"She established a monastery in the name of the Pantokrator, which is among the most outstanding in beauty and size. Such was this empress." This is how John Kinnamos succinctly sums up Empress Piroska-Eirene’s character as reflected in the great building she patronized.

This collection of essays contributes to the rich crop of new scholarship on the Pantokrator Monastery with thirteen papers by international scholars. The chapters examine Piroska in context, highlighting her Árpádian heritage and the flourishing Greek spirituality and culture in the Kingdom of Hungary, and scrutinizing Eirene’s life, image and impact in Constantinople. The volumes offer new insights on the cultural and religious history of early Árpádian Hungary, Hungarian-Byzantine diplomatic relations and shared devotion to the Mother of God, Constantinopolitan imperial representations, dynamic church, Byzantine art and architectural history. Piroska-Eirene played an active role in conceptualizing the Pantokrator Monastery as an innovative foundation that developed in the lifetime of its founders from a religious establishment into a monument of Komnenian piety and victory, from a monastery into a multifunctional medical and social complex.

Modern Istanbul preserves not one, but two portraits of Piroska-Eirene. One is the famous mosaic in the gallery of Hagia Sophia; the other is the Pantokrator. For which of the two would the Empress Piroska-Eirene wish to be remembered? The essays in this volume will help answer this question.