

Scott Wills

Tuesday, June 07, 2005

This week I'll be following up on last week's article where I took a look at the first half of the new *Saviors of Kamigawa* set. Today it's the turn of the red and green cards as well as the remainder of the set. Once again, I'm only commenting on these colours with regards to limited play. For constructed comments you'll need to check one of the other columns on our site.

Red

You might want to open up the Gatherer page of the red *Saviors* cards so you can refer to each card as I mention it.

As is typical for red it's the spells that shine over the creatures. Amongst the common creatures there really isn't anything that you'd be happy to have as a first pick.

Akki Drillmaster, Akki Underling and Shinen of Fury's Fire are all basically standard ground creatures with very few abilities to speak of. They're fillers and you'll be playing them but none of them are even close to first picks. If you can avoid having them in your deck altogether then so much the better but *Saviors* will be making up a full third of your draft picks so expect to be playing some of these guys in the coming months.

Ronin Cavekeeper is big, but not really very good either. Without the trample ability and with no evasion behind him he's no different than a Scaled Hulk really, with the only difference being he'll never hit your opponent for more than four damage. Once again you'll play him when you need something big at the top end of your curve but compared to the expensive uncommons and rares available he's pretty terrible.

Sokenzan Spellblade is fairly comparable to Frost Ogre from *Betrayers* and he's probably the best common creature in the set. Your opponent really will have to block him as the turn after he's cast you can usually find the mana to activate him three times and even with three cards in hand that gives him a total power of 11. If you can find some way to send him through unblocked via a Kami of the Waning Moon or Phantom Wings then he'll end any game in two attacks usually, and often one will be enough.

Glitterfang is largely unplayable unless you have a deck with a lot of Spiritcraft triggers. If you do have multiple cards like Waxmane Baku, Soul of Magma, Hired Muscle and so on then Glitterfang can be useful for adding counters to these every turn. That's an extremely narrow use though and I can't see myself ever having a deck that I'd want to include Glitterfang in.



Things improve considerably in the spells with Barrel Down Sokenzan and Spiraling Embers both being solid removal spells. In this format the 'drawback' of returning Mountains to your hand isn't necessarily going to be a drawback as your hand size could be extremely relevant.



Spiraling Embers has already proven very effective for me so far as the ability to hit players too comes into play fairly often for any spell that's capable of dealing five or more damage. On more than one occasion you'll see someone sweep a bunch of lands into their hand from some other spell and then finish an opponent off with a Spiraling Embers for seven or more. Both of these two red cards will be first pick commons you'll be looking for when drafting this set.

Path of Anger's Flame is the last card from the commons that will be played often, but it probably only has a place in certain decks. Blue-red decks will be more likely to use it as they can drop a number of small flyers and then hit for an extra six damage in one turn with this card. This card might also bring aggressive white-red decks back into fashion as white has another common first-striker in this set as well as numerous cheap flyers throughout the format and combining those with this card greatly increases the effectiveness of the +2/+0.

Red's uncommons aren't quite as bountiful as some of the other colours. Feral Lightning might be good but it's very difficult to cast and if you're in a losing position it isn't going to do anything to get you out of that. However, if you have an aggressive deck with a heavy red component then it deals a lot of damage for the mana cost.

Captive Flame, Burning-Eye Zuberu, Yuki-Onna and Oni of Wild Places are all playable and ahead of the power curve of the commons. You'll happily grab all of those over any of the commons that aren't removal.

Ghost-Lit Raider is probably the standout uncommon for me as it completely dominates several archetypes such as white-blue as well as messing up any other deck if they can't kill it right away. Even if it does die then the fact that it's a three mana Spirit means you can Soulshift it back fairly easily. The Channel ability on this guy is actually useful for once as I've already had a few occasions where an opponent has blocked a Kami of Empty Graves because my graveyard was empty only to find them losing their best guy to a Channelled Raider, which then immediately goes back to your hand when the Soulshift resolves.

Green

Once again, here's the Gatherer page for the green cards.

There's only one single green common creature that stands head and shoulder above the rest and that's Elder Pine of Jukai. As a three mana 2/1 with Soulshift 2 he's decent enough anyway but the Spiritcraft trigger he has on top is what separates him out. All decks need land to function and you can usually get at least one additional land every time he triggers. Green decks in particular often need the extra land to ramp up to their bigger commons like Okina Nightwatch and Moss Kami so the benefit is even more dramatic in this colour than it might be in Black or White for example. In this format too, cards in hand are often relevant for other effects and even if you get more lands than you need then they can still prove useful in pumping up cards like the aforementioned Okina Nightwatch or your Spiraling Embers. This is easily the best green common in the set and one of the best green commons in the entire block.

