MARJETA ŠAŠEL KOS
Draco and the Survival of the Serpent Cult in the Central Balkans
(Tafel 13)

Religious credences which often have their origin in prehistory are deeply rooted in people's minds; beliefs and superstitions manifesting themselves in many ways are usually the last to disappear from daily life. Frequently they survive in a distorted form up to modern times, as anthropologists are well aware. This is certainly the case with the serpent cult which in its primitive form is almost as old as mankind and is attested more or less everywhere where snakes occur, not seldom showing striking similarities in areas quite distant from one another\(^1\), due to the specific character of the snake. Although different peoples often displayed similar beliefs about snakes, it would nevertheless be misleading to regard Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, and Roman notions as having sprung from the same roots\(^2\). The Greeks worshipped the serpent primarily as a chthonic deity and as a guarding power, sometimes as guardian of a water spring. It was either representing evil powers, like the Delphic Python, the Hydra from Lerna, and the Arcadian Echidna, but much more often a beneficent creature, a benevolent epichoric spirit, a spirit of ancestors and heroes, δὰναθὸς διήθων, like Cychreus, Cecrops, Erechtheus, Meilichios, Trophonius, and Asclepius, who was originally a local Thessalian demon. Progressive anthropomorphism undermined the importance of the serpent cult which certainly played a much greater role in the prehistoric period than it did later, during Greek and Roman antiquity. Its importance also differed in terms of region.

The cult played an important role in the central and southern Balkan as opposed to the northern regions where sun symbols predominated\(^3\), and it manifested itself in many different ways. It may even be postulated that the snake was the principal deity of the Illyrians and their guardian spirit, and, according to some scholars, the name Illyrian itself might derive from the name for snake\(^4\). The Enchelei, one of the most important tribes, attested in southern Dalmatia and in the northern Macedonian area around Lake

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\(^2\) Hartmann, RE 2 A 1 (1921) 509 s. v. Schlangen (Mythologie und Kult).
Ohrd, who settled in this region before the arrival of the eponymous Illyrians, were named after the "water snake", the eel, in Greek ἡ ἕγχελος. They are said to have received the Theban heroes Cadmus and Harmonia who, according to the well-known legend, retired to southern Illyria at the end of their lives. The legend further tells us that the Encheleii made them their leaders in the fight against the Illyrian new-comers. Euripides was the first to mention this event (Bacchae 1330–1339), which means that by the 5th century at the latest, but most probably at a considerably earlier time, the tradition of Cadmus and Harmonia in Illyria had been well established. Their son Illyrius, who is mentioned by Pseudo-Apollodorus and in the commentary to Vergil's Aeneis, and is also known to some Byzantine writers, is said to have been the eponymous ancestor of the Illyrians. Cadmus and Harmonia would have subsequently been turned into snakes and were

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6 Ps.-Apollodorus, Library 3, 5, 4.

7 Scholia Vaticana, ad v. 1, 243, p. 311 Lion.

8 Stephanus of Byzantium, s. v. Illyria; Eustathius, in his commentary to Dionysius Periegetes, 389, ed. K. Müller, GGM II 289.
worshipped among the southern Illyrians as their divine protectors. Eratosthenes in the 3rd book of his *Geography* (this note is preserved in Stephanus of Byzantium in his description of Dyrrhachium) wrote that their graves were shown along the rivers Drilon (Drim) and Aous (Vijosë / Vojuša). Phylarchus (3rd century B.C., in Athenaeus 11, 6, p. 462 b = FGrHist 81 F 39) mentions a monument of Cadmus and Harmonia, most probably their funerary monument, shown in the vicinity of Kylikes, a famous town in the country of the Illyrians. The town, which must have belonged to the Enchelei before they disappeared under the collective name of the Illyrians, should almost certainly be identified with Procopius' Kilikai (*De aedif. 4*, 4, ed. J. Haury, add. et corr. G. Wirth, Lipsiae 1964, p. 117), a fortress in New Epirus in the neighbourhood of Scodra. Lastly, Pseudo-Scythnus actually speaks about the sanctuary of Cadmus and Harmonia, thus leaving no doubt that the Theban pair enjoyed divine worship among the inhabitants, who in any case regarded snakes as divine animals.

