

The Stories of the Second World War from the Villages of Manipur

Khangamlung Goimei

Research Scholar of History, Manipur University, Imphal, Manipur, India.

Abstract: *The Battle of Imphal which was fought in 1944 in Manipur from March to June was one such battle of the Second World War that affected the people of Manipur like never before. It was fought in different sites and locations, causing the villagers who had nothing to do with the British, Japanese or even the Indians to a large extent to leave their houses and find shelters in the jungle or the nearby villages only to find their houses, barns and granaries destroyed and burned when they return. One can only imagine what people went through to survive. The affected villages and war memorials tell stories of the Battle of Imphal which would have been lost in time had people not visited them and recollect the events of the war. As much as the Battle of Imphal finds its place in books and articles, visiting the sites and meeting the people who are the living libraries of the war which they preferably called "Japan Lan" which is simply translated as "Japanese War" is altogether another necessary task to understand what happened in 1944 in Manipur.*

Keywords: Manipur, Imphal, British, Japanese, Second World War, War Memorials, Oral testimonies.

I have chosen this topic because I believe that many people talk and read about the Second World War in general and the Battle of Imphal in particular which was fought from March to June in 1944 in Manipur and would be curious to know what the people of Manipur went through during the war, how they perceived it or how they reacted to it. They might also want to know what made the Battle of Imphal so important in history; why was it important for the British, the Japanese or for that matter, the Indian National Army to win this war. Reading about it in books and articles or watching the documentaries and videos that were made about it would give anyone a good sense of the War. However, it is important to visit the villages where the battles were fought and listen to the people who have witnessed, experienced and lived through it to appreciate the Battle of Imphal and understand the plight of the people during the period. Those who see the importance of historical sense in human society have constructed war memorials in different battle sites so that people can come and visit them

and relive the unforgiving reality of the war that was fought between the British on one side and the Japanese and the Indian National Army on the other side in this part of the world. Here, it must be pointed out that the common people of Manipur had nothing to do with the British, the Japanese and the Indians. For them this war is meaningless. It was just a war that brought disaster to them. They were forced to vacate their villages and find shelter in the jungle or in the nearby villages during the war period so that the warring parties could kill each other. What do they get in return? The answer is 'nothing'. They returned to their villages after the war only to find their houses, barns and granaries destroyed and burned to the ground.

The entire paper will be based on a few of my visits to the battle sites, and war memorials and the people I have met who have witnessed the war or who were told about the grim reality of the war which they called 'Japan Lan' which is simply translated as the 'Japanese War'. Here, I must confess that I still need to visit more places that are significant to the Battle of Imphal and meet more people who witnessed it, experienced it and lived through it, or who hold stories of the gruesome war, who are the living libraries of the Battle of Imphal but I am unable to do so for lots of reasons personal to me.

The Battle of Imphal or what the people called the Japanese War was fought in the soil and air of Manipur in 1944. Growing up, I heard stories of the Second World War that was fought in this part of the world. One grandfather used to tell us stories of using Second World War bombs to catch fish in the *Alang* River, known to the rest of the world as the Irang River. He said that he along with his friends would catch lots of fish. Since the fish they caught were in huge numbers, they were not able to eat the fish alone, so they would smoke-dry it, distribute it among themselves and carry it back home to their families. Also, another thing that drew me towards the Second World War was that people, especially people from my village (Thiulon) often talked about how the villagers would collect the paper currency, make it into bundles and chop it just because they thought the pieces of paper currency that flew up when they chopped it was beautiful. Some would use this paper currency as cigarette rolls and smoke them. The villagers did not know that what they were chopping or smoking was money. For them, only coins were money. I was told that some little wiser people would collect the money and hide them but they were lost as they must have never told their sons and daughters about it. Later I came to know that these all were true stories because the plane that was carrying British General Orde Wingate crashed into my village and its parts are still available in the village to this day.

