

Home is Where You Hang Your H Search

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You know all those times you try to access **magicthegathering.com**, or any less entertaining and informative website really, and the Internet seems a wee bit slow? Sorry about that. It's me. Blame your old pal michaelj. Send hate mail to... Actually, there is a perfectly good forum link. So anyway, Wizards of the Coast has this eminently useful site application called Gatherer, The Official **Magic: The Gathering** Card Database. Via Gatherer, you can plug in whole card names, or just bits of cards names, or halfway remembered snippets of card text, and *wham!* Gatherer will tell you whatever you need to know. You can also toggle between different search parameters and leave the term field blank, and Gatherer will *still* reveal the secrets of the (**Magic**) universe to you! For example, I can just select format=Standard and card type=Lands and *bam!* Gatherer shows me that there are sixty different kinds of lands in the current relevant format. *Thank you ~~ma'am~~ Gatherer.*

If you are wondering why the site is sluggish once in a while, it's me. I do about a million queries on Gatherer per day.

So anyway, let's get back to that sixty different lands stat. I looked it up because I am really interested in lands. Lands are the most fundamental part of your deck. What do people say when they lose? "I was land screwed," or "I was mana flooded," or "My colors didn't come out right." Everything that your deck can do, every capability, every limitation, comes from your lands. Why was Craig Jones able to wow us with that topdeck against Olivier Ruel? Because his *Green* deck stretched its base to be able to cast the Lightning Helix. Why was Mark Herberholz's G/R beatdown so consistent? Because he *didn't* stretch his lands according to the available *Ravnica* duals to accommodate synergies past Kird Ape and Skarrg, the Rage Pits. Each player made decisions based on card availability and what he was willing to risk – or sacrifice – based on his own level of comfort with mana consistency.

Let's start with the basics:

Forest

Island

Mountain

Plains

Swamp

Of all the land cards in Standard, these require the least amount of discussion. All of them are viable – good even – in one deck or another. It's not easy to rate which of these is best, because Standard is so even right now (and the nature of Team Standard is going to further mask the empirics of the format), but I'm going to give the nod to Mountain. As for last, my natural inclination is to say Plains, but between the two Orzhov colors, Plains is the one with Yosei on its team.

Sorry Swamp.

5/60

The Really Bad Dual Lands

Cloudcrest Lake

Lantern-Lit Graveyard

Pinecrest Ridge

Tranquil Garden Waterveil Cavern

Andrew Cuneo has a single Cloudcrest Lake in one of his decks right now, and the first Kiki-Jiki, Mirror Breaker decks ran Pinecrest Ridge, but these lands don't really seem like they should have a life out of Block Constructed. Even back at Pro Tour--Philadelphia, only Mark Herberholz deigned to play Tranquil Garden or Waterveil Cavern, with most of his Top 8 compatriots leaning on their Sakura-Tribe Elders and Kodama's Reaches to hit their colors.

Long story short: I'd be surprised if Andrew were still playing Cloudcrest Lake once *Dissension* hits the dealer tables.

10/60

The Classic Pain Lands

Adarkar Wastes
Brushland
Karplusan Forest
Sulfurous Springs
Underground River

The Apocalypse Cycle

Battlefield Forge
Caves of Koilos
Llanowar Wastes
Shivan Reef
Yavimaya Coast

Half the time I actually forget that these cards are in Standard. Like I when I sent my first version of the Critical Mass Update to my friend Josh Ravitz (which had mana based on the *Kamigawa* Block version), he asked me the quite understandable question, "Why aren't there any Yavimaya Coasts in this deck?" Similarly, when I am tuning an extremely difficult mana base – say for a three- or four-color control deck with acceleration – Josh or Osyp always tunes the mix by maybe one *Apocalypse* dual. The reason I am so absentminded about the existence of these lands is obviously that *other* cycle of duals (which we'll get to later). Generally speaking, the *Ice Age* and *Apocalypse* lands can be seen as a necessary evil. You want them because you want more consistent mana, and they tend not to hurt you long game... but that said, you don't *want them* want them.

Case in point: Karplusan Forest may have the word "Forest" in its name, but unlike Stomping Ground, *it doesn't count as a Forest*. What kind of a gyp is that? You have to take a point on the first turn for Kird Ape and you don't even get to biggie size it? Similarly, when control decks lose close games to their beatdown opponents, you can be sure that someone is going to start complaining about his "all Shivan Reef draw." Make no mistake, these cards are a *necessary* evil... but they're still evil. No one wants to take a point for every play he makes.




