the residents of Pfutseromi provided him with a decent burial near their village. His mortal remains have been repatriated by the JARRWC (Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation for War Casualties) in 2024.

The months from April to June 1944 were perilous times for the British, Japanese and the Nagas; however, the Chakhesang Naga villages, unlike the Angami Naga areas, did not express extreme odium towards the Japanese nor the British. Undeniably, some staunch British supporters captured and surrendered Japanese soldiers to the British or inflicted brutalities. Nonetheless, these acts were in compliance to strict British orders. Most of the people among the Chakhesang Nagas maintained neutrality and acted justly towards the British and Japanese. Both countries made efforts to promote their respective propaganda, and people were affected by each one. Different situations create different reactions based on the norms and knowledge of the people. The Battle of Kohima brought grave anguish and distress to the Nagas. These inflictions were brought both by the British and Japanese. While describing the accounts of the Battle of Kohima, the unravelling support of the Nagas in aiding the British has been mentioned by authors like Slim (1956), Lyman (2011), Swinson (2016), Colvin (2012), and Khrienuo (2013), to name a few. However, it is worth noting that even before the events of the Battle, the British inflicted hardships upon the Naga villages by evacuation orders along the Chakhesang Naga villages and Angami Naga villages.

People were displaced, and situations were far from ordinary. Agricultural activities were halted, and life was disrupted in every manner. However, despite the change in pattern, the Nagas exerted the best of their capacity to both armies. What is most significant in the study of the Battle of Kohima from Naga's perspective is not the question of whom they served better but what and how Nagas contributed to the war efforts of the Second World War.

3.6. Involvement of the Chakhesangs during the Second World War

1944 was an unforgettable year for the Nagas as many changes took place in a few months, and its impact has been far-reaching. The more extensive section of the 31 Division crossed the Chakhesang Naga villages to reach Kohima. As the main assault was targeted at Kohima, the Japanese Army was able to interact with and know more of the Chakhesang Naga people than other tribes of the Naga Hills. While it is true that some Japanese experiences with the Nagas were unpleasant, one cannot, however, deny the support the Nagas rendered the Japanese soldiers. This implication has an undeniable relevance to the Chakhesang Naga tribe.

The Japanese dependence on the local population for food supply was the only option for the Army. As Senior Private Manabu Wada, of the 138 Infantry Regiment, 31 Division states,

> In mid-April, after many days of bitter fighting we captured ridges north of Kohima but 138 Regiment now had no rations left. The British had burnt their food and supply depots so that not even a grain of rice or a round of ammunition was left for us…How could we be expected to fight on in these circumstances? By 5 April our three weeks' rations had exhausted (Tamayama &Nunneley, 2001, p. 175).

The Battle of Kohima began on 4 April, however, by the next day, the Japanese ration had exhausted. The villages around Kohima alone could not feed the large Japanese Army. As such, the Chakhesang villages had to be demarcated as the suppliers of its ration. The main store of the

Japanese Army in the Chakhesang Naga area was located at milestone 22 at Kikruma. The Japanese base at milestone 30 was also another ration collection point.

As food grains were demanded from the Chakhesang Naga villages, there were a few instances where the villages' wealthiest men voluntarily gave up to half or a year's harvest to the Japanese on behalf of the whole village. In Mesulumi village, Johirü and Rhita contributed one *ehbu* (A cylindrical bamboo basket of about 4 to 5 feet in diameter and 6 to 7 feet in height used to store paddy) of paddy and some of their domesticated animals to the Japanese Army. Similarly, at Pfutseromi village, Kedoulo Mero, Dikhalo Ritse and Dilo offered three *ehbu(s)* to the Japanese soldiers based at Milestones 30. In Tsüpfüme, Pinyi and Musanyi also contributed two *ehbu(s)* of paddy on behalf of the villagers. The villagers of Tsüpfüme recognized them by offering meat at every village celebration, even years after the Japanese retreat, as a token of appreciation for their selfless service towards the village during the Second World War (Nagi, 2019, p. 105). Besides these, almost every Chakhesang Naga household gave paddy and rice to the Japanese soldiers, besides their livestock. Paddy was contributed individually or collectively. At Thetsumi, for instance, each house contributed one tin of rice when the Japanese troops crossed the village.

In most cases, people were paid for the livestock, although there were instances where the Japanese forcefully took away livestock without any payment. According to Lhikemvu Wezah, at Jessami, as most of the villagers had evacuated their village, when the Japanese slaughtered a domesticated animal in the absence of the owner, they would leave the payment in the hands of those who were present in the village, to be given to the rightful owner. There have been many incidents of villagers offering food and rice beer to the Japanese soldiers during their visits to the villages. However, it should be noted that by the time the Japanese departed from the area, much of the stored paddy that villagers accumulated over the years was nearly depleted in many households. Additionally, the livestock population significantly decreased, leading to an overall economic decline.

Besides food, the Japanese soldiers were in need of labourers and porters to help carry their ration and ammunitions. Before the Battle of Kohima, the Nagas had already served the British as labourers. The Chakhesang Nagas were also conscripted into British service, undertaking long journeys over many days, primarily transporting goods towards the Indian-Burma border. During the battle, Angami Nagas served the British in various roles, both as combatants and non-combatants. Meanwhile, in Chakhesang Naga villages, the strong men became labourers, porters, and guides for the Japanese Army.

Besides labourers, a vital job fulfilled by the Chakhesang Nagas was the function of the *Soncho,* whom the Japanese appointed as interpreters. The interpreters' job was to demand ration from villages and ensure that the demanded amount was adequately collected and delivered at designated points. Some important figures who acted as interpreters (*Soncho)* in the Chakhesang Naga region included Zhetshuzu of Mesulumi in the Pfutsero region, Zulhilo in the Jessami region, Rephelhi, Thaba Tsido, Chasu and Aru in the Zhavame region and Puracho in the Chozuba region. The *Sonchos* were allowed to enter Japanese camps and receive instructions to be deliberated to the villages. The *Sonchos* played a significant role as interpreters and established genial ties between the Japanese Army and the locals. All complaints of the villagers about the Japanese were made through them, and they earned the respect of both the villagers and Japanese soldiers alike. Most of these men were either educated or had prior exposure to other races, as they had basic English and Hindi knowledge. Goyiepra Kenye of Chizami was also an important figure during the Battle of Kohima. As one of the earliest educated men among the Chakhesang Nagas (first graduate from the community), he was able to communicate with both the British and Japanese and protected locals during the War. According to Enipelo Thopi of Chizami, as the Japanese were departing from their village, they attempted to take Goyiepra with them, but the villagers intervened and halted them with spears.

The Chakhesang Naga's participation and involvement during the Second World War cannot be undermined. Although most of the local population interacted more with the Japanese, others assisted the British in various capacities directly and indirectly. Some acted as spies and reporters and corresponded with the British, while others served as labourers before and during the Battle. A few men were recruited in the British Army under the Assam Regiment. These men portrayed their heroism in the battles of Jessami and Kohima. Some have been recognized through the Naga WW2 Gallantry Award with citations. Among the Chakhesang Naga community, the following were recognized by the British Army:

Military Cross

1. Jemadar Visai Angami of Chizami village, Naga Levies No. L.7: Award with citation.

Military Medal

1. Naik Dilhu Angami of Khezhakenoma village, 1st Assam Regiment No. 555: Award with citation.
2. Sepoy Zashei Angami of Phekekedzumi, Naga Levies No. L. 146: Award with citation.
3. Sepoy Pungoi Angami of Porba village, Naga Levies No. L.190: Award with citation.
4. Sepoy Sare Angami of Chizami village, Naga Levies No. L.5: Award with citation.

Mentions in Dispatches

1. Lance Naik Kemvu Angami of Lekromi village, 1st Assam Regiment No. 563.

Others

Besides those mentioned above, there were other Chakhesang Nagas whom the British Army recognized:

1. Naik Kedutshu Angami of Kami village, 1st Assam Regiment, No. 564, received three gallantry awards: two 1939-1945 WW II Star Medals and one Burma Star Medal.

2. Havildar Sovehu Neinu of Phek, of the 1st Assam Regiment, No. 542, received two gallantry awards: one 1939-1945 WW II Star Medal and one Burma Star Medal.

3.7. Japanese Porters and Labourers: A Case Study

The Japanese employed several indigenous people to aid their army as they expanded their invasion policy in Asia. Many Asians and Pacific islanders became part and parcel of Japanese Army operations. The Japanese policy in Asia aimed to establish Japanese hegemony and exploit the resources of the occupied territories. To facilitate their operations, the Japanese employed local labourers and porters, who were often subjected to harsh conditions and forced labour. Moving into new terrain, the Japanese employed natives of the land as interpreters, guides, porters and labourers.

The Japanese employed native labourers for several reasons. It allowed them to navigate unfamiliar terrain and communicate with local populations more effectively. Moreover, using local labourers ensured a steady supply of logistical support. During their entry into Naga soil, the Japanese needed to engage the Nagas as in other parts of their conquered territories. The Chakhesang Naga villages, which happened to be the first villages to encounter the Japanese 31 Division on Indian soil, saw its natives becoming active participants in providing logistic support to the Japanese war efforts. At almost every encountered village, the Japanese demanded twenty to thirty men to serve the Army as porters and labourers who also became guides.

In contrast to the harsh treatment experienced by native labourers in some regions, the Chakhesang Naga villages saw a relatively more tolerant approach from the Japanese. The oral testimonies of these men are indispensable in understanding Japanese behaviour and attitude towards the Nagas, as well as recording the observations of the locals on the Japanese Army. Dilhu Losou of Leshemi village comments:

> My friends and I were coolies of the Japanese Army. We travelled up to Chakabama, carrying heavy ammunitions along with the soldiers. What amazed me most about the Japanese was the repeated chants of *hisa-hina…hisa-hina* as they marched with their heavy load. We also say *holeh-hoi…holeh- hoi* when we carry heavy loads or toil hard in our fields. They came from distant lands, but in many ways, we were similar. Our journey was not safe from the constant attacks of the British. Whenever the British fired at us, Japanese soldiers pushed us to the ground and then fought back. The road to Chakabama was full of danger, and we were always in fear, but they tried to keep us safe.

