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Anne Eller, *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom*. Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2016. xviii + 381 pp. (Paper US\$ 27.95)

In a protracted and contradictory process, the Dominican Republic obtained its “ephemeral” independence from Spain in 1822, in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. In that same year the island was united (Dominican historiography would call it “occupied”!) under Haitian rule. It acquired its “second” independence in 1844 when it separated from Haiti, but this one proved almost as ephemeral as the first. A new Spanish annexation was negotiated in 1861 with Spanish troops disembarking on the southern and northern coasts of the island.

The Spanish annexation (“*Restauración*” in Dominican historiography) only lasted until 1865. It has therefore often been interpreted as an irrelevant interlude in the building of the Dominican nation-state. Anne Eller’s wonderful book contradicts that interpretation. During 1861–62 the annexation was seen by many as irreversible, implying a reassertion of Spanish colonial ambitions and a new future for the Dominican nation. The Spanish involvement had great regional significance because of its timing. 1861 was the year of French intervention in Mexico, which underscored the continuing possibilities for renewed colonial efforts by European nations. It was also the beginning of the U.S. Civil War in which the debate about slavery played a crucial role. Through a painstaking analysis of documentary sources, Eller demonstrates how these events influenced the struggle against Spanish annexation in the Dominican Republic.

Despite its general title, the book focuses mainly on the period of the Spanish annexation, analyzing the background of President Santana’s decision to “offer” the country to the former colonizer, and explaining why this decision generated so much resistance from 1863 onward. Eller argues that the annexation, and the resistance against it, can only be understood in the context of a history shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Twentieth-century Dominican historiography has stressed the differences between the “Spanish” mestizo Dominican Republic and the “Black” Republic of Haiti, but in the nineteenth century the destinies of the eastern and western parts of the island were closely intertwined. This was true for the elites, but even more so for the rural masses. The 22-year unification of the island under Haitian administration had forged strong commercial and social ties. Most importantly, it had once and for all abolished slavery in a Caribbean context where slave labor was still broadly accepted. The fear of a reinstatement of slavery among the black and colored poor is a theme that pervades the book.

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Eller's book not only provides an original and timely contribution to the island's social history; it is also the first systematic description and analysis of the Spanish annexation as a crucial part of Caribbean history. For nonspecialists it may be too heavy on details, but persevering readers will acquire a unique understanding of the island's history and how it was shaped by geopolitics of colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean. It also contributes to recent attempts by historians to question the nationalist paradigms of Dominican (and, to a lesser extent, Haitian) history. Eller clearly shows that the border between the two countries was a contact zone and that "material and moral collaboration across the island was extensive" (p. 180). Perhaps most importantly, she shows the importance and complexity of race relations on the island. The memory of slavery united the poor in both sides of the island against colonialism. Just as Hans Schmidt's 1971 book, *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915–1934* did for the U.S. occupation in Haiti after 1915, Eller's gives many examples of the arrogant feeling of racial superiority among the Spanish occupying troops. This attitude precluded strong alliances between the Spanish and Dominican authorities and fostered the fear of enslavement—no surprise given the fact that in Spain's remaining colonies, Puerto Rico and Cuba, slavery still existed. In the end, this attitude led to the downfall and hasty retreat of the Spanish troops.

Eller tends to see the war against the Spanish troops mainly as a race war, or at least as a struggle against the prospect of re-enslavement. However, I did not see much proof for the racially outspoken "moral universe" among the Dominican peasantry she asserts on pages 42 and 43. Of course, it is notoriously difficult to obtain clear answers on these issues from historical sources, but I would suggest that the peasantry defended its rural autonomy above all. In addition, I would focus more on the regional differences between the commercially oriented northern elites and the agrarian caudillos in the south. It is no coincidence that anti-Spanish feelings were strongest in the north where the urban and commercial elites increasingly perceived the Spanish invaders as a threat to the regional economy. The alliance between these disgruntled elites and the urban and rural masses eventually got the better of the Spanish authorities.

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