

MAGICTHEGATHERING.COM

ARTICLES

↘ [Related links](#)

➡ [Read other articles](#)

TOURNAMENTS

MAGIC ONLINE

Article Search ▾ ➡

# Meloku the Clouded Mirror



Adrian Sullivan · *Single-Card Strategies*  
 Wednesday, December 1, 2004

This last week I've been pretty sick, but not so sick that I couldn't find time to draft a bit. When it comes to **Magic**, it is always a good idea to stay versatile. Playing in a draft or sealed deck can sometimes give you great ideas for a new deck. Conversely, playing a game of Standard or Extended can sometimes fuel the fire for your limited skills. For those of us in the writing game, all of the above can help us with ideas of what we will next right about.

I had already had **Meloku** floating in the back of my mind because of States – I'd seen a couple of the top Blue/Green decks running **Meloku** to great effect. In this most recent draft, I picked up what seems like my third **Meloku** in as many drafts. The card kept finding its way into my draft decks, so I'm not too surprised that it has also lodged itself into my noggin.



As you can see, **Meloku** is actually a very efficient Wizard. In general, as a constructed format becomes more focused, you'll see much less of the purely dedicated point-and-click kill (like **Terror**). And, thanks to that impressive 4 toughness, he can survive most singular burn spells that you could expect to have thrown at him. Since you are already in Blue, it isn't unreasonable to have a counterspell of some kind to stop someone's second burn spell from being a successful finishing blow.

Five mana is also an incredibly cheap cost for such a potentially potent finisher. **Deranged Hermit** or **Siege-Gang Commander** can create a group of creatures immediately for the same cost, but these only get out once. If they are dealt with, you won't be able to make any more. In addition, in a very late game, a **Meloku** can actually create a *huge* amount of creatures, and the fact that they fly is nothing to sneeze at either.

Just by plopping him on the table, **Meloku** is a powerhouse. But we can do better than simply putting **Meloku** into play...

## Mana makes the world go round

Mana is almost always one of the first factors to look at. Generally, we can go through the same assumptions: having access to quicker mana generally makes a card work far more efficiently and obviously more quickly as well. While it could simply be suggested that you use cards like [Birds of Paradise](#) or [Talismans](#), there are reasons that this isn't the best option.

[Meloku](#), like all of the [Moonfolk](#), activates his ability by returning land to your hand. So, whatever we decide to do to go about abusing [Meloku's](#) ability, we are going to have to overcome this primary drawback of (potentially) constantly returning land to our hand. With an active [Meloku](#), we can pretty much expect that we'll always have a land in our hand. The best solutions are the ones that simply get around the restriction of playing only a single land in a turn.

[Exploration](#) is one of the simplest and best solutions here. Even a single [Exploration](#) doubles your land-laying power immediately. With enough land, you can easily lay a [Meloku](#) by turn 3, and activate his ability quite regularly without stunting your mana development.



From creatures, [Budoka Gardener](#) can accomplish the same task as an [Exploration](#) (and is easier to your hands on as well), but it does suffer from several weaknesses. It comes into play a turn later, for one, and then takes yet another turn to get rolling.

Being a 1-toughness creature is no picnic either, so it might not be likely to survive, but it does have a lot of use as a potential attacker or blocker if you don't need its ability any longer. [Azusa, Lost but Seeking](#) is another creature, further hindered by being a Legend, but *far* quicker in getting the mana going.

One of the notable things about all of these methods is running out of land in your hand. By using [Meloku](#) to return a land to your hand, you can replay that land and essentially receive a "free" 1/1 spirit. If you run both an [Azusa](#) and [Explorations](#) or [Gardener](#), being able to lay out something like 4 lands a turn is not that uncommon. Sometimes, this can even be used for some rather impressive mana-production. While a full [Urzatron](#) (the Tower, the Power Plant, and the Mine) can be hard to produce, once produced, you can play, return to your hand, and relay it for a little bit of extra mana. For a *real* explosion, think what you can accomplish with a [Gaea's Cradle](#).



A [Meloku](#), a [Gardener](#), a [Cradle](#), and 4 other land can turn into a lot of mana in a heartbeat. The four other land can turn into 4 Illusions, tap the [Cradle](#) for 6 mana, and make a 5th Illusion (5 mana remains), replay the [Cradle](#), tap it for 7 mana and make a 6th Illusion (11 mana remains), tap the [Gardener](#) to replay the [Cradle](#) *again* and make 8 mana. Now you have 19 mana in your pool to burn with! Of course, you might have a spell to do something with that [Cradle](#) mana...

