
Risco Caído (Spain) No 1578

Official name as proposed by the State Party

Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape

Location

Tejeda, Artenara, Agaete, Gáldar
Gran Canaria island, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands
Spain

Brief description

Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape encompasses a huge central mountainous area on Gran Canaria island, sheltered by the Caldera de Tejeda, and formed of cliffs, ravines and volcanic formations. A large number of troglodyte settlements, set in a landscape of rich biodiversity, bear witness to the efforts of the original inhabitants to adapt to a difficult environment. The ancient origin of these sites, attested by the first eye-witness accounts of the Spanish in the 15th century, and by the existence of Libyco-Berber inscriptions, provide proof of the local presence of a pre-Hispanic culture, which seems to have evolved in total isolation, from the arrival of the first Berbers from North Africa, probably at the beginning of our era, until the Spanish conquest.

The troglodyte settlements consist of habitats, granaries, and cisterns, together with sites containing a large number of cave art images. Other evidence of early agricultural activity, such as farming terraces, bears witness to the continuous presence of traditional rural organisation models. Interactions between the communities of yesterday and today with the landscape imbue it with tangible and intangible values that are closely linked to the geography and characteristics of the landscape.

Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural properties, set out in Article I of the World Heritage Convention of 1972, this is a *site*.

Under the terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (July 2017), paragraph 47, it has also been nominated as a *cultural landscape*.

1 Basic data

Included in the Tentative List

29 January 2016

Background

This is a new nomination.

Consultations and Technical Evaluation Mission

Desk reviews have been provided by ICOMOS International Scientific Committees, members and independent experts.

Comments on the natural attributes of this property, and their conservation and management, were received from IUCN on 20 December 2018 and have been incorporated into relevant sections of this report.

An ICOMOS technical evaluation mission visited the property from 24 to 28 September 2018.

Additional information received by ICOMOS

A letter was sent to the State Party on 8 October 2018 requesting further information about the description of the property, factors affecting the property, the boundaries and the buffer zone, protection, conservation and the involvement of local communities.

An Interim Report was provided to the State Party on 21 December 2018, summarising the issues identified by the ICOMOS World Heritage Panel. Further information was requested in the Interim Report including: interpretation, documentation, boundaries, management and the name of the property.

Additional information was received from the State Party on 27 February 2019 and has been incorporated into the relevant sections of this evaluation report.

Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

13 March 2019

2 Description of the property

Note: The nomination dossier and additional information contain detailed descriptions of this property, its history and its state of conservation. Due to limitations on the length of evaluation reports, this report only provides a short summary of the most relevant aspects.

Description and history

Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape encompasses a huge central mountainous area on Gran Canaria island. It is sheltered by the Caldera de Tejeda, and includes a large proportion of the Barranco Hondo ravine and the Tamadaba Highlands, formed of cliffs, ravines and volcanic formations.

The zone contains a very large number of troglodyte settlements, set in a landscape of rich biodiversity, which bear witness to the efforts of the island's original inhabitants to adapt to a difficult environment. The ancient origin of these sites is attested by the first eye-witness accounts of the Spanish in the 15th century, and by the presence of Libyco-Berber inscriptions. The inscriptions, of a type that is widespread throughout the Maghreb, provide proof of the

local presence of a pre-Hispanic culture on the island, which seems to have evolved in total isolation, from the arrival of the first Berbers from North Africa (Imazighen in Berber), probably at the beginning of our era, until the Spanish conquest.

The troglodyte settlements consist of habitats, granaries, and cisterns, together with a number of outstanding sites containing a large number of cave art images, and used for cultural activities. Furthermore, the first Spanish settlers refer to sites that were held to be sacred, where seasonal ceremonies took place.

Within this ensemble, there are two notable cultural sites: Risco Caído and Roque Bentayga. The cavities, referred to as “temples” or “*almogarenas*” and documented throughout the island of Gran Canaria, are said by the State Party to have been created to mark the appearance of solstices, as astronomical markers, and to be linked to a possible cult of stars and Mother Earth.

Most of these constructions were built using traditional methods for sculpting out cavities. The early Canarians preferred areas dominated by volcanic breccia material and tuff sands which were relatively easy to sculpt using stone or bone tools. The use of troglodyte habitats did not end with the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, but was perpetuated, with some adaptations, up to a very recent period.

Risco Caído was carefully sculpted, with a perfectly symmetrical vault and a window open to the sky. This cavity is also richly decorated with triangular motifs, interpreted as representing the female pubic triangle as a symbol of fertility. According to the State Party, the specific geometry of the cave enables the illumination by the first rays of the sun of certain decorative elements at successive periods of the year. As for the *almogaren* of Roque Bentayga, it is situated at the foot of the mountain and is said to be positioned to face the rising sun and Roque Nublo. This cavity is associated with Libyco-Berber inscriptions engraved at the foot of the mountain and troglodyte habitats and granaries.

Sculpted objects, taken to be idols or “*pintaderas*”, have also been discovered in the troglodyte settlements. These sculpted objects, made of clay in most cases, represent mainly anthropomorphic and sometimes zoomorphic figures.

Transhumance routes, which clearly date from ancient times, and troglodyte cisterns, are still used by local livestock breeders, and bear witness to the perpetuation of traditional models of rural organisation. The whole property is interconnected by a network of paths, which are often the same as those used by ancient Canarians to travel, and are also used as pilgrimage paths and sacred routes.

Further evidence of the ancient agricultural activities is provided by the farming terraces, which continue to be used today. The landscape has been shaped to create unique farming terraces, supported by stout dry walls, sometimes

suspended above precipices, and unique water collection and distribution systems.

Part of the property, particularly in the pine forests of Tamadaba and Finca de Tirma, is considered as an extremely significant area for Canarian biodiversity, and the large escarpments are home to highly diverse flora and fauna. The traditional uses of endemic flora, dating back to the first inhabitants of the island, are still perpetuated today, such as the use of wild plants for medicinal purposes. Prehistoric varieties of barley have been discovered in granaries. Genetic studies show that modern barley is the same variety as that analysed from the fortified granaries, which has been shown in turn to have come from northern Morocco.

In the additional information provided in February 2019, the State Party stresses that no archaeoastronomical interpretation can ever be confirmed with absolute certainty. The State Party concludes that the relationship referred to between astral divinities, seasonal cycles, the need to measure time and the fertility cult, associated with the symbolism of cave art, are believed to illustrate the cosmology of the ancient Canarians, even though no intrinsic relationship can be entirely proven.