Lepulo Mero, of Lekromi village, who served as a porter, portrays a close observation of Japanese soldiers:

> The Japanese carried a detailed map of the Naga villages. They knew the names of surrounding villages and even the names of local streams. There must have been some spies who visited all our villages beforehand and prepared the map. Every Japanese soldier carried basic amenities. Each soldier carried two containers around his waist- one for water and the other, a small cooking pot. When they visited villages, they filled their pockets with rice and chewed them raw along the way. When an animal was slaughtered, raw meat was often divided among the soldiers. The meat was carried in their pockets and individually roasted it over a small burner, which every soldier carried. There were also women soldiers, but it was difficult to identify them. We observed that the rifles of women were shorter than that of men.

> Some young men and I of the village became Japanese porters. We were forced to serve them. However, the soldiers became friendly over time, and we communicated through gestures. Japanese soldiers enjoyed smoking and at almost every village, asked village boys to bring them tobacco leaves. My friend also smoked tobacco, but, knowing that he could not bring along his smoking pipe while serving the Army, carried distilled tobacco in a small bamboo cup. This was to be consumed in minimal quantity. When a Japanese soldier saw my friend consuming it, he took the cup and took a large sip of the content. The distilled tobacco, being significantly concentrated, immediately took its effect on the soldier, and he instantly fell to the ground. This act was hilarious to us and the other soldiers that for the first time we shared a hearty laugh with Japanese soldiers. After this incident, we mingled freely with the soldiers. However, due to the fear of being taken to the battlefield, we signalled each other and escaped one evening when opportunity favoured us.

In most cases, labourers and porters were demanded from villages and taken by force. Therefore, these men often requested early release, which seldom occurred. Those who complied with Japanese orders were guaranteed safe return by tying a red band around their arms on the completion of their tasks to signal their men that they were under the service of the Japanese Army and that no harm should be inflicted upon them. While some accomplished their assignments, many attempted to escape from the Japanese service. For instance, porters and labourers from Lasumi village seized an opportunity to escape when one of its men was accidentally injured by a bullet. A quick escape plan was plotted, and the injured person pretended to be dead while the others pretended to mourn for him. They communicated with Japanese officials and stated that it was taboo for a person to be buried outside his village. The Japanese commander was compelled to free the men of Lasumi village.

Some men were appointed as guides from among the porters and labourers. Kedoutse Lasuh of Thetsumi acted as a Japanese guide and led them from his village to Chakabama. He recalls:

> The village was in celebration the day the Japanese entered our village. I, along with three other grooms, were getting married that day. As the marriage ceremony ended, we were informed about the Japanese entry into our village and that they required guides and labourers from the village. The villager leaders insisted that I guide the Japanese troops to Chizami. Reluctantly, leaving my newly wedded bride in the village, I became a guide for the troops. Knowing that the jeep track to Chizami would be an unsafe path, I guided the Japanese through the village path across the fields, a path unknown to the British. On reaching Chizami, I was directed to lead the Japanese further. Being compelled to comply, I led the Japanese through Pfutsero, Kikruma and Chakabama. I was miles away from home and decided that I could not go on further and requested for release. As I was about to head back to my village, Japanese soldiers tied a red band on my arm, assuring me that no harm would be perpetrated upon me.

Chakhesang Nagas, who served the Japanese Army as labourers, porters, and guides, gives an overview of the close relationship between the Japanese Army and the locals. A common expression found among the locals was that of constant fear and apprehension, given the situation of the times. Those who travelled close to the battle site exhibited traumatic behaviour. Dilhi, a labourer from Lekromi village was deeply affected by the horrors of the battlefield and was reported to have been mentally traumatized. This trauma led to his death shortly after his return to the village. However, no labourer or porter was reported killed during their assigned task to the Army. With oral transmission being popular among the Chakhesang Nagas, the narratives of those who travelled closely with Japanese soldiers became the tales of the time and incorporated in village discourses.

The ruggedness of Naga labourers has been appreciated by Japanese soldiers themselves. They were impressed how Nagas carried the Japanese loads weighing 30 to 40 kgs on their backs and heads effortlessly through the slopes, while the soldiers panted as they marched with the labourers (Yasokawa, 1986, p. 224 as cited in Murayama, 2022, p. 262). The effortlessness of the labourers can be attributed to their familiarity with the sloping terrain and their regular practice of carrying heavy loads in their daily activities. The Japanese were aware of the development of antipathy among the locals but they were left without options. However, the contribution of the labourers in the war efforts of the Japanese Army can be condensed as immense.

The Japanese invasion to the Naga Hills during the Second World War demonstrates the complex dynamics between the occupiers and the indigenous population. The treatment of these labourers varied significantly. In many regions, the Japanese subjected local labourers to harsh conditions and forced labour, reflecting the broader exploitation and brutality of their occupation policy. In contrast, the Chakhesang Nagas experienced a more tolerant approach, most likely due to the Japanese recognizing the strategic importance of maintaining local cooperation in this area. The Japanese strategy of employing local labourers and porters was a tactical move to facilitate their invasion by utilizing the natives' knowledge of the terrain. This strategy was also essential for logistical support and communication, enabling the Japanese Army to maintain a steady supply and navigate the unfamiliar landscape. The Japanese occupation illustrates the intricate balance of coercion and cooperation, exploitation and empathy, within the broader context of Second World War in Asia. The experiences of the Naga labourers and porters provide a unique lens through which the multifaceted nature of Japanese military operations and their impact on indigenous populations may be understood. The oral narratives are not only crucial for historical documentation but they also serve as a testament to the resilience and adaptability of the Chakhesang Nagas amidst the cataclysms of war.

3.8. Japanese Bases and Strategic Sites

As the Japanese prepared to face the British Army at Kohima, Japanese bases were set up at several places along the Chakhesang Naga hills. Locations identified as Japanese activity sites in the Chakhesang Naga area were primarily defensive setups. Sporadic combats and shelling of mortars were witnessed in the area. Among the various Japanese bases set up in the Naga Hills, the bases established in the Chakhesang Naga region were suitably organized.

With no outside assistance supplied to General Sato's 31st Division, Japanese soldiers around Kohima were compelled to forcefully demand food from the Angami villages, who had turned hostile towards them. The Japanese needed to adopt a strategy of acquiring more food supplies. The Chakhesang Naga villages turned out to be a convenient arrangement for solving the problem. Food was demanded and stored at two main bases in the Chakhesang Naga area: Pfutsero and Kikruma, from where it was taken to Chakabama and Kohima. Strategic sites and Japanese bases were identified and their significance is discussed below:

3.8.1. Jessami: Battlefield

Jessami, located in the Ukhrul district of Manipur, India, is inhabited by the Kuzhale (Chakhesang Naga) speaking people. Jessami holds a place of importance in the history of the modern world because a fierce and decisive battle was fought here from 28th -31st March 1944. Jessami and Kharasom witnessed the first Japanese–British encounter in the Naga Hills and the first battles fought on Indian soil by the Japanese 31 Division. Simultaneously, the Japanese offensive had began in the Imphal region in March 1944 under Lieutenant-General Renya Mutaguchi's 15 Army. General Sato's 31 Division, whose objective was to concentrate the majority of its forces along the Kohima-Dimapur axis, also achieved their first victory against the British in Naga soil at Jessami and Kharasom. Events of the Battle have been discussed in chapter

2. The Oral accounts of Jessami gives an overview of conditions of the Japanese Army in the initial period of the invasion as the first interactions with the Nagas is noticed in the region.

3.8.2. Pfutsero: Japan Bedie- First Field Hospital and Patient Collecting Point

Pfutsero, which was heavily forested at the time of the Japanese invasion, became a strategic location for the Japanese Army. Geographically, Pfutsero, a sub-division under Phek District, is situated at a central location that connects many villages. The Japanese set up their base at a place known by the locals as *Zatsüzhie.* After the Japanese retreat, this area became known as *Japan Bedie*, locally translated as Japanese headquarters. It came to be called *Japan Bedie* because a large column of the Japanese Army was stationed there (Plate. 7). The invading Japanese column was so large that it stretched to about 6 miles from Mesulumi to Pfutsero Inspection Bunglow (File no. 707, NSA). The surrounding villages of Chizami, Mesulumi, Enhulimi, Sakraba, Porba, Tsupfume, Zhavame, Razaba, Pfutseromi, Lekromi and Kami brought food grains to the base at Pfutsero. The amount of food grains to be brought to the base was made known to the villages through the local interpreter. Zhietsuzu, an educated man from Mesulumi, was appointed by the Japanese as *Soncho*.

As the Chakhesang Naga villages surrounding *Japan Bedie* carried grains to the base, they came to realize that it was not just a place where the Japanese soldiers were stationed but was also a place where the wounded from the Battle of Kohima were brought for treatment. Rev. Zupelhi Mero of Lekromi states:

> I was in my youth at the time of the Japanese invasion. I carried paddy to the Japanese base at Pfutsero a few times. On reaching the base, I was instructed to drop my load at a point below the camp. While doing so, I heard moans of anguish and pain. As the village elders mentioned, I realized that the base must have been a place where the injured and sick received medical treatment. What once was a deep jungle was now filled with Japanese soldiers.

The 31 Division First Field Hospital was set up at milestone 30 (present location at *Japan Bedie,* Pfutsero). It also served as a Patient Collecting Point. Many injured soldiers from the Battle of Kohima were admitted to the field hospital at 30 milestones. Charles Pawsey also makes mention of the hospital in his tour diary to Pfutsero and Zhamai (Zhavame) that "there was a hospital with about 1000 patients in the heavy jungle beyond old Pfutsero I.B" and that about 1000 soldiers died here (File no. 155, 707, NSA). As per information gathered from Japanese war veterans, the Japan Association for Recovery and Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC) has been conducting surveys and excavations at this location since 2019 for the repatriation of Japanese bones.

