

Dehsheikh Cave, an enchanting natural wonder in Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province



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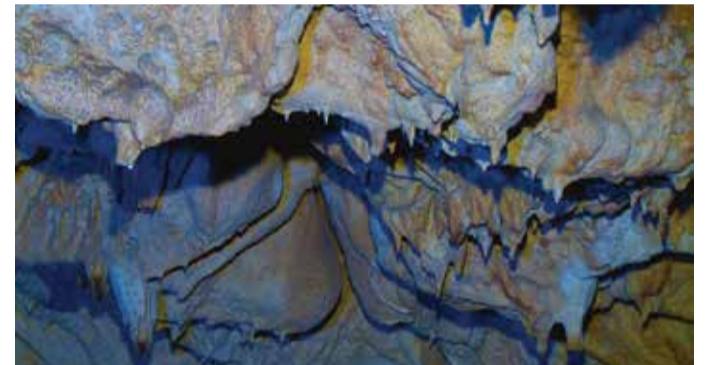
Iranica Desk

Dehsheikh Cave is one of the main attractions of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, situated two kilometers from the eponymous village, 51 kilometers from Yasuj, and 35 kilometers from Sisakht. Dehsheikh Cave remained undiscovered for centuries until a shepherd from the village stumbled upon it while searching for his flock. To date, researchers and speleologists have conducted three stages of exploration in the cave. According to geological studies, Dehsheikh Cave formed during the second geological period and is a completely natural limestone cave. Over time, rainfall has created cavities within the cave, allowing water to flow out and form magnificent stalactites and stalagmites. One of the notable features of this cave is its warmth in winter and coolness in summer. The enigmatic warmth during winters and the refreshing coolness during

summers in this cave pose a mystery that is yet to be solved. The entrance of this cave sits at an altitude of 1,670 meters above sea level and is a narrow passage, requiring a journey of about five to six meters to pass through. It faces the Qash Mastan Summit of Mount Dena. Some areas of the cave reach heights of up to seven meters, with various limestone stalactites forming in its chambers, adding to its unique beauty. Dehsheikh Cave is among the 600 identified caves in the country and is a tourist attraction in the city of Pataveh. It currently holds the second position in Iran in terms of size and depth. The cave's depth is estimated to be over six kilometers, and due to its vastness, certain parts and chambers remain unexplored. The pottery and bones unearthed in this cave have a rich history, indicating that at one point in time, individuals chose this vast cave as a place to live. While the exact age of these

pottery remains undetermined, some experts link them to pre-Islamic eras. Archaeological studies suggest that the pottery found is associated with the Achaemenid and Sassanid periods. The variety of pottery in Dehsheikh Cave points to its ancient origins. The absence of cave wall paintings suggests that this location has remained untouched and mysterious over the centuries. There are both large and small pools in this cave that are interconnected by narrow corridors in a miraculous manner. Within some of these passages, various insects, birds, and animals can be spotted, including bats, mice, as well as a variety of insects like spiders, centipedes, and beetles. A private sector project is currently underway to construct a road that provides access to the cave, along with facilities such as a restaurant, a pavilion, and a seating platform. This development has captured the interest and attention of nature enthusi-

asts. The cave comprises seven main halls, with six entrances and exits hidden among rocky shelters. As per the investor's assessment, the cave's eastern entrance is presently in use. Initial efforts to introduce and seek national registration for this extraordinary and historically significant site have been initiated. Deh Sheikh Cave is poised to be recognized as the third natural monument of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province. The historical city of Pataveh boasts unique attractions. To reach this mesmerizing site, you must first journey to Yasuj, the central city of the Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province, and then travel approximately 45 kilometers to the Pataveh region in the Dena district. Upon arrival, you will traverse through natural landscapes and the historic bridge of Pataveh before stepping into the enigmatic world of one of Iran's most exquisite undiscovered caves.



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Military triumphs and Roman-Sassanid relations

Shapur I's military successes and innovations in Sassanid kingship had a great impact on their royal identity and visual culture for this reason, as well as the fact that his reign, of all Sassanid rulers, yields the greatest number of triumphal images depicting Roman emperors. Shapur I's reign is pivotal for Roman and Sassanid agonistic exchange, as it marks the first time in the two realms' relationship that the imperial identity of one king dramatically changed in response to the existence and claims of the other. It appears perhaps unsurprising that Shapur I's would celebrate his victories and incorporate them into his self-representations, especially with the added perspective we are afforded by our knowledge of the succeeding history of Sassanid royal ideology and the pivotal place that his reign held in it. However, in order to understand how early Sassanid concepts of royalty developed one must examine it from the temporal perspective of the third century when there was nothing

necessarily inevitable about it, nor was there any precedent for it. Under Shapur I, Sassanid royal ideology underwent a rapid series of important developments that radically reformed the bounds, claims, and identity of kingship in Iran and had a significant impact on Roman-Sassanid relations. The shock that Shapur I's victories brought to the Roman empire and the gain in confidence that they wrought for the Sassanid royal identity were huge. Near the beginning of Shapur I's reign the Roman emperor Gordian III (238-244) invaded the Sassanid empire to punish the Sassanid capture of Hatra. Despite initial success, the force withdrew after Gordian III's death, most likely as a result of a coup instigated by Gordian's successor, Philip (244-249), though Shapur I did not hesitate to take credit for it and capitalize on it. Philip sued for peace and paid a large indemnity to Shapur I in order to hasten back to Rome to consolidate his position, a transaction that Shapur I portrayed both textually and



visually as submission, suggesting the concomitant reduction of the Roman empire and emperor to tributary status. Over the next decade and a half Shapur I succeeded in annexing Armenia, defeating a 60,000-man army sent against him by Rome, and sacking Antioch as

well as numerous other cities in Syria and Cappadocia. The apogee of Shapur I success came in 258/9 when he destroyed a Roman army led in person by the emperor Valerian (253-260), capturing and deporting the emperor, his court, and the remnants of the army in the process.

Capitalizing on the Roman empire's descent into chaos at the news of Valerian's ignominious fate, Shapur I invaded Syria, Cappadocia, and Cilicia, sacked Antioch a second time, and deported its skilled craftsmen to Pars and Xuzestan (Khuzestan). The challenge presented by the

claims of the Arsacid dynasty thoroughly overcome, Shapur I turned to contesting Rome's military dominance and universal claims. To consolidate Ardashir I's position over the Arsacids, the Sassanid court under Ardashir I manipulated the concept of Iranshahr (kingdom of Iran) centering in Pars. The aim of this was to appropriate from the Arsacids the royal Kayanid (and with it, perhaps, the "Achaemenid") heritage as the birthright of the Sasanian dynasty. Shapur I inherited this concept of Iranshahr from his father, but inspired by his military successes and ambitions, he expanded his father's claims of dominion over Iran, to ascendancy over Iran and Non-Iran. Iranshahr was roughly the extent of the old Parthian empire and was conceptually a localized kingship. "Non-Iran" was, in a sense, localized too and literally referred to Shapur's new conquests in Central and South Asia and the eastern Roman empire. However, paralleling his rock reliefs, Shapur I capitalized on the wider symbolism of this title.