

CONAN

Roleplaying in the Hyborian Age

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Of Chariots and Acheronians

With the release of *Conan the Roleplaying Game* we thought it might be rather nice to have an exclusive in *Signs & Portents*. With that in mind we have liberated the following article which will expand the game and open up some new gaming possibilities for Hyborian gamers.

Presented below are full rules for using Stygian and Acheronian chariots, both for use in battle and in sporting arenas. Howard is rather thin on detail in this respect, although it is fair to say that in various parts of Hyboria chariot racing as well as other sporting events will take place. Probably not in the western monarchies of Aquilonia and Nemed, but one can easily picture chariot racing in Zamora, Corinthia, Koth and Shem. The prospect of camel racing in Turan also springs to mind, but that's for another article.

The final decision on where chariot racing might take place is with each individual Games Master, but it opens up the prospect of a career as a charioteer as well as numerous storylines to fold into adventures and campaigns.

As well as chariots, we also have a brand new race for Hyboria – the Acheronians. This degenerate, corrupt and thoroughly unpleasant race once

ruled much of what is now Hyboria, but that was 3,000 years ago. Now they live in anonymity, but the challenge for players is still there. Can they begin to rebuild the glories of Acheron? Can they follow in the tracks of the terrifying Xaltotun, perhaps Conan's greatest antagonist? It will take some doing.

Chariots

The Stygian chariot is extremely lightweight and as a result is significantly faster and more nimble than earlier chariots such as the lumbering Acheronian type. The northern nations regard chariots as essentially obsolete in any case, but the Stygian armies still use chariot regiments to powerful effect.

Chariot Descriptions

All chariots require warhorses to pull such a weight at speed but there is a wide variation within the chariots themselves. Listed below are two designs seen on battlefields during the Hyborian Age; each is given the following characteristics:

Horses

This is how many warhorses are required to pull the chariot. No other creatures may be used in their place.

Passengers

Chariots are basically simple, three-sided carts with space for two or more passengers. This lists how many Small or Medium-sized creatures may ride in a chariot. Large creatures take the space of two Medium-sized ones. Creatures of Huge size or greater may not ride in the chariots listed below. A chariot will always require a driver to control its movement.

Speed

This is the base speed of the chariot when pulled by the maximum number of horses. As horses are lost through combat or other means, the chariot's base speed moves to the next number on this line, thus gradually slowing down.

Hardness

As detailed in *Core Rulebook I*, this is the hardness of each chariot.

Hit Points

Every chariot has a number of hit points. When these are reduced to 0, the chariot is destroyed.

Turn Rate

The lighter a chariot is, the faster its driver can get it to turn at speed. The first number here is the turn a chariot

can make, in degrees, when moving at normal speed. The second number lists how much it can turn when making a double move. No chariot can turn at running speed.

Cost

This is the base price a chariot costs to purchase; any chariot may be upgraded however (see below).

Weight

This is the base weight of a chariot, without passengers, cargo and horses.

Cargo

All chariots may carry cargo instead of, or in addition to, any passengers. This amount is listed in this section.

It is assumed that the passengers and their gear weigh no more than 200 pounds each – any excess above this amount will reduce the amount of other cargo that can be carried.

