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... Charles Godfrey Leland, Aradia: Gospel of the Witches, (New York

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Aradia comes from the name [Herodias](#), a witch goddess that was worshipped since the Middle Age.

<http://encyclopedia.kids.net.au/page/ar/Aradia>

The meaning of Herodias is 'song of the hero'.

<http://www.babynamespedia.com/meaning/Herodias>

Aradia

Aradia is one of the principal figures in the American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland's 1899 work *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, which he believed to be a genuine religious text used by a group of pagan witches in Tuscany, a claim that has subsequently been disputed by other folklorists and historians.^[1] In Leland's *Gospel*, Aradia is portrayed as a Messiah who was sent to Earth in order to teach the oppressed peasants how to perform witchcraft to use against the Roman Catholic Church and the upper classes.

The folklorist Sabina Magliocco has theorised that prior to being used in Leland's *Gospel*, Aradia was originally a supernatural figure in Italian folklore, who was later merged with other folkloric figures such as the *sa Rejusta* of Sardinia.^[2]

Since the publication of Leland's *Gospel*, Aradia has become "arguably one of the central figures of the modern pagan witchcraft revival" and as such has featured in various forms of Neopaganism, including Wicca and Stregheria, as an actual deity.^[3] Raven Grimassi, founder of "Stregheria", claims that Aradia was a historical figure named *Aradia di Toscano*, who led a group of "Diana-worshipping witches" in 14th-century Tuscany.^[4]

1 Italian folklore

The Italian form of the name *Herodias* is *Erodiade*. It appears that Herodias, the wife of Herod Antipas, in Christian mythology of the early medieval period, came to be seen as a spirit condemned to wander the sky forever due to her part in the death of John the Baptist, permitted only to rest in treetops between midnight and dawn.

By the High Middle Ages, this figure seems to have become attached to the train of nymphs of Diana, now also seen as a host of spirits flying through the night across the Italian countryside. Other names attached to the night flight of Herodias included Minerva and Noctiluca.^[5]

The canon *Episcopi* is a passage from the work *De ecclesiasticis disciplinis* by Regino of Prüm (written ca. 906). It became notable as a paragraph of canon law dealing with witchcraft by the 12th century. Regino reports that there were groups of women who believed that they could go on night journeys where they would fly across the sky to meet Diana and her train. The name of Herodias is not present in the text as attributed to Regino, but in the version by Burchard of Worms, written ca. 1012, the reference to Diana (*cum Diana paganorum dea*) was augmented by

"or with Herodias" (*vel cum Herodiade*).^[6]

Magliocco (2002) suggests that the legends surrounding this figure, known as Aradia, Arada or Araja, spread throughout various areas of Italy, and she traced records that showed that two beings known as *s'Araja dimoniu* (Araja the demon) and *s'Araja justa* (Araja the just) were found in Sardinia. Magliocco believed that the latter of these two figures, *s'Araja justa*, was the antecedent of a supernatural witch-like figure known as *sa Rejusta* in Sardinian folklore.^[7]

The Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade also noted that Arada, along with Irodiada, was a name used for a Romanian folkloric Queen of the Fairies (*Doamna Zînelor*), whom he believed was a "metamorphosis of Diana". She was viewed as the patroness of a secretive group of dancers known as the *calusari* who operated up until at least the 19th century.^[8]

Judika Illes, in her *Encyclopedia of Spirits*, noted: "Although venerated elsewhere in Europe, Herodias was especially beloved in Italy. She and Diana are the goddesses most frequently mentioned in witch-trial transcripts and were apparently worshipped together".^[9]

2 Leland's Aradia

Main articles: *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches* and *Witch-cult hypothesis*

In 1899, the American folklorist Charles Godfrey Leland published *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*, a book which he claimed was the religious text belonging to a group of Tuscan witches who venerated Diana as the Queen of the Witches. He also claimed that he had been given the book by a Tuscan woman named Maddalena, although historians such as Ronald Hutton have disputed the truth of these such claims.

Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches began with the tale of Aradia's birth to Diana and Lucifer, who is described as "the god of the Sun and of the Moon, the god of Light (Splendour), who was so proud of his beauty, and who for his pride was driven from Paradise". Diana instructed Aradia to "*go to earth below / To be a teacher unto women and men / Who fain would study witchcraft*". When Aradia descended, she became the first of all witches, and promised her students that "*ye shall all be freed from slavery, / And so ye shall be free in everything*".^[10]

Aradia was described as having continuing power to affect the world after she returned to the sphere of Diana. For example, in “A Spell to Win Love”, the “Invocation to Diana” asked Diana to send her daughter Aradia to perform the magic.^[11] Leland’s *Aradia* had a chapter containing folklore about the night assembly or banquet titled, “The Sabbat: Tregunda or Witch Meeting”, which involved Diana.^[12] Leland commented in the Appendix, “I also believe that in this Gospel of the Witches we have a trustworthy outline at least of the doctrine and rites observed at these meetings [the witches’ Sabbat]. They adored forbidden deities and practised forbidden deeds, inspired as much by rebellion against Society as by their own passions.”^[13]

Leland speculated that this folklore ultimately had roots in ancient Etruscan mythology.

Leland also equated Aradia with Herodias, explaining his speculation that Herodias was actually Lilith: “*This was not... derived from the Herodias of the New Testament, but from an earlier replica of Lilith, bearing the same name... So far back as the sixth century the worship of Herodias and Diana by witches was condemned by a Church Council at Ancyra*”.^[14] Pipernus and other writers have noted the evident identification of Herodias with Lilith.^[13] Historian Ronald Hutton suggested in *Triumph of the Moon* that this identification with Herodias was inspired by the work of Jules Michelet in *Satanism and Witchcraft*.^[15] Anthropologist and field folklorist Sabina Magliocco, on the other hand, is willing to consider a connection between the Italian Erodiade (Herodias), the Cult of Herodias, the night assembly, and Aradia.^[16]

3 Neopaganism

Aradia has become an important figure in Wicca as well as some other forms of Neo-Paganism. Some Wiccan traditions use the name “Aradia” as one of the names of the Great Goddess, Moon Goddess or “Queen of the Witches”.^[17]

Portions of Leland’s text influenced the Gardnerian *Book of Shadows*, especially the Charge of the Goddess.^[18] Alex Sanders invoked Aradia as a Moon Goddess in the 1960s. Janet and Stewart Farrar used the name in their *Eight Sabbats for Witches* and *The Witches’ Way*.^[19] Aradia was invoked in spellcraft in Z. Budapest’s *The Holy Book of Women’s Mysteries*.^[20] An entire website, the *Goddess Aradia and Related Subjects*,^[21] is devoted to Aradia as a Wiccan goddess and a powerful spirit in Italian folklore.

Aradia is a central figure in Stregheria, an “ethnic Italian” form of Wicca introduced by Raven Grimassi in the 1980s. Grimassi claims that there was a historical figure called “Aradia di Toscano”, whom he portrays as the founder of a revivalist religion of Italian witchcraft in the 14th century. Grimassi claims that Leland’s *Aradia, or*

the Gospel of the Witches is a “distorted Christianized version” of the story of Aradia.^[22]

Neo-Pagan narratives of Aradia include Raven Grimassi, *The Book of the Holy Strega* (1981); Aidan Kelly, *The Gospel of Diana* (1993); Myth Woodling, *Secret Story of Aradia*, (2001)^[23]

In 1992, Aidan Kelly, co-founder of the New Reformed Orthodox Order of the Golden Dawn, distributed a document titled *The Gospel of Diana* (a reference to *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*). The text contained a list of mother and daughter priestesses who had taught religious witchcraft through the centuries. Instead of Leland’s goddess Diana and her messianical daughter Aradia, Kelly’s text described mortal human beings. The priestesses’ names alternated between Aradia and Diana. Magliocco describes the character of Aradia in Kelly’s accompanying narrative as “a notably erotic character; according to her teachings, the sexual act becomes not only an expression of the divine life force, but an act of resistance against all forms of oppression and the primary focus of ritual”. Magliocco also notes that the text “has not achieved broad diffusion in contemporary Pagan circles”^[4].

