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# Expanding Cultural and Natural Heritage Through Archaeology: An Application of Cultural Keystone Places (CKP) in the Medieval Mediterranean

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**Abstract** In this article we apply the Cultural Keystone Place (CKP) framework to the island of Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain, to explore the importance of archaeology in enhancing connections to and valuation of natural and cultural landscapes. Through a brief overview of recent investments made on the island in the environment, agricultural and food heritage, as well as cultural heritage, we discuss the implications of the narrative created by what is and is not claimed or designated as heritage. We are writing from the position of archaeologists working on the island and argue that archaeological investigation of the often-overlooked medieval Islamic era on the island is key to understanding more fully the historical ecology and historical narrative of the island. Following the tenets of CKP, we argue that archaeological visibility can ensure the enduring cultural importance of a place, demonstrating not just its importance to people in the past, but also preserving it for the present and future.

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## Introduction

The study of human and landscape relationships through time is a strong point of convergence for the fields of ecology and archaeology, and environmental archaeology often draws on ecological concepts in its investigation of this relationship in the past. One such concept is that of Cultural Keystone Place (CKP), which are "places of strong cultural attachment that need particular consideration in any proposed development activities" (Cuerrier et al. 2015:428). The concept of CKP was developed and has been mostly broadly applied in Pacific Northwest contexts, specifically with regard to protecting and legitimizing traditional Indigenous spaces and (re)connecting Native populations to ancestral landscapes, knowledge, and stewardship practices (Cuerrier et al. 2012). As this framework gained traction in collaborative work between Indigenous communities and archaeologists, CKP was further codified to embody three categories of interrelationships between people and places: Socioeconomic, Environmental, and Cultural (Cuerrier et al. 2015: Figure 1). Its application is expanding into other regions and cultural groups, such as Chumash ancestral lands along the southern coast of California (Rick et al. 2022) and is being combined with palaeoecological and archaeological plant evidence to study the legacies of plant stewardship practices (Carney and Connolly 2024) and the diversity of food resources (Carney et al. 2022).

In a similar vein of archaeological inquiry focused on understanding the diachronic relationship between humans and environments, research in western Europe and the Mediterranean has explored the temporal meaning of places and landscapes. Sites and monuments can still have meaning in their "afterlives" (Bradley 1993; Smith and van Dommelen 2018), and the idea that a monument or site dates to


**Figure 1 A** Map of Menorca with the site of Torre d'en Galmés marked, and B Toponyms across the island mentioned in the text.

only one time period or one cultural phase has been challenged. It is recognized that the biographies of monuments and sites grow more complex as they persist in the landscape, and as more people engaged with them after their initial construction (Lillios 2022). This is exemplified by Iron Age monuments and sites in Iberia, with which medieval Islamic communities engaged in multiple ways—as evidence of past societies and rulers worth recording in chronicles as they made sense of the history of the region, and as places to build their homes and bury their dead (Lillios 2022 and references therein; Pérez-Juez et al. 2021, 2024; Pérez-Juez and Smith 2024).

Though stemming from vastly different corners of archaeology and human-environment studies, these approaches share the principle that a place's importance can persist through time and fit comfortably within archaeological inquiry. Archaeology provides a method with which to uncover the material evidence that contributes directly to understanding the intensity, frequency, diversity, and antiquity of use in a space. It is through archaeological study that the context of a space is better understood—the context of how it fits into landscapes and society over centuries or millennia. This material record complements oral traditions and the historical and ethnographic records that create the narrative of land-use and stewardship of a place, and moreover, can be scaled to specific sites or regions. Archaeological visibility can ensure the enduring cultural importance of places, but that visibility is often obscured by deficiencies in preservation or detection, including conducting research at spatial and temporal scales that do not capture the culturally relevant phenomena, as discussed by Wolverton and colleagues 2025 (this issue). In short, archaeological visibility can ensure the enduring cultural importance of places, demonstrating not only the importance of the place to people in the past, but also preserving it for the present and future.

