

Tomes of Magic: *Book of Chantries*



Hello, Mage fans, this is Adam Simpson for Mage the Podcast and today the topic is Tomes of Magic: *Book of Chantries*.

This is one of the very first books for Mage: The Ascension. It has a number three on the spine and this was one of two books that was started before Satyros Brucato signed on as line developer. The other was an adventure to introduce *Mage* to new

players and that was Loom of Fate which I discussed last time I did a podcast. So *Book of Chantries* is detailing Chantries for the game. Chantries are, just to defined the term, it's a gathering place for mages. It is a home for them. It is where they study. It is where they hide out. It is where they cooperate with other mages, advance their magic. It's a stronghold for them where they can mount operations, that they're going to carry out. It's basically a headquarters for a group of mages. Chantries can be dedicated to one particular faction of mages like a Convention inside the Technocracy or a Tradition inside the Council of 9. Or they can be mixed. You can have a group of mages who come together and form a Chantry for any reason that is important to them.

And not necessarily representing a particular faction of mages.

So those of you who are new to Mage now that you know what the word Chantry means, there are two other terms that we're going to discuss today. Just to bring you up to speed, one is Node. Node is a game term for any place on planet Earth, where quintessence, which is basically magic energy, naturally collects and Nodes are very important to mages of every stripe because once they control a Node and properly tap it, which is open it up so that they can receive all of the magical energy that it has, they can use that quintessence to power their magic, to send out to the Umbra, the spirit world, where they can create what is called a Horizon Realm, and they can use that Horizon Realm for a variety of purposes.

So Nodes are very much in demand among mages.

And this book makes it clear that there are a lot of conflicts between mages over ownership rights for a Node. The Cairns of werewolves and places that are important to wraiths and fairies in the World of Darkness are also sometimes counted as Nodes, where quintessence collects and that can lead to conflicts between mages and other

supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness - if you're interested in crossover games.

Chantries are called Chantries by mages in the Council of 9, that's the Tradition mages. Members of the Technocracy call their Chantries Constructs and Labyrinth is the term for Nephandi Chantries. For me the book wasn't really clear if Labyrinth is a term that Nephandi use themselves or if mages in the Technocracy and the Council of 9 call the Nephandi places Labyrinths. I guess that's open to interpretation by Story-tellers.

Last term to define today, is a Horizon Realm. This is a term that is misunderstood by a number of Mage fans or at least seemed to be some years ago when I was more active on the Internet with Mage forums. A Horizon Realm is an artificial umbral realm. The Umbra in World of Darkness and the world of Mage is the spirit world, where using magic, a mage can walk into the Umbra and from there, see a spiritual reflection of the place on Earth that he or she just left. Now traveling farther into the Umbra, takes a mage farther away from Earth and into particular Realms, little worlds that exist inside of the Umbra. Once a mage steps into a realm, there will be a different environment, different laws of reality.

You could see the Umbra as a place full of doors and every door leads to its own realm. Well, most of those Realms are naturally occurring Realms, but a Horizon Realm is man-made. It is one created by mages and for some reason that mages don't fully understand, when they create an artificial realm, a Horizon Realm, it always forms right along the Horizon.

Now, the Horizon is a naturally occurring barrier between the near Umbra and the Deep Umbra. The Near Umbra is much more hospitable to werewolves, mages and umbrood, the spirit creatures that exist there. Once you get through the Horizon and

get out to the Deep Umbra, that is much less hospitable. The analog is it's kind of like going from orbit out into deep space. The Deep Umbra is mostly empty.

Very great distances between things and very strange and very hostile beings exist out there.

But as I said, Horizon Realms naturally want to stick to the Horizon. And so because of that, they have portals within them that can lead a mage to the Deep Umbra or to the Near Umbra.

And this makes an interesting plot device in the world of Mage because if something that is out in the Deep Umbra can get access to a Horizon Realm, which supposedly is easier than breaking right through the Horizon wall itself, then once that being is inside a Horizon Realm, it's not too hard to find another door to get into the Near Umbra.

So it's kind of like a passageway for them and according to Mage lore there are a number of beings out of the Deep Umbra who want to get into the Near Umbra because the near Umbra will let them get closer to Earth and Earth is supposed to be the source of quintessence, of magical energy.

So there are a lot of beings that need that energy to further their plans or even to continue existing.

So Horizon Realms created by mages are very desirable to a number of scary beings out in the Deep Umbra. So mages have to defend their Horizon Realms, not only from other mages that would like to use them but also from unknown beings in the Deep Umbra that would try to break through.

So very important to have good security once mages create those Horizon Realms.

So the question naturally arises well, if Horizon Realms are so dangerous, why do mages want to make them? And that is because a Horizon Realm is a place where a

group of mages can define for themselves the environment, the conditions, the magical conditions, which means if, say, mages of the Order of Hermes pursue a certain kind of a magic that in the Middle Ages on Earth was easier to do but now, because of the disbelief of the masses of regular people, hermetic magic has become very difficult on Earth. But if these mages create a Horizon Realm, then they can set all the conditions. They can say this is a place where hermetic magic is natural. It's normal. It's an everyday thing.

And all of the beliefs of the Sleepers, the non-mages on Earth, the regular people, don't apply here.

So we are free to do any kind of magic we want. We don't have to worry about Paradox. Our magic is going to be easier to perform, so we can create Talismans here, we can do very powerful magical effects with much less risk.

We can further our magical research without worrying about the difficulties we would encounter on Earth. And also, if we can keep that portal from Earth to our Horizon Realm low-key than a lot of people will not even know that we have created this Horizon Realm.

Some people say well, why not just get one of the umbral Realms that's naturally occurring and make a headquarters there. And the reason that most mages don't want to do that is because Umbral Realms are usually very strange, alien places where a number of things are going on, a number of beings exist that have nothing to do with humans or mages and may not be very friendly towards them.

And even if they are, a lot of umbral realms are such strange and odd places that already have their conditions defined, that it is not a blank slate that a group of mages can paint their own ideal picture upon. They have to deal with the conditions that are there and they're usually either very strange or even hostile.

So the Horizon Realms are very desirable for those mages who have enough quintessence coming from Nodes to create them and who have the necessary magical knowledge to create them.

