

# Jungfru Maria möter ormen

- om formlers tolkningar

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## **Abstract**

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*On the Interpretations of Charms.*

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Virgin Mary snake charms were collected during the period 1880-1935 and were kept in various ethnological archives that specialise in traditions.

The aim of this study is to discuss how and why snake charms, using the gestalt of the Virgin Mary, were formulated and used and, in addition, by content analysis, view their purpose as a part of the general way of thinking.

How have the charms been understood and interpreted and what effects have earlier interpretations had? Has earlier research misunderstood and misinterpreted the Virgin Mary snake charms? Is there any possibility that they had been used in other ways, other than against bites from adders?

How can a study of the selected charms help to shed light on these questions? By using a source-pluralist method in relation to selected charms it has been possible to carry out a discussion around the role and meaning of them as they are and as integral parts of folk medicine and folk religion.

There are some signs that imply they may have been used for different purposes. A pattern has emerged through comparison with similar figures that have been used in other contexts. Words and expressions in the Virgin Mary snake charms were mainly drawn from the female world of fertility, infertility and birth control. The studied charms can have contained different meanings for men and women.

**Key words:** charms, folk religion, folk medicine, healing, snake charms, Virgin Mary, reproduction, metaphors, fertility, infertility, popular, adaptable Virgin Mary