The Karoos

Boros Garrison
Dimir Aqueduct
Golgari Rot Farm
Gruul Turf
Izzet Boilerworks
Orzhov Basilica
Selesnya Sanctuary

Once upon a time I thought I was *so clever*. I played two Dimir Aqueducts in my States Blue deck (plus the board!) because they let me play out of Hokori more profitably than a White Weenie player could. Today that kind of thinking is pretty laughable. Not only is Hokori "so 2005" as far as threats go, but *most* polychromatic decks run Karoos, some more than the maximum number allowed by a single guild, just because they're good. Karoos are so good that we even considered playing one Izzet Boilerworks in Osyp Lebedowicz's URzaTron deck from Pro Tour--Honolulu because of its consistent production of colored mana (taking burn in the midgame on Signet activations was a killjoy in tight games). Ultimately that proved less consistent than I would have liked, but the lone Boilerworks versus Tendo Ice Bridge was a debate that raged until the week of the Pro Tour.

In any case, the first step in Karoo understanding was the overall inclusion of this land type. Landmark in the wholesale inclusion of Karoos was of course the Worlds Ghazi-Glare that packed a full four Selesnya Sanctuaries:


Katsuhiko Mori		
Main Deck		Sideboard
60 cards		
4 Brushland	2 Congregation at Dawn	2 Carven Caryatid
5 Forest	3 Glare of Subdual	2 Greater Good
1 Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers	3 Pithing Needle	3 Hokori, Dust Drinker
1 Plains	2 Seed Spark	1 Kodama of the North Tree
4 Selesnya Sanctuary	3 Umezawa's Jitte	1 Kodama's Reach
4 Temple Garden	13 other spells	2 Naturalize
4 Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree		1 Seedborn Muse
23 lands		1 Wrath of God
		2 Yosei, the Morning Star
		15 sideboard cards
3 Arashi, the Sky Asunder		
1 Birds of Paradise		
3 Kodama of the North Tree		
3 Llanowar Elves		
4 Loxodon Hierarch		
4 Selesnya Guildmage		
4 Wood Elves		
2 Yosei, the Morning Star		
24 creatures		



Mori wasn't trying to be cute, wasn't trying to get his lands to play a particular role, like I was at States, nor trying to make his mana do anything funny, as in the original Eminent Domain at Wisconsin States, but just played the cards because they were good. An important thing to realize is that in Ghazi-Glare, the heavy use of one- and two-drops erases a lot of the early game disincentive to Karoos. For slow decks, playing a Karoo as your second land will usually result in a loss of card advantage – not to mention increased Boomerang or Annex exposure – but because Mori could get a Llanowar Elves or Umezawa's Jitte out of his hand before playing Selesnya Sanctuary, his liability was greatly limited. This is an interesting tension, given that beatdown decks both want Karoos least (they tend to want to tap out every turn for the first several turns) *and* have the least to lose (other than inherent tempo) when playing Karoos. It will be interesting to see how the waves of conformity treat Karoos from the standpoint of beatdown... something to watch for in

Charleston.

Long game, the Karoos, which represent a little-less-than-break-even mana in the short term, provide a queer sort of acceleration, and convenient colors to say the least. In the case of Ghazi-Glare, Selesnya Sanctuary is a natural mana engine to power up sister land Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree. This is a natural inclusion, as we've said; I predict the next step will be *splashing* off-color Karoos for the same purpose. Check out Kamiel Cornelissen's deck from Pro Tour Hawaii:

Kamiel Cornelissen		fxt 	
Main Deck		Sideboard	
60 cards			
4 Adarkar Wastes	2 Boros Signet	4 Descendant of Kiyomaro	
2 Boros Garrison	4 Compulsive Research	1 Ivory Mask	
6 Island	3 Faith's Fetters	4 Jushi Apprentice	
1 Oboro, Palace in the Clouds	2 Gifts Ungiven	2 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	
5 Plains	4 Hinder	1 Pithing Needle	
2 Sacred Foundry	2 Izzet Signet	1 Shard Phoenix	
3 Steam Vents	4 Lightning Helix	1 Tatsumasa, the Dragon's Fang	
	4 Mana Leak	1 Twincast	
23 lands	1 Rewind	15 sideboard cards	
	4 Wrath of God		
	2 Zur's Weirding		
4 Firemane Angel	32 other spells		
1 Meloku the Clouded Mirror			
5 creatures			

His primary color is Blue (more than half of Kamiel's business spells are Blue, including double colored mana costs like Hinder and Rewind), but a ton of the cards he has to play under pressure are Red, White, or Boros-stamped ... That next level of deck design is present in Kamiel's mana base: he is splashing Boros Garrison to power out Lightning Helix in his six basic Island deck! I think that this sort of splashing will continue - and get more sophisticated - as players learn how to exploit *Ravnica* resources with greater and greater expertise.

