

Mata Hari “A century of mystique.”

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In spite of her death a century ago, Mata Hari remains an iconic woman surrounded by mystique and intrigue. While publicly accused and demonized for spying extensively for Germany, no one will ever know if Mata Hari was actually guilty of the espionage that sent 20,000 Allied soldiers to their deaths. Recently, when the sealed court files became public, there was little real criminal evidence that called for such a dramatic end to her life. Possibly a morally corrupt and mortally dangerous spy, Mata Hari was also a self-made woman who created and benefited from her own image. Her legend continues to live on through history. Embroiled in the conflict of World War I, Mata Hari readily compromised her loyalty to the German government in order to aid the French as a spy. Mata Hari utilized her powers as an appealing woman to wage her own war, battling with the weapons she possessed. But living as double agent landed Mata Hari squarely in front of a French firing squad.

Margaretha Zelle was born on August 7, 1876, in Leeuwarden, in the province of Friesland in the Netherlands into the small family of Adam Zelle and his first wife Antje. In the little Dutch town where she grew up, her shopkeeper father lavished extreme affection on his "little princess," which may have created a vain, self-centered, and spoiled girl, with a yearning for male attention. (Biography, 2014) Margaretha's early life ranged from tragedy to scandal. After her parents divorced, her mother passed away and her father remarried. Her father went bankrupt due to poor investments and sent Margaretha sent to live with relatives.

A few years later, after a scandal with the headmaster at the school training her to become a kindergarten teacher, Margaretha answered an advertisement in the local paper. Unbeknownst to Dutch Colonial Army Captain Rudolf MacLeod, his friends had placed the ad

for a female companion as an amusing birthday present for him. Although his friends did not expect anyone to reply, Margaretha Zelle did, even sending an enticing photograph of herself.

She had olive skin, raven black hair, and beautiful amber eyes. MacLeod, a bald, mustached military captain based in the Dutch East Indies, MacLeod was immediately taken with her, proposed, and they married in July of 1895, despite a 21-year age difference. Mata Hari was only 19 years old. A few years later they had a son, whom they called Norman John MacLeod. (Shipman, 51-52)

The marriage was overall a disappointment. Rudolf MacLeod spent much of his money in local taverns. He repeatedly beat his wife, whom he blamed for his lack of promotion to a Major. The unhappy Zelle abandoned him temporarily, moving in with another Dutch officer. She studied the Indonesian traditions intensively for several months and joined a local dance company, taking the artistic name *Mata Hari*, the word for "sun" in the Malay language. At MacLeod's insistence, Zelle returned home to him, but his behavior did not change. Zelle escaped her life by continuing to study the local culture in Java, Indonesia. The culture and way of life in Indonesia fascinated her.

The still struggling couple soon had another baby, whom they named Jeanne Louise, more commonly known as Non. In 1899 MacLeod was promoted to garrison commander in another part of the Dutch East Indies and left his wife and family behind to find a house there. Zelle chose the biggest and prettiest house on the little island of Indonesia. She threw many extravagant parties. (Mata Hari Biography, 2014)

In 1899, their children fell violently ill, the family claimed they were poisoned by an irate servant. The base doctor overdosed both children with mercury. MacLeod's and Zelle's

two-year-old son Norman, died. (Mass, 2011) The marriage continued to fall apart after the death of their child. They moved back to the Netherlands and officially separated. The divorce became final in 1906.

Zelle went to Paris without her daughter, looking for work as a model or an actress. But no French industries were looking for an olive-toned, worn-looking woman. Though Zelle tried to make a life for herself in Paris, she could not find employment. Needing money to support herself, she fell back on her dancing career; however, the dancing Zelle knew was “oriental” and exotic, novel and, evocative. Fortunately, it became a main attraction. She danced in exclusive venues for the elite wealthy class. That was when she took on her lasting stage name Mata Hari.

Her life as a professional dancer did not last long as others began to imitate her style. Although she had many lovers who supported her extravagant lifestyle, she still needed a way to support herself, and Non, who lived with MacLeod. In the article “Femme Fatale, Fallen Woman, Spy” in *The New York Times*, Nina Siegal states that, “Although today’s exotic dancers are associated with grimy clubs, Mata Hari’s sensational premiere took place at the Musée Guimet in Paris, an art institution where it was seen by upper-crust socialites, and her enormous and immediate success thrust her into their ranks.” Hans Groeneweg, curator of the Museum of Friesland exhibition, confirms: ““She was at least a millionaire at one point”” (qtd. in Siegel). After her dance routine fell out of style, though, Mata Hari again sought the means to support herself and her expensive life. The article “The Execution of Mata Hari 1917,” published by Eyewitness to History, states that Mata Hari traded in her role as a dancer but wanted to keep living the role of a woman of wealth.

