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# THE HISTORY OF KILAY AND THE ILLUMINED WORLD

AN ESSAY BY DONIEL SCHAPIROSIUS



With the following essay, the author Doniel Schapirosius of Brossant would like to shed some light on those historical contexts that even the more educated among his contemporaries tend to be oblivious to—not to mention the mythologically vaunted and superstitious ideas of the common people, which are, in most cases, nothing more than a useless labyrinth of thoughts in which the truth becomes lost all too quickly.

The author carefully examined what is left of the past epochs, studying the traditional texts in great detail and weighing them against each other. This scientific examination allowed him to eliminate contradictions, cut a path through the wealth of passed-down information, filter out the essential, and unravel the great historical contexts. The author will begin his treatise with an outline of the Illumined World's overarching history followed by a more detailed analysis of the Kilayan Archipelago.

According to the oldest known sources, about 15,000 years B.A., there was a mighty empire centered on the easternmost edge of the continent of Arthbela, whose borders encompassed much of what is known as the Illumined World today. The name of this civilization remains disputed, but whatever names archaeologists conjecture from the few arcane hieroglyphs that have been excavated fail to persevere against the moniker that established itself long before the Arrival: the Elder Ones. Powerful as this empire may have been, it was between 15,000 and 10,000 B.A. that their godlike rulers would realize their kingdom was just as vulnerable to the world's greatest and most merciless equalizer than any other kingdom ever had been: and that was Mother Nature.

A fiery boulder from space, named *Starfall*, crashed into the heart of the Elder empire's metropolis, its impact and heat wave turning the proud nation and nearly half of the continent now known as Arthbela into ashes.<sup>1</sup> Devastating as the impact may have been, *Starfall*'s true horrors had yet to follow, and volcanic eruptions, firestorms, and rising sea levels paradoxically were the most merciful. The impact raised a giant cloud of ash that eventually came to cover the planet's celestial sphere and drown out the sunlight, thereby ushering in a global period of devastating cold.

The havoc this eternal winter wreaked upon the world cannot be understated: deprived of the sun and harried by the cold, plants from the most majestic tree to the daintiest flowers withered away; robbed of food sources, animals starved, or simply froze to death. And while some humans may have persevered longer than others,

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1 "The author notes that *Starfall*'s impact presents a conundrum in and of itself. For example, several scholars have pointed out that the comet's size, as deduced from the impact crater, should have had a far more devastating effect on the world than it did. Explanations range from divine intervention to a magical "mitigation phenomenon" or to fundamental misconceptions about *Starfall* itself. The topic remains the item of lively academic research and debate.

they could only escape their fate for so long: a mere ten years after Starfall, hunger and frost had killed tens of millions and thrown the few survivors into a life of anarchy.

Little is known about the epoch that followed, the “Shrouded Era,” which lasted from Starfall until 2000 B.A. The scant evidence, however, points to a dark age where humanity regressed to its primitive roots. Beneath a sunless sky, those fortunate (or misfortunate) enough to survive took to living in small clans and packs, scrounging the withered world for what meager sustenance it still provided.

From villages to metropolises, settlements were abandoned to their denizens’ desperate quest for food. Technologies were forgotten, rich cultural histories reduced to songs and stories that eventually descended into oblivion as well. Kings and queens were killed by, and sometimes eaten by, their starving soldiers, their palaces, crowns, and riches deemed as worthless as the farmers’ frozen soil upon which no crop would grow. Hunched and haggard figures in tattered animal skins, desperately praying to heathen gods for mercy from a merciless existence: that was what remained of a world that archaeology suggests was once as prideful and diverse as our own. Firm in the sky shroud’s grasp, any development of an advanced civilization seemed impossible.