4 Notes

- [1] Hutton 1999. p. 148.
- [2] Magliocco, Sabina (2009). 'Aradia in Sardinia: The Archaeology of a Folk Character' in *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon*. Hidden Publishing. Page 40 to 60.
- [3] Magliocco, Sabina (2009). 'Aradia in Sardinia: The Archaeology of a Folk Character' in *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon*. Hidden Publishing. Page 42.
- [4] Grimassi 1996.
- [5] Rosemary Ellen Guiley, *The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft*, 1989
- [6] Sabina Magliocco (2002). 'Who Was Aradia? The History and Development of a Legend' in *The Pomegranate: The Journal of Pagan Studies*, Issue 18.
- [7] Magliocco, Sabina (2009). 'Aradia in Sardinia: The Archaeology of a Folk Character' in *Ten Years of Triumph of the Moon*. Hidden Publishing. Page 54-55.
- [8] Eliade, Mircea (February 1975). “Some Observations on European Witchcraft” in *History of Religions* Volume 14, Number 3. Page 160-161.
- [9] Iles, Judika. *Encyclopedia of Spirits: The Ultimate Guide to the Magic of Fairies, Genies, Demons, Ghosts, Gods & Goddesses* (2009). ISBN 978-0-06-135024-5
- [10] Leland, Charles Godfrey (1899). *Aradia, or the Gospel of the Witches*. David Nutt. ISBN 1-56414-679-0. Chapter I
- [11] Leland, Chapter II

- [12] Leland, Chapter VII
- [13] Leland, Appendix
- [14] Leland is referring to the Canon Episcopi.
- [15] Hutton, Ronald (2000). *Triumph of the Moon*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-500-27242-5.
- [16] Magliocco, Sabina (2002). "Who Was Aradia? The History and Development of a Legend", *The Pomegranate*, volume 18, p. 5–22.
- [17] Farrar, Janet and Stewart (1983). *Eight Sabbats for Witches*. Robert Hale. ISBN 0-919345-26-3.
- [18] Valiente, Doreen. *The Rebirth of Witchcraft* (1989).
- [19] Farrar, Janet and Stewart. *Eight Sabbats for Witches* (1981). ISBN 0-919345-26-3. *The Witches Way* (1984). ISBN 978-0-7090-1293-1
- [20] Budapest, Z. *The Holy Book of Women's Mysteris: Complete in One Volume* (1980, 1989), First Wingbo edition 1989, pp. 23, 27, 44. ISBN 978-0-914728-67-2.
- [21] Goddess Aradia and Related Subjects. Retrieved 2009-12-27
- [22] "Stregheria.com FAQ". Retrieved October 13, 2005.
- [23] Woodling, Myth (2001), *Secret Story of Aradia*, from www.AradiaGoddess.com
- "Understanding Leland's Aradia". Myth Woodling (2007), www.AradiaGoddess.com. This article discusses the theory about the derivation of Aradia from "Herodiade" or "Erodiade."
 - "Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches" The complete text of "Aradia" by Charles Leland.

5 References

- Grimassi, Raven (1996). *Ways of the Strega: Italian Witchcraft, Its Lore, Magick and Spells*. Llewellyn. ISBN 1-56718-253-4.
- Hutton, Ronald (1999). *The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-820744-1.
- Magliocco, Sabina (2009). "Aradia in Sardinia: The Archaeology of a Folk Character". Hidden Publishing. ISBN 0-9555237-5-3.

6 External links

- "Aradia", Stregheria.com, an article by Raven Grimassi about the legend of Aradia and its evolution.
- The Stregoneria Italiana Project, which contains an academic discussion of the history and controversies associated with Leland and Aradia.
- "Epithets of Aradia", www.AradiaGoddess.com (2005), contains epithets used for Aradia the Goddess in Wicca.

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Herodias

Not to be confused with **Herodas**.

