

Tlön: Journey to a Utopian Civilisation

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Abstract

A 14th century Lithuanian explorer named Ladislas travelled in remote regions of the East and discovered the ruins of an unknown utopian civilization.

Ladislas recorded his impressions in an illustrated Manuscript which remained in obscurity until in the middle of the 19th century when it was translated by Leonid Krk, a notable Baltic literature scholar, into English. A copy later came into the possession of a Scandinavian urban planner, a friend of the author. Access to this interesting piece of discovery reveals the language, philosophy, social values and history of the civilization discovered including its architecture, town design and structure.

Ladislas discovered a civilisation whose main philosophy was idealism and whose highest social value was tolerance and the pursuit of harmony among the different sections, creeds and races and attempted to explain how these principles were expressed in town building.

The civilization is named 'Tlön' after a short story by Jorge Luis Borges, ("*Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*" Labyrinths, New Directions Book, N.Y., 1964), which describes the ambitious undertaking of a secret society to write an encyclopedia about an imaginary planet. As the reader travels through the story, it becomes increasingly clearer that the four Ages in the history of Tlön resemble, in some ways, humanity's stages of evolution. In particular, the third, alluding to the environmental crisis, forewarns a Huxley-like scenario of overcoming it.

Keywords: Dystopia, Utopia, tolerance, town building