In this article we apply the CKP framework to the island of Menorca, Balearic Islands, Spain (Figure 1). The combination of recent investments in ecological conservation, invigoration of sustainable eco-tourism and agro-tourism, changes in cultural heritage management frameworks, and a robust expansion of archaeological research on the island make it a prime case study. After introducing the environmental and historical context of Menorca, we review these investments against the CKP categories of Environmental, Socioeconomic, and Cultural interrelationships, and argue that recent archaeological findings at the archaeological site of Torre d'en Galmés are vital to strengthening and refining ideas of CKP and deepening connections and stewardship of this island landscape. We are not writing as ecologists, conservationists, historians, or tourism directors, but we weave elements of these fields into a broader discussion of how the narrative of this island has been created.

## Environmental and Historical Overview of Menorca

Menorca is part of the Balearic Islands off the Mediterranean coast of Spain. It lies within the Mediterranean ecosystem, and the major vegetation communities on Menorca are matorrals (shrub lands) punctuated by *Quercus ilex* (holm oak), *Olea europaea* (domesticated olive), *Olea sylvestrus* (wild olive), *Pistacia lentiscus* (mastic/lentisk tree), and *Juniperus phoenicea* subsp. *turbinata* (Phoenician juniper), along with Mediterranean pine forests, marsh and dune ecozones along with rocky outcrops (Médail 2022). Geologically

the island is divided into two: the southern portion is made up of younger Miocene limestone and calcarenites that create wide sand beaches which rank as top tourist destinations, while the northern portion is made up of older shales and sandstones as old as the Paleozoic period that attract visitors with its rugged and rocky vistas (Rosell and Llompart 2014; Segura et al. 2007). Hot summers and mild, wet winters characterize the region, and on Menorca the modern average daily temperatures range from 25°C in July and August to 11–12°C in January and February, with an annual precipitation of approx. 550 mm (Agencia Estatal de Meteorología 2024).

Over four millennia of human occupation, the island has experienced relatively low populations densities and has retained its rural and agricultural characteristics (Cherry and Leppard 2018). The earliest archaeological evidence of human settlement on the island comes from coastal caves dating to the Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age (c. late third millennium BCE) (Ramis et al. 2002). The island coast is dotted with early burial and habitation sites from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages (c. 1600–850 BCE), with settlements gradually moving away from the coast and deeper into the interior of the island (Sintes 2015; Van Strydonck 2014). Some of the most visible architectural remains date to the Iron Age, or the Talayotic period (c. 850–550 BCE), so called for the megalithic towers constructed during the era. Similarly, the Late Iron Age or Post-Talayotic Period (c. 550–123 BCE) saw the construction of large circular megalithic houses and ceremonial taula precincts (horseshoe-shaped buildings enclosing T-shaped stone towers), which have both received a significant amount of attention in recent years (see Riudavets and Ferrer 2022). The Talayotic and Post-Talayotic communities engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry, notably cattle, and developed local ceramic, metallurgical, and bone working industries (Van Strydonck 2014). By the sixth century BCE, the islands were part of the interaction spheres of contemporary Phoenician then Carthaginian colonies, and to a lesser extent Iberian and Greek centers, and were eventually conquered by Rome in 123 BCE. The archaeological evidence of the subsequent centuries indicates slow depopulation and gradual interruption of indigenous life, as these post-Talayotic settlements were abandoned, and a smattering of Roman settlements, portages, and later paleo-Christian basilicas appeared along or near the coasts. Between the fourth and seventh centuries CE, more