In the Southern Front: INA Museum Moirang

I have also visited the INA Museum at Moirang which hosts pictures, guns, ammunition, bombs, helmets, stretchers, diaries, maps and other equipment used by the warring parties. One of the most fascinating things

present in the museum is the photograph that showed one of the soldiers of the Indian National Army holding a bow and arrow to fight the British. In a war of guns, tanks and bombs, he was with his bow and arrow to fight his well-prepared enemy i.e., the British. Here, it is important to note that the tricolour flag of India was hoisted for the first time on Indian soil at Moirang on April 14 1944 by Lt. Col. S.A. Malik. The Japanese and the Indian National Army were successful in liberating this part of India and gave hope to the people of Manipur and India even though it was just for a while.

Ningthoukhong

Ningthoukhong is one village that has also witnessed the brutality of war. There is one particular bridge in Ningthoukhong that needs a special memory or mention. This bridge separated the British and the Japanese forces in the Battle of Imphal. The Japanese and the Indian National Army came up towards Imphal from Moirang and Churachandpur side but they were stopped by the British at Ningthoukhong bridge. This was one of the points the British desperately wanted to defend because areas like Moirang, Ningthoukhong and Bishnupur and up to Imphal were all plain areas and failing to control it would allow the Japanese and the Indian National Army to reach Imphal within a matter of hours and possibly capture it.

Majuron

Majuron is a village in Churachandpur District in Manipur bordering Bishnupur District. The village is located at the foothill of Rasuanbut, also known as Leimaton (to the Meiteis). The village was not affected when the British were stationed but trouble began when the Japanese came. The villagers had to sell their foodgrain, taro etc to the Japanese who paid them in Japanese currency though the people could not use them to buy anything in Manipur. However, this was only at the beginning of their occupation of the Rasuanbut. When the fighting got intense, the Japanese began to steal food from the villagers as they had no other means to secure food for themselves. When the British were clearing and chasing the Japanese away from the village, they asked the villagers to evacuate themselves to other places during the war period. After the villagers were evacuated the British burned all the food grain from the granaries and barns because they did not want the Japanese to get hold of it after they were gone for war engagement in other areas. Finally, when the Japanese were defeated and had to leave the village, some Japanese warned the villagers that they would come again and this time they would not be merciful to the villagers because the villagers did not help them when they were fighting against the British. When the war was well over, the villagers collected many things left behind by the British and the Japanese which included guns, helmets, shells, shovels, ammunition boxes etc. It is interesting to note that the villagers were using all these war remains to their maximum use. Some of them were using the ammunition boxes as toolboxes, as a vase for planting vegetables

and flowers; while in one family the shells were used to make the hearth in the kitchen.

Raengzaeng/ Ngariyan

Raengzaeng village was one of the places where one of the fiercest battles of the Second World War in Manipur was fought. The British and the Japanese left behind lots of guns, ammunition, bombs and every weapon of war. Some were burnt and not usable anymore. People from around that area collected all these and sold them to others. Mr. Mp. Guibamreiyang of Tamenglong said that his father, Direiyang went to Raengzaeng and collected about 10 guns. Some of the butts of the guns were burnt while others were not. His father made the butts of the guns, fixed them and sold them to the people of Tamenglong. It must be mentioned here that the battle at Raengzaeng as well as the fate of the villagers are more or less the same as that of Majuron because they are neighbouring villages.

Maibam Lotpaching

The Japanese scouted Maibam Lotpaching, also known as Red Hill, disguising themselves as Kukis carrying a basket each and buying anything they could on May 20th, 1944. They did not stay for long because they might be caught as they were fairer in complexion compared to the Kukis who were darker in complexion. That night around 11 pm. they came from Irengbam and surrounded Maibam Lotpaching and the fierce battle of Maibam Lotpaching began. The Japanese dug trenches and pits at the foothill and positioned themselves. The British on the other hand positioned themselves up on the top of the hill as they were actually waiting for a potential Japanese attack in order to capture Imphal. There was continuous bombing, and firing from guns, mortars and tanks. After about 2-3 days of continuous firing, rain began to pour down and the Japanese had nowhere to hide from the rain. Even if they wanted to take shelter in the houses, they did not do it because they thought that the British might bomb the houses and kill even the common people so they stuck to their pits and trenches. They were all wet. Soon they began to fall ill but there was no doctor to treat them. The Japanese were without ration too. They carried little rice in their socks which was not more than half a kilo. They had no curry to eat, there was no leaf; no potato; no dal; all they had was a small bottle of water, some small tablets and some syrup that would heal fever and the likes. They could not even cook and since water was scarce at those times and there was no portable water to drink except for the wells used by the Meiteis. They needed doctors, guns ammunition and food but there was no way to get them. After about nine days the battle of Maibam Lotpaching came to an end. There was a heavy casualty on the Japanese side. Many of them died in their pits and trenches. Some were killed with bullets and bombs while many others died of starvation and sickness. It must be pointed out that almost all the villagers ran to other villages and came back only after the war ended.

