

MANIFEST WAY

A GAME OF TRANSMUTATIVE MAGIC, PART 2 – SPELLS AND
MAGICAL COMBAT

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MAGICAL THEORY

Constitution

The 5 Divine elements make up all things, and it is the shifting balance of these elements that the mage attempts to harness and manifest. The temporary imbalance of one more of these elements can take a toll on the practitioner. This can be the result of manifestation on the part of the mage themselves, or as a result of some external force conducted through them.

In practical terms, Constitution is essentially the equivalent of hit points in terms of the game mechanics. Once a mage's Constitution is reduced to zero, they are rendered unconscious. It is possible through the application of magic or elixirs to revive a mage after falling unconscious. If they are not treated within a certain period of time, they are considered to be removed from the battlefield.

Because Ascendant mages attempt manifestation through *imbalance*, their Constitution is higher than Harmonists, as a result of years spent training their body to tolerate the strain.

Each mage will have a chart that records levels of an elemental essence beyond the norm, or balanced state. This chart contains a slot for each of the 5 elements.

Constitution Max/Level

Currently (until playtested), the base value is 25 for Ascendant Mages and 20 for Harmonists. This value increases by 5 for each level attained by the Mage.

Regaining Constitution

- Meditating (essentially, remaining immobile for a combat turn) – both Harmonists and Ascendants will recover a point of Constitution through this process (the Mage decides which Essence)
- Drinking/eating certain preparations aligned with a given essence – usually, more Constitution can be recovered through this method, though it applies to removing overabundance only for the Element for which it is aligned

'Damage'

'Damage' (or a reduction in the Constitution total of a mage), results from the excess of an elemental essence (or essences) in their body. In terms of magical combat, this is typically as a result of losing a transformation challenge.



Figure 1 Constitution Chart (sample)

In the above example, the mage has received a total of 3 damage, lowering their Constitution by that same amount. The overbalance came as a result of losing a challenge with their opponent (or opponents). Their opponents had sought a transformation that resulted in Fire and Water being manifested.

Ascendants

- Can't re-allocate their Constitution Points
- Don't receive penalties for having excess in an elemental essence

Harmonists

- **Can** re-allocate their Constitution Points

How this works:

Because Harmonists believe in balance, there is a destructive cycle that matches the cycle of generation, providing a natural feedback mechanism to restore order.

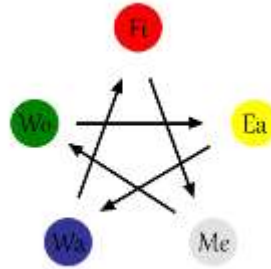


Figure 2 Destructive Cycle

In the current example, a point of excess Fire essence can be moved to Metal. If there had been 2 points of excess Water essence, a point could have been moved to Fire. That second Fire excess could be moved to Metal and the second Metal overabundance to have been moved to Wood.

- Receive penalties for having excess in an elemental essence

For every 2 points above balance in a given essence, the Mage receives a -1 penalty. In the current example depicted in Figure 1, the Harmonist Mage would have received a -1 penalty if they had not re-allocated their points.

The penalty would be applied when attempting to perform a transformation determined from the following chart:

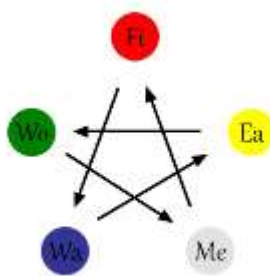


Figure 3 Countering Cycle

The theory here being that the overabundant essence is attempting to exert an undo influence on the natural feedback mechanism that would normally keep it in check. Here, an excess of Fire essence would mean a -1 penalty when attempting to make a manifestation requiring Water.

Note: If the Mage has the same amount of excess in each of the 5 Elements, then for the purposes of calculating penalties, there is **no** deviation from the norm. While technically above their idea state, the Mage's body is still maintaining a *relative* state of equilibrium as a result there would be no penalties for casting.

Maa (or undifferentiated 'magical' energy)

The universe itself is filled with transformative potential, a sea of energy that both constitutes and flows through all things in creation. In order for a Mage to effect a transformation, they must call upon this stateless energy to guide this manifestation to create a new form.

Each of the two schools of the Duarna have been taught to access this magical potential, but their ability to harness it varies. Because Ascendants are more focused on imbalance, their connection is less efficient and they have both a smaller reservoir to draw from and a more imprecise control of it within them.