So now that we've got the terms out of the way, Chantries, Nodes and Horizon Realms, we can talk about *Book of Chantries* and what it has to offer for us. *Book of Chantries* is the only book that I know of, I'm pretty sure it's the only book in all of the published Mage line, that focuses on the topic of Chantries.

So it makes a great point of departure today for discussing Chantries in general, once I've covered what you will find in the book. So hopefully, this episode won't stretch out too long and hopefully I'll be able to offer you some ideas of my own regarding Chantries that might make your own games more interesting.

And, of course, if you come up with some ideas of your own, please let us know at Mage the Podcast. We like to know what our listeners are doing in their own games and what ideas they are having for games they'd like to run in the future.

So, getting back to *Book of Chantries*, I can't remember if this was 1993 or 1994. Probably early 1994. It's difficult to get exact publication dates on these older Mage books. Oftentimes it's just the year that we can find by looking in the first pages of the book.

Book of Chantries offers us four Chantries of the Traditions, that is the Council of 9.

We get one Orphan Chantry. Three Technocracy Constructs and 2 Nephandi Labyrinths. And the 2 Nephandi Labyrinths are pretty atypical. I don't know if that was done on purpose or just to make them interesting. Most Nephandi Labyrinths are places where one or more cabals of Nephandi have set up a Chantry that is to their liking and where they pursue their own ends. The two Nephandi Labyrinths that we see here in this book are atypical in the sense that one has only one true Nephandus and

he has set up shop there where he has coerced a number of Tradition mages to basically be his pawns and carry out his goals.

And so you could see these tricked Tradition mages as being barabbi, that is, used to be members of the Traditions. Now they are Nephandi. But on another level you could see them as not typical Nephandi because they seem to have been told very little about what the Nephandi is like. And they've been given just enough information to pursue the goals of the one Nephandus who set up that Labyrinth.

The second Nephandi Labyrinth is sort of a renegade Nephandus. He used to be a full, regular Nephandus but he is rebelling against the Nephandi and wants to break out of the group and disassociate himself from them. And so it's kind of a lawless breakaway Nephandi Labyrinth.

And so that's detailed in the pages here. Together these 10 Chantries give us the first look that Mage fans had at that point of what Chantries are like. Chantries are very important to the game of Mage. They were mentioned a number of times in the First Edition core book and so it was really great that they were able to give us this book as one of the first few supplements for Mage. I really enjoyed it because it seemed to open wide the world of Mage. It told us not just about mage society and the Ascension War and the sorts of projects mages were involved in but it gave us a whole series of Chantries out there in the Umbra where we could see a much bigger picture of the world of Mage. We were able to see how mages create these Horizon Realms. How they sometimes, instead of making a Horizon Realm, they will find a naturally occurring Umbral realm and put their Chantry in there. Like the Hermetic Chantry of Doissetep.

So some of the Chantries we see in here are old and very well established. Some are very new. Some could be considered typical Chantries for mages. Some are very atypical and so it really gets ideas running for a lot of mage fans.

Really was appealing for me when I first read it. I highly recommend it to Mage fans, regardless of what edition of Mage you are running with the possible exception of Revised Edition. If you are running your games in Revised Edition, *Book of Chantries* might not be the best thing for you because Revised Edition set up the Avatar Storm and made it very difficult for mages to travel to the Umbra and really tried to focus on mage conflicts on Earth and closer to street level conflicts. Less cosmic in scope. And so I think *Book of Chantries* might not be fully appropriate for people running in Revised Edition but for 1st, 2nd editions and also Mage 20, this is a great book to get your hands on.

So let's talk about what makes it so good. Not only does it give us 10 Chantries.

It gives us information on how mages tap Nodes, how they find Nodes, why Nodes are so contentious. It really gives us some good information on why mages are struggling so much to get their hands on one or more of these valuable Nodes.

Also there is a fairly large section towards the early part of the book giving information about the Technocracy. Now, in these early days of First Edition Mage, the Technocracy was seen as a villain group and Satyros Brucato, even though he was working on this book, he had not yet really put forth his own ideas of opening up the Technocracy to be a more sympathetic group. And also to be a viable option for player characters, I'm really glad that he did that, but at this point, it was still a little too early for that.

So a lot of Mage fans had read a bit about the Technocracy in the First Edition core book but didn't really know very much about it.

Loom of Fate did not give all that much more information and so there's a section here in *Book of Chantries* that while it tries to give more information to readers about Technocracy Constructs, that is, Technocracy Chantries. But in the process it gives a good amount of information about the Technocracy itself.

What the five Conventions are like, how they interact with each other, the sorts of things they're trying to do, how they organize themselves and conduct their affairs.

So at that point it was very valuable for Mage players. Also, there's very good information on - not only examples of Chantries but also rules on how mages.... Let's see, it gives the roles needed to create Horizon Realms.

It gives roles necessary to open up portals between Earth and the Horizon Realms that they create. It also has a set of rules for how to create your own Chantry.

But either as a Storyteller or even as players, there is a new Background added called Chantry. It's from one to five dots, like the other Backgrounds for Mage. And if players take this background, they get creation points. And those creation points can be used in this new rule system in this book for Chantry creation.

So not only is a set of handy guidelines given to a Storyteller for them to set up a Chantry to use and people with NPCs and use it in their own stories, but players can get together and say, hey, we're going to make our own Chantry right off the bat, our own hideout and headquarters. And so it gives rules that players can use.

Now, I describe myself as a do-it-yourself gamer. And what I mean by that is when I'm running Mage I like to create my own NPCs. Even if I'm using a published setting or place for Mage, I usually take out all of the NPCs, create my own. Regardless of what role playing game I'm running, I like to create my own adventures or stories. I like to handle things myself. I like to change rules of the role playing game I'm running. We call that house ruling or making your own house rules. So, I mean, I even have a woodshop in my garage and I make the bookshelves that I put my gaming books on. So I maybe I'm taking this do-it-yourself ethical a little too far. Be that as it may, I do really appreciate it when a game publisher gives me a set of rules where I can take the setting of a game in my own hands and create my own things for it. So I really appreci-

ated the Chantry creation system that they offered me in this book. So, really recommend it for that reason.

