A2138-Asia-Parthian Empire-Heavy Horse Cavalryman and Rider-247 BCE – 224 CE



Figs. 1-2. Asia-Parthian Empire-Heavy Horse Cavalryman and Rider-247 BCE – 224 CE

**Case no.: 4**

**Accession Number: A2138**

**Formal Label:** Asia-Parthian Empire-Heavy Horse Cavalryman and Rider-247 BCE – 224 CE

**Display Description:**

The rôle of the heavy horse cavalry played a significant tactical and strategic rôle in the establishment of the Parthian or Arsacid Empire (247 BCE – 224 CE) by Arsaces I of Parthia of the Parni tribe. Under Mithridates I (r. c. 171–138 BCE) Parthia used the heavy horse cavalry to expand from N Mesopotamia to E Persia. The Silk Road was a commercial conduit through Parthia that connected the Roman Empire to Han China, and it was this connection that made Parthia a focal point of trade, commerce and cultural diversity. Parthian culture was a syncretism of Persian, Hellenistic and Roman elements. Furthermore, Parthia accepted local rulers as vassals, thereby preserving local cultures and furthering Parthian syncretism. The Seleucids and the Armenians and finally the late Roman Empire were contenders for military, political and commercial power in the west while the Scythians were military enemies in the east.

The heavy horse cavalry played a significant tactical rôle in the defeat of Marcus Licinius Crassus at the Battle of Carrhae in 53 BCE. This helped to establish a military tension between Parthia and Rome that resulted in a sporadic military contest that lasted for two centuries. During this period the heavy horse cavalry played a significant rôle and helped to establish Parthia as a major military contender in the area from the Levant to E Persia.

**LC Classification:**  [DS329.P2](http://josiah.brown.edu/search~S7?/cDS329.P2+R2+1901/cds++329+p2+r2+1901/-3,-1,,E/browse)

**Date or Time Horizon:** 247 BCE – 224 CE

**Geographical Area:** Parthia

**Map:**



Fig. 3. The region of Parthia within the empire of Medes, c. 600 BCE; from Shepherd 1926.

**GPS coordinates: 60E, 35 N**

**Cultural Affiliation:** Parthia

**Media:** terracotta, black slip.

**Dimensions:** H 117.77 mm, 4.64 in

**Weight: 89 gm, 3 1/8 oz**

**Condition: original**

**Provenance:** old French collection

**Discussion:**

Parthia encompassed all of the Median Empire by the first century CE. Much of this expansion was due to the effectiveness of the heavy horse cavalry.

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| Click image to enlarge |
| **Parthian Heavy Horse Cavalryman showing full mail on both horse and rider.** Graffiti from a private house, Dura Europos, Syria. Before 249 CE. After M. Rostovzeff, *et al.* 2007: figs. 2-3. |

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