



Piedra Pajarilla: A candidate for nomination as Global Heritage Stone Resource from Spain

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Piedra Pajarilla is a tourmaline bearing leucogranite outcropping at Martinamor, near Salamanca, Spain. It is part of the Hercynian granitic chain in the Spanish Central System. The stone received the local name “Piedra Pajarilla”, meaning “Little Bird Stone” due to the shape of the many tourmaline aggregates that are the main visual feature of the rock. This local name has been extrapolated to every granitic stone used in the area, even if they differ significantly in mineralogy, and as recently tested in physical and mechanical properties as well. Here we present the nomination of Piedra Pajarilla as a suitable “Global Heritage Stone Resource”. This stone ideally fits the newly proposed designation as it has been used since Roman times in Salamanca (Spain) and since the Middle Ages in the construction of major historic buildings, including both the Old and New Cathedrals, and many additional churches, castles and walls in the Salamanca area.

Salamanca’s historic city core has been granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1988, and all associated buildings, monuments and pedestrian streets are constructed from original materials. One of utilised materials, Piedra Pajarilla, was quarried for centuries from the immediate area. It was also the preferred building stone of many internationally renowned architects of Spanish origin during the 18th and 19th centuries especially involved in reconstruction following the Lisbon earthquake. Although the associated quarries are no longer active, the Piedra Pajarilla quarry sites remain relatively undisturbed and accessible. A renewal of quarrying is consequently feasible if additional stone supplies are required for heritage restoration. Thus there is also a need to preserve these historic quarries in anticipation of such work. The importance of Salamanca as emblematic heritage makes the historic stone quarries worthwhile to preserve as well. At the same time, Piedra Pajarilla can be considered as the first of several natural stones that can contribute to the denomination of a “Global Heritage Stone Province”, as a suite of associated stone resources have been utilised in the historical buildings of Salamanca.