In some regions known to have been settled by the Enchelei, the serpent cult is also attested archaeologically. Thus a special type of silver bracelets with ends in the form of snake heads, dated to the first half of the 5th century B.C., was found, e.g. at Trebenište and Radolište near Ohrid, ancient Lychnidus, which in antiquity was known as having been founded by Cadmus (see the epigram of Christodorus, *AP* 7, 697: ... Εἰχε δ’ ἀπ’ ἐσθεβαίον προγόνον ἐρικυκάδα πάτρην Λυχνίδαν ἦν Φοίνιξ Κάδμος ἔδειμε πόλιν). It may be deduced from the note in Polybius that the region around Lake Ohrid was once inhabited by the Enchelei who were, as we have seen, traditionally connected with Cadmus and Harmonia. He reports that in the war against Scredilaidas in 217 B.C. Philip V, among other settlements, conquered Enchelanae by Lake Ohrid (5, 108, 8). In later times this population was known as the Dassaretii (Ptol., *Geogr.* 3, 13, 32 Δασσαρητοί τοίς Λύχνιδος; Liv. 43, 9, 7: *ad Lycniudum Dassaretorum consedit* [Appius Claudius]).

Very similar bracelets were discovered at Prilep, on the territory of the Paeonian tribe of the Deuropes, thus excluding the possibility of narrowly ascribing the origin of this ornament to a specific ethnicon. Garašanin is certainly right to assume that such bracelets do not merely reflect an ephemeral fashion, but are doubtless also evidence for religious credences. Two small bronze plates representing a fighting scene also belong to the sphere of these credences. They were found in formerly Echeleian territory and are dated to the Hellenistic period; one is from Albania near Lake Ohrid, from the village Selce së Poshtme near Pogradec, the other from Gostilj near Skadar Lake in Montenegro. On both a huge snake is rising behind a single group of soldiers as if to help them against the

9 See M. Šešel Kos, *Famous Kylikes in Illyris* [forthcoming].
11 Id., *Bracelets* (above n. 10).
12 Id., *Bracelets* (above n. 10) 276.
13 Shqipëria arheologike, Tirana 1971, fig. 47; N. Ceka, *Qyteti Ilir pranë Selcës së poshtme*, Tirana 1985, Tab. 69 and 70.
14 D. Basler, *Nekropola na Velim Ledinama u Gostilju (Donja Zeta)*, Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja n. s. 24 (1969) 9; 43, tab. 25, 126/3. The dimensions of the tablet are 11.9 × 6.2 cm.
enemy. It may be interpreted as a representation of Cadmus\textsuperscript{15}, who was regarded as a heroized ancestor of the native population. Even if this interpretation should not be correct, these plates show beyond doubt that the Illyrian peoples were familiar with the conception of dead ancestors appearing in the form of a serpent\textsuperscript{16}.

Archaeological and epigraphic evidence shows that the worship of serpents, which must have been widely spread in the central and southern Balkans, Greece included\textsuperscript{17}, was particularly deeply rooted in certain regions, e. g. in the region of the Deuropes in Paeonia where the evidence of the snake shaped bracelets from Prilep is corroborated by a Greek inscription of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century A.D. from this area. It is a votive inscription inscribed on a natural rock above the village of Trojaci near Pletvarje, not far from Prilep, set up by a veteran from the praetorian guard, Ti. Claudius Rufus, for a snake god venerated at this place.


\begin{quote}
\begin{verbatim}
Ti(βέριος) Κλαυδιος Ρούφος ου-
ετρανός ἐκ πραττο-
ρίου Δράκοντι τῷ
ὅδε τειμο-
μένῳ δορὸν.
\end{verbatim}
\end{quote}

A snake rising above a bowl containing an egg is represented on the rock. Heuzey, who was the first to publish the inscription, mentions that the local inhabitants still believed in snakes as guardians of buried treasures\textsuperscript{18}. Its ephicic character was certainly the most important aspect of the snake. The social status of the dedicant shows that the serpent cult was by no means disdained by the upper class.

