

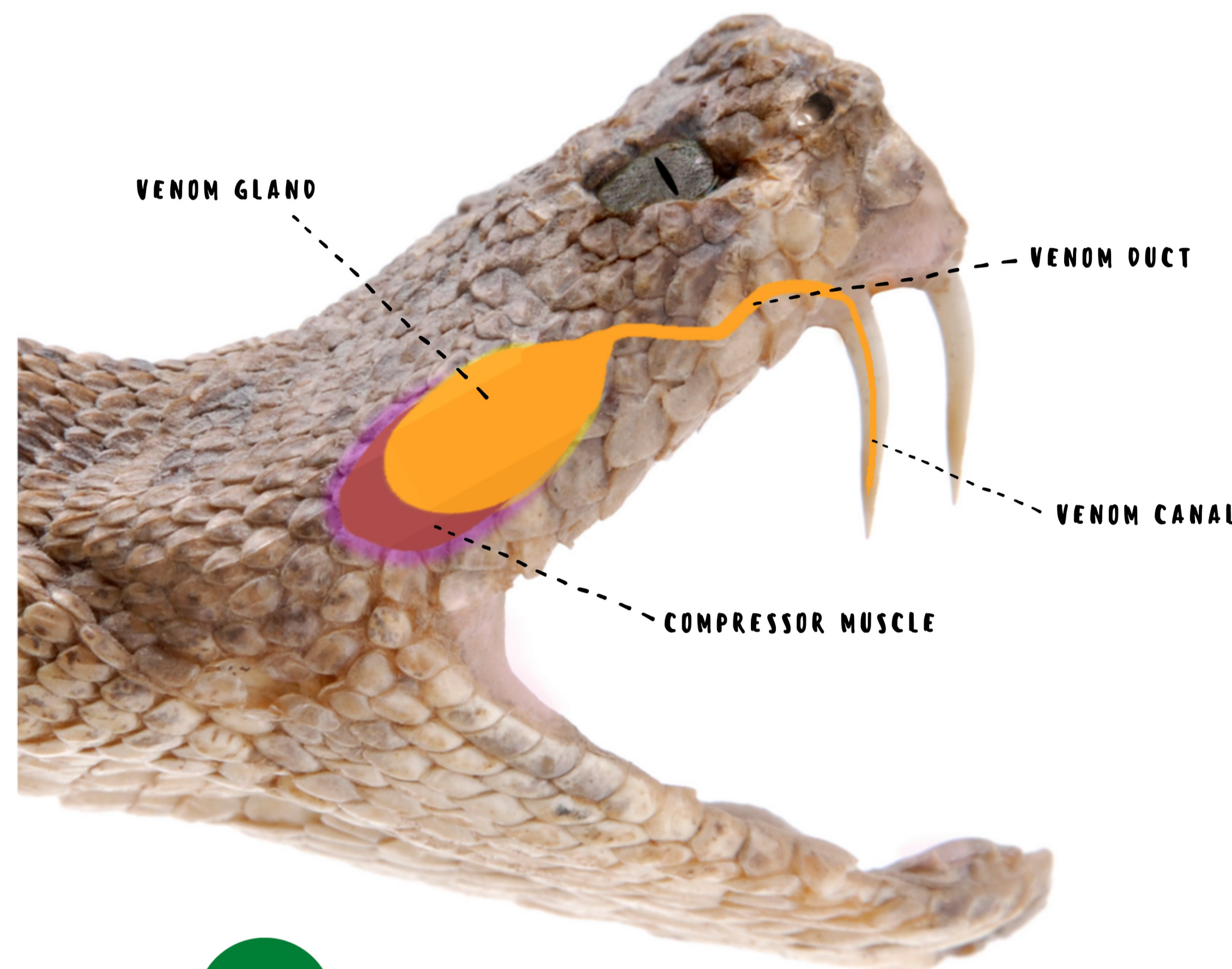
# SNAKE SYMBOLISM.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE ICONOGRAPHY AND ICONOLOGY OF OPHIDIANS THROUGH TIME.

