

Home > Games > Magic > Magicthegathering.com > Columns

Shrines that Work

Nate Heiss
Building on a Budget
Friday, December 10, 2004



PRO TOUR-VALENCIA

One of the coolest new mechanics to come out of *Champions of Kamigawa* is the Honden cycle. These legendary shrines all have mediocre abilities attached for their mana cost when you have just one out, but once you get to start combining their powers they become stronger.

Much stronger.

If you though the Zuber were cool, you are going to love the Honden. They are all the fun of the Zuber without the annoying hassle. Get the effects you want every turn – simple. There is only one catch: they are legendary. This means that you must be very careful when constructing the deck, since drawing more than one of the same Honden will be pretty bad. With that in mind, as a general rule of thumb I recommend playing two or three of each of the shrines, three for the good ones (Red, White, Blue...hey American flag colors!) and two for the mediocre ones (Green. Black).



The reason for this is that when you play three of a card, you maximize your chance of drawing only one copy of that card in your opening hand. If you play four, your chances of drawing two go up a lot. The reason to play two of the other ones is because you want to draw them later, probably after playing *Honden of Seeing Winds*, and even then you only want to draw one of each. It is more for upping your total Honden count to make sure you at least have two different ones right off the bat, with a total of thirteen Hondens in the deck.

Of course, all of this doesn't even tackle the real issue: mana. How do we plan on getting five colors of mana into play in order to cast all these shrines? The answer is rather commonplace these days. We have lots of awesome five-color tools available to us. I would recommend using *Kodama's Reach*, *Sakura-Tribe Elder*, and *Sylvok Explorer*. However, you could easily use *Talismans*, *Wayfarer's Bauble*, or *Orochi Leafcaller* instead of the Explorer. Even *Pentad Prism* would work.



After we add these mana fixers we are going to need more meat in the deck. Thirteen Hondens is not enough – we need other cards to help stall the game or creatures to attack and block. Card Drawing would also be very nice, since it will help us find our Hondens faster. I decided to go with a Sunburst theme as well for this deck, since we already have the five color base set up. My theme really only involves two cards: The under-rated *Clearwater Goblet* and the 'never found a home' *Etched Oracle*.

Clearwater Goblet is really amazing. It isn't the easiest thing to get into play at five mana, but it sure makes up for lost time – especially when you can play it for five counters (which will happen most of the time here). If you manage to live to your next upkeep, it's all gravy. You gain tons of life such that your opponents attacker's don't matter that much. When you combine this with the lifegain from *Honden of Cleansing Fire*, you opponents might as well forget about killing you with

damage.

Etched Oracle is this amazing creature that could never fit into any deck. Well, things have finally turned around for this trooper as he fits in perfectly in this deck. It enables you to block and trade with a large scary attacker while drawing three cards, helping vastly in the quest to get more Hondens while also helping offset the extra cards used to fix your mana.

Let's take a look at the finished deck:

Building on a Budget: Shrines that Work

Main Deck
60 cards

2 Plains	4 Sylvok Explorer	3 Honden of Seeing Winds
1 Swamp	4 Etched Oracle	2 Honden of Life's Web
2 Mountain	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	3 Honden of Infinite Rage
12 Forest		2 Honden of Night's Reach
6 Island	12 creatures	3 Honden of Cleansing Fire
		4 Clearwater Goblet

Final Wrap-up
[Top 8 Video Archives](#)



23 lands	4 Echoing Truth
	4 Kodama's Reach
25 other spells	

This deck plays out by accelerating mana into play while diversifying its color base. It is not uncommon to have five lands (and the ability to generate all five colors of mana) in play on turn three. **Sakura-Tribe Elder** and **Kodama's Reach** in particular are just amazing at accomplishing this. That means on turn 4 you can start playing our whatever action cards are available to you – Hondens, Sunburst cards, whatever. Once you get three Hondens into play you pretty much just win, but you could win with two as well. Normally you won't plan on winning via Oracle Attacks unless you are playing vs. some slow control deck, but there are always exceptions of course.

Tips on Playing the Deck

- When you have the choice, it's often right to play out **Honden of Night's Reach** before any other shrines you may have drawn. It will give you the most card advantage that way, and force your opponent to play all their spells. This is especially important against control decks that can counter your next Hondens.
- Don't be afraid to block with your spirit tokens from **Honden of Life's Web**. You will get more tokens. Once you have three Hondens in play you'll probably even start accumulating them fast enough to switch to offense and just overrun your opponent with them!
- Try not to just sacrifice your **Etched Oracle** as a card drawing spell. Make your opponent work for it.
- It is ok to play the **Clearwater Goblet** for 4 or 3. It will take four turns for that 1 extra life to offset missing the one turn, so keep this in mind when deciding when to drop the Goblet into play, particularly when your opponent has you on the defensive.



Best for leading off.

Adding Money to the Deck

Well, this deck somewhat self builds itself – you probably should play **Birds of Paradise**, but you knew I was going to say that. I always say that. Birds are insane. Besides that you could do with more card drawers. **Jushi Apprentice** would be decent in here because he can double as a kill card by forcing your opponents to draw a bunch after he is flipped. Of course, if you are going to do this plan, I recommend using **Minamo, School at Water's Edge** to help you. That way you can make yourself draw seven on their end step, draw probably four more during your turn from Hondens, and having 18 cards in hand, letting you force your opponent to draw 36 with Jushi+Minamo. At that stage of the game, it should be enough to kill them.

Until next time, **read your shrines carefully!**

- Nate Heiss
BuildingOnABudget and NateHeiss on **Magic Online**



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Nate Heiss](#) archive