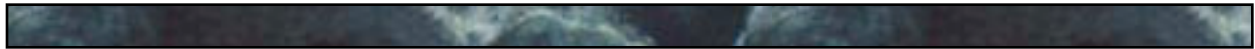


STORM KNIGHTS

MAGIC AXIOM

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MAGIC AXIOM

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INTRODUCTION

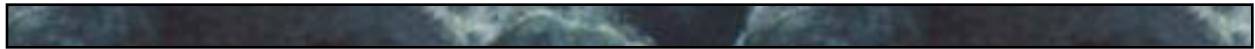
The first goal for STORM KNIGHTS was to update and revise the axiom charts of TORG. The official charts had many blank entries, many entries whose meaning was opaque, and the charts were not well suited for use with any realities other than the official ones.

Updating and revising the axioms has been a massive undertaking, Magic more-so than any other: the scope of what people consider to be magic is broad, and there are thousands of different magic systems, each with their own idiosyncrasies. Much of the material is contradictory and

seemingly irreconcilable.

Yet underlying all (or nearly all) of these differing systems of magic was a single common concept, a single shared assumption about what magic is. This assumption underlies magic in the real world, magic in fiction, and magic in role-playing games.

That assumption, distilled down into a coherent and concrete principle, forms the core of the revised Magic axiom and of a revised magic system. It answers a question that has taxed many: “What is magic?”



WHAT IS MAGIC?

Magic and magical concepts have existed in every culture known. Magic forms the backbone of most myths and legends, and folklore and superstition are alive and well in the modern world.

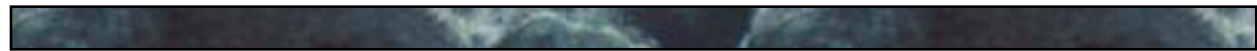
Magic has many permutations. Nearly every culture views magic differently, and many cultures have multiple forms of magic. Then there are the manifold magical systems developed for roleplaying games and fantasy fiction.

All of these seem incompatible, yet all of these apparently different magical sys-

tems share a single fundamental concept:

Magic involves people causing effects by manipulating symbols that represent the desired effect.

Let's expand. A **symbol** can be anything: a word, a picture, a gesture, or an activity. An **effect** is a specific desired end: cause injury, cure an illness, bring good fortune. In magic, people manipulate symbols that represent the effect and by doing so, cause the effect to actually happen.



Real World Magic

A college student shuffles the cards of the Tarot deck. Each card has a meaning, the way in which they're laid out has a meaning, what cards appear where in the layout have meaning, and whether the cards are upright or inverted has a meaning. These cards are said to foretell the future of an individual.

According to Joseph Campbell, the paintings on the cave walls in Lascaux invoke the magic of the hunt. People drew images of a successful hunt, so their hunts would be successful.

Isopsephia is an ancient form of numerology. To use this system, the person must convert the letters of their name to numbers, then find other words, names and dates whose numbers are related. Because their numbers are related to his numbers, those words, dates, and names are significant and foretell the person's future.

Magic in Fiction

The television show *The X-Files* featured an episode with an Appalachian folk magician. He wanted to harm a family, so he made dolls that looked human, that had

“In *Call of Cthulhu*, characters research ancient texts, written in dead languages, that tell of monstrous and inhuman beings from beyond existence.”

the same hair color as the person, that had bits of the target's hair and clothes, that had features which resemble the target's. What he did to the doll—burn it or stick pins into its eyes—happened to the target.

“Each card has a meaning, the way in which they're laid out has a meaning, what cards appear where in the layout have meaning. These cards allow the skilled to foretell the future of an individual.”

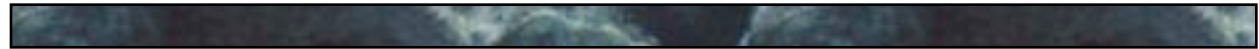
In Randall Garret's “Lord Darcy” stories, magic involved performing actions with objects, these actions and objects being related to what the magician wants to occur. The specific relationships were detailed in a series of laws—the Law of Contagion, Similarity, Synecdoche, etc.

