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**Renewing the house : trajectories of social life in the yucayeque (community) of El Cabo, Higüey,
Dominican Republic, AD 800 to 1504**
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Alice V.M. Samson

renewing the house

This study is a contribution to the household archaeology of the Caribbean. The aim of the research was to come to an alternative, material definition of the pre-colonial house, rather than rely on Spanish colonial descriptions from the 15th and 16th centuries as is commonly done. Archaeological research from the site of El Cabo, perched on a coastal promontory at the extreme eastern end of the Dominican Republic is presented, and seven centuries of indigenous community history from its development and florescence, to eventual demise is narrated through the dominant structure, the house.

Over two thousand archaeological features cut directly into the limestone bedrock, and an artefact assemblage of pottery, shell and stone led to reconstructions of fifty domestic structures, thirty of which are houses, and interpretations of the spatial organization and chronology of the site between ca. AD 800 and 1504.

House structures are extremely regular with imposing facades, consistent orientation, and swept and clean interiors. They are the location of ritual and shared abandonment practices. Inhabitants rebuilt the same house in the same spot over the course of centuries so that a particular house was just one stage in a long process of renewal. Evidence suggests renewal was coordinated across houses, and possibly across the whole community (yucayeque). This led to the development of long-lived estates, referred to as House Trajectories, the most successful of which lasted up to 500 years. The House Trajectory is an important constituent of indigenous culture and domestic sociality.

Alice Samson is a member of the Caribbean Research Group, Leiden University, and excavated in El Cabo between 2005 and 2008. Her research interests include settlement and household archaeology with a focus in the Caribbean and NW European prehistory.

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Trajectories of social life in the *yucayeque*
(community) of El Cabo, Higüey, Dominican
Republic, AD 800 to 1504

Alice V.M. Samson