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The Etiquette and Tactics of the Qadárni

Jack Bramah explains the ins and outs of "Little Wars"

The following is a monograph by Viscount Veshtáru hiChaishyáni, Holder of the Gold of Imperial Glory, field commander of the Legion of the Mighty Heroes of Avanthár. Usually such a manuscript would be prepared by a court scribe on behalf of the ostensible author, but Viscount Veshtáru was a scholar of some distinction and thus we can safely Assume that this is a first-hand account of Tsolyáni warfare:

The Qadárni battle is of prime importance in the extension of the glory of the Petal Throne without the necessity of resorting to a costly Qadardááli. A Qadárni challenge is usually Issued by an individual unit commander, be it a cohort or an entire legion. On rare occasions the force involved may be larger than one legion on each side, although this presents problems in equalizing forces except against those nations with the strange custom of combining different troop types under a single banner. Such a practice obviously makes the conduct of a decent Qadárni somewhat problematic. One might go so far as to say that the ability to wage a good Qadárni is the measure of a civilized nation.

The conduct of a Qadárni is governed by strict rules. The foremost of these is that the forces involved must be as equal as possible in number and type, if not quality—although there is little to be gained in honour by defeating a foe whose ability is markedly inferior. Having said this, there are two notable exceptions to this rule recorded among the Deeds of the Ever-Glorious Legions of the Petal Throne. The first was due to a series of errors which remained uncorrected, and the second occurred for reasons which are still somewhat obscure.

In 1150 or thereabouts, the Regiment of the Clan of Silver Lightning (7th Imperial Archers) were on patrol in Pán Cháka, near the Mu'ugalavyáni border when they were come upon by a Mu'ugalavyáni legion, believed to be Legion VII of the Second Palace: "Swordswinger". It seems that the Mu'ugalavyáni commander mistook the regiment for the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation. The commander of the Tsolyáni troops was a newly appointed man, his predecessor having been killed a few weeks earlier in a skirmish with some Páchi Léi ini in which he was the only Tsolyáni casualty.

The new commander was patently flushed with the glory of his new position and he agreed to the battle without informing the Mu'ugalavyáni commander of the error. He was obviously unaware of the religious and ritual significance of the Qadárni and was more interested in the chance of gaining personal glory by defeating superior troops. This was a serious mistake and he was roundly defeated by a legion whose level of restraint is on a par with the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation, and who were mightily wroth and who humiliated the survivors of the Regiment of the Clan of Silver Lightning, and sent them back to Béy Sü, where they were further chastised by the Empress Janulé.

Some people seem surprised that such a harsh punishment was meted out upon the legion, who put up a good fight against superior troops. In truth it was only a just punishment for a commander who put his own personal glory before that of the nation. The mighty Empire of Tsolyánu is renowned throughout the world for the steadfast way in which we adhere to the traditions in which we believe. (It also seems that certain officials at the Palace of Ever-Glorious War were even more anxious to attempt to express their displeasure by allowing the official records of the event to be written down in an ambiguous and misleading fashion. This overstepping of authority to mete out a sterner punishment than the Sovereign herself had determined is obviously a gross misuse of privilege.)

The second occasion involved the Legion of the Inverted Hand, the 27th Imperial Light Infantry. As in the previous case the opponents were Mu'ugalavyáni. On this occasion it seems that the red-hat commander was the one seeking glory ignobly by challenging an apparently inferior legion to battle. The Tsolyáni commander was aware of his foe's base motives and undertook to give the enemy commander a lesson in tactics, thus proving to him that the pursuit of cheap glory is a false thing and not a course to be followed by honourable men.

As a result of the unfavourable outcome of the action the Mu'ugalavyáni records are vague as to details of the action. Thus it is difficult to determine the legion involved or the identity of its commander. Through some researches of my own I have determined that the legion involved was either III/1st ""Slay All", I/2nd "Destroy in Glory", or possibly even III/2nd "Wreak Death".

The main reason for iSsúing a challenge to Qadárni is to gain glory for one's legion, and through that one's liege, and also to give a degree of combat experience to untried troops. This is not always exclusively the case, as can be shown by a Qadárni in which I had the honour to be commander.

In 2367 I had been given command of the First Cohort of the Legion of the Mighty Heroes of Avanthár. Our duties led us to be travelling to P. We received orders from General Sérqu hiChaishyáni, the Military Governor, to proceed to Fort Ikénsul in order to apprehend the rebel General Mi'itlénish. I arrived there with my cohort, with very little in the way of spare supplies, to discover the general firmly ensconced in the fort along with two hundred and fifty former troopers of Legion I of the Fourth Palace: "Imperishable" and a large number of Milumanayáni tribesmen.

