



# COMITATUS

Warfare in the Dark Ages

3rd - 11th C AD

Game Scenario

**Catalaunian Fields**

AD 451

## Historical Background

In late June AD 451 a formidable invasion of Huns and Germans led by Attila was defeated by an alliance of Romans, Goths and other Germans under Aëtius in a battle that took place on the plains of Champagne near Troyes in France. The Battle of the Catalaunian Fields (also known as Campus Mauriacus, or Châlons) arguably changed the course of European history.

Large numbers of Germanic warriors marched with the Huns. The Gepids, under Ardaric, commanded the right wing on the Catalaunian Fields and the Ostrogoths under the brothers Valamir, Theodimir and Vidimir commanded the left wing. Probably the army numbered somewhere between 20,000 and 40,000 men.

When Attila crossed the Rhine in 451, the Roman commander Aëtius moved from Italy to France taking with him only a small force of maybe a couple of thousand Auxilia and a few cavalry. He linked up with his former enemies, the Visigoths, who were led by their King Theodoric and his son Thorismund. The Visigoths held the right wing, Alans under Sangiban the centre, and Aëtius with Romans, Franks and Armoricans on the left.



*Visigoths and Huns fight for control of the high ground at the Society of Ancients Battle Day 2013.*



*The Roman General Aëtius and his Comitatus of Huns. Prior to 451 Aëtius had relied on the Huns for support and it is possible that some would have remained with him through personal loyalty, even in the fight against Attila.*

## Wargaming Catalaunian Fields

For anyone who likes variety this makes a great game. You can have Hun and Alan horse archers, Germanic warriors on foot and horse, a mix of Roman types and even 'Arthurian' Britons in the form of the Armoricans. It would make a good project for a club or group of friends where each person could build up a contingent rather than a full army.

It is also very well suited to a multi-player game with a degree of role play and personal objectives for the main commanders.

As a big battle with lots of cavalry the game is best played on a fairly large surface. At a pinch you could manage a 15mm game on a 6x4 foot table but it could be a bit cramped and a larger table would be better. In larger scales you will need at least 8x5.

The battlefield was an open plain with a significant large hill or ridge on the Hun left flank. No other significant terrain features are needed.

## Scale

Assuming around 30,000 men on each side, I use the following scale for a Comitatus game:

1 heavy infantry stand (6-8 figures two men deep) = 800 men;

1 light infantry stand (4 figures) = 400 men; 1 cavalry stand (2-3 figures) = 200 men.

## Aëtius' Order of Battle

*Note: The orders of battle that follow are what I used for the Society of Ancients 2013 Battle Day. You may vary the numbers and units to suit the figures you have as long as you keep the numbers more or less proportional on each side. See also the Appendix in Comitatus which shows command structure and possible bits for this battle.*

### Visigoth Command (Right).

Split into 2 contingents. The main one, under King Theodoric, holds a defensive position on foot representing a combination of dismounted nobles and other infantry. A mounted flanking force under Thorismund that has been sent to capture the hill. It is mostly mounted.

**Theodoric.** Allied Commander, 4 Leadership Points (LPs)

**Theodoric's Comitatus:** 4 Equites, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Dismounted nobles:** 2 Shieldwall Infantry, B Grade, High Morale

**Warriors:** 8 Shieldwall Infantry, B Grade, Above Average Morale (in two units)

**Archers:** 4 Archers, B Grade, Average Morale (in one or two units)

**Thorismund.** Subordinate Contingent Leader, 4 LPs

**Thorismund's Comitatus:** 2 Equites, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Warriors:** 6 Equites, B Grade, High Morale (in two or three units)

**Light Infantry:** 3 Skirmishers, B Grade, Average Morale

### Alan Command (Centre)

The commitment of the Alans was questionable as they had been in negotiations with Attila prior to the battle. It is possible that some Alan nobles rode armoured horses.