Besides the whole "tapping for mana" and sophisticated attention to the same, the bounce "disadvantage" to this card type actually offers a deck some unique benefits. Annoying Faith's Fetters locking down your City-Tree? Here's Selesnya Sanctuary to the rescue! Tendo Ice Bridge out of colored mana? Just call up Izzet Boilerworks!

Observant drafters probably know the Karoos' most interesting last secret: each one represents *two* land drops. If your opening hand has a Forest and a Golgari Rot Farm, you essentially buy yourself another turn to rip a land before you can start complaining to the mana gods.

27/60

The Guildhalls

Duskmantle, House of Shadow

I tried to make this card work. The good thing is that you can play it as a land and not have to waste a "spell" slot in your deck for a win condition. The bad thing is that its effect can seem irrelevant much of the time. Half the time, you are just giving the opponent a better look at Sensei's Divining Top, and sometimes you are randomly setting up his Dredge effects.

That said, I think that Duskmantle is probably a serviceable card, at least from the sideboard perspective. Jushi Blue on Jushi Blue tends to go to decking in games where one player wasn't completely dominated by the other one (second turn Jushi on the play, or a succession of Boomerangs), and Duskmantle isn't Legendary, so it avoids problems like you will sometimes see with Mikokoro, Center of the Sea as your planned victory condition.

Nivix, Aerie of the Firemind

I heard the previous versions were broken, and I believe it. Can you imagine the effect at zero mana? What about just a down payment? As it is, Nivix, Aerie of the Firemind seems a bit expensive for competitive play.

Orzhova, the Church of Deals

Like I said before, I was originally pretty high on Duskmantle. If you figure that a player has sixty cards and doesn't lose until he has to draw the phantom sixty-first, whereas players have only twenty life points, Orzhova looks pretty good by comparison. The Orzhov finisher is no less than three times as powerful for twice the requisite tapped lands, and should functionally be five or six times as potent. Traditionally no one writes home about life gain, but R&D has really been trying to impress us with that mechanic over the past couple of sets (Umezawa's Jitte, Descendant of Kiyomaro, Faith's Fetters and Loxodon Hierarch). In a B/W board control deck, you can expect to be taking blows to the jaw more often than not, so the one life gain per turn will many times be *more* relevant than the point it costs the opponent.



Skarrg, the Rage Pits

This card is just unbelievable. The net increase in power and toughness was good enough to make Okina an automatic inclusion in basically every Green deck for the past year and a half (though admittedly Skarrg requires 150% the tapped lands that Okina does), but it's the trample that really sets Skarrg apart. It's bad enough when your blocker can't take down the 2/3-turned-3/4 coming across the Red Zone; it's another entirely when that attacker goes over the top for a point.

Sunhome, Fortress of the Legion

The difference between Sunhome and Skarrg shows how **Magic** costs work in a very clear manner. Relevant effect for the cost of a bear, good... Very good in fact. Conditionally more powerful ability for the cost of an automatic game winner? Less so. Zvi had an old rule that if you were going to spend four or more mana on something, it had better win the game all by itself. Sunhome can't guarantee that, which is why it sees little, if any, serious play.

The other major issue with this card is that it doesn't produce colored mana. The deck that wants to play it has very specific mana costs: Savannah Lions, Hound of Konda, Lantern Kami, and Suntail Hawk on one, Leonin Skyhunter and Lightning Helix on two. Boros Deck Wins in Standard just doesn't have loose enough mana requirements to make Sunhome a reality at present.

Svogthos, the Restless Tomb

I don't have much of an opinion on Svogthos, just that people sometimes play it against me on MTGO and never animate it.

Vitu-Ghazi, the City-Tree

Vitu-Ghazi is a nice example of saving the best for last. You don't have to make a land down payment with Vitu-Ghazi, but this Kjeldoran Outpost update demands a little more operating mana... and this time it's Green. As we discussed above, that isn't necessarily *that much* of a disadvantage... You can always splash Karoos.