Mata Hari found herself in a position to accept a place in the French military intelligence agency, the Deuxieme Bureau, which offered her the opportunity to her to become a spy because of her connections to powerful people. (In *The Nemesis of Power the German Army in Politics*, John Bennet states that before the World War 1,) Mata Hari had performed several times before the Crown Prince Wilhelm, eldest son of Kaiser Wilhelm II, an older German general on the Western Front. The Deuxieme Bureau believed she might be able to obtain information by seducing the Crown Prince for military secrets. The French agency offered her one million francs for discovering reliable intelligence about German military plans (12-13). With Mata Hari's connections to the Germans, she was already acting as a German spy.

Many historians believe that the main reason Mata Hari accepted the offer to also become a spy for the French is that she fell for a Russian officer named Vladimir Masloff, also known as "Vadim." The young officer was 21 when he met the 40-year-old Mata Hari in 1916. With lengthy, dark hair and a long nose, he was slender and handsome. The usually composed Mata Hari became recklessly passionate about him. Part of the attraction she felt might have stemmed from the fact that Vadim was about the same age that Mata Hari's dead son, Norman, would have been, had he lived. Vadim brought out a more maternal side to her character. Vadim enjoyed the attention and the fame he got for being with a celebrity who was desired by many men in Europe. Vadim, a soldier, had to return to war, where he endured a German gas attack. He lost the his left eye, and wore a patch over it for the rest of his life. The gassing, though, threatened the vision in his good right eye as well, and the eye weakened over time. (Kennelly)

Mata Hari tried to gain permission to the military hospital, because she was traumatized over Vadim's war injuries. Mata Hari was determined that she would find the money to support

them both. Vadim recuperated in a military hospital near Vittel, placed officially in the war zone. Mata Hari, while trying to help Vadim get well, fatefully met Georges Ladoux. One of her friends had recommended that she go see him and plead her case to enter the hospital. When they met, Ladoux questioned Mata Hari fully about her political position about the conflict between France and Germany. Mata Hari replied that since she was a Dutch citizen, she was neutral. She assured him, though, as Paris was her home she sided with France. He then asked (knowing of her fame, and her connections, and her freedom of travel) if she would consider spying on the Germans for France. She told Ladoux she would think about his proposal. But to make her think even more about the proposal Ladoux told Mata Hari that she had permission to visit Vladimir in the hospital if she would do it. (Olga, Mata Hari and her Russian love).

Her assignment was to seduce top officials, and get information. One example of her espionage was in Brussels, where she was sent to seduce Wurfbaun, an owner of a company that supplied food for the German Army. Through seducing him, he promised to introduce her to General von Bissing who would provide her with more access to top secret information. Another job was to romance Major Arnold Kalle who would feed her more information. The second time she was supposed to seduce Major Arnold Kalle, he was more close mouthed. He even fed her false information, which did not help her personal reputation and her relationship with Vadim. One of the reasons the French recruited her was because of her quick thinking and her way of getting out of things even if she was cornered. (Siegel)

In 1917, the French Government intercepted a message from Germany claiming H 21 (Mata Hari's code name) spied for Germany. In World War I, Mata Hari's cross-border liaisons with the German political and military figures came to the attention of the French secret police

and she was placed under surveillance. In the deceitful realm of spying, the French suspected her of being a double agent for their country and Germany. In February, Mata Hari returned to Paris and was immediately arrested. She was then charged with being a German spy. She admitted that she had received 20,000 francs in the past to spy on France. But her allegiance was now to France. When the French interrogated her on what information she had given Germany, she stated that she had purposely told the Germans all the wrong dates and details.

The intercepted radio messages were brought out in court; the claim is they identified Mata Hari as the mysterious Agent “H 21.” The prosecution called five witnesses to the stand; all simply confirmed the opening statement and gave no proof of any evidence. Under the military court rules, Mata Hari’s attorney, Clunet, could not cross-examine the prosecution’s witnesses. And he was not allowed to directly question his own witnesses when it was his turn to present his case on Mata Hari’s behalf.