The island of Gran Canaria was inhabited for more than 1500 years by Berbers who originated from North Africa. This local culture developed in isolation up to the 14th century, when sporadic contacts were established with Europeans. From the 15th century onwards, this trend became stronger when the Canary Islands were conquered by Spain. In the ancient Canarian culture, the mountains were held to be sacred and they were the object of a cult, which is confirmed by several historical sources. Sanctuaries in these mountainous regions were also associated with burial places, suggesting, according to the State Party, that ancestors were thought to be responsible for controlling clouds and rainfall.

Despite the huge increase in population and development on much of the island of Gran Canaria in the 20th century, these traditions have survived in the Caldera de Tejedra region, which has been spared the pressure exerted on the rest of the island. However, archaeology did not start to be developed until the mid-19th century. In the 19th and 20th centuries, archaeological sites attracted interest, particularly with the discovery of the painted cave of Gáldar, which has become a symbol of the island's past. Following the discovery of tumuli at Agujero de La Guancha and at Gáldar, the regional archaeological excavation department was created. The discoveries made since then, and the construction of infrastructures, have led to an exponential increase in the island's archaeological inventory. It was not until the end of the 20th century, with the discovery of Risco Caído, and today with the archaeological work led by the Cabildo de Gran Canaria, that the history of the early inhabitants of the Canary Islands began to be written. Although most of the research in Gran Canaria was initially conducted in the plains, researchers over recent decades have become particularly interested in the archaeology of the highlands, because of the state of conservation of the

remains and important cultural singularities. The research programmes are focused primarily on the island of Gran Canaria, because of the size of the island, the monumental nature of the sites, and the cultural and scientific importance of the archaeological material on the island. The process of recognition of the cultural landscape has intensified the level of interest.

Boundaries

The nominated property occupies an area of 9425 ha, and a buffer zone of 8557 ha.

The boundaries of the nominated property and its buffer zone are delineated by the topography of the Caldera de Tejeda, following the crests of the surrounding mountains. The cultural landscape can be seen almost in its entirety from any point in the zone of the nominated property. It does however include the rock escarpments of Tamadaba and Barranco Hondo ravine, with Risco Caído, which do not form part of the more extensive Caldera. Their boundaries are however inside the watersheds formed by the crests of the surrounding mountains.

The nominated property has a large buffer zone in the south, which includes the landscape on the southern slope of The Caldera de Tejeda. The buffer zone also extends around the Barranco Hondo ravine to include Artenara, Las Cuevas, Las Arbejas and Juncalillo.

ICOMOS notes that, bearing in mind the recent discovery at Risco Caído, the archaeological potential in the buffer zone is promising.

ICOMOS wishes to stress however that many of the archaeological sites and sites of ethnographic interest listed are located inside and outside the buffer zone. The additional information states that these sites, including the archaeological site of Tirma, are of lesser importance than the most significant attributes present inside the property in terms of value, integrity and state of conservation. They are located in the foothills zone, in gorges that converge towards the mountains or on the coast, and are always located outside the Caldera de Tejeda, in a different geographic and cultural context.

The buffer zone also includes some events of ethnographic interest, which are not linked to the values expressed in the nominated property, but are of significant local interest.

State of conservation

Despite significant changes in the environment and landscape of Gran Canaria island, the cultural landscape of Risco Caído is in a good state of conservation, partly because of its isolated location. The factors affecting the property were fortunately identified in time, and strategies have been put in place to protect the property's values. The high levels of endemism and biodiversity observed in certain zones, such as Tamadaba, are good indicators. It should be noted however that this has not always been the case, as forest resources were overexploited after the Spanish conquest. The pine forests disappeared almost in their entirety because of the timber trade. The State Party

stresses however that today the forests are being supported by reforestation programmes, and almost the whole zone is included in one of the protection categories of the Canary Island Network of Protected Natural Areas (ENP in Spanish).

The State Party also indicates that, although the troglodyte settlements are in a good state of conservation, restoration work is currently under way at certain sites. Restrictions are also in force to regulate or prevent access, as at Risco Caído and Roque Bentayga, with guided tours being provided.

Based on information provided by the State Party and the observations of the ICOMOS technical evaluation mission, ICOMOS considers that the state of conservation is satisfactory.

Factors affecting the property

One of the main factors affecting the property mentioned by the State Party is development pressure, particularly from new building, sometimes on protected land, and the unfortunate rehabilitation and use of old buildings, and also from illegal tracks, high and medium voltage overhead cables, certain water works and the nocturnal lighting of some isolated hamlets. The State Party indicates however that the Integrated Management Plan for Risco Caído includes directives for the sustainable management of troglodyte dwellings and for the style of new buildings.

Based on the observations of the technical evaluation mission however, ICOMOS notes that new developments have been authorised, albeit in very small numbers, which do not comply with the recommendations. The State Party says the developments are examples of what it is striving to prevent. ICOMOS considers that the nominated property shows relatively few signs of being affected by development pressure, as there are few incentives to create tourist infrastructure or additional residential zones in the area.

In the additional information, the State Party indicates that town planning legislation in the nominated property prevents the construction of new buildings, which is not the case in the buffer zone, where building plots exist with restrictions on building type. The integrated management plan also stipulates that overhead cables must be buried and that sources of light pollution must be eliminated.

The ransacking or illicit occupation of certain troglodyte settlements constitute another factor affecting the property. The State Party indicates that the island's government (Cabildo de Gran Canaria) has stepped up its inspection activities to reduce this risk.

Environmental constraints are linked to the volcanic origin of Gran Canaria, which means that the rock on which much of the troglodyte heritage is built is somewhat fragile. Effects linked to agents of erosion such as water, vegetation and the development of micro-organisms also cause the rock to deteriorate. The State Party indicates

that specific factors affecting the rock include flaking of the walls, microfissures, and alterations to the pigments on the walls. The control of microclimatic data carried out on the main archaeological sites is therefore extremely important.

Exotic and invasive species are one of the main threats to the biodiversity of the nominated property. The State Party indicates that the Environment Ministry is currently actively engaged in clearing exotic plants, and that landowners are being encouraged to participate in this effort through incentive measures. As for fauna, it should be noted that some species, such as goats, rabbits and feral cats are also risk factors. Their irregular distribution causes severe damage to certain species of autochthonous flora and has a very negative effect on afforestation work. ICOMOS takes note of the efforts being made by the Environment Ministry to eradicate disruptive species.