Okina Nightwatch probably comes in second, but not because it's actually particularly powerful, but rather because the rest of the commons are fairly weak. The Nightwatch is powerful when switched on but comparatively weak if you aren't able to maintain that cards-in-hand advantage. The fact that

you need five lands in play to cast him means you probably aren't able to hold a lot of lands back in your hand. If you have this guy you will want to make an extra effort to try and find ways to get those extra cards in your hand.

Amongst the rest of the common creatures there really isn't anything you really want to play main deck. Nightsoil Kami is probably the best of the bunch but it's another random fattie with mediocre toughness and no Trample. As such it's not a patch on Moss Kami or even the Nightwatch for that matter.

Promised Kannushi is playable in decks where you have suitable Soulshift targets but at the end of the day you're just playing Raise Dead with a 1/1 attached and sometimes it can be difficult to kill off the 1/1 when you really want the Soulshift ability to trigger.

I've seen a few people playing Shinen of Life's Roar already and I have to say, if you're going to do so, please don't ever actually cast it. Attacking with all your guys along with the Shinen is just asking for a whole world of hurt when your opponent bounces or kills it before blockers, thus giving them free reign to block all of your men in a favourable fashion. If you really want the

effect then save it until you can Channel it as a surprise when your opponent is at least partially tapped out. The Channel effect can come into play on other occasions too when you can attack with a powered up Nightwatch into three small guys and channel it for a 3-for-1 trade. These situations are very rare however and I really don't want anyone to get excited about two mana 1/2 Spirits that have situational abilities.

Amongst the spells we have the standard Giant Growth card and the standard Naturalize variation too. The former – Inner Calm, Outer Strength – is pretty decent as it's both instant and Arcane and gives a reasonable bonus for it's cost. There won't be many decks where it doesn't make the cut.

Dosan's Oldest Chant is the only other common spell in green and it's not a card I'd really expect to see anyone playing. Cantrip life gain is nice when it's cheap and instant but in your green decks you want to be doing something a lot more significant on your fifth turn than simply playing an expensive life-gain Sorcery.

There are some nice creatures amongst the uncommons. The Stampeding Wildebeests reprint – Stampeding Serow – is a nice addition and it's better than the other creatures in the cycle as it's big and it tramples. You're pretty much getting a two mana discount on a Moss Kami and as a result you don't mind the upkeep on it so much as you might on its black cousin for example.



Descendant of Masumaro is solid, and if you can get a 2-3 card advantage over your opponent it can get very big, very quickly. It's one card that works very well with the black discard you can pick up throughout all three sets.

Ghost-Lit Nourisher is another really unfair uncommon. It's not quite as good as the red version as it's expensive to operate every turn when it doesn't gain you board advantage. However, it does mean that your opponent often won't be able to block and often won't be able to attack either as the threat of the +2/+2 gives them no options where they can even trade creatures off on a one-for-one basis.

Kami of the Tended Garden is the last of the really good uncommons, and as a four mana 4/4 it is very welcome. The upkeep cost can be a little annoying but you won't normally make this on turn four unless you can afford to pay it. As a spirit himself he also makes a good Soulshift target for cards like Scuttling Death and is a lot better than Order of the Sacred Bell because of that.

The Rest

Amongst the artifacts and lands there really isn't too much to worry about this time. Certainly there's no Umezawa's Jitte equivalent in this set.

Amongst the uncommons, it's the equipment cards to look out for. Manriki-Gusari is a slight improvement on Leonin Scimitar from *Mirrodin* but it's probably a little better in this format as it turns all of your 2/2s into 3/4s and with it's cheap Equip cost it'll be very easy to move it between attackers and defenders.

O-Naginata is pretty good too if you have the right number of creatures to cast it on. It probably isn't going to be making the cut in a white-blue deck but in black green where your three drops often have 3 power and where your more expensive guys certainly do this little piece of Equipment actually gives you a lot of power for it's price. Turning your Villainous Ogres into 6/2 trampers means they'll always kill what blocks them and likely inflict a lot of damage on your opponent too. Granting trample to other creatures like the Okina Nightwatches and Nightsoil Kamis of the world makes them much, much harder to race and will probably swing most games in your favour.

None of the other artifacts, even the rare ones, are really worth spending a card on except perhaps for Soratami Cloud Chariot which can potentially help swing a game by sending your guys to the air or by allowing you to block your opponent's flyers. It's still very expensive though so if you think your deck can do without it don't worry about cutting it.



All of the rare lands in the set are probably worth their place in your deck. You'll know when Mikokoro, Center of the Sea is worth playing but if you have cards in your deck that benefit from cards in your hand then it's not a bad card. The fact that it helps your opponent out too isn't bad here as it doesn't really cost you a card slot (it goes in place of a land) and you can usually activate it at the end of your opponent's turn and then gain the benefit of the extra card before they do.