Geographically, *Japan Bedie* is located at a strategic position. It was located at the foot of a few high mountains and under very thick vegetation. Thus, from an aerial view, made it challenging to identify the exact location of the Japanese occupation area. British warplanes were deployed to carry out air strikes a few times; however, every operation to strike the area failed. The Japanese base camp at Pfutsero functioned smoothly till the Japanese retreat.

Along the cliffs of one of the mountains in the vicinity of the base camp is a small area that may be identified as a sentry point of the Japanese Army (Plate 6). The location gives a bird's eye view of the surrounding area. Boulders have been placed one over the other in an asymmetrical manner, having an approximate height of about 2-3 feet and length 4- 6 feet at different points. This area is still in its original form and has not been disturbed by human activity. Opposite this cliff is what the locals today call the *Japan Cave,* located on the cliff of a nearby mountain (Plate 8). The cave was utilized by the Japanese Army as a sentry point and it also served as a natural repository for storing weapons. The existence of this cave was unknown to the locals before the 1960s. The cave was accidentally discovered by the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF) of the Border Roads Organisation in 1967. The discovery of the weapons was reported to the Indian Army, who seized the recovered weapons. The cave was believed to have been deeper and higher

than it is now, as the roof has fallen lower over the subsequent years, giving lesser accessibility for further exploration.

3.8.3. Chozuba: Japan Riba-Combat Area

In Chozuba, a sub-division under the Phek district, is a place called *Japan Riba* and *Zacako*, where Japanese activity was observed. The British set up a small outpost station at Chozuba to monitor Japanese activity in the area. After the Battle of Jessami, the Japanese spread in different directions to Kohima. A Section of the 31 Division travelled to Phek and, from there, proceeded to Chozuba-Cheswezu-Chakabama-Kohima. According to the village locals, a few Japanese soldiers stayed behind to counter the British Army stationed there. While in Chozuba, the Japanese were stationed at a hillock known by the locals as *Zacako*, where they constructed a tunnel, trenches and foxholes as a defensive strategy (Plate 2, Plate 4, Plate 5). Initially, the tunnel was about 100 metres in length and led to a nearby lake (*Zacako*, originally a horn-shaped lake); however, part of this tunnel was destroyed due to the construction of the highway.

According to oral witnesses, the Japanese, knowing they could not afford to face open combat with the British Army, adopted a strategy to bait the enemy. The British were deceived into thinking that the Japanese base was located at the adjacent hill of their base and bombarded the area. This area became known as *the Japan Riba* or Japanese battlefield. In 1984, the Government High School, Chozuba village, was built at *Japan Riba* to recognize the Japanese-British activity in the area (Plate 3). Above the high school compound, one can still witness two shallow formations on the ground: the bombarded sites carried by the British Army.

3.8.4. Kikruma: Signal Corps and Ration Delivery Point

Kikruma, under Pfutsero sub-division, was located around Milestone 22. It served as the Japanese Ration Delivery Point and a signal corps was maintained. Villages of Phusachodu, Zapami, Lasumi, Leshemi and Khezhakeno brought rations for Japanese soldiers to Kikruma. As

per the local records, the grains collected at Pfutsero were also brought to Kikruma, where they were taken to Chakabama and Kohima to feed the Japanese soldiers at war.

Kikruma was a crucial Japanese base as a signal corps was also established there. The Japanese Signal Corps was established in 1941 under the Inspectorate of Communications, directly subordinate to the War Department general staff. The corps consisted of at least two signal replacement regiments, a number of signal (telegraph) regiments, line of communication signal units, shipping signal units, air signal units and divisional regimental and battalion signal companies or sections (Far Eastern Unit MID, p. 69). The signal corps was responsible for communications between different headquarters and its troops. Kikruma is located at a strategic connection point, connecting Kohima with Chakhesang Naga villages. The relationship between the Japanese Army and the natives of Kikruma was cordial. It was reported that when the Japanese first came to the village, the villagers organized a feast for the Army. Being much impressed by the gesture of the villagers, the commander of the Army handed a letter to the village leaders, asking them to show it to any commanding officer who visited the village. What was written in that letter was unknown to the locals; however, this letter was said to have exempted the village from the joint contribution of paddy demanded by the Japanese in the Naga hills.

3.8.5. Cheswezu: Japanese and INA Base Camp

After the Battle at Jessami, a section of the Japanese 31 Division set up a base at Cheswezu, near Chozuba. A section of the Indian National Army (INA) accompanied the Japanese Army. Two base camps were set up in the area: the Japanese base camp at Cheswezu and the other the INA base camp at Chetheba. The high mountains of Cheswezu served as an excellent vantage point, and during the Battle of Kohima, army officials were often seen monitoring the conflict from there. Some locals were said to have befriended an Indian commander and assisted him in familiarising himself with the village's surroundings.

In addition to the previously mentioned locations, other significant sites in the Chakhesang Naga area related to Japanese activity include Phek Village, where Lieutenant General Sato established his first headquarters in the Naga Hills, and Chizami, where the Japanese set up their defensive position.

The Japanese made optimal use of the Chakhesang Naga region by setting up bases and utilizing the people's services and resources. These interactions, documented through personal and collective oral narratives, are invaluable for reconstructing the historical event. Within just a few months, the Chakhesang Nagas experienced a great deal. Despite the pervasive fear, interactions were harmonious when the villages were peaceful. The exposure to the Battle of Kohima and intermingling of the people with other cultures has left a profound impact on the Chakhesang Nagas.

Figure 6: Japanese Activity Sites

CHAPTER 4

IMPACT OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

With war ended in Europe, the war was shifted to the Pacific Theatre where the Allies planned strategies against Japan. The US successfully tested the first atom bomb in Alamogordo, New Mexico on 16 July 1945, and the US President, Harry Truman authorized its use against Japan. On 6 August 1945, the B-29, *Enola Gay* dropped the atom bomb, nicknamed *Big Boy* over Hiroshima, a city that was home to a quarter of a million Japanese, instantly killing about 80,000 people, and later tens of thousands more due to the effects of the radiation. Three days later, a second bomb, *Fat Boy* was dropped over Nagasaki on 9 August, killing 73,884 people and injuring 74,909 ((Roberts, 2011, Land of the Setting Sun section, para. 26). Japan surrendered on 15 August and the Second World War officially came to an end on 2 September 1945.

The global war which lasted six years saw devastating results with over 70 million lives lost, approximating to 3 percent of the world's population and costing 1.5 trillion dollars in 1945 (Roberts 2021, para. 2). The world witnessed a scene never witnessed before. Cities lost their grandeur, people lost their loved ones and homes, economies required reconstruction and governments fell, giving rise to new ones. The post-world war period was a transitional period for almost all nations of the world. A significant shift was noticed in the weakening position of the colonial powers of Britain, France and the Netherlands, and with the dawning of the Cold War, the emergence of two power nations: the US and the USSR. The division of the world into two ideological blocs led to the formation of NATO and signing of the Warsaw Pact, where critical roles were played by alliances in shaping a new world order.

De-colonization became the order of the day in many Asian and African states post- Second World War. During the war, Axis occupied nations either declared independence from their colonial masters or were granted independence by its occupiers. While colonial powers

concentrated on the war, nationalist feeling grew among the colonized people, who resorted to various forms of resistance. The defeat of Britain in Singapore and defeat of France by Germany in the initial years of the war inspired colonies to fight for their cause. The result was that when the war ended, the colonizers were challenged with the demand for swift outcome. There was also the question on the purpose of colonization among European nations which further bolstered nationalism among the colonies (Betts, 2012, p. 26).

The Japanese invasion and the involvement of the INA made a noteworthy impact on the national movement in India. After, the Second World War, thousands of INA were taken Prisoners of War (POW) from the reoccupied areas of Asia, and transported to India. They were taken to the Red Fort, Delhi to face court martial, popularly known as the INA trials which lasted from 5 November to 31 December 1945. Ayer (1997/2002) describe the trials as "the irony of fate", because these seventeen thousand INAs were supposed to have marched as victors to Delhi and hoisted the national tricolour at the viceroy's house, but instead they became prisoners in their homeland, awaiting trial, for waging a war against the British king (p. 82). However, as the proceedings of the INA trials began, public interest grew. The Indians were inspired by the knowledge that a liberation army, manned by Indians alone attempted to liberate the nation from foreign domination. A new momentum was sparked all over India, a spark that could not be ignored by the British. Although the British left the country divided, India became a free country 'at the stroke of midnight' on 15 August 1947. After a hundred years of struggle, India looked forward to prove herself as a major role player in world politics.

The spirit of nationalism was widespread and affected many nations and communities worldwide. The National movement in India was not limited to the mainland alone. The different communities of northeast India also played an integral part in the movement. Nonetheless, the Naga struggle for freedom was demanded from both the British and Indians. With the close of the battle in Kohima, the Nagas gained the sympathy of DC Pawsey, who made efforts to bring the

people together. However, the Nagas took the lead in forming the first well-organized political movement, the Naga Nationa Council (NNC). This initiative instilled in the Nagas a strong sense of independence, even without conventional norms. Although the Battle of Kohima took a heavy toll on the Nagas, it did not deter their outlook but invigorated their sense of self-determination. Meanwhile, the British carried out a rehabilitation programme in the Naga Hills.

4.1. Rehabilitation and Relief in the Naga Hills

The aftermath of the Battle of Kohima, witnessed the actual damage of Naga villages. Villages in and around Kohima were burnt to the ground and underwent reconstruction at the earliest. As per the reports of 1944, in the Chakhesang Naga region, 78 houses were damaged at Enholumi, 284 at Chizami (15 houses left) and 43 (1 house left) at Swemi. Stating on the gravity of the damage, D.C. Pawsey reported in June 1944:

> The Nagas near Kohima suffered worse. Kohima was completely destroyed, as was half of Viswema, Kigwema, Phesama and Puchama lost a few houses by shelling, and the villagers themselves were forced to leave their village and abandon all their possessions… Out in the Eastern Angami country, Chizami, Yorobami, Swemi and Jessami were destroyed by bombing (NSA, File. 497).

