

## **SUKTE INDEPENDENT ARMY**

The founder of Sakte Independent Army Pu Hau Za Lian was born in royal family clan on April 14, 1912 at Suangzang Village in Tedim Township. When he becomes 8<sup>th</sup> year old he studied at the Burmese School 1920-1924 and continues His education at Tedim Vernacular School Standard I-VII 1924-1932. He could not continue his education, because of his father Pu Pau Za Cin as the chief of Suangzang was become old and requested to assist his father.

### **WESTERN CHIN LEVY ARMY**

In contrast between the dictatorship policy and democratic policy, the Second World War was risen in 1939 and alliance of dictatorship policy (Germany Italy, Russia and Japan) the Japans entered in Burma in the early of 1943 and conquered all the centre land of Burma. The remain of the hill area was still in the hand of The British Government (Democratic policy alliance: England, America, and France). Then, to defend that area was formed the Eastern Kachin Levy and Western Chin Levy.

When Col. N.W. Kelly. OBE, DC called the headmen to discuss how to collect among the people for Western Levy Army and discussed three days (25-27, April 1942) with 25 persons of the chief and headmen. He promised that the twelve (12) items for the development of that area. After making agreement, the Headmen collected for to defend the authority of British. Then, to work under the tactical direction of Col. N.W. Kelly. OBE, DC, Pu Hau Za Lian was promoted as Commando Company commander and Pu Thawng Cin Thang was as Lieutenant.

### **THE OCCUPIED OF JAPANS**

While defending two year by the Western Levy Corp, under the leadership of Chief Pum Za Mang discussed how to drive out the British from our land but Pu Lian Khaw Mang (The headman of Mualnuam) strongly opposed his proposal. However, the chief Pum Za Mang was tailed to get it as the government it self encouraged autocracy than democracy. Because of in the early February, 1943 The Japan corps conquered this land because of the secret invitation and co-cooperative involvement with the Chief of Pum Za Mang Due to withdraw of British Army and Western Levy Army to India.

### **THE JAPANESE VICTORY**

On the victory of that Land the Japanese centered at Tedim and Chin Defence Army was formed, a general meeting was held at Tedim Town with the Chief and headmen. General Yanagida talked to the Chief and headmen in a soft voice for about half hour. When he finished speaking, Inada translated in a very loud voice into two dozen word which means: ***“You the Chin Leaders must be feel this land is yours, this county belong to you from now on. You must cooperate with the Japanese Army.”***

Commissioner Itoh then invited all the Chin Leaders to meet him in his office and told them that they were empowered as higher commanders in Burma-India theatre of war. Practically, nationalism crystallized when the Japanese occupied the Chin Hills and empowered the Chin Leaders in Tedim was very high in Civil and military ranks and summary powers hitherto not enjoyed by the previous government authorities. This was the reasons why Chief Pum Za Mang preferred the over lordship of the Japanese that the British over lordship that his forefathers' conquest of land had been ceded to its surrounding territories by under the authority of the British Government.

## **BORN OF SUKTE INDEPENDENT ARMY**

The Japanese held a meeting with the chiefs and headmen on 5-10 June, 1944, discussing about development issues. In that meeting Pu Hau Za Lian said to Japanese Officers that: *“We are very grateful to the Nippon Government for delivering us from the reign of the British and working towards our development. I would like to request one things to you that: ‘Those who oppose and betray you, you may kill them according to the law. But please do not kill the many people who were not unjustly arrested without thorough interrogation and fair judgment’* At this meeting Mr. Za Biak (Japan name was Hachita), the District Administration Officer said: *“There are three people on the western side of the river waiting to be executed. People from that side must surrender all their guns and horses. Those who fail to do so will be beheaded”*. The people came across the rule of Japanese was worse than the British government and acknowledged that the British cares as fatherhood.

## **SUKTE INDEPENDENT ARMY’ ACTIVITIES**

On the way back home from the meeting, Pu Hau Za Lian had secret agreement with Pu Thawng Za Khup. Pu Thuam Za Mang and Pu Pau Za Kam to fight against Japanese. Volunteers were to be recruited by Pu Thawng Za Khup and Pu Thuam Za Mang on the eastern side of the river and by Pu Hau Za Lian on the western side of the river. When Pu Hau Za Lian back to his village on June 11, 1944, he informed all the chiefs and headmen of the western side of the river not to surrender their guns and horses without his instruction.