For the opera by Jules Massenet, see **Hérodiade**. For the asteroid, see **546 Herodias**.

Herodias (Greek: Ἡρωδιάς, *Hērōdiás*; c. 15 BCE —



Herodias, by *Paul Delaroche*.

after 39 CE) was a princess of the Herodian Dynasty of Judaea during the time of the Roman Empire.^{[1][2]}

1 Family relationships

- She was the daughter of **Aristobulus IV** and his wife **Berenice**.
- Her father was the son of **Herod the Great** and his second wife, **Mariamne I**.
- Her mother **Berenice** was the daughter of Herod's sister **Salome I**, and of **Costabarus**, governor of **Idumea**.
- Full sister to **Herod V** (king of **Chalkis**), **Herod Agrippa** (king of **Judea**), **Aristobulus V**, and **Mariamne III** (wife of **Crown Prince Antipater** and,

after his execution by **Herod the Great**, she was possibly the first wife of **Herod Archelaus**, principal heir of **Herod the Great** and ethnarch of **Judea**).

- Daughter-in-law of **Herod the Great**, twice: once by marriage to his son, **Herod II**, and again by marriage to another son, **Herod Antipas**.

2 Marriages

2.1 Herod II

Herod II (born - ca. 27 BCE; died - 33 CE)^[3] was the son of **Herod the Great** and his third wife **Mariamne II**, who was the daughter of **Simon Boethus the High Priest** (**Mark 6:17**). For a brief period he was his father's heir. Some writers call him **Herod Philip I** (*not to be confused with Philip the Tetrarch, whom some writers call Herod Philip II*).

Herod was the first husband of **Herodias**, and because the **Gospel of Mark** states that **Herodias** was married to **Philip**, some scholars have argued that his name was actually **Herod Philip**. Many scholars dispute this, however, and believe the **Gospel** writer was in error, a suggestion supported by the fact that the later **Gospel of Luke** drops the name **Philip**.^{[4][5]} Because he was the grandson of the high priest **Simon Boethus** he is sometimes described as **Herod Boethus**, but there is no evidence he was actually called this.^[6]

Herod the Great's execution of his **Hasmonean** sons, **Alexander** and **Aristobulus IV** in 7 BCE, left the latter's daughter **Herodias** an orphaned minor. **Herod** engaged her to **Herod II**, her half-uncle, and her connection to the **Hasmonean** bloodline supported her new husband's right to succeed his father.

This marriage led to opposition from **Antipater III**, **Herod the Great's** eldest son, and so **Herod** demoted **Herod II** to second in line to the succession. **Antipater's** execution in 4 BCE for plotting to poison his father seemed to leave **Herod II**, now **Herod I's** eldest surviving son, as first in line, but his mother's knowledge of the poison plot, and failure to stop it, led to his being dropped from this position in **Herod I's** will just days before he died.

Herodias later divorced **Herod II**; however, it is unclear when they were divorced. According to **Josephus**:

Herodias took upon her to confound the

laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod Antipas^[7]

According to biblical scholars, the *Gospel of Matthew*^[8] and the *Gospel of Luke*,^[9] indicate that it was this proposed marriage which John the Baptist publicly criticized. The historian Josephus does not say this but these events (the divorce, the marriage, execution, and the resulting war with Aretas IV Philopateris, King of the Nabataeans^[10]) chronologically give weight to this theory, suggesting the events are linked.

2.1.1 Salome

Herod II and Herodias had a daughter named Salome, although some scholars indicate that some Greek texts show that Salome may have also been called Herodias like her mother, but was referred to as Salome in order to avoid confusion.^[11] As Josephus reports in *Jewish Antiquities* (Book XVIII, Chapter 5, 4):

Herodias, [...], was married to Herod, the son of Herod the Great by Mariamne II, the daughter of Simon the High Priest. [Herod II and Herodias] had a daughter, Salome...^[7]

Some ancient Greek versions of Mark read “Herod’s daughter Herodias” (rather than “daughter of the said Herodias”).^[11] To scholars using these ancient texts, both mother and daughter had the same name. However, the Latin Vulgate Bible translates the passage as it is above, and western Church Fathers therefore tended to refer to Salome as “Herodias’s daughter” or just “the girl.”