Fire risk is one of the important threats to the nominated property identified by the State Party. Means for preventing and fighting fire have been considerably expanded by the State Party, with the installation of new surveillance booths, the upgrading of the water reservoir network for land and air based fire services, the modernisation of telecommunications facilities and the installation of spark arrestors in the chimneys of buildings.

Risks of drought, and its effects on the local economy and particularly on traditional agricultural practices, are also a threat to the perpetuation of some cultural traditions. The State Party stresses that, after a long period of development focused mainly on tourism in the island's coastal areas, the new Gran Canaria Special Territorial Plan for Hydrology (PTE-4) now guarantees water supplies and agricultural irrigation needs for the highlands in the interior of the island.

ICOMOS notes that pressure from visitors, though very low up to now, has increased over the last few years. Tourism activities are concentrated mainly around La Puerta del Nublo, Roque Bentayga and Roque Nublo. The State Party stresses that, to enable better regulation of the inflow of tourists to these sites, interpretation centres have been created, with new paths and information panels. The State Party also indicates that the new tourism strategy will help in the management of the growing number of visitors. IUCN also stresses that it will be important to make sure that any change in visitor levels, as a result of possible inclusion in the World Heritage List, is proactively managed to ensure that zones that are important for the conservation of the blue chaffinch are protected.

3 Proposed justification for inscription

Proposed justification

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The cultural landscape has revealed ample archaeological evidence of the development of an island culture, now extinct, that evolved in isolation for at least 1500 years from the Amazigh settlers who reached the Canary Islands from the Maghreb.
- The property harbours a large number of troglodyte settlements, distributed along the cliffs and crags of the Caldera de Tejera, which bear witness to an outstanding level of adaptation by the early population of the island to a difficult environment. The use of the troglodyte dwellings did not end with the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, and has been perpetuated up to the present day.
- The cultural landscape is a mountain area organised by mankind, founded on references both to landmarks and to the skyline, maintaining and expressing the symbolic and cosmological vision of the aboriginal society of Amazigh origin.
- The sanctuaries with astronomical connotations are unique expressions of their genre, bearing witness to the high level of knowledge of the aboriginal people in the fields of geometry and astronomy.
- The nominated property hosts ancestral practices and land-use techniques that are perfectly adapted to the territory, such as transhumance routes, farming terraces, and water-management systems, that form an integral part of the cultural landscape.
- The geology and morphology of the cultural landscape, its ecosystem and its biodiversity, and its dark night sky, express a unique relationship between human beings and nature, which is reflected in the cosmological vision, calendar and rites of the early Canarians.
- The cultural marks of the ancient Imazighen have survived, not only in the form of Libyco-Berber inscriptions, but also by impregnating the place names, customs and practices relating to a range of aspects of rural life.

In the additional information of November 2018, the State Party indicates that historical and archaeological data link the nominated property to the ancestral territory referred to as "Tirma" in the chronicles of the conquest. ICOMOS stresses that Risco Caído is only one site amongst the sacred mountains of Gran Canaria.

In the additional information supplied in February 2019, the State Party stresses that, in view of the history of the place as a cultural site, and the appropriation of the name by local communities, it seems preferable for the stakeholders to maintain the name initially proposed.

Comparative analysis

The comparative analysis is presented in five parts: a comparison with properties having an astronomical component, a comparison including properties with troglodyte habitats and/or rock art, a comparison with properties relating to techniques and uses of the territory, a comparison with properties inscribed on the World Heritage List with regard to the overall significance of the cultural landscape, and a comparison with other properties at local and regional level.

In its comparative analysis, the State Party has drawn on the following ICOMOS thematic studies: Rock Art of the Sahara and North Africa (2007), Cultural Landscapes of the Pacific Islands (2007), Heritage Sites of Astronomy and Archaeoastronomy in the context of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (2010, 2017), and The cultural Heritage of Water in the Middle East and the Maghreb (2015).

The State Party stresses that – with the exceptions of Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (India, 2010, (iii), (iv)), and the Historic Monuments of Dengfeng (China, 2010, (iii), (vi)) –, the astronomical heritage is under-represented on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The State Party indicates that Rapa Nui National Park (Chile, 1995, (i), (iii), (v)) and the Megalithic Temples of Malta (inscription 1980, extension 1992, minor modification of boundaries 2015, (iv)), which include works and expressions with astronomical significance, are the two properties in island settings that are most comparable with the Cultural Landscape of Risco Caído. The State Party also points out that there are no expressions of this type of Amazigh culture in the Maghreb inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The State Party also compares the nominated property with two other properties that include troglodyte habitats and/or rock art, and concludes that there is no other cultural landscape in an island setting with attributes that include troglodyte settlements. Only Mesa Verde National Park (United States of America, 1978, (iii)), Göreme National Park and the Rock Sites of Cappadocia (Turkey, 1985, (i), (iii), (v), (vii)), and The Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera (Italy, 1993, (iii), (iv), (v)), are expressions of troglodyte habitat with a great diversity of uses, and are considered to constitute a complete ecosystem in the same way as Risco Caído. The State Party stresses however that the Cultural Landscape of Risco Caído is the only property that includes sanctuaries with astronomical connotations.

The State Party compares the Cultural Landscape of Risco Caído with Dougga / Thugga (Tunisia, 1997, (ii), (iii)). Dougga is essentially a Roman site, but it has some Libyco-Berber inscriptions which are among the very few to have been deciphered, one of which is the sole inscription ever to have been dated with certainty.

The State Party compares the cultural landscape of Risco Caído with properties inscribed on the World Heritage List that are related to land use and its techniques. The State Party indicates that the nominated property is the only property to include transhumance and markers of agropastoralism in an island setting. The varieties of prehistoric seeds that are still cultivated today are said to be a unique expression compared with other cultural landscapes associated with terrace farming systems. Although some connections have been identified with certain water collection and distribution systems and techniques in the Berber Maghreb, the State Party stresses that the nominated property is different in that it combines the archaeological heritage with a troglodyte habitat.