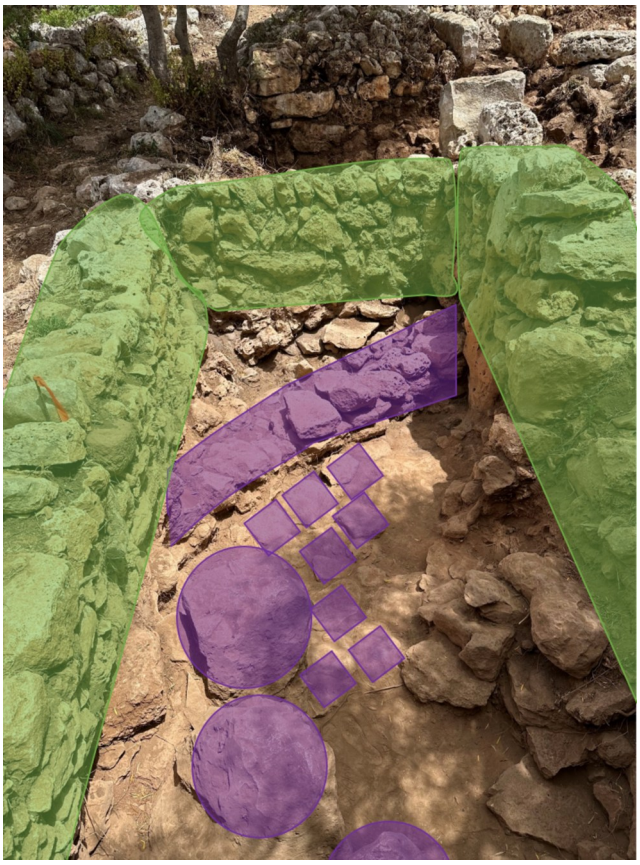

**Figure 2** Stratigraphic relationships at Torre d'en Galmés. The stone walls (in green) of a rectangular Islamic period room atop circular Talayotic architecture that includes pillars (purple circles) and paving stones (purple rectangles).

settlements were abandoned as the Byzantine empire's power in the western Mediterranean weakened, although ceramics, coins, and royal and religious accounts indicate that Menorca retained a connection, if reduced, to the Byzantine capital at Constantinople (Jarrett 2019; Zavagno 2019). Naval skirmishes and sea raids between the prevailing powers in the western Mediterranean, namely the Carolingian, Byzantine, and Muslim empires, left the island vulnerable and deterred demographic growth. This pattern continued until military commander ʿIsam al-Khawlāni secured control of the island and incorporated it into the Emirate of Córdoba in 902–903 CE, and Muslim populations moved from Iberia and North Africa to the Balearics (Kirchner and Retamero 2016; Pérez-Juez and Smith 2024).

Historical and archaeological research into this medieval Islamic period is bringing into focus the

**Figure 3** Stratigraphic relationships at Torre d'en Galmés. The stone walls (in green) of a rectangular Islamic period domestic compound abutting Talayotic architecture that includes a stacked stone archway and stone wall (in purple).

reinvigoration of the island as these new settler populations grew and harnessed the agricultural potential of the land through sophisticated hydraulic systems (Barceló 1989, 1995; Barceló and Retamero 2005; Kirchner 2010, 2019, 2024; Retamero and Moll 2010). At least one of these systems has been restored for modern use, as discussed below. The capital city was established on the western coast of the island, Madina Manūrqa (modern Ciutadella), and is the only known urban center on the island at this time (Kirchner and Retamero 2016). Because of a series of political invasions and resulting demographic shifts on neighboring Majorca and mainland Iberia, by the thirteenth century Menorca had an influx of Muslim refugees and settlers who left behind a wealth of material evidence rendered increasingly visible through ongoing archaeological research (Forste et al. 2025; Pérez-Juez et al. 2021, 2024). These communities were primarily rural agriculturalists who were engaged in irrigated and rainfed crop cultivation and pastoralism. These *alquerías* (farming villages) are characterized by typical Muslim domestic architecture—rectilinear buildings, many of which are composed of two or more rooms built in an L-shape that open up onto a patio, which is enclosed by two walls to create a private courtyard (Castillo et al. 2021; Fentress 2013; Gutiérrez Lloret 2013; Kirchner 2014; Kirchner et al. 2023). Some of these *alquerías* were built abutting or atop the ruins of the Iron Age structures, such as Torre d'en Galmés (Kirchner et al. 2023; Pérez-Juez et al. 2021) (Figures 2–3), but are less visible because their much smaller footprint is

**Figure 4** Irrigated terraces planted with fruit trees Arbres d'Algendar in July 2023.

overshadowed by the monumental prehistoric ruins, and also because it is difficult to discern the limestone rubble of a collapsed building from the craggy limestone bedrock outcrops.

While the Talayotic culture has been the major focus of historical and archaeological research on Menorca, interest in the medieval period is growing as excavations and archival work have yielded substantial evidence about this era (Forste et al. 2025; Kirchner et al. 2023; Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022; Pérez-Juez et al. 2023). Even though only a handful of Islamic-era settlements are attested to archaeologically across Menorca, the Muslim population left a legacy of toponyms and irrigation systems that persist into the present-day (Figures 1 and 4–5). These lines of evidence are discussed only briefly below, but nonetheless provide enough information to discuss the utility of CKP in understanding cultural heritage valuation.