Christian traditions depict her as an icon of dangerous female seductiveness, for instance depicting as erotic her dance mentioned in the New Testament (in some later transformations further iconised to the *dance of the seven veils*), or concentrate on her lighthearted and cold foolishness that, according to the gospels, led to John the Baptist’s death. (*This Salome is not to be confused with Salome the disciple, who was a witness to the Crucifixion of Jesus in Mark 15:40.*)

2.2 Herod Antipas

Herod Antipas (born before 20 BCE; died after 39 CE) was also the son of Herod the Great by his fourth wife, Malthace, and half-brother of Herod II. He was a ruler of Galilee and Perea, who bore the title of tetrarch (“ruler of a quarter”). He is best known today for accounts in the New Testament of his role in events that led to the executions of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.

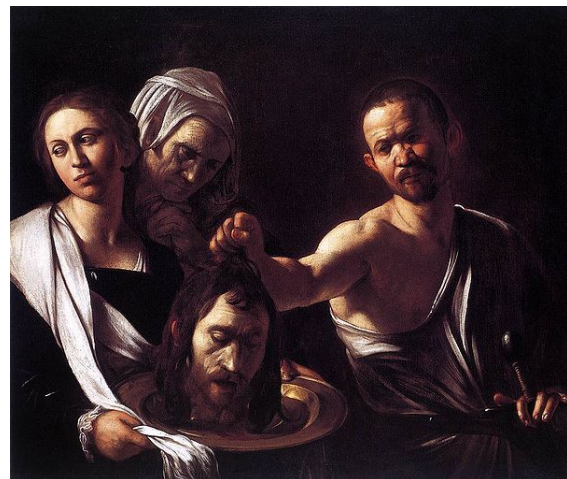
Antipas divorced his first wife Phasaëlis, the daughter of King Aretas IV of Nabatea, in favor of Herodias. According to the New Testament Gospels, it was John the

Baptist’s condemnation of this arrangement that led Antipas to have him arrested; John was subsequently put to death. Besides provoking his conflict with the Baptist, the tetrarch’s divorce added a personal grievance to previous disputes with Aretas over territory on the border of Perea and Nabatea. The result was a war that proved disastrous for Antipas; a Roman counter-offensive was ordered by Tiberius, but abandoned upon that emperor’s death in 37 CE. In 39 CE Antipas was accused by his nephew Agrippa I of conspiracy against the new Roman emperor Caligula, who sent him into exile in Gaul. Accompanied there by Herodias, he died at an unknown date.

The *Gospel of Luke* states that when Jesus was brought before Pontius Pilate for trial, Pilate handed him over to Antipas, in whose territory Jesus had been active. However, Antipas sent him back to Pilate.

It is uncertain if Herodias had any children by her second husband, Herod Antipas.

3 In the Gospels



Caravaggio's Salome with the Head of John the Baptist.

In the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Herodias plays a major role in John the Baptist’s execution, using her daughter’s dance before Antipas and his party guests to ask for the head of the Baptist as a reward. Antipas did not want to put John the Baptist to death, for Antipas liked to listen to John the Baptist preach (Mark 6:20). Furthermore, Antipas may have feared that if John the Baptist were to be put to death, his followers would riot.

3.1 Modern scholarship

At least one biblical scholar has doubted that the Gospels give historically accurate accounts of John the Baptist’s execution.^[12] According to the ancient historian Josephus, John the Baptist was put to death by Antipas for

political reasons, for Antipas feared the prophet's seditious influence.^[13] Some exegetes believe that Antipas' and Herodias' struggle with John the Baptist as told in the Gospels was some kind of a remembrance of the political and religious fight opposing the Israelite monarchs Ahab and Jezebel to the prophet Elijah.^[14]

4 In medieval literature

In medieval Europe a widespread belief held Herodias to be the supernatural leader of a supposed cult of witches, synonymous with Diana, Holda and Abundia.^[15] See Cult of Herodias.