In the local and regional context, the State Party stresses that the Canary Islands are the only group in the Macaronesian archipelago to have been settled prior to the European expansion of the 14th and 15th centuries.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis is exhaustive, and examines all the attributes of the cultural landscape. The comparative analysis includes a wide range of properties with astronomical characteristics and function, and sets out the context of this nomination and the gaps that it would fill in terms of the World Heritage List.

In the regional and chronological context, the comparative study rightly concentrates on island cultures and territories, and on the Maghreb and North Africa, where the closest cultural parallels can be drawn. ICOMOS notes that the cultural landscape of Risco Caído would be an invaluable counterpart to that of Dougga. Whereas Dougga represents a total merging of Libyan elements with Punic and Latin elements, the nominated property is said to represent an exclusively Libyco-Berber manifestation which was maintained as such up to a period when Libyco-Berber specificity, at least in terms of writing, had already long disappeared from the non-Touareg part of the Maghreb.

ICOMOS also stresses that the troglodyte habitat is a fundamental and crucial element of the cultural landscape of Risco Caído, as is its variety of uses, and is only represented elsewhere in the example of the Sassi and the Park of Rupestrian Churches of Matera, in Italy. This troglodyte tradition can also be considered as one of the signs of the identity of Amazigh culture, even though its richness and diversity are not represented in any property inscribed on the World Heritage List.

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii) and (v).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the set of archaeological sites and rock art manifestations bears unique and exceptional testimony to an extinct island culture that evolved in isolation for over 1500 years. Archaeological and historical evidence from the nominated property confirm the fact that this culture arose from the first settlers that came from the Berber Maghreb, and that the sacred mountains were the final refuge of the ancient Canarians before the Spanish conquest. The nominated property provides exceptional testimony of an island culture that includes the skyscape as a fundamental part of the perception of their world, rites and beliefs.

ICOMOS considers that the cultural landscape, with the archaeological sites, the rock art and other cultural expressions, bear outstanding testimony to an extinct island culture, which has connections –admittedly hard to characterise in detail– with present-day cultures in the Maghreb. Within this set of sites, whose overall richness is unquestionable, there are two sites which are probably cultural, and outstanding from an architectural viewpoint: Risco Caído and Roque Bentayga.

This pre-Hispanic culture is extinct, but the caves, farming terraces, granaries, water management systems and ancient trails have been preserved. The traditions of local communities in the region still resonate with direct and indirect references to this past way of life.

ICOMOS stresses however that, on the basis of the information currently available, it is difficult to establish with any certainty whether it is correct to refer to certain archaeological elements as “astronomical markers” or “solstice markers”. Other interpretations are questionable, such as the triangular motifs interpreted as vulvas, and the assertion that there was a Mother Earth cult.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (iii) has been justified.

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;

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the aboriginal troglodyte settlements of the Caldera de Tejada and the surrounding area are an unrepeatable example of this kind of human habitat in ancient island cultures. They illustrate a highly efficient and complex level of organisation of the space and adaptive resource management. The caves, the sanctuaries, the farming activities and the terraces blend with the natural landscape to create a genuine cultural landscape, that still today maintains its main symbolic and cosmological connotations. The troglodyte habitat has been kept alive as a way of life over time, creating new ways of occupying the space that express the syncretism between the local Amazigh culture and the Spanish culture introduced after the conquest.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property contains forms of settlement, agriculture, and land and water management that are an outstanding example of interaction between man and the environment in ancient island cultures. The archaeological remains and the cultural landscape have on the whole survived in an outstandingly visible way.

ICOMOS also notes that the cultural landscape of Risco Caído includes a large number of troglodyte settlements, bearing witness to the remarkable efforts of the island's original settlers to adapt to a difficult environment. While some sites date back to the pre-Hispanic period, the use

of the troglodyte settlements did not disappear with the arrival of the Spanish conquerors, and has been perpetuated, albeit with some adaptations, up to a very recent period.

ICOMOS considers that criterion (v) has been justified.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (iii) and (v).

Integrity and authenticity

Integrity

Most of the nominated property and the buffer zone are delineated geographically by the Caldera de Tejada, and many of the boundaries follow the crests of the surrounding mountains. ICOMOS considers that all the attributes of potential Outstanding Universal Value are included in the nominated property zone.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property has remained largely intact and has not been affected by any damaging development. Over recent years, the main sites have experienced positive change, mainly as a result of tourism impact management and information dissemination. Infrastructures have recently been improved in the buffer zone, where most of the built-up areas are located.

The State Party indicates that the information technology used in the management system for the nominated property also includes a system in which local farmers are considered as partners in environmental management.

ICOMOS notes however that erosion is one of the main deterioration processes observed. The region is currently experiencing a serious drought, which reduces the effectiveness of plant cover in protecting the soil.

Authenticity

The archaeological sites are authentic in their design and materials, their situation and their setting, their function and the associated spiritual traditions, which are still alive today.

The troglodyte settlements have largely retained the original form and design of their architectural elements, and of the many decorative elements and crafted objects that enable an understanding of the ways of life of the societies that occupied the sites. ICOMOS considers that the results of archaeological research and excavations on the site also bear witness to its authenticity.

ICOMOS considers that the astral interpretation attributed to the troglodyte sites with a large number of rock art images, and the assertion of the existence of a Mother Earth cult, will need to be confirmed in the future. However, this does not mean that the rock art itself is not authentic, but only that there are questions about interpretation.

ICOMOS notes that part of the cultural landscape of Risco Caído, and Tamadaba in particular, is considered to be one of the most significant sites in the Canary Islands for biodiversity. Several of the landscapes in this region can be considered as genuine vestiges of the natural habitat of the first settlers of the Canary Islands.

Traditional land-use practices bear witness to the continuity of traditional rural organisation models, and of mountain agriculture, with its smallholdings, terraces, family gardens, threshing areas and orchards. The whole nominated property is also connected by a complete network of trails, which are often the same as the trails used by the ancient Canarians, but which are also used as transhumance routes and pilgrimage paths.

The techniques and traditional structures linked to the culture of water are still in place. Some are still in use and others have been abandoned. The territory and landscape have been sculpted to create farming terraces, supported by dry stone walls that are sometimes literally suspended, and water collection and distribution systems.

The nominated property and its surrounding area bear witness to a living knowledge of the ethnographic heritage of flora and fauna and their uses, particularly as regards medicinal plants. Traditional practices connected to pottery are also a significant example of how the cultural heritage continues to be expressed in the landscape.