**Environmental Investment in Menorca**

UNESCO declared Menorca a biosphere reserve on October 7, 1993. The Menorca Biosphere Reserve, which is managed by the Consell Insular de Menorca (Menorca Island Government), is part of a national program in Spain that is connected to UNESCO's Man and Biosphere Program. These programs define a biosphere as a place where "human activity is carried out in compatibility with the conservation of natural resources and cultural heritage" (Agència Menorca Reserva de Biosfera 2024a). This designation was made in order to protect the environment in the wake of development across the island since the 1960s, and to ensure policies were uniform across the island regarding water, energy, waste management,

**Figure 5** Irrigation system is still active in the ravine of Cala en Porter in July 2022.

territory and landscape, conservation and custodianship of natural heritage (and later cultural heritage), the economy, education, and social welfare (Canals Bassedas and Carreras Martí 2016). The five main areas of conservation and sustainability as outlined on the website (menorcabiosfera.org) are the environment, social welfare, tourism, culture, and economy.

With this biosphere designation, an ethos has permeated the island culture focused on limiting the ecological impact of modern living. There has been particular attention focused on reducing the environmental impact and carbon emissions of the agricultural sector, including meat, dairy, and crop products. One of the more visible programs is the Custòdia Agrària, which is created by the ecological non-profit organization called Grup Balear d'Ornitologia i Defensa de la Naturalesa (GOB Menorca), and works with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which connects government and civil/private organizations to advance sustainability initiatives. Together they research and release public-facing data on the ecological footprint of fruit, vegetables, beef, and dairy production as part of its mission to support sustainable stewardship and environmental conservation (Alliance for Mediterranean Nature and Culture 2023a, b). The government of Menorca (Consell Insular) also supports sustainable land-use by making grants available to farmers to fund traditional agricultural practices and to maintain biodiversity on their land. The Consell is involved in promoting the sale and production of local goods in their "Made in Menorca" program, which focuses on food and artisan products made from natural raw materials, including wood and esparto grass.

Across these programs' mission statements, there is a recurrent call to maintain the mosaic of agricultural land, pastures, and wild areas that blanket the island to preserve the biodiversity of the natural and cultural landscape. This patchwork of land-use has been maintained since the medieval period, and a taxonomy of plot types has can be reconstructed based on textual and archaeological evidence: 1) a *huerta* is a large irrigated area, often for growing fruit trees, and can be associated with urban or rural settlements; 2) an *almunia* is a farm connected to government officials; and, 3) an *alquería* is a rural farming site, comprising both residential areas and farming or pasturelands (Kirchner 2018, 2024), whose territory was complemented by 4) *rahals* which were collectively held mixed-use land (Glick 2005:167; Kirchner 2018:201). These smaller plots can be understood as kitchen gardens and personal orchards, which supplied fresh vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Many agricultural plots (particularly irrigated ones) retained into the mid-twentieth century their original structure from the Arab and Berber farmers of the Islamic era (Barceló and Retamero 2005; Kirchner 2024).

The efforts of environmental sustainability and conservation are encouraged across multiple social

sectors of the island, including tourism. The official tourism website of the island, Menorca.es, includes a link to the biosphere website page listing Visit Tips (Agència Menorca Reserva de Biosfera 2024b), as well as guidance on how to be a low- or no-impact visitor and how to conserve resources such as water. This is one way the government balances tourism with its ecological stewardship, simultaneously touting its environmental treasures (stunning coves, unreal teal waters) as top eco-tourism destinations while educating visitors on how to align their behaviors with the conservation goals of the island.

While these are only a few of the programs and institutions active across the island, they demonstrate Menorcans' desire to continue to steward the land while balancing the needs of modern living and ecological stewardship. Connecting to the definition of CKP above, these investments make clear that this environment requires "particular consideration in any proposed development activities" (Cuerrier et al. 2015:428). Along with this kind of habitat and natural environmental preservation, there is also a desire to preserve productive environments and practices, particularly those related to agriculture and food production.

