

# **ARCHAEOLOGY OF MANIPUR**



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**STATE ARCHAEOLOGY · ARTS AND CULTURE DEPARTMENT  
GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR**

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## PREFACE

*Archaeology though quite new in Manipur becomes very popular particularly among the scholars. This is because of the fact that archaeology is one of the best sources for the reconstruction of the past culture and history of the people. Late W. Yumjao Singh was the first archaeologist of Manipur, however, his work was restricted to only few finds on the historical period. After the establishment of the state Archaeology in 1978 exploration, excavation, preservation and protection of Archaeological sites and remains have started throughout the state. As a result of this extensive work a number of Prehistoric caves and open-air sites both in the hills and valley of Manipur have been discovered. Proto and Historic sites and remains have also been discovered from different parts of the Manipur valley. Megalithic culture is also recognised as a living culture in Manipur.*

*Manuscript, sculpture, epigraphy, numismatics, temple and monument are the main sources of the historical archaeology of Manipur, however, these remains are also few in Manipur. This may be because of the fact that Manipur was invaded several times from the neighbouring countries during her early history. Besides, the Knowledge of writing and brick making was also comparatively recent in Manipur. The earliest epigraphical evidence is the stone inscription of Konthoujam Lairema, which is datable to the 17th century A.D. As regards the sculpture also the casting of the image of **Panthoibi** and **Sanamah** in the early 17th Century is the first evidence of sculpture in Manipur. The various sculptures of Hindu and Buddhist Pantheons are also mostly recent. Archaeological evidences show that 17th Century A.D. was a very important turning point in the history of Manipur. The present report is a brief account of the aspects of Archaeology in Manipur.*

Imphal  
30.6.88

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# ARCHAEOLOGY OF MANIPUR

## INTRODUCTION

Manipur by virtue of her geographical location at the gateway between India and South-East Asia played an important role in the development of human culture from pre-historic times. Archaeological investigation and excavation began in Manipur as early as 1935 by late W. Yumjao Singh, the first and foremost archaeologist of Manipur. He conducted excavations at Kameng, Sangaithen and collected antiquities including old manuscripts, copper-plate and ancient coins. A report on these archaeological finds was published in the year 1935. It is mentioned in the report that the various artifacts collected by him were despatched for examination by expert to the Indian Museum at Calcutta. However, the report of the examination has never published and the nature of the articles is still unknown.

After 43 years of the first archaeological work State Archaeology was established by the state Government in 1978 with a view to explore and preserve the past cultures of Manipur. Since its inception the office is devoted to the preservation, protection, exploration and excavation of Ancient and Historical Monuments, Archaeological sites and remains of the state. During the last decade, systematic exploration and excavation were conducted both in the hills and plain of Manipur and a number of Pre-and Proto-historic sites have been discovered in different parts of the state. The cultural relics recovered from these Pre and Proto-historic sites belong to Stone Age and Metal Age culture of Manipur. The Stone Age cultures of Manipur may be divided into three distinct cultural groups ; Palaeolithic, Hoabinhian and Neolithic.

## **PRE-AND PROTO-HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

Archaeology in its broadest sense is the study of Man's past. It includes studies of the origin of man and analysis of ancient tools and artifacts, art and architecture and deals also with the histories of people. Pre-history is that branch of study which deals with history of the race or people of the period which is beyond the memory of man and also before the development of writing. In the reconstruction of this period archaeology makes its most important contribution. Proto-history is the transitional period between Pre-history and History, and it is the period of human history based on myths and legends.

### **STONE AGE CULTURE**

#### **PALAEOLITHIC**

The Old Stone Age (Palaeolithic) represents the earliest period of pre-history. This was the age in which man evolved from the hominid stage and developed as a tool making animal. At this stage man subsisted by hunting and gathering, and made tools out of stone and bone. The palaeolithic cultures of Manipur are also represented by the stone and bone tools. Cultural remains of this period are found both in the caves and open-air sites located in various parts of Manipur. Sitewise description of the Palaeolithic culture of Manipur is given below.

#### **Songbu Cave, Chandel District**

The cave known as Songbu was discovered in 1983. It is located near Burma border in the midst of thickly forested hill ranges in Chandel District. The cave is in the shape of an arc and opens towards south-west. The roof of the cave slants towards north-east. There is also a deep gorge in front of the cave. The cave floor has been disturbed and only a little area near the south-west corner remains as original. Exploration along the gorge and the disturbed floor yielded numbers of stone artifacts consisting of scrapers, flakes, blade-flakes, retouched flakes, split pebbles, core

tools and a large thin triangular flake with coarsely faceted butt of sandstone. On typo-technological basis the artifacts appear to be of an advanced Middle Palaeolithic culture.

#### **Khangkhui Cave, Ukhrul District**

About 11 km towards south-east of Ukhrul town is a range of limestone hills of the cretaceous origin. The elevation of the hill range above sea level is about 1767 metres. There are four caves at this site and a large number of artifacts of pre-historic man have been discovered from two of the four caves. A trial digging was conducted in one of the caves and numerous stone and bone tools along with faunal remains of *cervus*, *sus*, *bovine* etc. have been recovered. The animal remains recovered from the site are not fully fossilized.

On the basis of the raw material the cultural objects from Khangkhui could be divided into two groups viz stone implements and bone implements. The stone tools are mostly flake and blade tools, and few are core tools. The flake tools comprise of various types of scrapers, points, tanged points, burins, borers, knife and a few blade tools. The core tools are handaxes, cleaver, and choppers. The tools are mostly made on limestone and few are of sandstone, quartz and chert. The bone tools are found in association with the stone tool industry. They consist of points, scrapers, chisels, perforators and blunted back knife. This is the first time in North-eastern India that bone tools are found in association with stone tool industry.

The stone tool industry of Khangkhui is comparable with that of the Choukoutien Culture, particularly from locality No. 15, in China. Besides, it is also similar with the Sangiran and Tjabeuge flake industries of Java and Celebes respectively.

#### **Machi, Chandel District**

Machi is a Maring village located on the top of the hill range bordering the south-eastern corner of Manipur valley. Exploration in and around the village resulted in the discovery of a chopper

made of sandstone. Typologically the chopper belongs to chopper-chopping tool tradition of South-east Asia.