Ascendants

- Points can be re-allocated within their pool to attune with a particular essence; they received a -1 to their Constitution for every 2 points of overabundance of an Aspect in their Maa pool
- Acquire a smaller amount of new Maa for their pools with each level of mastery

Harmonists

- Can't re-allocated their Maa into different essences. Any overabundance will be distributed amongst the 5 Elements as evenly as possible (in regard to no particular cycle) in order to restore balance
- Acquire a larger relative amount of new Maa with each level of mastery

Regaining Maa

- Mages will regain 2 points of Maa at the beginning of the next combat turn
- Harmonists can't specify the Aspect or Aspects to assign regained Maa; the Maa is distributed in such a way as to restore order, reducing any overabundances so all Aspects have the same value. However, if all Aspects have the same value and there is still recovered Maa left undistributed, the order follows the elemental progression (Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, Water)
Conversely, Ascendants **can** specify the Aspect or Aspects to assign the regained Maa.
- By communing with a shrine or other object/relic (the amount of time and energy recovered may depend on the place or item communed with)

Aspect

Aspect refers to the elemental essence within a physical object that describes its most defining characteristic. A patch of rocky ground might express a metallic aspect, while a forest would have a wooden one. When a Mage attempts to guide an elemental transformation, they must call upon related Aspects in the environment to coax this change into being. The abundant an Aspect is, the more resistant it is to change. This abundance is reflected as a value associated with all terrain tiles on a game map.

SPELLS

Attunement

Attunement Radius

This is the natural extent of the Mage's ability to align their elemental energies with the Aspects of the environment. This required Aspects must be within this radius for them to apply towards the intended transformation.

The attunement radius is 1 tile for every 2 levels of mastery (e.g., both a 1st and 2nd level Mage will have an attunement radius of 1).

Center of Attunement

This is referred to as the *Tuu-Dian* or Centering Point and represents the tile on which the Mage stands.

Area of Attunement

The Area of Attunement refers to the grouping of tiles that fall within the attunement radius.

The area of attunement is always centered around the casting mage.

Overlapping

If areas of attunement overlap, then the elemental Aspects of any tiles within the overlapping region *will be shared between all mages attempting to call upon their essences.*

Effective Aspect

The *effective Aspect* is:

$$\text{Base Aspect} / (\text{number of Mages whose areas of attunement overlap}),$$

rounded up. Minimum is always 1. This effective Aspect is present *even if the mages do not utilize the essence of a particular tile for their spells.* All Effective Aspect values return to the natural values once the combat round is over.

Note:

- the use of spells may change the base value of a tile
- the tile that a Mage is standing on is not considered to be part of an overlapping region

Target

This is typically a tile (or grouping of tiles). The transformation spell seeks to change the Aspect of the target tile (or tiles). If a mage seeks to affect multiple tiles, they must expend the minimum required Maa and acquire the minimum amount of Aspect *for each tile.*

Major (and Minor Elements)

A desired transformation will require a certain element or grouping of elements. The Major Element defines what the greatest aspect of the change is centered around. Multi-element spells require more resources but will have a more profound effect.

Note: A spell with a single elemental aspect requirement is considered to have only a Major Element and no Minor elements.

Spell Strength

Effectively, determines the amount of 'damage' a spell will cause to its target. The *effective spell strength* is determined by adding any bonuses from the application of additional resources.

Maa Requirements

- A mage must be able to overcome the Aspect value of a target tile (or tile)
- They must use *at least* an amount of Maa equal to the value of the target Aspect value to have an effect
- The *type* of Maa required depends on the Aspect of the target tile *and* the type of Mage
- A spell will typically require the expenditure of 1 Maa for each Minor Element
- Increasing the distance of a spell requires 1 Maa for every 2 tiles

Ascendants

For *Ascendants*, whose spells are resonant with the *countering* or *overacting* cycles, will require an amount of Maa sufficient to overcome the essence of the element they are either trying to counter or overact.

e.g., An *overacting* spell attempting to create a transformation in a tile containing an Earth Aspect of 2, will require a minimum of 2 points of Fire Maa in order to work.

Notes:

1. Because of their adherence to a philosophy of imbalance, they can use **excess** elemental essence as a source of Maa for a spell. For every 2 excess elemental essence used for a spell, the Mage lowers their Constitution **maximum** by 1 for the duration of the combat.
2. An Ascendant Mage is free to use a *generating* or *destructive* cycle spell, but the effective target Aspect Value is increased by 1.

e.g., In the previous example, the Mage requires 2 points of Fire Maa to work. If they had received 2 points of Fire damage from a previous combat, they can remove those 2 from their Constitution chart and use this energy for the spell *without reducing their Maa pool*. However, their Constitution maximum would be reduced by 1.

