

# A Pioneer to the Art of Nasik Cave, *Dist. Nasik Maharashtra*

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Nasik was one of the most important centers of Hinayana Buddhism in north-west Maharashtra. The group of twenty-four caves locally known as Pandu Lena through few in number is nevertheless of great importance for study of the early rock-cut architecture in Western India. This in the main is due to the fact that some of the caves are most complete and contain numerous epigraphically records of the Western Kshatrapas and the Satavahanas which enables us to date them precisely. Nasik therefore can be said to provide a datum for the reconstruction of a precise chronology for the earlier phase for the rock-cut architecture. We will however not go into the details of the development of the site but confine ourselves to only one cave-X in that order.

Cave -X also known as the **Nahapana** Vihara is important on several counts. Firstly it is a combination of a vihara and a chaitya shrine and secondly it combinations datable inscriptional records. Besides there are some classical motifs in the carvings which are significant. Essentially the cave consists of a verandah a hall with cells d on sides and back and a stupa carved in the centre of the back wall. It has an open forecourt at the front from where a flight of steps leads to the verandah (11.4m wide 2.8m deep and 3.6m high). In the side walls of the verandah is a cell each of either side. The verandah has four pillars and two pilasters all of the same variety. They have a stepped pyramidal base la **ghata** an octagonal shaft above which is the bell capital surmounted by a box containing **amalaka** and over this is an inverted stepped abacus crowned by animal capitals along which are seen bull goat tiger lion elephant and sphinx also. In the back wall of the verandah are three doorways and two windows in between them.

The hall proper is quite spacious (13.9x13.6; 3m ht.) and the cave is thus one of the largest in Western India. There are in all 16 cells with beds five each in side walls and six in the back wall in the center of which a stupa panel is carved. The panel is inset and is in low relief and it is therefore not unlikely that it was an afterthought. It is highly probable that it was carved after the similar one in cave-III which is later than cave-X in point of time. Be that as it may what we see here is a conscious attempt to combine a vihara and a shrine. This was also the intention as we have noted of the donor of cave-XVII which unfortunately could not be completed.

There are six inscriptions in the cave of which three are of **Ushavdata** the son-in-law of **Nahapana** two of **Ushavdata's** wife and one of Abhira **Ishvarasena**: all recording their grants. They record that the cave was the gift of **Ushavdata** whereas the cells in the verandah were the gift of his wife. The cave was donated in the 42<sup>nd</sup> year of **Nahapan** that is 120 A.D.

The engravings on the floor in the hall of cave-X. (Fig. 2) The details of the engravings are given below.

Sr. No.	Subject	Number of the Pictures
01	Square Grids	02
02	Plus Sign	01
03	Trapezium	01
04	Square	01
05	Square Design	01
05	Human Figure	02
06	Human Figure with Elephant	01
07	Dog	02
08	Peacock	02
09	Fish Trickle	03

The engravings can be categorized into three sequences:

- 1) Geometrical Engravings
- 2) Human Figures
- 3) Birds & Animals Figures

The first category engraving is Geometrical (Fig.4, 5 & 6) like square trapezium square grid sign/ Plus Sign, symbols (Fig 6, 12). The second category engraving is human figure separate with animal (Fig10). The category is animals like dog (Fig. 9), fish (Fig. 7), fish trickles (Fig 8, 9) elephant & peacock (Fig. 11). Other figures cannot be clear to identify.

The simplest engravings—grooves crisscross pattern grids could have been done ever a period of 3000 years of even more. The men of the Neolithic period may have continued to engrave these symbols at differing motivations and withought to know their original significance. The historical men early only left a significant engraving like representatives of human figures and even a figuration of birds and animals. During the Iron Age to Historical Age appeared geometrical figurations such as circles squares sq. grids & other signs etc.