So, let's look through a few things in this book before we move on to some other topics. They did a really good job of dropping plot hooks in this book. Really enjoyed that. There are a number of Chantry write-ups that make up the bulk of the book where there are so many plot hooks. Now, plot hook is a general role-playing term. It means an idea for a game master or Storyteller that they could use in their own games.

So, one example is for a lot of these Chantries it talks about how the Chantry has a Horizon Realm and it talks about what it's like in that Horizon Realm because most of these are very different from Earth. Then it talks about the Nodes on Earth that connect to a Horizon Realm. Because you have to remember that a Horizon Realm is an artificial umbral realm. And not only is it created by mages but it has to have quintessence feeding into it continually or it will break down and cease to be. It will just break up and fade away. So any Horizon Realm that mages create has to have connections, links to Nodes on Earth feeding it quintessence.

So we see a number of these Nodes on Earth and the book talks about how because Nodes are very valuable to mages and other supernatural beings they have to be defended. They have to be protected and that is where a lot of plot hooks come in. Especially Doissetep did a great job of this. Doissetep is a hermetic Chantry, a Council of 9 Chantry, in this book. It is a large, powerful and very old Chantry and because of that it has a lot of Nodes on Earth. And these Nodes have to be supervised. They have to be checked up on. If there's any problems, then the intruders have to be chased off and the mages of Doissetep have to keep a close eye on these Nodes because if they lose enough of them, then the quintessence coming in to Doissetep will be so little that the Horizon Realm, or in this case its position in another realm, will be in jeopardy

and they could lose the part of - they could lose the Chantry itself. In the case of Doisetep, most of the Chanty's assets are in the Shade Realm of Forces.

And in the world of Mage, every Sphere has its own Shard Realm and Shade Realm. I'm not going to go into that now. That's a topic more appropriate for a podcast about the Umbra.

But even the Chantries that exist in the Umbra and are not in a Horizon Realm, they're in a naturally occurring realm - which there's very few of these, they still need their supply of quintessence or they are in great jeopardy.

So not only were there plot hooks for the Nodes, but there were a number of plot hooks for NPCs that live in the Chantries, there were plot hooks for possible conflicts, or future occurrences in these Chantry. So reading through this book, there are just so many ideas for a Mage Storyteller and even for players that it makes it a very appealing book.

This book is the first time that we see Second Edition Dreamspeakers. Dreamspeakers are a Tradition inside the Council of 9 and between First Edition and Second Edition, they really changed a lot. That Tradition changed its nature, its background, what it's like. I'm not going to go into a lot of detail now. That's really a better topic for a podcast that focuses on the Dreamspeakers. But I mean just to make a long story short, it used to be a very, very loosely defined Tradition that accepted any sort of a mage that had dreams that pulled them towards this group.

In 2nd Edition, Dreamspeakers are almost entirely made up of, I guess, you can say, native people groups around the globe who practice a very tribal, primal, older form of magic. So, you might have a group of Pacific Islanders, who would have their own group within the Dreamspeakers, and then you would have tribal sub-Saharan African group of mages. And they would be another group within the Dreamspeakers, and Native Americans and so on.

In *Book of Chantries*, we see a Chantry that was created by Native Americans who are Dreamspeakers and it very much focuses on their style of magic, on their needs, on their thoughts about how a Chantry ought to be. So, yeah, this is the first time we see Second Edition *Dreamspeakers*.

At this point, the Technocracy is still presented to Mage players as very much a villain group NPC opponent that they would face off against. And so, we get this line that I'm going to quote in here: "Misery is the common thread that links the diverse Constructs of the Technocracy." So, I remember reading this and thinking to myself, oh, damn, the Technocracy is a powerful group. They have constructs everywhere and every single one of them is miserable. Wow, membership does not have its privileges in this group. But as Second Edition continued, the way that the Technocracy was presented opened up a bit. So I'm not against retconning the Technocracy Constructs a bit in light of the newer material and changing things a bit. But that's up to you. The Constructs that we see in this book - there are three of them - are presented as rather unhappy places to be. But very good information on them, nonetheless.

So this covers the good points of *Book of Chantries*. A lot there. Very highly recommended from me. Now, there are some weaknesses with the book I wanted to discuss those. Hopefully I won't spend too much time because I also want to get on to the greater discussion about Chantries. Doissetep is a hermetic Chantry, is the oldest and most powerful, most well-known of all Tradition Chantries. The write up here I feel suffered very much from a theme that they wanted to present in this book. I can't remember the name of the the main author, but also Satyros Brucato, they both coordinated and both contributed a lot of material to this book and they wanted to push this theme that Chantries go through seasons. When they are first created, they are in their spring season. They're weak but full of potential. Then they go to summer, where they're more powerful and very active and positive.

And then they move to autumn where they are beginning their decline and then they move to winter, where they are limited by a lot of problems that have occurred. They are not as active. They do not have a lot of good possibilities to look forward to.

This idea was quite interesting and can be used very well in your Mage Chronicles, but it can also be overemphasized. I don't like to stick to it dogmatically. And this book really wanted to push it by showing it in a number of the Chantries, especially Doissetep. It presented Doissetep as a Chantry that was in its winter because its glory days have passed. It's very old. It's full of too many conflicts. Very dangerous ones, it's not near as active as it should be. To be honest, it presented it as a very depressing and kind of a crazy place where mages are assassinating each other, even the new trainees. The new mages who are just learning their first steps are getting killed in the hallways in the middle of the night on accident. It's such a dangerous place. It was overkill in my opinion. If I was going to present Doissetep in one of my games, I would tone that down a bit because I think they really took it too far.

Also this book is the first time that we see the Order of Hermes presented as a group of ruthless political backstabbers and manipulators. And I think that was overemphasized in the book.

There is a Tradition Chantry called the House of Helekar for the Euthanatos Tradition. And in the write-up, I really couldn't tell if this Chantry exists in its own Horizon Realm or if it exists in the Shade Realm of Entropy. They seem to switch back and forth in the description and it just wasn't clear to me what they were talking about.