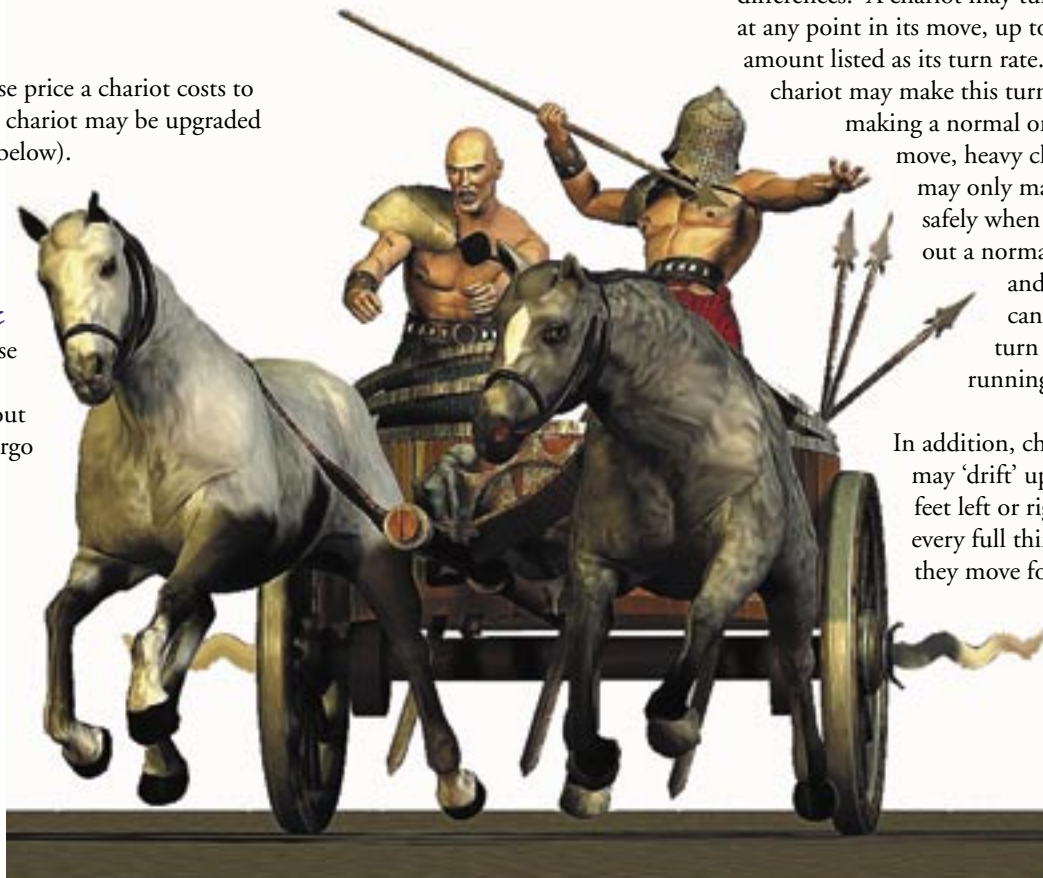
Overrun

This is the base damage caused by the chariot when performing an overrun attack.

Stygian War Chariot

Horses 2
 Passengers 2
 Speed 60 ft. /50 ft.
 Hardness 5
 Hit Points 10
 Turn Rate 90°/45°
 Cost 1,800 sp
 Weight 250 lb.
 Cargo 150 lb.
 Overrun 2d8

This is the standard war chariot of Stygia, little changed since the ancestors of today's Stygian warrior caste modified the design from the Acheronians thousands of years ago.



Movement

Chariots move in initiative order in the same way as any mounted combatant. There are, however, some important differences. A chariot may turn once at any point in its move, up to the amount listed as its turn rate. A light chariot may make this turn while making a normal or double move, heavy chariots may only make it safely when carrying out a normal move and neither can safely turn while running.

In addition, chariots may 'drift' up to ten feet left or right for every full thirty feet they move forwards.

Acheronian War Chariot

Horses 4
 Passengers 4
 Speed 40 ft./40 ft./30 ft./20 ft.
 Hardness 5
 Hit Points 20
 Turn Rate 45°/-
 Cost 3,200 sp*
 Weight 500 lb.
 Cargo 300 lb.
 Overrun 4d6

Acheronian war chariots are rarely available to buy, since the remaining Acheronians no longer build them. Their game statistics are provided for comparison to the Stygian chariot and to represent any more old-fashioned chariots, such as might be found in ancient tombs or ridden by mysteriously resurrected Old Acheronians and giant-kings.