Palel Airfield

I went to Kakching to see for myself the Pallel Airfield but unfortunately, I was not allowed to go and look at the airfield by the Assam Rifles for security reasons. Pallel is located along the way to Moreh, which is the border town of Manipur. It is located in a strategic location and if the Japanese and the Indian National Army could take control of it, they could establish a supply line from Burma. Therefore, the Japanese and the Indian National Army fought with all their might to capture it. They might as well come out successful had it not been for the British air attacks on them. I wanted to see the airfield because it was in this place that the Indian National Army destroyed several British aircraft. It was here that the Indian soldiers serving the British army betrayed the Indian soldiers of the Indian National Army.

In the Northern Front :**Khangkhui Khullen**

The first fighting took place between the British and the Japanese took place at Khangkhui Khullen in the Ukhrul Shangshak-Ukhrul area. From there the Japanese went towards Shangshak and other areas in Ukhrul.

Shangshak

Shangshak was also one of the places where the fiercest battle took place during the Battle of Imphal. The area where the new church building was constructed was one of the mass gravesites. Sadly, we cannot identify if it was a British or a Japanese or a mass grave for both of them. After another 50 to 100 meters from there, Mr. Alungshing Meiphok who is in his 80s and his wife Mrs. Raimla Meiphok who is 58 years old discovered another mass grave where bodies of around 12 people were dug up when they were digging the ground to construct their house. In the battle of Shangshak, the British and the Japanese were in such proximity when they were fighting. The British were stationed around the new church building area while the Japanese were stationed around the old church office or village office. Shangshak has a war memorial to commemorate the brave soldiers who sacrificed their lives for their country in a foreign land.

Mayarping stated that the Japanese raised their flag at Sangshak after occupying it. When this news came to the British officers posted in Ukhrul District, many of the British soldiers committed suicide including Young Sab (Young Sab literally means Young Officer. It was how he was known locally), a British officer who was posted in Ukhrul as Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) saying that it was better to commit suicide than to die in the hands of the Japanese. There was intense aerial fighting between the Japanese and the British in the Ukhrul-Sangshak area as both of them wanted to dominate the area. When the war was over, there were lots of guns and ammunition left behind by both the British and the Japanese but the villagers were afraid to take them because the British warned them not to take anything. He also talked about the traumatising effect of the war and stated that "Somi's father

(his contemporary) had seen so much dead and blood that the trauma stays with him even to this day. If he sees blood he would just collapse." He added, "There are lots of stories like this."

Kangpokpi

Kangpokpi was first occupied by the British but the Japanese attacked and captured it. However, after the Japanese captured it, the British tried to recapture it which resulted in bombing the same area twice – first by the Japanese when they forced the British to retreat from it and second, by the British to recapture it from the hands of the Japanese. Kangpokpi, that time was important for the British because they were using the Kangpokpi Christian Hospital to treat the wounded soldiers. It is important to note that one of the places which was bombed does not support much vegetation even to this day. The people found jars, flower vases, bombs and lots of other items in the area when they were digging the ground for cultivation.

Kanglatongbi

Kanglatongbi may be seen as another strategic site in the Battle of Imphal. This place is not very far from the capital Imphal and cutting this road by the Japanese 15 Division was very important because the Japanese intended to isolate Imphal from the rest of the region and to finally capture it. Visiting the memorial makes one understand why it is important to capture this strategic location for the Japanese and for the British to secure it against the invading Japanese. Kanglatongbi is one place where one can oversee one of the airfields of Imphal. Had the Japanese been in complete control of this strategic location, they would have been able to launch a devastating attack on the British because the British were heavily dependent on air support for reinforcement and resupply and destroying the airfield would have meant paralysing the military movement and breaking the fighting spirit of the British forces. Therefore, both the British and the Japanese engaged themselves in a very fierce fight at Kanglatongbi. The Japanese were able to cut the Imphal-Kohima Road for some time but they were successfully prevented from advancing towards Imphal at Kanglatongbi by the Army Ordinance Corps of the Indian Army comprising officers, clerks and storekeepers who turned themselves into suicide squads and raiding parties. 19 Indian Army Ordinance personnel of the 221 AOD died defending Kanglatongbi.