Lodge of the Gray Squirrel is a Dreamspeaker Chantry detailed in the book and this for me was the greatest weakness of the book because it has to do with basic themes of the game. Lodge of the Gray Squirrel is a Chantry that has created its own Horizon Realm and the Native American Dreamspeaker mages wanted to create a place, not only where they could pursue their own goals, but where their own Native

American tribesmen who were not mages could find a place to escape from all of the injustice and problems that were occurring in the United States at that time that they started the Horizon Realm. So, what they did was the mages went to the unawakened Sleepers in their tribal groups and said, hey, we've created this utopia far away from the problems of the real world. Come with us through the portal and we'll all live there and create our own, basically, utopia. And when you read through the description of the Chantry, it says that, yeah, this utopia worked out fine. It's this great place where several Native American tribes have settled and they live far away from the real world, and they're very happy and they're peaceful and they get along and there's no problems and they all want to stay and they look forward to a bright future.

And I see this as a real problem with Mage because I don't think that the game should ever present magic as being a way to solve all your problems. I think Mage does a much better job when it is in the mode of saying, hey, magic gives you a lot of abilities. It solves a lot of problems but it brings a lot of new problems with it. So the life of a mage is not necessarily happier than the life of a Sleeper. It's just quite different. And I think they fell down on the job on this Lodge of the Grey Squirrel description. I think it would be much more interesting and also much more plausible if they presented this as being a failed utopia or having just a lot of problems because when you take a large group of Sleepers and take them through a magic doorway to a magical world that is, basically, cut off from the real world and then you try to say to them, hey, we're mages We're very special here. We have... We're kind of in charge, we're very high-profile people in this magic world and we've got a doorway, we can go back to the regular world whenever we want to.

We pass back and forth but you guys, hey, you got to stay here because, you know, security and resources and all that stuff. You guys got to stay in the Horizon Realm but we go back and forth all we like, so isn't that great?

I don't think Sleepers would think that's great. I think they would go through the portal and then find that there are a number of resources, amenities like I don't know, electricity, plumbing, stuff like that, that they're not going to find in this world and they're going to have a very hard time establishing and they're going to get disillusioned with things pretty quickly.

So I just - I think it was a poor idea on the part of the writers to present this utopia where everything is great because magic has solved all our problems.

I would handle things differently if I were running a game, but that's just my ideas. Maybe you will have a different set of ideas when you read through this. But I just wanted to offer that for something to chew on as you head through the book yourself.

Last weakness that I was finding with the book was, there are descriptions of two Technocracy Constructs. One is called Mecha and the other called, Null-B, these are interesting places. But what I had a problem with was in Mecha, they have this set up where they capture enemy mages and turn them into slave workers and they put these collars on their necks that extract quintessence. And so Mecha is not only a place where the Technocracy does their own thing but it's also a place where they create, they farm quintessence and then they carry it out to other Technocracy Constructs to help them. And I'm wondering, how do you get quintessence out of people? I don't think that was thought through very well.

It says that only mages are created - made into slaves in Mecha and only mages produce this quintessence. But looking through all the editions of Mage, I see that mages never create quintessence. They always have to go to a Node to get their quintessence, or get it from tass that originated at a Node. The only way to pull quintessence out of human beings is to pull it out of their - the pattern of their body and that would cause great physical damage to that person. You would get a small amount of quintessence and cause a lot of bodily harm to the person and this can be done to

magicians and Sleepers both. So I just wasn't quite sure what they were thinking of when they wrote up this description on Mecha.

Also, on Null-B it says that they harvest quintessence from the deep Umbra. Well, in all the editions of Mage, in a number of places, it says that there are beings out in the Deep Umbra that can't get quintessence and really want it. And because of that, they try to break through the Horizon barrier and get to Earth, where the quintessence is. So if Null-B is harvesting quintessence out in the Deep Umbra, you got to wonder where are they getting it and wherever they're getting - it is possible to get some quintessence out in the Deep Umbra, but where you're getting it from is probably going to be some supply or phenomena or even being that wants that quintessence for its own ends. So I think after some time went by, you would accidentally discover that you are stealing something else's quintessence and that something really isn't very happy with you. That can make for a lot of interesting Chronicle ideas but that was not mentioned in the Null-B write up. It simply says, hey there's quintessence out there, we get it, and there's no problem with it and let's carry on and talk about Null-B. So to me, that seems like a weakness.

It just didn't seem very well thought through, unless there's some aspect of Mage that I am not aware of. Perhaps those of you listening can enlighten me so that I don't make problems like that in the future if I'm getting it wrong.

So those are the weaknesses I saw with *Book of Chantries*. But despite the weaknesses, I saw much more in the way of strengths in this book. I really enjoyed reading it and even after the enjoyment of reading it, I had so many ideas for Mage Chronicles. I think you are going to get a lot of ideas too if you get your hands on the book and read through it.

And even though this book was published more than 20 years ago, it is available today from Storytellers Vault, which is a part of DriveThruRPG.com. So you can order it

as a PDF or print on demand. I didn't check to see if it's available as print-on-demand. Some are. Some aren't but it's going to be available as a PDF.

So this is a book you can pick up today for less money than when it originally came out and you can still make that a part of your games. And again, if you're playing Mage 20, like so many of us are, don't sweat the conversion. I really don't think it's going to be very difficult.

Okay, so from here... Well I've been running kind of long. About 35 minutes here but I would like to get into a discussion of Chantries in general, because this is such an interesting aspect of the world of Mage. I really like to use Chantries in my games regardless of what edition I'm working with because they really offer a great contrast. A Chantry, whether it's an Earthly Node or the Horizon Realm behind it, Chantries offer a contrast that is hard to find in other places in the world of Mage. In a Node or especially in a Horizon Realm mages can cut loose and do very powerful magical effects. They have much less need to worry about Paradox. They will have an easier time doing their magic.

And so that powerful magic that a lot of players get interested in is much easier here. And they are more imaginative, creative, different sorts of places where a lot of weird things can be encountered. And after you spend some time with your players in these Horizon Realms, you can take them back to Earth, the regular world of the Sleepers, where there's much more Paradox. Magic is more difficult and they have to - the players have to switch gears and realize, oh, hey, I'm back on Earth.