An article in the *Washington Post* by Racheal Siegel states that it is no shock that this court found her guilty, because of her past choices. The death sentence was delivered. Recently in 2017, on the hundredth anniversary of her death, the sealed court files in France were opened, confirming the mishandling of her case. After her prosecution, Mata Hari returned to her isolation cell to await her execution. She was not given her death date; in a twist of good intentions the French justice system felt it was more humane *not* to advise an awaiting execution inmate of an execution date for fear of causing more anxiety, and violence in the prisoner. Mata Hari spent her last months in prison hoping for a reprieve.

According to the article “The truth and Lies of Mata Hari”, “In the early morning hours of October 15, 1917, the guards entered the cell of Hari and roused her. She was told her petition

for clemency had been denied, and “the time for expiation has come”. Mata Hari screamed in disbelief, and distress, “It's not possible! It's not possible!” Two nuns who had come to know and care about Mata Hari then tried to comfort to her. Mata Hari composed herself and told one of them, “Don't be afraid, Sister. I shall know how to die.” She refused the customary blindfold of the French. Twelve rifles pointed at her, she blew a kiss, the order to fire was given, shots rang out, and Mata Hari was dead. One of the bullets hit her in the heart and death was instant.

Even long after her death, many people are keenly interested in knowing about Mata Hari's life and her execution; there are still many mysteries and speculations involving her job as a spy. One wonders why none of her confidants came to her aide. *NYT*, did an article on The local dance company in the Norway who did a performance on her, states that when Mata Hari was discovered, her many lovers were shocked to hear. But none came to the rescue of the damsel in distress. They were all on separate sides now. According to Ted Brandsen, the choreographer and the director of the Dutch National Ballet, in Norway states: “It has to do with the fact that she's a Dutch woman who has fallen on bad times and found herself involved in a lot of wealthy nobles and aristocrats,” he continued, “who during wartime are now allocated to their relevant armies” and did not come to her defense when she was accused of spying, for Germany” (Siegel, NYtimes)

A number of films have been made on Mata Hari's life, and number of books have been written and many songs have also been composed in her name.

Another article in the *New York times* states ““She was, I think, the first really good marketeer,” Mr. Ted Brandsen, the managing director of the Dutch National Ballet stated. “What fascinated me is the story of a woman with an incredible lust for life and a powerful instinct to

survive, and to reinvent herself and to transform herself. She had a lot of horrible things happen to her and she managed to somehow give a spin to it and find her way out.”

People are still curious about Mata Hari today. Some examples are, many people in Europe and America thought of Mata Hari as a greedy villain. People were disgusted by the fact that she was a double agent. Some didn't like the way she stepped out as an independent woman, and created a new lifestyle for herself. Others felt she had no morals. These people felt that Mata Hari deserved the ending she received. Mata Hari put to many innocent lives at risk for her personal gain.

But some people thought of her as a strong, self-reliant woman who made a life for herself and the people she held close to her heart. When her life seemed to be falling apart she found ways to rebuild and construct it with ingenuity and tenacity. People admired her determination, and her independence, in a time where woman didn't have very important roles. Even to the end she was unwilling to be dominated by others, and people continue to find her amazingly brave. Therefore, a century later we are still drawn to the mystique of Mata Hari.

(Samuel, 91)

Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources

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www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/10/15/i-am-ready-mata-hari-faced-a-firing-squad-for-spying-and-refused-a-blindfold/?utm_term=.c9fbb0b84375.

“Le Pettit Parisian” [“The Small Parisian”]. *Le Petite Parisian* [Paris]. *Le Petite Parisian*,
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Mata Hari’s Letters- Georgetown University.

www.library.georgetown.edu/special-collections/manuscripts/letters-mata-hari. This website holds all of Mata Hari’s letters, and there English Transcripts.

Mata Hari, The Spy. earthandjade.com/2017/03/13/mata-hari-the-spy/. This is a primary, just because it has many primary pictures on the website, and it was very helpful for finding pictures on Mata Hari. It also explained much about her life, but in shorter sentences than usual which was helpful, since I am used to big long paragraphs on certain things.

Matano, Lisette, editor. “Letters from Mata Hari.” *Letters from Mata Hari*,

www.library.georgetown.edu/special-collections/manuscripts/letters-mata-hari. This is

definitely primary source stuff. I really needed it too. These letters are mainly distress calls to any one who will listen (also to her many lovers to give money) but not to the people she was working for, I mean people because she was working for many, and those people happened to be warring against each other.

Melton, H. Keith. *Ultimate spy*. This book, was very helpful in explaining what Mata Hari did to double cross the Germans, and why she needed the money.