ICOMOS considers that it would be advisable to obtain additional information about the genetic studies performed on mummified human remains. ICOMOS also notes that it is necessary to know how these remains would be conserved and presented to the public.

The additional information provided in February 2019 confirms that genetic analysis has detected the presence of DNA of North African origin in the indigenous population of the Canary Islands. These results suggest that the colonisation of the islands was a heterogeneous process, and that different islands may have had different evolutionary histories. Analyses have also been carried out on domestic animals and plants found in archaeological contexts. The genetic analyses performed on pre-Hispanic pigs, for example, have shown the presence of bloodlines linked to wild boar from North Africa. ICOMOS stresses however that the conservation of human remains will have to be fully integrated into the management of the property.

ICOMOS considers that the requirements of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Evaluation of the proposed justification for inscription

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of the nominated property for the World Heritage List.

The nominated property is an evolving cultural landscape, which is both a relic and a living landscape. The archaeological sites, and the troglodyte settlements and

rock art of the ancient Canarians, bear witness to this culture, which became extinct after the Spanish conquest. Many aspects of the ways of life of the ancient Canarians have continued to inspire land organisation and management, as reflected in the troglodyte habitat, water management and transhumance routes. Furthermore, the spatial organisation, and the relationship of the attributes with each other and with the geography of the landscape, in the form of symbolic geographical markers, support the importance of the nominated property in heritage terms.

The property meets criteria (iii) and (v) and the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

Attributes

The material attributes expressing the Outstanding Universal Value of the property are: the archaeological sites and artefacts associated with all these historic periods, and particularly the troglodyte settlements (habitats, granaries, cisterns, cavities with rock art images and cavities with cultural significance). The mountains, the escarpments of Tamadaba, biodiversity, rural settlements and the terrace landscapes are attributes of the cultural landscape, in view of their extremely close links to cultural practices over the course of history. The trails established by the ancient Canarians, and the transhumance routes across the landscape are also attributes of the property's outstanding universal value. Finally, the cultural practices, knowhow and astronomical knowledge, and many other aspects of the intangible cultural heritage of the communities in the nominated property (in particular language, place names, ecological knowledge, crafts, activities and seasonal rituals) are attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value of this cultural landscape. A full list of the attributes is provided in the nomination dossier.

ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets the conditions of authenticity and integrity, and meets criteria (iii) and (v).

4 Conservation measures and monitoring

Conservation measures

Many active conservation measures are being taken, including conservation and rehabilitation initiatives and programmes. The Ministry of the Environment, in conjunction with associations and landowners, is actively involved in the upkeep and surveillance of the property. Furthermore, the protection requirements to preserve the nominated property are guaranteed in a long-term perspective by virtue of the legal and planning measures that apply to the zone and its attributes.

The integrated management plan for Risco Caído includes a priority action plan to meet conservation needs in the zone in which the main attributes are located. In addition to preserving the physical integrity of the property, another objective is to restore the original landscape, with its endemic flora and vegetation. This measure is not only

intended to preserve the landscape, but has also become a teaching resource and a tourist attraction.

Another measure is the conservation and upkeep of the ancient trails. The State Party indicates that the Ministry of the Environment, in conjunction with the associations and landowners, will actively participate in the upkeep and monitoring of the nominated property.

The conservation strategy for the region is also focused on the intangible heritage. Ancestral livestock rearing methods, such as transhumance, have been supported by the strategic plan for the primary sector, and by initiatives intended to preserve trade and knowhow, such as the tradition of ceramic production and cheese production.

Specific conservation measures are being applied to certain troglodyte settlements. A landscape enhancement project is under way at Risco Caido. At Cuevas del Rey, conservation work is currently under way on the slopes and access paths, as at Bentayga. At Risco Chapín, work has been carried out to prevent the collapse of the entrance, panels have been installed to prevent sunlight from entering the interior, and runoff water has been channelled away.

In the additional information, the State Party indicates that a multi-disciplinary team was recently set up. An initial field campaign took place in 2018, with the aim of continuing archaeoastronomical research.

The State Party has committed itself, in the integrated management plan, to carrying out a permanent programme of research on the property, recognising that the importance of the property is the direct result of research. ICOMOS considers that it is important that the archaeological research programme should be specifically linked to the conservation of the property, and that it should answer research questions relating to the proposed Outstanding Universal Value.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the current state of conservation of the environment and of the significant heritage elements, including the periodic reports to be submitted to the World Heritage Committee, will be carried out by the Cabildo de Gran Canaria, as the entity responsible for the nomination and the monitoring of the property.

Information about the state of the property will be collected and recorded each year, and a periodic report will be drawn up every 6 years, on the basis of this information, to evaluate the state of conservation and management.

ICOMOS considers that the conservation and monitoring measures are appropriate to maintain the value, authenticity and integrity of the property.

5 Protection and management

Documentation

The Museo Canario has produced an exhaustive set of archaeological maps for the Cuenca de Tejeda Spatial Plan. The archaeological maps were revised and updated in 2004-2005. The inventory of rock art was finalised in 2007 and deals specifically with the zone in which the nominated property is located.

The ethnographic heritage, both tangible and intangible, has also been studied in depth, and an inventory has been drawn up based on the ethnographic maps.

As for the environment, it is important to note that a large number of reports and in-depth studies were undertaken as part of the process of devising legal concepts for the protection of the zone. When the planning system was devised, reports on the state of the environment were drawn up for each protected area. This is also the case for the development of special conservation zones (SAC) forming part of the European network Natura 2000.

ICOMOS notes that, in English, the term “troglodyte” has a negative connotation. ICOMOS suggests that the State Party should consider changing this term, and using “cave” instead, for example.

In the additional information supplied in February 2019, the State Party indicates that, in its future documents, the term “cave” will be used for contemporary dwellings, while the term “troglodyte” will be used in a historical context.

Legal protection

Law 4/1999 of 15 March 1999 on the Historic Heritage of the Canary Islands in Article 62, relative to Archaeological Sites of Cultural Interest, states that “all sites, locations, caves, shelters or mediums that contain rock art” are declared as such. Thus, as with national law, by virtue of autonomous law, all manifestations of rock art in the Sacred Mountain area of Gran Canaria are automatically considered as Heritage of Public Interest (BIC), which means that the provisions and level of protection established therein apply to them.

