

MW-GAIA: BRINGING THE MILKY WAY TO SCHOOLS 2021

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TOPICS COVERED

- The Milky Way as a Galaxy: the science and research background
- Dissemination of the GAIA science
- Bringing the research closer to the public
- Teaching the Milky Way in schools
- How to make teaching and science communication more inclusive

Deadline for abstract submission: 14 May 2021

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ORGANIZERS

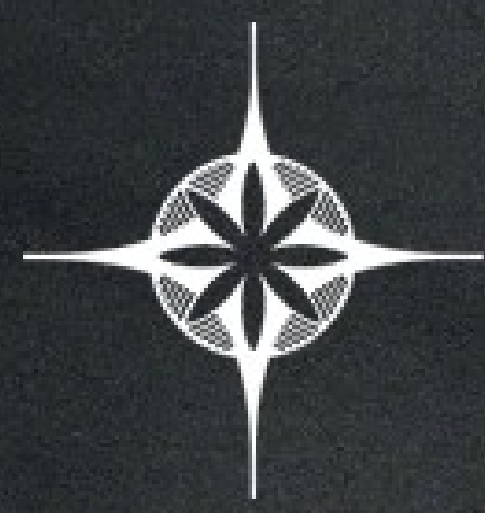


Linas Smigelskas

Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology

Presentation of the Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology

The idea of ethnocosmology was born on the Kaldiniai Hill in Lithuania. Its founding fathers were Gunaras Kakaras, head of staff at the astronomical observatory, and Libertas Klimka, senior research associate at the Semiconductor Physics Institute and an avid enthusiast of ethnoculture. Kakaras' fascination with the celestial sphere, and Klimka's with ethnology found something in common – the Lithuanian nation's connection with the sky, the Sun, the Moon, and stars. Such were the origins of ethnocosmology – both of the term and the future museum. On 15th March 1990 the Museum of Ethnocosmology was established. The main task of the Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology is to collect, accumulate, systematize, preserve, research, expose the information on the relationship of a man and mankind with the Cosmic World and to provide it to the visitors. Ethnocosmological information may be the following: ethnographic material therein texts, songs, rites, symbols; scientific works and science achievements, space technology and results of space exploration programs, audio, video or photo materials; heavenly sight through the telescope; artworks; philosophical and religious texts, etc. During 2007–2008 the museum was restored. The works were financed in accordance with the EU Cohesion Fund aid program “The Expansion of Services” by the Tourist Complex at the Lithuanian Ethnocosmology Museum. In November of 2008, the very first excursions were organized. The Museum has become a peculiar center of culture where resilient links of a man, nation and mankind with the Cosmic World are disclosed in broad panorama and now we have more than 40 000 visitors from Lithuania and other countries every year. We have day and night time programs, 80 and 40 cm telescopes for public observations, various educational programs, events, for example, our Museum celebrates International Asteroid Day. The Museum of Ethnocosmology attaches great importance to the education of schoolchildren and students where the knowledge directly interlaces with the formation of world outlook, with cognitive astronomical observations, where new questions arise next to the answers. Estimating the uniqueness of the content of the Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology – opening to visitors the space of human existence in the Universe, emphasizing all the relations with the Cosmic World – from ethnic relationship to the achievements of space exploration programs of the states of the world.



History

In the 1960s, the search for a location to build a new Lithuanian astronomical observatory began. The old one, situated in Vilnius' Čiurlionis St., could no longer function properly due to the city's dust, smoke, and lighting. Various places were examined and finally in 1969 the hills of Kulionys village, located in the Molėtai district and surrounded by Lake Želva, were chosen. The place was found suitable and construction works began the same year.

The idea of ethnocosmology was born on the Kaldiniai Hills. Its founding fathers were Dr Gunaras Kakaras, Head of Staff at the astronomical observatory, and Dr Libertas Klimka, Senior Research Associate at the Semiconductor Physics Institute and an avid enthusiast of ethnoculture. Kakaras's fascination with the celestial sphere, and Klimka's with ethnology found something in common – the Lithuanian nation's connection with the sky, Sun, Moon, and stars. Such were the origins of ethnocosmology – both of the term and the future museum. But it took some time before the term 'ethnocosmology' was actually used.