**Socioeconomic Investment in Menorcan Agricultural and Food Heritage**

The identity of Menorca is deeply entrenched in the connection to the land, and embodies a slower, more rural lifestyle that has its roots in prehistory (Ferrer et al. 2022). Even today, only relatively small urban centers dot the island, and 70% of the island is dedicated to farmland (IUCN and GOB Menorca 2023). It is further enshrined on the island's official tourism website (Menorca.es), which touts "traditional" farming life as a unique experience in Menorca, as a dominant message in tourism campaigns, and is the basis for agro-tourism on the island. Beyond enjoying fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy products that are raised in sustainable and low-impact ways, tourists can have an immersive experience by staying in these "traditional" (i.e., historical, 100 years+ old) farmhouses and estates. There are thirty-one *agriturismos* (Catalan: *agriturismes*), and six rural hotels listed on official tourism website (Fundació Foment del Turisme de Menorca 2024). The impression visitors are left with after they browse these websites or visit the island is that the heritage harkens back only to the last few hundred years, a relatively shallow foray into the deep human history of the island.

One salient example of a modern agricultural endeavor findings its roots in medieval Islamic land-use practices is the Arbres d'Algendar, an organic orchard in the ravine of Algendar (Mestral Menorca 2019). This ravine is home to an irrigation system engineered by Andalusian farmers (Barceló and Retamero 2005), which was restored by this project in order to water its terraces of fruit trees (apple, pear, fig, plum, among others) (Figure 4). While at present there is no evidence about which species were cultivated when these terraces were initially constructed, apple, fig, and plum were present in Iberia by this period (Peña-Chocarro et al. 2019), making it possible that they were also cultivated by medieval farmers. This sustainable irrigation system also provides training and employment for underprivileged people, and thus stewards both the environment and the modern population. This ravine is also a popular hiking trail for visitors and locals seeking a shady respite.

With regard to food heritage, Menorca garnered international attention when it was named the European Region of Gastronomy in 2022. This program aims to improve citizens' lives "by raising awareness about the importance of cultural and food uniqueness" while also stimulating tourism and economic growth (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism 2022a). In the report assembled for Menorca's bid for this award, the main goal was to emphasize the culinary diversity that comes from the richness of natural and cultivated products, including cheese, seafood, cured and spiced sausages, and locally grown fruits and vegetables. The report also traces the history of gastronomic influence, highlighting the agricultural roots of the prehistoric populations along with Spanish, French, and English influence beginning in the eighteenth century, while the Islamic influence on cuisine is limited to one dish called arròs de la terra/Moorish rice that is made with semolina, and to a vague mention of Islamic influence on dessert culture (International Institute of Gastronomy, Culture, Arts and Tourism 2022b). As part of this gastronomic celebration, the island's archaeology museum, Museu de Menorca, held an exhibit called "The Taste of Menorca" ("El Gust de Menorca"). The catalogue features kitchen equipment central to Menorca cuisine through the ages: Talayotic cooking pots, Roman fish sauce plates and amphora, along with early-modern

pieces such as mortars, grease pans, and glass stemware (Anglada et al. 2022). Absent from this catalogue are medieval Islamic objects, despite the museum having in its collections numerous Islamic-era ceramic vessels, three of which are viewable through their online catalogue (Museu de Menorca 2024).

In place-based topics such as agricultural and gastronomic heritage, the representation of cultural groups and time periods reflects their salience to the current culture. Again, while these are just a few examples of agricultural and food heritage initiatives, the medieval period is not as visible as other eras (Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022). As archaeological evidence grows, it is important to consider the way in which cultural periods are represented in these spheres.

**Cultural Heritage Investment in Menorca**

Another pillar of the biosphere reserve is history, and archaeological research is understood as important to preserving cultural heritage. Menorca Talayótica, an organization dedicated to the promotion of Menorca's ancient history and heritage, reports 1,586 prehistoric sites in an area of 700 km² (Consell Insular de Menorca 2021:167). The Talayotic settlements and burial places of Menorca were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2023 under criteria (iii) (to bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared) and (iv) (to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history) (whc.unesco.org/en/criteria). The sites developed for visitors (with infrastructure such as walkways, interpretation signage, and parking lots) are mostly the monumental, megalithic and therefore highly visible, prehistoric ruins, and are slow to update signage as the "Islamic afterlives" (Lillios 2022; Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022) are exhumed through archaeological research.