Both [Manabond](#) (mentioned extensively during the [examination](#) of [Psychic Vortex](#)) and [Fastbond](#) can both be used to great effect with [Meloku](#) as well. [Manabond](#) is a great "all-in" effect, effectively nullifying the fear you can have with activating [Meloku](#) super-aggressively by making mana-stunting not an issue. Of course, you do lose out on anything else you could be casting.

**Fastbond** let's you keep your options in return for the ability to activate the **Meloku** as many times as you choose, provided you have the life to keep relaying the land. On the other hand, you can truly explode with a **Gaea's Cradle** with very low life loss.

## And on each land lives a Flying Man

I like to think of **Meloku** as turning all of your lands into a potential **Flying Men**. Having access to all of these **Flying Men** immediately changes the combat math on both sides of the table. Back in the day, I used to run **Splintering Wind** for both its pinging and blocking ability. The drawback to **Splintering Wind** ended up being pretty minimal compared with being able to have a card that often amounted to a **Forcefield** in green. **Meloku** as a creator of chump blockers is very similar: the drawback is often minimal, and at the same time, simply the threat of your land turning into illusions can keep off most potential attackers. Better yet, since these Illusions are fliers, you can often transition into attacking very quickly. There are a number of cards that can really help this transition nicely.

**Opposition**— There might be no card finer for pairing with **Meloku** than **Opposition**. Even if you do return a huge amount of your land to your hand and cripple your mana, your opponent will quickly be crippled as well. Barring cards like **Starstorm** and **Slice and Dice**, you can expect that you'll be able to keep them wrapped up very quickly.

**Kyren Negotiations** — Similar to **Opposition**, the Negotiations allows you to turn your Illusions into potentially immediate damage. Simply make as many Illusions as you intend to, and if they do happen to die as chump blockers, they still get to do a point of damage before they go. On the following turns, there is no need to risk yourself by attacking with them. Again simply sit back in a defensive posture and then tap them for a point of damage either before they die from chump-blocking or at the end of your opponent's turn.

**Stampede Driver** and **Dawnstrider**— Both of these cards serve the same purposes quite nicely. Turn that excess land in your hand into a key to winning a race, either aggressively or defensively. **Meloku** and **Dawnstrider** is the equivalent of an infinite supply of fogs. **Stampede Driver** can quickly turn all of your little Illusionary **Flying Men** into an army of slightly pumped up **Flying Men**.

**Coat of Arms** — Simply because of the incredibly cheap cost of creature production, it can very quickly become completely insane to have **Coat of Arms** and **Meloku** out. Don't expect the game to last more than a turn or two after these two cards are out together.

## An army of free men

As a creature producer, **Meloku** is a rare mass-producer that doesn't actually cost any cards to use. Most of the time, cards like this are either far less efficient, or they require something like a discard of a card. You do give up having a land in play, but this isn't the same thing as say a **Goblin Trenches**, which actually requires you to *completely sacrifice* your land rather than simply return it to your hand.

This means that you have a lot of cheap creature labor. Anything that requires that you sacrifice creatures or permanents is going to have a lot of free food to work with. Most of the cards that require a sacrifice of a permanent of some kind tend to be a bit more powerful. They are designed under the presumption that you already had to spend a fair amount of mana (and an actual loss of a card) to get your effect. **Meloku** kind of sidesteps that.

Want incredibly efficient mass discard? Sacrifice a couple of Illusions to a **Sadistic Hypnotist**. Solid reusable creature kill? Check out a **Stronghold Assassin** or **Attrition**. Hate all of that non-basic land your opponents are always playing? Try out a **Shivan Harvest**. Want to feed your **Smokestack**, **Ertai the Corrupted**, or **Lord of the Pit**? **Meloku** can give you all the creatures you need.

If losing all of those creatures is your plan, a card like **Fecundity** might seem right up your alley. Especially when used with cards like **Ashnod's Altar** or **Phyrexian Altar**, you can easily start off a



chain reaction of card drawing and mana that could get you into something to further abuse **Meloku** with. Remember, most good **Meloku** decks are going to run Green cards to help increase their ability to put land into play, so a **Fecundity** can easily be a very efficient card drawing engine. For a more straightforward approach, simply use a card like **Slate of Ancestry**.