The nominated property is also integrated into the various planning instruments, that is: the Land Use Plan for the Municipality of Agaete; the Artenara Municipality Subsidiary Land Use Rules; the Land Use Plan for the Municipality of Galdar; and the Land Use Plan for the Municipality of Tejeda.

The State Party also indicates that the Special Territorial Plan for Historical Heritage (PTE-6) provides the island with the regulatory coverage that is necessary to protect its historical heritage as part of the island’s management plan.

A large proportion of the nominated cultural landscape is classified as an Area of Special Heritage Interest (ARIP) under the title “Highland Area I – Troglodyte Settlements” (ARIP 3). The second ARIP, entitled “Highland Area II – The

Traditional Rural Area”, is also included in the cultural landscape.

In the additional information, the State Party indicates that all the cultural sites, whether ethnographic or archaeological, have the same level of protection in the nominated property zone and in the buffer zone. The State Party also points out that the ARIP, in force since 2003, no longer match the updated inventory of archaeological sites. A procedure has been under way, since 2017, to redelineate the ARIPs in the nominated property zone.

Most of the nominated property and its buffer zone are included in one or more of the protected categories in the Canary Island Network of Natural Areas (ENP). Furthermore, the property is also located inside the Gran Canaria Biosphere Reserve. All the protection and management measures relating to this category of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere programme (MAB) therefore apply in this territory.

At local level, the property is protected in four categories: rural park, natural monument, natural reserve and protected landscape. The legal environmental framework of these zones is regulated by the Land-use and Management plans that apply in each case.

Most of the area of the nominated property and its buffer zone is included in the European Natura 2000 Network. Four zones with an impact on the nominated property have been declared Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

The Gran Canaria Land-use Planning Instrument (PIO-GC) plans the use of natural, cultural, territorial and urban resources for the island of Gran Canaria. Gran Canaria's PIO, definitively approved in 2003, defines the territorial model and island planning, establishing a model for territorial organisation and use to ensure sustainable development. The PIO does not plan any new zoned areas for the nominated property and its buffer zone.

The new Canarian land law also provides additional legal protection, i.e. the new statutes of the Canary Islands (2018). In the additional information, the State Party indicates that this new law will improve the protection of the cultural landscape by reducing the impact of certain factors which are not specifically covered in the various planning regulations.

It is also stated in the additional information that the nominated property is a multi-internationally designated area site (MIDAS). Internationally designated sites can potentially act synergistically to improve the protection and management of the property.

ICOMOS and the IUCN however considered that it was important to better understand how the overlaps between the delineations of the nominated property and its buffer zone, and the various protection measures, are managed on the ground. It was also necessary to know the implications for Barranco Hondo, given that it is not a Natura

2000 site and that it is not entirely covered by the local designations.

In the additional information provided in February 2019, the State Party indicates that the zones not included in the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) of the Natura 2000 network are those already subject to traditional agricultural protection and the rural habitat zones. The State Party also stresses that the protection and conservation measures of the Natura 2000 network are based on those stipulated for the Canary Island Network of Natural Areas (ENP), in cases where the two zones overlap.

In the part of the property that is not included in the protected zones, i.e. mainly the Barranco Hondo zone, several additional protection aspects are set out in the town planning regulations. In addition to the cultural protection zone, there are three other territorial protection categories: protected rural landscape, protected rural horticultural land, and traditional agricultural land. The State Party notes that the only parts of this zone not covered by these protection systems are rural habitat zones. They are however covered by rural land status, which prohibits any development activity.

Management system

The Cabildo de Gran Canaria is responsible for the management of the nominated property, and is the competent authority, particularly as regards cultural heritage, the environment and land use.

The State Party stresses however that, in view of the new challenges and objectives arising from the nomination, the Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape Steering Committee was created in 2015 to ensure the permanent coordination of the management of the nominated property, and the intervention and action strategy. One of the main contributions of the Steering Committee was the drawing up of the Integrated Management Plan for the cultural landscape of Risco Caído in 2015. The management and governance structure is completed by the “Foundation for Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria”, which is currently being set up.

The State Party stresses that around twenty persons currently participate in the protection and management of the cultural landscape. The Regional Ministry of the Environment takes charge of the operational management of environmental conservation and risk prevention tasks. The process set up to unify the public management system of the cultural landscape and the network of interpretation centres will also require trained local staff.

The conservation measures are funded by ordinary investments and specific investments to promote the cultural landscape. Ordinary investments are funded by the Government of the Canary Islands, but also by the central government and the European Union. These funds cover a wide range of actions (environmental, social and infrastructure-related) and are usually managed under the responsibility of the Cabildo de Gran Canaria.

The integrated management plan covers protection and conservation; research and monitoring; education and capacity-building; raising awareness of and presenting the property; public use and the responsible tourism system; sustainable local development; participation and coordination; and adapting planning. The integral management plan is discussed and adopted by the Steering Committee. The master plan is assessed and updated each year.

In the additional information, the State Party stresses that the water management policy, as defined in the Hydrological Plan, is based on gradually covering the need for desalinated water for coastal crops for tourism purposes. This strategy is intended to guarantee the water supply for the highlands and foothills, where traditional farming still exists, and where water is essential for maintaining the agricultural landscape and the local economy.

As for long-term planning and risk preparedness, the State Party refers to fire risks. ICOMOS considers that the Fire Prevention Defence Plan is crucially important. It would be important to carry out a detailed examination of the potential impact of climate change on the property.

Visitor management

The infrastructure for visitors can be divided into three parts: the network of interpretation centres and places to visit, the network of trails and mountain refuges, and the network of observation points and the local accommodation system.

The network of interpretation centres currently consists of the centre at Risco Caído (Artenara), the centre at Bentayga (Tejeda) and the centre at Degollada de Peraza (Tejeda). The Cultural Landscape Management, Research and Monitoring Centre is to be built in the near future at Tejeda, in the south-east of the buffer zone.

The whole region is covered by a complete network of trails. All the itineraries are clearly signed and thematically based, and equipped with digital facilities. The network also includes scattered mountain refuges.

The property has a single hotel, some rural inns, and rural guest houses which are approved for tourist accommodation, most of which are in caves.

ICOMOS stressed that it would be desirable to obtain details about the intended functions of the Cultural Landscape Management, Research and Monitoring Centre, and the schedule for bringing it into service.

