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**Sinopsis**

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Malta's recent independence was achieved despite a confusion of internal conflicts which must appear puzzling to the outsider. Socialists and Nationalists clash both with each other, and with a Church whose authority is almost medieval. Dr Boissevain has lived for more than two years in Malta and has studied at first hand the conflicting groups in the villages. He examines the importance of the cults of saints and the bitter rivalry between them. The clash of the Church and Labour clubs within the villages and the difficult role of the parish priest are analysed in the framework of Maltese ecclesiastical and secular politics. Both in its vivid description of village festive and political life and in the careful analysis of conflicts and factions, the book makes an important contribution to political anthropology.