

Margaretha Zelle

Mata Hari













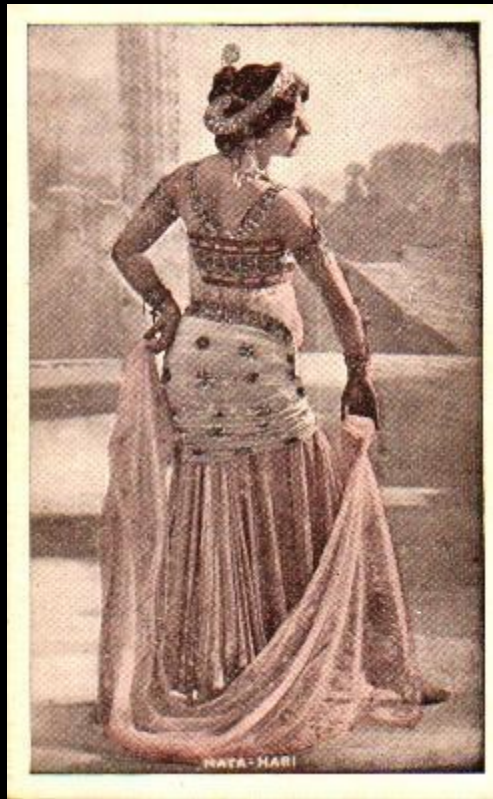












Code: H-21. Executed by firing squad on 15 October 1917, at the age of 41

Mata Hari was the stage name Dutch-born Margaretha Zelle took when she became one of Paris' most popular exotic dancers on the eve of World War I. Although details of her past are sketchy, it is believed that she was born in the Netherlands in 1876 and married a Dutch Army officer 21 years her senior when she was 18. She quickly bore him two children and followed him when he was assigned to Java in 1897. The marriage proved rocky. The couple returned to the Netherlands in 1902 with their daughter (their other child, a son, had died mysteriously in Java). Margaretha's husband obtained a divorce and retained custody of his daughter.

Margaretha then made her way to Paris where she reinvented herself as an Indian temple dancer thoroughly trained in the erotic dances of the East. She took on the name Mata Hari and was soon luring audiences in the thousands as she performed in Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Madrid and other European capitals. She also attracted a number of highly-placed, aristocratic lovers

willing to reward her handsomely for the pleasure of her company.

Mata Hari was arrested on 13 February 1917, at the Elysée Palace Hotel, on the Champs Elysée, Paris. She was placed on trial on 24 July, accused of spying for the Germans, and consequently causing the deaths of at least 50,000 soldiers. Although the French and British intelligence suspected her of spying for Germany, neither could produce definite evidence against her. Supposedly secret ink was found in her room, which was incriminating evidence during that period. She was executed by firing squad on 15 October 1917, at the age of 41.

Hitherto, certain German documents unsealed in the 1970s supposedly prove that Mata Hari was a German agent; During autumn 1915, she did enter German service, and on orders of section III B-Chief Walter Nicolai, was instructed about her 'duties' by a Major Roepell. Her reports were to be sent to the Kriegsnachrichtenstelle West, in Düsseldorf and Agent mission in the German embassy in Madrid, under Major Arnold Kalle, (with her direct handler being Captain Hoffmann, who also gave her the code name; H-21).

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