The additional information provided in February 2019 indicates that the Centre is scheduled to open in September 2019, and that the budget has already been approved by the Cabildo de Gran Canaria. The objective of the Centre is: to carry out management tasks relating to the property, including on-site management, coordination of activities, action projects and administrative work; to support research activities; to carry out on-site monitoring of the parameters and indicators affecting the property; to implement training activities and the acquisition of the skills needed to promote

and manage the property; to provide an exhibition space and meeting rooms.

An analysis of the number of visitors suggests that current numbers could be in excess of 100,000 per year. In view of the potential increase in visitor numbers if the nomination is successful, the new tourism strategy needs to be implemented as soon as possible.

Community involvement

In the additional information, the State Party stresses the involvement of the local communities in the upkeep of the cultural landscape, but also in research work, and their participation in public decisions. The State Party indicates that this participative management process for the property, formally established in 2016, initially concentrated on the participation of the local community in the drawing up of the Integrated Management Plan for the cultural landscape, and then on the creation of the Citizens' Commission for the cultural landscape, consisting of associations and the local population. The State Party also indicates that the role of the municipalities has been essential in the management strategy and in the setting up of the Foundation currently being created.

ICOMOS considers that the fact that all the elected representatives of the four municipalities involved in the candidacy, and the elected members of the Cabildo de Gran Canaria, have signed the Declaration of Mountain Areas of Gran Canaria, bears witness to the degree of local commitment to participating in the management of the property.

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the protection and management of the nominated property

ICOMOS considers that the protection measures for the nominated property and the buffer zone are in place, and provide appropriate protection for the nominated property. ICOMOS stresses that, although the Barranco Hondo ravine is not included in the network of protected natural areas, it is covered by several additional local protection measures.

ICOMOS considers that the property management system is appropriate. ICOMOS notes however that the Steering Committee should set up as soon as possible the Cultural Landscape Management, Research and Monitoring Centre which is scheduled to open in September 2019. It should also make sure that the new special territorial hydrological plan for Gran Canaria is implemented.

ICOMOS considers that the property management system is appropriate, but that it will be necessary to set up the Cultural Landscape Management, Research and Monitoring Centre. The implementation of the new special territorial hydrological plan for Gran Canaria inside the property and adequate distribution of water to farmers must be effectively ensured.

6 Conclusion

ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List. The nominated property meets the conditions of authenticity and integrity, and meets criteria (iii) and (v).

The cultural landscape of Risco Caído bears witness to the local presence of a pre-Hispanic island culture, which evolved in total isolation from the arrival of the first Berbers from North Africa, probably at the beginning of our era, until the Spanish conquest. The property bears witness to the efforts made by the island's original population to adapt to a difficult environment.

In the culture of the ancient Canarians, the mountains were considered as sacred and a cult was devoted to them, and this is confirmed by the first Spanish people to arrive, who referred to sacred sites at which seasonal ceremonies took place. Within this ensemble, whose overall richness is outstanding, there are two particular troglodyte settlements very probably of a cultural nature, which are outstanding from an architectural viewpoint, and have many cave art images: Risco Caído and Roque Bentayga.

Furthermore, the trails established by the ancient Canarians strengthen the relationship which past and present occupants have maintained with the sites. The transhumance routes, whose ancient origin is unquestionable, are still used by local livestock farmers, as are the troglodyte cisterns, and they bear witness to the continuity of traditional models of rural organisation. The mountains, the escarpments, the biodiversity, the rural settlements and the terraced landscapes are all attributes of the cultural landscape with very close links with cultural practices, throughout the history of Gran Canaria island.

Interactions between the landscape and communities of yesterday and today imbue the landscape with tangible and intangible values, such as traditional uses associated with the island's endemic flora, traditional land use, social and religious uses, which are very closely linked with the geography and the characteristics of the landscape, and bear witness to the Outstanding Universal Value of the nominated property.

7 Recommendations

Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape, Spain, be inscribed as a Cultural Landscape on the World Heritage List on the basis of **criteria (iii) and (v)**.

Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

Brief synthesis

Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape encompasses a huge central mountainous area on Gran Canaria island, sheltered by the Caldera de Tejeda, and formed of cliffs and ravines, in an area of exceptional biodiversity. The property contains a set of manifestations, which are primarily archaeological, of an extinct insular culture that seems to have evolved in total isolation, from the arrival of the first Berbers from North Africa, probably at the beginning of our era, until the Spanish conquest in the 15th century. The property has troglodyte sites, which contain a large number of rock art images, some of which are very probably cultural, and farming settlements, giving rise to a cultural landscape that still conserves most of its original elements, and the visual relationships between them. The vestiges of this pre-Hispanic culture have survived in time and space, shaping the landscape, and conserving traditional practices such as transhumance, terrace-farming installations, and water management installations. The Libyco-Berber inscriptions constitute unquestionable proof of the local presence of a pre-Hispanic culture, and bear testimony to the westernmost expression of Amazigh culture, which, for the first time, evolved into another unique insular culture.

Criterion (iii): All the archaeological sites and rock art manifestations of the Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Cultural Landscape bear unique and exceptional testimony to an extinct insular culture that seems to have evolved in isolation for more than 1500 years. The archaeological and historic testimony of the property bear out the fact that this culture stems from the original populations from the Berber Maghreb, which is in itself exceptional, as this is a unique case of an insular culture whose origins go back to the Amazigh world.

Criterion (v): The troglodyte sites of the Caldera de Tejeda are a unique example of this type of habitat in ancient insular cultures, illustrating a complex level of organisation of space and of adaptive management of resources. The spatial distribution and the sites documented enable a detailed understanding of the ways in which the ancient Canarians made use of the territory. This is an exceptional case, in which traditional land use practices that are highly adaptive and original, stemming from a culture that has disappeared, are still in use today.

Integrity

The property, whose geographical boundaries are set by the Caldera de Tejeda, has spectacular and monumental physical characteristics, sacred forests, troglodyte settlements on the cliffs and summits, agricultural installations for terrace farming and trails established by the ancient Canarians. The relationships between the different attributes are clearly visible, with numerous viewsheds for visitors. The property's integrity makes it an exceptional cultural landscape, that is both complete and very harmonious, representing the final mountain refuge of the

Imazighen on the Canary Islands. Over the last few years, there has been a positive evolution in the integrity of the main sites, mainly driven by the management of tourism impact and the dissemination of information.