On June 14, 1944 all the Chiefs and headmen at Heilei village. Pu Hau Za Lian re-lated to them about the meeting with the Japanese that was held the previous week. In that meeting what Mr. Za Biak said, how the Japanese treated our peoples and the order issued by the Japanese, is it not better to die fighting against them? Everyone at that meeting immediately agreed to fight against the Japanese. Soon, Pu Hau Za Lian had recruited 875 volunteers from the villages. They were issued arms and ammunition hidden by the Western Chin Levy at Leitawhtan yet by Capt. Burne and Lt. Thawng Cin Thang, leaders of the Western Chin Levy who were stationed at Sa-ek. The Western Chin Levies made headquarter at Taakzang, a place located north of Suangzang villages, and underwent military training together headquarter with the army of Pu Hau Za Lian.

When the Japanese knew about it, they dispatched 58 Chin Defense Army to crush the headquarter. Pu Hau Za Lian and Lt. Pu Thawng Cin Thang got this news and sent some soldiers from the army to ambush them at Kaptel Village. They captured all the 58 Chin Defense Army soldiers alive and made them their own soldiers.

At the same time, 60 soldiers from the Chin Defense Army and Gurkha Corps could no longer stand the ill treatments of the Japanese and deserted their Tedim Headquarters and surrendered to the Sukte Independent Army to joint in the fight against the Japanese. They were warmly welcome.

Pu Hau Za Lian and Lt. Thawng Cin Thang called a meeting at Heilei village on July 11, 1944, inviting the headmen and elders from the west river and discusses about attacking the Japanese Headquarter in November when the rainy season was over, and set the freedom from the Japanese rule. They agreed to wipe out the Japanese from the land, and name their troop the “Free Chin Movement” or “Zo Suakta”. The ranks were assigned as the follows:

1. Commander in Chief Pu Hau Za Lian (Suangzang)
2. Subedar Pu Thawng Khaw Mang (Suangzang)
3. Subedar Pu Thang Khen Thang (Heilei)
4. Jemedar Pu Cin Za Dal (Suangzang)
5. Jemedar Pu Tun Thual (Kaptel)
6. Jemedar Pu Song Theu (Kaptel)
7. Jemedar Pu Kam Khan Khup (Tuitawh)
8. Jemedar Pu Kam Khup (Laitui)
9. Jemedar Pu Sawm Pau (Muizawl)

10. Jemedar Pu Ngin Za Dal (Heilei)
11. Jemedar Pu Khoi Za Ngo (Heilei)

Pu Hau Za Lian was in charge as military affairs and Lt. Thawng Cin Thang of the administration as the whole movement had been organized under their leadership

### **FREE CHIN MOVEMENT TO SUKTE INDEPENDENT ARMY**

A meeting of the Free Chin Movement officer and the villages headmen at Taakzang Headquarters on September 1, 1944, Jemedar Tun That of Kaptel said that his proposal to change the name: "I propose to change the of our movement from "Free Chim Movement" to "Sukte Independent Army" after the land of Sukte on which started our movement to attack and wipe out the Japanese army. The proposal was unanimously accepted and the "Sukte Independent Army seal and decorations were approved". The Pu Hau Za Lian said that: "Our new approval name the Sukte Independent Army refers to the land on which was born our movement. Our mission is to get rid of the Japanese army, who have been torturing, enslaving and killing our brothers. We must set free without discrimination all our land and our people. We are committed to sacrifice our lives fight our enemies and save our land and our people.

While the SIA Commander Pu Hau Za Lian was in the Laitui village during his tour, visiting the troops who were stationed as various villages, an urgent letter was sent to him by Chief Pu Thuam Za Mang, Chief Pu Thawng Za Khup and Tedim Headquarters Pu Pau Za Kam. So he came back to learn from the letter that all the Chiefs and headmen from the Land of western and eastern gathering together with guns report at Suahlim, and Mr. Za Biak would arrive at Mualbem on September 14, 1944 to arrest them.

Therefore, Pu Hau Za Lian and Pu Thawng Cin Thang called a meeting with the SIA officers and headmen from the various villages at Taakzaang on September 7, 1944 to discuss about this letter. In the meeting they signed agreement to protect the chiefs and headmen of eastern side of the river from arrest by Japanese and that every villages should take the responsibility to provide the required number of men and materials for the battle. Then 421 guns and 17,000 bullets were distributed to the villages in to empowerment of the SIA activities.