Ursula K. Leguin's *A Wizard of Earthsea* had magic that revolved around a language, the true language that was spoken to create the world. Words in this language have power. By using the word *tolk*, for pebble, a magician could create a pebble, create the image of a pebble, cause the pebble to move, or break a pebble. Magicians studied intently in order to learn and use the words, and went to great lengths to discover lost words.

Magic in Roleplaying Games

The magic of *Wizards of the Coast's Dungeons & Dragons* involves spell components. Magicians burn guano to cause a fireball. They rub fur on a glass rod to cast a lightning bolt. To understand another's language, they take a ceramic model of a ziggurat and break it. Each component symbolizes the spell's effect.

In *Call of Cthulhu*, characters research ancient texts, written in dead languages, that tell of monstrous and inhuman beings from beyond existence. When the stars are right, they read the incantation—that in-



cludes appeals to unknown powers—and can summon or banish impossible horrors.

In *Mage: the Ascension*, mages use foci—ranging from feathers and drawings to dances and meditation—to work magic, each Tradition having its own unique sets of foci corresponding to its paradigm.

The Fundamental Principle of Magic

What is magic?

Magic is the use of symbols to cause specific results, the symbols representing the desired result.

Symbolic manipulation is the implicit principle behind all magic: magic in the

OTHER MAGICS

As stated in the Introduction, the scope of magic is very broad. In addition to spellcasting, it includes forgotten lands, magical creatures, and magical materials.

However, spellcasting (encapsulated by the Fundamental Principle of Magic) is the most common, most iconic form of magic, and the one most likely to be used by players.

The other forms of magic have their place on the new axiom chart, but for the sake of clarity they are not discussed in this article, but in later articles.

real world, magic in fiction, and magic in roleplaying games. This principle describes what magic is, because it's what everyone believes magic to be.



THE AGES OF MAGIC

Though each magic system revolves around magic's Fundamental Principle, not all of them work the same. Some forms of magic are precise and controllable, others obscure and imprecise, and some are mere superstitions. Magic is sometimes weak and unpredictable, and at other times is powerful and exacting.

These disparities make it seem as if devising an overarching scheme for magic is impossible. It isn't, for behind all of these differences there is a discernible order to magic, a path to its development from something weak and difficult to control to

something powerful and easy to control. This path—which underlies the Magic axiom—can be broken up into five separate stages, the Ages of Magic.

The Age of Superstition

At low Axiom levels, magic is unknowable, uncontrollable, and unreliable. It manifests as good and bad luck, superstitions, good luck charms, omens, fortune-telling, and curses. Folklore and superstitions are the only source of magical knowledge.



The Age of Mysticism

Mystic magic is obscure, ritualized, undependable, and limited in effect. It is difficult to discern the principles of mystical magics, and comprehensive, well-understood systems of magic are unknown. Magical learning is taught by tradition, as rituals handed down from person to person. New rituals may be unearthed from time to time, but this is a haphazard process of trial and error.

The Age of Arcana

Arcane magic is specialized, controllable, and exacting. The principles of magic are known and understood, allowing for a comprehensive body of magical knowledge. This body of knowledge allows spells to be created and used, but only with intense study. This limits spellcasting to specialists, variously referred to as sorcerers, wizards, magicians, mages, and so forth. Magic can be dramatic and powerful, and can have a great deal of impact on the daily lives of many.

The Age of Mastery

Magic is no longer an esoteric discipline, it is a ubiquitous tool that anyone

can use. Common people can learn cantrips, minor spells of great utility, and mages can learn spell formulae, allowing them to surpass the rigid restrictions of spells. The fundamental essence of magic has been identified, and mages can use magic more flexibly than ever before. Innate magics, or talents, are possible, meaning some can work magic because it is a part of who they are.

“At the apotheosis of the axiom, anyone can use wish magic, and everyone does.”

The Age of Myth

Magic can be worked by the pure application of desire: magicians can wish for something and it happens. At the apotheosis of the axiom, anyone can use wish magic, and everyone does.

These five Ages form the backbone of the Magic axiom, and define the path it takes. Nearly all systems of magic, from fiction, the real world, or other games, can be placed into this progression somewhere.



