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Chisei, Heart of Oceans



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A long time ago, I remember my first real flying beating: it was on the back of a Serendib Efreet/Clone deck. In retrospect the deck was pretty bad, but it was leagues ahead of where I was in the game at that point. Arabian Nights had already been out for a little bit and before that I had thought that the drawbacks for the cheap blue fliers were too much to make them worth playing. Of course, at that time, most of the people I played **Magic** with had this curious habit of playing a lot of their spells. If you played a counterspell deck, well, you played every countering spell card you owned. We weren't very good, and so this "Painful flier" deck was pretty good against us.

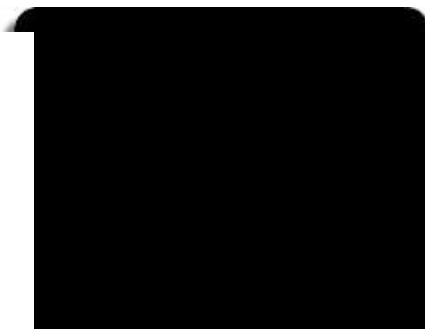
Arabians was really the beginning of Blue's long history of undercosted high-powered fliers. A lot of these cards come with some kind of small (read, *major*) hitch, but that didn't keep them from seeing play. Take *Serendib Djinn*, for example – a 5/6 flier for a mere four mana. One playgroup I know nicknamed the Djinn "the needy girlfriend". It seemed to them that the Djinn was just like Mike D's girlfriend - "Fish again?" she'd whine, and hit him. The thing about the Djinn, even if it hits you for three damage because you fed it fish, somehow it would still do such an incredible amount of damage so fast, it didn't really matter.

"Lucky Djinn" is another fat Blue flier with a nickname. Lucky the *Indentured Djinn* got his name because of how lucky you would have to be to win after you cast him or how lucky you were that your opponent cast him. Lucky's drawback, giving your opponent a free fistful of three cards was really dangerous in *Masques' Block*, a Block chockfull of **Terror**-like effects and the occasional bounce effect.

Probably the fast fliers of this ilk that saw the most tournament play has got to be *Waterspout Djinn*. In a more aggressive Blue deck, he was a Djinn with a pretty moderate drawback. Returning an untapped Island every turn was something that didn't tap you out so much. The real power of all of these fliers was something that this Djinn was best at showcasing. You were playing Blue, so you had access to counter-magic to back up the big Flier. The creature was large, so it could play a really effective offensive or defensive game. Finally, the fact that it was so cheap meant that you could sneak it out early, and let it impact the game before a late-game had set in.

Nowadays, the color wheel has turned. White is the color of the cheap, fat flier. For the most part, White also gets to get away with not having drawbacks for these fliers as well. Rather than a new *Waterspout Djinn*, we get Chisei. Adding insult to injury, *Betrayers* sent us a set of five Legendary four-drop creatures. Of them all, Yukora, Iwamori, Fumiko, Hokori, and Chisei, Chisei stands as the hardest one to actually get working for you. Let's take on that challenge, shall we?

What's eating Chisei, Heart of Oceans?



There are two big problems with Chisei. The first is that Chisei is Legendary. This isn't a big deal when you are just dropping your first one, but having subsequent Chisei become dead draws is not the most appealing thing in the world. One of the things that has always been nice about the cheap Blue flier is that it was possible to drop one 4/4, and then on the next turn swing and drop another. Your opponent would be at 16 life facing down two 4/4 fliers. Not nice for them. Well, running *Mirror Gallery* doesn't seem like a worthwhile investment here, especially since it still wouldn't let you



drop a turn four and then a turn five Chisei without doing a lot of work on turns one through three getting out the Gallery. We'll just have to accept Chisei's Legendary status and move on.

The other problem of Chisei is the upkeep. This is where Chisei got the short end of the stick, compared to all of the other *Betrayer's* four-drop Legends. This is *not* the *Waterspout Djinn* or even the *Serendib Djinn* upkeep. By virtue of actually casting those Djinn, you usually have a land to give them, but getting counters on something for Chisei to nibble on will actually take some work.

Eating counters in a pinch

There is a real problem with making a deck that eats counters off of cards. We don't want to play cards that aren't any good but happen to acquire counters. On the other hand, it seems silly to take counters off of many of the cards with counters that *are* good. Taking counters

off of an *Arcbound Ravager*, a *Tendo Ice Bridge*, or a *Parallax Wave* will not generally seem like the best of ideas while you're in the midst of a game.

There are plenty of good cards that you can run that you might not want to take counters off of, but it isn't a terrible idea to run these cards in a deck with Chisei just so you can have ample cards available that Chisei can eat from. Here are some good examples of these kinds of cards:

- *Callow Jushi*
- *Sengir Vampire*
- *Karstoderm*
- *Triskelion*
- *Umezawa's Jitte*
- *Orochi Hatchery*
- *Tendo Ice Bridge*
- counters from *Scars of the Veteran* or *Test of Faith*

All of these cards could be useful in your deck, but you aren't really gaining anything out of eating their counters.