In Imphal Area

As Imphal was the target of the Japanese, the Japanese tried to bomb and capture it from the British. When the British were firing 'Top' (a 'Top' to the local people's understanding is a big gun that could hit and destroy tanks and aeroplanes. They might be referring to Howitzers, cannons or a mortar), it reached as high as the clouds in the sky but it could not hit the Japanese planes as they dodged the bullets. They were told that the Japanese pilots were all girls so they used to imagine how good the men would be if

women were like that. Gongthonrei Pamei stated "During this period, the people in Imphal had no food to eat because the British had collected most of the food items from the area to feed the armies who were fighting the Japanese.

Koirengei Airfield

The Koirengei airfield served the British during the Battle of Imphal in which the British were fighting against the Japanese and the Indian National Army. Koirengei was a safe haven for British aeroplanes and vehicles during the course of the war. The British dug a tunnel at Koirengei foothill just big enough to keep vehicles like jeeps and aircraft near the airfield and they would drive them backwards and park inside the tunnel and hide it from the Japanese bombing. During the war period, the people escaped to other villages, some went as far as going to the hills as there were not many war activities up in the interiors (towards Tamenglong). After the war was over, the local people would search for scraps of metals, bullets and bombs – anything they could salvage and sell for money. Whoever found bombs was considered lucky because they could be sold for a higher price. The buyers were hill people as well as the Meiteis. Usually, Hill people would buy them to extract the gunpowder to make bullets or to catch fish. Though trade and commerce soon began after the war, the villagers had no food to eat after the war because they could not cultivate their fields the men were taken as coolies to carry ration, arms and ammunition for the British during the war.

The airfield that served the British when it was needed the most had to be abandoned after the war because it would often flood in the area rendering it not possible for service during rainy season. Also, now that the war is over there is no need for the airfield anymore. However, it may be pointed out that the Koirengei airfield area is occupied by the Assam Rifles and they are preserving it by not allowing people to drive any vehicle on it.

Mantripukhri

Although Mantripukhri also faced the same hardship of war just like any other village in Manipur, it was not shattered with bullets, bombs and burning. However, its hilltop was well prepared to meet the need of war. Trenches which are knee to waist deep dug by the British are still available to this day. Many of the villagers escaped the war and came to Machiang village which is located in present-day Noney District. About 100 people died in Mantripukhri from diseases soon after the Battle of Imphal.

Kameng

Guithuanliu Gonmei stated that when she was about 12 years old, she saw the bombs of the Japanese war at Kameng foothills near the terrace fields. To her young eyes, the bombs seem to be about an inch thick. Since the bombs were all broken after blasting, the bits of the bombs might not be as big as the one foot but it was definitely about half-a-foot and the breadth must be about the size of two palms. The bomb debris was

scattered all around the fields.

Majorkhul

During the war, the villagers had to escape to different villages. The whole village including all their barns where they stored foodgrain and all the other vegetables that could kept for a longer period were burned down by the British as a preventive measure against the Japanese getting access to it. After the war, when the people wanted to resettle themselves, the villagers were asked to shift away from their original settlement area. The people had no choice but to relocate their village to the present location. There was also a cholera outbreak in Imphal and many Meiteis died of it.

Chingmeirong.

Chingmeirong was a British camp during the Battle of Imphal. It is located between Kangla Fort and Koirengi and it became a dumping ground for all the Allies damaged vehicles including aircraft. During the war, almost all the villagers escaped to Machiang village (in present-day Noney District), Maibung, a Kom village near Mapao and Konsaram (a Liangmai Village. The village is also known as Konsakhul). Some of them ran to nearby areas where there were British forces. About five to ten people stayed back to look after the village while the rest fled. The village was soon reestablished after the war. When the war ended, many people from Chingmeirong village started to work for the British as peons, sweepers etc. to find a livelihood.