This is performed as a free action and in no way impedes any other movement the chariot may perform.

A chariot driver may choose to whip his horses harder as a full round action. If he succeeds at a Handle Animal check at DC 10, he may increase his base speed by ten feet for that round only.

Tight Turns

The driver may also attempt to get his chariot to make a much tighter turn than is entirely safe. A driver may choose to make two turns in a round instead of just one, though these must be made at the beginning and end of the move – they may not be made halfway through as a normal turn may. This is a full round action and requires the driver to make a Handle Animal check at DC 12 if he is moving at base speed and DC 15 at double speed. A

single turn may be made at running speed, again with a successful Handle Animal check, this time at DC 25.

If these checks are failed, the chariot will automatically overturn at the start of the next turn, as covered below in Collisions and Overturning.

Combat

All passengers on board a chariot may make their normal attacks as if they were mounted (see *Core Rulebook I*, Chapter 8). The chariot driver, however, must always dedicate at least one hand to controlling the horses and so may only wield single-handed weaponry. Any passenger may make an attack at any point in their move, such is the speed of the chariot. This in no way affects the number of actions they may perform each round.

All chariots, no matter what their size, are assumed to take up a space five feet wide and ten feet long, with the horses directly ahead. Either passengers, horses or the chariot itself may be targeted by an attack if within reach or range, though passengers will receive the benefit of cover for attacks to the front or sides of their chariot, as detailed in *The Player's Handbook*. This is from a low wooden barrier running round the sides and front of the chariot.

Passengers receive no benefit for attacks originating from the rear of their chariot.

If any horse is slain whilst pulling a chariot, it must be cut free within one round, as described under Collisions and Overturning, or the chariot will automatically overturn.

Sideswipes

Although the main use of the chariot is to provide nobles with a platform for archery and a means of getting around the battlefield, they can also be used to directly injure enemies by driving the chariot sideways into an enemy chariot.

Any chariot driver moving his vehicle alongside another chariot may choose

to sideswipe it as a full round action. The drivers of both chariots must make an opposing Handle Animal check. The winner will deal damage to the loser's chariot, as listed below:

Chariot Sideswipe

Damage	Critical	Type
2d6	20/x2	Bludgeoning

Against Warriors on Foot

The passengers of a chariot may attack any warrior on foot as if they were mounted. Those on foot may fight back as if the warriors in the chariot were mounted. However, the driver of a chariot may overrun his enemies, driving his horses and chariot right over them.

Overrun attacks are detailed in *The Player's Handbook*. If successful, such an attack will cause an additional amount of damage to the target equal to the Overrun score of the chariot, as covered above.

Collisions and Overturning

One of the most impressive sights on the battlefield or racetrack is that of a chariot moving at full speed then, for whatever reason, overturning. Wood, passengers and horses all tumble and break apart as a cloud of dust and blood veils the entire mess. Few ever survive such accidents and it is often only the skill of the charioteer that can avoid such disaster.

Handle Animal checks are used by the charioteer to control his chariot whenever he attempts an extreme action or when a collision looms up ahead. The DCs of such checks are listed below;



Action DC

Cutting free a dead horse before chariot overturns:	10
Swapping drivers whilst chariot is in motion:	10
Hitting Medium-sized creature or object:	15
Hitting Large-sized creature or object:	20
Hitting an immovable object such as a stone building:	30

There is a +5 bonus to this check if the chariot is moving at base speed or slower and a -5 penalty if it is moving at running speed.

If the Handle Animal check is successful, the chariot neatly avoids the obstacle or swerves at the last moment. Games Masters are encouraged to use the above examples as a base should their players ever attempt an action not listed here. If the driver passes his check, he succeeds in the action he was attempting or manages to avoid tragedy, as appropriate. If he fails the check by 5 points or less, the chariot must move in a completely straight line for the next round. No turns or drifts may be attempted. If the chariot cannot move straight ahead for whatever reason (an immovable object being directly in front of it for example), then the chariot will automatically overturn. If he fails by more than 5 points, the chariot will overturn.

