



HORSESHOES

HORSESHOES (*naʔl*), iron protectors for the hooves of pack animals (beasts of burden) and mounts. In Persia, as in southern Europe, both horses and donkeys are shod with them (*Brockhaus Enzyklopädie* VIII, p. 716). The horseshoes used in Persia are usually “made to measure” by hand, rather than by using machines. The nails used for horseshoes have rectangular, square, or rounded heads (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Types of Persian horseshoes and horseshoe nails.

Figure 2. Types of European horseshoes.

The Persian horseshoes illustrated here represent products of the 17th-20th centuries (Fig. 1), and are surface finds that are not precisely dateable. They can be classified into the following types: horseshoes with 4, 5, or 6 nail holes along the edge (Figure 1, top row); closed, slab-shaped shoes with a large central hole towards the rear in addition to 4 or 6 nail holes along the edge (Figure 1, middle row, left and center); horseshoes with six holes along the edge and one nail hole at each end of the rear of the horseshoe (Figure 1, middle row, right); completely closed, slab-shaped horseshoes with just 6 round nail holes along the edge (Figure 1, bottom row, left); and narrow horseshoes with 6 nail holes along the edge, which are either round (Figure 1, bottom row, middle) or neat, elongated rectangles (possibly due to European influence in their manufacture; Figure 1, bottom row, right). The flat, closed Persian horseshoes (Figure 1, middle and bottom row), which resemble those from Argolis (Greece) in both shape and thickness, are less common.



The dimensions of Persian horseshoes vary, according to the way they were produced, the age of the animal to be shod, and whether they are designed for a horse or a donkey. On average, they are approximately 10-11 cm long and 8-9 cm wide. The thickness of the horseshoe varies between 2 and 5 mm, depending on how much it has been worn.

European horseshoes from Roman times to the late Middle Ages resemble Persian horseshoes in shape (Figure 2; Kleiss, 1990, p. 310). Older Persian horseshoes found by archeologists are also thought to have been similar in their original form to the horseshoes illustrated here. This is confirmed by finds from the medieval Armenian-Islamic strata of 9th-13th century Bastām in northwestern Persia (Kleiss, 1979, p. 163, No. 12; p. 167, No. 6; p. 175, No. 17; and p. 177, No. 12).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Wolfram Kleiss, *Bastam I, Ausgrabungen in den urartäischen Anlagen 1972-75*, Berlin, 1979.

Idem, "Hufeisen aus Iran," in *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 23, 1990, pp. 299-310.

A. von Müller/L. and A. Orgel-Köhne, *Museumsdorf Düppel*, Berlin, 1980.