After many millennia this desolate era slowly came to an end as Starfall’s shroud began to clear. The period known as the Resurgence Era lasted from approximately 2,000 to 150 B.A. Slowly but surely the dust cloud grew thinner, until, in some corners of the world, the first rays of sunlight fell upon the earth, and life once again began to sprout. Civilizations reemerged, most notably in the regions now known as Brossant and Khîra, but one would be misguided to assume it was an era of prosperity, cooperation, and peace. Haunted by mankind’s dark side and the collective memory of ten thousand years of misery and hunger, these fledgling civilizations spent as much time warring each other for resources and power as they spent nourishing the fragile seedling that was humanity’s second chance.

As every child knows, it was “the Arrival” that turned the tide of history. After a failed parley between the queen of Khîra and the king of Brossant, the two nations declared war upon each other, seemingly dooming the world to yet another devastating war. But just as the squabbling factions and their escorts made to leave the square, something incredible happened: in the bright light of day, the sun went dark, and nine figures descended from the skies: the Celestials had arrived.

Entire books have been written about that fateful day, and the author shall let those tomes tell the detailed tale. After a harrowing display of their divine powers, the nine gods proclaimed that humanity had lost its way. Under their guidance, they would unite the world once and for all. And so they did. Awed by their radiance, the two humbled emperors returned to the negotiations; a year later, their two nations were allied under the banners of the federation called the “Illumined World.” The rest is history: after their successful intervention, the nine Celestials founded an order to carry out their will on earth, then returned to Coson Tar, their castle in the heavens.

The Horizon Era followed. Empowered by the Celestials, who now worked miracles from their heavenly abode (or from below in events known as “theophanies”), the nations of the Illumined World set out to unite the shattered world and spread Celestialism by means of pioneering, diplomacy, or, if needed, conquest. Never again should humanity regress to the primitive savagery that had ruled in past eras. With the Celestials’ power and guidance, they would illumine the entire world so it could stand as one.

It started well. In 126, pious explorers discovered and claimed the secluded and uninhabited continent of Allion, founding the city of Meredon, which now serves as the seat of the Divine Order and remains a place of pilgrimage for pious Celestialists. In 201, the rugged island of Øssja followed, and Øssja’s tall, red-haired deni-







zens were peacefully integrated into the Illumined World, succeeded by the fertile Saymahan Islands in the early 300s and the distant Horizon Isles that lay close to the unpassable Oblivion Passage, the part of the Arthbelan Sea far south of Khîra that, for unknown reasons, no expedition has ever returned from.

It was not until 431, in the frosty mountain ranges of Xats'al that the hardy Chapaj of the land refused the Order's offer, causing Brosant to declare war upon the nomadic tribes. The Celestial's approval of this war forced the other Illumined countries to join. What should have been a conquest of weeks became a long, bloody war known as the Ice War; what the Chapaj lacked in numbers and technology they made up in their exceptional prowess and territorial knowledge. The scope of the subject is, once again, too vast for this essay, so the author shall suffice it to say that this bitter war ended in 472, when the Celestial pantheon issued a decree to seek a peaceful resolution. How the growing civil unrest (particularly when it came to the Khîranian people) over the controversial conflict contributed to the decision remains speculation.

In 474, after long negotiations, the Chapaj joined the federation of the Illumined World at last and were granted unparalleled privileges, such as full independence from Celestialism and complete autonomy over all state affairs.

Due to internal political strife and a lack of public enthusiasm, Illumined imperialism slowed to a crawl in the ensuing centuries, so it was over three hundred years until, in 790, the final country joined the federation by means of colonization. It was a stunning tropical archipelago west of Khîra. Like Øssja, Chapaj, and the Saymahan Isles, the explorers came upon inhabited land: indigenous tribes called the "Makehu" (transl. "People of the Waters") had settled on the archipelago's many islands. The author shall not speculate on the question of whether any colonization can ever be truly "peace-

ful,” but he will acknowledge that Helrend tre Nayfarn, the explorer, certainly attempted such, the most symbolic of her gestures being the gifting of Caleste’s Lambent Scepter to the powerful Makehu High-Chieftain Nekawo, the leader of the populous Ūni e Lī tribe and the tribal people’s closest thing to a ruler. Nekawo reciprocated by giving her the Bone Crown, a sacred relic made from the bones of his ancestors. It was a momentous act meant to mark the beginning of an unprecedented and peaceful era of cultural symbiosis and was cemented by the naming of the islands as “Kilay lir Carmon.” The “Islands of the Two People.”