MAGIC AXIOM

The Magic axiom limits the “supernatural” elements of a reality. It determines what magic can do, what methods are available to evoke magic, and the extent to which the supernatural can affect the natural world.

This is the essential axiom chart, the chart reduced to the bare minimum of complexity (for ease of understanding). It is based around the Fundamental Principle of Magic and the Ages of Magic, but presents both in more detail.

0- Magic has no effect, and magical concepts and beliefs are contradictory.


1- Magical beliefs are now possible, including belief in luck, the symbolic manipulation of luck, omens, and so forth.

The *folk lore* skill is possible.

Axiom 1 is the beginning of the Age of Superstition.

2- Magical energies first manifest: the presence of magic alters the outcome of events for good or ill, causing random outbreaks of good or bad luck. Such magical effects are known as *hexes*.

3- Superstitions can now evoke hexes; people can, through the use of symbols,



bless or curse each other or themselves. *Omens*, spontaneous events that prefigure good or ill luck, first manifest. The skill of *omen reading* is possible, which allows individuals to understand the import of omens.

4- Rituals to evoke omens are now possible, allowing for fortunetelling. Fortunetelling can predict the future, though only in the most general fashion, and doing so is very unreliable.

5- Rituals can now evoke hexes (though unreliably). A body of magical lore can be accumulated, which lore consists of a collection of recorded rituals. Many rituals do not work and those that do work are extremely unreliable. There is no way to differentiate between the two. As a result, magical knowledge is heavily entwined with folklore.

Magical Traditions can be formalized, and organizations based on a Tradition are possible.

This is the beginning of the Age of Mysticism.

6- Rituals increase in reliability; it is now possible to distinguish real rituals from folklore. A deliberate study of symbols is now possible, allowing the learned to guess at what symbols might evoke a desired effect. Through this process, they can discover new rituals.

7- The magical symbology of a Tradition can be formulated as a detailed series of magical laws; these laws delineate which symbols are needed to evoke a given effect (thus eliminating guesswork). Reliable rituals are now possible.

8- The rudiments of spells and spell-casting are developed. Specially trained (or talented) individuals can devise and cast spells. Spells allow precise control over when, how, and how powerfully a magical effect manifests. The spellcaster's

WHY TRADITIONS?

One of the strengths of the new Magic axiom is the sheer variety it enables. From primitive superstitions to overpowering wish magics, the new chart is rife with ideas that enable gamemasters, players, and writers to explore new cosms and new characters.

Differentiation is important: if every cosm has the exact same type of magic, there is nothing significant to distinguish a Cyberpapal mage from his Ayslish counterpart. Fortunately, the cosm sourcebooks went to some length to try and distinguish one cosm's magic from another's.

Examples include the spell magic of Aysle, the mystical Occult of Orrorsh, the technomagic of Tharkold, Nile's Mathematics, and the theme magics of Core Earth. The new Magic axiom seeks to support the same variety and extend it.

In the new Axiom, each unique variety of magic is a Tradition. Cosms can have many Traditions or one (or none, at an Axiom of 0). Traditions let the new chart support the extant magic systems of *Torg*.

It also allows the importation of Magic systems from other games. As *Dungeons & Dragons* wizards are different from *Deadlands* hucksters and *Earthdawn* mages, the Axiom needs to recognize and support such differences.

Last, Traditions exist in the real world. Voodoo is different from Kaballah, which differs from Enochian magic, geomancy, and Pythagorean magic. Each of these different magical systems are Traditions, and the Axiom allows for them to exist in-game.

Traditions exist in *Torg*, the real world, and other roleplaying games. The new Magic axiom had to allow for their existence as well.

Tradition limits what effects are possible. Divination effects are possible. The earliest types of magical creatures appear.

Axiom 8 is the beginning of the Age of Arcana.

9- Apportation effects are possible. Spells can be translated between Traditions. Focusing is possible.

10- Alteration effects are possible. Impressing is possible.

WHY 0-21?

The original *Torg* axiom charts were numbered from 0 to 33. Despite this, there were a number of holes—the charts were simply incomplete. One of the goals of revising the axiom charts has been to fill in the holes.