Draco is also mentioned on an interesting Latin inscription from neighbouring Dardania, from the territory of Scupi (present-day Skopje), recently republished and revised by B. Josifovska-Dragojević, IMS VI No. 10. It is a marble altar discovered in 1872 by Noël Morten on the left bank of the Vardar opposite a place called by him “Vlascia”. This toponym was wrongly identified as Blatsche (= Blace) in later publications, but, as Josifovska pointed out, Vlascia could only be the village Vlahčani (no longer inhabited) near the village Sopot, situated on the opposite bank of the Vardar. For some time the altar had been regarded as lost (Domaszewski could not find it) but it was found again by Lj. Kovačević and is at present immersed in the threshold of the church of St. George.

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\textsuperscript{15} M. Šašel Kos, \textit{Cadmus} (above n. 5).

\textsuperscript{16} See S. Stipčević, \textit{Le culte du défunt héroisé dans la religion illyrienne}, Simpozijum Dušovna kultura Ilira (Symposium Culture spirituelle des Illyriens), Centre d'Etudes balkaniques 11, Sarajevo 1984, 215–221; cf. also id., \textit{Symboles} (above n. 3) 50.

\textsuperscript{17} E. Küster, \textit{Die Schlange in der griechischen Kunst und Religion}, RVV 13, 2, Giessen 1913.

\textsuperscript{18} L. Heuzey, ad. No. 131.
near Sopot. Its inscribed surface is almost entirely obliterated, so that no photograph of the inscription could be published. Fortunately its reading has been ascertained (I give it according to Josifovska, who cites all the older relevant references):

Iovi et Iuno-
5 ni et Dracco-
ni (!) et Dracce-
nae (!) et Ale-
xandros Epit-
ynchanus serus)
[F]uri Octavi[ni]
e(larissimi) v(iri) posuit.

The copy made by Lj. Kovačević confirmed Domaszewski's identification of the senator with C. Furius Octavius and not C. Furius Octavius, thus allowing the inscription to be dated to the Severan period.

The second part of the dedication is unique as the couple Draco and Dracena are not attested elsewhere. A female counterpart of Draco is not surprising as she sometimes also appears in Greece alongside with Zeus Ktesius, Zeus Meilichius or Philius, as, for ex., 'Ἀγαθὴ Τοχή' (note also the feminine epithets Ktesia and Meilichia for female deities). All of them are former snake gods, important enough to be later assimilated into the supreme Greek god. In our case assimilation did not occur; the dedication is to Jupiter and Juno and to Draco and Dracula, thus revealing that the pair were locally important deities, probably more important to the dedicant than the first two mentioned gods from the official Roman Pantheon. The appearance of Draco and Dracena recalls the worship of Cadmus and Harmonia. It is interesting to mention in this context that it may be inferred from Dercylus that Harmonia had once been regarded, at least in some sources, as a daughter of a snake.

It is significant, too, that on several votive stelae in the area of Prilep and elsewhere in northern Macedonia one or two serpents appear: one of the most interesting representations is preserved on a trapezoidal stele from the vicinity of Prilep on which two snakes surround an altar with a bell shaped krater with an egg on its edge. It is dated by S. Düll to the first half of the 3rd century A.D. Equally noteworthy is the appearance of one or two snakes on tombstones from the same area. It is thus obvious that serpent deities played an important role in the southern Dardanian and northern Macedonian regions.