Rare pictures of exotic dancer and "spy" Mata Hari who was executed by French firing squad.

www.mirror.co.uk/news/real-life-stories/gallery/rare-pictures-exotic-dancer-spy-1135615

This is a primary source site. It has many pictures that capture Mata Hari in her scandalous wear.

Stewart, James. *Spies and traitors*. This book was very helpful in explaining to me, how Mata Hari double-crossed the Germans. It explained how the need for money had "made her overstep her boundaries" as she had never had a spying gig before, more or less two.

Secondary Sources

Biography- Childhood, Life achievements.

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Paragraph 1. This website gave me some great information on Mata Hari's early life.

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www.thetimes.co.uk/article/how-mi5-exposed-mata-hari-betrayal-b5nsj7r2z. This

website was definitely helpful when I didn't really understand the plot line of her betrayal to the Germans. I thought that people had set Mata Hari up to make it look like she had double-crossed the Germans to work for the French. But it turns out that it wasn't a set

up. She had actually betrayed the Germans to work for the French. Mata Hari was actually a spy for them,, and she was spying on them for the Germans.

Crazy about Mata Hari.

www.friesmuseum.nl/en/collection/blog-mata-hari/crazy-about-mata-hari/. This museum in Europe is a spy museum, and one of the main exhibits is Mata Hari. They have many items that make up her life, and it is a really nice place. The museum have many items that Mata Hari had and used.

Dacner, Spy- Biography. www.biography.com/people/mata-hari-9402348. I used this website in Paragraph 2.

Female Spies in World War I and World War II.

www.thoughtco.com/female-spies-of-the-world-wars-3530435. Like the other annotation (below) this website had a short paragraph about Mata Hari, and it explained all you need to know in short detail.

5 historical figures who's heads have been stolen.

strangerremains.com/2015/07/23/the-heads-of-these-5-people-were-stolen-from-their-graves/. I had no idea. When no one claimed Mata Hari's corpse it was donated to the Museum of Anatomy in Paris. Her body was dissected and her head removed and preserved in wax. Mata Hari's head became part of the museum's display of infamous criminals that were executed in the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. When the French Minister of Education threatened to close the museum in 2000, the museum director decided to give the minister an inventory of the museum's collections. However, when he reviewed the list he found that Mata Hari's head was missing.

Officials at the Museum of Anatomy don't know when the head was taken or by who

Hari: Truth and lies. www.infobarrel.com/Mata_Hari_Truth__Lies. This was a very interesting, helpful website. It helped me understand multiple things about the smaller things that went on in Mata Hari's life.

The History behind Mata Hari.

www.nationalgeographic.com/archaeology-and-history/magazine/2017/11-12/mata-hari-history-killing/. This website explained lots about Mata Hari's life before espionage, and her sad family life, and "teaching."

This was a very helpful website, so I could learn more about her background, before her life of espionage. It gave me more insight of her family life.

Hunter, Ryan Ann. *In disguise*. Like the book *Dark Game*, (below) this book was not super helpful but it could be used to find background details, and background info on people that she corresponded with. It might be helpful, but I don't think so.

Janeczko, Paul B. *The dark game- True spy stories*. This book, was helpful, but not really necessary, because I really do understand Mata Hari's story and plot, so this book's story really did not help me find any other items that would be good to use in some of my research. But if I need to go back to look for small details, then I will.

Maas, Nate. "Nates nonsense." *Nates nonsense*, www.natemaas.com/2011/05/mata-hari.html.

This was very helpful for me. It answered one of the questions that I needed to answer further, that not very many people that made the websites knew.

What was the cause of Mata Hari's young son's death?

It turns out that Mata Hari's son died from being poisoned by the nanny, who was being paid by one of Mata

hari's old lovers, to kill, because he was mad that she had a baby with the General Macleod.

Mata Hari. kidskonnnect.com/people/mata-hari/. This is definitely a very understandable website if you do not understand Mata Bari's case. I learned much about the plot of her story on this website. It was very helpful, and I know it will be necessary to come back too.

Mata Hari. www.mata-hari.com/matahari.html. This was definitely one of the more helpful websites, that Ive seen, and used. It. has lots of info that not many people would know about Mat Hari's life. It also gave me MANY primary source pictures of Mata Hari.

Mata Hari- Biography. www.biography.com/people/mata-hari-9402348. This is the biography of Mata Hari's life, her family life, married life, loss, dance career, espionage, and execution.

Mata Hari Biography. www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/mata-hari-4002.php. This website was very helpful in helping me learn, and distinguish Mata Hari's early life.

Mata Hari 1876-1917. www.emersonkent.com/history_notes/mata_hari.htm. This website explained some of the smaller things to me. Did you know that MATAHARI means sun on Indonesian.