Though the cynical reader may assume the worst, reality did initially appear to live up to noble intentions. Like the Chapaj, the Makehu were free to practice their ditheistic religion; decisions were made by the new Illumined regime that was the Blue Island Coalition and the Council of Elders, a syndicate consisting of the tribes’ chieftains. And while the pioneers were eager to form new settlements in the resource-abundant islands, they could only do so with permission from the neighboring Makehu settlements and the Archipelago’s new joint government.

It was a time of harmonious cultural exchange that mirrored the overall prosperity of the 800s, which historians describe as the beginning of the Golden Era. Except for the mysterious lands beyond the Oblivion Passage or the sheer endless uncharted waters southwest of Khīra, the Celestials’ vision of a unified world appeared to have come to fruition; the Celestials no longer decreed for exploration.

Be that as it may, it would be intellectually myopic of the author to leave out the obvious portents of dark chapters to follow: not only did the Makehu’s technological inferiority inevitably create an imbalance of power, but even the most pacifistic intentions couldn’t tame the beast that was the cultural superiority many of the settlers felt towards these “wild, slit-eyed aboriginals” who prayed to gods that,



unlike theirs, did not even exist. This imbalance only worsened in the settlers' second and third generations, as they no longer perceived themselves as newcomers rather than as "Kilayans," leading to inevitable social tensions; a sentiment the Blue Island Coalition, tired of having their economical ventures slowed by the Council's hesitance to open their lands for mining, was all too happy to foment.

As with the Elder Empire, it was once again Mother Nature who ultimately turned the tide. Around 867 A.A., a traveler from Xats'al brought the disease now known as the Black Fever into the archipelago. While the "Kilayans" reacted with only mild symptoms like sneezing and chills, the disease ravaged the Makehu population. After three to seven days of extreme fever, exhaustion, and nausea, their skin peeled from their bodies, revealing flesh that had turned greyish black. The disease was as horrible as it was deadly and wiped out over three-quarters of the native Makehu population, furthering the already prevalent imbalance of power between the two peoples.

History took its course: more and more, the imperialistic-leaning Blue Island Coalition excluded the Council of Elders from their decision making, establishing settlements, plantations, and jade and nuvium mines without their consent. Verbal pushback by the remaining Makehu was ignored; violent pushback was misconstrued as open hostility and used to further justify the Coalition's domination. That the Celestials did not intervene (the last documented theophany occurred in the 600s) was interpreted as the divines' tacit approval.

When the Celestials suddenly ceased communication with the earthbound mortals in 1001, an event now known as the Silence, the Divine Order returned to Kilayan politics. Desperate and fearful of losing their power, they imposed strict religious laws in the archipelago, forcing the decimated and marginalized Makehu population to convert to Celestialism. It will not surprise the reader that this was the straw that broke the camel's back. The bottled-up cultural

tensions exploded into violent conflicts that ended in a riot in 1023 that cost thousands their lives. And while the situation ameliorated as the Order lost influence in the later portions of the century, it was not until the 1100s that the conversion laws were revoked, and a course of reconciliation and redemption sought. Today, the Makehu and Kilayans live in the semblance of peaceful coexistence, but the scars of the native's travails remain; though formally reinstated, the Council of Elders remains under firm control of the Coalition, and the Makehu are drastically underrepresented in the upper strata of society. They are yet again allowed to practice their faith, but much of their religious history and culture has been lost to the Silence-era conversion efforts. The author hopes that the current historical trajectory points toward cultural and ethnic harmony and the healing of old wounds.



# THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

EXCERPT FROM A GENERAL TRAVELOGUE



The Kilayan Archipelago, located in the Arthbelan Sea, consists of seven main islands and 43 secondary islands, covering an area of 5,500 square miles. According to the older theory of the Kilayan scholar Katos Vel’Narys, the archipelago is of volcanic origin, but this is by no means certain, and volcanoes active in historical times are only found in northern Uunili and Lehowai. A more recent theory from Jaleta Caweti suggests that the archipelago originated from a single island that sank below sea level in time, and depth soundings between the islands indicate shallow waters. In contrast, the sea depth beyond the islands increases dramatically, making this theory the one preferred by scientists today. The largest island, Uunili (an Inâlized version of its Makehu name, Ūni e Lī, meaning “Mighty Hill”), covers 2554 square miles. It is



also the most populous, and its location in the middle of all the islands makes it an excellent administrative and commercial center. The island is divided into two parts by a large lagoon. A mountain range called the Komalo Massif along the west coast protects the southern peninsula perfectly from the wind, and so the interior of the island has a warm climate and poor soil, which produces lush primeval forest, while to the west of the mountain range, a humid climate favors cultivation, leading to a great number of plantations. These provide the metropolis of Uunili, which sits on the slope of the massif's tallest mountain, Mount Ilakaato, with food. A mighty bridge over the mouth of the lagoon opens up the northern island. Characterized by the Owa e Īkomo Delta and its three grand rivers, the land is highly arable and almost completely cleared for agriculture; rice terraces and plantations dominate the landscape.

Southwest of Uunili lies the second largest island, Maitepo (Mai e Tēpo, "Big Brother Island"), which has an area of 1,240 square miles. There are several large plantations inland, but otherwise, the island is still uncharted. To the east of Maitepo is the 140 square mile-wide island of Maitemi (Mai e Tēmi, "Little Brother Island"). The mountainous island is fertile and green, and there are several small villages along the coast.

North of Maitepo and Maitemi is Uunuma (Mai e Ūnuma, "Fog Island"), the third-largest island with 396 square miles. Endemic to this island and its acidic, ferruginous soils is the rare and treasured purple nightflower, which has been smoked by the Makehu people for a long time as a medicinal and ceremonial plant. This herb is increasingly no longer harvested wild, but grown on the many plantations that characterize the island.

At the very east of the archipelago is the fourth largest island Lehowai (Lehō e Āhe, "Eats the Sun"), 333 square miles wide. As the Makehu fear this island because of its active volcano, Mount