\footnote{S. Düll, Die Götterkulte Nordmakedoniens in römischer Zeit, Münchener Archäologische Studien 7 (1977) 403 no. 257, fig. 30.}

\footnote{Ead., Götterkulte (above n. 21) 140 ff.}
Draco occurs very rarely on the inscriptions. Our two inscriptions are the only dedications to the snake god called Draco in these parts of the Empire. This deity is otherwise attested epigraphically only on rare inscriptions from Africa and Rome.

A dedication to Alexander on a Latin inscription from the Latin speaking part of the Empire — although, it is true, next to the border of the Greek speaking world where dedications to Alexander are not exceptional — is probably also unique. There is, in my opinion, absolutely no doubt that the Alexander on the dedication should be identified with Alexander the Great, who was believed to have been conceived by a serpent deity. Mommsen wrongly identified him with Alexander of Abonouteichus, and, consequently, Draco with the serpent god Glycon, a creation of the false prophet Alexander of Abonouteichus who had been active in the fifth and sixth decades of the 2nd century A.D. He was treated with ridicule and malice by Lucian (Ἀλέξανδρος ἦ Φευδόμαντις), but had nonetheless had a great impact on his contemporaries, while Glycon exercised some influence even on posterity. Mommsen’s opinion was accepted by several scholars who dealt with the inscription later on. There are several archaeological, epigraphic and numismatic attestations of Glycon from the main eastern parts of the Empire. He is always represented with a human head and, whenever his name is given, it is always Glycon. The fact itself that two dedications to Glycon came to light in the neighbouring province of Dacia is sufficient proof that Draco was a different deity. Moreover, there is no place for Dracena in Glycon’s cult and in his mantic activity, which is described in detail by Lucian. Groag, who had disagreed with Mommsen, proposed a much better explanation for the appearance of Alexander on the dedication. He connected it with a passage from Dio (30 epit., 18, 1–3) mentioning for the year 221 that in Upper Moesia.

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24 For the citations see the commentary of B. Josipovska, IMS VI ad No. 10.


26 CIL III 1021 = ILS 4079 from Apulum: Glycon | M. Anton(ius) | Onesas | iusso () dei | l. p. See also CIL III 1022.


28 οἶχαι γὰρ τούτων πρότερον δαιμόνιος τῆς Ἀλέξανδρος τὸ δ Μακεδών ἑκείνος εἶναι λέγει καὶ τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ τῆς σκεῦους ἀπάσαν φέρει, ἀρμῆτη περὶ τῶν περὶ τῶν Ἱστρὸν χωρίων, οὐκ οἶδ᾽ ὅπως ἑκείνη ἐκφάνη, βασκεθέντος μὲν ἀνδρῶν τετρακοσίων, θύρως τε καὶ νεβράδας ἐνέσκαιμομεν, κακῶν οὐδέν δρόντον, ὁμολόγως δὲ παρὰ πάντων τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἐρακί τότε γενομένων ὁτι καὶ καταγοραί τα αἰτία πάντα δημοσία παρεσκευάσθη: καὶ οὐδεὶς ἐπέλυμεν οὐτ᾽ ἀνείπειν οἱ οὐτ᾽ ἀνέβαιν, οἱ ἄρχον, οὐ
and Thrace a spirit (δαίμον τίς) appeared, claiming to be Alexander of Macedon. Accompanied by four hundred men he advanced through the country in the guise of a new Dionysus, living at public expense while authorities did not dare to interfere. The procession proceeded as far as Byzantium and hence by ship to Chalcedon where the spirit disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared. No doubt that the representatives of Roman government had removed him, thus ensuring that he would not cause further trouble.