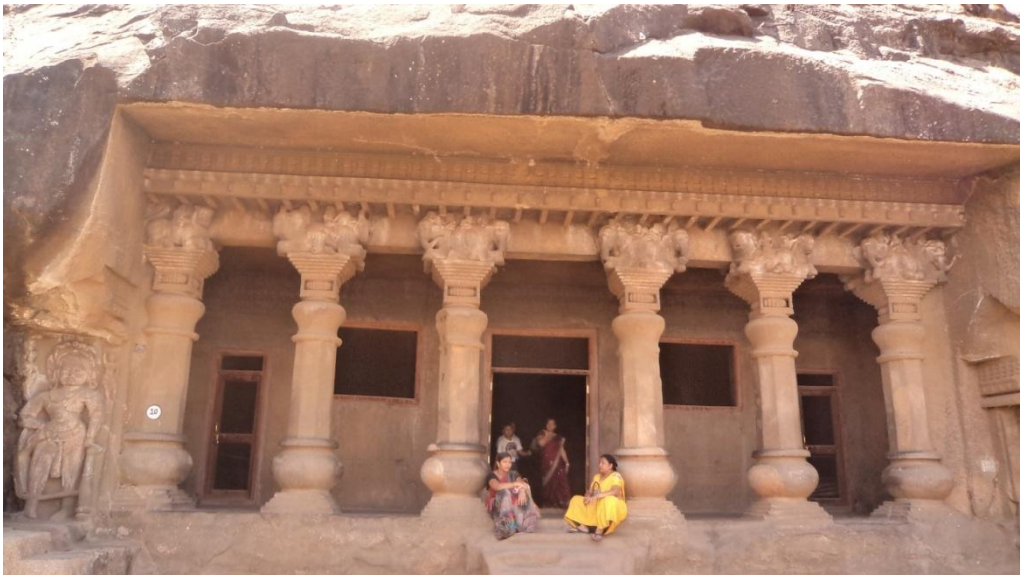
Dating of excavated caves was 120 A.D. defiantly these engravings are engraved in that period or latter.

## References

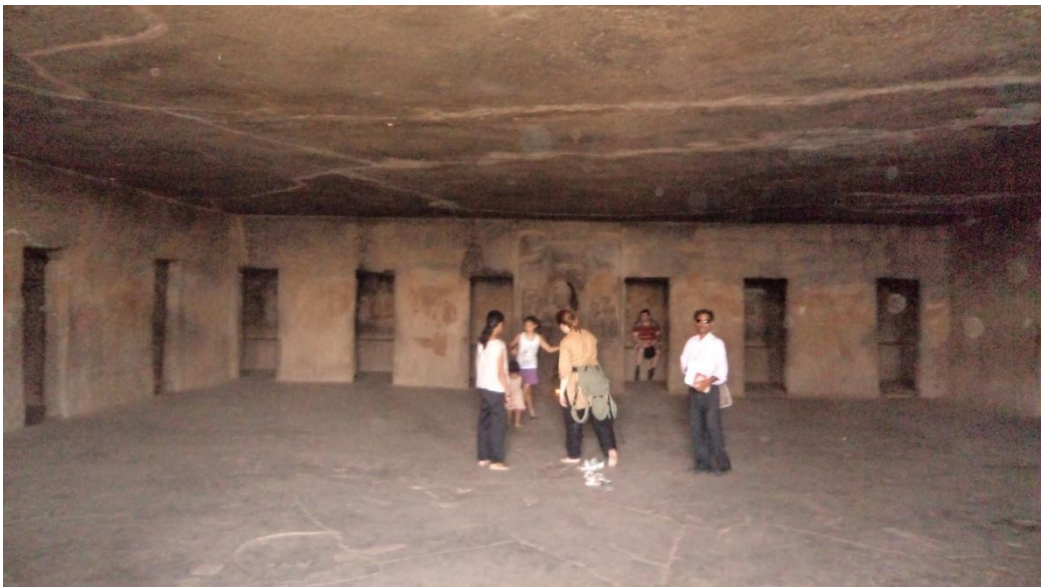
- [1] Dhavalikar M.K. "LATE HINAYANA CAVES OF WESTERN INDIA" Published by Dr. Deo Director Deccan College Post Graduate and Research Institute Pune (INDIA) -1984 pp 9.
- [2] MICHEL LORBLANCHET (edited by) "ROCK ART IN THE OLD WORLD" Published by INDIRA GANDHI NATIONAL CETRE FOR THE ARTS -1992 PP 535.