Tarung

The villagers were displaced and they fled anywhere they found safety during the battle of Imphal. There was not as organised fleeing to a particular place or village. Everyone was left to themselves while they were escaping the war. It was about a year or two before they came back and resettled in the village. As soon as they resettled in the village, they began cultivating the fields again without any restriction from the government. Many of the people get to work in government jobs. However, agriculture remains their main occupation. The villagers faced some discrimination as the Meitei Hindus practised the concept of purity and pollution. For instance, when it was time to pay the school fees of the children, the Meiteis would ask them to put the money down on the table as they could not take it directly from the hands of the hill people. If any Meitei who take money directly from the hand of any tribal would pollute himself/herself he/she has to perform purifying rituals to purify themselves again.

Kakhulong

Since there were lots of armies in the village the Japanese thought it must be the capital area and dropped bombs on it however, the bombs did not fall in the village but in Paona Bazaar area and burned the whole of Paona Bazaar. The whole village was burned by Japanese bombing. The

granaries that were burned could not be burned completely so there were billows of smoke from the granaries for more than a week. The village was bombed twice. One is at the periphery of the village, near Paona and the other is on the south side of the village. One villager Kakhuphun died from the Japanese bombing. During the war, everybody fled the village. Some fled to Sangaiprou, some fled to Joulenpham (Joulen village in Senapati District), some fled to Changangei (in Imphal West District), some fled to Bishenpur area, some to Leisan (Leisan Tampak village in Churachandpur District) and others towards Wangoi (Wangoi Sub Division in Imphal West District). They fled everywhere in Manipur. Only a few people were left in the village. Even after the end of the war, the villagers did not come back and resettle at once. They come in waves, one after the other and reestablished themselves again. During the war, the Japanese were all over Manipur. It was such a hard time. People in the hill areas might be able to till and cultivate their fields but it was not so in Imphal. Even if the people had fields, nobody could cultivate them during the war. It was such a chaotic time; not knowing where to sleep or what to eat because they kept running from one place to another. The Japanese were running short of food supply. People could not cook food in the hills anymore because the Japanese began to snatch their food and eat it if they saw any smoke coming up from cooking. They have horses to carry their stuff which they brought all the way to the hills. Even those horses grew thin and died along the way. They carry something like salt which they apply on wild taro before eating them hungrily (as they have nothing to eat). The Japanese suffered a lot.

Gangmeichung Gangmei is one of the siblings of five in his family. He and his family also escaped to Sangaiprou village and worked for the British during the war period. They used to supply rice beer for the British. Those who worked for the British were enumerated in the form of rice, some flour, sugar and milk called anchor (anchor could have been the name of the brand that canned the milk) apart from two rupees as one day wage. Since there was a shortage of labour, two men/boys each from every housework for the British. Two or three children were made to sweep their rooms. The doctors were also present in their camps and the doctors would check their health status and confirm if the children were fit to work or not or if they were too young to work. They were given food and water in the morning and tea in the afternoon. Life was not so easy at that time.

Lamsang Chingkhulong/Chingkhiuluang

Kamei Sapu Rongmei, a resident of Lamsanf Chingkhulong/Chingkhiuluang from Imphal West District stated that the village was a haven for both the Meiteis and the Rongmei people who fled their villages during the Battle of Imphal. People from the Bazaar (Imphal market area) like Majorkhul, Keishamthong and other areas come and find shelter in this village. However, the people from this village did run and escape to other villages. It was said that the elders often found lots of dead Japanese soldiers in the jungle.

Pangei Nepali Basti

Pangei is one of the oldest Nepali villages in Manipur. The British were stationed in one of the hills along Pangei and the Japanese were believed to have been on the other side of the hills. The village was shelled and bombed by the Japanese. People often found bones while digging the ground for settlement or cultivation in the village. The present-day Nepalis in Pangei village are the descendants of the Nepali veterans who worked and fought for the British during the Second World War.