Harmonists

For *Harmonists*, whose spells are aligned with either the *generating* or *destructive* cycles, will require an amount of Maa sufficient to overcome the essence of the element they are either trying to generate or destroy.

e.g., A generating spell attempting to create a transformation in a tile containing an Earth Aspect of 2, will require a minimum of 2 points of Fire Maa in order to work.

Note: A Harmonist Mage is free to use a *countering* or *overacting* cycle spell, but the effective target Aspect Value is increased by 1.

Maa Levels

The base amount of Maa for Ascendants (until playtested) is 22 and 25 for Harmonists. This maximum increases by 3 points/level for Ascendants and 5 points/level for Harmonists.

Aspect Requirements

Each spell will list the required elemental aspects necessary to gather to affect the desired change in the target tile. Both Ascendant and Harmonist mages draw upon their environment to meet their requirements.

Bonuses

A mage may seek to increase the efficacy of their spell by tapping into more of the required elemental Aspect. For every 2 points of Aspect acquired for the Major Element of a spell, the strength of the spell is increased by 1.

Aspect Value Depletion

If a Mage uses the full Aspect Value of tile, then the tile's Aspect Value is *diminished by 1*.

Harmonists can use their own Maa as a substitute to avoid adversely affecting their environment. However, this causes an imbalance, must be rebalanced by distributing the energy. Additionally, for every 2 Maa used in this fashion, their maximum Maa pool total is reduced by 1 for the duration of the engagement.

Barren or zero-Aspect tiles

If a tile's Aspect value reaches zero, it is replaced by a neutral gray marker and is considered barren. This creates a knock-on effect of diminishing the Aspects of adjacent tiles due to the elemental depletion of essence in this area. Any adjacent tiles will have their Aspect Values diminished by 1. **Ascendants** are unaffected by proximity to such barren tiles. However, **Harmonist** mages will have to spend an additional point of Maa *for every barren tile adjacent to them*.

Elemental Attributes

Attribute/Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Animal	Scaly/Azure Dragon	Feathered/Vermilion Bird	Human/Yellow Dragon	Furred/White Tiger	Shelled/Black Tortoise
Time of Year	Spring Equinox/springtime	Summer Solstice	Change	Fall Equinox	Winter Solstice
Color	Green	Red	Yellow	White	Black/blue
Directions	East	South	Center, up, and down	West	North
Weather	Windy	Hot	Damp	Dry	Cold
Attributes	Strength and flexibility	Upward and expansive	Centering and stabilizing	Inward and contracting	Downward and inward
Stage	Matter's growing stage	Matter's prosperity stage	Matter's changing point	Matter's declining stage	Matter's dying stage

Bonuses and Penalties

There are a number of items and events which may affect the way that magic is manifested during combat.

Type	Influences	Effects	Radius	Duration	Charges
Event	Aspect(s)	Enhances or diminishes expression of Aspects in the environment	n/a	Until new event	n/a
Weather	Aspect(s)	Enhances or diminishes expression of Aspects in the environment	n/a	Until weather changes	n/a
Shrine	Maa	Source of Elemental Maa related to Aspect of Shrine	(variable)	1 turn	n/a
Preparation (food, elixir, etc.)	Maa	Overbalances Elemental Maa in Mage	Self	(variable)	(variable)
Object	Maa	Source of Elemental Maa	(variable)	(variable)	(variable)
Animal Familiar	Maa	Source of Elemental Maa related to Aspect of Familiar	(variable)	Continuous	n/a
Facing Direction	Maa	-1 to target Maa cost when opposing Aspect; -1 to target Maa cost when aligned with Aspect	Self	Until direction changes	n/a

- **Event**

Such profound elemental events have an effect on the environment. Because of their scale they are selected as a random event prior to the start of the battle. Also because of their extremely disruptive nature, they are treated as part of the Countering Cycle

e.g., Forest fire, earthquake, tsunami, etc.

Example: a forest fire will diminish water; the event card will list how much to suppress the Water Aspect of all tiles on the battlefield; effect will last for the duration of the battle

1. **Weather**

Itself a part of the Manifesting Cycles, the Weather can influence the Aspects of the environment. The particular way in which the weather influences the environment will depend on the severity of the weather phenomenon. If mild or benign, Aspects will be affected according to both the Generating and Overcoming Cycles and. If severe, Aspects will be affected according to both the Overacting and the Countering Cycles.

