= Golem Arcana =

Golem Arcana is a tabletop miniature wargaming game developed and published by Harebrained Schemes for iOS and Android devices . The game combines physical miniatures on a game board with a mobile app that much of the gameplay takes place in ; the physical pieces and the app communicate through the use of a Bluetooth stylus . Several elements of the game , including special abilities and optional missions , exist only within the app .

Golem Arcana was funded through a Kickstarter campaign that launched in September 2013 and went on to raise over $ 500 @,@ 000 . The game was released just under a year later , on 13 August 2014 . Both studio co @-@ founder Jordan Weisman and executive producer Ray Winninger had extensive experience developing both video games and tabletop games , and one of their primary motivations in creating Golem Arcana was to merge the two gaming types . They also sought to create a more social experience than could be found in traditional multiplayer video games .

The game received mixed reviews upon release . Critics were split in their take on the hybrid of physical pieces and the digital app , with some seeing it as a boon and others as a detriment . The game received praise for its visuals , lore , and ruleset , but also received criticism for its price .

= = Gameplay = =

Golem Arcana is a two to eight @-@ player miniature wargaming game that interfaces with a digital app through the use of a Bluetooth stylus . Players compete against one another in one of several scenario types , including eliminating the opponent 's golems or capturing and holding a specific area of the map . The ultimate goal of the game is to collect a set number of " victory points " , which are gathered by defeating opposing golems , completing scenario objectives , and as rewards for completing optional missions encountered through the app .

Each player controls a number of physical miniatures called golems , which are placed on a game board built with interchangeable map tiles . Each map tile is divided into nine squares arranged 3 by 3 , and has terrain features pre @-@ printed on it . Golems come in small , large , and very large sizes . Up to four small , two large , or one large and two small golems can share a square on a map tile . The very large " colossus " golems take up an entire square by themselves . Each golem comes with a card that lists the actions it can take . Another type of card , known as relics , allow players to active special abilities including healing and resurrection .

The golems , cards , and game board are covered in small magnetic dots . A Bluetooth stylus that comes with the starter kit reads the dots to transmit information from the board to a mobile app . Gameplay information such as the position of all of the golems , terrain and map effects , and the game 's rules are stored in the app , which uses that information to determine and present players with available moves , attack accuracy and damage , and other statistics . Players then use the stylus to choose where to move and what actions to take ; players still have to move the physical pieces on the board , but their moves are also reflected in the app .

The game also has several components that exist only within the app . The base game includes around 70 knights , which in the game 's lore are sorcerers that control the golems . Players pair each golem with one knight , or three knights for the " colossus " golems , and different knights provide golems with different bonuses . Players can also use spells , in the game 's lore by evoking ancestral gods called Ancient Ones . Ancient Ones are cast using mana , which can be acquired in several ways , including when a golem that the player controls is defeated or though missions that appear in the app . Players encounter missions , which provide optional objectives in exchange for victory points , while moving around the map . In some cases not completing the missions offers alternative rewards . Harebrained Schemes collects aggregate data on the decisions that players make in the game and uses it to alter the game 's lore .

= = Development = =

Golem Arcana was announced in July 2013 in a blog post on developer Harebrained Schemes ' website . The blog post indicated that the studio would return to Kickstarter to fund the game , and that most of the studio 's staff would continue to work on their other project , Shadowrun Returns , while a few would be split off to work on Golem Arcana . The Kickstarter campaign was launched on 10 September 2013 and ran until 15 October 2013 , with a funding goal of $ 500 @,@ 000 . Backers could get the base game by pledging at the $ 55 Kickstarter reward tier .

The game was released on 13 August 2014 , with the digital component available for both iOS and Android . In addition to the base game , a number of expansion sets have been released . Expansions sets contain three miniatures as well as cards and abilities . Harebrained Schemes has also released " Colossus " expansions , which contain one large miniature instead of the three normal @-@ sized ones . Expansions are planned for release at least through early 2016 .

Both studio co @-@ founder Jordan Weisman and executive producer Ray Winninger had experience developing both tabletop games and video games . One of the studio 's motivations for developing the game was to combine the two mediums , with Winninger explaining " One of the spaces we 're interested in exploring at Harebrained , and Golem is the first effort , is how can we take those tabletop games that we know and love so much and leverage technology to enhance that experience in some way . " Weisman and Winninger also stressed the social nature of the game . Winninger , comparing Golem Arcana to Skylanders , another game with both physical and digital components , stressed that Golem Arcana was less focused on components and more focused on the social experience . Weisman pointed to his disappointment that " kids ' idea of playing together after school these days usually means just meeting online from their own houses " in stressing that participants playing against each other in Golem Arcana would do so face @-@ to @-@ face .

= = Reception = =

Golem Arcana received mixed reviews upon release . Reviewers were divided on the game 's defining feature ? the hybrid of physical miniature and digital app , but praised the game 's visuals , lore , and rules .

Writing for Rock , Paper , Shotgun , Robert Florence praised the app for calculating variables like movement range and tracking statistics like health and ability cooldowns , but spoke of a disconnect caused by constantly shifting focus between the screen and the board . While ultimately questioning the need for the physical components at all , Florence also saw the game as having potential in the future . Chris Hutton of Tom 's Guide took a much more negative view . Hutton found it cumbersome that the starter kit came with only one stylus and that only one device running the app could be synced to a given game at a time , necessitating that the screen and stylus be passed back and forth between players . He also found the stylus itself to be unresponsive , slowing the game down to the point that he lost interest . VentureBeat 's Jay Henningsen , on the other hand , had nothing but praise for the app and stylus . After fifteen minutes he found using the stylus to be " almost natural " , and found that the app handling all of the rules and stat @-@ keeping made for " one of the easiest experiences I ? ve ever had getting into a new game " . He went on to say that players will look to see the technology spread to other miniature wargaming products .

One element that did receive near @-@ universal criticism was the game 's price of $ 80 for the base game . PC World called the price the game 's " biggest flaw " , Yahoo ! Tech called it " hefty " and " a steep investment " , and VentureBeat called it " quite the price tag " , but qualified their statement by pointing to the large number of items that come with the starter kit .

The game did receive praise for its visuals , storytelling , and rules . The Academy of Adventure Gaming Arts & Design awarded Golem Arcana the " Best Miniature Figure Rules " prize in the 2015 Origins Awards . In an otherwise negative review , Chris Hutton of Tom 's Guide praised the storyline and visuals , saying of the latter that " the colorful , interesting terrain created a unique universe " . Game Informer praised the game 's setting and its " gorgeous visual aesthetic " .