

---

## Book Reviews

---

Anne Eller. *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016. 400 pp. ISBN: 9780822362371. \$29.95.

To modern observers of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century Caribbean politics, the idea of Haiti as a regional power and inspiration for revolts elsewhere seems improbable. Nonetheless, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as late as the Spanish American War of 1898, it had such an image. Slave rebellions from the Southern US to Brazil considered Haiti their model and insurgents fighting against Spain sent delegates to Port au Prince in search of advice, arms, and ammunition, while slave owners and the states that supported them throughout the hemisphere watched, blockaded, and fought against Haitian influence. Indeed, the Dominican Republic to this day defines itself at least in part by being “not Haiti”, a state from which it won its independence in 1844.

Historian Anne Eller, in “We Dream Together”, examines the complicated relationship between Haitians and Dominicans during the independence era, during which these two peoples were at times allies, at times in open warfare, and at times proxies for Great Power conflicts. The focus of the book is the resistance to Spain’s reoccupation of the Dominican Republic, a process that began at the request of the Dominican elite, fearing invasion by Haiti or overthrow by their population.

In her introduction and Chapter One, Eller expertly traces the remarkable beginning of this story. After decades of turmoil in the wake of Haitian independence from France in western Hispaniola, in 1822, eastern Hispaniola became part of the Haitian Republic. Unity prevailed until 1844, when frustration over autocratic rule from Port au Prince led Dominicans to declare independence, in what became known as The Separation. The Dominican separatists defined their new state, with some accuracy, as a beleaguered republic, beset by the constant threat of Haitian invasion. Seeking outside aid, Dominican leaders even sought annexation by the United States, France, and other European states. In the end, it was Spain, the former colonial power, that agreed to annex Santo Domingo, during an economic and military revival, and taking advantage of the distraction of the US Civil War, an alliance with France, and the tolerance of Great Britain.

The following six chapters examine the attempts by Spain and its Dominican allies to govern Santo Domingo and rural eastern Hispaniola. Although initially there was little resistance, within a few months a severe insurrection began. This resistance to Spain and the Dominican elite forms the basis of this book, as well as the collaborative support, provided to rebels by Haiti. Fears of the restoration of slavery and the permanent recolonization of the island drove resistance, while Dominican elites fear of reannexation by Haiti, “black rebellion” directed against lighter-skinned landholders and plantation owners, encouraged closer ties to Spain and called for more Spanish troops.

Eller describes how the Dominican elites framed their opposition to Haiti in racial terms, attempting to differentiate their new nation against their more populous neighbor to the east, the

general populations understanding of identity was much more fluid. While within Santo Domingo and Port au Prince the sense of a politically, culturally, and ethnically defined nation was clear, in the regions between these two capitals, there was more uniting the agricultural laborers, ranch hands, small farmers, and coastal maritime communities of Hispaniola. While Haitian nationalism, and the pride among Haitian elites and military at their anticolonial position, was visceral in the West, the sense of Dominican identity was less clear, and especially in border areas and central Hispaniola, far more liminal.

Interestingly, Eller points out that it was the Spanish occupation of 1861-1865 that more clearly delineated the border between Haitian and Dominican sections of the island, with Spanish troops taking up border positions and preparing for feared incursions from Haiti. The rebellion against Spain, and against the elites that initially invited the European forces, enabled rebels to define themselves as Dominican patriots. At the same time, Haiti emerged not as the enemy feared by the Spanish and elites, but to the common Dominicans as an ally, host nation for rebel encampments, and sources for inspiration and arms.

Spain's initial landings were met with indifference by much of the population, but soon Spanish heavy-handedness on Catholic orthodoxy, broken promises on economic development, and fears that colonial authorities would reimpose slavery—which continued to exist in Cuba and Puerto Rico—engendered active resistance. By summer 1863, Spain faced a widespread insurgency which, coupled with flareups of yellow fever, decimated the occupation force. Eller's narrative on the rebellion, including the support from Haiti for this movement, is engaging and complex.

Even so, the struggle against the Spanish did not create a drive for a unified island. Haitian reluctance to confront Spain directly disappointed Dominican rebels, even as Haiti's leaders recognize their vulnerability to Spanish ground and naval forces. Spain faced what European and North American leaders had feared since the 1790s: a revolt inspired and aided by Haiti. Even though the Dominican population was mixed, the rebels were disproportionately people of color, while support for Spain was highly correlated—although not identically—with those of primarily European descent.