#### **Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati District**

The open-air site at Nongpok Keithelmanbi is situated on the bank of Thoubal river. A number of palaeoliths have been recovered from two archaeological localities at Nongpok Keithelmanbi. The lithic industry from the site comprises of mostly pebble tools. The tools consist of chopper, scraper, blade, graver, notch etc. Few flakes, cores and splited pebbles with batter marks have also been discovered from the site. The stone artifacts are mostly made of quartzitic sandstone and few tools are of chert. The palaeolithic culture of Nongpok Keithelmanbi may be assigned to the end of the terminal pleistocene.

#### **HOABINHIAN CULTURE**

The culture is named after the type site Hoa Bin at North Vietnam. The culture represents the transitional period between the Palaeolithic ( Old Stone Age ) and Neolithic ( New Stone Age ) particularly in South-east Asia. In other parts of the world the period is known as Mesolithic. The culture is characterised by the persistence of the old Palaeolithic hunting and gathering way of life in the new environment created by the withdrawal of pleistocene era. The old flora and fauna of pleistocene were replaced by modern forms, but agriculture was still unknown. The period came to an end with the gradual invention and diffusion of the Neolithic way of life based on farming and stock-rearing. Hoabinhian culture is found at Tharon cave and open-air site at Nongpok Keithelmanbi.

#### **Tharon Cave, Tamenglong District**

Tharon Cave site is located at about 4 km north of the Tharon village. The cave site is located amidst the thickly forested Reyanglong hills at an altitude of about 976 metres above sea level. The cave is locally known as *Kalemki* ( Kalem=Bat ; Ki=House ) or the House of Bat. A Stream Kalem-ki-magu is flowing cutting its way through the sandstone bedrock near the caves and finally

form a waterfall on its way to the west. The rock type of the area is sandstone of Barail series.

The cave known as Kalemki is very long and dark inside, and exploration inside the cave was very difficult. There are fourteen passages inside the cave. The cave has three openings, two of them lead to the stream. There is also another cave at a short distance down stream. Besides these caves, three other caves are also discovered around the area. Exploration along the stream bed and the mouths of the cave resulted in the discovery of edge-ground pebble tools consisting of protohandaxe, handadze, cleaver, scraper, pointed edge-ground pebble tools. But exploration inside the cave was not possible as the cave floors are covered with sandstone slabs and debris from the roof. Typologically the edge-ground pebble tools are similar with those Hoabinhian tools reported from different parts of South-east Asia.

#### **Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati District**

Remains of Hoabinhian culture were recovered from Nongpok Keithelmanbi locality No. 1. The lithic industry from the site is represented by pebble tools and few flakes and blades. The pebble tools are dominated by the split pebbles and pebbles with batter marks. The tools are made of quartzitic sandstone, except one scraper and a blade which are made of chert. The Hoabinhian culture at Nongpok Keithelmanbi may be dated to 5000 to 6000 years B.P. ( Before present ).

#### **NEOLITHIC CULTURE**

It is known as the culture of ground and polished stone tools. Besides, man made pots and pan, kept large herds of cattle and lived in permanent house. Neolithic man had taken to agriculture instead of relying on collection of vegetables and foodgrains. Each of these traits is the symptom of change in man's attitude to the life he had then lived. He had ceased to be wanderer, going after the chase for most of his time, and began to stay permanently at one place.

Neolithic culture is fairly widespread both in the hills and plain. A large number of Neolithic ground and polished stone tools have been recovered from different parts of the state. Most of the stone artifacts are stray finds collected from the Jhum fields and accidental digging. These neoliths consist of chisel, hoe-blade, triangular axe, quadrangular axe and adze etc. Typologically, the neolithic stone artifacts of Manipur can be compared with those found in south, east and south-east Asia. So far only three stratified neolithic sites respectively at Phunan, Napachik, and Nongpok Keithelmanbi are discovered in Manipur.

#### **Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati District**

The exposed section at Nongpok Keithelmanbi (locality No. 1) yielded potsherds of cord marked pottery. The corded ware stratum overlain the Hoabinhian cultural level described above. The culture is represented mostly by potsherds decorated with cord-marks. The cord-mark pottery are hand-made and baked in low temperature. The colour of sherds is dominated by light red and reddish brown. The common thickness of the sherd ranges from 4 mm to 6 mm. It is evident from the character of the potsherds that this corded ware culture may belong to the early Neolithic culture of Manipur. Besides the cord-marked potsherds, few ground stone tools of triangular hoe or axe type are also recovered from the area. But their direct relation with the corded ware is not established yet. A sherd from the site dated by radio-carbon (C14) dating method suggests an age of  $4460 \pm 120$  years B.P. (B.S. -523) for this Neolithic culture.

#### **Napachik, Wangu, Bishnupur District**

Napachik is a small elliptical hillock located on the right bank of Turel Achouba (Manipur River). The small hillock lies in between the villages of Ithai and Wangu, about 4 km south of Ithai barrage. The hillock is 18.5 metres high. The top and upper reaches of the hill-slope are eroded heavily and shrub (*Eupatorium Cannabium*) and its thorny variety grow on the higher level of the hillock.

The neolithic site of Napachik was first excavated in 1981 and reexcavated in 1985. In 1981 a trench measuring  $4 \times 2$  sq. metre was dug on the south-western slope of the hillock. The excavation exposed seven layers of loose and brownish hill-wash clayey soil which are underlain by blocks of sandstone resting on the parent rock. The cultural material recovered from the excavation comprises of a large number of potsherds of both plain and corded ware and small pebble choppers, flakes, edge-ground stone tools and corded tripod wares. The corded wares are reddish-brown and grey in colour and are applied with slip. They are fine in texture and their thickness ranges from thin to medium. They are hand-made and shaped by beating with a cord-wrapped pad. Tripod legs recovered from the site indicate that the potters of the time provided their pots with legs of various forms. A potsherd sample from the site was dated by the Thermoluminescence dating method. It gives an age of 1450 B.C. (PRL-TL 77) for the tripod ware culture in Manipur.

