



COMITATUS

Warfare in the Dark

Ages
AD 250 - 1100

Scenario 4
Dasymon
AD 838

This scenario presents a large scale Arab-Byzantine battle in which the Byzantines try to destroy the smaller Arab force while they have a temporary advantage in numbers.

Historical Background

In 838 Caliph Abu Ishak al-Mu'tasim invaded Anatolia to avenge a successful Byzantine attack on the Caliphate the previous year. In a two-pronged attack into Anatolia, the Caliph led a large force through the Cilician Gates while a smaller army of around 20,000 men, led by Afshin Kaydar bin Kavus and supported by the Emir Omar al-Aqta attacked from the north east. Afshin's army included units of Turkish slave soldiers – forerunners of the Ghulams, as well as a number of Armenians.

The Byzantine Emperor Theophilus sent the Strategos Aetios to reinforce the town of Amorium and to block the Caliph's approach while he took command of the central field army (Tagmata) and marched east to confront Afshin. Theophilus' army included a large number of Khurrami Persian and Kurdish exiles under their recently christianised leader Nasr (now baptised Theophobos). The Byzantine army probably numbered around 25,000 men.

The armies met on 21 July near the fort of Dasymon (or Dazimon) in north eastern Anatolia on some plains dominated by the hill of Anzen. Theophilus attacked at dawn the following day and initially made good progress, driving back one wing of the Arab army. Around noon, Theophilus led the Khurramis and 2000 of the Tagmata to reinforce the other wing. At this point, however, Afshin launched his Turkish horse-archers in a ferocious counter-attack which stopped the Byzantine advance, allowed the Arab forces to regroup and caused the Byzantines to waiver. Some sources say that the Turks were away foraging when the Byzantines attacked and it was their return, much like the Gothic cavalry at Adrianople that swung the battle.

The Emperor found himself isolated with his Tagmata and the Khurramis on the hill of Anzen. The Arabs and Turks surrounded the hill and subjected them to archery and (according to some sources) catapult fire. Sustaining heavy losses, Theophilus eventually managed to break out and retreat with the remnants of his army. His General Manuel was badly wounded in the rescue attempt and later died, while Theophilus himself was also wounded.

After the Byzantine defeat Ancyra was abandoned and plundered by the Arabs. Then the two Arab armies united and marched unopposed to Amorium, which fell and was brutally sacked after a two week siege.



The Game

The scenario assumes that the Byzantines attack the Arab position while the Turks are away foraging. The object of is for the Byzantines to try to crush the Arabs before the Turks arrive. The game is assumed to start at around 6 am with the Turks arriving at noon. This is represented by 6 full turns after which the game ends.



Byzantine Order of Battle

The Byzantine army is organised into 2 contingents, the first is commanded by Theophilos, supported by Theophobos, the second by Manuel, supported by an additional subordinate commander. Theophilos's contingent includes the Persians and any or all of the Tagmata. Manuel's contingent contains the remaining Byzantines. The army may contain **up to 1000 points** in total chosen from the following possibilities:

Leaders

Emperor Theophilos, General. 4 CPs. @ 100 points

Theophobos (Nasr), Persian commander, subordinate to Theophilos, dice for CPs. @ 50 points

Manuel the Armenian, Byzantine contingent commander, 3 CPs. @ 100 points

Byzantine commander, subordinate to Manuel 3 CPs @ 50 points

Byzantine Tagmata

Hetaeria 1-2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, Exceptional Morale @ 25 points each

Cavalry 8-12 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 20 points each
3-5 units @ 10 points each

Extra to upgrade any Tagmatic troops to Partially Armoured @ 2 points per stand

Extra to upgrade Hetaeria to Armoured @ 3 points per stand

The Tagmata could be in up to 5 units to represent the Hetaeria (The Emperor's Comitatus) and the 4 other regiments: Scholai, Excubitoi, Arithmos, and Ikanatoi. Any number of the Tagmata may be Shock Cavalry rather than Lance & Bow.