A direct assault upon the fort would have caused the loss of a great number of men, and there was no guarantee the attack would be successful in any case. I therefore decided that the best course of action would be to challenge Mi'itl to a Qadárni in the hope that if he lost he would give himself into my custody. As it turned out Mi'itlénish was having similar thoughts because of his precarious supply situation, and he Issued the challenge with the proviso that if he should win we would leave him with enough supplies for one week and would not attempt to follow him, and if we won he would give himself into my custody for taking to Pélesar. These conditions were in themselves somewhat unusual, but seemed appropriate since each commander believed he had no other way to achieve his aim.

The designated area for the battle was laid out on the plain beside the fort, overlooked by the ridge where I had made my encampment. Since Mi'itlénish only had twelve platoons to my seventeen*, I left my extra hundred men concealed behind the ridge in case the Milumanayni should attempt any foul play. Naturally these men were given orders not to encroach upon the designated area under any circumstances. As is usual we agreed that any troops that left the designated field could not return, and that if a commander should order a general withdrawal he would thereby concede defeat.

Since I am now concerned with various aspects of the etiquette of conducting Qadárni, I shall leave a discussion of the tactics employed in this particular battle to a later stage and instead concentrate upon the unusual circumstances surrounding the end of the battle.

In addition to the troops formally enrolled in the legion, our expedition was accompanied by a number of companions of mine and others travelling with the cohort for safety. Among these were a former Livyáni and a Mu'ugalavyáni bowman. About halfway through the battle these two left their vantage point on the ridge and circled around the battlefield to get closer to the Mu'ugalavyáni command post. Despite my specific orders not to interfere in any way with the Qadárni, the bowman proceeded to take pot-shots at the command post, seriously injuring Mi'itlénish's second-in-command. Mi'itlénish possessed an ancient Bednálljan weapon which he used against the two men, rendering the Livyáni unconscious. The Mu'ugalavyáni bowman fled.

At about the same time the Milumanayáni tribesmen, who had been watching from the sidelines, suddenly swept across the corner of the battlefield towards our encampment with the apparent intention of looting our baggage while all our troops (or so they thought) were otherwise occupied. On seeing this Mi'itlénish sounded the retreat, thus conceding the battle. Prisoners were collected by the respective sides, and then Mi'itlénish's lieutenant came to me to say that his general wished to discuss the outcome of the battle. I Assumed that he wished to talk about the attack on his command post. This turned out to be correct, and he at once began to negotiate terms for the official conclusion of the battle. He had captured the Livyáni and eight of my own troops, while we had captured forty-seven of the enemy. The terms he offered were that in exchange for our prisoners, four days' supplies and the man who had attacked the command post, Mi'itlénish would give himself and all the prisoners he had taken.

I readily agreed to these terms, since I was particularly angry that my specific orders had been disobeyed. The treacherous bowman himself protested volubly, but this was the vain protestation of a man who knows he is about to be justly punished for demeaning the honour of one of the most glorious institutions known throughout the Five Empires. During the night, however, the scoundrel escaped to the fort, where the Milumanayáni were now holding out against both our forces. Subsequently he made his way to Pélesar, where he challenged me under the Manifesto of Noble Deliverance for handing him over to the enemy. Since he was quite obviously in the wrong, the gods watched over me and I was victorious in this duel...

But I digress. Still, the matter of duelling is relevant to my discussion, for another important part of Qadárni and also Qadardáli is the series of duels between the champions of each army before the commencement of the battle. These serve a twofold purpose, the most practical (if secondary) of which is to bolster the morale of one's troops and hopefully demoralize the enemy. With untried troops this is of particular importance, as they do not have their own battle experience to draw upon. The primary, though less tangible, purpose of champion duelling is to attempt to obtain the favour of the gods.

