



MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

Related links

Read other articles

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search

Seshiro the Anointed



Adrian Sullivan · Single-Card Strategies
Wednesday, November 3, 2004

We return to our column, already in progress.

W [Last week's column](#) was a fun one – Scott Johns managed to get me to change topics in midstream by suggesting I write about **Kiki-Jiki**, **Mirror Breaker** and my very fun deck from this year's Wisconsin State Championship tournament. I've never really been one to shy away from fun requests, so I happily acquiesced. Of course, I had had another column in mind before that...

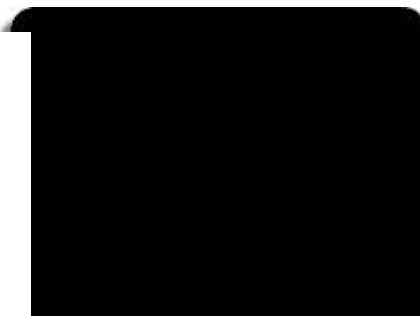
And so, gentle reader, I come back to it.

A snake.

I will always remember that first snake that really made me smile. No, it wasn't my friend Liz's snake, and watching it feed on the rats we put in its cage. It was **Ophidian**. The Doily-Snake. I remember riding on the back of him to my first Pro-Tour Qualifier win. **Ophidian** could be an extremely cruel card to have to deal with – once you got through with an **Ophidian** on the attack, each extra card you drew made it that much easier to draw more cards to get through. I had first seen the card in Sealed, and had questioned its value, but I quickly came to appreciate the amazing power of its card drawing.

Later on, there would be a bird. **Thieving Magpie** would be the "better" **Ophidian** (it flew), but its increased casting cost held it back from some decks that may have preferred the 'phid. Later yet, we would have a beast (**Hystrodon**), and he would see some play. For a beast, though, this wasn't very exciting card advantage. A card was a card was a card, and when you had beasts on the attack, it often seemed so much better to play tougher, stronger beasts, and get your free cards from forcing your opponent to block (either because of **Provoke** or because they didn't want to die) or using **Contested Cliffs** to knock things around.

Now, once again, we have a snake, like the **Ophidian**. Left unblocked, it draws a card, but not only that, it also loves other snakes – this snake makes *all* of your snakes into card-drawers. And unlike **Ophidian**, this leader of snakes let's you deal your damage and draw the card too. This leader of snakes once studied battle with the human monks. His name is **Seshiro the Anointed**.





The ecology of the legendary snake monk

Reading the card text on Seshiro can be a bit exciting. He gives all Snakes +2/+2. He makes all snakes into super-Ophidians. Right there is enough to be excited about him. His drawbacks come out pretty quickly, however. He costs 6 mana (the same price as most Dragons). A creature that is only 3/4 starts to look a little unimpressive at 6 mana. Then a bit of pondering – every other snake that is out gets +2/+2 – in a sense, we can imagine that *he* gets that +2/+2 when another snake is out. Suddenly, in that light, his 6 mana cost begins to make sense, and we can imagine him hitting the table and adding 6 or 8 power and toughness to the table the turn he hits.

Seshiro is also a Legend. This means he gets all of the privileges and benefits afforded to Legends. He can be searched for with **Time of Need**. He can be protected by the various Legendary Lands (most notably **Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers**). He can hit play just a little bit faster with **Untaidsake, the Cloud Keeper**. Unfortunately, he is still bound by the Legend rule, so you can only play one of him out at a time. Other snakes, of course, can be played without limit.

So clearly, he likes being around other snakes. The more the merrier. What are the best ways to make them?

Snakes. Why did it have to be snakes?

As much as I like **Ophidian**, a part of me wishes that Seshiro did something cute and cuddly, like power up kitties or squirrels (sorry **Anthony!**). Wiser heads (less manipulated by purring, perhaps) prevailed, and it was the snakes that got his bonus. One of the best parts of this card is how much better it is when you have lots of snakes. If you have an abundance of snakes and you drop a Seshiro, expect to win. Here's how you can go about making that abundance:

Orochi Eggwatcher / Shidako Broodmistress

The Eggwatcher is a solid choice for snake production. The **Orochi Eggwatcher** is fairly cheap to get out and serves as a slithering version of a **Kjeldoran Outpost**. A snake itself (and a shaman, which will be relevant in a bit), the Eggwatcher can easily make a quick army of snakes if it isn't taken care of quickly. As Madison's Matt Severa liked to say, you can imagine the **Orochi Eggwatcher** carefully tending the nest and putting out little snakes – but at some point there are too many and she just starts chucking them at people's heads. Kind of cute imagery, but if you get out that Seshiro, it's pretty likely that the only time you'll be chucking these snakes is if you'll be killing them by doing it.

