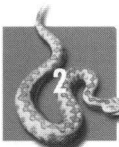
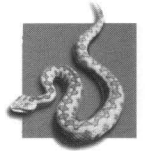


European  
Snake Society

VOLUME **20**  
**2000**





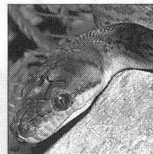
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# **F**ROM THE EDITORS

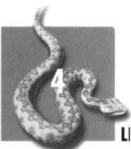
Since Adam and Eve things haven't worked out that well for snakes, not only in the Bible but also in the Christian world as a whole. In comparison with the Christian world there are many other cultures, ancient and modern, which worship the snake. In these cultures snakes, often in the form of a god, play an important part in the creation and preservation of the earth. Even a superficial view of the history of civilisation shows the important role snakes play in the religion and culture of ancient Egypt, the Greeks, Romans, Indian, Chinese, many Negro and Indian tribes (in North, Central and South America), Aboriginal and European civilisations.

Their mysterious way of appearing and disappearing represents magic, spirits, lost souls, forefathers and the underworld; the snake symbolised (and in some cultures still symbolises) immortality, infinity, on going renewal of life, sexuality and fertility.

For better or for worse people and cities depended on the well being of these 'guardian angels'. In areas with periods of great drought the fertility of the land depended on the rainmaking qualities of the snake. Red Indians compared the speed in which rattlesnakes strike with lightning. For this



*Painted snake on a Late Cucuteni vase. First half of fourth millennium BC.  
From: Gimbutas, The goddesses and gods of old Europe. Myths and cult images. London, 1982, page 97.*





reason some Pueblo Indians in the United States of America still perform their 'Snake Dance'.

No other animal inspired ancient artists more by the production and decoration of totems, artistic and religious items, tools and utensils as the snake did. Even in caves ancient drawings of snakes were found. Desmond and Ramona Morris referred in their book 'Men and Snakes' to the 'Dome of Serpents' near Rouffignac, in Central France. In a small part of this cave, a drawing was found showing more than one hundred curled up snakes.

The ancient fascination for snakes might also be caused by the killing ability of some venomous snakes. Their strike is so fast that it is barely visible with the naked eye. The wound they leave is often not visible but the consequences of a bite are quickly perceptible and often disastrous.

We present this first issue of *Litteratura Serpentina* in the new millennium with several articles on the special role snakes have in other cultures. We would especially like to mention the articles by Amrita Sivanand and Daan van Kampenhout. Both authors have no special interest in our hobby or in



Wooden snake mask, Cameroon, 19th -20th Cent.  
From: Nissenon & Jonas, page 31.



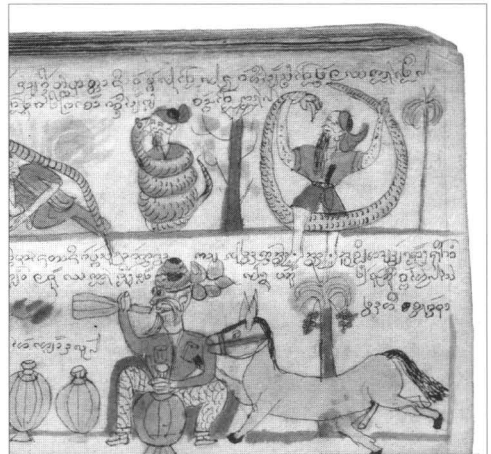
Bishop's crosier, St-Michael and the dragon. Limoges, France.  
Late 12th -early 13th Cent. From: Nissenon & Jonas, page 72.



*Snake at the tomb of King Ramses I, 1135 B.C.*

herpetology. They wrote their articles on request of the editors. In this issue we present some other aspects on snakes and snake keeping. We hope that these articles will interest you.

*Gijs van Aken  
Marcel van der Voort*



*Illustration from a 19th Cent. palmistry book from South East Asia*

