



*The Social and Religious history of a Maltese Parish; St Mary's Qrendi in the Eighteenth Century.* By Frans Ciappara Malta, Malta University Press, 2014. 386 pp. ISBN 978-99909-45-77-5.

A writing of history 'from below', this work focuses on the humble lives of common people within the micro-setting of a small village in eighteenth-century Malta. It marks a departure from traditional chronological narratives of surface events, background institutions and power classes, and directs its attention to the obscure and unsung masses who emerge in vivid snatches through the pages of this book. Rather than embracing literary evidence at face value, the author digs up a wealth of quantitative data from a wide range of archival sources, and analyses it against that of other eighteenth century communities in order to project a picture of how common people lived and inter-acted within the cultural, religious and social milieu of a Maltese village community.

This analyses of a social 'microcosm' with its fascinating focus on everyday human life and its complexities within a limited geographical area, is here projected and proposed as the best approach onwards an understanding of 'total history'. Its strength lies in joint historical and

socio-anthropological approach which leads to a better understanding of man and the inter-connectivity of all aspects of his earthly life. Anthropology, folklore, social history, church history, historical demography ... are here called into play and skillfully exploited to produce an overall functional analysis. The book's headings bear on the social fabric and occupation of the community, social cohesion, the family unit, religious influence, cultic expressions and the social context of death.