Yet, during this process, it has become clear that having 34 benchmarks for each axiom is simply overkill. The complete charts were less usable, not because of bad content but because of information overload. There was just too much information to amass comfortably.

With 34 benchmarks, the differences between each axiom level were small, in some cases imperceptible. They tended to blur together in an indistinct mess. As a result, the many realities tended to blur together as well, especially if their axiom rating was close to that of another cosm.

In comparison, this Magic axiom is clear, distinct, and usable. Each axiom level has its own feel, its own flavor. Even cosms that differ by only one point are distinctly different. It makes it easier to differentiate realities, which makes it easier to build a variety of well-defined realities.

Having 22 benchmarks makes the axiom easier to understand. It makes it more useful as a system to describe and differentiate realities. Taken together, these make it easier for players and gamemasters to understand and play in each reality.

This reasoning holds for all the axioms, not just Magic. The next revisions of the other axiom charts will use 0-21 benchmarks as well.

11- Conjunction effects are possible. Wards are possible. Charges are possible.

12- Traditions no longer limit the type of effects that are possible. Permanent magical items are possible.

13- Mages can discover the essence of a cosm's magic; this essence underlies all magic in the cosm and is the source of all magic in the cosm. Knowledge of the fundamental nature of magic allows mages to transcend the limitations of a Tradition. They can share spells freely between different Traditions and can even devise and cast spells that use no symbols (although

such spells are more difficult to cast and produce weaker effects).

Axiom 13 is the beginning of the Age of Mastery.

14- Spell manipulation becomes possible, allowing mages to bend the rigid limits of a spell (e.g. to allow the effect to last longer or to make the spell more powerful). Manipulating a spell requires extra effort during spellcasting.

15- Spell formulae develop. A formula is a spell that can be manipulated at will, with no extra effort or concentration.

16- Spontaneous magic (casting “on-the-fly”) develops. Mages can select an effect and cast it without using a spell (drawing the energy directly from the essence of magic itself). Spontaneous magic can use components, but none are required.

17- Conjunctional magic becomes possible, allowing mages to mix different effects into the same casting (either as a spell or a spontaneous magic effect.)

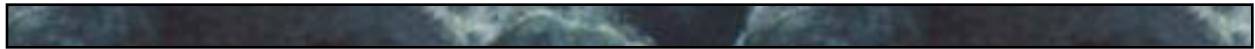
18- Wish magic develops. A wish mirrors the desires of the mage creating it; what he wants, happens. Mages no longer need to learn different magical skills, as a wish can duplicate any one of them.

Axiom 18 is the beginning of the Age of Myth.

19- Potential wishes (wishes which are created by mages, but which can enact the desires of anyone) are possible.

20- Wish magic can be used unskilled, though trained mages are far more proficient.

21- Wish magic becomes an innate ability. Anyone can evoke a wish, simply by concentrating.



CONVERSION

Because the axiom chart has been altered, conversion notes are necessary. The following notes allow gamemasters to convert Magic axiom ratings from the old axiom to the new axiom.

Each entry lists two values, a literal conversion, which maintains the old Magic rating as much as possible, and a "suggested" rating, which better reflects the nature of magic in that cosm.

When converting, gamemasters should keep in mind that, because the new chart is so different from the old, differences be-

tween the old cosm and the new cosm are to be expected, both in available spell effects and available mechanics.

The Cosms

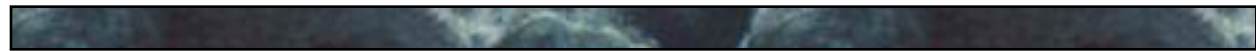
Aysle

Original: 18

Literal Conversion: 14

Suggested: 16

Notes: A Magic of 14 allows for all



tools Aysle currently has, with the exception of “on-the-fly” spellcasting. A 16 would allow for “on-the-fly” spells, but would also include spell formulae, something the original cosm didn’t have.

Gamemasters who wish to portray the cosm mostly as it was can use the 14 and disallow “on-the-fly” spellcasting or use 16 and ignore spell formula. However, a 16 does allow for some very interesting options for Aysle (see page 14 for details).