I've got to be more careful, got to be more low-key. Got to plan more carefully, my coincidental magic. And I think this contrast between the two different places will add a lot to your Chronicle. Mages will get a better understanding of how they're a part of this mystical, other world that most people have never even heard of. And it emphasizes those things quite well.

Also, I think I forgot to mention this earlier but not every Chantry has a Horizon Realm. There are a lot of Chantries that do not have Horizon Realms.

They still can be considered Chantries because many of them are located at or near Nodes. And so there's still quintessence for the mages there. But the larger, more powerful Chantries do create Horizon Realms because there's so many benefits to be gained there.

In the book we get one Orphan Chantry for the Hollow Ones and that is a large two story house, that has no Node, no source of quintessence, no Horizon Realm but it still counts as a Chantry. It's a place where four or five mages live and pursue their own studies and try to keep themselves safe in the World of Darkness.

But getting back to the general discussion, I wanted to remind everyone that backgrounds are an interesting part of the game. All of the mage characters will spend some dots in Backgrounds. And this is the one resource for player characters that cannot be increased with experience. If you stick to the rules as written for the different editions of Mage, Backgrounds are chosen during character creation. But after a character is complete and in play, there's no way to spend experience and raise them. Backgrounds, go up or down according to what's happening in the Chronicle. Storytellers at the end of a session will say to their players, hey, you get this many more dots in Avatar or Arcane or you lose this many dots in, say, Resources or Talisman because of what happened during this game session.

So Node is one Background where a player character has access to a Node and can pull quintessence out of it for their own personal use and Chantries have everything to do with Nodes. So if players get involved with a Chantry, that is a great opportunity for a Storyteller to increase Backgrounds for the player characters.

There is a new Background introduced in *Book of Chantries* called Chantry and those are points that players can use to create their own Chantry. But even if you're

not using that optional Background, when a player character, joins a Node or cooperates with a Node - not note. I'm sorry. Chantry or works with a Chantry for a period of time, that is a great opportunity for the Storyteller to say, hey, you get this many dots or additional dots in the Node Background. So, you've got more contestants you can use during the game.

Also, Chantries are very important to the world of Mage. I think it's worth noting that the first two supplements that were started before the game had a line developer, were one, an adventure. So that people had a practical example of how they could run this game and two was *Book of Chantries*. So that players could better use Chantries in their games. Because, if you look at the rules carefully, Nodes and the Chantries behind them, are the only places where players can get quintessence. They can start play with quintessence but once they spend it, the only way they're going to get it is to go to a Node. And most Nodes have been claimed by mages or other supernatural beings. There aren't a lot of just empty free Nodes lying around for players to find even way out in the middle of the wilderness.

So, by introducing all this information on Chantries, it equips a Storyteller to help players be members of Chantries, or to establish their own, or to even infiltrate a Chantry. Because the *Book of Chantries* gives so much information on Chantries, there are rules and resources here for Chantry security. What specifically do mages do to protect their Chantries. How - what are the rules for these security measures.

I mean, what are the dice you roll and difficulties and things that you check, when you are either establishing them or trying to infiltrate a Chantry and get past these security measures yourself. So this book gives you everything you need to handle that. And I think that the writers of Mage intended for players to have their characters be members of Chantries.

Now, this is guesswork on my part, but after reading the early editions of the book, it really seems clear that the writers of Mage wanted Chantries to be a part of these games. They were places where not only the player characters could get the quintessence that they need to power their magic when they're adventuring, but also, it is a very rich source of stories, of plot hooks, of connections with other mages. A Chantry is a place where a player character can learn from their mentor, ask their mentor for help, get a mentor if they don't have one.

Mentor is an important background for mages. But if a player character can start play without any dots in Mentor and if they want to get one, this is a good place for the Storyteller to provide one, at a Chantry that they've either joined or visited.

So Chantries are a great place for Storytellers to introduce story ideas to the players. If the players are members of a Chantry then the Chantry leadership can come to them and say, hey, we've got a mission for you. We've got a job for you. Something that we really need you to do or the other use of a Chantry is a place where a player characters can go and say, hey, I want to increase my knowledge in the Forces Sphere. Can somebody train me here? And the people in the Chantry can say oh yeah, sure, we can do that, but you got to do something for us. Here's your next story idea, once you complete that, come back and we'll give you all the training and Forces that you would like. So Chantries are really, I think an integral part of the world of Mage and so it really was important that they put out this supplement and help people work them into their own games.

Now, when we are talking about ideas for Chantries, one thing that occurs to a lot of us is we've seen those Harry Potter movies in recent years. A lot of people enjoyed those movies and even if you didn't, at least you have heard about them.

I think there are a number of people who are going to be new to Mage and when they come in, they don't really have a very set idea of what the world of Mage is like,

but they enjoyed the Harry Potter movies. And there's probably a number of people are saying, hey, could we do something like that?

And yeah, Mage has you covered. If you are using *Book of Chantries*, you can say that you've got a cabal of player characters that have all recently Awakened. They have become members of a Chantry where they are still training under mentors, they're learning their magic. And they know some so you can start play. But if you use this book together with the Second Edition supplement *Initiates of the Art*, it is a natural fit. For those people who want to do a Chronicle similar to Harry Potter. *Initiates of the Art* is a later supplement which is not necessary, but a really great one. It tells you how to play initiates. How to play mages who are just starting out. They have less abilities, less power. They're not as strong as regular starting players from the core books of First and Second, *Mage20*, etcetera. So, with these weaker student mages, you could have them living at a Chantry and subject to its rules and laws and play through all the ideas you have that you might get from watching Harry Potter movies or reading those books. And there are probably a number of Mage players who roll her eyes and say, my gosh, Harry Potter.

That's not what I want to do with Mage. But hey, I can understand that. But still a Chronicle that focuses on students in a Chantry has a lot to offer and *Book of Chantries* is going to be a necessary aid for doing that.