The cultural material collected from the second excavation consists of microliths, cores, utilized quartz crystals, edge-ground perforator, net-sinker, spindle whorl of pottery and tripod wares and corded potsherds. The neoliths recovered from the site are the triangular adze or hoe type. The technique employed in manufacturing the neoliths are chipping, pecking and grinding.

### **Phunan, Imphal District**

The neolithic site of Phunan is located on the Phunan hill range which is at a distance of about 22 km from Imphal towards south-east. In the course of exploration a large number of potsherds decorated in geometric patterns along with few ground stone tools consisting of triangular hoe, chisel and quadrangular axe and two very large grinding stones were recovered from the site. The stone tools are dominated by square-cut sides with rectilinear median cross-section. Decoration of pottery includes circular impressions, parallel incised marks in band, parallel and diagonal appliques, and cord marks.

## METAL AGE

The Metal Age of Manipur is characterised by the hand-made pottery decorated with carved paddle impressions and provided with conical legs and ring foot. These legs are not different technically from those found during the Neolithic period. Metal Age in Manipur appears to be late and so far only four sites have been discovered around the periphery of the Manipur valley.

### **Mongjam, Imphal District**

The archaeological site at Mongjam is located at about 11 km north of Imphal. The site is on the southern foothill of the Mongjam hill. Excavation of the site revealed that a greyish loam fan deposit overlain the light yellowish brown fissure clayey deposit, probably of late Holocene. The fan deposit was 30 cm to 34 cm in thickness. The cultural remains are recovered from the fan deposit in the mixed form and consist of tripod legs, plain and decorated potsherds, a piece of glazed ware, a small iron knife, teeth of animals, clay net sinkers and charcoal pieces. The decorated wares included incised ware, perforated ware and impressed ware. The potsherds are black, whitish, red and brown in colour. They are all hand-made.

### **Nongpok Keithelmanbi, Senapati District**

Nongpok Keithelmanbi is located about 13 km of Yairipok town. The archaeological site is located on the left bank of the Thoubal River. There is a small hillock and exploration around the hillock yielded a large number of potsherds, tripod legs and pieces of glazed ware, iron slags, net sinker. The glazed ware recovered from the site are decorated with floral design. The potsherds are decorated with criss-cross, herring bone, basketary or chevron pattern. Brown is the dominant colour of the sherds. The reconstructed pottery type includes big jar with widely opened mouth having round, flat or '∧' shaped lip forms. The cultural materials from Nongpok Keithelmanbi are similar with those found

from Mongjam. The antiquity of these cultural materials could not be established yet.

#### **Panjao Pallum Ching, Kakching, Thoubal District**

The site is located on the right bank of the Sekmai river at a distance of about 2 km north-west of Kakching town. Due to long exposure to heat and rain and prolonged weathering the top soil has already been eroded making the hill slopes almost barren. As a result cultural materials once buried into the soil are exposed on the surface of the hill slope. A trial excavation conducted at the site unearthed a burial associated with different types of red pottery and iron implements. Pots having globular body with long or funnel shaped neck, pots with pedestal having wide opened mouth, deep bowl and small shallow bowl etc. are recovered from the burial site. One of the pots with globular body was found painted faintly in wavy band on the shoulder. The iron implements consist of barbed harpoon, double barbed arrow head and a sword. A bronze bangle is also found from the site but outside the trench. Similer type of bangle made of bronze is also reported from Indonesia.

#### **Moirang, Bishnupur District**

The burial site at Moirang was unearthed accidentally while digging a pond. Similar cultural materials with those found at Panjao Pallum ching was recovered from this burial site. The pots recovered from the site are also painted faintly. The wood of the coffin was dated by C-14 ( radio-carbon dating ) method and was assinged to 1170 A.D. ( PRL-538 ).

#### **MEGALITHIC CULTURE OF MANIPUR**

The word Megalith is used as a descriptive term to denote certain structures erected with large stones. Megaliths are generally associated with the burial and other customary and ritualistic practices of the people. There are many such monuments comprising of menhirs, dolmen, stone seat and terraces, assembly places

and various sorts of stone tomb all over the world. The existence of such stone monuments are found in different parts of the state. A large number of megalithic monuments are found inside and outside the villages of Mao-Maram Nagas, in Senapati District of Manipur. The megaliths at Mao, Maram, Purul, Koide, Oinam villages are associated with customary and ritualistic practise of the people. They erected such monuments with feasts of merits to attain status in the society. In these villages the erection of megalithic monuments is still continuing since time immemorial. The feasts of merits performed by Mao-Maram Nagas centered around the sacrifice of cattle and the memorial stones erected by them are mostly of Menhir type. They also erected flat stone seats supported by two or more stones. Remains of megalithic monuments are also found at Khoupum, Tamenglong District ; Salangthen, Churachandpur District ; Nungbi, Ukhrul District ; Tharon, Tamenglong District of Manipur. The megalithic monuments of Manipur are comparable with those found at Java, Indonesia and other South-east Asian countries. The antiquity of these monuments is not known. Some are quite old whereas other have been erected in the recent past. However, they still play an important role in the living culture of many of the hill people of Manipur.

## **HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY**

The main sources of the history of Manipur are provided by the old manuscripts, sculptures, epigraphical records, and the remaining historical monuments.

### **NUMISMATICS**

The antiquity of the coinage in Manipur is not definitely known yet. However, different types of coin have been issued by the various rulers of Manipur. The ancient coins of Manipur are made of bell-metal, but there are also commemorative coins made of silver and gold. The coins are roughly square or circular in shape. The materials for minting the coins are believed to have been imported from Burma. It is also believed that bell metal is not locally produced in Manipur. Bell metal or white bronze is an alloy of copper with a large proportion of tin. The alloy is highly malleable and the larger amount of tin gives lustre and fair to the coins. The coins of Manipur bear various legend and the initial letter of the name of the issuing ruler. The archaic Meitei script was first used till the introduction of Hinduism in the state. After the advent of Hinduism from king Charairongba ( 1697-1709 A.D. ) onwards to king Kulachandra ( 1886-1891 A.D. ) Devanagari script was used in Manipuri coins. During this period the Bengali script was also introduced as a popular script of coinage.