In the Northwestern Front (Tamenglong Area) Inriangluang

In Inriangluang village, some of the villagers went to hide at Nkhukpanglang cave while others hid in the fields. Fearing that the armies would come and spoil their granaries, many villagers hurriedly made temporary granaries for themselves and hid the rice in the jungle but since the barn had no roof, the rice became wet from the rain and rendered it not fit to eat and as a result, food was scarce after the war. Throughout 1944, there was no fighting between the British and the Japanese, the movement of the British soldiers never stopped during the war in Inriangluang/Tamenglong. They would come to Tamenglong and go to Phelong; from Phelong they would go to Halflong in Assam.

Mrs. Guidiliu Pamei of Inriangluang recalled that her father Husing went to Thiulon village after Wingate's plane crashed there and took the clothes from the crashed site. There were some holes from the burning and it was still stained with blood so her mother washed it and gave it to her father-in-law Direiyang who stitched it into shirts for her mother, her sister and herself. Her father also brought home a bomb that looked like a banana flower (*haotut*) thinking it would make a good *laibu* as it had a really nice shape (*laibuis* made of three stones that were placed in such a manner that it could hold the pot(s) for cooking in the hearth). So, her father was using that bomb in place of one of the stones to make the hearth. Some of the villagers saw it and scolded us saying that it was a bomb and that it could kill if it exploded so my father just rolled it away behind the house. Before that our hearth was made of two soft stones (*taomuan*) and the third was made of that bomb.

Thiulon

Wingate's plane could be seen already burning by the people in Tamenglong before it finally crashed in Thiulon Village at Guaisanjeng. Since the plane was burning while it was still in the air and giving out lots of smoke, they were calling it a 'cigarette-smoking plane.' The people were screaming as they saw the plane crash. All the people in the plane died in the crash. It was said that the mutated arm of a girl was found with a wristwatch ticking so they took out the wristwatch, broke it and watched it.

On hearing the news that Wingate and all the crew members in the plane had died in a crash in Thiulon, another plane came from Imphal the

next day to enquire about it. That plane got entangled in bamboo as it was flying really low and crashed in the same area where Wingate's plane crashed. However, it was not damaged. There were two people on that plane. One of them broke his thigh while nothing happened to the other person. The villagers carried them to Mr. Dikim Gonmei's house and made them rest. Then the Thiulon villagers carried them down to Guainengluang, also known as Oinamlong and from there they were carried off to Imphal. Then the villagers collected the bits and pieces of the dead people and buried them in the village on July 6, 1944. A cross was put up at the crash site and it was the first ever cross to be put up on any grave in the village as there were no dead after the villagers began to get converted to Christianity.

It was said that the money which had fallen from the plane was mostly paper money. Since the villagers did not know that it was money, they chopped it off with machetes. The villagers also exchanged one currency note with one British coin with one Hmar (his name is not known), who was simply known as Lilalpu (Lilalpu means Lila's father. Lilal being the son's name and 'pu' means 'father' So, he was simply known to the villagers as Lilal's father). Thiulon villagers did not know the value of the currency notes when they exchanged them. The only money they were aware of in those times was the coins so as long as they could exchange these paper currencies with the coins, they were happy. Languiyang, a native of Inriangluang, became rich by exchanging the currency notes which were brought by Thiulon villagers not knowing it was money or not knowing its value with coins.

Haochong, Ijeirong and Oktan

During the war period, the Japanese came to the Inpui villages of Ijeirong, Haochong and Oktan in Tamenglong and were living with them. The British knew that the Japanese were in these villages so they dropped leaflets from aircraft warning the people to evacuate the villages as they would be bombed. Since the villagers did not know how to read and write, they brought the leaflets to the Japanese to read to them. Now that the Japanese knew the plan of the British they also fled the villages along with the villagers and nobody died because of the bombing.

Then the Japanese continued to stay in the villages. After a few days, the Japanese received news that about 100 British soldiers would be coming to the villages so the Japanese waylay the British, blocked the road from the front and the rear and caught them. Then they were taken to Haochong village for interrogation. After torturing the British soldiers, the Japanese slit their throats and killed all of them outside the village and left Haochong soon after that. Immediately after hearing the news, the British army who were stationed in Imphal came to Haochong and asked the villager to submit their guns. After collecting all the guns, the British bombed and burned the whole village.

