

Book: De Soldanis: an eighteenth century intellectual

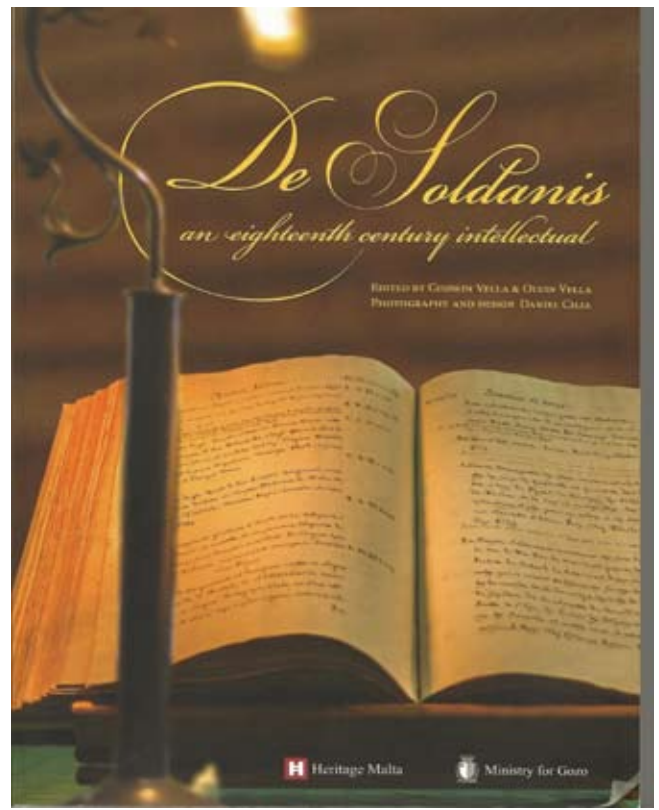
REVIEWED BY GEOFFREY G. ATTARD

Edited by Godwin Vella and Olvin Vella,
Photography by Daniel Cilia,
Malta, Heritage Malta/Ministry for Gozo, 2012,
pp. 144.

A book that did not attract the amount of attention that it truly deserves is the publication entitled *De Soldanis – an eighteenth century intellectual*, joint-publication issued by Heritage Malta and the Ministry for Gozo, edited by Godwin Vella and Olvin Vella with photographs by Daniel Cilia.

The year 2012, saw the celebrations of the three hundredth anniversary of the birth of this great Gozitan scholar whose reputation could not be limited to the shores of the Maltese islands but went beyond into the adjacent European continent. Before the present publication, De Soldanis had already been the subject of various scholarly writings; in 2010 the Department of Maltese within the University of Malta had dedicated its annual issue of the *Journal of Maltese Studies* (no 27) to Agius de Soldanis and the presentable publication was edited by Mr. Olvin Vella. Before that, way back in 1999, the newly-established Fondazzjoni Belt Victoria commemorated its very beginning with the publication of De Soldanis' *Gozo Antico E Profano, Sacro e Moderno*, translated into Maltese by Mons. Ġużeppi Farrugia; the publication was presented in both a one-volume paperback and in two volumes enclosed in a box. Therefore it is certainly not the case of a local patriot forgotten in the mists in a well-planned rehabilitation of the Gozitan polymath.

De Soldanis – An eighteenth century intellectual is the work of various authors or rather of different researchers, all experts in their own respective fields of study. Rosabelle Carabott's 'Timeline' is definitely to be lauded since it provides the reader who may be only slightly interested in the life of De Soldanis with the main activities of his life. Godwin Vella, who like De Soldanis, hails from Gozo, writes about De Soldanis' 'humble roots'. Dr. Arnold Cassola's contribution focuses on the Gozitan identity of the



Gozitan cleric while Dr William Zammit writes about the not-so-positive involvement of De Soldanes with the Order. Other studies included in the volume are by Gozitan archaeologist George Azzopardi, John J. Borg, Liam Gauci, Janica Magro and Biagio Vella. At the end of the book one finds a catalogue of the exhibition which was held on the occasion of the third centenary since his birth.

I believe the Vella, Vella & Cilia publication is to be cherished by both professional and amateur historians and readers of Melitensia, or rather Gaultitana. Running into 144 pages, it is a very attractive publication with hundreds of photographs some of which cover entire pages. It is certainly the main source of literature and information about Ġan Piet Agius De Soldanis. There is no doubt that the book contains first-hand knowledge most of which is original and never published before. Although the book is almost one year old, its contents are ever new, ready to captivate the reader and instil in him the need to know more and more about such an interesting seventeenth-century Gozitan personality who has been rightly called the 'Father of Gozitan historiography'.

Book Series: Maltese for Foreigners

REVIEWED BY ESTHER GALEA

Charles Daniel Saliba,
6 Books plus CD and Syllabi
Malta, BDL Publishing, 2013.

Charles Daniel Saliba has published a Maltese/English book series entitled *Maltese for Foreigners*. This series, which is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), consists of three levels.

- Level A1 (Beginners–Elementary) includes three books: *My First 750 Words in Maltese*, *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context* and *Speaking Maltese*. These three books are perfect for beginners and are suitable for use by individuals, by groups or in a school setting.
- Level A2 (Elementary–Pre-Intermediate) includes the book *Speaking Maltese 2*. Saliba has plans to publish *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 2* to further the lessons taught at this level.
- Level B1 (Intermediate) includes two bilingual readers: *Reality* and *Rocco Learns Karate*. In the future, Saliba will publish *Maltese Grammar Essentials in Context 3* to complete this level.

Saliba has also produced a CD containing the audio files linked to the books so learners can listen to native Maltese speakers reading the text and acting out the dialogues. In addition, Saliba has also devised a syllabus for each level based on the CEFR, which can be downloaded for free from his website: www.charlesdanielsaliba.com.

The bilingual series is aimed at beginners who want to learn Maltese and advance to the intermediate level. This series is based on a needs analysis Saliba conducted with foreigners learning Maltese and instructors teaching Maltese to foreigners. *Maltese for Foreigners* is a by-product of Saliba's PhD research, undertaken at the University of Sheffield, focusing on teaching Maltese as a foreign language and sponsored by a Malta Government Scholarship Scheme Grant.