The biosphere website cites specific legacies in the landscape from the Islamic period, including the "ethnological heritage related to systems of cultivation and water use" and "Menorca toponymy, which retains some names of Arabic origin" such as Binibeca, Binidalí, Biniancolla, Alaior ("bini" meaning "son of", and "al" being the preposition "the"). The one Islamic-era site mentioned on the website is the fortified castle of Santa Águeda, located in the northwest atop one of the highest points on the island (Agència Menorca Reserva de Biosfera 2024c). While the Muslim era is listed on a webpage, there is not much in the infrastructure of heritage management and heritage tourism that highlights it, and there is limited signage and information across the landscape about this 400-year-long chapter of history. Even though the Consell Insular de Menorca purchased this fortress in 2007, little archaeology has been conducted to learn more about it, and little has been done to develop it for visitors. Another toponymic nod to the Islamic population is the name of a popular beach on the eastern coast, Sa Mesquida, or The Mosque, but there is no evidence or oral history of such a building nearby. While there is still much room to study and highlight the Muslim legacy on the island, the past 20 years have seen a marked change in recognizing the built and environmental legacy of the Islamic-era populations, to the point that the Islamic period of the Talayotic sites was included in the World Heritage nomination report as a way of preserving the long history of prehistoric structures.

Cultural heritage investment is uneven across the different archaeological and historical periods of the island, and such investments aim to highlight the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the archaeological remains. While there is a gallery at the Museu de Menorca dedicated to the Islamic period, the objects and topics on display are by nature removed from their place in the landscape. The protection and recognition of the Talayotic remains is complicated by the fact that many of these sites were reoccupied in the Islamic era (as described above), and early archaeological investigations removed later layers of cultural material to uncover the prehistoric ruins (Pérez-Juez 2016; Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022). The temporal vagueness with which the medieval period is viewed is reflected in a colloquial saying when explaining unknown episodes in the past: "it belongs to the time of the Moors" (Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022:99).

**Strengthening Heritage Investment with Archaeology**

These local and national programs codify that this environmental mosaic, specific elements of farming and food heritage, and prehistoric archaeological sites are deemed important to modern life. Given these categories, a case can be made that the entirety of the island is a CKP, but there is a leap of nearly two millennia from prehistory to today. In this gap, during

the medieval period, people developed land-use practices (including irrigation systems) which left substantial archaeological traces and place-names that endure into the present. Medieval archaeological sites showcasing the once dense Muslim population are incredibly common across the island yet rarely acknowledged or commented upon (Pérez-Juez et al. 2021). There are large-scale narratives about Menorca's inclusion in the Islamic empire and large remote hilltop fortifications built by Muslim islanders, but these broad strokes do not connect to any lived experiences of the Muslim communities here. While the UNESCO World Heritage designations include the Islamic period remains, the inscription of these sites as explicitly named "Talayotic" and do not mention the Islamic period; an interesting contrast to the existing toponyms across the landscape that reflect the Muslim populations of the past.

The historical particularisms of the island might shed light onto this period being relatively overlooked; Muslim populations were removed during the thirteenth century, and as Christian populations settled on the island, non-Christian identities and culture were criminalized and thus suppressed and hidden. So now, after nearly 800 years, archaeology can revive the memory of this time period, during which people shaped and modified the agricultural landscape in ways that were inherited by people in more recent history, and which continue to support the livelihoods and economy of the island. The modern Menorcan population is primarily Christian with Catalan roots and see a stark separation between themselves and the Muslim Arab/Berber medieval population across ethnical, linguistic, and religious categories. This gap, described as a *damnatio memoriae* (Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022), can be restored with archaeology, as new evidence is uncovered about the lived experiences in the medieval era and the ways in which people stewarded this island landscape.

At the forefront of this archaeological and historical research, the Menorca Archaeology Project (MAP) is excavating at the site of Torre d'en Galmés. This site is an ideal case study as it lies within the intersection of protected heritage and environments—it is one of the largest Talayotic sites on the island with a substantial Islamic-period reoccupation, and it is nestled between two ravines with medieval irrigation systems (Barceló and Retamero 2005; Kirchner et al. 2023; Pérez-Juez and Sintes 2022; Pérez-Juez et al. 2021). MAP's goal is to understand the diachronic history of the site, the reasons for its reoccupation, and how people modified their natural environment to support their agricultural and craft economies (Forste et al. 2025; Pérez-Juez et al. 2024).