Sonpram

There was no major fighting between the British and the Japanese in the Tamenglong area. The only place where fighting took place in Tamenglong was in Irang River valley, which is about 6-7 km away from the Sonpram village. However, soon after the war, In the Sonpram area, dysentery and Japan Laina (Japanese diseases) broke out and killed lots of people as there was no medical facility. Sonpram and the neighbouring villages witnessed a grave famine-like situation after the war because it was impossible to carry out farming during the war period. The people had to survive on yam (*Dioscorea*) as a substitute for rice and wait for the next harvest. This was coupled with the outbreak of Peiriam making the situation even worse. Therefore, many students gave up their studies and helped their parents with agricultural work.

Tharon

In Tharon village, the people did not go to other villages during the war but they feared that the British might come and burn their village including their granaries, so they hid their paddy in the jungle. When the war was over, they brought it back to the village and ate it so they did not suffer from lack of food after the war.

The part of the Second World War that was fought in Manipur in 1944 was known to the rest of India and the world as the Battle of Imphal but for the people of Manipur, it is simply known as the Japanese War. The villagers in Manipur who had nothing to do with the War had to bear the brunt of the War in differential severity. Some of the villages were never compensated by either the British, the Japanese or the Indians after the war for the things they lost during the war or for the contributions they made towards the warring parties. After the War ended, these villages had to establish themselves again from scratch. For the next few years, they had to struggle to rebuild themselves. These accounts of the villagers remain a very significant source of information if one is to fully understand the Battle of Imphal or the Japanese War.

Notes and References (Endnotes)

1. Interview with Chaoba Kamson on 28/03/2023 at Kakhulong, Imphal
2. Interview with Mr. Chingliang Gangmei on 23/01/2018 at Mantripukhri, Imphal
3. Interview with Mr. Ch. Joseph Panmei on 06/01/2018 at Thiulon Village
4. Interview with Mr. Dibam Panmei at Thiulon Village on 06/01/2018
5. Interview with Gangmeichung Gangmei on 28/03/2023 at Chingmeirong, Imphal
6. Interview with Gongthonrei Pamei. He was telling me the story about the battle of Imphal as it was told to him by the elders on our way to Kangpokpi on 25/05/2019. He lives in Koirengei in Imphal
7. Interview with Mr. Mp. Guibamreiyang on 16/01/2018 at Tamenglong
8. Interview with Mrs Guidiliu Pamei at Tamenglong Headquarters on 15/01/2018

9. Interview with Mrs. Guithuanliu Goimei on 15/01/2018 at Tamenglong. She is originally from Chingmeirong, Imphal
10. Interview with Mr. Kamei Aduana on 04/09/2022 at Tarung Village Imphal.
11. Interview with Mr. Kamei Sapu Rongmei on 04/09/2023 at Lamsang Chingkhulong/Chingkhiuluang
12. Interview with Khangthen Pamai at Koirengei on 27/01/2018. He is originally from Thalon in Tamenglong (not to be confused with Thalon village of Imphal)
13. Interview with Mr. Mayaring on 21/01/2018 at Imphal, He is originally from Hungdung Village, Ukhrul
14. Interview with Mr. Namthuilung Kamei at Noney (Longmai) on 17/12/17. He is originally from Chingmeirong in Imphal
15. Interview with Mrs. Pantiliu Panmei at Koirengei on 25/05/2019. She is originally from Lukhambi (Khumji)
16. Interview with Rongmei Chandra Haomei on 07/05/2023 at Chingmeirong, Imphal
17. Interview with Taorem Gouramuhan Singh on 23/05/2019. He is an eyewitness to the battle of Maibam Lokpa Ching
18. Interview with Mr. Thuiguangpou Pamei at Namthanjang, Kaithelmanbi, Imphal on 21/05/2019. He is originally from Sonram Village in Tamenglong
19. Telephonic interview/Messenger Interview with Mr. Ringphapam Kasar on 21- 24/11/2018. He is from Khangkhui village in Ukhrul
20. War memorials I have visited
21. INA Museum at Moirang
22. The War Memorial at Kangklatongbi
23. India Peace Maemorial, Maibam/Maibam Lotpaching
24. War Memorial at Shangshak