**Prehistory of Kangleipak or Manipur**

Manipur is situated on the tertiary ranges of a branch of the eastern Himalayas running south and forms part of the compact physiographic unit following the great divide between the Brahmaputra and Chindwin valleys. Northeast India holds the key to the understanding the scope, depth, dimension and cultural diffusion between south Asia, southeast Asia, Polynesia and Micronesia which played a crucial role in transforming the northeast Indian ethnographic canvas from prehistoric times onwards. Manipur appears to have absorbed Bronze Age cultural traits from Thailand and Upper Burma where indigenous early metal age culture developed at a comparatively early date around 4000 BC.

**Old Stone Age**

The four Khangkhui Caves are located near Khangkhui some 11 kilometres (6.8 mi) south-east of Ukhrul on the border with Upper Burma. Archaeological excavations have found stone and bone tools as well as animal remains as evidence of Stone Age habitation of these caves.[9] The first evidence of Pleistocene man in Manipur dates back to about 30,000 BC. Other notable caves nearby include Hunding Caves, 11 kilometres (6.8 mi) south of Ukhrul, Purul Cave in Purul and the Song Ring rock shelter at Beyang village in Tengnoupal.

One of archaeologist O.K. Singh's most valuable findings is a pebble chopping tool discovered in Maring Naga Village, Machi, in the Chandel district.[10] The Marings are one of the oldest tribes of Manipur and this find is considered as a landmark in the Paleolithic archaeology of Manipur, as it confirms, the area was inhabited by Neolithic people from the early Stone Age or lower Paleolithic period.

**New Stone Age**

Hoabinhian Culture – A large number of Neolithic celts have been discovered throughout Manipur and are now preserved in the State College Museum Archaeology Department. These celts are mostly edge-ground pebble and flake tools and show the presence of Neolithic culture in Manipur.

Findings in the Tharon Caves in the Tamenglong district provide the first concrete evidence of Hoabinhian and Lapita culture in India, a Mesolithic southeast Asian and Polynesian cultural pattern based on historic finds from the village of Haobihian in North Vietnam and Lapita in Tonga. Similar relics have been found in Thailand at the Spirit Caves as well as in Burma and other places in Southeast Asia, Micronesia and Polynesia. Tharon is a Liangmei village where the five caves and rock shelters were first explored in December 1979 by the State Archaeology Department.

The site is located at 93.32’ longitude and 25.3’ latitude in the midst of the thickly forested Reyangling Hills, about 4 kilometres (2.5 mi) north of Tharon Village. Locally, the caves are known as Kalemki (from Kalem (bat) and Ki (house), literally: The house of the bat). A stream called Kalem-ki-magu runs near the caves, which are composed of Barail series sandstone and were probably formed by rock weathering. Tharon's edge-ground pebble tools are similar to finds from Burma, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Laos, Cambodia, the Philippines, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Fiji, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Niue, French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, Nauru, Tokelau, the Cook Islands, Hawaii, Samoa, Rapa Nui (Easter Island), Pitcairn Islands and Tonga where they were used about 7000–8000 BC. The Tharons have a distinct affinity with the Haobihian culture and before the advent of the present Tibeto-Burman inhabitants of the area, Proto-Australoid people occupied these caves around 5000–4000 BC.

Napachik is A Stone Age site dating to the second millennium BC. It is on a small hillock near Meetei Village, Wangu, in the southern part of the Imphal Valley, on the right bank of the Manipur River which flows into the Chindwin River in Burma. The edge-ground tools and corded wares of Napachik are similar to those found in the Spirit Cave in Thailand, the Padubtin Cave in Burma, the Lapita sites in Tonga along with Haobihian sites in Vietnam although tripod wares were also found at one the Haobihian sites. Possible dates for the Neolithic age in northeast India are between 500 BC and 2000 BC. It is probable that, while Napachik culture has an affinity with that of Haobihian, handmade corded tripod wares from Chinese Neolithic culture arrived in the area around the second millennium BC showing that the Manipur valley was already inhabited by Neolithic men in or around 2000 BC.