Now, Chantries often exist within Horizon Realms that are for the most part very far removed from regular life on Earth, and even those Chantries that do not have Horizon Realms are often in secluded places where people do not have a lot of contact with regular folks and regular society. So most Chantries of all stripes are quite isolated places. And so, this makes it easier for mages to do the things they want to do there. But it introduces a lot of ideas for Chronicles that I think really should be dealt with. One of those is, if you get a group of people who all have the same mindset and

separate them from regular society, they can become very set in their ways. I think of the term echo chamber which is an expression of place where everybody who thinks alike separates from everyone else, and they all reinforce their ideology and get so dogmatic about it that they lose touch with reality and can get into some very odd thinking. Sometimes even dangerous thinking. And Chantries have the capacity to become echo chambers for mages of a certain school of thought. So that is something that can be worked with in your Chronicles.

Also, one thing that I was really wondering about is just marriage between mages.

There are a number of examples of NPCs in the published Mage books. A number of examples of mages who marry and then have children who Awaken and become mages. And it's never really discussed in the book, at least that I can think of, does the child of two mages have a greater chance of Awakening and becoming a mage? Or is it just like regular people? Because I'll tell you, if there's any noticeable increase in the chance of this mage child Awakening, I'll tell you right now, that every every Chantry out there is going to make it a priority to become matchmakers for their mages. If they've got single men and women in their Chantry, they're going to try and hook them up and get them to marry because mages are the most valuable resource in the world of Mage.

There are very few people who awaken and can use Sphere magic. So if there's any way of creating more mages for your faction, you're going to get a really big leg up in the Ascension War. So it would not at all be ridiculous to have a Chantry where a young man joins and he really wants to focus on his magic and the leadership of the Chantry comes to him and says, hey, we got this single girl over here who's a mage and you really ought to take an interest in her. And this young man is saying, no, no. Look, I just want to study on my magic. That's why I'm here. They say, hey, this girl is re-

ally something. I mean she's got the personality of a cold fish and she's not much to look at but you're really gonna love her. Hey, take her out to dinner - on us.

This kind of unwelcome attention, is going to be a reality if children of two mages are more likely to Awaken. So, something that I think about. Maybe I'm just kind of weird that way.

But, moving on, one thing that I was really wondering about while reading this book was how do Chantries handle utilities and supplies? I mean, maybe I'm getting a little too far into the weeds here but they create Horizon Realms and most of the Chantry exists in this magical realm, far removed from the world we know. So, what about indoor plumbing and electricity, and internet and food supplies, and building supplies. And all these other necessary things that mages are going to need. Because mages - a lot of mages live there full-time. Not only that, but their acolytes, their unawakened servants and employees and helpers, are there with them. And there's usually more unawakened people in a Horizon Realm Chantry than awakened people. So how do these people get the things they need to live? A number of these Chantry descriptions were just saying, hey, they've got satellite TV and Internet in here. They have a computer network that a Virtual Adept set up and all this great stuff and I'm thinking, where do they get the electricity? That's just something I think about.

Naturally in Doissetep, which is in the Shade Realm of Forces, there's very strong lightning storms happening in the sky all the time. So it is not at all ridiculous to say that they put up some lightning poles and harvested that and have electricity round-the-clock. That's not silly in my mind.

But at Lodge of the Grey Squirrel, where they pursue traditional Native American mode of life, that's going to be more difficult to set up power lines and utilities of all different kinds. Not only would that be very, very difficult to establish on your own, in a

magical realm is different from Earth, but there's going to be a certain mindset among a lot of the people there saying, hey, that's what we're getting away from.

Not what we want. Let's not re-establish all the same problems as Earth. And then there will be other people there saying, hey, you know, I really like indoor heating it.

I'm kind of weird that way. I like that. Can I have that please? So, there could be some conflicts over that. This is something that I think about when I read about a lot of these Chantries.

An important thing that I would emphasize in a lot of my Chronicles that use Chantries is getting to know the unawakened acolytes and servants in these Chantries. I think if mages are going to visit or become members of Chantries, there's going to be a lot of things going on in those Chantries. A lot of conflicts, a lot of Politics, a lot of issues between the residents of those Realms. And to get a really good idea of what's going on instead of talking to the mages, really what you want to do is talk to the Acolytes, the unawakened people there. This actually is a very similar theme to a lot of novels written about the Edwardian period in England, which was the very late 1800s, very early 1900's before World War One.

There were a lot of wealthy families, some nobility, some not, they had large estates and manor houses. They had a lot of servants and in these Edwardian novels one thing that was emphasized, was, if you want to really know what's going on in this family or in this estate then don't spend your time with the ruling family. Get to know the servants. Talk to the kitchen staff. Talk to the butlers. Talk to the chambermaids and so on. They'll tell you what's really going on around here.

And I think that same theme is going to apply to Chantries in Mage. A lot of the mages are very focused on the magic that they're working on. Some of these mages are quite narrow minded individuals. And so there's a lot going on in their Chantries that they're just not going to worry about or not even hear about.

The Acolyte staff is very aware of the fact that these mages want to focus on what they're doing and so they're not going to trouble them with a lot of the day-to-day bits of gossip or problems. So, if your player characters really want to find out what's happening in a Chantry or gain some influence, or some ability to move freely once they get there, then establish relationships with the unawakened Acolyte staff.

One practical example for you here is before your players go to a Chantry, try and talk to someone who has been there or someone who knows about it and say, hey, what are they always wanting there but have a hard time getting? I mean, is there a certain foodstuff or a certain supply that they really need and they just can't get their hands on. And this NPC can tell them, oh hey. Well, you know, there's a lot of people there that have a really hard time getting to Earth. There's not much travel back and forth because of security concerns and so they don't they don't have any way to make their own chocolate. And I don't know about you, but I kind of like the stuff and so this NPC can say to your players, hey, if you stock up on a couple of pounds of grade a Swiss chocolate and show up and start handing it out, you're going to make some friends there. And the Acolytes there are probably going to take a shine to you and they'll open up to you and tell you what's going on.