Pu Hau Za Lian-Commander in Chief of SIA and Pu Thawng Cin Thang of the Western Chin Levy led the troops from Taakzang Headquarters on September 8, 1944 encamped at Suklui valley along the Manipur river. It took three days for all the troops to get eastern side of the river of the river as they have to cross it by hanging on suspended rope. Then they encamped again at the place called Belmual that was rather close to Mualbem village. When they got the information that Mr. Za Biak had arrived at Mualbem with 15 Japanese and 30 Chin Defense soldiers, the SIA soldiers left their camp Belmual at the midnight and surrounded Mualbem. They had planned to attack at dawn, but somebody let loose the gun at midnight and the fight began right away. The SIA killed on Japanese soldier and captured Mr. Za Biak and others alive. From the SIA side, Pu Phawng Kim of Suangzang village was killed and Pu Ngo Nang, Vial Lang, Pu Hau Khual and Pu Khai Za Khup were wounded.

After capturing Mualbem, the SIA opened its headquarter at the Chief Pun Thuam Za Mang house on the morning of September 15, 1944 and sent words to all people and Chin Defense Army soldiers from various village to surrender. *"Then many CDA officers from the various Japanese comps came to surrender unconditionally at the SIA headquaters. They included Pu Pau Kam and Pu Lam Zam from the Limkhai village camp, Pu Kiam Piu from the Vangteh village camp, Pu Vum Khaw Hau, Pu Thian Pum and Pu Awn Ngin from Lawibual Headquarters and Pu Gin Khaw Thang, Pu Gin Za Tuang, Pu Vung Suan and Pu Pau Za Kam from the Suahlim village camp"*. Since they were all young and educated, ranks and duties were immediately assigned to them as appropriate.

The Sukte Independent Army leaders continued traveling to villages around Mualbem to recruit soldiers, bring along whatever weapons they had. They were assigned ranks and duties in the Sukte Independent Army and equipped with the necessary weapons. The Sukte Independent Army increased in

number and strength. Now, they were enough troops to attack the various enemy camps and headquarters in that land. The Japanese camps at Saizang, Khuavum, Takheuh, Sialtu, Khualumual, Thangngal, Zawngkong, Suahlim, Suangatkuam, Phunom, Thangnuai and Sakhiang were completely eliminated. At the same time as the Japanese in the surrounding villages of the Tedim town were fought by the Sakte Independent Army and Western Levy. On the other hand, the camps in stationed in the Kam Hau land were also attack and driven off from Lamzang, Gawngmual and other villages by the local people using their own weapons.

### **END OF SUKTE INDEPENDENT ARMY**

After the elimination all the Japanese camps and heaaquarters in Tedim Township by The Sakte Independent Army and western Chin Levy under the leadership of Pu Hau Za Lian and Pu Thawng Cin Thang, a big celebration was held on November 27, 1944 at the Thuamvum (Forewhite). On that memorable day, Lieutenant Colonel Warren and Major Franklin from the 5<sup>th</sup> Division of British Army greeted the Sakte Independent Army commander in Chief Pu Hau Za Lian, Western Chin Levy leader Lieutenant Pu Thawng Cin Thang and all the respective officers at Thang Mual (Forwhite) with respect and admiration. In his official address, Major Franklin said that: *“The 5<sup>th</sup> Division of the British Army came to fight the Japanese army and expel them from India and Burma. However, even before we arrived, the Sakte Independent Army and Western Chin Levy, out of you love for your land and your people, sacrifice your life, making use whatever weapon and ration you have, had driven away the Japanese army from your land. We acknowledge your victory with great appreciation. We will continue to pursue the remaining Japanese army in the Burmese proper. You can return to villages and families now”*. By hearing the message from the Major Franklin, the Sakte Independent Army soldiers and the Western Chin Levies, returned to their villages and families with great pride and celebrated their victory even the name Sakte Independent Army is forgetting, name as their personal names, village’s names and their clan names with their own folks happily.

The commander in Chief of Sakte Independent Army Pu Hau Za Lian and the Western Chin Levy leader Lieutenant Pu Thawng Cin Thang presented their respective members with certificate of appreciation according ti their performance.