Overturning

If a chariot overturns, the chariot itself, along with all passengers and horses, take an amount of damage equal to the Overrun score of the chariot. Passengers may make a Reflex check at DC 20 to halve this damage. An overturned chariot, if it survives intact, takes 1d6 minutes to put right and re-hitch any living horses. As battles frequently last several hours, with brief rests between engagements, this is quite commonly done on the battlefield. The combined Strength required is equal to the original hit points of the chariot.

Chariot Upgrades

All chariots may be upgraded with fittings and devices designed to increase their lethality in some way for battle. The weight of these upgrades is deducted from the cargo capacity of the chariot in question. Many charioteers and warriors spend a great deal of time personalising their chariots, wanting a distinctive-looking vehicle so as to ensure they are highly visible on the battlefield.

Archery Rack

Many chariots have the cheap addition of a simple wooden spear rack mounted inside, allowing crews ready access to enough ranged weapons to last an entire battle.

An archery rack holds up to two bows of any kind, and comes with three oversize quivers each holding up to 40 arrows. 10 lb. 20 sp.

Metal Banding

Large iron bands hammered around the frame at the sides of the chariot, greatly increasing its resilience to damage. Whereas a normal chariot may be susceptible to strikes from axes and heavier weapons, it will take a determined and accurate hit to damage one reinforced with metal banding.

Metal Banding adds a bonus of +1 to a chariot's hardness score. 120 lb. 200 sp.



New Feat

Chariot Combat (General)

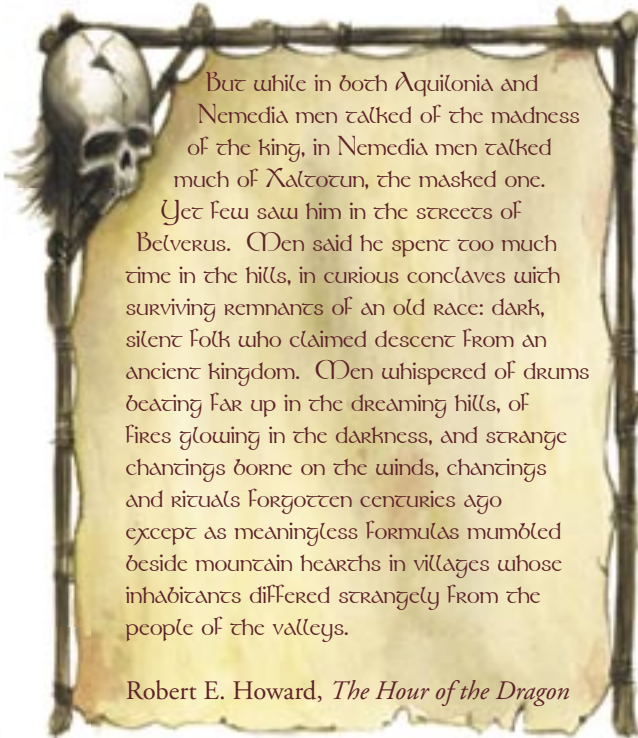
You are skilled in chariot combat, maximising the benefits from the limited cover afforded you by its walls.

Prerequisite: Handle Animal skill, Base Attack Bonus +1.

Benefit: When you are in a chariot, you gain double the usual cover bonus from its low walls.

Special: If you have the Chariot Combat feat, you may select any feats for which the Mounted Combat feat is a prerequisite just as though you also had Mounted Combat. These feats may then be used when you are in a chariot, just as though you were mounted. However, you may not use them when mounted unless you also have Mounted Combat.

