



Nomination of  
TALAYOTIC MENORCA  
for Inscription on the World Heritage List

**CRITERIA MET BY THE PROPOSED PROPERTY**  
(discussion paper)

**Criterion (iii)**

*Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.*

The components and attributes of the property, along with the remains of its material culture as a whole, illustrate a unique evolutionary process in the pre-history of the islands that encompasses a series of successive cultural phenomena whose roots date back to the Copper Age, continue through the Bronze Age, reach their height in the Iron Age and continue until Roman Times.

Archaeological sites offer exceptional testimony of an island civilisation of the past that established a powerful, imaginative and original tradition expressed through its monumental architecture, the material remains and regional organisation of which have maintained their presence on the island and indelibly marked its landscape over the last three thousand years.

The components of the property provide a significant sample of the extreme diversity and density of pre-historic archaeological sites in an excellent state of conservation on the island of Menorca, the greatest density recorded anywhere in the world covering an extensive area of living, inhabited territory, with over 1,558 sites catalogued in 700 km<sup>2</sup>. These manifestations constitute an exceptional reserve of information concerning the physical nature and way of life of the human communities that inhabited this island and a place of excellence for studying the primitive civilisations of Europe and the Mediterranean islands.

The great concentration and originality of the social, economic, ritual and burial monuments, along with the remains of the material culture and its continued survival over time, are an outstanding reflection of a pre-historic culture that make the property one of the most extensive, rich and important archaeological complexes in the Mediterranean basin and in the island world of the entire planet.

As a whole, the property offers an exceptional testimony to the Balearic Talayotic Culture, which developed between the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, offering genuine and original expressions on this island in the Mediterranean context, as a result of its relative isolation and the ability of island cultures to generate amazing, endemic monumental works and expressions.

The archaeological sites of Menorca illustrate an exceptional cultural process in which the remains of pre-historic island cultures survive beyond their times, thanks in part to their continued use, which extended up until the Islamic period and later.

The pre-historic heritage of Menorca offers unique testimony to a process of human occupation and adaptation to a limited territory, in extreme conditions and with few resources, illustrating the odyssey of the ancient island cultures of the planet and generating an outstanding cosmovision that includes the skyscape and an original territorial division of the world of the living from the world of the dead.

The nominated property illustrates the long, outstanding Talayotic cultural process, in which the extreme insularity and the conditions of relative isolation enabled its inhabitants to model and adapt the scope of outside cultural influences for centuries by developing a unique system of expressions that is very different from its context. These circumstances created the conditions for the survival of cultural traits that date back to the Copper Age, traits that were erased from the mainland in the course of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age.

The burial customs of the Talayotic culture of Menorca, enlightened by researchers and archaeological evidence, show specific island beliefs and rituals that are different from those of neighbouring islands and of the Mediterranean surroundings.

## **Criterion (iv)**

*Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.*

The nominated property is an excellent example of a monumental site and archaeological landscape that illustrates a significant stage of the island pre-history of the Mediterranean, characterised by the development of Cyclopean techniques and constructions, generating unique architectural forms and built components endowed with enormous power, imagination and originality.

The components of the property include a rich inventory of Cyclopean architecture, which illustrates the different stages that the pre-history of the island encompasses, comprehending a wide range of different kinds, including religious, burial, dwelling and symbolic structures, which showcase one of the most complete manifestations of this kind of buildings in terms of diversity and functionality in the pre-historic panorama of the Mediterranean basin and the island territories of the world.

The property includes excellent elements of outstanding buildings such as the burial navetas, the shrines acknowledged as “taula” grounds and the houses with their peculiar circular floorplan, which constitute unique expressions exclusive to Menorca. On top of this, there are also the amazing morphological characteristics of the towers or “talayots” and the burial sites on the cliffs, with exclusive traits for this kind of manifestation in Europe and the Mediterranean. The specific morphology of most of these structures is considered unique in the pre-historic Mediterranean world, with many variants of each kind represented. Moreover, some monuments illustrate unique reference elements of the transition from megalithic to Cyclopean techniques.

Talayotic buildings are notable, not just because of their originality, complexity and surprising proportions, but also for their imaginative and innovative use of materials, the considerable technical ability required to build them and the colossal collective effort invested over time. The complexity of the construction can be seen, for example, in the case of the “taula” grounds, evidence of the availability of a surprising knowledge of geometry, physics, geology and astronomy.

The series of components of the nominated property each show a space that exemplifies the singular ways in which this culture occupied the territory, laying out physically inter-connected areas that even today continue to clearly express the relations of inter-visibility between settlements and between the most representative monuments, offering an exceptional reading of the universe of visual and territorial relations on which the life of these communities was grounded.

Certain Cyclopean monuments and their megalithic predecessors (dolmens, burial navetas and “taula” grounds) show regular orientation patterns that remained stable over the time that highlight them and allow them to stand out from other contemporary cultures of similar Cyclopean characteristics, as outstanding attributes that could be considered as unique expressions of cultural astronomy, which manifest a vigorous relationship between the landscape and the skyscape.

The water catchment systems to be found in Talayotic settlements and their cisterns, illustrate one of the most outstanding expressions of the water culture on islands, which can be considered unique in the Mediterranean area.

The remains of the Talayotic culture blend harmoniously into the current landscape, particularly in the case of the properties of the series, where we see the superimposition of new, historical stone cultures that have generated agricultural spaces fenced in by over one hundred thousand kilometres of dry stone walls, and where the same plant species that made up the ancient Talayotic landscape continue to grow, thus showing an outstanding symbiosis between the monumental pre-historic landscape, the current living landscape and the natural environment.

## **Criterion (v)**

*Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.*

*Compliance with this criterion is a point to be discussed. These elements, may eventually be included in the previous criteria.*

The nominated property illustrates an outstanding process of cultural syncretism between the pre-historic and the historic landscape, where the ruins of the past become subjects in their own right of today's monumental landscape of the island, having been recognised now as a fundamental element of the island identity.

The set of components of the property as a whole illustrate a unique and unrepeatable example of how the substantial remains of a pre-historic culture now blend in with their rich natural and human surroundings to create an incomparable cultural landscape.

The scenic context of each component of the series, which shelters the best expressions of the Talayotic culture of Menorca, is grounded on the peculiar Menorcan agro-ecosystem, characterised by a mosaic of plants forming the landscape that, in general terms, is very similar to the one that the ancient settlers helped to forge from the beginning of the Bronze Age, highlighting an outstanding case of archaeological sites that can be properly placed in context and perceived in relation to their surroundings.

The traditional forms of land use and the layout of the territory in the area of the nominated property, show a unique model of territorial organisation that includes the exceptional grid of dry stone walls and the amazing form of farming settlements characterised by the exquisite manner in which they have adapted to and shown the utmost respect for the remains of the Talayotic culture.

The components of the property show a clear scenic continuity based not only on stone cultures, but also on factors like the excellent conservation of emblematic natural surroundings and the continuity of the vegetation landscape.

The cultural dimensions of the current landscapes allow many leading aspects of the spiritual and social life of their ancient inhabitants to be transmitted to the present, along with the history of its inhabitants up until the present day, in a context that has hardly changed since pre-historic times.