

The Mytos and Mycos Conference - Riga, 2003

The University of Latvia by the Baltoscandia Committee, a committee for cultural and scientific exchange of ideas between the countries connected to the Baltic Shield, is delighted to invite You to the conference, Mytos and Mykos, from the 26th to the 28th of June.

The conference will focus on the Baltic Shield and the events beyond and below its surface. We wish to use the migration of the myths and the growth of the mycelium as a model for exchange and development of ideas.

We will gather under the motto: "Remote past - imminent present".

Members of the committee
Tamara Fortuna, director of the committee

Walter Block, art curator, Karlsruhe

Gro Gulden, professor of mycology,
University of Oslo

Ludmilla Litz, scientific officer of anthropology,
Tallin University

Otto Siebcke, professor of geology,
University of Latvia

Pjotr Sewdowski, professor of Baltic fairytale
literature, University of Krakow

Herman L. Sabelstein, professor of European law
University of Uppsala

Riita Juhola, scientific officer of History,
University of Helsinki

Gertrude Rotlack, secretary

THE BALTIC SHIELD

Balticum and Scandinavia form a relatively homogenous biogeographic area through Ordovician era. (505-435 mill. years B.C.), marked by dramatic episodes strongly influenced by glacial ages, enormous changes of the sea level, vulcanism and even a huge change of latitudes caused by plate tectonic activities of displacement. The period ends with a tremendous mass-extinction, and the formation of what is now known as the Baltic Shield.

The Baltic Shield is a geologic term for the flat bedrock area which forms the north-western part of the Russian platform. In west it is limited by the Caledonian mountains and Kattegat; and a longitudinal hollow which reaches from the Oslo Field to the Carpathians. In the north it is limited by the North-ice Sea.

THE MYCELIUM

With its infinite network of cob-web-fine threads (hyphae) the fungus represents one of the biggest living organisms of the world. Due to its ability to develop its underground network over a large area it has become a much-coveted object of research for modern network contractors.

Only when the fungus wants to multiply its network becomes visible. The mushroom is the visible reproductive organ, spore distributor, of the network. Most of the time the network is resting in subsoil anonymity while its hyphae threads continue growing and thereby constantly enlarging the network to new geographical sites.

Though the mycelium and the mushroom seems like simple organisms, we notice that they live and function in complex relationships with other organisms; symbiosis - when both parts benefit from the relationship; commensalism - when one of the parts benefits and the other part remains unaffected; amensalism - when one part suffers and the other part remains unaffected.

THE MYTH

Myth, from Gr. Mythos, originally stories about gods. The meaning of the word has been discussed a lot through all times. Platon was convinced of that the myths contrasted His Infinite Ideas, and put them equal to lies.

Others has thought of the myths as expressions of Fundamental Truths, as Holy Tales or as signs of Basic Patterns in a Universal Human Thought Process.

Fake or facts; myths, fairytales and legends is a part of our common cultural heritage which is created and intermediated by anonymous storytellers. They are distributed from mouth to ear through generations, over state borders; transformed and adjusted to new times and cultures and coloured by local languages and habits. They form an intercontinental and intercultural pool of ideas.

PROSPECTS

The intention of focusing on the migration of the myths and the growth of the mycelium is to reveal common features for a creative and distributive structure which will be used in the renewal of scientific and artistic methods and network-building.

We find obvious analogies between the anonymity the myths are loaded with, and the apparently unmediated existence. This is interesting according to how the artistic as well as the scientific enterprise in the society of today often is characterized by a stressed personal focus which only has its equals among past times mythical heroes worshipping of epic format; even though the ideas rising from this activities are common possession, or parts of the same ocean of imaginations, similar to how the mushroom pops up from the same subsoil mycelium, and the myths migrates from new mouths to new ears and transform into countless variations.