5 Herodias in fiction

- *Hérodiade*, opera by Jules Massenet.
- *Herodias*, story by Gustave Flaubert, one of the *Three Tales (Trois contes)*, published in 1877.
- *Salomé*, play by Oscar Wilde, French (1894), translated into English by Lord Alfred Douglas, 1895.
- *Salome*, opera by Richard Strauss, based on a German translation (by Hedwig Lachmann, grandmother of Mike Nichols) of the play by Oscar Wilde.
- *Salomé*, an opera by French composer Antoine Marriotte, set to a French libretto based on Oscar Wilde's play.
- *Salome*, song by Irish rock band U2.
- In *Parsifal*, the opera by Richard Wagner, the lead female character of Kundry is revealed to be Herodias, in the second act. In the opera she was said to have laughed at Christ when she saw him being crucified and was cursed with immortality. She eventually finds redemption through the actions of Parsifal.
- Herodias is the name of an outcast devil in the *Dungeons & Dragons* roleplaying game.

6 External links

- Herodias, A Dramatic Poem by Joseph Converse Heywood.
- Herodias (third of the Three Tales), by Gustave Flaubert (English).

7 Further reading

- Gillman, Florence Morgan. *Herodias: At Home in the Fox's Den*. Interfaces. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2003.
- Meier, John P. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Volume Two: *Mentor, Message and Miracles*. Anchor Bible Reference Library, New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Theissen, Gerd. *The Shadow of the Galilean: The Quest of the Historical Jesus in Narrative Form*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.

8 References

- [1] Herodian Dynasty
- [2] <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0239%3Abook%3D16%3Achapter%3D2%3Asection%3D34>
- [3] Kokkinos, The Herodian Dynasty, p. 237
- [4] Harold Hoehner, *Herod Antipas: A Contemporary of Jesus Christ* (Zondervan, 1983), page 132 - 134.
- [5] see also, for example, E. Mary Smallwood, "Behind the New Testament", *Greece & Rome*, Second Series, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Apr., 1970), pp. 81-99
- [6] Florence Morgan Gillman, *Herodias: at home in that fox's den* (Liturgical Press, 2003) page 16.
- [7] W. Whiston translation at Project Gutenberg
- [8] Matthew 14:3-12
- [9] Luke 3:18-20
- [10] (Josephus, Antiquities 18:116-119)
- [11] Taylor, V. (1966). *The gospel according to St Mark*, 2nd Edition. London: Macmillan (pp310ff.)
- [12] Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, Volume Two: *Mentor, Message and Miracles*. Anchor Bible Reference Library, New York: Doubleday, 1994, pp. 171-176.
- [13] Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, Book XVIII, Chapter 5
- [14] Florence Morgan Gillman, *Herodias: At Home In That Fox's Den*, page 84 (Liturgical Press, 2003). ISBN 0-8146-5108-9
- [15] Ginzburg, Carlo (1990). *Ecstasies: Deciphering the witches' sabbath*. London: Hutchinson Radius. ISBN 0-09-174024-X.

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9.1 Text

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The Invocation to Aradia

Aradia! my Aradia!
Thou who art daughter unto him who was
Most evil of all spirits, who of old

Once reigned in hell when driven away from heaven,
Who by his sister did thy sire become,
But as thy mother did repent her fault,
And wished to mate thee to a spirit who
Should be benevolent,
And not malevolent!

Aradia, Aradia! I implore
Thee by the love which she did bear for thee!
And by the love which I too feel for thee!
I pray thee grant the grace which I require!
And if this grace be granted, may there be
One of three signs distinctly clear to me:
The hiss of a serpent,
The light of a firefly,
The sound of a frog!
But if you do refuse this favor, then
May you in future know no peace nor joy,
And be obliged to seek me from afar,
Until you come to grant me my desire,
In haste, and then thou may'est return again
Unto thy destiny. Therewith Amen!

<http://temple.covenofmidnight.com/Books/BoL/Goddesses%20and%20Gods.pdf>