After the Japanese retreat, the British organised rehabilitation and relief programmes in the Naga Hills. Villages named under the relief programme were grouped under three categories: List “A”, “B”, and “C”. The Chakhesang Naga villages were categorised under List “C” of the programme, which included the villages of Thipuzumi, Pfutsero, Zhamai (Zhavame), Chobama, Thetsumi, Mesulumi, Enhulumi, Chizami, Swemi (Sumi), Losami, Phekekedzumi (Phek), Kikruma, Cheswezumi, Purobami, Khomi, Pholami, and covering more than 10,000 individuals (NSA, File. 497). Relief in these villages was seen in the distribution of cooking pots and monetary aid for the reconstruction of houses. Rations in the form of rice, salt, dal and chillies were supplied to almost

all affected villages covered under the list. Ration Godowns were also set up at vital points to supply the needs of the people.

Although the government carried out relief and rehabilitation, villages affected by the war underwent great hardship. For many, the relief programmes did not compensate for all the losses that amounted to during the war. The wartime events prohibited people from carrying out regular agricultural activities, which greatly affected the year's harvest. The effects of the battle were profound and enduring. Alongside the process of rehabilitation, restructuring efforts took place at both the community and individual levels. Nagas witnessed a period of rebuilding their social, economic and political systems as they adapted to new circumstances.

4.2. Impact of the Second World War on the Chakhesang Nagas

Cultural exchange takes place when two or more cultures come in contact with each other. The exposure of Nagas during the Second World War introduced to its people new cultures. The events of the Second World War witnessed a cultural change among the Nagas, especially the Chakhesang Nagas. The war, which began as disputes between countries, took a global shape, reaching remote corners of the world, which had no role in its creation. Like many other communities of the colonial period, the Nagas were caught in the middle of a global affair. A war that was not theirs was fought on their land, disrupting the smooth functioning of tribal community. A similar situation was seen among the Micronesians (inhabitants of a group of islands in the West Pacific). Falgout et.al. (2008) opines,

> Micronesians' stories reflect their position of being caught in the middle of a foreign war—one initiated, designed, and led by others. Some elders say, Japan and America went to war with each other; Micronesians were simply in the way. While no statement can typify the experiences of every resident, in most cases Micronesians saw themselves largely as victims of

actions beyond their control…Micronesians remained largely cast by either in the role of supporters of the Japanese cause or as onlookers and bystanders (p. 104).

In the Naga hills, the people were compelled to become participants of the war. The experience might have brought dysfunctionality to internal affairs, but its impact has been far-reaching and worth noting. Foreigners flooding the villages and homes of the locals, brought about a change that impacted almost every aspect of traditional life. The Naga Hills, considered remotely untouched by civilization in the 1940s, witnessed a warfare that shed the light of modernity. Charles Pawsey, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills, commented in 1943, "Who, two years ago, could have prophesied that one would ever see a full-blooded American Red Indian walking about Phekekedzumi (Phek) village" (File no. 707, NSA). Even though the Battle of Kohima was short-lived, its long-lasting impact can be seen to date. It exposed the Nagas to modern weapons, technology and ideas, influencing their social, political and economic development. Experience and memory have played vital roles among the Nagas in their contribution to the Second World War's local history and military history.

4.2.1. Collection of War Materials

With the defeat and retreat of the Japanese Army in June 1944, there was a change in the living pattern of the Nagas, who had interacted with the foreign races. An immediate impact of the Battle of Kohima can be seen in the people's interest in collecting war materials among the Chakhesang Nagas. The period after the Battle witnessed a phase of exploration, experimentation and modification of war materials, challenging the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the people.

Looting the enemies' possessions was a common phenomenon during the American Civil War. After battles, officers in both armies commanded soldiers to gather items that would be useful to the Army, including arms and ammunition. In the process, soldiers often stripped enemy bodies of uniforms, shoes and personal effects (Weicksel, 2018, p. 117). A similar situation was witnessed

during the Battle of Kohima, more so with the Japanese soldiers who had run out of supplies. Carrying sufficient ammunition was difficult for the Japanese Army, which had to traverse through the rough topography of the India-Burma border. With the failure of the anticipated supply of food and ammunition, the Japanese were left with no other option but to loot their enemies' supplies. According to Medo (2023):

> After the Japanese retreat, looting of war materials was continued by the locals of the war-affected area of Phek district. To the locals, this was not considered looting but collecting the scattered unclaimed materials left behind by the Japanese and British Army. The manufactured materials proved most beneficial to the locals, and they utilised them in whichever way best suited the local needs. Military remain samples for archival records were mostly collected from the Kohima battle site, thus leaving abundant materials for the people of the Phek district to explore, experiment and reuse. In the Phek district, the Japanese base at milestone 30, where the 31 Division set up the 1st Field Hospital, was a most visited site. The Kohima battle site was also explored to collect useful abandoned materials. In these multiple explorations, people collected anything they found exciting and purposeful; blankets, bowls, cups, containers, empty food cans, spoons, ammunition boxes, saddles, bullets, tiffin boxes, water bottles, band-aids, belts, calling bells, gas masks, pocket knives, swords and vehicle parts among others. The most sought-after item for collection were the untaken arms. Young boys often visited these sites with the men of the villages to retrieve them. The drive to possess an arm was invariably immense, that some men went to the extent of digging the graves of buried soldiers (pp. 91-92).

A significant change in the lifestyle of the Chakhesang villages was the steady increase in the usage of metal tools. Knives, swords, spoons, containers and rifles were collected and made use in different ways for domestic purposes. Agricultural and household articles were smelted out of the iron from deserted British jeeps, vintage military bowls became standard measuring cups, and ammunition boxes became valuable storage boxes (Plate 10, Plate 12). The boom shells from

air-stricken areas were collected and used as church bells (Plate 13). One can still witness them in the village churches of Sohomi, Mesulumi, Leshemi and Lewoza. The church bells of Leshemi and Lawoza belong to the same bombshell, cut into half and utilized to date. These villages have still not considered replacing them with modern bells. Blankets and clothing of deceased soldiers were also collected for personal use. Zhietshutsonyi Kapfo of Lekromi notes that the blankets were heavily soiled and had to be washed several times before usage. With a shortage of clothing supplies and circulation of money, these proved most convenient, even if it meant digging out from the graves of the dead. Although dead bodies were dug out of the graves, villagers made sure that the bodies were not manhandled and were properly buried back. As stated by witness accounts, most bodies were buried two or three feet below the ground, thus making it more accessible to retrieve items.

The use of rifles also increased hunting activities among the Chakhesang Nagas. The drive to possess a rifle became very strong, especially among the men of the villages. It has been recorded that Kewechu Mero of Lekromi village collected twelve rifles from a single visit to milestone 30, out of which four rifles were given to two men who helped him transport the arms to the village while keeping the remaining eight rifles as personal property. With Japanese rifle barrels being relatively smaller than British rifles, Japanese rifles were modified by increasing their barrel sizes to accommodate British bullets, which were readily available at the time, unlike Japanese bullets. The adventurous boys of the villages collected hand grenades and experimented with them in nearby forests, oftentimes amazed by their mechanism. Incidents of accidental handling of war weapons have been reported in the area. Nevertheless, in all these explorations and expeditions to British and Japanese activity sites, it is evident that there was a realization among the people that they were trailing much behind in the age of modernity and technology.

A prominent change was also seen in the usage of daily household items among the Chakhesang Nagas after the Battle of Kohima. Whatever was considered purposeful was collected

and utilized to the maximum, compromising the original purpose. Reusing war materials with suited modifications often gave pseudo-meaning to the new item. For instance, horse saddles were cut into pieces and divided among women to be utilized as backstraps while weaving or air-dropped nets unwound into solid ropes (Plate 11). Some modified items gave resolute meanings and became indispensable articles of usage until recently. A sense of inquiry and a test of creativity and innovation was inculcated in the minds of the people, knowingly or unknowingly, thereby paving the way to the acceptance of new thoughts and ideas.

4.2.2. Change in the Political Structure

The political culture of the Nagas since the early days of colonization was based on the system of native administration, which suited the local taste and was conducive to maintaining law and order (Venuh, 2005, p. 42). This system, as in other parts of the Naga Hills, was prevalent in the Chakhesang region, whereby *Dobashis* and *Gaunburas* played the role of government agencies in aiding village administration as per the customary laws which dominated the law of the land. However, the introduction of Western education and the Naga's participation in the First World War in the Labour Corps resulted in the formation of the first Naga organization, the Naga Club, in 1918 in Kohima and Mokokchung. Its primary objective was to foster understanding, fraternity and unity among the Nagas and acted as a platform to discuss Naga identity (Venuh, 2005, p. 57). During the visit of the Simon Commission to Kohima on 10 January 1929, led by John Simon and members Clement Atlee and E. Cadogan, Naga Club members submitted a memorandum expressing the voice of the Nagas. The memorandum stated that the Nagas were an independent people and never subjugated to foreign rule until the British came to their area. It also stated that Nagas shared no social affinity with Hindus nor Muslims, thereby demanded withdrawal from the Reformed Scheme of the Government of India and to be brought directly under British protection in safeguarding their customary rights. The memorandum concluded with the firm words,

> If the British Government however, want to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust to the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected; but to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times (Alemchiba, 1970, pp. 163-164).

The Naga Club represented a unified voice of the people for the first time. The Second World War stimulated Naga nationalism. The Naga's exposure to the British, American, Allied forces, and Japanese had a tremendous impact on the socio-political outlook of the people. Deputy Commissioner C.R. Pawsey, having established close acquaintance with the Nagas and having understood the political aspirations of the people, took the initiative of organizing an institution in April 1945, called the 'Naga Hills District Tribal Councils', aiming at uniting Nagas and forming Tribal Councils in modern democratic lines. In its conference in February 1946, the Naga Hills District Tribal Councils was renamed the 'Naga National Council' (henceforth NNC). The NNC emerged as the only political organization in the Naga Hills that worked for the solidarity and political aspirations of the Nagas (Venuh, 2005, pp. 61-62). The NNC primarily aimed at the Nagas' social, economic, political and cultural development with British support. However, it soon changed its motive to a more political one, to achieve the unification and solidarity of all Nagas under one government (Yonuo, 1984, p. 151).

