

Ústav pro klasickou archeologii FF UK Vás zve na přednášku

THE DEEP HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS RITUAL



Přednášku prosloví profesor **Luther H. Martin** z University of Vermont (USA) v pondělí **27. 2. 2012** v „Zelené posluchárně“, Celetná 20, Praha 1, 1. patro, **od 17:00. (změna místa konání vyhrazena!)**

Anotace:

“Deep history” is a programmatic proposal by an interdisciplinary group of scholars to reconceive human history in an evolutionary framework beginning in Africa some 80,000 years ago, rather than one modeled on the Biblical account and with an emphasis on texts that began in the Middle East some 5000-6000 years ago. Foremost among this group of scholars is the Harvard historian Daniel Lord Smail, whose 2008 book, *On Deep History and the Brain* was one of the first to propose, in any detail, the bio-cognitive substrate of human subjects, especially the evolutionary morphology and function of the human brain, as an appropriate historiographical frame, and how this frame might inform historical expressions and change. A deep history of religious rituals, then, traces the development of, changes in, effects of and relationships between various practices that have violated, manipulated, or modulated our evolved neurochemical systems within religious contexts.

I will illustrate these psychotropic practices from my field of historical specialization, Hellenistic religions, specifically, the initiation rites of the Eleusinian mysteries, the Roman cult of Mithras, and the Dionysian mysteries. On the basis of surviving material and literary evidence, I conclude that the initiation rites of the Graeco-Roman mystery religions include psychotropic practices specifically designed to alter the body chemistry of initiates in predictable ways. This conclusion suggests that religious rituals are social exaptations or by-products of ordinary, if hyperstimulated, processes of cognition and behavior that are available to humans in their constructions of any ritualized behavior. This insight (re)raises the question of defining, or at least stipulating, what is meant by the category “religion”. From the deep historical perspective of religious rituals, “religion” refers to one social institution that legitimates as well as controls human psychotropic practices.