Orochi Hatchery

If the Eggwatcher is a solid choice, the Hatchery is a very solid choice. Even when cast at the cheap 4 mana, it can be ready the next turn to make 2 snakes a turn. At 6 mana, that's 3 snakes a turn. It can be very hard to keep

up with this kind of production of snakes, let alone if they come out as 3/3s.

Snake Basket

This card is an oldie, but a goodie. My first signed card (signed by Richard Garfield in Paris, thanks to my friend Ben Kellerstrass), the **Snake Basket** has had a home in many of the decks I've worked on, but a favorite was my **5-color** deck from a few years ago. The **Snake Basket** makes snakes in a single shot, but it makes them more quickly than probably any other method. The one-shot use may be a drawback, but consider that 11 mana spent on an **Orochi Hatchery** will get you only three Snakes, but will get you *seven* Snakes with a **Snake Basket**.

Other, slow and mostly bad options

Of course you have **Serpent Generator** to pump out 1/1 Poisonous Snakes every turn. Or you have **Riptide Replicator** (naming Snakes), making X/X Snakes. Or **Volrath's Laboratory**, making 2/2 Snakes. But, none of that is all that hot. Really, we need to look at the singular snakes out there that can make a difference.



Ouroboros, and other powerful snakes I have known



The image of the Ouroboros is incredibly well known in nearly all of the cultures of the world. The snake swallows its own tail, symbolizing (among other things) the continual return of all things to their own beginning. The natural cycle of life and death all at once. Most people the world over recognize the image of Ouroboros, even if they don't know what it represents. In the **Magic** world, it's hard to find a player who doesn't know the familiar face of one of **Magic's** most potent snakes: **River Boa**.

River Boa

Here is a snake that works so great with Seshiro. On its own, **River Boa** is one of the most efficient creatures every printed. For two mana, a regenerating, island walking monster. When Seshiro hits, it's incredibly likely that even if you aren't drawing cards with it, you'll be killing creatures as they block it.

Sakura-Tribe Elder

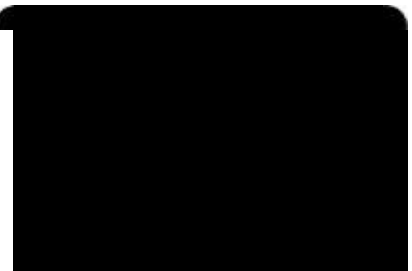
This card is already being called one of the best cards in the new set. Very simple and subtle, a **Sakura-Tribe Elder** is usually going to be found in your graveyard, already having fetched a land for you. Since you need 6 mana for Seshiro, this is just fine. After Seshiro hits, a late-game **Sakura-Tribe Elder** is actually a very reasonable card to actually leave on the table, and it still fetches that land for you if they go about killing it.

Mystic Snake

A counterspell that comes with a snake attached as bonus is already a more than decent card. Give it the chance to be an actual beater and draw you cards and it becomes even better. Here is another card that builds on itself – if you start drawing cards you're going to be all the more likely to draw *another* **Mystic Snake**, which will let you stop your opponent from doing something useful to resist you *and* give you another snake body, which will let you draw more cards – you get the idea.

Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro

Here is the snake that might just work best with Seshiro, his daughter. Sachi's mana empowering ability is quite relevant when used with Seshiro. Not only are many of the cards best able to mass produce snakes mana-intensive, but Seshiro himself is also expensive. It isn't at all unreasonable to cast a turn 3 or 4 Sachi and follow her up with a Seshiro on the next turn. The thing to remember with Sachi is that all *shamans* get the mana



bonus. Thankfully, there are a reasonable number of shamans that are already good:

- **Eternal Witness**
- **Troll Ascetic**
- **Viridian Shaman**
- **Vulshok Sorcerer**
- **Sakura-Tribe Elder**

Sosuke, Son of Seshiro

Sosuke is not nearly as good as Sachi, in my opinion, but still serves a great purpose. In conjunction with Seshiro, players are put into a rough choice: either block a snake and let their blocker die, or let it through for a bit of damage and a free card for the opponent. Sosuke also benefits from being a pretty potent card all on his own if you're in creature combat.