## A bit of sneakiness

Of course, there are a ton of truly insidious little tricks (and rather mundane ones) that can be accomplished with **Meloku** and the cards that support him. Here are just a few examples:

*The ol' Infinite Men/Infinite Mana* – It's always fun to get infinite mana. A card like **Budoka Gardener** already is very playable, but combine it with **Meloku** and **Intruder Alarm**, and you have infinite creatures in play. If one of your land taps for more than one mana, well, then you have infinite mana. Both of those things are usually "good".

*Hasty Men* – In a sense, using an **Anger** requires a bit of guile, or simply a few cards in hand. If you don't have another way to get an **Anger** into the grave, by activating a **Meloku** on your own turn you can easily get too many cards and be forced to discard some. Once you do have an **Anger** in the grave, the threat of a mass of Hasty, Flying Illusions can be pretty intense.

*Land? A Hand?* – **Meloku** can easily turn your hand into a mittful of land, and oftentimes you can't empty it quickly enough, or you don't want to. With **Scorched Earth**, you can turn all of those lands in your hand into the fuel to destroy every single one of your opponent's lands. With **Volrath's Dungeon**, you can quickly empty out your opponent of their hand, and force them to draw those same tired cards over again for the next many turns.

*Stronghold Lockout* – **Meloku** can feed any of the **Spellshapers** from **Masques** Block, but it can be especially fun to turn those lands into potential counterspells with **Stronghold Machinist** and **Stronghold Biologist**. Discard a land to counter either a creature or non-creature spell! Combine this with an **Arcane Laboratory** and lose your friends.

*Power-Jushi* – **Jushi Apprentice** is already a very potent card, but combine it with any of the Moonfolk... Not only will you have a bunch of nice Illusions to defend the fort with, but Jushi will flip in no time flat.

Of course, there are a huge number of potential uses for **Meloku**. Pretty much any card that requires a discard effect (like **Seismic Assault** or **Wild Mongrel**), and pretty much any card that needs a healthy abundance of creatures can be easily exploited by **Meloku**.



## Wrapping Up

**Meloku** naturally lends itself to creating my favorite color combination, Blue/Green. Generally, **Meloku** ends up lending itself to a more controlling approach, and so here is an attempt at a Standard deck with that in mind.

Standard-Legal Con-Troll		
Standard Meloku the Clouded Mirror Deck		
60 cards		
9 Island	4 Budoka Gardener	2 Time of Need
14 Forest	4 Tel-Jilad Chosen	4 Condescend
	4 Sakura-Tribe Elder	1 Intruder Alarm
23 land	4 Thought Courier	
	4 Viridian Shaman	7 other spells
	4 Eternal Witness	
	3 Meloku the Clouded Mirror	

1 Azusa, Lost but Seeking  
2 Keiga, the Tide Star

30 creatures

This deck uses a few decent early defenses (especially against Artifacts) with **Viridian Shaman**, the **Chosen**, and **Condescend**. It also helps speed itself up with **Budoka Gardener**, **Azusa** (with **Time of Need** to find it), and the **Sakura-Tribe Elder**. **Time of Need** also made the inclusion of a second **Keiga, the Tide Star** seem more reasonable (casting a second Keiga can be really mean against the right opponents). **Thought Courier** and **Eternal Witness** help keep things running smoothly until a **Meloku** can begin to take over. Other than **Azusa** and the Gardener, the only real nod to trying to do anything specifically comborific with **Meloku** is the single **Intruder Alarm**, just to enjoy the potentially abusive **Meloku/Alarm/Gardener** combo that I brought up earlier.

In general, this deck is just made to survive against most decks, and then be able to truly make use of **Meloku** as a potent finisher with the help of Azusa or a Gardener. While a lot less splashy than an Extended **Opposition/Static Orb/Meloku** deck or a **Gaea's Cradle/Meloku/Cloud of Faeries** explosive combo deck, I like the idea of a simple control deck that isn't based off of a bunch of hard counters. Decks like this have always made me smile, so I might be a bit biased there, though.

I hope you have a great week. Until next time!



[Discuss](#) on the message boards



[Respond](#) via email



[Adrian Sullivan](#) archive

[WHAT'S NEW](#) [CORPORATE INFO](#) [WHERE TO BUY](#) [INTERNATIONAL](#) [SUPPORT](#) [SITEMAP](#) [PRODUCTS](#)

[© 1995-2004 Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Rights Reserved.](#)  
[Wizards is headquartered in Renton, Washington, PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057.](#)  
[PRIVACY STATEMENT](#)