



La Madonna delle Milizie o Madonna a Cavallo

Our Lady of the Militia

The Feast usually falls the last Saturday of May – Location: In the city center

The date. The recurrence of the Madonna of the Militia falls on the last Saturday of May. The Feast is registered in the [Intangible Heritage List](#) of the Sicilian Region (R.E.I.).

Scicli and the Intangible Heritage List. They are: *Cavalcade of St. Joseph, Easter Holy Week, Easter Sunday, Our Lady of the Militia, The Immaculate Conception folk songs.*

What is the feast of Our Lady of the Militia. The festival recalls an armed clash between the Normans and Saracens (Arabs) occurred in 1091 and resolved in favor of the first thanks to the appearance of the Virgin Mary on Horseback, who participated in the battle: the *only Madonna warrior of Christianity*. Note that in Sicily the Saracens were currently named "Turks".

Collateral Events. In conjunction with the festival is set up an attractive market of handicrafts. In addition, almost every year there is also the Feast of "Heads of Turks", typical Scicli cake par excellence, with its obvious reference to the battle that inspired the festival. The Head of Turks has shaped turban Arabic, filled with custard or ricotta cheese cake, is consumed at the end of the play. The Head of Turks can be defined as "trophy of defeated", because made by losers (and not by winners). In fact, Arabs introduced confectionery in the territories that fell under their rule and therefore also in Sicily. In any case, is all year round in the best cake's shops.

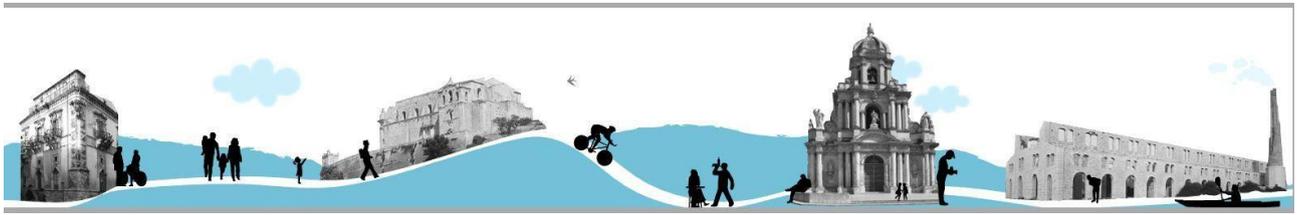
The Feast. In 1736, the Sacred Congregation of Rites decided that the Feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Militia, a moveable feast time, were to be celebrated on Saturday before Passion Sunday. According to a widespread tradition, observed by several authors of historical works and religious, fifteen days before the Passover of 1091 would be held, on the marina of Scicli, a clash between Roger the Norman and the Emir Belcane, miraculously resolved in favor of the Christians for the intervention of the Virgin. While the Great Count Roger de Hauteville and the Norman Captain inspect the fortress of Castle in Scicli, comes the news of the fighting on the coast between local people and Saracens.

A hermit tries in vain to convince the Emir Belcane to avoid bloodshed and King Roger must accept the fight with the words: "You want war? It is war!". The victory is due to the Virgin Mary that descends from the heaven riding a white horse and takes part in the fighting, and therefore a "Madonna di Scicli" is the *only real Lady Warrior of Christianity*. The Normans win the battle and Roger and his Militia pay homage to the Virgin. An Angel in heaven singing the praises of Mary



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and the victory of the Christians.

The places, the actors and scenes. A monumental stage is mounted at Italy Square (*Piazza Italia*), the most spacious of Scicli, surrounded by Baroque buildings and having on the left with the Church of St. William, patron of the city. Beyond the stage, on the hill, the Church of St. Matthew, recently restored, dominates the scene and is a splendidly seventeenth century wing. Although most times were hired famous actors to play the main parts, the issues that are most remembered are those in which participated actors and local characters, much loved by the audience.

There are many scenes that capture the viewer: the peroration of the Hermit, the declaration of war of King Roger, the arrival of the invaders on a large boat (that emerges from the streets behind), the descent from heaven of the Virgin Mary on Horseback, an event which precedes a few minutes the end of the performance. The costumes are from renowned theaters.

The Church of Our Lady of the Militia. To commemorate the victory against the Saracens in 1093 was built a votive church along the road between Scicli and Donnalucata, providing it with a tower in defense of any new incursions. The church was rebuilt and enlarged in 1391 and again in 1721 by the priest Paul Sammito. The main arch of the new church was painted the portrait of Sammito and was a plaque that reads the last words spoken by Our Lady on Horseback rushed to the defense of Scicli: ... En adsum Civitas mea dilecta, protegam te dextera mea ("behold, I am here in my beloved city, I will protect you with my hand"). In the church is preserved the stone statue representing the Madonna and Child in her arms and is shown, on a stone, the paw print of the horse riding which was the Virgin, when he touched the ground.

Free interpretation of the texts reported on websites

Texts and Video

http://www.siciliainfesta.com/feste/festa_della_madonna_delle_milizie_scicli.htm

[See how you do the heads of turkish](#)

website <http://www.comune.scicli.rg.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/3329> (IT)

Please contact the Organizers calling the Municipal Office before planning a trip to Scicli to attend specific events. Venue: Palazzo Spadaro, via F. Mormina Penna - Tel. + 39 0932 839611



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