



STORM KNIGHTS

TRADITIONS

SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

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TRADITIONS: SCHOOLS OF MAGIC

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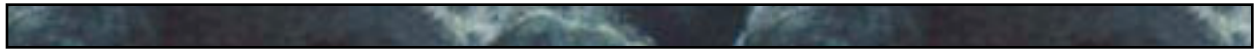
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INTRODUCTION

This article is a product of my efforts to develop a complete Magic axiom chart. Completing the chart required intensive efforts to wards exploring and explaining the basis of magic, developing more generic and robust mechanics, and where necessary pruning old rules.

Conjuration substitution, first introduced in the *Delphi Council Worldbook*, was conceptually bizarre and needlessly complicated. “Theme magic” is a great

idea, but the implementation was terrible.

These rules replace the “conjuration substitution” rules, and provide new magical theory and mechanics to implement differing “schools” of magic.

Note: This is the second edition of the Tradition rules. They have been rewritten not only to make the mechanics of spell translation quicker and simpler, but also to incorporate some changes to the complete Magic axiom and its associated theories.



SYMBOLS AND EFFECTS

Stated very simply, the fundamental concept of magic is this: people do something to cause something else to happen and what they do somehow resembles what they expect to happen.

“What they do” involves *symbols*, “what happens” is the *effect*. In terms most magicians would use: people use symbols to evoke effects, and the symbol somehow relates to or is reminiscent of the effect. This concept can be seen in nearly all systems of magic and underlies nearly all “laws” of magic.

The earliest forms of magic were uncontrollable. The symbol-effect links were unreliable and evoking an effect was difficult.

TRADITIONS

First available at a Magic axiom of 7, a Tradition is an organization of mages who share a common magical paradigm, a shared understanding of how the forces of magic are wielded. Each Tradition has its own unique beliefs and approaches to harnessing magic. Each Tradition is restricted by its own laws, purpose and perceptions, much like schools of philosophy. Each is similar in some respects, but very different in others; although the uninitiated may see little or no difference at all.

Native American Shamanism, for example, is an Earth Tradition that blends religion with magic. Magicians who belong to this Tradition (called Shamans) perceive magic in terms of their religious views.

In order to cast spells, Shamans might include prayers to their totems, or other spirits. They might use beads and eagle feathers, peyote, face paint, and colored sand to craft their rituals. Drums and chants could also be utilized.

Mages found a way to control magic effects through spells. They could pick the symbols, define the effect and create the relationship between the two.

This process depended heavily on the mage’s worldview, which differs from that of other mages, and so two mages couldn’t share spells or pool magical knowledge.

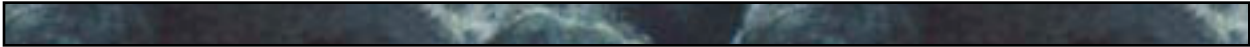
Traditions are schools of magic that are organized around a specific philosophy, religion, moral code or political movement. Members of the Tradition view the world similarly and so can view magic similarly.

This allows them to build a common body of magical knowledge, share spells and pool research.

Other Shamans would recognize the symbolism of the components (chants, beads, and so forth). This shared system of beliefs- the religious nature of the world- is reflected in the component symbology. This shared symbology and shared world view is what allows mages to share ideas, discoveries, and spells.

In roleplaying terms, Traditions reflect a form of theme magic. Each Tradition has its own feel, it’s own accouterments and procedures. Because they share a common belief system, often including a common religious or philosophical outlook, mages from each Tradition also tend to share similar attitudes about life (though there are always exceptions).

This theme is carried out in all aspects of the Tradition, including which spells they can create. Mages cannot create spells which violate their Tradition’s theme. The nature of the limitations depend on the philosophy of the Tradition.



Shamanic spells deal primarily with spirits and afflictions, for example, and a shaman cannot learn, design, or cast a spell like *bullet*, even if would be allowed by his Magic axiom- it doesn't fit his Tradition. These restrictions help reinforce the philosophy and increase the mage's control over magic.

It is these similarities in outlook and philosophy that allow mages to work together, sharing spells freely. It is this similarity of philosophy that also limits mages. Learning how another Tradition works magic is possible, by studying their magi-

THE RULES

The game mechanics of Traditions are controlled by the *magical theory (by Tradition)* skill and the appropriate sections of the extended Magic axiom chart (see Appendix 1).

