



Writing East: The "Travels" of Sir John Mandeville (The Middle Ages Series)

Iain Macleod Higgins

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No work revealed more of the mysterious East to statesmen, explorers, readers, and writers of the late Middle Ages than the *Book of John Mandeville*. One of the most widely circulated documents of its day, it first appeared in French between 1356 and 1371 and was soon translated into nine other European languages. Ostensibly the account of one English knight's journeys through Africa and Asia, it is, rather, a compilation of travel writings first shaped by an unknown redactor.

Writing East is a study of how Mandeville's *Travels* came to appear in its various versions, explaining how it went through a series of transformations as it reached new audiences in order to serve as both a response to previous writings about the East and an important voice in the medieval conversation about the nature and limits of the world. Higgins offers a palimpsestic reading of this "multi-text" that demonstrates not only how the original French author overwrote his precursors but also how subsequent translators molded the material to serve their own ideological agendas.

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