During the last decade, altogether 1524 coins have been collected from different parts of the state. Most of the coins are collected from the bed of Imphal river particularly from Moirangkhom, Singjamei Khetri Leikai, Ningom Thongjao and few are collected from Kiyamgei, Kangla and Konthoujam. Out of these collections, seven coins belong to British India and five are modern coins. The remaining coins are the early bell-metal coins of Manipur. The bell-metal coins are roughly square and circular in shape. The circular coins have two types, one bigger and other smaller in size. The assemblage of coins collected so far may be

classified into nineteen varieties on the basis of the legends incused on the coins. The bell-metal coins recovered so far belong to 18th/19th century A.D.

The square coins are incused with the legend *Ja, Shri, Je Shri, Je Shri Ram, Ram, Shri Ram, Je Shri Garibaniwaja Makhaleshor* and *Cheitra Sudhi Tarsa Wadha 2 Sawana* in Devanagari script. Only one square coin is found incused with the initial letter 'Ma' in archaic Meitei script. The circular bell-metal coins are incused with various legends such as *Shri Ram*, in Nagari and Bengali script. Few coins incused with the initial letter *Ma*, in archaic Meitei script are among the collection. Besides, coins incused with initial letter *La, Cha, Ka, Ma, and Ra* in Bengali and Devanagari script are also included among the collection.

## SCULPTURE

Nothing definite is known regarding the origin of sculpture in Manipur. The earliest available record for casting of idols in Manipur is that of the Panthoibi and Sanamahi in the early 17th century A.D. After the adoption of Hinduism as state religion of Manipur it became a common practise of the Manipuris to worship Hindu God and Goddesses. The Goddess Kalika was worshipped in Manipur as early as 1706 A.D. Many other Hindu icons such as Vishnu, Shiva, Ganesha, Karttikeya, Bhairava, Hanuman, Garuda, Sarasvati, Nara Simha, Ram-Sita, Varaha, Vamana, Krishna, Balaram etc flourished in Manipur particularly in Manipur Valley. They are of local origin and are made of sandstone in relief. Besides, icons of Buddhist pantheon are also discovered from different parts of the Valley and one Buddhist icon was also recovered from Tengnoupal District. Most of them are made of white marble. This material is not locally available. The icons were probably brought from neighbouring countries. Besides, the Buddhist icons are closely comparable with those found in Burma.

## EPIGRAPHY

Epigraphical records form one of the most important source of information for the reconstruction of history. They recorded

important incidents and also supply us the complete list of officers with their designations to whom different functions are allocated by the rulers. They give us information about the religious faith, toleration or bigotry. A number of inscribed stones have been discovered in different parts of the state. A brief description of some of the inscriptions is outlined below.

**(a) Ningel Inscription, Thoubal District**

Ningel is an important historical place and is located about 35 km east of Imphal. At present there are two inscribed stones and two other monoliths at Ningel. The Villagers of the area report that previously there were three inscribed stones at Ningel. But where about of the third inscribed stone is not known at present. The remaining two inscribed stones are written respectively in archaic Meitei script and Assamese/Bengali script. The first inscription is composed of 31 lines and inscribed the name of king Garibaniwaj ( 1709-48 A.D. ), and who has also been described as *Simha Nongsakumba*. The inscription also records a number of high ranking officials and their names along with the names of village chiefs and their respective Villages. The inscription was closed with the words '*Rama*' thereby indicating the strong influence of Hinduism. The Second inscription consists of 18 lines, the first line was inscribed in archaic Meitei script. The inscription was erected in 1814 A.D.

**(b) Chibu Inscription, Churachandpur District**

Chibu is a local word for salt spring. It is located on the southern periphery of the Tonjang Village bordering Burma. *Cheitharol Kumbaba* records the erection of the stone at Chibu in 1872 A.D. in commemoration of the victory of Maharaj Chandrakriti over the rebel Chiefs of Lushai. The stone is inscribed in Assamese/Bengali Character and a mythical unicorn animal is found engraved at the lowest portion. A pair of big foot prints on another large stone slab is laying just in front of the inscribed stone. The inscription is very badly preserved and

most of the letters became illegible. The few readable lines are the record of the subjugation of 112 Villages and capturing of four Lushai Chiefs in the course of the expedition which was led by Souwajamcha Balaram Singh Major and Kangabamcha Thangal Major. It is also recorded that they were assisted by one British officer.

**(c) Kumbi Inscription, Bishnupur District**

There are two stone inscriptions on the north eastern corner of the Kumbi Junior High School Compound. One of the inscription is inscribed in archaic Meitei alphabet and it has been referred as inscription No. 1 and the 2nd inscription is written in Assamese/Bengali Character. Inscription No. 1 is located on the southern side of the two and faces west. It contains 12 lines. The name of king Pamheipa was recorded in the inscription but its historical context is not established yet. The inscription bears no date and year. Inscription No. 2 is composed of 15 lines. The inscription recorded about the Kumbi Keithel and the name of Village authority and Maharaj Churachand along with the date of 6.9.1940.

**(d) Bishnupur Inscription, Bishnupur District**

The inscribed stone at Bishnupur is located towards the northern end of Bishnupur Keithel near the bank of the Ningthem Pukhri which is on the eastern side of the state Highway. The inscribed stone leans towards east and faces west. The inscription was erected on the inauguration day of the Ningthem Pukhri during the reign of Churachand Maharaj in 1894 A. D. The inscription is written in Assamese/Bengali Character and consists of eleven lines. The name of Shri Hoabam Thambou Singh Selungba is also inscribed as the writer of the inscription in the last two lines. The inscription is in good condition and well preserved.

**(e) Moirang Inscription, Bishnupur District**

The inscribed stones are located in the very centre of the Moirang Keithel. They are very badly preserved. Due to weathering,

the inscribed letters have started falling. The inscriptions are written in Assamese/Bengali script in Meitei language. The inscribed stones recorded the names of Maharaj Bheigachandra, Shri Ramanada Singh (nominated king of Moirang). In the other inscription Shri Kiya Ngankhrakpa, Shri Pukhram Leishang Singh Khadrakpa, Shri Bhadra Singh are inscribed. As the inscriptions are badly preserved it can not be deciphered properly.