Khurrami Persians

Theophobos' Comitatus. 1-2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 20 points per stand

Heavy Cavalry 6-8 Heavy Horse Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 points per stand

Light Cavalry 4-6 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 10 points per stand
3-6 units @ 10 points each

Extra to upgrade up to ½ Heavy Cavalry and any of the Comitatus to Armoured @ 3 points

Byzantine Thematic Cavalry

Manuel's Comitatus 1-2 Shock Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 20 points per stand

1st Class Cavalry up to 4 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 points per stand

2nd Class Cavalry 2-4 Shock Cavalry, C Grade, Average Morale @ 10 points per stand
2-4 units @ 10 points each

Byzantine Thematic Infantry

Commander's Comitatus 1 Shock Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 20 points

Spearmen 3-6 Spearmen, C Grade, Average Morale @ 8 points per stand

Archers 3-6 Foot Archers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 points per stand

Light Infantry up to 4 Skirmishers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 points per stand

The Comitatus may instead be Spearmen, A Grade, Armoured, High Morale @ 18 points
2-6 units @ 10 points each

Extra to upgrade spearmen to armoured @ 3 points per stand

Equal numbers of Archer and Spearman stands may instead be replaced by Spear & Bow stands (eg: 1 Archer + 1 Spearman converted to 2 Spear & Bow)

Arab Order of Battle

The Arab army is organised into 3 commands with Afshin commanding the reserve, Omar the infantry and Sembat the cavalry. The majority of the Turks are assumed to be away foraging and as their arrival ends the battle they do not need to be represented. The Arab player selects **up to 750 points** from the following:

Leaders

Afshin, General, 4 CPs @ 100 points

Omar al-Aqta, Arab subordinate commander, 3 CPs @ 50 points

Sembat, Armenian subordinate commander, 3 CPs @ 50 points

Reserve

Afshin's Comitatus 2-4 Lance & Bow Cavalry A Grade, Exceptional Morale @ 25 points

Ghulams 4-6 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 20 points

Turcomans up to 4 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, High Morale @ 14 points

Extra to upgrade Comitatus to armoured @ 3 points per stand

Afshin's Comitatus may instead be Shock Cavalry

2-3 units @ 10 points each

Infantry

Omar's Comitatus 1-2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale @ 17 points per stand

Arab Infantry 8-12 Spearmen, B Grade, Average Morale @ 10 points per stand

Archers 8-12 Foot Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 8 points per stand

Daylamis up to 4 Javelinmen, B Grade, Average Morale @ 9 points

Armenians 2 to 4 Javelinmen, C Grade, Average Morale @ 7 points per stand

Skirmishers up to 4 Skirmishers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 points per stand

4-8 units @ 10 points each

Equal numbers of Archer and Spearman stands may be replaced by Spear & Bow stands

Cavalry

Sembat's Comitatus 1- 2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale @ 17 points per stand

Armenians 2-4 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 points

Arab Cavalry 2-4 Light Javelin Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale @ 9 points per stand

Khorsanians up to 4 Heavy Horse Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 points

Tribal Cavalry up to 4 Light Horse Archers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 7 points

Extra to upgrade Armenians to Partially Armoured @ 3 points per stand

2 to 4 units @ 10 points each

Terrain and Deployment

The battlefield should represent the open but hilly terrain of north eastern Anatolia. The River Halys was nearby and could be used to mark off one edge of the battlefield with a few streams running into it. The hill of Anzen dominated the field and should be represented on the table to one flank.

The Byzantine player chooses and sets up terrain which must include at least one steep hill. The Arab player chooses sides. Then Byzantines deploys all Manuel's troops up to bow range from the centre line. The Tagmata and Khurrami contingents start the game off table and the Byzantine player must note their intended entry points on a sketch map. They may enter anywhere on the Byzantine half of the table, either on the back edge or sides, and they do not need to enter from the same point.

Once Manuel's contingent is deployed the Arab player deploys all his troops up to bow range from the centre line on the opposite end of the table. The Byzantines have initiative on the first turn, thereafter, dice for initiative. The Tagmata and Khurrami's may enter the table on the first turn of the game at the points marked. They may arrive in any formation and measure their movement from the table edge.

Victory Conditions

The Byzantines win if by the end of the 6th turn they have suffered less casualties than the Arabs, and at least 3 enemy A or B Grade units are shaken, broken or destroyed with no more than one Byzantine unit in the same state. Any other result is an Arab victory.