Core Earth

Original: 7

Literal Conversion: 5

Suggested: 5

Notes: A 5 includes fortunetelling and Traditions, both of which Earth has (whether or not magic works in the real world). Anything higher is too advanced for a "Near Real World" cosm, though (as in the official material), some areas of Earth might have crossed over to a 6 or 7.

Cyberpapacy

Original: 10

Literal Conversion: 10

Suggested: 10

Notes: Despite the relatively high Magic axiom of the Cyberpapacy, there are no spells in the cosm’s sourcebook and only two creatures have spells listed (both gospogs). This makes it difficult to judge what the reality should have. A 10 allows for the creatures listed in the sourcebook (Cygoyles, demons, etc.) as well as substantially the same spell effects available at a TORG 10.

Land Below

Original: 12

COSM	ORIGINAL	LITERAL	SUGGESTED
Aysle	18	14	16
Core Earth	7	5	5
Cyberpapacy	10	10	10
Land Below	12	11	11
Living Land	0	0	3
Nile Empire	12	8	11
Nippon Tech	2	1	1
Orrorsh	15/20	12/16	6/12
Space Gods	7	5	0
Tharkold	12	8	12
Tz’Ravok	7	5	2

Literal Conversion: 11

Suggested: 11

Notes: The creatures observed in the Land Below, like Ungrosh, require a 9. However, an 11 allows for the spell effects available under the original axiom (such as the wards and charges of Engineering).

Living Land

Original: 0


Literal Conversion: 0

Suggested: 3

Notes: There is no compelling reason for the Living Land to be a 0, and the superstitions of Magic 3 suit its primitive and tribal nature well. With this rating, eidenos might hunt only on lucky days or they might eat the right berries before the hunt, for luck. Such superstitious rituals could actually bring good or bad luck, though this is hard to prove (not that an eidenos would try).

Keeping the rating of 0 does offer some interesting options. The eidenos would believe that there is no luck, for everything is Lanala and is governed by Lanala.

Chad Dickhaut: “Why do you soft-



skins agonize over the cause of things? The Carnol attacked our camp because it was hungry. The snake crawled into your pack because it was cold. Those villagers came down with the sleeping sickness because that is the way of things for those who live near the marshlands. In all of them is Lanala. How can you attribute to 'luck' what is caused by the goddess?"

This option would give the eidenos another area of commonality with the Akashans (see "Space Gods", below), giving them even more motivation to favor the Living Land (as they did in the official campaign).

Nile Empire

Original: 12

Literal Conversion: 8

Suggested: 11

Notes: Most engineering effects (such as maat matrices) are technically wards, which the Nile didn't have access to. An 11 allows for the existence of Wards, which Engineering should have, but means the Nile's Traditions are still restricted by their theme (as they are in the *Nile Empire Sourcebook*.)

Nippon Tech

Original: 2

Literal Conversion: 1

"With a Magic axiom of 6, the essence of magic is unknown, so no one knows what the Occult is or who's behind it. Which is just how the Gaunt Man likes it."

"Why do you soft-skins agonize over the cause of things? The Carnol attacked our camp because it was hungry. The snake crawled into your pack because it was cold. In all of them is Lanala. How can you attribute to 'luck' what is caused by the goddess?"

Suggested: 1

Notes: A 1 indicates that Nipponese can believe in superstitions and fortune-telling, but they don't actually work. People can knock on wood, but it's pointless. This seems apt for the reality.

Orrorsh

Original: 15 (20 for the Occult)

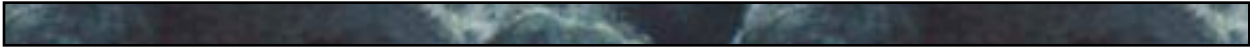
Literal Conversion: 12 (16 for the Occult)

Suggested: 6 (12 for Occult effects)

Notes: Orrorsh's Occult is a mysterious form of magic whose practitioners have to guess at what symbols (called props or Nouns) might evoke a given desired effect, using their own knowledge and mysterious, possibly untrustworthy occult tomes. This is exactly the type of magic prevalent at Axiom 6.

Thought the Occult could be seen as spontaneous magic, making the cosm 12/16 (the "straight" conversion), the murky rituals of 6 are far more appropriate for the feel of Orrorsh and the feel of the Occult. Making it a straight 6 would limit the potential effects, however.