**Figure 1:** Nasik Cave's (Pandu Lena)



**Cave No. X (Figure 2)**



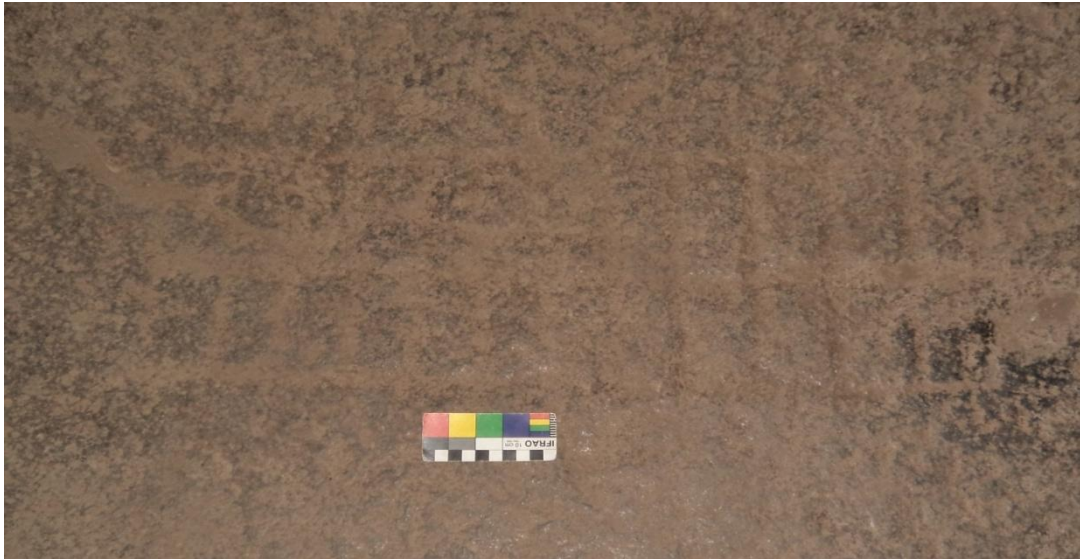
**Cave No.X, Hall (Figure 3)**

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Engravings : Square Grids (Figure 4)



Figure 5



Figure 6



**Figure 7**

Other Fish, Birds & Animal Engravings (Fig. 7 & 8)



**Figure 8**





Figure 9



Figure 10



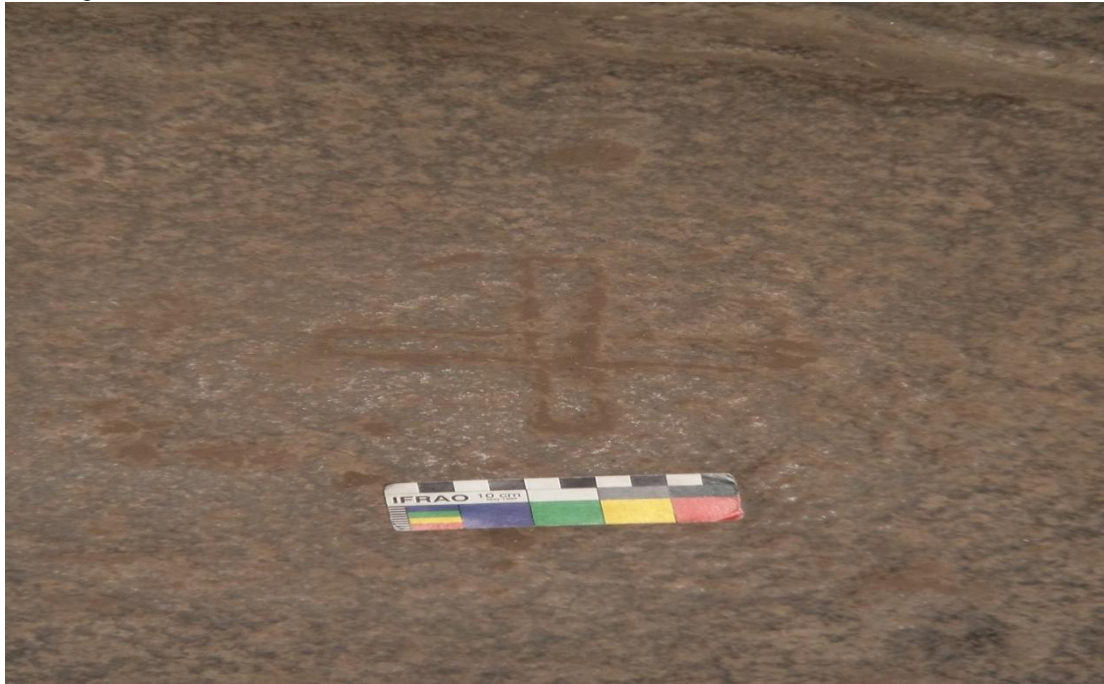
Figure 11

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Peacock & Plus Sign



**Figure 12**