

PREFACE

Four of the five contributions which are appearing in this collection were presented at the Conference on Agius de Soldanis organised by the Department of Maltese on the 16th of May 2007. The principal aim in organising this event was to urge established scholars to publicise their research on de Soldanis and to encourage others to investigate this figure. In recent years some historians specialising in the eighteenth century have published insightful works on the role played by Maltese *litterati* during this period and they are all in agreement that de Soldanis deserves much more importance than has ever been accorded to him. Although his linguistic input has long been recognised, especially through the effort of the late Joseph Cassar Pullicino, the monumental figure of Mikiel Anton Vassalli has overshadowed that of de Soldanis and we feel that such an unbalanced attitude is neither accurate historically nor does it do justice to the development of the Maltese language. In fact, de Soldanis was responsible for a number of initiatives in support of Maltese. One of his more significant merits was that through his writings a new and fruitful contact was made available to foreign scholars interested in our language. His correspondence with foreign philologists and *litterati* is evidence of the esteem in which he was held. It is our hope that through this edition of the *Journal of Maltese Studies* as well as through other works

scheduled to be published in the near future by students of the Department of Maltese, this esteem will be enhanced in our own times as well.

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