One of the early efforts of the NNC was the submission of a four-point memorandum to the Cabinet Mission in June 1946, in which the NNC expressed the solidarity of the Naga tribes, vehemently opposed the grouping of Assam with Bengal, that Naga Hills should be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam and safeguard Naga interest, and that the Naga tribes should have a separate electorate (Sema, 1986, p. 84). The NNC, through this memorandum, evidently proclaimed to have a separate identity and that the local administration's autonomy should be considered to preserve their interest. The motives of the NNC soon changed as a prerogative for an independent status for the Naga Hills and submitted a memorandum to Her

Majesty's government and the Government of India on 20 February 1947. With transfer of power of India from the hands of the British to Indians, a series of talks were carried out to deal with the Naga issue, which resulted in the Nine Point Agreement also called the Hyadri Agreement. Accordingly, the Assam Governor would act as an agent of the Government of India and have special responsibility for ten years to ensure due observance of the agreement and at the end of the period, the NNC would be free to either extend agreement or adopt a new one regarding the future of the Naga people. The provisions of the Nine Point Agreement were incorporated into the Indian Constitution as the Sixth Schedule. The Naga extremists, led by A.Z. Phizo declared the agreement null and void and strongly stood for independence, resulting in the declaration of Naga independence on 14 August 1947, a day before the declaration of India's independence. From 15 August 1947 onwards, the Naga struggle became one of liberating themselves not from the British but from Indian rule (Venuh, 2005, pp. 62-66, Yunuo, 1984, pp. 175-176). The Naga political issue intensified under the leadership of A.Z. Phizo, who was elected President of the NNC in 1949. On becoming President, Phizo announced his intention to hold a plebiscite on the issue of Naga independence. He successfully conducted the plebiscite in all Naga villages on 16 May 1951, whereby 7,000 men and women gave their thumbprints, a stark 99.9%, favouring independence (Alemchiba, 1970, pp. 174-175). Following this, the NNC boycotted the District Council Elections in 1951 and, subsequently, the General Elections in 1952. Sema (1986) remarks, "To keep the record straight it must be mentioned that not a single vote was cast" (p. 92).

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to Kohima in March 1953 marked a turning point in Naga politics. Members of the NNC viewed the visit of the Prime Minister as an opportunity to voice their demands. However, when the district authorities issued an order, denying any address either in speech or writing during the public meeting, representatives of the Tribal Councils walked out from the meeting Nehru was to address. The result of the walk-out was taken seriously, and the police raided the house of T. Sakhrie, Secretary of the NNC. Consequently, almost all office bearers of the NNC went underground. The villages of Viswema, Jakhama, Kigwema and

Phesama were also searched by armed police, seizing guns, followed by the arrest of several people (Alemchiba, 1970, p. 181). This was followed by a number of atrocities carried out by the Indian Army in the Naga villages.

The Nagas recognized the message and efforts of Phizo, and it instilled in their minds a strong aspiration and courage to free themselves from the bondage of the sufferings incurred towards them by the Indian Army. During his speech at the Hamburg Conference, West Germany, in March 1974, Phizo reasserted that "Nagaland is a sovereign state. At no time have the Nagas surrendered their independence to a foreign power. And the Nagas are determined to defend their just cause for independence" (A.Z. Phizo Birth Centenary, 2004, p. 24). During the troubled years, the participation of the Chakhesang Nagas in the open combats with the Indian Army cannot be undermined. The arms collected in the aftermath of the Battle of Kohima became the arms of the Nagas to fight the Indian Army. As per the decision taken at the conference of the Naga Youth Movement in 1954-55, at Lakhuti, Wokha district, out of every ten households, one soldier was to enroll in the 'Naga Army' to fight the Naga cause. The nine households would sponsor him and would also render any form of assistance to the family of recruited soldier. The Chakhesang Naga involvement and contribution in the arms combat during the attack on the Indian Army headquarters at Kohima in 1956 and the early years of the Naga national movement cannot be undermined. A combatant of 1956 states that the Chakhesang Nagas who took part in the operation used British and Japanese rifles, which they collected from the abandoned wartime sites.

4.2.3. Developmental Activities

Development in the Naga Hills began with the British consolidation of power. As per Allen's report (1905), the only cart road in the Naga Hills district was a section of the 'great road' that ran from Negherething on the Brahmaputra to Imphal in Manipur. The opening of the Assam-Bengal Railway in 1903 rendered Dimapur (entry point to the Naga Hills District), to all intents and purposes, the terminus of the road. By 1905, the roads that connected the District ran through

Nambar forest, Nichuguard, Diphupani, Ghaspani, Piphima, Zubza, Kohima, Jakhama to Mao Thana, covering 57 miles. Four miles beyond Mao, the road gradually descended to the valley of Manipur. Only 14 miles of the road between Mao Thana and Dimapur were metalled then. Bridle paths were constructed up to Khonoma from Kohima. The path also ran through Wokha, Mokokchung, and Tamlu to Geleki, the extreme north of the district. Another bridle path ran eastward towards Cheswejuma, 28½ miles from Kohima, to Shitzu in the Sema country, where it joined the bridle path in the west. The British constructed Inspection Bungalows across the district for the vigil. There were 23 British Inspection Bungalows in the district. In the Chakhesang inhabited areas, Inspection Bungalows were set up at Cheswejuma (28½ miles from Kohima), Satazuma (85¼ miles) and Zhulhami (48½ miles). In 1904, there were post offices at Kohima, Impur, Mikokchung, Nichuguard and Wokha. The office at Kohima was a combined post and telegraph office (pp. 56-58).

In the early 1940s there were only two cars and two schools running up to class IV in Kohima. With reinforcements to eventually meet the Japanese invasion, there was a steady increase in vehicles in the Naga hills with better road connectivity (Kire, 2019, p. 224). The British undertook various developments in the Chakhesang Naga regions as well. As preparations were made to counter Japanese entry, many new roads were dug to keep vigil and also to connect the various Inspection areas set up at different locations throughout the hills. The existing narrow roads, fit only for humans and animals, were expanded for jeeps to commute through the region, and British Inspection Bungalows/Dak Bungalows were set up at different locations besides the few existing ones. British inspection/Dak Bungalows were set up at Pfutsero, Chizami, Sthazumi, Phek and Cheswezu. These developments saw a rise in new settlements. For instance, Pfutsero, which was heavily forested, came to be occupied by people of neighbouring villages with the transfer of the Pfutresomi Government Middle School in (1944). Pfutsero turned into an educational centre for many of the surrounding villages. This resulted in the inter-mingling and settlement of people from different villages, which was uncommon prior to the Second World

War, when all activities of life were concentrated at respective villages only. Pfutsero became one of the first prominent town settlements in the Phek district. Likewise, gradual town settlements were witnessed in Phek, Jessami, Chozuba, Chizami, and Meluri.

The development of roads in the Naga Hills provided connectivity and interactions among people of different tribes and villages. Before 1942, there were no towns in the Naga Hills except for Dimapur, which had been a small outpost serving as a gateway to the Naga Hills and Manipur. The post-war saw the booming of Dimapur as the commercial centre and commodity supplier of the Naga Hills and Manipur. Economic activity increased, resulting in locals engaging in various kinds of trade alongside the Marwaris, who dominated the trade before the war. Kohima, too, became a town serving the needs of the surrounding tribes and villages. It became a regularly visited site catering as a commercial spot and an educational centre for higher studies. This increased the number of students pursuing higher education among the Chakhesang Nagas. People from Jessami and Zhavame visited neighbouring towns in Manipur for commercial transactions. With increased travels to Kohima, the primary market of the people, a variety of new commodities were purchased. For the first time, small shops with essential commodities were established in selected Chakhesang Naga regions to satisfy the needs of the locals.

Infrastructural change evolved in the style of construction of houses. Corrugated Galvanized Iron (CGI) roofs replaced thatched roofs, and bamboo matted walls were replaced by wooden walls, with more doors and windows. With many villages being burnt down on the eve of the Battle, the new houses that came up had a modern touch. The imitation of British bungalows and Assam hill type houses was seen as the new type of houses. Structural changes were witnessed, with the new houses constructed at an elevated level, unlike the traditional houses, which were built at ground level. In the interior household settings, the partition of rooms became prominent. While living with domesticated animals in the home was a common phenomenon, the construction of cow sheds, chicken coops and pigsties within the compound became the new arrangement. A

few households also constructed toilets outside their homes. There was also an increased usage of household items, including utensils and other cutlery of aluminium and steel. The use of pottery was soon replaced by manufactured kitchenware. A unique feature among the villagers of Zhavame was laying a layer of boulders against the walls outside their houses and construction of trenches under the beds. The knowledge of bunkers and trenches can be attributed to the practice of the Japanese soldiers during their stay in the village. This type of defence construction became most prevalent and suitable during the troubled years of the 1950s when the Indian Army ravaged Chakhesang Naga villages. The post- war witnessed significant changes in the living patterns of people, making Rechard (2018) remark, "By the end of the war, expensive but durable corrugated steel was replacing thatched houses on Naga houses, and some communities were planning their electrification. People installed pipes and tanks to supply water directly to their villages" (p. 343). These developments were rapid and much of these were due to exposure to the war.

4.2.4. Role of Christianity and Western education

As in other parts of the Naga Hills, western education and Christianity have played a prominent role in bringing about a cultural change among the Chakhesang Nagas. Before the war, the age-old institutions of the *throke* and *lüke* (male and female dormitories) functioned smoothly and all life skills were taught here according to traditional customs. Western education did not gain much significance before the Second World War. In the early 1940s, there were only a few educated persons, and village schools that ran up to Class II barely functioned. In Chizami village, for instance, to keep the school running, young children and parents were threatened, forcing children to go to school, as low enrollment would result in the closure of schools. The importance of western education was realized only when the villagers witnessed a small fraction of the advancements of the world. Early educated people like Goyiepra Kenye, the first graduate among the Chakhesang Nagas, interacted with the foreigners and protected the villagers during the crucial period. Men like him and others played a prominent role in changing the mindset of the people.