Meanwhile, construction works for the Molėtai Astronomical Observatory continued. The first two telescopes were tested. There was no advertising, just short messages in the press. Apparently, this was enough – the Observatory started receiving visitors, both groups and individuals. The majority were interested in the Astronomical Observatory itself and the work of its staff. But some visitors were different; some had questions like: "Why do I, a tiny being of this planet who only needs so little to live, exist in this boundless universe?"; "What's the purpose of it and what's the purpose of my existence?"

Such questions suggested that visitors could benefit from the opportunity to see the sky through a telescope themselves, get answers to certain important questions and raise new ones. These ideas were supported by Juozas Algimantas Krikštopaitis, originally a physicist who later discovered philosophy and gained Habilitation in that field (the highest, postdoctoral academic qualification).

But the full realisation of the idea required dedicated premises and buildings. As soon as the construction works for the Observatory were finished, a "special purpose astronomical pavilion" was built based on Vytautas Lisauskas's design. But in truth it was a museum. It was built on a specifically selected spot, a little bit further from the Observatory, near the Hill of Kulionys. The building's architecture is based on the image of the Cosmic World Tree. The roots – an underground gallery ascending the hill – contain the exhibition, and at the top of the hill, as if climbing the trunk, we find the telescope. Together with the buildings and conception was born the name ethnocosmology – the Lithuanian understanding of the sky, relations and respect for the celestial world as the source of life.

In November 2008, the very first excursions were organized. As the number of visitors increased, new guides were prepared as well as the exhibition outside and inside the observatory. The museum begins 2010 with two new telescopes for night-time observations, telescopes for the observation of the Sun, and a continuously updated inner and outer exhibition.



Phylosophy

Ethnocosmology – the entirety of visual, emotional, ethnic, spiritual, cognitive, pragmatic, prognostic and ontological relations with the Cosmic World

Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology is the first and the only museum of such character in the world. The essence of the Museum is the relationship of a man and mankind with the Cosmic World.

The main task of Lithuanian Museum of Ethnocosmology is to collect, accumulate, systematize, preserve, research, expose the information on the relationship of a man and mankind with the Cosmic World and to provide it to the visitors.

Definition of the Cosmic World

Sky – is a space above us with clouds, with the Sun and stars at night. Rain and snow fall from the sky. But the Sky can also be written in a capital letter – it is a space of the highest spiritual substances – the World of Gods (Heaven).

Cosmos – is a word of Greek origin emphasizing the order and harmony of the space around us and heavenly bodies in it.

The Universe – is a scientific term pretending to range the absolute entirety of the world around us. A matter, energy, space and time – everything belongs to the Universe. By generalizing these three definitions further we will use the term 'Cosmic World' that includes the contents and meanings of the conceptions of the Sky, Cosmos and the Universe.

Ethnocosmology

It is a reflection of the relationship of a man and mankind with the Cosmic World and its manifestation in traditions of life of the nation, its rites, material and verbal heritage, science, technology, literature, art, philosophy, religions, futurology and science fiction.

From here comes the interdisciplinarity of ethnocosmology, variety of manifestations of the links with the Cosmic World in human activities.

In the scale of time Ethnocosmology covers historical heritage, links of contemporary activities of the mankind with the Cosmic World, problem of unearthly mind and unearthly civilizations and, what is very urgent for ethnocosmology, – prognostic, futurological aspect of the future of the mankind in relation with the Cosmic World.

Relationship with the Cosmic World

Our relationship with the Cosmic World is expressed by the following propositions:

The Cosmic World is always far away but it is always above us. We are not able to dissociate ourselves from it – we are always in it and we are an integral part of the Cosmic World.

The Cosmic World is an inevitably broadening space of human activities coming through the scientific cognition and physical assimilation.

We – civilization of the Earth – are the products of Cosmic evolution and our future will always be under the influence of the consistent patterns of the Cosmic World.

In the Cosmic World there lie the causes of birth, evolution and existence of life and mind.

In the Cosmic World there lies the ultimate cause of birth and existence of the Universe.

The cognition of the Cosmic World and the sense of relationship with it constantly put the strain on an ontological question: what is the meaning of human life and evolution of the mankind in this Universe?

In the Cosmic World we apparently run into the Obscurity, which as an objective form of the expression of the world around us assumes physically and immanently the most realistic tangibility.

Every man is in constant relationship with the Cosmic World. But the sensation, conception and significance of that relationship depends on spiritual and cognitive world outlook of a single man.