**(f) Inscription of Maharaj Chourajit, Awang Khul, Tamenglong District**

The inscribed stone is presently displayed in the show room of Bal Bhawan of the Institute of people's Action, Awangkhum. The inscription is done on a slab of sandstone. There are nine inscribed lines, but the first two lines are very badly eroded and is illegible. It is inscribed in Assamese/Bengali alphabet. In the 3rd line *Shri Jukta Manipureswar Chourjit Maharaj Meidingu Nongpok Wairang Pamheipa* is inscribed. The inscription was erected in chandrabda 1025. ( 1814 A.D. ).

**(g) Nungba Inscription, Tamenglong District**

The inscribed stone is located in the village of Nungba Khullen at an altitude of about 2400 feet above sea level. The inscription consist of five inscribed lines and it appears to be written in Kabui language. Further study of the inscription and the script employed is in progress. At present it is not known when the inscription was erected.

**(h) Andro Inscription, Imphal District**

The inscription of Andro is located on the northern side of the Sacred Fire place of Andro. It inscribes in archaic Meitei script and its language is also archaic Manipuri. The inscribed stone is dated to 1744 Saka ( 1822 A.D. ). It is the royal edict of king *chingkhomlel Pamheipa Nongpok Wairang Lamlokpa* ( King Jay Singh ).

**(i) Leishangkhang Inscription, Imphal District**

The inscribed stone at leishangkhang ( Wangoi ) is located at the site of the old market place of Leishangkhang. The inscription is the record of the inauguration of the market place known as *Mayang Ngamba Keithel* by Maharaj Birachandra Singh, Nongpok Wairang Pamhaiba ( Maharaj Murjit ) on the 21st day of *Thawan* in 1741 Saka ( 1819 A.D. ). The inscribed stone was written by Lairikyengba Shridananda and Prashuttama. A peculiar character of this inscription is that both archaic Meitei and Bengali scripts are used in writing the inscribed stone.

**(j) Konthoujam Liremma inscription, Imphal District**

The inscribed stone is located inside the compound of Konthoujam lairemma. It is inscribed in archaic Meitei script. It may represent the earliest inscription so far discovered in Manipur. The inscription does not record any particular date. Only the names of king Khagingamba and Charairongba were mentioned in the inscription. The inscription is probably written and erected during the time of king Charairongba. The inscription is about Konthoujam Liremma and Kouthoujam clan.

**(k) Heisnam Liremma Inscription, Imphal District**

There are two inscribed stones inside the protected compound of 1st Bn. Manipur Rifles. The inscriptions are inscribed in archaic Meitei script. One of the inscription was inscribed and erected during the time of Nara Singh Maharaj and the other one was erected by Gambhir Singh Maharaj.

**Inscription of Nara Singh :**

It is recorded, in the inscription, that the foundation stone for the construction of the temple of Heisnam lairembi ( the family deity of Heisnam clan ) was laid on sunday, the 21st day of the Meitei lunar month of Kallel ( May-June ) in the year of Ahongsangbam Prem Singh ( the name of the Cheithaba ) in 1765 Saka

( 1844 ) by *Lairel Nonglel Seltreng Manik Khomba* ( Nara Singh Maharaj ).

### **Inscription of Gambhir Singh**

The inscription records the inauguration of the temple of Heisnam lairembi on wednesday of the Chandrabda era 1040 ( 1829 A.D. ) by *Meitingu Chinglen Nongtarel Khompa* ( Gambhir Singh Maharaj ).

#### **(l) Kakching Khunou Inscription, Thoubal District**

The inscribed stones are located in the centre of the Kakching Khunou Keithel. The two inscribed stones are erected facing north and south in opposite directions. The inscribed stone facing north is broken and the broken piece is now housed in the office of the Small Town Committee, Kakching Khunou. The inscriptions are written in archaic Meitei script and records no date. The inscriptions recorded only the names of some important personages of the locality.

#### **(m) Wabgai Inscription, Thoubal District**

There are two stone inscriptions written respectively in archaic Meitei script and Assamese/Bengali script at Wabgai Keithel. The inscribed Stone bearing archaic Meitei script is located just at the centre of the market place. The other inscription is located towards the western side of the market place. Both the inscriptions are erected during the reign of Shri Churachand Maharaj.

## **TEMPLES AND MONUMENTS**

Only a few monuments of later period are now standing in various stages of decay in different parts of the state. Not a single monument erected before 15th century A.D. have survived. The scarcity of the early historical monuments in Manipur may be due to the fact that early buildings might have been constructed with wood or other like available materials. These materials such as wood, bamboo and reed are easily weathered when exposed to tropical or sub-tropical climate. Building of such materials cannot be expected

to be durable and permanent. Besides, the art of making brick was probably introduced very lately in Manipur. The earliest available record of making brick in Manipur was during the time of King Khagemba ( 1597-1652 ). The frequent Burmese invasions also contributed in the nonexistence of the early monuments.

Temples represent most of the existing monuments of Manipur. However, there are few structures such as the Old Kangla Fort, the royal Gate-way at Langthabal and other monuments erected on the cremation ground of Kings and important personages.

### **Kangla Fort**

It is the old palace and fortress of Manipur till 27th April, 1891. It represents the traditional conception of a royal residence, citadel and fortress. The whole layout of the old palace is a system of concentric enclosures acting as a barrier to the palace buildings at the heart of the enclosures. Surrounding the perimeter of the old palace was a mud wall. Beyond the mud wall it is further enclosed by a deep and formidable moat. The palace buildings, for example, the coronation hall, royal residence, royal arsenal etc. are further enclosed by a citadel. The royal Chronicle recorded the construction of the Citadel in the year 1611 A.D. during the reign of King Khagemba ( 1597-1652 A.D. ). The Citadel is built of well-burnt bricks and is about 20 feet high. Only a portion of the citadel is seen to-day. Besides, there are a number of sacred places and monuments inside the old fortress. On the north-western side of the old palace the residence of Bir Tikendrajit and temple of Brindabanchandra is located. On the south-eastern side is located the temple of Shri Shri Govinda and Beithob, Darbar hall, Graveyard, Coronation hall etc.

