

A close-up photograph of a spider on a green stem. A large, clear dew drop is on the stem, reflecting light. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

TALES OF SARDINIA

# THE ARGIA'S DANCE SU BALLU 'E S'ARGIA

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Celebration and sickness,  
laughter and tears  
mix in the dance



*After a long night in an offal forest  
will the dawn become flesh? "*

It's summer, the harvest season, the time of year when the terrible Argia appears. There's no set time: night, dawn, noon, it doesn't matter. She is there, her round abdomen, covered with red spots, creeps into the hollows of the ground, between the stones and the grass, ready to strike. For the Sardinians she is the only who survived to God's extermination of the poisonous animals that were on the island before.

In some countries she's often mistake for an ant whose colors, red blood and black as pride, invite to danger, even if its bite is harmless. Harmless is an adjective so far from the truth for our Argia, her displayed warning well suited the danger.

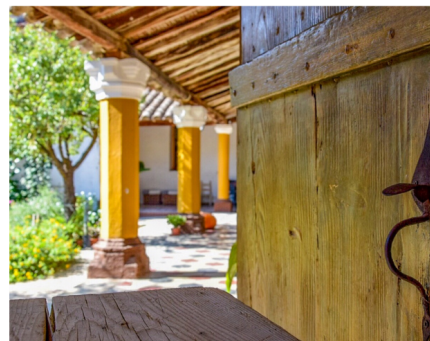
Her bite doesn't cause instant pain, but its effects can be seen few minutes later, sweating, nausea, retching, delirium, fever, headache, severe abdominal cramps and, in the most serious cases, loss of consciousness and sometimes death, if it's not cured by the times and with the methods of the tradition. After her sting, the victim is no more the same person: he suffers a real possession by the Argia. The only chance of being saved is to discover the characteristics of the responsible Argia. The whole village take part in this 'investigation': people play and dance to discover the preferences of the Argia, will it be "piccìna, coubada or fiuda?" which means "young and unmarried, a bride or widow?". Each of these conditions correspond to a different symptomatology. For each suffering there's a specific intervention.



The "Argiato" (the one bites by the Argia) is despotic and demanding, dictates his own rules, everyone knows that whoever possesses him wants to be satisfied. He is placed in the middle of an open space, better if it's used as a yard, to evoke a good omen. Because, according to the tradition, the yard is the place that glorify life, where the products of the ground are worked. He is surrounded by 7 unmarried young women, 7 brides and 7 widows, all summoned into a dance group that turn around him with an alternated rhythm. They rise songs and sounds mixing them to the dance in a curative vortex of meeting, sometimes it's frantic, sometimes it's comforting, and it helps to identify and eliminate the toxic substances and restore the well-being of the "Argiato" .

Those who look for reason in this dance are going to get lost. The mysteries are not hidden in the gestures, but in the invisible that surrounds them. It's like a story. You don't have to believe in it. You can get in there and be guided, it's like music, it's like life. You are moving into the unknown. It can be frightful, of course. You cannot be ready for the unknown, but it's the greatest ally that you could have. It's easier than you think.

The most important processes, movements, mechanisms, are based on the pure simplicity of some basic laws. The best thing to do is to follow the call without creating useless confusion. Imagine a point of view outside the ordinary world, the world we are used to.



If you look from that point of view you will remove the veil to the others' truths and you will bring out what you'll discover to keep inside. Men think they are what they know, but actually they're largely what they don't know about themselves.

You are the path you decide to trave.

Don't be afraid of the dance. Join the story, be driven and create another story.

The people of this ancient land of Sardinia have always had thousand channels to meet the non-ordinary world. The 'ninnie, the brebus', were used to make it more gentle and familiar.

Today we don't have the same curious eyes to fully perceive the colors of this ancient dance that will set a man free from the Argia. Its call and its sequences, mimes, postures, ritual gestures, are dominated by mythical-religious experience from which all the participants used to drew wisely. We have lost that contact, but nothing prevents us from finding others.

The self-protection magic value of this healing ritual is still clear, aimed not to leave the ill alone in a moment of great discomfort. The movements change, the pitch change, but the positive role of the group and the collective need, in the disruptive and liberating force of the dance and the song hasn't changed. This perspective is the one that what moves me the most.





I don't give too much importance to ritual gestures, I overtake the grotesque movements, I look for the encounter with my 'Gnosis' and it talks to me. It tells me that the more someone will feel welcomed and not judged, the more he will be ready to talk about himself. It whispers to me that some tones and some expressions transmit the need to help and support, not to humiliate. It transports me to an unconventional time in which I see worlds that try to touch each other, to match their concept maps.

I see a rhythmic, circular conversation. It will be ever more constructive when the people involved in the dance will open up to each other and they will be ready to temporarily embrace the point of view and the emotion of the others.

A dear friend of mine from the area of Nuoro will tell me laughing: " Musca juches?" that means "are you crazed? Are you out of your mind?", said that maybe is originated by the use that some people made of the 'Amanita Muscaria', a well known hallucinogenic mushroom, that assures epic shamanic journeys.

Well, no. No divination trance, no mushroom surprise.  
Maybe I've been infected by Argia's frenzy...





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A Soul  
that seeks Reflection  
Between the Here and the Now

Roots  
that find Essences  
Among the cunning and false  
Appearances

"That which you believe  
you possess  
are only Transparencies"

Whispers  
of the unconscious Weaver  
of the Ever

SARDINIA'S TALES  
*by Manuela Panna*