Each of the four magics has their own associated skill. Only mages can learn the skills of the four magics (indeed, having adds in any of these skills is what makes you a mage).

There is another skill which mages who design spells learn called *magical theory*. Anyone can learn the *magical theory* skill, however, even non-mages.

This **focused** skill (by Tradition) allows you to translate a spell from one Tradition to another (among other uses). *Magical theory* is, in essence, the *science* skill for magic.

Each spell is associated with a Tradition. Only mages of that Tradition can use that spell. All spells will list the Tradition that created them, as well as the game mechanic elements comprising the spell.

Translating Spells

Mages who wish to expand their spell repertoire will often seek to acquire spells

cal theories, but learning to cast spells as they do is impossible.

Spells created by one Tradition can only be cast by members of that same Tradition. An alchemist could not learn any voodoo spells or even cast them directly from a voodoo grimoire unless he first translated the spell. Unrecorded spells cannot, of course, be translated.

It takes long hours of work to learn the theories of an alien Tradition, in order to understand it. Once understood, a mage can attempt to translate spells from the alien Tradition into his own.

from an alien Tradition. In order to be able to understand and learn the foreign spell, the mage must translate it, making it a new spell of their Tradition. Translating spells from one Tradition to another only becomes possible at a Magic axiom of 10.

To convert a spell from one Tradition to another, the mage must first have studied the magical theories of both Traditions- the mage must have at least 1 add in the *magical theory* skill of the alien Tradition and ought be fairly well versed in his own. This gives him the basic understanding of their symbology and allows him to replace it with his Tradition's.

They must also have sufficient adds in the Arcane Knowledge and magic skill to learn the spell.

Example: A shamanic spell has a skill requirement of *divination/folk* 15. A voodoo mage who wishes to translate that spell must meet those requirements.

Rarely, this will include learning the Arcane Knowledges of the alien Tradition, assuming they are different. If the Arcane Knowledge is synonymous with one you already know, there is no problem. If the

Arcane Knowledge isn't part of your Tradition, you must gain adds in it.

The last requirement for translating a spell is a roleplaying consideration. As all Traditions are limited by their theme. For a spell to be a translated, it must fit within the theme of the Tradition. The gamemaster has final say in the case of any disputes.

This is not to say that the components listed with the spell must be appropriate. In the above instance, the shamanic spell is guaranteed to utilize chants and other components that aren't a part of voodoo. Part of translating the spell is converting the magical symbols of the alien Tradition into symbols appropriate for your Tradition.

After meeting the requirements for converting the spell, the mage can begin the process of translation. Translation involves replacing the symbols of one Tradition with the symbols of another.

In game mechanical terms, the "Component Theorems" portion of the spell design sheet is discarded and the player designs a new one. This process works exactly like applying component theorems to the spell during the spell design process. The mage must have adds in component theorems, use appropriate symbols and can take extra time, if they wish.

Component theorems reduce Complexity, just as in spell design, and if the translating mage's Theorem Subtotal is lower than the original, the difference is added to the spell's Complexity. His Theorem Subtotal cannot be higher- the spell cannot be made any more efficient than it is.

Once this process is complete, the mage finishes the spell. This process a number days or weeks of work, depending on the mage's magic axiom (see table, left). Each "day"

| AXIOM | TIME TAKEN |
|-------|------------|
| 10 | 6 weeks |
| 11-15 | 4 weeks |
| 15-20 | 3 days |

MAGIC AXIOM, GRIMOIRE SPELLS, AND TRANSLATING

As with other concepts, Traditions grow in flexibility and power as the Magic axiom rises. The following is a summation of the development of Traditions. (The axiom chart can be found in Appendix 1.)

Mages from cosms with a Magic axiom of less than 5 cannot design, record, or learn grimoire spells.

Grimoire spells are first available at a Magic axiom of 5. Mages from cosms with a Magic of 5 can design and record grimoire spells, but can only learn spells they have designed themselves; they cannot translate foreign spells.

Traditions first develop at a Magic axiom of 7. This allows mages to learn spells from their Tradition, though it is necessary to translate any spells designed by other members of that Tradition, as personal understanding is still important.

At a Magic axiom of 8, mages can learn any spell in their Tradition, no matter who designed the spell.

Translating spells from foreign Traditions is possible at a Magic axiom of 10. The translation rules described above only function for mages from cosms with that axiom or higher.

