

(research in progress)

Muralité Lost in Gothic Walls : The Evolution of the Construction Methods of Wall-Passages from Classical Greece to Medieval France

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What is *a wall*? It is generally thought to be a simple accumulation of materials, creating an aggregated mass (*muralité*). But this was not the case in French Gothic architecture, in which a wall became something else.

This study investigates the disappearance of *muralité* in Gothic walls by examining the evolution of construction methods of wall-passages in masonry architecture from the 5th century B.C. to the 13th century. Wall-passages, that is, narrow spaces made inside walls, developed especially as triforiums in French Gothic architecture. Previous studies on wall-passages have revealed their existence and influences on each other, but there is no systematic survey of their construction detail, especially their forms and stone emplacements. In order to find out the characteristics of the construction methods of wall-passages, written sources from the 19th century such as *Congrès archéologique de France*, *Bulletin monumental* and restoration reports, as well as the stone fabric of Norman Romanesque, Burgundian Gothic and Île-de-France Gothic architecture, have been analyzed.

This research discovered that Gothic wall-passages were constructed in a particular method that was unknown until then. This reveals a particular attitude of the builders toward the wall itself, which they saw not as a “solid” but rather as a flexible medium that could be articulated internally as well as externally. An example is the Cathedral of Bourges, where wall-passages have stones with a small cross section placed vertically in a single course resembling a thin film to fill the gap between the pillars.