### **Temple of Shri Shri Govinda**

The temple was built during the reign of Nara Singh Maharaj. The construction of the temple began on 16th January of 1846 A.D. and the temple was dedicated to Lord Govinda and His

consort Radha. During the time of Chandrakriti Maharaj the temple along with the deities inside were damaged by the great earthquake on 10th January, 1869 A.D. The temple was reconstructed on 29th of November in 1874 and was inaugurated on 26th of April, 1876 A.D.

The temple is rectangular in plan with straight sided walls on all the sides and vaulted roof on the top. The front entrance has a separate verandah or portico to the main structure. The temple was originally covered with gold leaf, but after the Anglo Manipuri War in 1891 British Government removed all the gold leaf from the temple. The entire length of the temple is 16.95 metres and its breadth is 18.63 metres. The whole structure stands on 1.34 metres high plinth. The main facade of the temple is to the east and the interior of the shrine could be approached by flight of steps provided on the three free sides of the portico. The exterior wall of the temple is decorated with elaborate floral designs in relief. The interior of the shrine consists of the sanctum hall measuring 11.30 × 7.65 sq metre and an ambulatory passage.

### **Beithob**

It is located just in front of the Shri Shri Govindaji temple towards east. It was dedicated by Chandrakriti Maharaj to Lord Govinda on 25th of July 1855. The structure comprises of two tall buildings one at each side of the three rows of columns. There was a roof over the columns, but only eleven columns are now seen standing without the roof. The tall building on each side of the rows of colonnade served as bell houses. The bell-houses share similar architectural design and are double storeyed.

### **Temple of Brindabanchandra**

The temple is better known as the temple of Bir Tikendrajit, and belongs to 19th century. The temple is square in plan with one projecting porch on each cardinal face. The four cardinal faces of the temple accommodated the entrance, which are composed

of arch openings. The sanctum cella of the shrine is divided into two chambers. A tunnel is located on the northern side of the sanctum cella. The upper floor of the shrine is approached by an extensive flight of steep steps provided on the western side. The upper floor is enclosed by a parapet wall.

### **Old Capital Site of Kanchipur**

Kanchipur is located about 8 kms to the south of Imphal city. The capital at Kanchipur ( Langthabal ) was founded by King Jay Singh ( Bheigyachandra ) in 1779 A.D. Jay Singh was a great patron of Gaudiya Vaisnavism. During his time the famous idol of Shri Shri Govinda was carved out of a Jakfruit tree from Kaina. On the occasion of the installation of the idol of Shri Shri Govinda the popular Rasa dance of Manipur was staged for the first time at Kanchipur for five days in 1779 A.D. Jaya Singh, however, shifted his capital to Konthoujam Yumpham (Present Raj Bhavan) in 1796 A.D.

After three decades Gambhir Singh established his capital at Kanchipur in 1827 A. D. and developed the ruined capital complex by building temples, royal residences and excavating big tanks. He was succeeded by his infant son, and Nara Singh took over the charge of ruling Manipur on behalf of the infant son of Gambhir Singh. An aborted attempt to end the life of Nara Singh was made by Nabin Singh. After the incident Maharani Kumudini fearing grave consequences left Manipur with her son. Then Nara Singh became king of Manipur in 1844 A.D. In the same year of his accession to the throne Nara Singh shifted his Capital to kangla, the old royal seat of Manipur. Kanchipur decayed gradually through the ages and nothing remains of the once beautiful capital complex except the royal gateway and few historical tanks viz Haomacha, Apanbi and Ras-Mandal are found at present.

### **Gate-Way**

The gate-way is in advanced stage of decay. The western wall includes outward and is in very bad shape. But the wall is still retaining the beautiful form of the gate-way. The gate extends

from east to west with its main entrance through the north. The entrance door is arcade in design. The walls of the gate are ornately decorated with beautiful floral designs of geometric patterns in relief. At each corner of the gate-way facing north were probably two pedestals, on top of which were placed a '*Kangla Sha*'. But only a part of the pedestal is seen to-day. The historical tanks are located on the south-eastern and south-western sides of the gate-way.

### **Kanchipur Hillock**

This hillock forms part of the capital complex of Maharaj Gambhir Singh. A Kufa of Gambhir Singh made of brick is still visible in ruin on the eastern slope of the hill. And later during the time of Churachand Maharaj, a summer palace was constructed on top of the hillock. Remains of the palace as seen to-day consist of a temple and a gate only.

### **Sacred Jack-Tree Site, Kaina**

During the reign of Maharaj Bheigachandra the sacred icon of Shri Shri Govindaji was sculptured from a Jack-tree brought from Kaina. Since than Kaina became an important historical place. The Site is located about 35 km on the eastern side of Imphal.

### **Temple of Shri Krishna**

The temple of Shri Krishna at Brahmanpur Guru Aribam leikai, Imphal was constructed by Garibaniwaj Maharaj in 1722 A.D. The temple is square in plan with a Jor-Bangal type roof and erected on a high moulded plinth with a projected proch in the front. The temple faces south. The proch in the front shares similar roof style with the main temple. The style of the temple is comparable with the hut-type temple of 17th and 18th century found in Bengal.

### **Temple of Thangal General**

The temple of Thangal General was inaugurated in 1879 A. D. The temple is now standing towards the north-eastern corner of the

present palace by the side of the Wangkhei Kcngba road. The temple in plan is an incipient type of panchayatana or temple of five shrines. There are four minor shrines at each corner of the main shrine. The main shrine is square in plan with an ambulatory passage around the square sanctum in the centre. The temple is approachable from all the four sides through flight of steps. The roof of the shrine is in the form of octagonal dome. The style of the temple is a combination of both Hindu and Islamic Art.

### **Temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba**

The temple was built by Leimapokpa Keirungba and inaugurated in 1879 A.D. The temple is now standing inside the compound of the Manipur State Road Transport Corporation, Imphal. The temple is square in plan and is made of lakhori bricks. The body of the temple consists of the square sanctum with an ambulatory passage. The temple is approachable from all four sides. The main facade of the temple is to the south. The roof of the temple is approachable by a spiral staircase provided to the western wall.