The reality of Orrorsh (implicitly, a



world law) boosts the Magic axiom to 20 for Occult events, causing weird visual manifestations (like inexplicable storms). Under the revised Axiom, it works in much the same way, boosting the Magic to a 12. The most appropriate Axiom rating for Orrorsh is: 6 (12 for Occult rituals and effects).

“Ravagons worship Ravok alone, and the practice of magic is utterly alien to them.”

At a 6, all magical spells are contradictory. This isn't problematic. As the *Orrorsh Sourcebook* notes, spells are rare and usually contradictory, just as they are with a Magic of 6.

Spells from Orrorsh (limited to those in the sourcebook) are the result of Occult investigations and almost impossible to find, hence are not contradictory in Orrorsh (the same phenomena that powers the Occult also raises the Axiom for native spells). Optionally, gamemasters might consider eliminating Orrorshan spells altogether, restricting natives to Occult rituals.

Horrors are magical creatures, so require a sufficient axiom to support their existence. A 6 wouldn't but a 12 does, so the same 6/12 rating allows for them to exist, exactly as described in the sourcebook.

One last note: With a Magic axiom of 6, the essence of magic is unknown, so no one knows what the Occult is or who's behind it. Which is just how the Gaunt Man likes it.

Space Gods

Original: 7

Literal Conversion: 5

Suggested: 0

Notes: The Space Gods cosm shouldn't

have a Magic of 5 (and should never have had a 7 under the official chart). Whereas Earth has various magical Traditions and practitioners of the same, the Star Sphere does not. Add to this its status as the “Reality of Science Fiction”, including the Akashans' scientific (and hence natural law) orientation, a 0 is far more apt.

A 0 means the Akites don't believe in superstitions, good or bad luck, or folklore. They quite likely regard Earth's acceptance of the same as evidence of humanity's primitive nature. The Akashans are rationalists, to the core.

Tharkold

Original: 12

Literal Conversion: 8

Suggested: 12

Notes: An 12 allows for the creatures appropriate to Tharkold as well as (most of) the effects currently present there.

Tz'Ravok

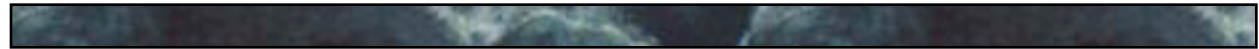
Original: 7

Literal Conversion: 5

Suggested: 2

Notes: According to the *Ravagons Sourcebook* (pg. 39), “No natural magic systems exist on Tz'Ravok.” More (from page 9), “[r]avagons have no natural ability for the arcane arts” and “ravagons throughout the ages have left magic alone.” In fact “there are not even any legends concerning magic” among ravagons.

That is a pitch-perfect description of a cosm with no magic, that is, an Axiom of 0. An Axiom of 0 might be a good suggested value, but we already have one cosm with an Axiom of 0 (the Space Gods). Why have perfectly good low Magic axiom levels, if they're not going to



be used? Part of the point in re-designing the Axiom charts was to allow for variety in Axiom levels, this should be taken advantage of.

Since we've already got one 0 axiom, Axiom 2 is a good suggested value. A 2

means ravagons can be superstitious, but these superstitions have no effect. Good and bad luck can exist, but appear at random. There is still no actual magic use, so no changes to the setting need be made.



AYSLE AS A MAGIC 16 REALITY


The primary difference between canon Aysle's Magic and the "suggested" rating is the presence of spell formulae. A spell formula is much like a spell, but instead of having a single set Effect Value, Range and so forth, the values for the Spell Formula are chosen each time a mage casts it.

Formulae are highly magical and very flexible. In comparison, spell magic is rigid and limiting. To raise the Effect Value of a *fireball* spell, the mage has to design the whole spell again, from the very beginning. To raise the Effect

"Ayslish magic would be clearly superior to all other magics, even those from otherwise magically powerful cosms."

Value of a *fireball* formula, the mage just chooses a higher Effect Value as they are casting it, and each time they cast they can choose a different value.

