



# COMITATUS

Warfare in the Dark Ages

3<sup>rd</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> C AD

Game Scenario

**Dasymon**

21 July 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 Theophilos 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. Theophilos' 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. Theophilos attacked at dawn the following day and initially made good progress, driving back one wing of the Arab army. Around noon, Theophilos 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. Sustaining heavy losses, Theophilos 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 Theophilos 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 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 Turk vanguard arrives. The game ends two turns later when the main Turk contingent is assumed to arrive.



## Byzantine Order of Battle

The army is divided into 3 contingents: Emperor Theophilos commanding the Tagmata (regular field army units) and Thematic Cavalry (regional militia), Theophobos commanding the Khurramis, and Michael commanding the Thematic Infantry. They may be additionally aided by a 4<sup>th</sup> subordinate leader, Aetios, to command the Thematic cavalry. The army may contain up to 1000 points (pts) chosen from the following possibilities:

### Leaders

- Emperor Theophilos**, Commander in Chief, dice for LPs, re-roll 2 once only @ 100 pts
- Theophobos (Nasr)**, Khurrami Persian leader, dice for LPs. @ 50 pts
- Manuel the Armenian**, Byzantine Leader, dice for LPs. @ 50 pts
- up to 1 additional Byzantine leader — Aetios**, @ 50 pts

### Byzantine Tagmata

- Hetaeria**: One unit of 1-2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, Exceptional Morale @ 10 pts/stand + 30 unit pts. Forming the Emperor's Comitatus. Or Shock Cav @ 12 pts/stand
- Other Tagmatic Cavalry**: 6-10 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 10 pts each. In 3-4 units @ 25 pts per unit.

Extra to upgrade Hetaeria to to Armoured Lance & Bow, or Cataphracts @ 2 pts per stand.

*The Tagmata could be in up to 5 units representing the Hetaeria and the 4 other regiments: Scholai, Excubitoi, Arithmos, and Ikanatoi. Any number of the Tagmata may be Shock Cavalry rather than Lance & Bow @ +2 pts per stand.*

### Khurrami Persians

- Theophobos' Comitatus**: One unit of 1-2 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 10 pts/stand + 25 unit pts. Extra to upgrade to Armoured @ 2 pts/stand.
- Heavy Cavalry**: 4-8 Heavy Horse Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 10 pts/stand. In 1-4 units @ 15 pts per unit.
- Light Cavalry** 4-6 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 7 pts/stand. In 1-2 units @ 15 pts per unit

### Byzantine Thematic Troops

- Manuel's Comitatus**: 1-2 Shock Cav, B Grade, High Morale @ 12 pts/stand + 20 unit pts.
- Infantry**: 3-8 Spearmen, C Grade, Average Morale @ 8 pts/stand + 10 unit pts.
- Archers**: 3-8 Foot Archers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 pts/stand + 10 unit pts.
- Light Infantry**: up to 4 Skirmishers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 pts/stand + 10 unit pts
- Cavalry**: 4 to 10 Shock Cav, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 pts/stand in 1-4 units @ 15 unit pts each. Up to ½ may instead be Heavy Horse Archers @ 10 pts/stand

### Aetios' Comitatus (if he is present):

- 1-2 Shock Cavalry**, B Grade, High Morale @ 12 pts + 20 unit pts.

## Arab Order of Battle

The army is organised into 3 contingents with Afshin commanding the reserve, Omar the infantry and Sembat the cavalry. The Turks are assumed to be away foraging. The arrival of their vanguard ends the battle. The Arab player selects up to 750 points (pts) from the following:

### Leaders

**Afshin, Commander in Chief:** dice for LPs, re-roll 2 once only @ 100 pts

**Omar al-Aqta, Arab subordinate leader:** dice for LPs @ 50 pts

**Sembat, Armenian subordinate leader:** dice for LPs @ 50 pts



### Afshin's Reserve

**Afshin's Askari (Comitatus):** One unit of 2-4 Lance & Bow Cavalry A Grade, Exceptional Morale @ 10 pts/stand + 30 unit pts.

**Ghulams:** 4-6 Lance & Bow Cavalry, A Grade, High Morale @ 10 pts/stand, in 1-3 units @ 25 pts/unit.

Extra to upgrade Askari to armoured @ 2 pts per stand

### Omar's Infantry

**Omar's Comitatus:** 1-2 Shock Cavalry, B Grade, High Morale @ 12 pts/stand + 20 unit pts. Or 1-2 Spearmen @ 10 pts/stand.

**Arab Infantry:** 3-12 Spearmen, B Grade, Average Morale @ 10 pts/stand, in 1-2 units @15pts/unit.

**Archers:** 3-12 Foot Archers, B Grade, Average Morale @ 6 pts/stand, in 1-2 units @15 pts/unit

**Daylamis:** up to 4 Javelinmen, B Grade, Average Morale @ 7 pts/stand + 15 unit pts

**Armenians:** up to 4 Spear & Bow, C Grade, Average Morale @ 8 pts/stand + 10 unit pts

**Skirmishers:** up to 4, C Grade, Average Morale @ 6 pts/stand + 10 unit pts

### Sembat's Cavalry

**Sembat's Comitatus:** 1-2 Shock Cav, B Grade, High Morale @ 12 pts/stand + 20 unit pts.

**Armenians:** 2-4 Shock Cav, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 pts/stand + 15 unit pts.

**Arabs:** 2-4 Light Javelin Cav, B Grade, Average Morale @ 7 pts/stand + 15 unit pts.

**Arabs:** up to 4 Shock Cav, B Grade, Average Morale @ 12 pts/stand + 15 unit pts.

**Turcomans & Khorsanians:** up to 12 Light Horse Archers, C Grade, Average Morale @ 7 pts/stand, in 1-3 units @ 10 pts per unit.

**Turk Vanguard** (arriving on the 6<sup>th</sup> turn. Not counted in the Arab points total)

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

**Turcomans:** 8 Light Horse Archers, B Grade, High Morale (in one or two units)

## Victory Conditions

The Byzantines win if by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> 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.



## 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 of 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. 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 noted on the sketch map by the Byzantine player. The Byzantine player may chose to delay their entry unit the 2<sup>nd</sup> turn. They may arrive in any formation and measure their movement from the table edge.