

international context. This included mention of South-South cooperation, relations between the United States and the USSR, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77. The harsh reality of the study's findings is that whilst Jamaica and other developing countries have achieved political independence, they remain under economic servitude. The internal struggle for ideological and political hegemony masks the downward spiral into an abyss of economic malaise.

A noteworthy aspect of *Between Self-Determination and Dependency* is the inclusion of interviews of former government officials, ambassadors and heads of local organizations. They provided an invaluable insight into the motives, influences and opinions of key individuals who played pivotal international and regional roles.

The 1980s is clearly delineated in the final two chapters, 'Jamaica and the Caribbean in the 1980s' and 'Jamaica's Relations with International Capital and the US in the 1980s'. The introduction of the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) marked a watershed in the island's economic scenario. The GDP indicators reflected economic stagnation and the era is rightly dubbed 'a lost decade' (p. 75). Henke is also accurate in identifying the continued dominance of the United States and its 'reassertion of global influence' (p. 101).

Undoubtedly, *Between Self-Determination and Dependency* can serve as a valuable lesson for developing countries to be extremely wary of their economic policies and relationship with international lending agencies. It will also be useful for those countries campaigning for a Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME).

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– *Church and Society in Spanish America*, by A.C. van Oss. CEDLA Latin American Studies No. 90. Aksant Academic Publishers, 2003.

The untimely death of Adriaan van Oss – he died on May 2, 1984 at age thirty-six – denied the field of Latin American history, and Central America in particular, the sustenance of an intellect that had much to offer. Prior to his death, van Oss reworked his doctoral dissertation into book form, which Cambridge University Press published in 1986 as *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala, 1524- 1821*. Though now out of print, *Catholic Colonialism* endures as an insightful contribution about how a division emerged early on in Guatemala, in van Oss's schema, between an Indian 'west' controlled by regular clergy and a Ladino 'east' attended to by the secular church. Ecclesiastical themes were dear to van Oss's heart, and ones about which he had published several articles and had prepared others for publication. An initiative on the part of the Centro de Estudios y Documentación Latinoamericanos (CEDLA) in Amsterdam to gather together nine such essays under the rubric *Church and Society in Spanish America* affords us a reminder not only of commendable work assiduously done but also a glimpse of what might have been had van Oss lived longer.

The collection begins with 'A Far Kingdom', which sees van Oss at his synthesizing best, delineating 'Central American autarky' as the eighteenth century drew

to a close. Contrary to ‘the stereotype of the colonial settlement as “a port and a fort”’, van Oss depicts the region as ‘inclined towards self-sufficiency instead of commercial ties with the outside world’ (p. 19). For him ‘the unifying cultural bond was the Catholic Church’, not ‘the lure of mercantilist speculation’. Unlike ‘trade-oriented coastal factories’, he asserts, ‘Central American towns had no need of fortifications, a fact which surprised the seventeenth-century English traveller Tomas (sic) Gage, who thought everything worth anything could be robbed’. Just as van Oss draws on one clergyman to have us imagine, like Gage did, arriving in the capital city of Santiago de Guatemala ‘without entering through walls, or gates, or passing over any bridge, or finding any watch or guard to examine who I was’ (p. 20), so too does he lean on the accounts of other clergymen, especially Domingo Juarros and Pedro Cortés y Larraz, to portray colonial Central America on the eve of Independence as ‘a largely self-sufficient agrarian society, thrown back on its own resources, isolated from the rest of the world’ (p. 4).