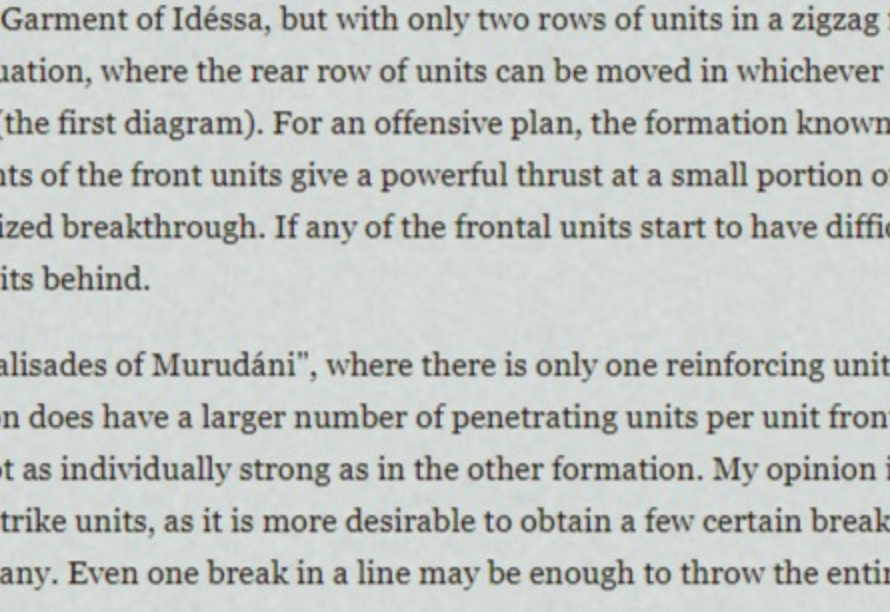
For such a duel to be properly conducted there must be some semblance of equality in skill and social rank of the participants. For this reason I was myself forced to take part in the duels before the Qadárni at Fort Ikénsul, although I was the commander of one of the forces. Unlike duels in the Hirilákte there is no absolute requirement that the participants be armed exactly alike, since what is at stake is the honour of one's legion, and part of that honour is bound up in the way that the legion is armed. The number of duels appropriate for a battle generally depends the size of the forces involved and the importance of the battle. For a typical Qadárni some four or five duels should take place, although there have been engagements where there were dozens and others where there was only one.

I shall now move onto various aspects of the tactics of Qadárni battle. The main problem governing the precise tactics of Qadárni is that the forces involved are not generally large or varied enough to make use of those complex formations described in the works of Ssámiren and Sá'alur.

Given an entire legion it is sometimes possible to use the simpler unit formations such as the Claw of the Kröea, and even some of the more complex formations such as the Garment of Idéssa , the Palisades of Murudáni, or the Teeth of Krá. But for a single cohort these formations lose their meaning. The most complicated one can get is to leave a small number of men in reserve for use as a strike force should a breach can be made, or to shore up a weak point in the line. However, the equality of the forces on each side means that it is difficult to put aside a substantial reserve unless one's troops are of markedly superior quality to the opposition.

In the case of a Qadárni between two single cohorts, the most complicated manoeuvre one can attempt is a minor outflanking in order to gain local superiority in numbers, although one must be careful not to let the enemy overlap and outflank or break through the stretched-out line.

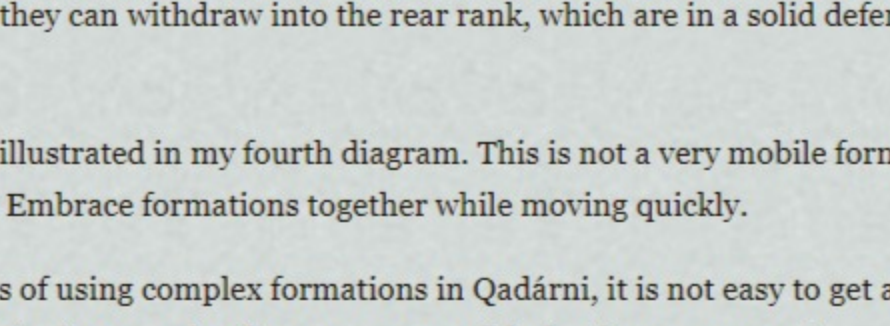
It was this manoeuvre I attempted at Fort Ikénsul. Both sides advanced in a long line. My first move was to advance on the Mu'ugalavyáni right with the three platoons on the left of our line in an attempt to outflank. Three platoons that I had sent in the rear moved up to close the gap thus created. The Mu'ugalavyáni advanced along the entire line in an attempt to make use of his superiority in group skill by engaging my troops on a one-to-one basis. He almost succeeded, but my first three platoons managed to outnumber the enemy right. However this meant that my right was slightly outnumbered. At this stage the battle was at a crucial point. One Mu'ugalavyáni platoon did break through the far end of the line, and one or two of my troops wavered. At the other end of the line my troops were starting to roll up the Mu'ugalavyáni line. At this moment the Milumanayáni tribesmen surged across the corner of the battlefield and the Mu'ugalavyáni command post came under attack by outside agents. It was at this point that General Mi'itlénish sounded the retreat, ending the battle.



A formation akin to the Garment of Idéssa, but with only two rows of units in a zigzag formation, can be useful in a defensive situation, where the rear row of units can be moved in whichever direction is required to support the front units (the first diagram). For an offensive plan, the formation known as the Teeth of Krá is useful. The striking points of the front units give a powerful thrust at a small portion of the enemy line, giving a good chance of a localized breakthrough. If any of the frontal units start to have difficulties there are two potential reinforcing units behind.