If Aysle has access to spell formulae, while other cosms do not, this gives Ayslish mages a distinct advantage. Ayslish magic would be clearly superior to all other magics, even those from otherwise magically powerful cosms (like Tharkold). This makes the "Reality of Magic" the most magical reality.



Integrating spell formulae is very easy, as they change nothing about the feel or setting of the cosm. Mages still have grimoires (but grimoires full of formulae instead of spells), they still cast magical effects using symbols, they still use the four magics and arcane knowledges. The setting remains the same, only now it's more distinctive, different from all the other cosms.

Another Option

For gamemasters who wish to use a 16, but dislike suddenly adding spell formulae, another option is available. If we assume that Aysle only recently became 16, then spell formulae and “on-the-fly” castings are recent innovations, innovations which not all mages have access to.

One can learn to cast “on-the-fly” easily, and most mages have, but devising and using spell formulae takes special instruction, instructions not available outside the High Lord’s coterie of magicians. In this case, Aysle mages would still have books of spells (as in the current material), but they would be aware of the rumors of spell formulae, and would be desperately seeking to learn about them.

If the High Lord’s mages possess the secrets of spell formulae and mages of the

Armies of the Light don't, this explains why Dark mages dominate, even over more skilled and learned mages of the Light. The effort to steal the secrets of formulae could be a source of adventure

“An Ayslish PC with formulae will be equally footed with Dark mages, and superior to technodemons and Cyberpapal witches. He'd also be a celebrity among his magical colleagues in Aysle.”

ideas. This would allow the players to intervene and change the course of Aysle’s civil war, by doing something useful to alter the balance of power. That's a victory worth Glory.

An Ayslish PC with formulae will be equally footed with Dark mages, and superior to technodemons and Cyberpapal witches. He'd also be a celebrity among his magical colleagues in Aysle.

Using spell formulae doesn't alter Aysle, but does make it unique. This is a strong reason for gamemasters to consider utilizing them.



AFTERWARD: A MAGIC METASYSTEM

There are many systems of magic, each differing from the others. The Ages of Magic, and the new Magic axiom, have been written with the varying characteristics of different magic systems in mind. In effect, they describe not just one system of magic, but a meta-system of magic. This metasytem allows us to understand and incorporate many different magical systems.

Here's how it works:

In some magic systems, magic is weak and chaotic, in others powerful and rigid, in yet others it's powerful and free-form, with few restrictions on the mage.

In TORC, when magic first materializes it is weak and poorly understood, as expertise with magic grows it becomes powerful and controllable, and eventually it becomes capable of effects that are breathtaking in scope. Thus, the varying capabili-


ties of the many magical systems represent not irreconcilable differences, but different stages in the development of magic, that is, different levels of the Magic axiom.

By analyzing the unique characteristics of specific systems, we can place that system within the overarching Magic axiom.

Examples

- *Dungeons & Dragons* magic (in Third Edition and earlier) revolves around magic-users learning and casting spells. Magic-users are specialists, and not everyone can be a wizard. These are all prime attributes of the Age of Arcana, so *Dungeons & Dragons* fits somewhere in that range, probably at a 13.

- Magic in Brandon Sanderson's *Elantris* and the *Mistborn Trilogy* revolves around innate abilities, channelled through external props (in *Elantris*, magical sigils, in *Mistborn*, pieces of metal). Innate



magical abilities belong to the Age of Mastery, so these two worlds are probably a 14 or 15.

- *Mage: The Ascension* presents a distinctive and colorful system of “magick.” Though its metaphysic is fundamentally incompatible with TORG’s, the elements of its magick have clear parallels in the new axiom.

The *Mage* magic system involves Traditions (each with their own paradigm and symbology), rites (formalized repeatable effects), and free-form magic (which can accomplish nearly anything). They can also combine radically different magics into one effect (in TORG terms, conjunctive magic). All of these concepts are present in the Magic chart, conjunctive magic being the most advanced at a 17 (probably the best rating for the *Mage* system).

The mechanics of *Mage: The Ascension* cannot be perfectly reflected within TORG (not uncommon, see the *Translating Game Mechanics* sidebar, above). Even so, its concepts fit into the Magic chart and an appropriate axiom rating can be determined.

