

Dry Stone: Constructive Heritage, Knowledge and Technique

Section: Technology and science

written by Cèlia Mallafrè Balsells | October 13, 2024



The origin and motivation for research into dry stone construction stem from an interest in gaining a precise understanding of this technique and the structures derived from it. The goal is to prevent, as much as possible, the loss of knowledge, as well as the technique and culture associated with it.

Dry stone constructions address the needs arising from agriculture and livestock farming, with stone as the primary building material. This technique, declared an intangible cultural heritage of humanity by UNESCO in 2018, is common worldwide wherever stone is found. The method takes on different geometries and compositions depending on the type of stone in each region, its properties, the specific needs to be met, and the builder's knowledge and skill.

It is a technique with thousands of years of history, passed down orally and through hands-on practice from generation to generation. This transmission, done in a non-academic way, has been refined and specialized over time up to the present day.

Among traditional construction techniques, dry stone is one of the least well-known from an architectural perspective. The mysteries surrounding the construction knowledge tied to it,

preserved and passed down through generations without any documentary or graphic support, are another reason for the growing interest in this building method.

Analyzing and updating its origins using contemporary tools for documentation and analysis could be a way to preserve the constructive memory and prevent the loss of a source of knowledge acquired and perfected by our ancestors, who, for years, with the goal of survival and improvement, made the most of the resources in their environment. It is a legacy we cannot ignore if we do not wish to lose our origins and identity.

