Lower population levels after Antiquity meant that any ancient towns still occupied were over-large for their current inhabitants. Yet increasing insecurity prompted the building of town walls or fortresses, the former usually from antiquities and leaving large areas of the erstwhile town outside the defended circuit, the latter with antiquities often to refurbish or upgrade earlier structures. Of particular use were column shafts, employed to strengthen walls, and chopped up to provide projectiles, first for mechanical throwing weapons, and then for gunpowder cannon – and in enormous quantities.

It should come as no surprise that defence and offence were both hard on the survival-rate of antiquities. If some materials survived by being incorporated into fortresses (as in Byzantine North Africa, in Greece, or throughout Turkey), there is little evidence that this was done in any way to present the antiquities themselves as prestige items, rather than simply to re-use the marble blocks as sturdy bulwarks against attack. There are exceptions from the mediaeval period, such as the town walls of Konya, and the odd classical relief, examples of which appear throughout this book. But there is no evidence that military men on either side of the Crusades took any artistic interest in the materials they re-used, or even that walls displaying superabundant quantities of antiquities – such as the town and citadel walls of Ankara – did so for artistic or apotropaic reasons, any more than did the late antique walls in the West or in North Africa. The reliefs in the castle at Bodrum (placed there during the 15th century) are the exception that seems to prove the rule. For the mediaeval period, the only semi-artistic use of antiquities, as we have seen, was when column-shafts migrated from being structural necessities to become decorative additions. But these are never accompanied by extensive bas-reliefs either in Christian or (more understandably) in Moslem fortifications.

Unfortunately, town walls were to suffer mightily during the 19th century, as notions of fresh air and modernisation combined with projected transport facilities to make them a badge of all that was old-fashioned and restrictive of expansion – which every good town of course wished to do. But if in France or Italy we are hampered in our investigations of re-use
because so many have been demolished in the face of modern development, in our Crescent matters are somewhat better.

Town Walls as Town Status Symbols

In the Middle Ages as in many earlier periods, walls were a badge of rank and prestige to a city, providing necessary security as well. It was not unusual for towns to have several sets of walls as the population expanded, but it only seems to have been in late antiquity that shrinking populations caused walls to be built within earlier and larger sets, and generally using antiquities from the more prosperous and monumental days, as can be seen at Miletus.1 In Europe the 19th century saw light and sanitation campaigns that dismantled many sets of walls (Langres, Bordeaux). There is irony in the French building of antiquities-rich walls in Algeria from the 1830s, convinced as they were that they needed to make their installations secure against European artillery. But then defence brooked no opposition, so that the Byzantine wall at Limyra cuts right through the Ptolemaion, arguably helping to preserve that monument.2

In the West we have in mediaeval manuscript illustrations plenty of supporting evidence for the prestige in which decorated walls were held, and in spite of mass dismantlings during the 19th century (such as part of the walls of Talavera)1 several sets, with their built-in antiquities, have survived to today, as in Spain,3 as have Islamic walls and gates simply re-used by the Christians.4 Such manuscripts frequently give emphasis to the importance of ramparts, of triumphal gateways, and of urban splendour.5

Town walls are important for our theme since they so often incorporate earlier antiquities, and sometimes use these as decoration. Some late

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1 Tuttahs 2007, figs 391–2 for Miletus: plans of the Justinianic wall, which encompasses the North Market and the Palaestra, but not the harbour. Fig 477 the harbour becomes a narrow canal leading to the Maeander: the ancient Lion Harbour was 100m wide.
2 Hellenkemper & Hild 2004, pl.221.
3 Arias Vilas 1972 for the walls of Lugo, with 17–23 for a history of their study. 63–78 for the materials re-used, and 79–93 for a comparison with other late antique walls (table on 82), plus appendix 93–97 for a list of such walls in Spain, including notes on material re-used in them.
5 Touzet 1977: when the buildings inside city are represented, 18, ils sont d’ailleurs de caractère également antique, munis de frontons, de colonnades et de toits à larges tuiles, until the 10th century.