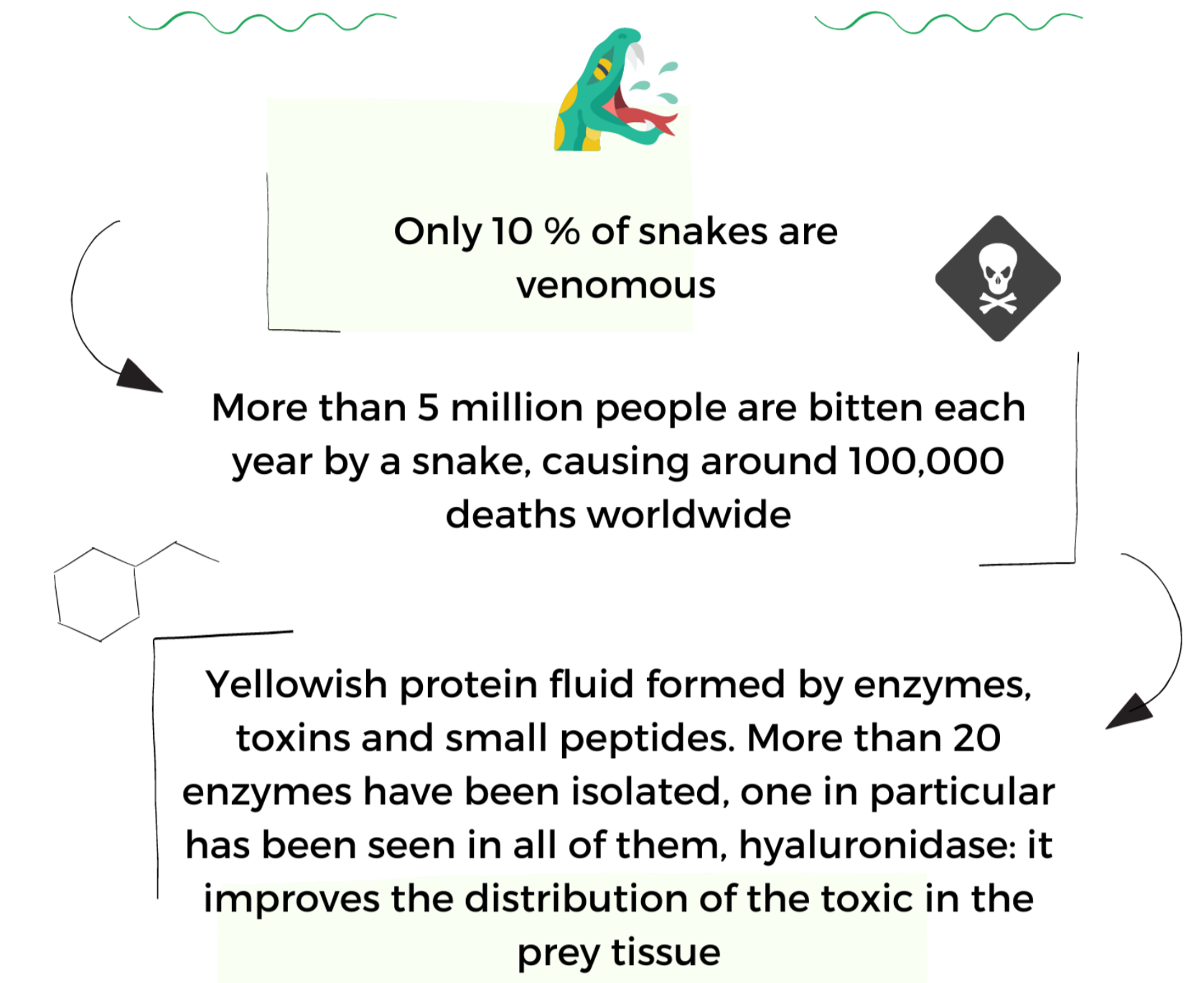
ESTHER NACHER BUENO - FINAL DEGREE PROJECT  
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## OBJECTIVES

- 1 Set out several **influences** of the ophidians' figure in some of the most important areas that involve the human being life.
- 2 Leave a record of the **legacy** that snakes have left in History.
- 3 Analyze the different **symbolic interpretations** of the snake figure in cultures all around the world and through time.
- 4 Analyze the relation between snakes and the field of **medicine**.