And then you can start with both feet firmly on the ground and understand what's happening in this Chantry. Because sometimes mages visit Chantries just as a stopping over point when they're traveling somewhere else or because they're sent on some minor errand from their own mentors. But a lot of times mages are going to a Chantry because there's a problem there that they have to solve or that they have to stay there for some time because they really need to use it as a staging area for something they're doing in the Um

Finally, I had some ideas on Portals. Portal is a game term. It means basically a magic doorway that takes you from Earth to the Horizon Realm of a Chantry, or even

from one Chantry to another Chantry or from a place in the Chantry to a naturally occurring umbral Realm. It's basically a magic door and these portals are presented in the game usually, in one way. And that is a doorway that is always open. Always working. It will always take you exactly where you think it's going to take you. Takes you from one fixed place in the Horizon Realm, to one fixed place on Earth or another Chantry, etc. So, because these doorways are always open, they have guardians. Sometimes these guardians are mages, sometimes they are unawakened Acolytes, sometimes they are umbral creatures that have been forced or contracted to serve as guardians.

So, what if you put that assumption on the shelf and said, hey, what if the portals worked differently? What if the portal was sometimes in one place, but other times it shifted to another place? What if the doorway doesn't work like we think it will? It's not like a doorway in a house where you anything can move through it, but what if only people can move through it and animals and large objects can't. Or what if a person has to be wearing something metal in order to walk through or nothing metal can pass through this doorway? People in clothing and wood, etc. can move through, no problem. And anything metal will get stuck and it just won't go through. Or you'll walk through the doorway and you'll find that whatever metal object just isn't there anymore. Or maybe it's not metal, maybe it's some other material or some other kind of an item. This can make portals a more interesting part of your game.

A lot of Tradition mages will have a special ceremonial knife or other object that is very important to them. It's an important Focus for what they're doing with their magic and so they walk through a portal and all of a sudden, hey, it's not there. I don't have that item. It's waiting behind at the other end of that portal at the Node on Earth, and I'm going to have to go back and get it later. And so, this can add some interesting ideas to your own stories.

Also, what if there was no actual doorway sort of portal? What if there's an area and anywhere within that area, if you carry out the Rote or say the magic words, or make the right gestures - you will appear in the Horizon Realm. So in that way you could set up a very clever trap since most mages expect a doorway in one of these areas, you could create a doorway - maybe against the wall, maybe freestanding - and that doorway corresponds to a place in the Horizon Realm where you've set up a jail cell.

So that the regular mages who are a part of this Chantry will stand well apart from this doorway on Earth. They will say the magic words and appear in the Horizon Realm. But intruders will break into this place, they'll see that doorway and they'll say, oh, well that must be the doorway. I'm going to go through there and say the magic words that I've stolen from a scroll somewhere and they appear in a jail cell. And then the guardian umbrood spirit in the Horizon Realm would alert the Chantry mages. Hey, there's an intruder and he's all bottled up. You can interrogate him now. So I thought that might be fun to try in a story. But there's all different ways you could work with these portals. You don't have to take the assumption that it's just a standard doorway that's always open. So do with that what you will.

I was also thinking, what if the portal was like a pool of water? You have to step down into the pool and duck down and then when you stand up again, you'll be in the Horizon Realm and vice versa. It's kind of interesting. More naturalistic and not every player character wants to get all wet.

What if you have to take something, an old scroll on paper or parchment, and you've got to get it to the Horizon Realm intact. Now there's a little complication that players have to deal with. Sometimes annoying, sometimes interesting for a Storyteller.

You can also have your portals key to particular times. Like it only works at night time. It only works under a full moon. It only works when it's raining. What if a mage or any person using the portal has to be in a certain emotional state to use it? This might get annoying after a while but if it's a place that the players don't go very often. What if you were to say, hey, you have to be really really angry or the portal won't work for you. And so now the players are in this perhaps embarrassing situation where they have to get themselves all angry and furious before they can use this portal. Might be fun in your stories. Do with that what you will.

You could also say that there's a three day delay before a portal can be used again.

So if you're chasing someone, they go through the portal. Nope, it's not going to work for three days. Three days from now you're going to get into the Horizon Realm and then you'll have to catch up with the person or find out where they went.

It's a complication that can be used well.

And what if the portal is only an astral sort of a portal? Any person who walks through the portal, their body will fall asleep and fall to the ground and their mind will astrally travel to the Horizon Realm. And so they will have an astral body, sort of a semi-transparent appearance, and they will walk around in that Horizon Realm and find that everyone else there has an astral body. It just makes it different. Maybe you could use that for an Akashic Brotherhood Chantry and just put a little different flavor for a part of your Chronicle. It's an idea. I might try it sometime.

So moving on, here are some ideas for using Chantries in your own Chronicles.

I'll try to go through this quickly. I'm running a bit long here. Hopefully, I'm not boring anyone.

What if you were to have a Chantry of Sons of Ether or Virtual Adepts and in this Chantry, in the Horizon Realm of this Chantry, they have certainly dealt with the power

problem. They've got electricity and Internet connection very well established in this Horizon Realm. And so the player characters go there and visit and you can say that your player characters are all or mostly mystical kind of mages. They're not techno mages. They're not Virtual Adepts, technomancers or Sons of Ether. They're like hermetics, Verbena, Dreamspeakers, etc. And once they get to this Horizon Realm and after they meet a few people and kind of see how it works, the Horizon Realm is under attack and the attackers shut down the power grid inside the Horizon Realm. So there's no working electricity. Maybe they use an EMP, electromagnetic pulse bomb. This is a high-tech, real world weapon that when you set it off, regular people don't see or hear anything. They don't even know that it has happened but that electromagnetic pulse will scramble hard drives. Electrical devices shut down or don't work properly. And so after the attackers have done this, all of the techno mages that live in this Horizon Realm can't use their regular foci. They can't use the regular Talismans. Their normal, kind of magic just doesn't work anymore and so now the player characters are the center of attention.

Their mystical magic works just fine. It doesn't rely on batteries or electricity or hard drives. So they can use their magic to fight off the attackers and earn the trust and friendship and admiration of all the Techno Mages that live there.

What if you had a Chantry that its portal only opens once every five or ten or so many years? And so during that, say, 5 or 10-year period, that Chantry is completely cut off from Earth and from other Chantries. Just say it's a quirk of the Horizon Realm or the umbral realm where they established this Chantry and the mages there have just learned to accept it. And so after the ten years are over the Council of 9 calls on the player characters and say, hey, you have to go to this portal that is now open after 10 years and you've got to walk through, see what's going on there. Bring us back a status report. I mean, we're kind of worried about those guys. We had heard anything

for 10 years. So once the portal opens up after 10 years, it will stay open for three days or a week or some number of days that the Storyteller will set. And so the player characters have to deal with whatever they find in there and resolve it before that portal closes after a certain number of days.