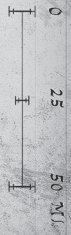
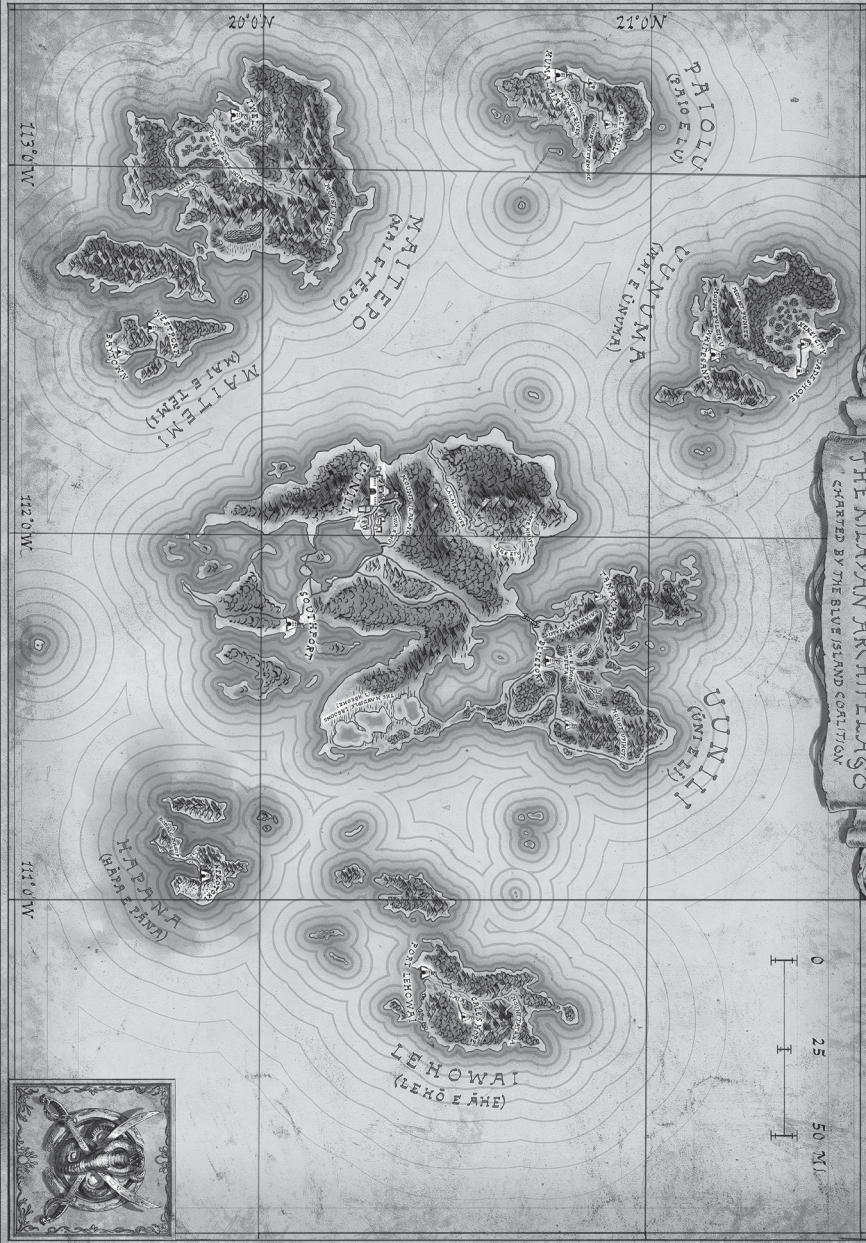
Tatana (Tātāna, “Lots of Smoke”) and did not dare tread upon the island before the Colonization, this wild land has only recently been developed and exposed to the light of civilization.

The fifth-largest island, Paiolu (Paio e Lu, “Mountain Face”), is located opposite Lehowai in the west of the archipelago and measures 300 square miles. Called the “Island of Rivers,” this land offers a festival of creation. Rich in exquisite flora and benign fauna, it is no wonder that the Makehu people consider this island to have been blessed by their benign god Īmīte.

At just 104 square miles, the craggy Hapana (Hāpa e Pāna, “Cliff Coast”), located southeast of Uunili, is the smallest of the seven main islands. This mountainous island is already fully developed because of its rich nuvium deposits and has been shaped by man for his benefit. Although this makes the island uninviting, it provides the many miners who mine its mineral resources with wages and bread. Except for a few fishermen’s huts or farmsteads, the neighboring islands are uninhabited.

Alred Dal’Toran  
Journeyman Explorer of the  
Illuminer’s Guild, 1156 A.A.

THE KILRYAN ARCHIPELAGO  
CREATED BY THE BLUE ISLAND COLLECTION



113° 0' W

112° 0' W

111° 0' W

20° 0' N

21° 0' N



# CREATURES OF THE ARCHIPELAGO

A BESTIARY

THE ALAPU



TAXONOMY: *Alapusica vulgaris* , Webb, 791 A.A. Genus is monotypic, but some significant morphological, sanguinic, and parasitic variations exist in lineages from different islands. Three subspecies are currently recognized.