### **Temple of Sanamahi**

The construction of the temple was begun on the 21st day of wakching in Saka 1805 during the reign of Maharaj Chandrakriti. The site of the temple is popularly known as Tolong Yumpham. The temple is now standing inside the compound of the 1st Battalion Manipur Rifles. Sanamahi the lord deity of the Meitei is still worshipped in this temple.

The holy shrine looks like a Gothic tower. The body of the temple consists of the sanctum cella with a projected porch to the east. The body of the shrine rested on an octagonal platform. The interior of the shrine is approachable by flight of steps provided on the southern side.

### **Samadhi of Maharaj Khaba**

The monument was erected as a memorial on the cremation ground of Maharaj Khaba (Bhadra Singh, 1824. A.D.). The

monument is standing on the left bank of the Nambul river inside the compound of the District and Session Court at Uripok, Imphal.

The monument is erected on a slightly raised platform. The body of the monument consists of a square sanctum with an arch projection in the front. The roof is dome in shape, and the eaves are curved like an arc and rested directly on the walls.

#### **Samadhi of Gambhir Singh**

The monument was erected on the cremation ground of Maharaj Gambhir Singh at Kanchipur. The monument erected on his cremation ground shares similar architectural style with the Samadhi of Maharaj Khaba at Uripok. The style of both Samadhi is exact replica of char-chala hut of Bengal found in 17th/18th century A.D.

## PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION OF HISTORICAL MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES.

### PROTECTION

The Government of Manipur declared seventeen Historical sites and Monuments as Protected under the Manipur Ancient and Historical Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1976. Below is the list of the protected historical sites and monuments.

SL. No.	Name of Historical Sites/Monuments.	Location	District
1.	Kangla Fort	Assam Rifles Compound ( Kangla )	Imphal
2.	Sacred Jack Tree Site	Kaina	Thoubal
3.	Sekta Kei ( Mound )	Sekta village	Imphal
4.	Sacred Fire Place	Andro	Imphal
5.	Temple of Shri Krishna	Brahmapur Guru Aribam Leikai	Imphal
6.	Temple of Thangal General	Wangkhei	do
7.	Temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba	M.S.R.T.C. Compound	do
8.	Temple of Sanamahi	Ist BN. Manipur Rifles Compound	do
9.	Samadhi of Maharaj Khaba	District & Session Judge Court's Compound, Uripok	do
10.	Samadhi of Maharaj Gambhir Singh	Kanchipur (Langthabal)	do
11.	Menhir	State Museum Approach Road	do
12.	Inscribed Stone Monuments	Ist BN. Manipur Rifles Compound	do
13.	Inscribed Stone Monuments	Konhoujam Lairemma's Compound	do

SL. No.	Name of Historical Site/Monuments.	Location	District
14.	Megalithic Monuments	Traffic Island at Mao	Senapati
15.	Rash Mandal, Haomacha and Apanbi Pukhri	Kanchipur ( Langthabal )	Imphal
16.	Gate-Way & Brick Wall in Ruin	Kanchipur (Langthabal)	do
17.	Hillock ( Palace Site )	Kanchipur (Langthabal)	do

### CONSERVATION

The major problem of the conservation of monuments is the removal of vegetation growth from the body of monuments. The sub-tropical climate of the state favours luxurious growth of vegetation. They damaged and destroyed many monuments. To check further deterioration of the protected monuments the State Archaeology, Manipur regularly removed the harmful vegetations from the body of the monuments. Recently effective chemicals are tried to remove the vegetation without harming the materials of the monuments. The result of the treatments proved to be very effective. Besides, some of the protected monuments are provided with protective fencing. The temple of Thangal General at Wangkhei, the Samadhi of Maharaj Khaba at Uripok, and Samadhi of Maharaj Gambhir Singh at Kanchipur are already provided with protective fencing and their protected area are being developed. In 1987 the temple of Thangal General was renovated and restored. The restoration of the temple was carried out with extreme care and only the missing part of the shrine was reconstructed to its original form using lime, cement and surki mortar. The minor shrine on the north-eastern corner of the main temple was also reconstructed completely as the minor shrine was toppled down by a speed vehicle. The whole compound of the temple was developed and provided with protective fencing. As part of the beautification the temple complex has been electrified on the four corners of the temple. A new approach road was also provided on the western

side of the temple and further restoration and beautification work is in progress.

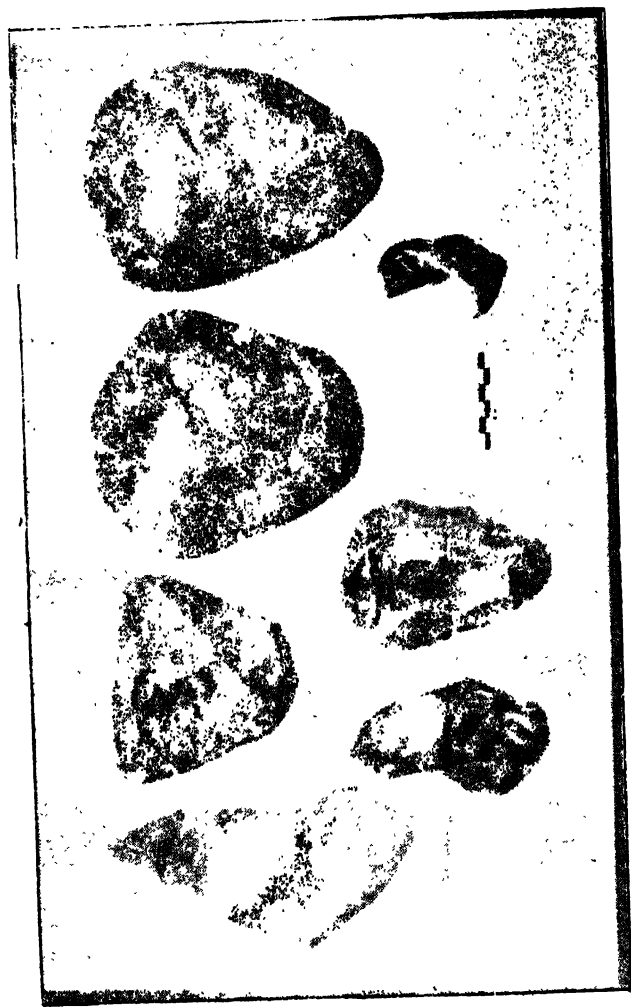
The temple of Shri Shri Govindaji and its adjoining structure, Beithob are in a very bad shape. To improve the present condition of the monuments a major repairing or restoration work is urgently necessary. Iron clamps are fixed around the upper part of the Beithob to check further decay of the monument. It may hold the structure intact till the major restoration work is taken up.