So that can put a timer on your story and perhaps that can give you something interesting to present to your players.

As I said before, a lot of Horizon Realm Chantries are very isolated communities. And so the mages can get very, very locked into a certain mindset. What if you had a cabal of players or just one player whose job it was to check up on Chantries? Maybe that's his role in the Technocracy or the Council of 9. Hey, you're the guy who travels between Chantries officially with our blessing and you'll just spend some time there and then come back to us and tell us how are they doing over there? Are they all right? Are they getting off kilter? They getting a little weird or are they regular, good, decent folks? That's one idea you can work with.

Also, I had a Celestial Chorus mage that I made as a character in someone else's Chronicle a while back. He was a courier. His job for the Council of 9 Traditions was he would carry packages and messages in between Chantries. Because Chantries are so isolated it is very difficult for them to be in communication with the outside world. Even Chantries that are on Earth that are in an isolated area way out in the wilderness or underground or something. They're going to have a hard time communicating with other places mostly because of security. If they have a phone line or an Internet line, that is something that the Technocracy can use to spy on them - or Virtual Adepts can use to spy on them. And so a lot of these mage strongholds have very little communication for necessary, security reasons.

So, the person who can carry packages or messages between them becomes a lot more valuable. It becomes a little bit more like traditional settings.

If you were to go back a few hundred years than most anywhere you went, even homes in regular towns, they were very interested when someone new came into town because that person was carrying news of the outside world. And they wanted to know. So when your player characters visit a lot of Chantries, you can play that up. You can have a lot of Acolytes and even mages all gather around the newcomers and say, hey, tell us what's going on on Earth, or what's happening in the rest of the world of mages. We haven't heard anything for weeks or months, or even years and we are all ears. Tell us about it.

Now, something I try to be mindful of when I'm working with Chantries in a game.

Now, let's see... What if you had an upset in the umbral courts? Just to give you a brief explanation, in the Umbra, there are umbral courts. And each court has a different theme, like the Egyptian gods of the Greek gods, or even something else. And there are powerful umbrood creatures that are native to the Umbra and they make up these courts and because they are powerful umbrood Lords, they have agendas and conflicts that involve a great many people inside the Umbra and on Earth and other places as well. And so, what if you had an upset in one of these umbral courts and because of that the door slams shut to a Tradition Chantry? Umbrood Lords have a lot of influence in the Umbra and closing off a portal between a Horizon Realm and Earth is something they can probably do.

So the players are called in to rescue. Did someone in that Chantry upset the umbral court? Maybe there is some sort of a key to open up the portal again. Some sort of Talisman or powerful artifact kind of item. And the players are called upon to go and get that key so that the Chantry can re-establish congress with the rest of the world.

Maybe that key exists in an Akashic Brotherhood Chantry on Earth that is very isolated. It's up in the mountains and that Talisman is owned by an Akashic master who is

well advanced in years. Has been meditating for most of his time and he's really not interested in the conflicts of the outside world. So when the players get here and ask for the key, this akashic master just isn't impressed and he isn't even very concerned about what's happening with the rest of the Council of 9. And he says, hey if you want that key, you've got to live here. Take part in our customs and practices and our meditations and prove to me that you are the sort of people who are worthy of receiving this key and only then will I give it to you. I can't just hand this powerful artifact out to anybody who shows up.

And so now the players have to get into the mindsets of the Akashic Brotherhood. Learn their ways. Show that they are good people. And only then will they be given the key and then they can go and open up the portal and rescue the Chantry mages. One idea.

Now, what if there was a Horizon Realm that is on the verge of fracturing? Perhaps the Technocracy or some other enemy came in and raided and took over a lot of their Nodes. So many Nodes that the quintessence supply feeding into the Horizon Realm is now dangerously low and the Horizon Realm could break up at any time.

Now, let's say the players are already in this Horizon Realm. They're either members of that Chantry or they're just visiting for some reason, and they are called upon to help with disaster control and evacuation. We've got to get everybody out of this Horizon Realm before it breaks up completely.

Now, in this process, they make contact with the messenger of a powerful umbrood Lord who is able to preserve the realm. This umbrood Lord has some power or ability to just solve the problem, like snapping your fingers. But the Lord wants something in return. This umbrood Lord says, I'm only going to stabilize this realm and give it back to you mages if you steal a powerful magical treasure that this Chantry owns. Some real treasured powerful item that the Chantry has had for perhaps even hun-

dreds of years and is an integral part of the beliefs and practices of the mages here. And so, the player characters are told by this umbrood Lord's messenger that if they steal this item, hand it off to the messenger, then they will save the realm. They will become Heroes of the Council of 9. But in the process they will betray the trust of the leaders of the Chantry and the other friendships they've made their. Can they resist the temptation? That's something you can explore in your own Chronicles.

So that wraps up a few ideas that I had for Chantries. There's always more but I've already run over an hour here so I should probably wrap this up because, like me, you probably have a lot of things that you need to get to today.

So in conclusion, I just want to say that the *Book of Chantries* was a really great supplement for any edition of Mage: The Ascension. I enjoyed reading it, I have used it in my Chronicles a number of times I would like to continue using it in some future Chronicles. I recommend picking it up and thumbing through it, even if it's just a PDF for a few bucks. I think you're going to find something worth reading there.

And even if you don't pick up the book, I encourage you to make Chantries a part of your own Mage Chronicles. They offer a lot of plot hooks. A lot of possibilities. A lot of interesting ideas to grapple with both in terms of the power of your own players, but also the possibilities that you have in the game.

So for Mage the Podcast this has been Adam Simpson talking to you.

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You can also find us on Google Play and the TuneIn app. We encourage you to listen to us in any way that works best for you.

So, this is Adam Simpson encouraging you to not only enjoy reading the Mage books but run a Chronicle yourself. Find some players out there, perhaps online, who can welcome you into a game and I think you're really going to enjoy it.

So, well, have a good week everyone. This is Adam Simpson signing off. Goodbye.