Getting through

To make the most of Seshiro, it is often a question of getting your snakes through. Even getting through for one burst can be great if you draw enough cards. Here are a few options.

Lure

Risky, to be sure, but especially useful on a regenerator, **Lure** can be a very easy and cheap way to get through. Staying in the color green is already good, of course, but the drawbacks are a bit dangerous – if they get rid of the **Lure** or the **Lured** creature at the wrong time, you can find yourself on the bad end of a nasty block.

Matsu-Tribe Decoy

The decoy carries many of the same issues as **Lure** but with the added bonus of being a snake. In addition, the Decoy can actually be a weak creature-kill spell, dispatching anything tiny that hits the table. After a Seshiro hits, it can do an even better job of killing creatures. Given enough mana, the decoy can keep a pretty large number of creatures from blocking anything else, and that isn't half bad.

Falter and friends

Any of the one-shot “don't block” cards are great here. **Falter**, **Panic Attack**, **Crown of Ascension** (sacrificed). Just getting through for a single blast can draw you yet another card that does the same thing on the next turn. Don't run too many of these kinds of cards, however, or you'll find yourself without enough snakes to attack with.

Cover of Darkness

This is definitely one of my favorites at doing the job. Name “Snakes” and suddenly only artifact and black creatures can block your guys. With the kind of card drawing that you can often expect to get when you have this and Seshiro out, the game should be over quickly. While it can be destroyed by anti-enchantment spells just like **Lure** can, at least it isn't a creature enchantment that can suffer from a much more common creature-kill spell. There are many other variants on this card (like **Bedlam**), but this one is probably the best of its type.

Whispersilk Cloak

Here, you've got a card that serves an amazing double-purpose. You not only keep Seshiro from being killed by nearly anything (save sweeping cards like **Wrath of God**), but now it can't be blocked either! Nice!

Killing creatures

Running simple creature kill spells can be another way to get Snakes through. As with the old Ophidian decks, the great thing about this is that each time you succeed in getting a guy



through, you draw more cards that will help you get creatures out of the way to get more cards through.

Wrapping Up

So, with all that we've learned, I have made a little Seshiro deck that isn't entirely dependent on only Snakes, and yet can do a lot when you do get your snakes going. This deck is legal for Standard, and I hope you like it.

Seshiro for Standard		
60 cards		
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	3 Sachi, Daughter of Seshiro	4 Time of Need
1 Shinka, the Bloodsoaked Keep	2 Seshiro the Anointed	4 Magma Jet
5 Mountain	1 Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker	2 Orochi Hatchery
13 Forest	1 Kumano, Master Yamabushi	10 other spells
2 Pinecrest Ridge	1 Sosuke, Son of Seshiro	
22 land	4 Orochi Ranger	
	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	
	4 Vulshok Sorcerer	
	4 Viridian Shaman	
	4 Eternal Witness	
	28 creatures	



Here, the deck uses four **Time of Need** and two Seshiro to ensure that you'll be able to generally pop out a Seshiro when you hit 6 mana. Because the mana to get Seshiro is so important, three Sachi are in the deck to help ramp up to that 6 mana. Not including Sachis, there are 18 Shamans, so a Sachi is very likely to help produce a great amount of mana on the next turn.

Magma Jet, **Vulshok Sorcerer**, and **Viridian Shaman** (against artifacts) can help keep the table clear. **Eternal Witness** serves the role of getting back your best-killed cards (like Seshiro) and also getting back more cards to help you get that Seshiro through (like **Magma Jet**).

Overall, the deck is pretty solid at doing what it wants to do. It does have a lot in common with my Kiki-Jiki deck from last week (and even includes one because of **Time of Need**), but it is quite capable of creating a situation where it is the Seshiro that is pulling out your wins.

I hope that everyone has a great week. Until next time!



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Adrian Sullivan](#) archive