To this end, an interdisciplinary approach is employed at various scales: intrasite/household-level investigations of quotidian practices, and settlement-level to understand how this medieval population adapted to the natural and cultural features of the locale. The rich archaeological assemblages of ceramics, metal objects, macrobotanical remains (seeds, fruits, plant parts, wood charcoal), microbotanical remains (phytoliths), faunal remains, and geoarchaeological evidence (micromorophology, dung spherulites) records over 200 years of human livelihood during the medieval period. These scientific analyses are framed with robust spatial recording and analysis and further contextualized with interpretation alongside the scant contemporary historical texts. Current results of this archaeological and historical research provide insight into the exact categories of interest to CKP—the land-use and the environment along with socioeconomic and subsistence practices such as food preparation and skilled production (metallurgy, architecture, perhaps wool production). In short, we explore evidence of how these medieval rural populations practiced their agricultural lifestyle, adapted their livelihoods to the natural environment, and how they too displayed deep connections to the landscape.

Archaeology can contribute to the richness of a CKP, and in Menorca specifically it can revive the memory of medieval populations without detracting from the historical and/or cultural connection to antecedent and decedent groups. In the case of Torre d'en Galmés, studying the large Islamic settlement does not diminish the importance of the Talayotic settlement. As more archaeological work is undertaken with a newly sharpened awareness of the traces left by the medieval populations, their visibility will be amplified, and the seeming absence of evidence of Muslim influence will be revised on the island (*sensu* Wolverton et al. 2025).

Along these same lines, archaeological and historical evidence can contribute to the historical ecology of an area by strengthening connection between past and present land-use, such as tracing continuity in the cultivation of tree fruits. This aligns with the Biosphere goal of understanding the traditional ways in which the island has been

stewarded. What becomes evident with the case of Torre d'en Galmés, as at other sites across the island with multiple periods of occupation, is that there is an overlap in the interests of the biosphere reserve and world heritage designation in protecting *places,* specifically within the context of the intersecting spheres of natural and cultural resources and heritage. From an economic perspective, there is opportunity to develop more cultural and gastronomic programs and parks featuring the medieval Islamic contribution to Menorca heritage, simultaneously broadening appeal while making an important addition to the island's historical narrative.

**Caveats and Concluding Thoughts**

In contrast to regions and issues where the CKP approach has more commonly been used, such as (re) connecting communities to traditional homelands/ landscapes from which they or their ancestors have been coercively separated, in Menorca there is no descendant population seeking recognition for the medieval ancestors. Instead, our perspective comes from our experience as archaeologists who are seeking to bring greater visibility to this medieval population and to understand its role in creating and maintaining the unique natural and cultural features discussed above. One aspect where CKP and archaeology align is in the longevity of a place; CKP seeks cultural longevity, and archaeology can help illuminate that temporal scale.

In this particular case, we see how filling in the medieval gap can reestablish cultural connections to contemporary Menorcan culinary culture and can help uncover new areas of investment and research into anthropogenic landscapes. The work done at Torre d'en Galmés by MAP has been essential to these efforts, re-establishing historical links to landscape use and agricultural heritage. This paper is a first step in understanding this island landscape through the CKP framework, and meaningful research can continue as conversations are widened to include other fields of history, cultural and natural heritage and patrimony, ecological conservation, and ethnobotany. Being cognizant of the narrative that is formed when natural and cultural resources are recognized or protected—or not—in official ways is especially important as CKPs are monetized through international funding agencies and tourism economies. Moreover, archaeology is well-suited to push back against the narrative of erasure (intentional or not) of non-Christian populations on the island.

However, when faced with a patchy and potentially incomplete archaeological record (Lucas 2012), some questions arise in the application of CKP to archaeological cases. Does CKP allow for discontinuities in temporal and spatial extent of a space's importance? Can a place be a CKP for one time period but not another? Can the demarcation of the place change, expanding or contracting, through time? In other words, does the importance of a space need to be temporally and spatially continuous? While this exploration perhaps generates more questions than answers, it is clear that CKP thinking is useful in evaluating natural and cultural heritage, and that there is potential to explore the boundaries of CKP frameworks related to geographic boundaries, temporal continuity, and the meaning of places to multiple populations. The Islamic period of Menorca is just one example where these questions may be asked, and the ramifications of such a framework can be assessed in a place with both a strong regional identity and a dedication to the exploration of the island's history and heritage.

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**Declarations**

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