One of the most basic elements of Vitu-Ghazi is that it's in the color of Wrath of God. After minimal early game stabilization, Vitu-Ghazi can basically ensure that you will hit a two-for-one with every Wrath; just play out a Saproling as a delaying tactic, and the opponent will almost have no choice but to play a second creature... right into your sweep.

This is how I would rate the Guildhalls for Standard:

Nivix
Sunhome
Svogthos
Duskmantle
Orzhova
Skarrg
Vitu-Ghazi

Agree, disagree, or send hate mail to/in the forum.

34/60

The New Dual Lands

Godless Shrine
Overgrown Tomb
Sacred Foundry
Steam Vents

Stomping Ground

Temple Garden

Watery Grave



The defining cards of *Ravnica* Block, these will have a more lasting impact than Loxodon Hierarch or probably even Dark Confidant. These cards are just a hair under the original Dual Lands, and compete with the *Onslaught* cycle for best successors (in my mind, it's not clear which cycle is better... only that there are twice as many in *Ravnica* Block). They outmode the "pain" lands, and even convince some designers to forget the other sort exist (my bad).

It may seem counterintuitive that Steam Vents is better than Shivan Reef, for example – one gives you colorless for free, but the other always asks for two points if you want to play it untapped – but the reason is that the multicolored decks *are really mana hungry*. In URzaTron, for example, your colored lands *have to make colored mana*. You have all the colorless you could ever want! You don't play Shivan Reef for the free **1** it gives you. You play Shivan Reef because when the rest of your lands all say "Urza's-," you need that Reef to drop the

Tide Star. Therefore, if it is your *only* source of colored mana for several turns – and you will be tapping it for Mana Leak and Telling Time and small Blazes while you ramp your true engine – Shivan Reef is going to be hurting you a little bit, plink Plink, PLINK. Steam Vents, on the other hand, asks for two *once* (and sometimes not even then), and never demands another point ever.

The secondary market wouldn't be demanding \$20 for every Watery Grave if these lands weren't good – they are in fact the backbone of this article's point – but these cards are so good, they are strictly better than the *Invasion* cycle (Coastal Tower et al). If that's not impressive to you, think about this: the only G/R beatdown deck in the history of the Pro Tour to score a perfect 14-0 record in its Swiss rounds played Shivan Oasis as its dual land; Stomping Ground, especially in concert with Wood Elves and Farseek, is more than twice as good.

41/60

The 'Tron

Urza's Mine

Urza's Power Plant

Urza's Tower

Probably the most powerful synergy built into the Core Set at present, the UrzaTron has been a defining element of Standard since its return, from Wayfarer White Control to Tooth and Nail to BlueTooth to Hattori-Hanzo Tron and URzaTron today.

The primary incentive to the UrzaTron in recent memory is the ability to tap for a game winning threat like Keiga, the Tide Star... and still have counter mana open. The sacrifices a player must undergo to *play* the 'Tron are less obvious, and because they are sometimes hard to see, can present a series of pretty-looking traps for the unwary designer or player.

Operationally, you have to make sure you can cast your colored spells. The 'Tron is powerful, but it sucks up 12 of your land slots (11 if you are the risk-taking bluff machine Terry Soh). Jon Sonne's

U.S. National Team deck played only one color and he *still* ran Solemn Simulacrum and Chrome Mox to fix his Blue!

To my mind, the UrzaTron is so powerful that mana balance is not so much a disincentive but a challenge, a caution to proceed carefully; when you have the best hand, you are most likely to lose when you screw up.

Tactically, any game you lead on Urza's Mine, your opponent is going to know at least 11 (10 for Terry) other slots in your deck, and will be much better armed as the second turn approaches than if you led with something vague like Watery Grave.

44/60

The Strays

Forbidden Orchard

With Intruder Alarm no longer Standard-legal, I fear Forbidden Orchard's day in the sun is over. This card had a brief stint in the original Hattori-Hanzo Tron deck at Worlds, but the Izzet stamped mana out of *Guildpact* has obsoleted the Orchard from that role as well. It'll always have Vintage, though, where a Mox, an Orchard, and an Oath of Druids is usually game.

Quicksand

This card was one of the best *Ninth Edition* inclusions for Blue Control at Champs, and if Blue Control were still Tier One, it would probably still see heavy play. The shift from Draw-Go style control to URzaTron and three-color decks with more board control (a trend that is only going to expand when *Dissension* brings us two more Blue Guilds, including the most iconic color combinations of the ancient and recent years, respectively) has marginalized Quicksand; it's still a great card, but there just isn't room. In the previous section, we talked about how UrzaTron decks have to manage their colored mana balances more precisely than other decks, even when they are only one color... Not a good omen for Quicksand. In other news, Frenzied Goblin, Hound of Konda, and Ninja of the Deep Hours all renewed their contracts for another season.