In a similar manner, the Ages of Magic

TRANSLATING GAME MECHANICS

Though the axiom chart includes enough variety to translate nearly any fictional setting into *Torg* terms, translating a roleplaying setting presents additional difficulties. As the *Mage: the Ascension* example shows, even if the concepts behind the magic of the setting are neatly compatible, the game mechanics will not be.

The game mechanics of magical systems—such as those in *Shadowrun*, *Earthdawn*, *Deadlands*, or *Dungeons & Dragons*—are predicated on the mechanics of their parent system: *Dungeons & Dragons* Class-Levels, *Shadowrun*’s dice pools, *Earthdawn*’s Disciplines, the poker deck and chips of *Deadlands*. This makes it impossible to exactly recreate them using *Torg* mechanics.

Fortunately, this was not a design goal of the new Magic axiom. Instead, the axiom includes those common concepts that underlie most settings, allowing the settings (if not the mechanics) to be translated into *Torg* terms. Gamemasters who wish to translate the mechanics of other settings must look elsewhere for advice.

metasystem enables gamemasters to adjudicate the Magic axiom of nearly any other setting they wish to translate into TORG terms (some more easily than others). This gives TORG magic an unprecedented level of flexibility and scope, its only limits the imaginations of writers and gamemasters.



CONCLUSION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I set out to revise TORG's axiom charts, I had a few goals in mind:

- 1.) To maximize TORG's ability to represent a large variety of settings—original or imported—with a high degree of fidelity.
- 2.) To give gamemasters and writers tools to build any reality they wished.
- 3.) To make each chart complete and internally consistent.
- 4.) To include within each axiom a variety of concepts and tools that improve its playability and flavor.
- 5.) To make each axiom level distinct from the others, having its own feeling, its own flavor.

With of the Ages of Magic metasystem, the Magic axiom finally fulfills these goals.

Under this chart, magic is no longer one kind of magic, it's many different kinds of magic. This is good for each cosm individually and for the game as a whole.

The axiom is now distinct- each axiom level is present, each level is different from the one before and the one after, each has its own flavor (or offers its own unique tools for mages to use).

This axiom is coherent- there is a consistent theory behind magic and how it develops. Each level leads logically to the next, and the whole forms an understandable progression.

Last, and most importantly, it is ecumenical. It reflects a greater variety of magical concepts, but is based on the one implicit concept common to all, or nearly all, systems of magic.

This axiom chart allows the TORG magic system to replicate many settings, from the real world to *A Song of Ice and Fire* to *Ars Magica*, which enables gamemasters to more easily translate other settings into TORG cosms. It also allows extant TORG cosms to be more distinctive, more colorful (“Aysle as a Magic 16 Reality” for ex-



ample).

I've always believed that this is what TORG could be, if done correctly, that it's what TORG should be. After nearly a decade of research and development, I am inexpressibly happy to have reached the point where the Magic axiom finally lives up to my vision. I can only hope that, when complete, the other axiom charts will as well.

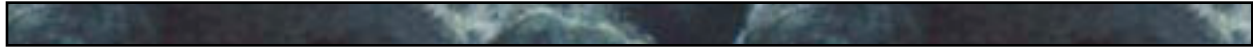
In conclusion, I want to thank the many people who've helped along the way, most of whom did so without know-

ing it. Thanks is also due to the members of the TORG email List and WEG's TORG boards.

Most importantly, thanks are due to the original designers of TORG and the TORG magic system. This chart differs from theirs greatly, but they developed the concept of an axiom chart and the fundamental concepts of TORG magic, without which I wouldn't have had a place to start from or a vision to work towards.

Thank you.

- Jasyn Jones, January 31, 2010

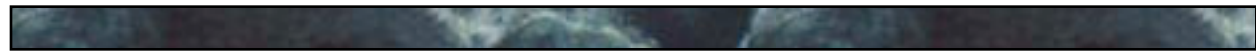


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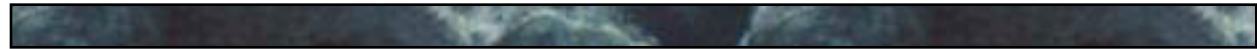
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