Authenticity

Part of the cultural landscape is considered one of the greatest expressions of biodiversity in the Canary Islands, and can be considered as a genuine vestige of the natural habitat of the first inhabitants of the Canary Islands. The authenticity of the attributes of the property is made manifest in particular by sites that are probably cultural, former granaries and multiple examples of troglodyte settlements which largely retain their original form and design, particularly troglodyte sites decorated with rock art images and bearing Libyco-Berber inscriptions. The situation and the setting of the main sites have remained without significant change for more than 500 years after the Spanish conquest. Even the route of the ancient trails, the underground cisterns and the location of the former refuges have been maintained in time and space. As a result, the main scenic elements of the cultural landscape and skyline, including the night sky, have remained virtually unchanged since the Spanish conquest in the 15th century.

Management and protection requirements

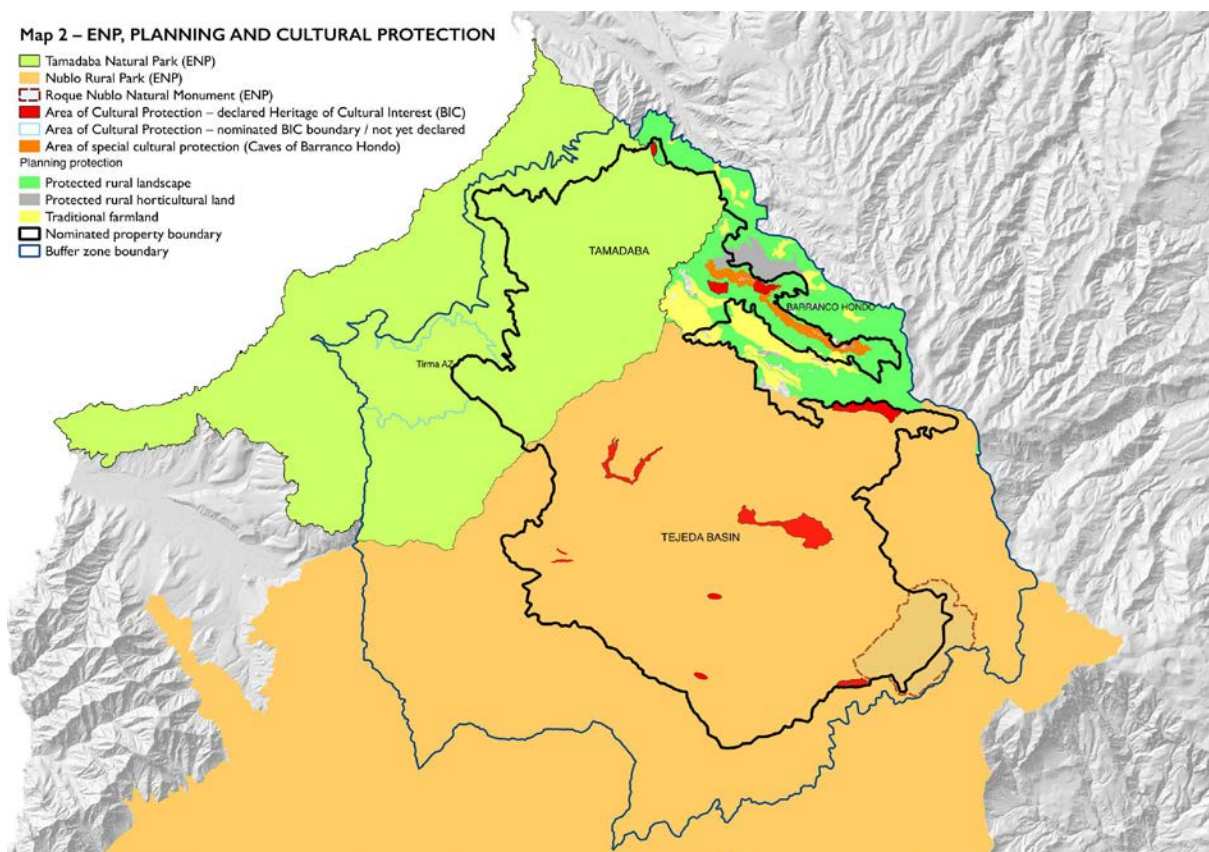
A set of protection measures for the property ensures the complete protection of the landscape and of all the cultural and natural attributes of the property, in a short and medium term perspective. As for the cultural heritage, the main attributes have been inscribed on the list of Properties of Cultural Interest, which entitles them to maximum protection status both in national legislation and in Canarian regional legislation. The majority of the property and its buffer zone is also covered by some of the protection measures of the Canary Island Network of Protected Natural Areas, and of the European Natura 2000 network.

The Cabildo de Gran Canaria is responsible, and is the competent authority, for managing the property by virtue of the devolved powers it holds. It has the means and the human and financial resources to address this task. Bearing in mind the new challenges and objectives entailed by the nomination, such as enhancing grass-roots participation in the management process, a steering committee was set up in 2015 to provide permanent coordination of the management and the intervention/action strategy for the property. One of the Steering Committee's main contributions has been to draw up the Integrated Management Plan for Risco Caído. The management and governance organisational chart of the nominated property has been completed by the Risco Caído and the Sacred Mountains of Gran Canaria Foundation, which is currently in the process of being set up. The integrated management plan stresses the importance of considering the cultural landscape values as a whole, including addressing questions such as the protection of the landscape and skyline, promoting local produce, sustainable mobility and the fostering of a sustainable tourism model.

Additional recommendations

ICOMOS further recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- a) Ensuring that the Cultural Landscape Management, Research and Monitoring Centre is operational as soon as possible,
- b) Setting up the Risco Caído Foundation, in order to consolidate the participative management mode of the property,
- c) Drawing up a risk preparedness plan covering fire risks and climate change,
- d) Implementing the new tourism strategy,
- e) Including an archaeological research plan that is integrated with the conservation of the property,
- f) Implementing the new Gran Canaria special territorial hydrological plan (PTE-4) inside the property and ensure that an adequate water supply is effectively distributed to current and emerging farmers;



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property (February 2019)



General view of the Tejeda Basin



View of Roque Nublo at night



Group of caves on the slopes of Mesa de Acusa



Panoramic view of the interior walls of Los Candiles cave sanctuary in Risco Chapín