The rest of the lands are obviously playable too. Tomb of Urami has some pretty drastic drawbacks but when you're out of spells you might just find a 5/5 flyer ends the game before your opponent can draw anything to stop it. If it backfires and you lose, so be it, that's the risk, but hopefully you won't

be activating it if you're going to win anyway and it can help you win a game you might otherwise have lost.

Next Week

Next week it's back to a draft pick situation, but this time with the addition of *Saviors*. With that in mind I'm going to go through the pick here and ask you all to make your choice via the poll below. I'll be discussing the options next week.

It's a standard *Champions-Betrayers-Saviors* booster draft and after the first two boosters your deck is looking like this:

- 1CC: Frostling
- 2CC: Skullsnatcher x 2, Akki Raider, Wicked Akuba, First Volley, Glacial Ray
- 3CC: Ronin Houndmaster, Villainous Ogre x 2, Nezumi Ronin, Throat Slitter, Ronin Warclub
- 4CC: Frostwielder, Kami of Fire's Roar
- 5CC: Soul of Magma, Okiba-Gang Shinobi, Frost Ogre
- 6CC: Swallowing Plague

Your other possible inclusions are:

Lava Spike, Psychic Spear, Kumano's Pupils, Mark of the Oni, Crushing Pain, Call for Blood.

The rest of the cards are unplayable, off-colour, late picks.

You open up the following pack:



The ghostly objects around the kami circled faster and faster, creating a dizzying cyclone of motion. When it opened its eyes, it struck.

—Stephen Tapson

The mist was thick, cloying, and constricting. Shuro fought his way to fresh air only to look back and see his comrades fallen on the battlefield behind him.

—Pat Lee

graveyard from play, you may return target Spirit card with converted mana cost 7 or less from your graveyard to your hand.)

—Matt Thompson

Shinen of Fear's Chill

Creature — Spirit

Shinen of Fear's Chill can't block.
Channel — Discard Shinen of Fear's Chill: Target creature can't block this turn.

—Dustin Kuhn

3/2

Curtain of Light

Instant

Target attacking unblocked creature becomes blocked.
Draw a card.

"Paint gold upon the wind,
Shape the wind into a shield,
And vanish behind the brightness."
—Suoto-Fur, kitsune poet

—Chippy

Elder Pine of Jukai

Creature — Spirit

Whenever you play a Spirit or Arcane spell, reveal the top three cards of your library. Put all land cards revealed this way into your hand and the rest on the bottom of your library in any order.

Soulshift 2

—Alan Peck

2/1

Into the Fray

Instant — Arcane

Target creature attacks this turn if able.
Splice onto Arcane (As you play an Arcane spell, you may reveal this card from your hand and pay its splice cost. If you do, add this card's effects to that spell.)

—Dustin Kuhn

Dreamcatcher

Creature — Spirit

Whenever you play a Spirit or Arcane spell, you may sacrifice Dreamcatcher. If you do, draw a card.

"Be careful where your mind wanders.
Even in the quietest moments, the kami are listening, and your thoughts give them shape."
—Lady Azami

—Mark Tedin

1/1

Feral Lightning

Sorcery

Put three 3/1 red Elemental creature tokens with haste into play. Remove them from the game at end of turn.

They moved like apes, but a thousand times swifter, prying into every corner, leaving pawprints of ash.

—Dustin

Hand of Cruelty

Creature — Human Samurai

Protection from white
Bushido 1 (When this blocks or becomes blocked, it gets +1/+1 until end of turn.)

"The sword is just a tool. It is the samurai's hand that delivers death."

—Roy Walker

2/2

Rushing-Tide Zubera

Creature — Zubera Spirit

When Rushing-Tide Zubera is put into a graveyard from play, if 4 or more damage was dealt to it this turn, draw three cards.

Cut off from the kakuriyo by the destruction of their honden, the zuberu sought new ways to bring their secrets home.

—Mark Brill

3/3

Adamaro, First to Desire

Legendary Creature — Spirit

Adamaro, First to Desire's power and toughness are each equal to the number of cards in the hand of the opponent with the most cards in hand.

"Beware Adamaro! In him all pain and anger is perfected."
—Isao, Enlightened Bushi

—Dustin Farenz

/

Which card do you draft?

- Kami of Empty Graves
- Akki Underling
- Shinen of Flight's Wings

- Inner Calm, Outer Strength
- Kagemaro's Clutch
- Promised Kannushi
- Shinen of Fear's Chill
- Curtain of Light
- Elder Pine of Jukai
- Into the Fray
- Dreamcatcher
- Feral Lightning
- Hand of Cruelty
- Rushing-Tide Zuberu
- Adamaro, First to Desire

Submit

© 1995-2009 Wizards of the Coast LLC, a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
[Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Statement](#)