The temple of Leimapokpa Keirungba was badly damaged by big banyan trees which have grown on its north-eastern and south-western corners. The trees dislodged the brick work of the temple, and damaged the structural stability of the temple. The trees have been removed completely from the body of the temple and the damaged part of the temple is being restored to its original form. The work of restoration of the temple is still in progress.

The royal gate way at Kanchipur erected by Gambhir Singh Maharaj was also provided with protective buttress wall to check further inclination of the western wall. Besides, the historical tanks at Kanchipur, viz Rasmandal Pukhri, Haomacha Pukhri and Apanbi Pukhri are also cleared of weeds, reeds and water hyacinth every year. □



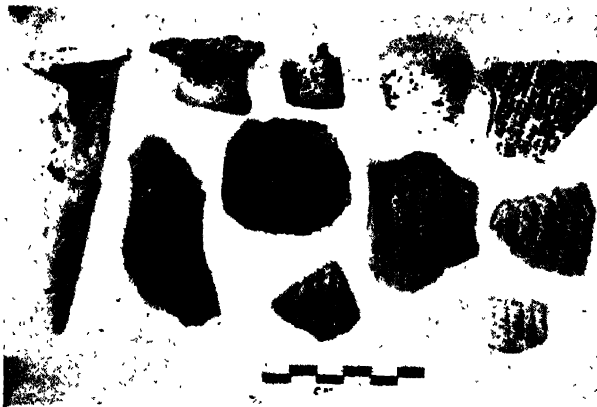
Palaeolithic stone tools from Songbu Cave, Chandel District.



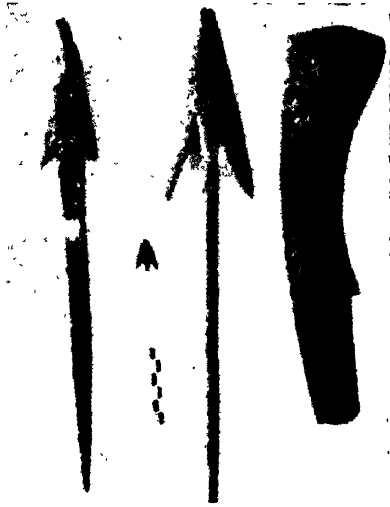
Hoabinhian stone tools : Edge-Ground pebble tools from  
Tharon Cave, Tamenglong District.



A Neolithic stone tools :  
Ground and polished celts from Manipur.



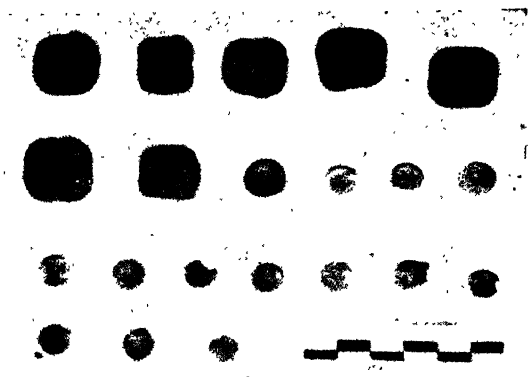
B. Neolithic Pottery : Tripod ware culture from  
Napachik, Wangu, Bishnupur District.



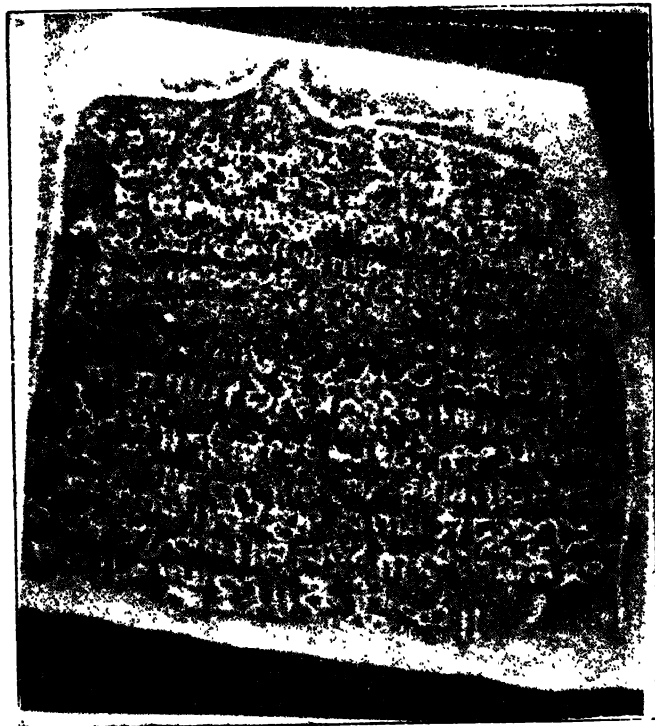
A. Protohistoric iron implements from Panjao Pallum ching. Kakching, Thoubal District.



B. Protohistoric Pottery from Panjao Pallum ching. Kakching, Thoubal District.



A. Ancient coins of Maripur.



B. Stone Inscription of Konthoujam Lairemma,  
Imphal District ; 17th Century A.D.



Stone Inscription of Chibu with a mythical Unicorn animal  
from Tonjang village, Churachandpur District ; 1872 A.D.



Temple of Shri Krishna at Brahmapur,  
Imphal District ; 1722 A.D.



Temple of Thangal General at Wangkhei,  
Imphal District ; 1879 A.D.