## SNAKE VENOM



1



### Fertility

Water is one of the natural habitats of the snake, so they are often associated with **abundance**. Furthermore, their sinuous movement resembles the trajectory of a river, which is why they were considered a **source of life**. Thus, they are also associated with **sexuality**.

2



### Cosmos and Chaos

Popular knowledge believe the Cosmos emerged from the Cosmic Egg after being fertilized by a gigantic serpent, which was considered a **phallic symbol**. Additionally, the **primordial Chaos** was an **ocean**, which also states a relation with the snake.

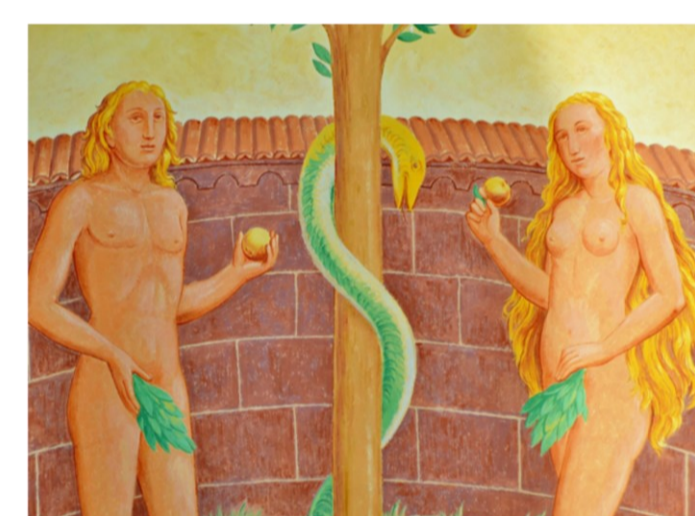
3



### Eternity

Ophidians shed their skin periodically. They were associated with the **cyclical processes** of life, such as day and night. This concept is represented by the **uroboros**, the image of a snake devouring its own tail.

4



### Evil

Their fixed and penetrating gaze gives them a cold and calculating look, which leads to believe that they're intelligent animals. For this reason, in conjunction with the lethality of their venom, they are considered an allegory of **Evil, Death and betrayal**.

5



### Keeper

Their gaze that **never blinks** makes them the perfect candidates to protect treasures, as is the case of dragons. They are also protectors of objects, places or people, both the living and those trying to reach the afterlife.

6



### Bestiary

Medieval bestiaries were a compendium of creatures that were known to exist. Some contained **fantastic creatures** that were believed to be real, such as **dragons** or basilisks, both imagined from the snake figure.