Groag showed that Epitych anus’ master was the well-known senator C. Furius Octavianus, a contemporary of the mentioned event, known from the passage in Ulpian, *de officio praetoris tutelaris*, and from several inscriptions. The family was related to the family of the Pontii; both owned large estates in Dardania and were probably involved in mining-business. Thus Epitych anus’ dedication to Draco and Dracena, deities closely connected with earth, could perhaps so be explained. It seems plausible that the apparition of Pseudo-Alexander induced Epitych anus to set up the dedication also to Alexander. Groag further suggested that the Alexander invoked on the inscription would either have been this Pseudo-Alexander, or else Alexander the Great himself. There is no doubt that the last possibility could be the right one. Even if we assume that the dedicant had this newly arrived “spirit” in mind when setting up the dedication, he obviously believed that it was a true reincarnation of Alexander the Great, as the impostor claimed to be. Given that on one hand the cult of Alexander was revived in the period of military campaigns in the East during the first half of the 3rd century A.D., especially under Caracalla and Alexander Severus, and that on the other hand the prophet Alexander of Abonouteichus was a rather ephemeral phenomenon, in any case much more than his creation Glycon, Gagé’s suggestion that Epitych anus would not distinguish between the two Alexanders seems most unlikely. The times were imbued by manifold manifestations of religious syncretism, but it seems to me much more probable that Epitych anus had not even heard of the false prophet, who had died some 70 years earlier.

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στράτωτης εἰς ἐπίτροπος, εἰς τὸν ἄγνον ἥγοιμον, ἀλλ' ἀπεστάλθη ἐν ποιμήν τινί μετ' ἣμέραν ἐκ πορηγήσεως ἐκοιμήθη μέχρι τοῦ Βυζαντίου. ἔντρεθε γὰρ ἐξαναχθεὶς πρόσεχε μὲν τῇ Ἀλκηνοθίᾳ γῇ, ἐκεῖ δὲ δὴ νυκτὸς ἱερὰ ταῖς ποιμένες καὶ ἑπὶ ξύλινον κατακόοις ἀμφιῆς ἐγένετο. ταῦτα μὲν ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ ἕτοι, ως εἶπον, δὲν, πρὶν καὶ ὑπὸν πρὶν τὸν Βασιλαν ἐν τῇ Ῥώμῃ γενέσθαι, ἔμαθον.

29 PIR² F 580.

30 Fragmenta Vaticana, c. 220, ed. Th. Mommsen (Collectio librorum iuris anteustitiani 3), Berlin 1890, 69: *Memini itaque me suadente Alcimu libertum Furi Octaviiani clarissimi viri praetorem in cura retinuisse, cum tutelam eius administrasse necessariumque ad res gerendas videtur: nam et liberis materni in pari sunt condicione. CIL III 8169 = Jahresh. Bb. 6 (1903) 28 (Morten’s better copy). This inscription confirms Ulpian’s notice. See also CIL VI 1423, cf. p. 3141: *Furtii L. f. Caeciliae matri plissimae Furius Octavianus co(n)s(ul) pontif(ex) filius*.

31 CIL III 8169 = Jahresh. Bb. 6 (1903) 28 (Morten’s better copy). This inscription confirms Ulpian’s notice. See also CIL VI 1423, cf. p. 3141: *Furtii L. f. Caeciliae matri plissimae Furius Octavianus co(n)s(ul) pontif(ex) filius*.


33 Thus also N. Vulić, Glas Srpske Kralj. Akad. nauka 88, Beograd 1911, 159ff. Cf. also id., Spomenik 98 (1941 – 1948) 33 No. 80.


35 Gagé, *Alexandre* (above n. 34) 12.
It is evident from the dedication that the serpent cult must have been important to the dedicant, and it can be further assumed on the basis of the already mentioned evidence that it must have played a significant role in Dardania, as in northern Macedonia. This can be stated, however, irrespectively of Epitynchanus’ origin; the name Epitynchanus cannot tell us anything about the origin of the dedicant, as the epigraphic evidence from Rome shows that it was a rather common name among the slave and freedmen population.

