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Images of Finnish Leadership

Myth is a discourse, which at first seemssensible and true, but may be revealed untrue by a closer observation. For the myth, however, the truthfulness or untruthfulness is insignificant.

Myths are models that help people to interpret their lives. Myths are, in a way, eternal models that tell how things have always been and how they will be from now on. By their nature, myths are strong and clear, they subdue other meanings and present their own as the only one. They are reductive models that are a priori organizing reality.

Myths are helpful for people, in the same way as religions and ideologies, when people are searching models and advice for their lives. But in case of religions and ideologies, where people are consciously looking for the answer, myths are acting in the secret, they are effecting us unconsciously.

The national myths have a strong effect in all walks of life. Mythology and literature are closely linked to each other and their interaction can be noted since the beginning of our cultural history. Sometimes the connection between mythology and literature is very straight forward, when a myth is presented in a book or a poem. Especially in folklore, the connection is often obvious.

It has been said that especially the Finns have deposited their most important myths in poetry. Actually, very few nations have as rich mythology as the Finns have. The most important poems in the Finnish folklore are myths that are dressed in a skillful manner. For example the stories of Kalevala can be understood as mythical stories, but they are also telling something about our history. The stories can be seen as models for other activities too, as I have done in this article of leadership. In this article I study four Finnish epics, which are rich with leaders. The books I deal with are Kalevala, Väinämöinen tarinat, Seitsemän veljestä and Tuntematton sotilas.

Väinämöinen, the leader of the Kalevala people, can be regarded as the archetype of the Finnish leader. He is first of all a soothsayer with all the knowledge in his mouth. In him the qualities of a sorcerer are mentioned again and again.

Compared with other notable leaders the tales of Väinämöinen are concentrating on celebrating his wisdom, when on the other hand, in the characters of Zidén, Adlercreutz, Kaarna and Koskela their social nature, emotional intelligence, psychological eye and capability to understand their men are underlined. These qualities are lacking in von Fiendt and Lammio, who are the anti-leaders in Väinämöinen tarinat and Tuntematton sotilas.