This differs from the "Palisades of Murudáni", where there is only one reinforcing unit (see the third diagram). This formation does have a larger number of penetrating units per unit frontage than the Teeth of Krá, even if these are not as individually strong as in the other formation. My opinion is that it is best to have fewer but more potent strike units, as it is more desirable to obtain a few certain breakthroughs rather than have a slim chance of many. Even one break in a line may be enough to throw the entire formation into confused retreat.

In Qadárni, particularly where the units involved are small, the effect of actions on morale is the most important factor towards victory. The breaking of a single sub-unit can be the start of a catastrophic collapse of morale in the rest of the enemy force. At the same time, while attempting to force a hole, one must be careful not to compromise the morale of one's own troops by using too fine a point on the elite units. In a Qadardáli battle the best way to force a breakthrough is to risk a surprise shock unit of either elite troops or Sh'orn or Ahoggvá. In a Qadárni this is impossible, as the troops must be of the same type and the difference between the best and worst is much smaller. Nonetheless one should keep one's best sub-unit as a strike force poised to exploit any weakness in the enemy or to bolster up a fragile section of one's own formation.



I have devised a defensive formation which can be used successfully by a force comprising troops of disparate skill and morale. I have named this the Cliffs of Ngéshtu for the way that it breaks apart the oncoming waves of the attackers. The formation consists of two rows of troops. The front contains the best and steadyest troops, and is formed into a series of wedges. The second consists of a series of Embrace of Nayári formations. The idea is that the solid wedges channel the attacking troops into the arms of the Embraces. There they are subject to flank attacks by the rear ranks of the troops, where they can be dealt with piecemeal. If the front wedges get into trouble they can withdraw into the rear rank, which are in a solid defensive formation even without the wedges.

The Cliffs of Ngéshtu is illustrated in the fourth diagram. This is not a very mobile formation, with some difficulty in keeping the Embrace formations together while moving quickly.

As well as the difficulties of using complex formations in Qadárni, it is not easy to get any advantage from terrain, as the custom is to choose as level an area as possible for the engagement.

One aspect of battle not often dealt with is the commander's own ability and his effect on the conduct of the battle. In a Qadárni, it is possible for a mediocre commander to get by because of the absence of complex strategies and manoeuvres. Such a commander is wise to rely only on a simple strategy of which he is fully confident. In this way he can tempt his opponent into making mistakes. In Qadárni the function of the commander is not so much to come up with brilliant strategies to defeat the enemy, as to instil spirit and confidence in his men by giving them a show of utter certainty. In this way the morale of his troops will be higher and they will be more likely to perform to the best of their ability, so giving their commander a better chance of success with whatever plan he chooses. In short, a commander must always seem certain in himself, iSsúing orders in a determined fashion without hesitation or dithering. Such hesitation may not be obvious in the beat of the war-drums; but it will be to subordinate officers nearby, and it then seeps down to the ordinary soldier by some intangible contagion of mood. Even if the battle is clearly lost the commander must not panic—particularly in Qadárni, where defeat is not always disgrace. A panicked retreat will only lead to greater capture and dishonour for one's legion. The gods cannot ask more than that a man behaves according to the dictates of nobility and accepts what his Skein of Destiny has in store for him.

As an example of the effect of command I shall use the second battle I commanded. I was sent out with all the cohorts of the Legion of the Mighty Heroes of Avanthár by the General of the legion, His Supreme Refulgence the Emperor, to seek glory in a Qadárni with the Mu'ugalavyáni. I was challenged by General Kakománish Tu'oen of Legion II of the Second Palace: "Mighty Power". This is an old and experienced unit with much recent battle experience, whereas with the exception of the first cohort our own unit was completely untried. It was obvious that we had little chance of a victory, but I did not let this show in my orders and my men performed heroically. In fact they did not know when it became better to give in, and so a disproportionately large number of them were killed rather than captured. General Tlángten hiSsanyösa of the Legion of the Lord of Red Devastation was particularly full of praise for the actions of these men in face of a superior force.

To fight Qadárni correctly is of the essence of nobility and glory, and can be a source of honour even in defeat, as long as the battle is lost well.

May the Glory of the Petal Throne and its soldiers carry on through the ages, heralding the might of Tsolyánu across the known world, instilling fear in the hearts of those who stand against us. Let the Azure Power of the Seal go on forever to outshine even the splendour of the Priestkings.

MOLMiTLANYAL OTULÉNGBA!

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