The serpent cult in this region, however, was known at a much earlier age. The origins of the worship of snakes can be traced in Dardania back into the earliest prehistory. At a neolithic site in Priština, Predionica, a late neolithic clay figure of a coiled snake was found in a house, symbolizing a protector of the domestic hearth. It is also interesting to note that such practices survived throughout the centuries of the Middle Ages and the modern era up to our own days.

Several survivals of the serpent cult have been noted in the central and southern Balkan region, some of which are attested also in other formerly Illyrian lands, notably in Dalmatia. The snake is sometimes regarded in southern Serbia as averter of evil, bringing health, as protector of fields, and sometimes also an animal which can aid fertility, if, for instance, a girl wears a woolen garment over which mating snakes have crawled. Not infrequently, however, anthropologists also note superstitions about snakes, in which serpents are perceived as dangerous and malevolent animals. Concurrent rituals were devised for defense against them, such as pouring boiling water on stones in a courtyard and around a house, or by other devices, often on certain days in spring, like St. George’s Day or the Day of Forty Martyrs. Certainly these superstitions cannot be regarded as testimonies for a serpent cult. Nonetheless, survivals of a serpent cult in which a belief in snakes as benevolent creatures is reflected are disseminated over a vast area, but they tend to be concentrated in formerly Dardanian regions. Under the superstratum of Christian and Moslem beliefs, several features of the former snake cult still exercise a great influence on local imagination and religious observances. Snakes are still regarded in many Albanian villages in the region of Kosovo and Metohija as protecting heaths and graves, their magical powers bringing health. A snake is sometimes built as a sacrificial

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37 R. Galović, Predionica, Priština 1959, 25, Pl. 5, fig. 4. Similar snakes from the same period were also found at Lisičiči near Konjic in Bosnia and at Krivač near Bribir in Dalmatia, see A. Benac, GZM n. s. 10 (1955) 59, Pl. 12, fig. 15; P. Korošec, Diadora 6 (1973) 167–171. Clay snake coils were also discovered in a house from a later period at Mycenae, see W. Taylor, New Light on Mycenaean Religion, Antiquity 44 (1970) 270–280.
38 At Sutomor (on the former Encheleian littoral) it brings bad luck to kill a snake-like lizard, called bivvor in Croatian, a word related to Rumanian balaur, a pre-Slavic Balkanic meaning dragon, which probably indicates a continuity with the serpent cult of the autochthonic inhabitants in Dalmatia, cf. R. Katičić, Encheleer (above n. 5) 44 n. 62. St. Hilarion saved the inhabitants of Epidaurum (present-day Cavtat) from the huge serpent Boas in A. D. 365, see Sancti Hieronymi Vita S. Hilarionis eremitae c. 39 (Migne, PL II); Farlatti, Illyricum sacrum VI 3–4, 47–50. Cf. R. Katičić, Encheleer (above n. 5) 42–44, n. 62.
39 M. Zlatanović, Verovanja o zmijah na jugu Srbije (Superstitions about snakes in southern Serbia, summary in Russian only), Vranjski glasnik 21, Vranje (1988) 225–234 with other references cited.
animal into the foundations of a new house to avert evil. Its head likewise protects newly 
mapped couples against evil, and its teeth protect babies against the evil eye, disease, or 
magic. In the village of Šušice (Shushicâ) in Kosovo, two girls from the house of K. Metaj 
died from tuberculosis around 1950. Villagers believe that their grave is guarded by two 
coiled snakes, perhaps a distant echo of the mentioned tombstones from the Roman 
period on which two snakes are represented.