The immediate result after the Battle, in the case of Chizami village, was that the school enrollment increased incredibly. Girls were also allowed to receive formal education, though the number of educated girls was considerably small in the initial years.

The government, too, made efforts to open more schools in the Naga Hills. Charles Pawsey (1946), recognized the intellectual awakening among the Nagas as he quotes,

> The first and most obvious effect is the demand for education amongst all tribes but especially amongst the Angamis who previously were less literate than the Aos. I think this desire is due to the fact that, throughout the war, the Angamis have seen more foreigners than any of the other tribes and naturally desire to know more of the world, a desire that can only be satisfied through education. …During the War they (Nagas) have found their feet. They have come to the conclusion that they are as good as, or better than, most other races provided they have equal opportunities and equal education. (NSA, File no. 155)

Christianity reached the Chakhesang Nagas in the 1890s through missionaries and evangelists from the Angami region and the first church was established in 1895 at Chozuba. Although the spread and acceptance of the new religion was gradual, there was rapid growth in the establishment of churches in the Chakhesang inhabited area after the Second World War, as in other parts of the Naga Hills. In the Naga Hills, the proportion of Christians increased from 18 per cent to 46 per cent between 1941-1951 (Rechard, 2018, p. 345). In the Chakhesang Naga region, the number of churches rose from 14 to 41 between 1940 and 1950 (CBCC, Souvenir, 2000). Christianity was still faced with much opposition, and new converts often faced various forms of persecution, compelling them to seek protection from neighbouring villages. However, with the gradual spread of Christianity, the traditional religious rituals were given up and replaced by new moral ethics in the realm of Christian principles. Baptist missionaries translated the Bible into the local language to spread the gospel. Angami Naga being the medium of instruction in schools of

the Chakhesang Nagas, the Angami Bible and Angami gospel song books were introduced to the people.

The intellectual outlook of the people changed. While elaborate customs of earning recognition and prestige through the erection of monoliths/menhirs, hosting feasts of merits and construction of *kecike* (horned house), besides other accomplishments, had been the primary concern of the people, the post-war era saw a change in the mindset and attitude of the Chakhesang Nagas. Formal education gave the people a broader outlook. Education and engaging in different fields of learning and earning became the people's primary concerns. The old society, which was community-based, became a more individualistic one, with each person having personal motives and pursuits. The post-war saw a considerable increase in the number of educated people among the Chakhesang Nagas who contributed to the period of modernization.

4.2.5. Socio-economic Impact: A Cultural Change

The Chakhesang Nagas enjoyed the status of being a 'Loose control' area, and a few new elements were introduced in the form of Christianity or formal education. However, the primary life of the people was left unaffected. Life revolved around agricultural activities, and all festivals were connected to them. Singing and dancing were expressions of emotions. Sema (1986) states,

> the Naga society was a very close and well-knitted one. In it, the individual was subordinate to the community. However, there was a large measure of individual freedom which made one feel delighted in the welfare of his village. A Naga worked for his village, enjoyed the benefits given to him by the village and participated in joy and merriment in the different feasts of the village. One's individual pride was due to the pride of the village. Thus, the Naga villagers maintained and enjoyed a disciplined life (p. 49).

The pre-war preparations gave ample opportunity to the people under the Assam province to earn through skilled and unskilled labour. Slim (2014) remarked that "every road, airfield and

camp had to be made from virgin jungle or rice field" (p. 175). There was an urgent need for labourers and porters to work on various projects under a limited timeframe. With work being demanding, poor health and mortality rates amongst the workers increased. A policy of increasing wages was adopted to attract villagers. For instance, wages increased from rupees 2 to rupees 6 per day in Manipur (Saigal, 2022, p. 112). In the Naga hills, labour wages were increased from four to five annas to five rupees per day (Gimson Papers, p.1, as cited in Rechard, 2018, p. 342). People from Naga villages rushed to military sites to work as labourers as it offered an opportunity to earn many times more than the value of house taxes. Earning for their labour was a new experience as most of them were unfamiliar with monetary transactions. The only type of trade known to the people of the remote Naga villages had been the barter system. Sometimes, when wages were paid in the rupee note, Nagas preferred coins. The Chakhesang Nagas were reported to have travelled up to the Burma border to earn wages. For the first time, the value of money was understood, and the purchasing power of the people increased.

The economic activities of the people underwent change after the Second World War. With earning opportunities offered before and during the war, the tribals of northeast India started to engage in multiple jobs other than agriculture. A new class of mercantile community emerged, and they made efforts to cater to local needs and tastes. Cash cropping was also a new venture undertaken by the people. An observation on the Nagas post-war stated, "And if majority of the Shingpos or the Nagas remained cultivators, a growing number were acquiring new skills and occupations- there were now Mizo nurses in military hospitals, Naga mechanics and contractors, and Chin lory drivers" (Reid Papers, 1946, as cited in Rechard, 2018, p. 344). Many got employment in colonial administration, teaching and other technical professions. The race in different professions was gradual among the Chakhesang Nagas as education reached them much later than the other forward tribes. Nevertheless, diversity in different professions was noticed in the years that followed.

After 1944, as among all Naga tribes, the Chakesang Nagas experienced drastic changes in the lifestyle patterns of the people. All tribal ceremonies and festivals were regarded as practices against Christian thought; however, western outlook and western culture crept into the society. Self-woven cultural attires were regarded as indecent and were discouraged by Christian missionaries. This led to the purchase of mill-manufactured cloths from Assam, which were sewn into western clothes. Shirts, skirts and trousers replaced traditional attire, while shoes, sandals and slippers began to be worn for the first time. Recovered soldiers' boots became the footwear of men during their hunting trips.

After the war, new consumption patterns were noticed among the people. Prior to the war, villages were self-sufficient, and the practice of exchanging agricultural items with neighbouring villages was a common phenomenon; they did not feel the need to purchase food items from other regions. However, during the war period, many individuals tasted western food for the first time, experiencing a different culture. British and American soldiers exposed a variety of new consumer goods such as biscuits, chewing gums, chocolate bars, baked beans, jams, canned meat and sardines. Amazed by the variety and uniqueness of new food items, men and young boys of the villages visited Allied military camps to offer their service by running errands, waiting on them or cleaning their bases to get a taste of the food items awarded to them. By the close of the Second World War, variety in food items and new cooking techniques became visible. The new food items included sugar, cooking oil, lentils, sea salt and new varieties of vegetables, etc. Nagas, who practised simple cooking methods of boiling or roasting food over the fire, now learnt the art of frying and new roasting techniques. With the knowledge gained from soldiers and exposure to the outside world, many new food items and cuisines replaced traditional ones.

A significant change noticed among the Nagas, particularly the Chakhesang Nagas, is the massive improvement in hygiene and sanitation. New lifestyles and changes in the interior and exterior designs of homes drastically changed people's living habits. According to traditional

belief, the interiors of the houses were not to be swept at night, nor were utensils washed with water. Sweeping of houses at night was avoided, fearing the disposal of valuable or useful household items into the fire. The work culture of the villagers involved working in their fields from dawn to dusk, leaving them with little time to clean their homes and often resulting in neglecting household chores. Washing utensils with water was also forbidden out of the fear that washing away even a tiny morsel of food would invoke the phenomena of '*to zo, so zo'* meaning, the curse of consuming all the food before the harvest season even though the harvest was sufficient to last the whole year. This was the reason why after every harvest, the village priest and family heads would bless the year's harvest to be *'to pu, so pu',* indicating the abundance of food even though it is consumed. Fearing the former phenomena, everyone was expected to clean their plates and cups with their fingers only, as an act of washing. After the Second World War, with the increase in the number of Christian converts, exposure to the Western education system and engagement in different professions, the concept of practising a hygienic lifestyle became prominent. Clean habits were also encouraged by Christian missionaries. With the new type of houses constructed at an elevated height, and animal sheds and toilets constructed outside houses, cleanliness was promoted. The most positive impact seen in this change can be summarized as the decrease in the number of diseases and epidemics in the villages. Access to modern health facilities also benefitted the people in multiple ways. With improved accessibility to products such as soaps and other cleaning agents, personal hygiene was enhanced. People now looked for jobs in different sectors of the government, which, in turn, improved hygiene and quality of life.

A noticeable change after the Japanese invasion was observed in the vegetation. A typical plant, eupatorium odoratum, a native of the tropical, infested almost all north-east Indian states. R.S. Tripathi et.al. (2006), while conducting a study on the plant, concluded that the eupatorium odoratum entered northeast India through troop movements from southeast Asia during the Second World War. They further stated its spread was one of the most visible effects of the Second World War (p. 305). The eupatorium odoratum spread rapidly in the Naga Hills after the Battle of

Kohima, resulting in the local nomenclature of the plant – *Japan prü*, meaning Japanese plant or weed in the Chakhesang Naga dialect (Plate 14). The Chakhesang Nagas, like other Naga tribes, hold a belief that this plant was introduced to their region by the Japanese during Second World War. Since its spread, the locals have made multiple use of this plant. For instance, it in times of minor injury its leaves are crushed and placed over the wound to act as a coagulant. The plant is also used in paddy fields as manure.

The Chakhesang Nagas have undergone multifarious changes both at the personal and community level after the Second World War. However, this does not indicate that people had altogether given up their practices, customs and traditions. These changes blended and progressed with the old culture of the people. Christianity and formal education faced challenges and met resistance in the initial years. However, they were accepted over time and rooted well in society. The various changes were bound to happen, as they have happened in almost every society of the world. However, what is unique about the Nagas in general and the Chakhesangs Nagas in particular is that the changes were sudden. Had the Battle of Kohima not taken place, the developments: material, social, economic, religious or political, would have occurred at a later period, and the course of Naga history would have been a different story. The Nagas have experienced many changes over the decades, yet traditions have been preserved, keeping the Naga identity and culture distinct and unique.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Second World War was aptly characterized as a ‘total war’, not sparing any community or people that came on its way. India, particularly the indigenous tribes of North-east India, experienced its effects from the moment of the British declaration of war. Like many other colonized nations, India witnessed significant involvement of its workforce and resources in the conflict. The Nagas were embroiled in a ‘war that was not theirs’, situating the Naga’s loyalty and resilience to the test. The trajectory of Naga history would have been markedly different had they not encountered British colonization. From the start of the 20th century, the Nagas became exposed to a system of foreign administration and political dominion. However, had colonization not taken place in the Naga Hills, the ‘Naga Hills’ and its people would have been obscure and not have found its place in the records of world history. The Second World War and the Battle of Kohima elevated the Naga Hills to a global platform.

