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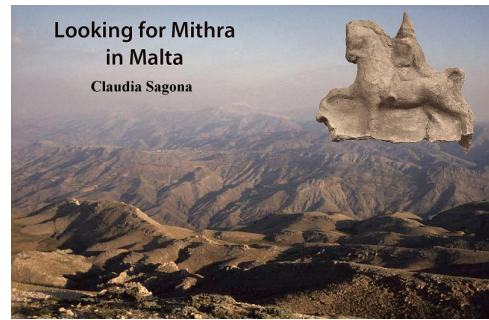
Maltese Historical Association (Aust) Inc
(Ghaqda Storika Maltija (Awstralija) Inkorporata)

No 2/2011

April Newsletter

This Month: Our next talk will take place at the Maltese Community Centre, 477 Royal Parade, Parkville at 7.30pm on Tuesday April 19, 2011. Our guest speaker this month is Dr Claudia Sagona and her topic will be 'Looking for Mithra in Malta'.

The cult of Mithra reached the height of its popularity in the second and third century AD in Roman territories after quiet beginnings in the highlands of eastern Turkey sometime in the first century BC. The Mithraic cult reached many parts of the Roman world and it is unlikely that Malta was immune to this popular, yet private and exclusive cult. There is every possibility that Mithraic practices filtered into the islands sometime after the archipelago came under Roman domination in 218 BC at the start of the Second Punic War.



This talk investigates the evidence for the cult in the Maltese islands. We will look at the objects with Mithraic iconography that have come to light in the archipelago in the not so distant past when building works and other disturbances have uncovered Mithraic cultic sites in which these artefacts were located. Mithraic places of worship, known as the 'mithraea', have been found in numbers throughout the Roman world and the most convincing cultic site in the Maltese Archipelago is located at Ras il-Wardija perched on the west coast of the north island of Gozo. In addition to funerary sites with possible Mithraic architectural traits, there are early church structures, comprising simple stone buildings and natural caves that might have served an earlier, Mithraic purpose.

Claudia Sagona M.O.M. is a Senior Fellow in Archaeology at the University of Melbourne. An honorary member of the National Order of Merit of Malta, her research on Maltese archaeology has focused on the Phoenician-Punic period. She has also carried out fieldwork in various regions of the Middle East. While in Malta, she has focused her efforts on the remains of the Punic or Carthaginian world. She is a senior staff member of the excavations at the Punic temple site at Tas Silg, and has written substantial books on Malta's ancient past, including *The Archaeology of Punic Malta* (2002), *Punic Antiquities of Malta* (2003), and *Looking for Mithra in Malta* (2009).

You are invited to a musical production *Ikun Li Trid Int* ('Your Will Be Done') written in 1976 by Maltese composers and song writers Therese Cassar and Manwel Mifsud. Widely sung/played during the Holy Week celebrations in Malta, this production is based on the gospel story of the last hours before Jesus' death, and features an introductory song followed by a song for each of the fourteen Stations of the Cross.

When: Friday April 15, 2011 – All Welcome

Time: approximately 7pm (following conclusion of 6.30pm Mass)

Where: St. Bernadette's Parish Church, 59B Westmoreland Road, Sunshine North, Victoria

Who: Local choir led by Dr Simone Cremona (organ)

Meeting with Minister Dolores Cristina

On Thursday 24th March, the Maltese Minister for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Ms Dolores Cristina met with representatives of various associations, including some MHA committee members, at the Parkville Centre. The reason for this meeting was to discuss and make suggestions to the Information Note that was issued by the Maltese Government in January 2011. The Maltese Government proposes the establishment of a Council for Maltese Living Abroad and a Maltese Cultural Institute.

The Executive committee of the MCCV made several suggestions in response to the Information Note on behalf of the associations affiliated with MCCV. It was agreed that the establishment of the Council and Cultural Institute were two huge steps forward for Maltese migrants. Two of various suggestions, put forward by MCCV were:

- a) to ensure that the history of Maltese Migration is recorded and preserved appropriately
- b) that the teaching of the history of Maltese migration becomes and remains a part of the compulsory educational curriculum of schools in Malta.

MCCV also suggested that the proposed Council should provide assistance to the Malta Emigrants Commission in establishing and maintaining its proposed Migration Museum as an important aid for the effective preservation of such history.

The question of Maltese language maintenance among young Maltese Australians also arose. One of a few recommendations made by Ms Edwidge Borg, vice president of the Federation of Maltese Language Schools, suggested that the Maltese Government establishes a 'Specialist Unit' with branches where Maltese communities exist, to promote the teaching of Maltese Language, Literature, History and Culture run on similar basis as the Alliance Francaise and the German Maltese Circle.

These items were some of the highlights that were discussed at the meeting. Ms Cristina will be advising Dr Tonio Borg, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the suggestions and recommendations that were made by the associations' representatives on her return to Malta.

Frances Bonnici

Upcoming Events

1. Farewell reception for HE Francis Tabone, Malta's High Commissioner to Australia on May 7, 2011 - details to be advised.
2. Joseph Calleja, the Maltese tenor, has announced an upcoming visit to Australia - details as they come to hand.

Last Month: On Tuesday 15th February 2011, the Maltese Historical Association held its first presentation for the year. The speaker for the evening was Fr. Victor Buhagiar and the topic was 'Fireworks in Malta: their evolution'.



Fr Buhagiar had a fascination with fireworks since he was a young boy and this has not gone away as the audience could see the passion he still has for fireworks. Most males in his family were involved in the making of fireworks for the festa of the village where he was born, Siggiewi. He explained in great detail the techniques used to make the different types; how other chemicals were introduced in the combination of the potassium, sulphur and nitrate to produce colour in fireworks. It took several death tragedies when firework factories blew up for the Maltese to realise that more safety precautions were needed while manufacturing fireworks. Fr Buhagiar demonstrated how petards are made using cardboard cylinders.

The presentation ended with a film clip showing a fantastic display of fireworks where new techniques in the art of pyrotechnics could be seen.

Mother's Day Social Dance

When: Thursday May 19, 2011

Time: 10:30am – 2:30pm

Where: Maltese Community Centre, 477 Royal Parade Parkville

Lunch, dessert plus soft drinks

Entertainment: generously provided by Mario Sammut and Moods Music

Donation \$15.00 pp. Booking is essential; call 9387 8922

Payment must be made before the event

'This activity is part of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria's Gambling On An Alternative Initiative'



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