The Dominican rebellion did not defeat the Spanish so much as outlast it. Worn down by disease, engaged in a brutal and unexpected counterinsurgency, and facing increasing opposition from a population it had believed would welcome it, in early 1865 the Spanish government decided to withdraw unilaterally, leaving behind devastated towns and countryside, frantic collaborators pleading for evacuation to other Spanish colonies, and the humiliation of defeat.

The victorious rebels had outlasted a European power. But Eller overstates the extent to which the insurgents had truly defeated Spanish forces on the battlefield, although their political victory was undeniable.

In her conclusion, the author illustrates the widespread disillusionment that encompassed the island. While a few voices called to unite Haiti and the Dominican Republic, enshrining their mutual fight against imperialism, this was not to be. Acrimony over limited Haitian support to the rebellion, pride among Dominicans in their military struggle, co-opting of anti-Spanish resistance by Dominican elites, even those that had initially supported the Spanish, and the lack of stable government in Haiti, all mitigated in favor of an independent Dominican Republic.

Eller's book is an insightful and engaging examination of race, national identity, state formation, and agency in resistance to European imperialism and is appropriate for readers interested in these issues, or the histories of the Dominican Republic, Spanish Empire, or broader Caribbean. The history of the Dominican Republic has received less attention than it merits in recent decades; this

volume shows just how vital and vibrant this history is, and nudges the field toward additional examinations.

doi:10.1017/S0165115319000354

Wayne H. Bowen, *University of Central Florida*

Daniel B. Rood. *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery: Technology, Labor, Race, and Capitalism in the Greater Caribbean*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. 288 pp. ISBN: 9780190655266. \$74.00.

Daniel B. Rood's *The Reinvention of Atlantic Slavery* is a smart, creative, and often absorbing study of how business operators, technologies, and commodities maintained slavery and connected the broader Caribbean during much of the nineteenth century. Although Rood overuses white sugar as a metaphor for ideas about racial purity, most of the evidence for his other arguments are rather convincing. Rood makes a strong case for viewing parts of Virginia, Cuba, and Brazil as a slavery-driven "single economic-technological block within the wider Atlantic world" (7). He demonstrates clearly that creole experts influenced science, technology, and business in significant ways, countering narratives that paint Latin American and Caribbean residents as passive absorbers of science and technology. He also shows that the regular use of slave knowledge and labour in the operation of new, more sophisticated technological systems contradicted claims that black Americans possessed limited mental capacities. What is perhaps most impressive is Rood's ability to discuss these complex issues while also including captivating descriptions of the technologies involved in sugar, iron, and flour production. There are few histories of technology existing that can compete with Rood's creativity and descriptive prose.

Rood's research particularly shines when he discusses the "creolization" of European technologies and the multidirectional spread of technologies, experts, concepts, and designs. Cubans became prominent global voices in the milling and chemistry of sugar, especially as it pertained to its production in the tropics. Rood discusses how Cuban chemist José Luis Casaseca took his European counterparts to task over their ignorance of how the Caribbean climate affected the chemical processes involved in sugar production. Cubans also made many significant contributions to sugar-generating equipment. Rood shows how "West Point-trained southerners with experience laying out [railroad] tracks, bridges, and tunnels in 'tropical climates' replaced many English engineers on new lines in Cuba" (94). These U.S. southerners interested in doing business in the Caribbean played up their relatively-close geographic connection and their experience with working with black slave labour as a means of gaining lucrative business deals over Yankee and British competitors. According to Rood, business opportunities provided by successful Caribbean exporters, in addition to increasing American appetites for sugar products and coffee, drew Virginia iron producers to Cuba and flour salesmen to Brazil more than schemes based on an "aggressive pro-slavery expansion into a neo-colonial Caribbean" (112). This extensive Caribbean network, in good part, based on slave labour and slave knowledge, fuelled the reinvention of what Rood and several other scholars refer to as the "second slavery".

Slavery, as is well known, was justified by white claims of black inferiority. But reliance on the heads and hands of Africans and their descendants across the Americas slowly undermined this false contention. A number of the Brazilian bakers who desired the particular qualities of Virginia flower relied on slave labour. Escaped slaves and freedmen became critical bakers in