At a Magic axiom of 13, translation becomes easier. Perfectly translating a spell now requires only a *Good* success (instead of a *Spectacular* success). Each step below *Good* allows the spell to be translated, but introduces a 2- (for *Average*) or 4- (for *Minimal*) point error in the translated spell.

At a Magic axiom of 16, characters no longer need study a foreign magical theory skill. Magical knowledge has become universal enough to make the *magical theory* skill a **general** skill instead of a **focused** skill. This makes translating spells much easier.

Traditions become more generalized at Magic 17. The restrictions of theme magic are lifted: all Traditions may design and cast any spell their Axiom allows. Mages can translate any spell from another Tradition.

Spell translation becomes a simple process at Magic 18. Any success allows the spell to be translated without error.

At Magic 20, Traditions become mostly social organizations. Mages do not need to translate spells at all; they can learn any spell directly from the grimoire of another Tradition.

TRADITIONS AND ARCANE KNOWLEDGES

Most Traditions use the standard arcane knowledges (Folk, Light, etc.), but some Traditions use different ones.

The simplest variant arcane knowledges are synonymous knowledges (see pg. 203 of *The Revised and Expanded Torg Rulebook*). Instead of using Fire, a Tradition might use Flame instead. Such substitutions add a small amount of flavor, without introducing large-scale changes.

Other Traditions might have access to unique arcane knowledges. The Nile Empire, for example, has the Engineering arcane knowledge. In most cases, these are used exactly like existing arcane knowledges, but allow magicians to affect different objects.

There are Traditions that have unique arcane knowledge schemas. These add complexity, and can cause balance issues.

If a variant arcane knowledge schema allows mages of that Tradition to achieve the same effects mages of other Traditions can, but with fewer arcane knowledges, then mages of that Tradition will have a decided advantage- with less skills to learn, they can advance faster, and make more powerful spells. A variant arcane knowledge schema ought to be balanced against the standard, so no one Tradition (or character) has an undue advantage.

A good example of this is the Nile Empire's Engineering schema. Though it only has one arcane knowledge, the range of effects Engineering can create is severely limited. An Engineer cannot cast a *fireball* spell, for example.

The most complicated variant moves beyond alternate arcane knowledges into entirely new skills and mechanics. Such systems discard standard magical mechanics (Principle of Definition, Backlash, etc.) entirely or replace them with something new. Examples of this are the Orrorshan Occult or the Nile Empire's Mathematics.

Highly variant mechanics can be challenging. Each is in essence a wholly new SFX, which increases the complexity for players and gamemasters. The standard rules (such as spell design) must be rethought and sometimes the designers of new systems overlook these issues (Mathematics, for example, has no spell design rules). This places additional burdens on gamemasters who must either ignore such issues or devise house rules to implement them.

(Cont. pg. 6)

represents one work day, or about 8 hours of labor. If the mage works less, for any reason, time to complete the spell increases accordingly. They can work longer, each day, but this does nothing to speed up the process. Each week is a work week, or about 5 days of labor a week. Missing a day of labor increases the time accordingly, but working extra days doesn't speed the process any.

During this time, they cannot engage in any other activity of any significance (spell design, magical research, and the like). They can quit working at any time, and come back to the uncompleted spell later, picking up where they left off.


After the time has been taken, the player makes a *magical theory* (*the mage's Tradition*) skill check. The Difficulty Number for this check is the "Skill:" requirement of the spell. The mage can spend possibilities, but unless the translation is occurring during game time, he cannot spend cards.

In order to convert the spell exactly, he must achieve a *Spectacular* success. Every Success Level lower than that introduces a 2-point error into the spell. Any *failure* requires the mage to try again, by spending the same amount of time again and attempting another *magical theory* (*the mage's Tradition*) skill check.

For each point of error introduced, the gamemaster should do one of the following:

- Subtract one from the Effect Value
- Subtract one from the Range value
- Subtract one from the Duration value
- Add one to the Backlash
- Add one to the Difficulty
- Add one to the Cast Time

The mage cannot change the spell effect at all. Any defects the spell may exhibit cannot be eliminated (on the positive



side, the mage can't introduce any new ones either).

Once this process is completed, the mage can record the new spell in his grimoire. It is a spell of his Tradition and can be shared with all other members of his Tradition.

Translating "On-the-Fly"

In desperate straits, a mage may attempt to translate a spell "on-the-fly." This first becomes available at a Magic axiom of 11. The spell must qualify for translation as normal- if you couldn't translate it normally, you can't translate it "on-the-fly."