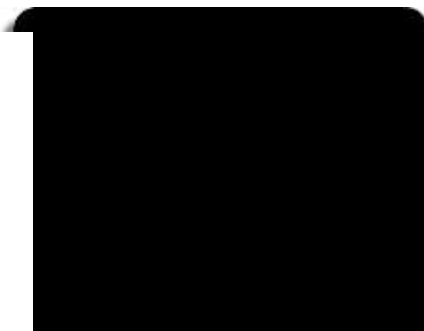
One step up the ladder are the cards that don't mind being eaten from quite so much. The best example of a staple food for Chisei like this is probably *Mirrodin's Core*. For a bare minimum of effort, you can keep a Chisei fed on just one of these, and it still has a pretty

decent use besides that. In Standard, probably the next closest thing to such a card would be *Sun Droplet*, but it's still a bit of a stretch. In Extended, a card like *Powder Keg* would almost fit the bill, but that card actually fits better in another kind of category.

Counting calories

One of the first ways that you can actually make Chisei do something useful is to regulate the counters you actually have on something. Maybe you've accumulated too many counters on your *Powder Keg*, and now you need to turn down the heat a little bit before you blow it up.

Smokestack is another card that might just get a little out of control without something to turn it down.



Smokestack might be one of the perfect examples. As you and your opponent both run out of permanents, one play that some players use is to quit trying to fight the *Smokestack*, and just let it wear you both out. Because a player can do this, it is usually a bad idea to accumulate Soot counters on your *Smokestack* too quickly. A Chisei let's you regulate this so that you can easily turn up the heat, and turn it back down before it gets out of control and tears apart all of your board as well.





Aether Vial has shown its worth in both Extended and Standard, and here a Chisei can easily let you have a fallback if you made a mistake and put on one counter too many. It becomes easier to drop an Engineered Explosives early as well.

One of my favorite cards when it comes to regulating the counters on it still has to be Chalice of the Void. One of the small problems of the card is when you need to stop a certain casting cost from being played and yet that casting cost is vital to your own deck. Chisei can turn these cards back into live cards for you. Since it is likely you'll have other cards in your deck that Chisei can feed from, you will often be able to keep the Chalice at the state you'd like it to be in.

Sneaky Trick Smorgasbord

Of course, there are simply cards that you want to hem in a little bit. These are cards that generally have counters that you absolutely *want* to eat. Let's take a sampling:

- **Unstable Mutation.** This was always a good card in Blue Flying Beatdown. Now you can keep your mutating men from dying!
- **Rogue Skycaptain,** one of my favorite little fliers. He can be pretty expensive to pay for without something taking away his wage counters.
- **All Hallow's Eve.** Sure it is just another Living Death, and it takes two turns. With Chisei, drop it down to a single turn to pop it!
- **Tidal Influence.** Homarids aren't all that good, and neither was much of the blue that came out of *Fallen Empires* except for one little Merfolk. However, keeping the Tidal Influence set to three counter with a Chisei will keep all your little Blue men at +2/+0
- **Harbinger of Night.** The Harbinger will whack the entire board really quickly, but combined with Chisei will keep at least one of your creatures smiling.
- **Tornado.** I still remember the first time I cast this card. It can be quite painful to activate Tornado on successive turns, but with a Chisei, you can make it easy for your opponent to say goodbye to any relevant permanent they might drop.



When I think about having a Tornado and a Chisei out at the same time, I can't help but want to giggle. I remember playing it at a PTQ and using it to take out 4 permanents (quite a hefty life investment!) and when I think of doing the same thing and losing little to no life, it's pretty cool.

Wrapping Up

This week's deck is a casual Chisei deck for Extended, running a few of the "cogs" cards from the *Mirrodin* block, and tossing in some Smokestacks to help keep the Chisei fed good and proper.

Casual Extended Chisei/Counter deck		
60 cards		
4 Mirrodin's Core	4 Chisei, Heart of Oceans	4 Smokestack
4 Yavimaya Coast	4 Birds of Paradise	3 Engineered Explosives
1 Mountain	4 Coretapper	2 Chalice of the Void
2 Plains	3 Trinket Mage	4 Wayfarer's Bauble
4 Forest		

3 Island	4 Leonin Squire	3 Umezawa's Jitte
2 Adarkar Wastes	3 Etched Oracle	2 Chrome Mox
20 land	22 creatures	18 other spells

This deck runs the Chisei both as a fast clock and as a regulator for the vast amount of counter-producing cards in the deck. One of the things that the deck can pull do is put out quite a few permanents to sack to the **Smokestack**. If you've used up a Chalice or an Explosives, sacking it to a **Smokestack** isn't a difficult prospect, and returning it with a **Leonin Squire** can help keep you fat in permanents. Cards like the **Etched Oracle** can help create that extra bit of beatdown, and can become a nice little draw device if need be. **Coretapper** doesn't power up all of the artifacts in your deck, but if nothing else can at least provide a steady supply of food to Chisei.

There are 23 cards in the deck that can help feed the Chisei, but each of these cards can be quite useful in how the deck plays out without the Chisei being around. **Trinket Mage** helps keep the deck moving smoothly, fetching more mana for the deck, or running the Explosives or Chalice for disruption while you set up **Smokestack** to hold them down or beat them in the head with Chisei in the air. With the right draw, the deck can actually beat down really fast!

I hope that you enjoyed this week's card spotlight. Enjoy the rest of your week!



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