

The Setup

For the first battle of 2023, I pitted the newly completed, but untested, Deceangli against the Persian Satrapy of Longawayoff which had not seen any action recently. Both armies were of reasonably the same size and potential fighting strength.

The pitch was based on the site of the battle of Aqua Sextae (105BCE). The river, which was in a valley, had four fords crossing it with only the road crossing being shallow. The slopes in the near corners were steep but elsewhere gentle. The far side had woods, heath and scrub. The near side was fairly open.



The Teams and Their Plans

Allwed, king of the Deceangli, had mustered 8,700 men from the tribe. This included men from several minor sub-clans as well as the main clan.

Allwed led the main cavalry force of 900 men. The main clan provided three warbands, but not all were of warrior quality, which with their supporting light troops totalled 4,500 men.

The three sub-clans added a further 3,300 men. Again the quality was not that high and most of them were skirmishers.

Allwed decided to fake a crossing of the road ford and head for one of the other fords with his cavalry and the main clan's warbands. The sub-clans, who were hidden in the woods, would each head towards another of the fords and so force the enemy to split their men to cover every ford.

He hoped that he could get across with enough of his men before the enemy could fully react.

Xavier, the satrap of Longawayoff, had just over 7,600 men in his field army, including two subject allies led by local chieftains.

Xavier personally led a reasonable cavalry force of 1,200 troopers and had 2,500 regular infantry armed with bow and spear. He also had 2,300 mercenary Arabs – a mix of cavalry, camelry and infantry.

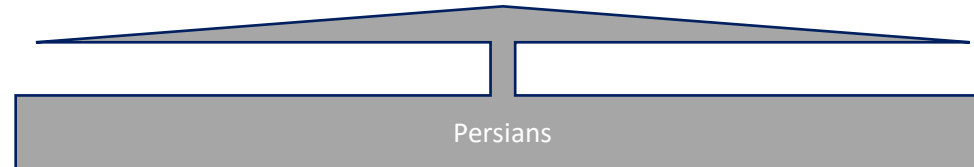
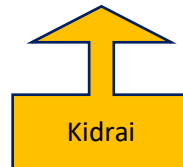
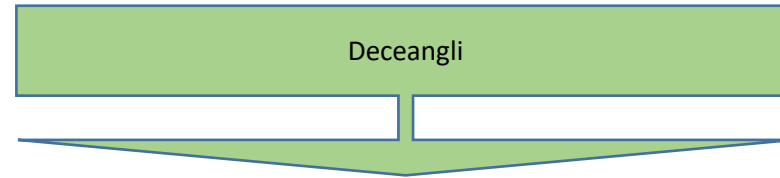
His two subject allies were classed as reluctant. Kashta of Ethiopia, commanded 800 good quality foot archers and Yaute, chieftain of the Kidrai Arab tribe, led 900 mixed quality cavalry.

Xavier assumed that the main attack would come via the road ford and sent his own infantry to bottle that up, with his two cavalry contingents providing cover on their flanks.

He sent his two subject allies off to cover the fords to his left in case the enemy tried to cross them and attack his flank. His allies had orders to delay any enemy crossing until Xavier could reinforce them.

His plan was that his infantry bow power would sufficiently weaken any enemy crossing the road ford that they would not press home any serious attack.

The Deployments



P1

Both sides started to move forward to gain control of as many fords as they could.

Deceangli: Main clan headed towards the middle ford whilst sub-clans moved to cover the other fords.



Note:
arrows point
at first
Division in
each Corps.

Kidrai: Advanced to the slope of the river valley.

Ethiopians: Advanced.

Persians: Advanced towards the main ford.

P2

Xavier's troops now had the exit from the road ford under control and his allies were closing on the fords to his left. Allwed and his cavalry had reached one of those fords but the Deceangli infantry were getting strung out.

Deceangli: Pressed forward with cavalry and reached the ford but were shot at. Infantry moved forward but were getting separated.



Note: arrows point at first Division in each Corps.

Kidrai: Held position but sent some scouts forward.

Ethiopians: Continued advancing with some troops opening fire.

Persians: Infantry started to deploy to block the exit from the ford.

P3

With only a small force opposing him, Xavier ordered an advance across the road ford and sent his Arab cavalry to cover the ford on the right. The Deceangli cavalry kept weakening the enemy foot archers as their own infantry advanced.

Deceangli: Advanced with cavalry to deal with enemy archers as warbands continued moving forward.



Note: arrows point at first Division in each Corps.

Kidrai: Held position with scouts skirmishing with enemy troops.

Ethiopians: Heavy casualties meant held position and shot at long range.

Persians: Ordered a general advance to cross the road ford and sent Arab cavalry to deal with threat on the right.

P4

Allwed and his cavalry were destroyed in melee and the Deceangli troops covering two of the fords were being pushed back. Xavier's infantry advanced through the road ford forcing the new Deceangli commander to change his plans.

Deceangli: Cavalry and sub-clan guarding the road ford had been destroyed. New commander moved main warbands to face enemy crossing the road ford.



Note: arrows point at first Division in each Corps.

Kidrai: Charged enemy cavalry.

Ethiopians: Few remaining men withdrew.

Persians: Infantry started to cross the ford whilst Arab camel archers covered the other ford.

P5

The continued pressure and missiles from the Persians caused one warband and the sub-clan on the Deceangli left to break. With the situation looking bad, the Deceangli commander issued the order to withdraw.

Deceangli: More groupings had broken so issued order to withdraw.



Note:
arrows point
at first
Division in
each Corps.

Kidrai: Skirmished
with enemy foot.

Ethiopians:
Continued to
withdraw.

Persians: Lead infantry unit started
to fire on enemy as the next one
crossed the ford.

P6

The Deceangli withdrawal turned into a retreat as Xavier continued to advance with his men, pressuring the Deceangli with bow fire.

Deceangli: Few remaining troops continued to withdraw.



Note: arrows point at first Division in each Corps.

Kidrai: Returned to starting position.

Ethiopians: Held position next to their baggage.

Persians: Infantry shot at retreating enemy as cavalry started to cross the fords.

And Finally

With no Deceangli willing to stand and fight, Xavier claimed a fairly easy and comprehensive victory. Whilst his subject allies had taken a pounding, Xavier's own troops had suffered just minor casualties.

Allwed's plan was potentially a little too complicated for his men and his initial deployment left his infantry too far from their key objectives. This allowed Xavier to get his men in position to block the exits from the fords and with their bow power they started to wear the Deceangli down. Although he got his cavalry across the river, they were too isolated and reasonably easy meat for the Persian allies. With Allwed's death, missile casualties across the rest of the tribe and low quality of their men, the Decangli morale crumbled quickly. All Xavier had to do was to ignore the problems his allies were having and stick to his advance with his own men.

The most valuable Unit? Potentially, both of Xavier's subject allies had claim to this as it was their action that took out the enemy commander and prevented his main assault on the right from ever getting anywhere close to success. As most of Xavier's own troops did very little – apart from some shooting – they are probably right.