Fighting in ‘Britain’s Greatest Battle’, the battle scene witnessed many Nagas, getting recruited to the Assam Regiment. The newly recruited soldiers, whom British officials deemed ill-trained and inexperienced on the eve of their first major mission, proved their worth through their exemplary courage, unwavering dedication and remarkable resilience in the Battle of Jessami and later in the Battle of Kohima. The soldiers of the Assam regiment, although recruited and trained in western warfare, exhibited their true nature of belonging to warrior tribes to the extent of involving in hand-to-hand combats, akin to wrestling, a most popular sport among tribal communities. The indigenous know-how, coupled with familiarity with the rough terrain, all the more, made them an indispensable asset on the battlefield. Today, soldiers of the 1st Assam Regiment are recognized and remembered, their names carved in the memorials at Jessami and Kohima (Plate 9).

The Naga support for British war efforts during the Second World War cannot be undermined. The Nagas found themselves massively involved from 1942 onwards by working at military sites, digging new roads and widening old ones, carrying British supplies, assisting in the administration or becoming informants, among many other voluntary works. With indigenous skills and knowledge, Naga labourers aided in accomplishing the war's demands. Chakhesang Nagas demonstrated their resourcefulness by travelling for days and weeks as British porters, manually transporting supplies to British outposts along the India-Burma border. The expansion of the bridle path along Kohima- Phek- Jessami witnessed villagers working diligently along this path.

In the Chakhesang Naga context, the people of this region rendered much logistic support to the Japanese. The area was not a war zone but a pivotal point enroute Kohima; this proved convenient for the Japanese. The Japanese acquired the much-needed requirements of informants, labourers, and porters for the Army from this region. In desperate conditions, Japanese forces sought to leverage the sympathy of the locals and secure indigenous support as in other tribal communities. Despite being forced in some cases, the services of these men who were familiar with the landscape also became advantageous for the Japanese. The powerful speeches of Japanese officers, the efforts of the soldiers to earn the trust of the locals through their participation in indigenous sports and activities, teaching the locals how to use firearms, setting up rudimentary Japanese schools, showing respect to women and paying (in their printed currency) the locals even in their absence, to an extend influenced the minds of the people. Regardless of British warnings on the eve of the invasion, the first encounters with Japanese soldiers differ in the Chakhesang Naga region. Mesulumi, Kikruma and Lozaphuhu villages welcomed the Japanese forces by offering them food upon arrival. However, this attitude did not last long. The constant requisition of the people's paddy, livestock, and other essential resources became a burden to the people, with hardships already exacerbated even before the Japanese invasion. At the time of the Japanese invasion, wealth was measured according to how much paddy a person possessed. The 'rich' men

of villages like Pfutseromi village offered their year's harvest to lighten the villagers' burden. The collective contribution of paddy was a common phenomenon in almost all Chakhesang Naga villages. Japanese soldiers often slaughtered pigs, cattle and poultry during their visits to villages. Kikruma, being a Ration Delivery Point of the Japanese Army, paddy contributions from the Chakhesang villages were stored here and dispatched to the Kohima battle site. Chakhesang Naga's contribution to the Japanese, through its resources and workforce, is an aspect that has been overshadowed by researchers who concentrate much of their studies around the battle site. While it is an undeniable fact that the people around Kohima gravely suffered the direct effects of the traumatic war, the study of the Chakhesang Nagas during the period is also significant. To the Japanese, the contribution of the Chakhesang Nagas may seem minimal as they had thousands to feed. However, to the Chakhesang Nagas, who barely managed to survive each year, the effects of the Japanese invasion lasted for years.

The Japanese dependence on ration supply from Chakhesang villages can be summarized as crucial. With the average number of households in the Chakhesang Naga region ranging between 80 and 200 and Japanese troops flooding in thousands, the amount of ration supplies to the troops cannot be underestimated. By the time of the Japanese retreat, villages were reduced close to poverty. Much of the paddy and livestock was incredibly exhausted in this agro-based community. Unfamiliar with other means of earning and lack of required skills for seeking employment, majority of the Chakhesang Nagas found themselves still engaged in agricultural activities. A steady decline in the economy post-war is noticed among the Chakhesang Nagas. While Feasts of Merit were regularly celebrated among the Chakesang Nagas before the war, hosting of such events drastically dropped after the Japanese invasion. This can be attributed to the contribution made to the war efforts of the Japanese Army as such events were hosted with the accumulation of many years' harvests. Other factors responsible for the decline of such prestigious events can be attributed to the disruption of agricultural activities during the troubled years of conflict between the Naga National leaders and Indian Army in the 1950s, and change in the

lifestyle and thought of the people with the influence of Western education and adoption of Christianity.

With the passage of time and the voices of those who experienced the war dying, one has to delve into the tangible remains of the period for historical reconstruction. Despite limited literary sources of the area, the war remains, and the landscape are keepers of history. The different ways in which Chakhesang Nagas skilfully utilized the material remains of war became not just collectors but preservers of history. Some of these items are still in use and are cues of the event. British and Japanese activity sites have stood the test of time and are a constant reminder that an event of global significance extended up to this corner of the world. These landscapes hold the memories of the people who experienced it and those of later generations. To the onlooker, the material remains and landscapes are a reminder of the great event and hold historical significance and value.

In recent years, the Chakhesang Naga region has become a potential site for investigation and research. Recognizing its importance and relevance, it has come under the preview of the Japan Association for Recover and Repatriation of War Casualties (JARRWC) since its first survey in 2019. Chozuba, Chizami and the surrounding area of Pfutsero have been under study since its first visit to the region. The First Field Hospital at Milestone 30, located south of the mile signpost, is a significant site for excavation, as per a Japanese veteran report. A mass burial site is estimated to be present in the area where about 200 Japanese soldiers were buried in the vicinity of the field hospital (Plate 15). A trial excavation of the area was conducted in November 2023; however, the exact location of the burial site has yet to be adequately identified. The demarcated area is under the jurisdiction of the Department of Horticulture, Nagaland, and the area has not seen many developmental activities except for a fruit plantation project. Japanese bones of those who could not be afforded a decent burial were scattered all over the area, and ignorant of their significance, these have not been preserved and thus cannot be recovered. However, the mass

burial site is still believed to be an unexplored site. The existence of the Japan Cave and a man-made structure (boulders not arranged in local style) on the cliffs adjacent to the field hospital are also an indication that the Japanese base at Pfutsero was not only a significant area for the locals but more so for the Japanese whose mission under JAWWRC is the recovery of soldiers' bones.

The changes foreseen after the Second World War among the Chakhesang Nagas can be summarized as the direct and indirect impact of the great event. The Nagas, particularly the Chakhesang Nagas, entered into the period of modernization, which not only witnessed a change in the living patterns but also an intellectual awakening, evidently visible in the interest in Western education and thought, which further boosted the Naga political movement under the visionary leadership of A.Z. Phizo. The NNC's political and military participation witnessed intense resistance against the Indian Army, which turned most brutal in the 1950s and 60s. The use of abandoned British and Japanese rifles furthered the NNC to gain momentum. The Chakhesang Nagas, who had witnessed soldier's life during their exposure to the Japanese Army, enthusiastically sought recruitment in the 'Naga Army'. The households not directly involved in the Naga political movement offered their selfless assistance and support to the families of the recruits. The voice of the NNC became the voice of the Nagas in their pursuit of the Naga identity and self-determination.

The Second World War stands as a pivotal moment in history. It profoundly impacted nearly every community and population worldwide, with enduring repercussions. The tremendous global event paved the way for modernity in the Naga context. If the intellectual, religious and social awakening occurred in colonial India in the second half of the 19th century, the Nagas, particularly the Chakhesang Nagas, experienced it a century later. Although brief, the period witnessed the cultural exchange and adoption of Japanese and British conduct among the Chakhesang Nagas. The Japanese exposure implored the minds of the people to test their skills with recovered war remains. The visible impacts of the war include Western influence in

education, health and sanitation, and changes in economic pursuits, food habits, and lifestyle, among others. The development in the Naga political movement is an indication of an intellectual and political awakening among its people. The Second World War brought many cultural changes, making the Nagas and the Chakhesang Nagas face the challenges of modernity.

Nevertheless, had the Nagas not experienced the great war, the Naga Hills would not have found its name and place in the accounts of the historical event. What remains now are the few voices and the tangible remains that serve as requisite sources and upholders of history. The present research is limited to the Chakhesang Nagas, delving more on the oral histories of the people who experienced the event first-hand as participants and bystanders. The Chakhesang Naga experience of the Second World War give more insight for further exploration and research. A comprehensive study of the Battle of Kohima can be conducted in other affected communities besides the region surrounding Kohima. Alongside the study of tangible war remains, identification and excavation of strategic sites in other regions can contribute to further research. Till date no proper research has been conducted through excavation of potential sites. The JARRWC's mission is inclined towards the recovery of Japanese bones, however, in the lesser explored areas, artificial structures like trenches, fox-holes, sentry points, bombarded areas etc. are still undisturbed by human activity. These sites can contribute to the military study, technology of weaponry and the extend of its usage during the Second World War in the Naga Hills and elsewhere. Another limitation observed during the conduct of the research was the Japanese perspective of the war in the Naga Hills. A collaborative research project can be conducted between Naga and Japanese researchers to produce a comprehensive study to adequately accommodate both perspectives. This partnership can contribute to a better understanding of the historical interactions and more accurate portrayal of the shared history. The present research thus, concludes that history is dynamic and historical trajectories are often diversified, leading insightful researchers to unravel the missing links.