Tendo Ice Bridge

Tendo Ice Bridge has been one of my favorite cards since it was printed last year. I liked it so much, I played four copies in basically every deck. I ran four copies in multiple two-color decks, and even made room for it in Josh Ravitz's formerly mono-Red deck at U.S. Nationals ('cause mise). Sadly, I think that the Ice Bridge's day is about to close. Playing only two copies in URzaTron was only the first indication. The one-time favorite is no longer on the short list, and I am actually reluctant to play it in decks where I would have automatically included four copies just a few months ago. Sad for Tendo Ice Bridge, but a clear indication that Mike Turian is getting his way up in Renton, WA.

47/60

The *Champions of Kamigawa* Legend Cycle

Eiganjo Castle

I had this discussion with former Pro Tour Top 8 competitor and R&D Intern Pat Chapin:

Pat: Why doesn't your deck run Eiganjo Castle?

Me: No targets.

Pat: What about Ink-Eyes?

Me: If I have two mana, Ink-Eyes's natural ability is just better. Eiganjo Castle is just going to randomly manascrew me against Boros or something.

Pat: I don't even know what Eiganjo Castle does, just that you are supposed to play it in any deck with Plains.

I'm pretty sure Pat knows what Eiganjo Castle does, but his point is clear. The *Champions of Kamigawa* (colored) Legendary Lands have become essentially automatic inclusions in every deck. They are technically strictly better than basic lands, and some of them have big upsides to boot. Eiganjo Castle is one of the trickiest in the cycle because it is always saving creatures that people forget are Legendary, like the unassuming Katakai or Isamaru.

Minamo, School at Water's Edge

Here is a short chat I had with my friend Josh Ravitz last week:

Me: Have you ever attacked with Godo and Keiga with a Minamo in play?

Josh: I dunno... Probably.

Me: LIAR!

Josh: ?!?

Me: THIS IS NOT THE KIND OF THING YOU FORGET.

Josh: OMG! Keiga hits for 10! You're right. I must never have done that.

Of a cycle of "automatic inclusions," Minamo is my pick for the best. Not only is it absolutely busted with Godo, not only do you get a free Banishing against lazy opponents (untap my Dragon and block), but the School at Water's Edge has powerful offensive and defensive synergies with itself and other lands.

With Mikokoro, Center of the Sea, Minamo can help kill an opponent twice as quickly by decking.

See fewer Spectral Searchlights (if any) in Eminent Domain decks? Minamo is a big reason why the Pro players have gone to 7-8 Signets or Fellwar Stones. Minamo, all by its lonesome, counters Spectral Searchlight as a win condition. You just add ♣ and Minamo can untap itself, preventing you from taking any burn.

Okina, Temple to the Grandfathers

Okina's effect on the board can be huge. Once upon a time its main value was that it wasn't a Forest (pretty important in Tooth-on-Tooth with 7/10s dueling). This card remains relevant, but Legendary creatures tend to deal damage in chunks of five, so Okina tends not to actually speed up victory clocks. The coolest thing this card does is make it so that your opponent's Dragon wins the 5/5 on 5/5 fight.

You: Attack with Keiga.

Him: Block with Kokusho.

You: Pump your Kokusho.

Him: This isn't going to be good.

You: Take your Kokusho.

Him: If only I could see *two* moves ahead instead of just one...

You: Play my other Keiga.

Him: Nope. Not even one.

Or...



You: Attack with Yosei.

Him: Block with Kokusho.

You: Pump your Kokusho

Him: I'm not getting another turn, am I?

Shinka, the Bloodsoaked Keep

The least played of the cycle, Shinka is still good, but the least relevant, just because Legendary creatures don't get in a lot of fights in my experience. I cut it out of my Standard Red Deck entirely because I didn't think the effect was worth the possible downside against Dryad Sophisticate. Fifth of five.

Shizo, Death's Storehouse

Probably the second best of the cycle, all I can say is Shizo is in the right color. "Give Ink-Eyes Fear," (you can replace Ink-Eyes with any sort of a lethal 5/5 Dragon or whatever as well) is likely the most, um, *feared* land activation in Standard. This card is such a hater that Antonino DeRosa played one in his Mono-Blue Grand Prix deck *just to 187 the other guy's Shizo*... He would have consistently lost to it (and presumably the Servant of Oni) otherwise.