7



### Identity

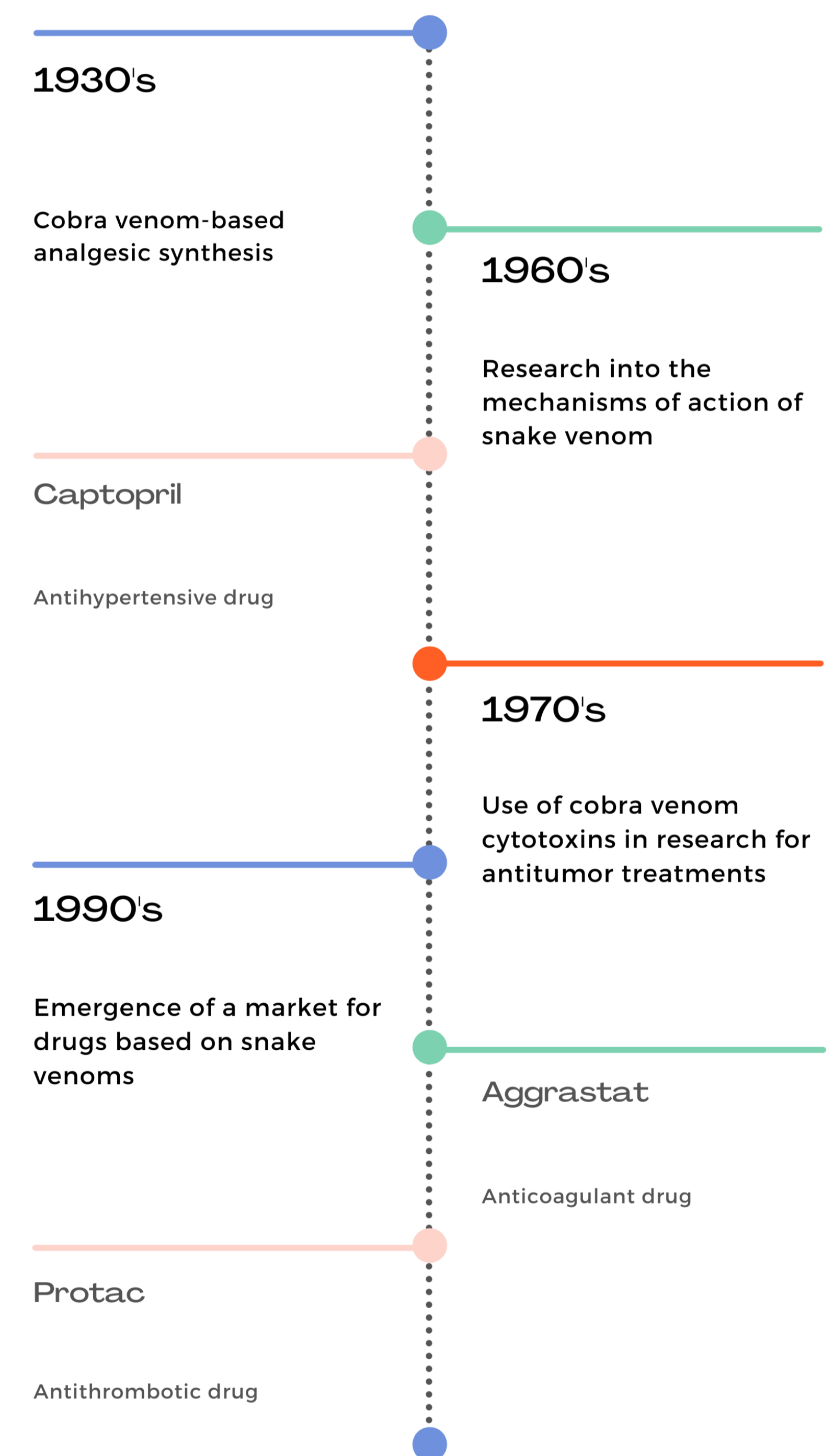
Snakes have a link with power and royalty, and we can find them represented in **heraldry**. Through it, the aim is to embody and extol warlike values related to ophidians, such as caution, wisdom and lethality.

8



### Health care

Because of their **rejuvenating capacity**, snakes appear as symbol of **healing**. Therefore, the **Rod of Asclepius** is the symbol of human and veterinary medicine, and the **Caduceus of Hermes** is the image of the medical industry.



## CONCLUSIONS

The figure of the snake has **more symbolic meaning and interpretation than any other animal**. It is a **universal figure** with various positive interpretations, such as health, fertility and wisdom, but also with several negative interpretations, as it is often associated with temptation, death or betrayal.

Ophidians have been introduced in our daily life, becoming part of **medical concepts**, and even serving as an example for some drugs formulation that achieve the opposite effect of what is expected from such a feared animal.

The **enormous influence** that snakes had on all existing cultures is evident and still endures today.

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