Plate 1: Japanese Army currency in Naga Hills

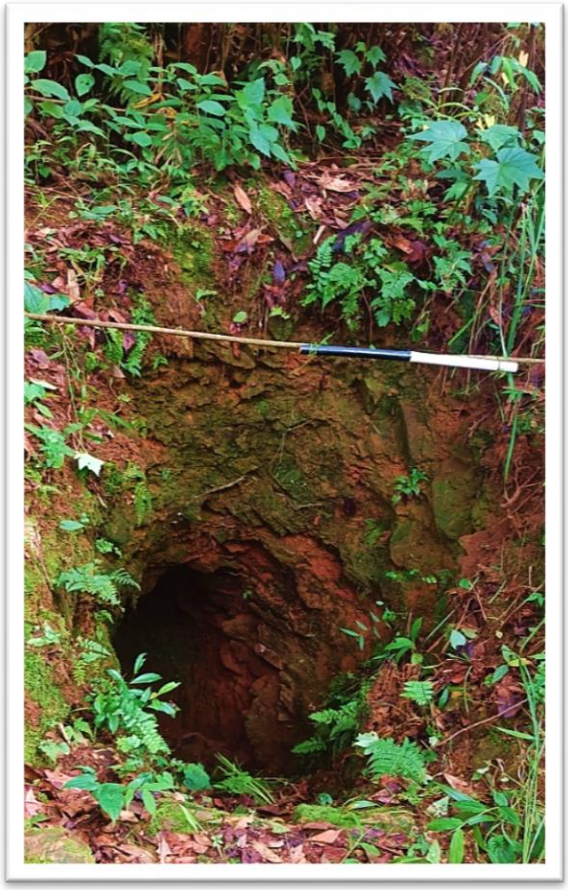

Plate 2: Remains of tunnel constructed by Japanese, *Zacako,* Chozuba

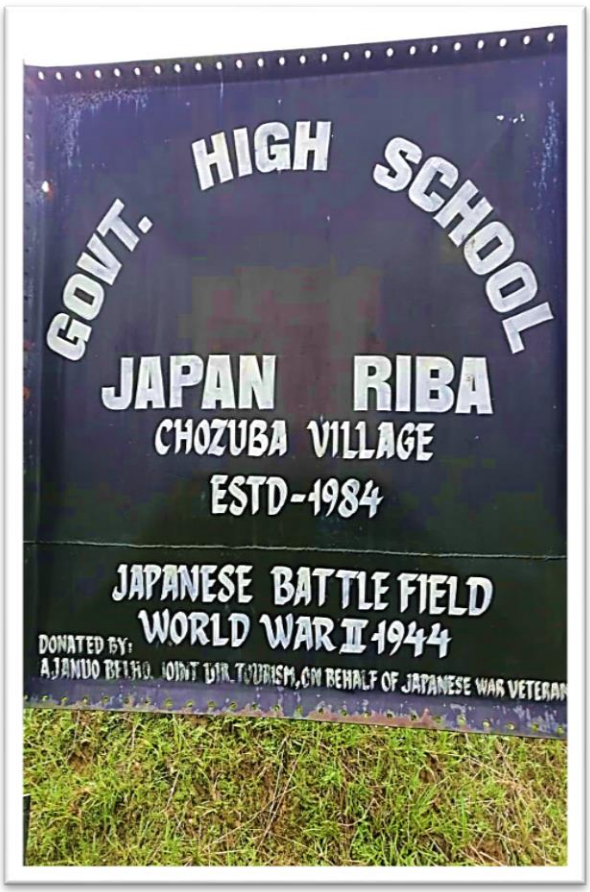

Plate 3: *Japan Riba* site, Chozuba

Plate 4: Remains of a trench, *Zacako*, Chozuba

Plate 5: Remains of a foxhole, *Zacako,* Chozuba

Plate 6: Remains of sentry point, Pfutsero

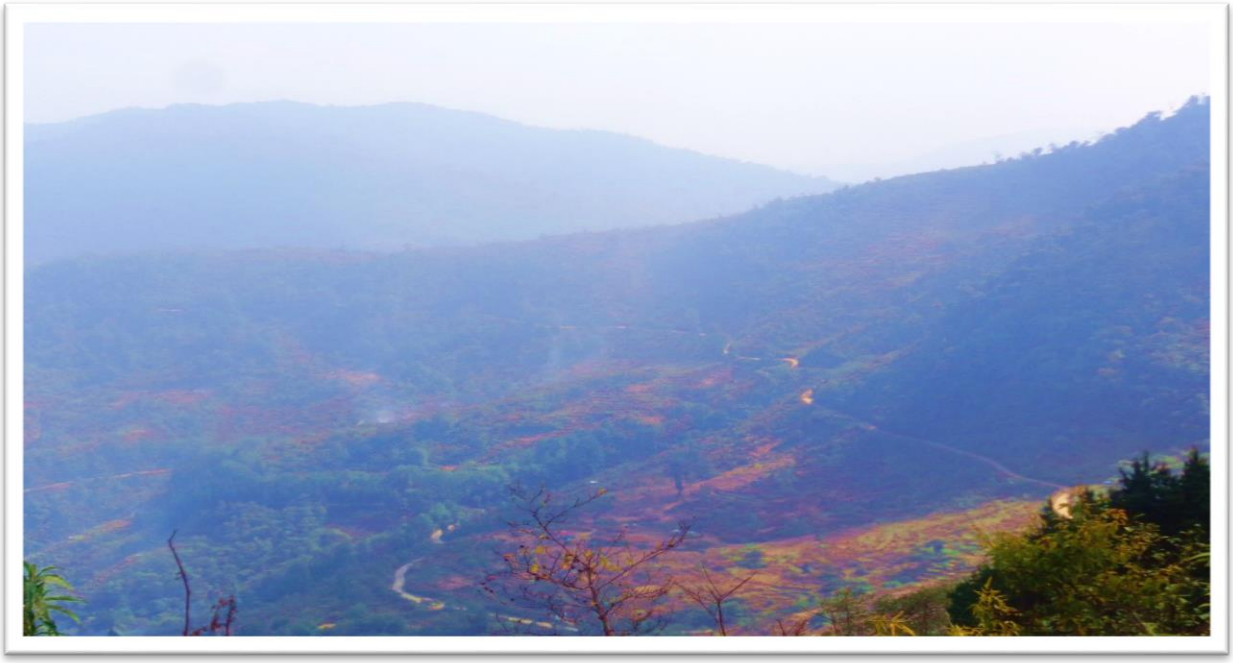

Plate 7: View of *Japan Bedie*, Pfutsero, from sentry point (Fig. 6)

Plate 8: *Japan Cave*, Pfutsero

Plate 9: War Memorial at Jessami

Plate 10: War remain: Ammunition box

Plate 11: War remain: Backstrap from a horse saddle

Plate 12: War remain: Agricultural tool, iron from deserted jeep

Plate 13: War remain: Church bell at Mesulumi village

Plate 14: Eupatorium odoratum, locally known as *Japan prü*

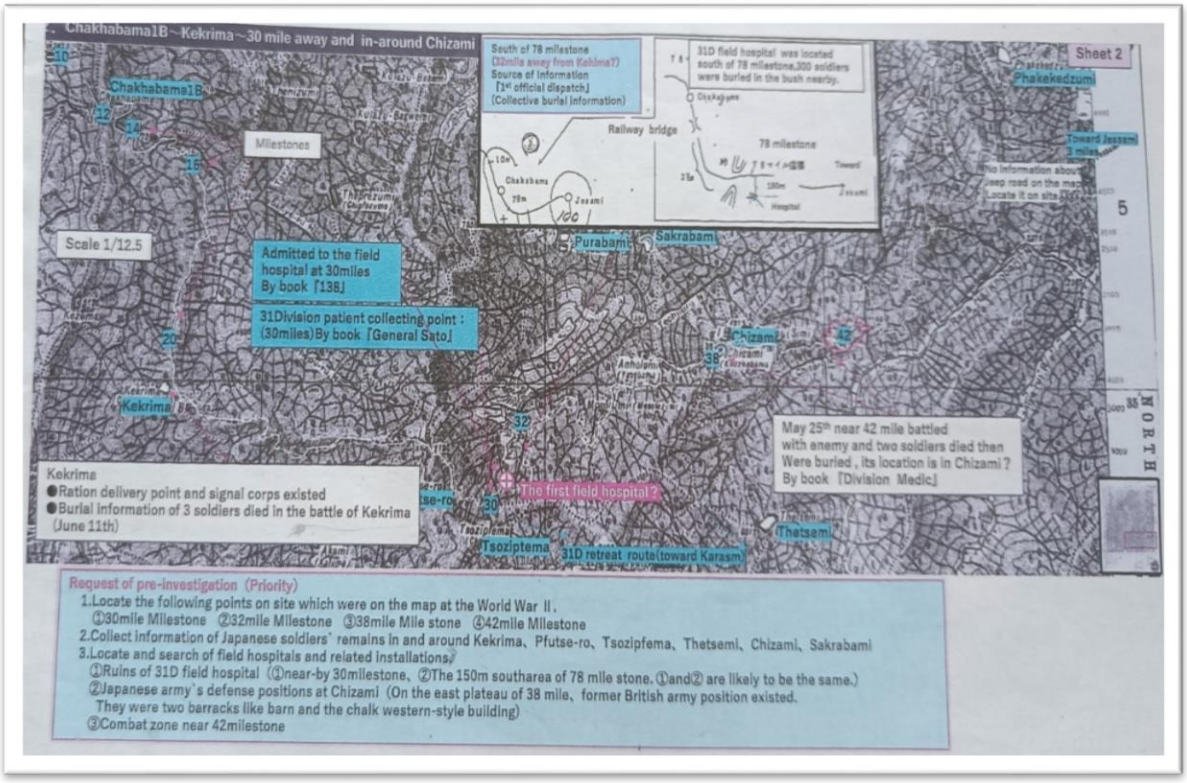

Plate 15: Japanese activity sites and burial information
Source: JARRWC Manuel

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