Note: Weather-related events are one type of random occurrences that can be encountered at the beginning of each combat turn. They are considered to remain in effect until a different Weather Event is encountered.

Example: *Misty rain* – Water promotes Wood, so Wood Aspects are increased; Water also diminishes Fire, so Fire Aspects are reduced

Example: *Torrential downpour* – Water promotes Wood, but because this is an Overacting Cycle, Wood Aspects are increased by a larger amount than the Generating Cycle; Water counters Earth, so Fire Aspects are reduced

2. Shrine

Typically, a fixed part of the map, shrines are places devoted to a particular elemental energy

The radius of effect is determined by the nature of the shrine

3. Preparation (food, elixir, etc.)

Something consumed by the Mage that is used to create a temporary imbalance in elemental energies within their bodies

4. Object

A larger, mobile object that is a Maa source like a shrine. It's radius of effect is usually 1.

5. Animal Familiar

Once a Mage has acquired sufficient Prestige (Ascendants) or Accolades (Harmonists), they may become eligible to acquire an animal familiar. These are essentially living shrine, providing a source of Maa linked to their own elemental Aspect (**see:** Elemental Attributes table)

6. Facing Direction

Elements are also associated with a direction.

A Mage receives a +1 to target Aspect Maa cost when facing in a direction **opposite** to that associated with the Aspect of the target tile. Conversely, a Mage receives a -1 to target Aspect Maa cost when facing in a direction **aligned** with the Aspect of the target tile.

Example: A Mage is facing directly southward and is attempting to Influence a target tile with a Fire Aspect of 2. Because Fire Aspect is associated with a southerly direction, the Mage must only overcome a Fire Aspect of 1 (i.e., allocate 1 point of Fire Maa).

Defensive Magic (*An-Bao Aspect*)

A Mage may choose to resist an opponent's magic by working with the elemental Aspect of their *Tuu-Dian* or Centering Point. To both the Ascendants and Harmonist Mages, this is referred to the An-Bao Aspect or Great Fortification. The Ascendants also refer to this as **Zun-maa**, or Draining Energy.

Essentially, the Mage bolsters the Aspect of their own tile so that their opponent has to spend more Maa to work to transmute the elemental character. The defending Mage expends an amount of Maa associated with the element that would generate more of the Aspect in their tile. The mage would then cast an Overacting or Generating Cycle spell to produce this effect.

The maximum An-Bao Aspect enhancement is one greater than a Mage's current level.

Note:

1. The Mage is not required to enhance the aspect to its maximum. A Mage may choose to use less of their Maa for the An-Bao Aspect.
2. The only instance when this maximum is different is when the Aspect of the Tuu-Dian coincides with the Major Discipline of the Ascendant Mage; in which case, they receive an additional bonus of 1 point to the defending tile's Aspect.
3. Alterations to the Aspect Value of each of the Tuu-Dian's **remain until either transformed or altered again by some event**.
4. **If all Mages choose to defend then then the combat immediately resolves.** The only effect is the altered Aspect value of the respective Tuu-Dian's of each of the Mages.

Spell Examples (Single Aspect)

Countering Cycle

Cycle/Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Aspect(s) Required	3 Earth	2 Metal	2 Water	1 Wood	1 Fire
Strength	2	2	2	1	1
Description	"A stirred earth rumbles, shifting. Wood settles and is covered up."	"Enraptured, fire embraces the metal, giving of its warmth."	"Enraged and confused the waters roil about, surging over their banks in a great flood."	"Long roots till the soil and displace the foreign elements; metal is cast aside."	"Flame agitates the water trapped within; the kettle sings."

Overacting Cycle

Cycle/Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Aspect(s) Required	4 Water	3 Wood	2 Fire	2 Earth	1 Metal
Strength	3	2	2	2	1
Description	"Over-nurtured, the wood outgrows its boundaries, fed by the flooding waters."	"Piled high with fuel, the woodsman's fire rages, its tongues crying out to heaven."	"Scorched and parched, the earth cracks, its back broken."	"Compressed and strengthened, the earth breaks and re-forges the metal within."	"The sword, new, its spirit questing. It quenches itself in the calming waters."

Generating Cycle

Cycle/Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Aspect(s) Required	3 Water	2 Wood	2 Fire	1 Earth	1 Metal
Strength	2	2	2	1	1
Description	"Nourished by the Spring rains, the first sprouts grow and life returns in balanced measure."	"A hearth is warmed by the ample wood, feeding the soul and brightening the eve."	"A tempest blazed, a life lived, the fire settles the wood to ash, quiet and still."	"The earth draws around itself as with a blanket. Its sleep brings dreams within, of metal and cold."	"Flame agitates the water trapped within; the kettle sings."

