

Cambridge Elements[≡]

Elements in Rethinking Byzantium

edited by

Leonora Neville

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Darlene Brooks Hedstrom

Brandeis University

SAILING AWAY FROM BYZANTIUM TOWARD EAST ROMAN HISTORY

Leonora Neville

University of Wisconsin-Madison



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment

978-1-009-59555-1 — Sailing Away from Byzantium Toward East Roman History

Leonora Neville

Frontmatter

[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom

One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
New Delhi – 110025, India

103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,
a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of
education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009595551

DOI: 10.1017/9781009595582

© Leonora Neville 2025

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions
of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take
place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009595582

First published 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-009-59555-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-59554-4 Paperback

ISSN 3033-4292 (online)

ISSN 3033-4284 (print)

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence
or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this
publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain,
accurate or appropriate.

For EU product safety concerns, contact us at Calle de José Abascal, 56, 1º, 28003
Madrid, Spain, or email eugpsr@cambridge.org

Sailing Away from Byzantium toward East Roman History

Elements in Rethinking Byzantium

DOI: 10.1017/9781009595582

First published online: June 2025

Leonora Neville

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Author for correspondence: Leonora Neville, Leonora.neville@wisc.edu

Abstract: Although the first thing one learns about the “Byzantine Empire” is that it was really the eastern Roman Empire, scholars have preferred to call it “Byzantine” in a repudiation of the self-conception and emic vocabulary of the inhabitants of that polity. The terminology of “Byzantium” artificially severs the “medieval” eastern Roman Empire from its “classical” roots allowing for the fundamentally Eurocentric schematization of history into “ancient,” “medieval,” and “Renaissance” periods. “Byzantine” is not a benign term of art but has served a variety of political and historiographical agendas, including maintaining nationalist visions of ethnic continuity, creating precedents for communism, enabling politics of nostalgia for Orthodox dominion, and constructing visions of western European superiority and masculinity that justify colonialism. By exploring these intellectual legacies of “Byzantium,” and the benefits of conceptualizing Roman history as an unsevered whole, this Element exhorts scholars to let go of the “Byzantine” misnomer.

Keywords: Byzantine, Byzantium, east Roman, later Roman, medieval Roman

© Leonora Neville 2025

ISBNs: 9781009595551 (HB), 9781009595544 (PB), 9781009595582 (OC)

ISSNs: 3033-4292 (online), 3033-4284 (print)

Contents

1	Introduction: Names Matter	1
2	Work Done by “Byzantium”	5
3	Reasons for Change	40
	Conclusions	54
	Bibliography	57