Her real name Margaretha Geertruida (Griet) Zelle, the one and only MATA HARI.

Mata Hari was from a town called Leeuwarden, in the Netherlands. Her family was middle class. Her mother was **Antje van der Meulen** and of Javanese descent. Margaretha was their only daughter but there was at least one other sibling.

This Website also has MANY primary source pictures.

Mata Hari executed. www.history.com/this-day-in-history/mata-hari-executed. This website explains everything you need to know about how Mata Hari's execution. In raw detail, it explains how she waved to her executioners, and was shot right in the heart. It explains how she fell, still staring in to the eyes of the French, and how SHE looked betrayed. It explained how she feel, how she silently, quietly, seemed to collapse, still staring into the eyes of the French executors. It also explains how the executioners were so disgusted they appointed one of the officials to pull out his pistol and shoot her in the head to make sure she was officially dead.

Mata Hari, Primary Source Pictures.

docs.google.com/presentation/d/1F-buYNN49IT3xwSNCpyJ04PFioRy5g7jLmBml5EQ4ow/edit#slide=id.g2d1157c61f_0_26. This is not a website, it is just a google slide that I made for all the primary pictures that I was collecting. It has all the primary pictures that I have collected over my studies.

Mata Hari's True Story Remains a Mystery 100 Years After Her Death.

time.com/4977634/mata-hari-true-history/. This website, explained to me Mata Hari's legacy, and what she would be remembered for. It explained however dubious her real-life espionage career was, her legacy became that of an enthusiastic female spy, and her name evoked mystery, seduction and duplicity.

Mata Hari: The Controversial Life and Legacy of World War I's Most Famous Spy.

www.goodreads.com/book/show/32508763-mata-hari. this website explained Mata Hari's life in a few paragraphs. this website explains the book that the article talks about.

What is interesting about the book, is that explains a lot about how the French closed the case of Mata Hari up very fast and locked it away until everyone from that time period was dead. “The French Army itself also contributed strongly to the legend of Mata Hari. To protect state secrets, and perhaps to conceal their own judicial wrongdoing, the French military court sealed all of the trial records for 100 years – until late 2017, when all involved would assuredly be dead. A journalist, Alain Presles, and an author, Sam Waagenaar, both claimed to have read and even copied the secret file, but the veracity of their claim remains unknown until the files are opened to the public and whatever portion of the truth they contain is made known to pierce the swirling mist of rumor and deception surrounding the death of Mata Hari.” <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/32508763-mata-hari>

Mata Hari: The Dancing Spy.

warfarehistorynetwork.com/daily/military-history/mata-hari-the-dancing-spy/. This was definitely the best website that I’ve looked at yet! It had so much info on Mata Hari, and it explains her death, in so much detail! I have not found a website like that yet.

Mata Hari- the exotic dancer, courtesan, promiscuous & notorious spy during WWI.

www.thevintagenews.com/2016/07/07/mata-hari-the-exotic-dancer-courtesan-promiscuous-flirtatious-notorious-wwi-spy-2/. This website helped me to find out how Mata Hari’s arrest played out.

Olga. “Mata Hari and her Russian Love.” *Beautifulrus*,

beautifulrus.com/mata-hari-and-her-russian-love/. This website, I used when I needed to explain Mata Hari’s lover, Vadim.

Shipman, Pat. *Femme Fatale*. This book, was helpful for me to figure out some of the more complicated items on my bucket list.

'I am ready': Mata Hari faced a firing squad for spying — and refused a blindfold.

www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/10/15/i-am-ready-mata-hari-faced-a-firing-squad-for-spying-and-refused-a-blindfold/?utm_term=.6466c9b86beb. This website was the website that told me how Mata Hari was “framed.” Or so it thought.

Siegal, Nina. “The mysterious Mata Hari, in dance.” *The New York Times*,

www.nytimes.com/2016/02/24/arts/international/the-mysterious-mata-hari-in-dance.html.

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Vaagenar, Sam. “Mata Hari.” *ELECTRONIC LIBRARY LIBOK.NET*,

www.libok.net/writer/6187/kniga/18905/vaagenaar_sem/mata_hari/read/15. This site was in Russian until I translated it.

Wheelwright, Julie. “Did they get Mata Hari wrong?” *The Guardian*,

www.theguardian.com/world/2001/oct/16/humanities.highereducation. This website questions if Mata Hari, was actually a bad person/exotic dancer/spy, it was not entirely important.