The continuity of the serpent cult is particularly striking at the village of Orman 
near Skopje, Roman Scupi, on the ager of which the dedication to Draco and Dracena 
of Epitynchus had been discovered. This continuity was described shortly before the 
second World War by M. S. Filipović, and in the beginning of the seventies by L. 
Spirovskà. At the very beginning of spring, on March 22nd, the villagers of Orman 
gather to go to a hill called Zmijarnik ("Snake hill"), half a kilometer away from their 
village. There they wait for snakes to emerge from under the rocks, then some of 
them dance in a ring, while the others catch the animals and throw them inside the ring 
believing that on this day snakes do not bite and are not venomous. Young couples who 

wish to have children born to them put pieces of their clothing inside the ring in front 
of the snakes and incite the reptiles to crawl over them; thus their wish would be fulfilled. 
Spirovskà writes that snakes were also believed to fulfill other wishes expressed by the 
owners of clothing who implored them for various types of help and remedies.

Bringing fertility, which is one of the manifestations of the chthonic deity, must have 
had been one of the primary features of snake worship. The belief that a serpent can cause 
pregnancy or in some way assist in conception is currently attested among many primitive 
peoples in Africa and elsewhere, and is firmly rooted among the inhabitants of many 
Indian or Mediterranean villages. Thus, for instance, Greek women from the village of 
Promahà who cannot bear children go on a given day to a special stone, called Serpent 
Stone, near a deserted church of St. Ilarion, and walk around it three times, burning 
candles and leaving money on the top of it in hope that their barrenness will be cured.

The serpent worship practised at Orman near Skopje is probably unique in Europe. 
It is surely no coincidence that it is performed precisely where it had been attested in the 
Roman period, and where, broadly speaking, it has been known from the prehistoric 
period onwards; it can thus be assumed with great probability that it has survived from the 
prehistoric past. The ritual of its recent performance is the only means by which its 
former appearance and primary features may be approached. The element of a serpent

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40 U. Xhemaj, _Le culte du serpent dans la culture populaire albanaise._ Gjurmime albanologjike, Fio
41 A. Stipčević, _Zmija kao čuvarica groba._ Zbornik za narodni život i običaje 49 (1983) 628 n. 9.
42 S. Filipović, _Kult zmije u okolini Skopla._ Biblioteka Centralnog higijenskog zavoda, Miscellanea 1 (1937) 
136–149 (non vidi). Cf. S. Stipčević, _Symboles._ (above n. 3) 180–182.
43 L. Spirovskà, _Le culte du serpent dans le village d’Orman, région de Skopje._ (in Mac. with French summary), 
Makedonski folklor 7–8, Skopje 1971, 141–146. I am grateful to Mrs. M. Petrović, Skopje Museum, for this 
reference.
45 G. K. Spyridakis, _'Εκθέσεις λαογραφικής δραώντος εις περιοχάς τοῦ νομοῦ Πέλλης (Μακεδονίας)_ (29 
crawling over garments of the believers is also known from the cult of Phrygian-Thracian Sabazius. It is known from Clemens of Alexandria (Protrept. 2, 16; cf. also Arnobius, Adv. nat. 5, 20 f.) that individuals initiated into the mysteries of Sabazius had a serpent drawn through the bosom of their dress (ὁ διὰ κόλπου θεός), which was regarded as an incarnation or manifestation of the god itself. Elements of similar content must have featured in various Graeco-Roman cults where serpents played a conspicuous role. Serpent cults in different parts of the Graeco-Roman world undoubtedly displayed different traits and different accents. The ritual at Orman helps us imagine how they have been.

It is, or has been, performed on March 22nd, the day of the Forty Martyrs. Spirovská concludes her report with a note that the Orthodox Church had built a church near the ancient site. She adds that by having done so the church has signified accession of this cult, which by being united with the church holiday of the Forty Martyrs has thus been saved from oblivion. Christian notions of the snake derive from Jewish and, generally speaking, eastern notions of the serpent, which have mostly retained such evil traits as are embodied, for instance, in the Eden snake. It must therefore be concluded that far from preserving the relics of the serpent cult at Orman from oblivion, the building of a church at the site will probably decisively contribute to its final disappearance.

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47 See Theophrastus, Characters 28.
48 Spirovská, Le culte du serpent (above n. 43) 146.