**Sangiban.** Allied Commander. 2 LPs.

**Sangiban's Comitatus:** 2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, Armoured, B Grade, High Morale

**Heavy Cavalry:** 4 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale (in one or two units)

**Light Cavalry:** 8 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, Low Morale (in two units)

### Roman Command (Left).

**Aëtius.** Commander in Chief. 5 LPs.

**Aëtius' Comitatus:** 2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Roman Cavalry Leader.** 3 LPs

**Cavalry Commander's Comitatus:** 1 Equites, A Grade, High Morale

**Bucellarii:** 2 Equites, B Grade, High Morale

**Armoricans:** 2 Equites, B Grade, Average Morale

**Palatine Cavalry:** 2 Equites, A Grade, Average Morale

**Roman Infantry Leader.** 3 LPs

**Infantry Commander's Comitatus:** 1 Equites, A Grade, High Morale

**Laeti and Limitanei:** 3 Shieldwall Infantry, C Grade, Average Morale

**Burgundians and Saxons:** 3 Shieldwall Infantry, B Grade, Average Morale

**Gallic Legions:** 6 Roman Infantry, B Grade, Average Morale (in two or three units)

**Auxilia Palatina:** 4 Roman Infantry, A Grade, Average Morale (in one or two units)

**Archers:** 6 Foot Archers, C Grade, Average Morale (in two or three units)

**Frankish Ally Commander,** 3 LPs

**Frankish Comitatus:** 1 Shock Infantry, Armoured, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Frankish Warriors:** 4 Shock Infantry, B Grade, High Morale (in one or two units)

## Attila's Order of Battle

### Ostrogoth Allied Command (Left).

Led by the brothers Valamir, Theodimir and Vidimir. Possibly Valamir had overall command.

**Valamir.** Commander, 3 Command Points (LPs)

**Valamir's Comitatus:** 1 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Theodimir.** Subordinate Leader, 3 LPs

**Theodimir's Comitatus:** 2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale

**Warriors:** 8 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale (in two units)

**Archers:** 5 Foot Archers, B Grade, Average Morale

**Vidimir.** Subordinate Leader, 2 LPs

**Vidimir's Comitatus:** 2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale

**Thuringians, Rugians and Scirii:** 9 Shieldwall Infantry, B Grade, Average Morale (in two or three units)

### Hun Command (Centre).

The left flank command is attempting to seize the high ground (see map next page). The other Huns have a front line of light cavalry backed up by a second line of heavier cavalry.

**Attila.** Commander in Chief. 4 LPs.

**Attila's Comitatus:** 2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Left Flank Leader.** 3 LPs

**Leader's Comitatus:** 1 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Heavy Cavalry:** 2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale

**Light Cavalry:** 6 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, High Morale (in one to three units)

**Front Line Commander.** Subordinate, 3 LPs

**Leader's Comitatus:** 1 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Light Cavalry:** 18 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, High Morale (three to six units)

**Rear Line Commander.** Subordinate, 3 LPs

**Commander's Comitatus:** 1 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Light Cavalry:** 8 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, High Morale (two to four units)

**Heavy Cavalry:** 2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale.

### Gepid Command (Right).

**Ardaric.** Commander. 4 LPs.

**Ardaric's Comitatus:** 1 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Exceptional Morale

**Gepid Cavalry:** 4 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale (in one or two units)

**Herul Cavalry:** 2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, Average Morale

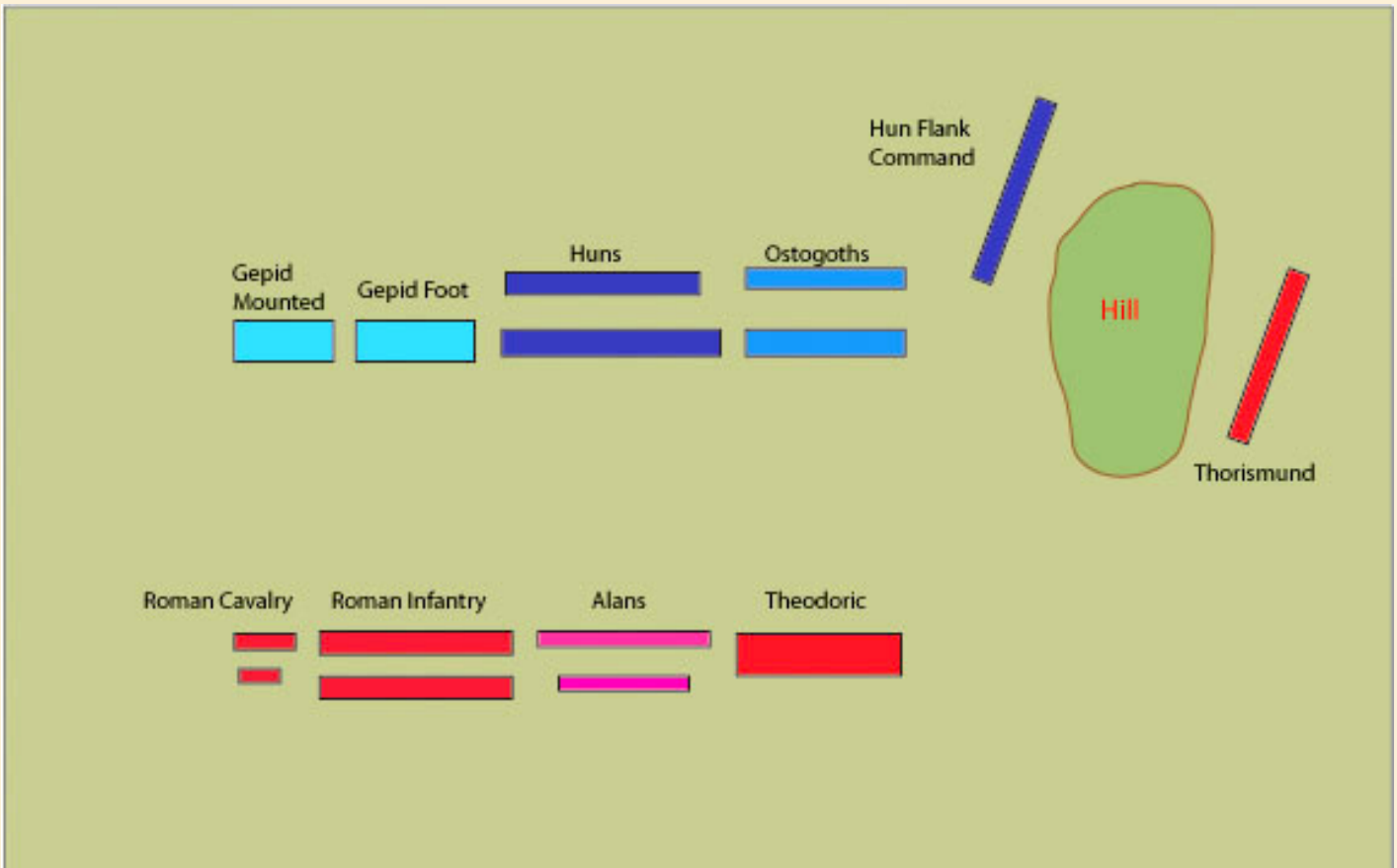
**Gepid Archers:** 4 Foot Archers, B Grade, Average Morale

