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Constantinople, as the capital of the Byzantine Empire and still a magnificent city today, has played an important role in sparking the interest of both scholars and a wider audience in the history of the late antique and Byzantine world. As one of the European Capitals of Culture in 2010 and with its unique location on two continents, thereby representing East and West, Istanbul has received much attention in modern discussions on a great variety of topics.

The fifteen essays (all in Dutch) concentrate on Constantinople between A.D. 330 and 1453, although these dates are taken flexibly. Six of the essays are based on papers given at a conference on Constantinople in Amsterdam in 2009, whereas the others are by specialists in the Byzantine world who were asked to contribute for the occasion. The volume has an eclectic approach, which leads to an interesting mosaic of articles as the authors focus either on archaeological, (art) historical, religious or literary perspectives on the city.

The volume shows a mixture of new scholarly ideas and more general articles, the latter being of particular interest to an audience less familiar with the city and the Byzantine world. For instance, there are articles that offer an overview of the historical origins and architectural changes in the city over time, from early Greek times through to the Renaissance. Similarly, Roman law and the rich Byzantine literary traditions are well represented. As is to be expected, religion plays a part in several articles, as Constantinople – hosting several church councils – had been an important centre for orthodox Christendom. In several instances, however, readers also get a glimpse of ongoing scholarly debates, such as on Constantine's role in the foundation of Constantinople. Did he choose Constantinople merely as an imperial residence strategically located in the East (as Singor claims), or did he regard Constantinople as his imperial capital right from the beginning (see Hekster)? The final four articles demonstrate how ancient Constantinople should not be treated as enclosed by its fall in 1453, as its history continued to show new signs of prosperity in architecture and other areas. For example, Schmidt's article explains how seventeenth-century travellers encountered Istanbul, and Theunissen demonstrates how the Ottoman baroque-rococo of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries should not be seen as a sign of westernisation (as it has been regarded). Modern Constantinople is still filled with ancient treasures that wait to be unearthed. Vroom describes how the Marmaray Project, a spectacular rail transport project to connect the European and Asian part of Istanbul, is being delayed for years because of dazzling numbers of archaeological finds (for instance at the port and neighbourhood of Yenikapi).

For those interested in Constantinople, especially those teaching in college and students at an advanced level, the volume presents an appealing mixture of articles that offer a broad range of perspectives on the city.

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