New Race: Acheronian



But while in both Aquilonia and Nemedian men talked of the madness of the king, in Nemedian men talked much of Xaltotun, the masked one. Yet few saw him in the streets of Belverus. Men said he spent too much time in the hills, in curious conclaves with surviving remnants of an old race: dark, silent folk who claimed descent from an ancient kingdom. Men whispered of drums beating far up in the dreaming hills, of fires glowing in the darkness, and strange chantings borne on the winds, chantings and rituals forgotten centuries ago except as meaningless formulas mumbled beside mountain hearths in villages whose inhabitants differed strangely from the people of the valleys.

Robert E. Howard, *The Hour of the Dragon*

Though the ancient empire of Acheron was overrun and destroyed by the Hyborian barbarians three millennia ago, many of Acheronians survived the

onslaught and were assimilated into the then-new Hyborian kingdoms, particularly in Nemedian and Aquilonia. Here their descendants survive in scattered hill villages, barely noticed by the descendants of the barbarian destroyers of Acheron, preserving dark rituals and strange customs that have otherwise been forgotten. In these tiny hamlets the Acheronians bide their time, firmly believing that their empire of evil will one day return, overthrowing the petty kingdoms of the Hyborians to usher in a new reign of sorcery.

Acheronians are tall, white-skinned and dark-haired. The men tend to wear full beards and are cadaverously thin, while the women are lithe yet voluptuous. Some scholars believe the Acheronians to be closely related to the race of giant-kings that are said to have been the founders of Stygia, long before those now known as Stygians conquered that land.

Culture: The culture of Acheron is now so lost in the mists of time that many Hyborians doubt that it is anything other than a myth. Similar to Stygians in many ways, the Acheronians were greater sorcerers, practising foul necromancy, thaumaturgy of the most evil kind, and grisly magic taught to them by devils. They built towers rather than pyramids and used gold coin as currency. The degenerate modern Acheronian is no more than a shadow of those ancient sorcerers.

Names: Xaltotun, Baal, Chiron, Tothmekri, Thugra Khotan and Akivasha are the only Acheronian names we know of for certain. Contemporary Acheronians might give their children Nemedian or Aquilonian names as a form of cover, or, as with the examples we have of ancient Acheronian names, their names might be similar to those of Stygia or derived from names of Phoenician gods and demons. Suggestions: (male) Aleyin, El, Hadad, Hammon, Hay-Tau, Keret, Mot, Ruti, Sutekh, Tsaphon; (female) Anat, Asherat, Baalat, Sapas.



Religion: Like the Stygians, the Acheronians of old were worshipers of Set, the Old Serpent. They believed, not without some justification, in bodily resurrection, and communed with the creatures of the Outer Dark, often taking such devils as familiars.

- +2 Charisma, -2 Strength. Acheronians have very forceful personalities, but are far less powerful of body.
- -1 racial penalty to all Diplomacy and Gather Information checks that target non-Acheronians. Though

Acheronians are powerfully charismatic, there is a sinister and rather antisocial edge to their personalities that makes other races very wary of them.

- +2 racial bonus to all Craft (alchemy), Craft (herbalism) and Knowledge (arcana) checks. Acheronians still remember the old ways, the ways that once allowed their ancestors to rule much of the known world by sheer magical might.
- -2 racial penalty to all saving throws against

Corruption. Acheronians are probably the most corrupt human race still in existence, if they can even be said to be truly human. It would not even occur to a typical Acheronian to resist being corrupted, or even that it was possible to become more corrupt!

- +1 racial bonus to all magic attack rolls when using curses. Acheronians are experts in the path of wizardry in general, but are particularly effective and vindictive when blasting their enemies with curses.

Background Skills:

Craft (alchemy), Craft (herbalism), Knowledge (arcana).

Favoured Class:

Scholar.

Prohibited Classes:

Barbarian, Noble, Nomad, Pirate.

Automatic Languages:

Acheronian, plus the language of whichever Hyborian kingdom they live in.

Bonus Languages: Demonic, Old Stygian, Nemedian, Aquilonian, Brythunian, Ophirean, Corinthian, Hyperborean.

