

Arcana Magi Behind the Scenes: The Rule of Mana Ver 2.0

by H-M Brown

Greetings fellow Readers.

Welcome to Arcana Magi Behind the Scenes.

Now the last time I wrote on the Rule of Mana, it was expanded from the Main Series to the other stories that had their own rules. However with the establishment of four sub-universes in 2011, each of the rules on Mana that wrote were now applied to the new stories I wrote that year. However, none of the rules changed, yet the list of stories and the four sub-universes have been expanded in this edition of Behind the Scenes. In terms of re-writing, I decided to leave it as is with a little tweak here and there.

So let's begin shall we?

Seiryu Sub-Universe

Stories - Arcana Magi Zero, Arcana Magi Pure

Since Arcana Magi Zero was the first story I wrote, Zero's rules were simple. When I introduced Mana, I established that people were born with Mana and that Alysia had to awaken it in order to use magic to free everyone who turned to stone. Mana in this story is actually an essence that exists within the mind, body, heart, and soul. From there, the person then imagines something to cast, for instance Alysia thought of the wind blowing the leaves on trees and gathered the wind to form a ball of air.

In terms of spellcasting, they are simple names with the

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exception of the winged men in Volume 2, Megumi's Fable in which I just made up some random faux Latin. Pretty lazy, I know. The objective here in this universe was to establish an internal prejudice among the Magi. Those who cast spells with magic circles would have distinct advantage over others because of casting speed. This was why I used faux Latin with the foreigners to establish the difference differences in combat.

To maintain diversity of the spellcasters in the story, I introduced Madam Karyn Mayweather. Because she was older and wiser, I establish that she had to ability to cast spells without even chanting a single word. This was to help show the diversity of the spells in this universe as well as to show that are spellcasters powerful enough to accomplish that feat.

Overall, Zero basically laid out the foundation of a few rules that would be common place in the entire universe. Channeling Mana and short named spells are staples in all of the series. However, while the Main Series carried over some of the rules, the story in turn expanded built on the rules of Mana that would be applied in Memorial and Rush.

Suzaku Sub-Universe

Stories - Arcana Magi

This is the original version of the Rules of Mana, laid out for the Main Series. Because of the length of the story, Mana was a bit more fleshed out and applied some real world logic creating a type of fantastic phlebotinum. Here I did a little scientific research to give Mana a unique feel within the context of the real world, and tried not to take too much away from the fantasy that this story was written for.

Excerpt From Arcana Magi — c.4: Reflection:

“Mana is a form of energy Reya. As with some other form of

energy, like electricity, Mana has two types, stored and kinetic energy. The difference is that Mana powers magical items, like the Manaboard.” Suzie took a second Manaboard from the table showing Reya its wooden surface as Karl stepped off the board and picked it up.

“You see Reya,” Karl said. “Mana’s source of energy is within everything around us. From the living to the inanimate object. For us magi, we can channel Mana from nature. Unfortunately, we cannot channel Mana from each other or from creatures with living brain. This is due to our will and instinct to resist each other from channeling each others Mana.”

“Fantasy with scientific logic? Wouldn’t writing about this take away from the feeling of Fantasy in Arcana Magi?”

It is strange that I would make this approach, but I feel that unlike High Fantasy, where magic could be treated as anything goes and any mistakes in the storytelling or plot can hand waved by saying “It was magic.”, in Techno-Fantasy (Sounds better than Urban Fantasy), there should be a little logic on how magic works in my world. After all, in High Fantasy a mistake that could be hand waved off as magic could easily make me a lazy and bad writer. In fact, because science co-exist with magic in Arcana Magi, I can create certain types of technology without the need of applying Hard Science, or use current technology on a magical level. Of course, I might be accused of lazy writing for doing that, but then again with Fantasy, the world is supposed to go beyond imagination, so long as I don’t cause my fellow readers to lose any connection to common sense of reality. After all, you still have to turn the knob first, then pull or push to open the door.

“So, what is Mana?”

As I have given in the example above, it is a source of energy like electricity, oil, chemical, etc. This allows the concept of using

Mana as fuel to operate machinery to actually exist in Arcana Magi.

“Where does Mana come from?”

Mana comes from nature in my world. An essence that dwells within everything from trees to rocks, humans to plants, and microbes to air. Yes, even sources of energy itself like fire, oil, and wind has Mana.

“How does Mana apply itself to Magic?”

Humanoids were born with the ability to see Mana, which in their eyes would look like mist. Because they can see that mist, they can mentally channel the Mana and change it to other forms of energy to cast spells, or they can use that Mana to activate a magical item or machinery. Those who don't have the ability to see Mana, are unable to cast spells or activate magical items whatsoever.

“Can spellcasters draw Mana from other spellcasters, non-magical people, or animals?”

No. This is due to free will and instinct within the mind of humanoids and animals. That is an automatic natural defense. If anyone learned to do that, the world would be in trouble.