52/60

Other Standard-Legal Legendary Lands

Boseiju, Who Shelters All

Any metagame is the product of multiple forces (even "Affinity or anti-Affinity" asked subsequent templating questions). The current metagame, where Jushi Blue was previously the top dawg and is currently not even the top Blue Control deck, is similarly a product. Part of it is that the mana has gotten better for decks like URzaTron. Part of it is that the proactive plays, up to and including Niv-Mizzet the Firemind, have gotten better, so players would rather tap out than sit back on counters. A big disincentive to counters – maybe the biggest – is this Legendary Land. It asks a question too: How many?

God's Eye, Gate to the Reikai

A card long on potential but short on implementation, I don't see God's Eye catching up before its time in Standard ends less than a year from now. The coolest thing I saw God's Eye do was contribute to a Smokestack/Crucible of Worlds deck build by Greg Weiss... but that is neither here nor there, nor was it ever Standard-legal.

Hall of the Bandit Lord

This card is the kind that gets my Johnny blood pumping... Then I realize that Standard is all about Kird Apes, or in the alternative, Blazes to my head, or in the alternative, Pillory of the Sleepless.

Mikokoro, Center of the Sea

Sophisticated decks come in two varieties, the kind that lose to Miren, and the kind that lose to Mikokoro. Mikokoro is just insane against dedicated Blue decks. They spend all these resources getting Jushi Apprentice in play, protecting it, activating it... and then you make them discard. When you are both on 6-7 cards, Mikokoro makes it difficult for the opponent to get ahead in card count in a significant way.

It is also superb *in* Blue decks. The Blue monoliths are so powerful you can tap out for them with the expectation that the opponent isn't going to have anything better. Given that set of parameters, Mikokoro is quite helpful: the monolith gives you the lead, Mikokoro keeps you even; ergo, you keep the lead. Problem card? No counter in hand? Might as well see what's on top! Oh look, a Mana Leak.

In concert with Minamo, School at Water's Edge, Mikokoro is also a fine – and difficult to answer – kill card (just make sure you do the math).

Miren, the Moaning Well

It took me a long time to see how good Miren is. Gerard Fabiano called me before Grand Prix--Mexico City and asked why there was no Miren in Critical Mass; I had no good answer, whereas he had, "You are playing four Keigas." Good argument.

My onetime Righteous Babe teammate Brian Kowal recently asked me if I had ever seen a beatdown deck win after Ryusei, the Falling Star had been sacrificed to the Moaning Well. I confessed that I hadn't. Is it because I'd never seen these cards played together... or because it has never happened?

Miren has a lot of splash damage synergy in the current Standard. One way you are liable to lose is if you get your Firemane Angel enchanted with Pillory of the Sleepless (not kidding). The Angel can keep you even, but let's face it, you didn't just spend a Gifts Ungiven and six additional mana to stay even on, um, Pillory of the Sleepless. Miren allows you to sacrifice the Angel and get back on track. After all, even against Tallowisp, you've got a hell of a lot more Angel recursion than he's got, um, Pillories.

Oboro, Palace in the Clouds

Island is good. Oboro is better.

When this card came out, the first thing we thought was that mono-Blue decks could suddenly Gifts Ungiven for a Blue source. Haven't played against a lot of Hokori lately? It's still better than Island.

Like the Karoos, Oboro, Palace in the Clouds has great synergy with Compulsive Research... I don't know if this is necessarily how you want to spend your Oboro, but late game, once you've got the mana you need, the net card effect will often be relevant.

Tomb of Urami

Unlike, say, Caves of Koilos, this card is not a *necessary* evil. I know that it wins games... *sometimes*... But in my experience, nothing good has come for the Tomb player. When I won my slot for PT--Los Angeles, it was that I had gotten lucky and ripped a Consuming Vortex against an activated Tomb; I didn't have much else... but then, what could I possibly have needed?

Untaidake, the Cloud Keeper

Tsuyoshi Fujita's "Paddle" deck from PT--Philadelphia had 21 maindeck Legendary permanents and five more in the sideboard. If ever there was a deck that wanted Untaidake, it would have been that one. Untaidake was left on the steps of the Church of Deals, wrapped in the shredded remains of an opened *Champions of Kamigawa* pack. No one – not even the Players' Pick – has seen the Cloud Keeper since his mommy left him there.

60/60

Next Week: Teams