**Frankish Subordinate Leader,** 3 LPs

**Leader's Comitatus:** 2 Shock Infantry, B Grade, High Morale

**Frankish Warriors:** 12 Shock Infantry, B Grade, Average Morale (in two or three units)

## Deployment



Troops are deployed as shown on the map. The positions are approximate and can be adjusted to fit the troops being used. Although Attila's army has slightly fewer troops as they have more cavalry they will take up more space. The main lines should be 2 bow shots apart and the flanking forces should be at equal distance from the bottom of the hill.

Aetius' army moves first on turn one, simulating the initiative they took to seize the hill. Attila's army moves first on turn two as he then took the offensive. Thereafter dice for turns, adding the commanders in chief's command points, the winner deciding whether to go first or second.

The actual battle started late in the day and ended when darkness fell. Therefore the game is limited to 6 normal turns. If at that point no one side has an obvious victory the game goes on for two more turns with reduced visibility (max 4 javelin throws) as dusk falls.

The game is over at the end of the 8th turn when it is assumed that both sides pull back and withdraw to their camps if there has been no clear winner.



## Victory Conditions

The Roman side wins a victory if Aetius is still alive and more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the Roman contingent and Theodoric's command (excluding Alans and Thorismund's command) are unshaken; holding their original position or are closer to the initial enemy position; and they suffered less overall casualties than the Hun side (counting all contingents). Casualties include actual casualties removed, any troops driven off table, and routing units.

The Hun side wins a victory if Attila is still alive and more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  the Romans and Visigoths (including Thorismund's command) are shaken or casualties, or more than 4 javelin throws behind their original position.

Any other result is a draw. In a multi-player game, individual players have the following additional victory conditions:

Attila wins if he is still alive, the Huns win, and no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  actual Huns (excluding German Allies) are casualties.

Ardaric wins if he is still alive, the Huns win or draw, and more Huns than Gepids are casualties.

Valamir wins if the Huns win or draw and the Ostrogoths inflict more casualties on their opponents than the Gepids did on theirs.

Aetius wins if he is still alive, the Romans win, and the Visigoths have more casualties than the Romans

Theodoric wins if the Romans win or draw and no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the Visigoths are casualties.

Thorismund wins if the Romans win or draw, he succeeded in capturing the hill and no more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of his command are casualties.

Sangiban wins if he is still alive, the Romans win or draw, and none of his heavy cavalry are casualties.

It is quite possible for more than one player to win. Note that Theodoric, Thorismund and Valamir do not have to survive to win. In fact, a heroic death could even be considered to contribute to victory. Attila, Aetius, and Adaric, however, have future plans that requires their continued existence and Sangiban was not that heroic.