“I read on some websites on energy where scientists and students have debated and argued over what types of energy there are, and how many there are. Why take the risk of applying science, when you don't know science, and you could be wrong in your explanations of the science of energy?”

Yes, I do not know science, but part of being a writer is doing research. There are plenty of sites that have different explanations, definitions, and thoughts on the types and forms of energy, and they

are nitpicky about it. But from what I can understand is that the types and forms as applied are interchangeable. For example, in an EIA website about energy, there are two types of energy, Kinetic and Potential, and there are forms of energy like Electricity and Chemical, but in Wikipedia Kinetic and Potential energy is included as forms like Electricity and Chemical. Therefore, I decided as a rule of cool, Mana is a Form of Energy that has two Types, Kinetic and Potential, can be channeled to cast spells, and can activate magical items or machinery.

“Could you explain a little more about Mana Output?”

Okay, this is very important because one of the things that would blow every readers mind is if computers cannot let magical people channel Mana due to alterations, or how can clothing do so? It all depends on the natural essence within the natural item used.

For instance, clothing that was made from wool has 100% Mana when extracted. If the wool is sewed as is, it will maintain its 100% Mana output, however, if you use modified dyes rather than natural dyes on the wool, it starts to lose its Mana output depending on what type of altered chemicals being used. See, chemicals alone have 100% output but once technology starts to manipulate it, like growth hormones (sorry, you can't channel Mana from lettuce and corn laced with hormones), then the Mana loses its output slowly but surely to the point of zero percent.

That's why computers lose their Mana output because of all the alterations, modification, and chemical lacing it underwent to be what it is, even if electricity is flowing through, no one can channel that because its also considered altered. It is very tricky indeed to explain and it all depends on how the item in question was made.

As a result of the Main Series rules, I had a more thorough template on Mana to play around with in other Arcana Magi.

Genbu Sub-Universe

Stories - Arcana Magi Memorial, Arcana Magi Cross

This Sub-Universe contains the basic principles of Mana found in Zero and the Main Series like Channeling, Mistform, fuel for machinery. However, I also introduce drawbacks in Mana like losing energy output when undergoing alterations when manufacturing items. So for Memorial, I decided to expand on the negative aspects of Mana. In this case instability.

It was a difficult approach when I was drafting it. Mainly because of logic. I tried to be as clear as possible how unstable Mana in Azure does not kill her, thanks to the four mysterious beasts. But I also included it to have a poisonous nature. So yeah, she should be killed, but again, the shackles Azure wore suppressed it. Not only that, but she did use it as a means of beating the dome creature. The effects of unstable Mana is very devastating as depicted in the climax of Memorial. But it still is Mana and Magi who are strong enough can attempt to do what Azure did and that was to draw the unstable Mana back to the physical body.

Another rule I established is that creatures are capable of feasting on Mana. This actually gives the creatures in Arcana Magi a very unique mysticism to add to the story overall. It also helps me come up with inventive monsters outside of the common creatures seen in fantasy stories like basilisks and dragons.

Byakko Sub-Universe

Stories - Arcana Magi Rush, Arcana Magi Divine

Byakko Sub-Universe did not exactly give much in terms of adding new rules. It is a short story and very little room to establish Mana role. Also the story had to be kept straightforward and simple. So rather than establishing new, I applied rules already in place. In this case, I showed how Mana works on machinery.

Now to be fair, when I originally first drafted the story, I showed how Mana was used to start up Akane's motorbike in the beginning

of Rush. Unfortunately, the scene in question was already fast paced that spending a line or two describing how her bike activated brought the story to unnecessary halt. So I had to remove it.

My intent in applying Mana in this story was show, rather than tell through dialog, how Mana operated the machinery. As you have read, Akane provided Mana as fuel to her robot Suzaku. The mist form flows into dome of light and charges up the battery to operate the engine. It does drain energy from the pilot when doing so and the energy tank is not always filled completely. Also, to cast spells, Akane and other Golem pilots use the Brace, which controls the arms and hands, to cast their spells. Think of the robot arms as magical wands.

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Overall, the rules of Mana do have common rules that will be present in future titles like Mistform, Channeling, fuel for machinery. Hopefully, by sharing some of these rules in this behind the scenes, when I do write the next Arcana Magi, I do not have to waste a paragraph or scene trying to establish the rules. Of course since each story is different from one another, new or expanded rules, it by no means give me a free pass if I were to continue any of the previously written series. So do not expect the rules I establish in Memorial to suddenly appear in Zero, unless I have a good way to insert it without ruining that particular story.

Well I hope this Behind the Scenes look in Mana helped you all understand of what to expect in the magical world of Arcana Magi. The diversity and inventive potential I can bring out of this concept is near limitless and yet still has its ground rules to maintain consistency.

So, until next time...

See ya.