Mages from cosms with a Magic of 20 (or higher) don't need to translate foreign spells, so do not need to translate "on-the-fly."

The "on-the-fly" translation process can be done rapidly, within about a minute (6 combat rounds). The mage must score a *Spectacular* success in order to translate the spell, but the check automatically introduces the maximum amount of error- 8 points. Any *failure* means the mage must wait a "work period" (see the table above) before attempting any translation of the spell.

This procedure is dangerous as the mage must discard the Component Theorems of the alien Tradition's spell, and cannot apply theorems as efficiently as during the spell design/translation process. They can select new components, and get the base values for the ones selected, but

TRADITIONS AND ARCANES KNOWLEDGES, CONT.

Additionally, balancing new mechanics is much more difficult than balancing an alternate arcane knowledge schema. New mechanics must be playtested, or the magical system might end up noticeably more or less powerful than the standard spellcasting rules. Such systems should be rarely used, if at all.

cannot add their component theorem adds or a time bonus. In most cases, this will increase the spell's Complexity (and hence Difficulty and Backlash), by a significant amount.

In addition, the spell must be cast as an unlearnable grimoire spell, adding a further +4 to the difficulty and +6 to the backlash of the spell. Unless the caster makes their casting skill check (vs. the modified Difficulty) with at least a *Superior* success, the mage will also suffer a magical surge. This kind of spellcasting is considered to be a last ditch option for most magicians.

Like many other magical rules, translating spells "on-the-fly" becomes easier at higher Magic axioms. Mages with a Magic axiom of 15 can translate spells with a *Good* success. This still introduces the maximum error, however (8 points).

At Magic axiom 17, "on-the-fly" translation only introduces 4 points of error. Finally, at Magic axiom 19, any success allows the spell to be translated with 2 points of error.



TRADITIONS AXIOM CHART

This is an excerpt from the complete Magic axiom, dealing specifically with magical Traditions.

5- Spells first developed, but mages cannot share spells.

7- Mages learn how to share magical knowledge, allowing them to create a shared body of magical research called a Tradition. All members of a Tradition use the same magical symbology. This allows them to share spells with other mages, although personal interpretation of the spell is still important.

8- The organized experimentation possible within a Tradition allows mages to begin to more fully realize the potential of the Magic axiom. Mages may now attempt to cast grimoire spells directly from a grimoire, without having learned them. In addition, they no longer have to worry about individual interpretation of their Tradition's spells.

10- Mages may now begin to comprehend other Traditions and even translate spells between them. This involves intensive study into the Tradition's spell symbology and magical philosophy. By learning the *magical theory* skill of alien Traditions, mages may translate the Tradition's grimoire spells. Only spells that are appropriate to the mages' Tradition may be translated. Such research is difficult and fraught with error.

11- Translating spells "on-the-fly" becomes possible, allowing mages (in extremis) to quickly translate and cast spells from another Tradition. The spell's efficiency is heavily degraded after undergoing this process. Translating "on-the-fly" is dangerous and seldom utilized.

12- The magical symbology underlying magical Traditions begin to widen, allowing more and more spells to be used. The "theme" of the Tradition becomes more flexible.

13- Translating grimoire spells between Traditions becomes easier. Mages may now translate spells with a great degree of compatibility; though study of the alien Tradition's magical symbology is still necessary.

16- Magical theories become generalized, covering all effects, not just those of a specific Tradition. Translating spells between Traditions becomes easier.

17- Traditions are no longer limited to a theme; magicians can create all varieties of spells available to their cosm, though each Tradition may still use theorems in their own signature way. Restrictions on what spells are appropriate for a given Tradition are eliminated. Mages may now translate any spell an alien Tradition offers.

Translating spells "on-the-fly" becomes a more efficient process, with the translated spell suffering from less degradation.

18- Mages may translate the spells of alien Traditions with great ease, even among novice mages. Errors in translation are extremely rare.

19- Translating a spell "on-the-fly" becomes a relatively easy process, though translated spells still suffer from degradation.

20- Translating a spell between Traditions (whether "on-the-fly" or regularly) is no longer necessary. Mages may learn spells of alien Traditions directly. The distinctions between Traditions become largely academic. Traditions usually become an association of mages, similar to social clubs.

STORM KNIGHTS

Jasyn Jones' STORM KNIGHTS

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