The broad sweep of the opening chapter, punctuated as it is with van Oss’s penchant for detailed tables and minute observations, is followed by a fine-grained analysis of the chronicle written around 1700 by Francisco Vázquez. Though well known and oft-cited, the Franciscan friar’s *Crónica de la Provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús* is a weighty tome that has not received the same kind of scrutiny enjoyed by those of other Guatemalan chroniclers like Antonio de Remesal, Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, and Francisco Ximénez. There are good reasons for this, as van Oss himself recognizes, for besides penning ‘the most long-winded single work published in Guatemala during the colonial period’, Vázquez did so for reasons ‘frankly apologetic and didactic’ and in ‘a style of writing in which clarity of meaning is sacrificed at the altar of literary “elegance”’ (p.26). Despite harbouring no illusions about the ‘heavy reading’ entailed in gleaning ‘murky significance’ from the devout criollo’s text, van Oss critiques Vázquez with a view to extracting from his chronicle salient features of colonial life, distilling for readers the essence of Vázquez’s labours without exposing them fully to the friar’s lugubrious prose. The chapter’s abrupt end suggests that van Oss had yet to reach a definitive conclusion about where Vázquez fits in the historiographic scheme of colonial Guatemala.

Seven subsequent chapters see van Oss stick, for the most part, with matters pertaining to the ecclesiastical operation of empire, with his spatial focus shifting from Central America to Venezuela, then to South America as whole, and next to Mexico, along the way addressing issues related to architecture, urbanism, demography, and economics. Only in the final chapter, which examines the Mexican state of Hidalgo during the Cristero Revolt of the 1920s, does he stray from the colonial period, an era whose defining characteristics, van Oss makes clear, often transcend its temporal limits and resonate throughout Spanish America long after the demise of imperial Spain.

Assembling a collection of discrete but inter-connected essays, as CEDLA has done on behalf of van Oss, is a valuable undertaking, all the more so because some of the pieces in *Church and Society in Spanish America* have never appeared before or were published in scholarly journals with limited circulation. The book is one that colonial-period specialists will read and refer to. One wishes, however, that greater care had been exercised in the production process, for infelicities

abound. The first four paragraphs of Chapter Four, for instance, appear as they should on page 61, only to be repeated on page 62. A similar typographical snafu occurs at the start of Chapter Five. Punctuation is often shoddy, words are printed with letters missing or incorrect spacing, and place names are misspelled. Van Oss, a great admirer of the poetry of T. S. Eliot and the prose of Jorge Luis Borges, was a scholar for whom the written word was an art, and precision a virtue. He would not have been amused at such indiscretion, and in truth his legacy is not entirely well served by what is surely a well-intentioned endeavour.

Van Oss lived and worked just as the computer, data processing, and geographical information systems were about to revolutionize how we analyze, display, and communicate research findings. What a teeming mind like his could have produced in the digital age only compounds the loss of a fine academic who was taken away too soon.

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– *To Inherit the Earth: The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil*, by Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford. Oakland, California: Food First Books, 2003.

In the midst of the heated debate on the conservation of natural resources, agriculture modernization, and agrarian reform, a grassroots movement has emerged among the rural population in Brazil in the struggle against large landowners and government agencies regarding the current land tenure policy. The Landless Rural Workers' Movement (MST – *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra*) emerged from isolated land disputes in different parts of the country to become one of the most prominent national-wide movements in Latin America. The MST has been supported by many organizations such as the Catholic Church, the Rural Workers' Union, and NGOs. Due to its Marxist ideology and its involvement in violent land disputes, however, the MST has been often pictured as a subversive and anarchic movement inciting violence and disorder. Only a few people know that, in the course of its 20 years of existence, the MST has succeeded in settling more than 485,000 families in 2,826 settlements encompassing approximately 8 million hectares. Likewise, the image of a violent MST in the media does not show how its members are usually the victims of unpunished murders in land disputes. In a country with large rural area where 50 per cent of the agricultural land is controlled by 4 per cent of the landowners, and with a rampant urbanization process, the MST has proven to be an alternative to the long promised, but never accomplished agrarian reform.

The MST has been the theme of many books. Here, Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford shed new light on the analysis of this genuine movement by giving special attention to the historical and geographical context of land tenure in Brazil. The authors show how the colonial legacy of land tenure policy detached from social policy and based on clientelism and paternalism has greatly limited agrarian reform in achieving fair land distribution and, consequently, socially and economically efficient use of agricultural land in Brazil.