Overcoming/Controlling Cycle

Cycle/Element	Wood	Fire	Earth	Metal	Water
Aspect(s) Required	4 Metal	3 Water	2 Wood	2 Fire	1 Earth
Strength	3	2	2	2	1
Description	"A woodman's axe glints in the morning light, the tree's gaze meeting it as it falls."	"Doused, the fire's passion ebbs."	"The lone oak by the river's edge, its roots grasp firm the earth and lets none lay claim to it."	"The earth draws around itself as with a blanket. Its sleep brings dreams within, of metal and cold."	"Gathered high, the fallen earth dams the raging stream."

COMBAT TURN SEQUENCE

1. Random, cyclic or predetermined events occur (weather, event, etc.)
2. Recover Maa
3. Redistribute Maa and Constitution points
4. Apply any buffs (elixirs, artifacts, objects, etc.)
5. Adjust Aspect values based on combatant positioning
6. Prepare spells (blind – players do not announce their actions)
7. Cast spells (simultaneous)
8. Calculate damage
9. Determine winner(s)
10. Allocate damage
11. Adjust Maa
12. Adjust environmental conditions

SAMPLE COMBAT

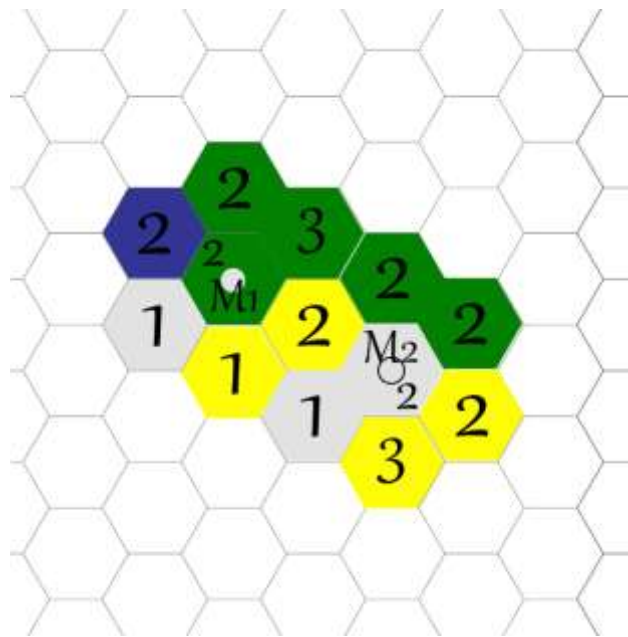


Figure 4 Battle Map Segment

Mage	School	Target Mage	Target Aspect	Elemental Cycle	Aspects Req	Distance Mod	Overcoming Aspect Mod	Additional Maa	Base Strength
1	Harmonist	2	Metal	Overcoming	1 Earth	0 Maa	+2 Maa	0	2
2	Ascendant	1	Wood	Overacting	4 Water	0 Maa	+2 Maa	2 Water	3

Set Up

In this sample combat, the Ascendant uses their ability to draw upon their unbalanced energies to supplement the deficiency in required elemental Water Aspect to enable the transformation. The Overacting spell would typically require 4 Water Aspects but only 2 are present in the environment with their Attunement Radius.

Since each Mage is only 2 tiles distant from each other (and both of their Attunement radii are 1), then there is no additional Maa required to affect the transformation.

Neither Mage expends additional resources to alter the base strength of their spells and so the final spell strengths are identical to the base strengths.

For the purpose of this sample combat, the Ascendant is assumed to have received no prior loss of Constitution.

Resolution

Comparing final strengths of the spells shows that the Ascendant Mage's transformation is 1 stronger than that of the Harmonist's. In this case, the Harmonist would receive 1 point of Water Aspect damage. However, since the Ascendant tapped into their reserves of Maa to overcome the deficiency in Water Aspect, they will receive a Constitution loss of 1 Water Aspect. Since no losses had been received previously, their only imbalance will come from the current combat and damage is calculated based on 1 point for every 2 Maa Aspect utilized. Here, **both** Mages would have received a single point in Water Aspect Constitution loss.

In terms of Maa adjustments, the Harmonist Mage only expended 2 Metal Aspect Maa while the Ascendant Mage spent 2 Wood Aspect and 2 Water Aspect Maa.