



The Book of Dede Korkut: A Turkish Epic

Faruk Sümer

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One of the oldest surviving pieces of Turkish literature, *The Book of Dede Korkut* can be traced to tenth-century origins. Now considered the national epic of Turkey, it is the heritage of the ancient Oghuz Turks and was composed as they migrated westward from their homeland in Central Asia to the Middle East, eventually to settle in Anatolia. Who its primary creator was no one knows, the titular bard, Dede Korkut, being more a symbol of Turkish minstrelsy than a verifiable author. The songs and tales of countless minstrels lay behind *The Book of Dede Korkut*, and in its oral form the epic was undoubtedly subject to frequent improvisation by individual performers. Partly in prose, partly in verse, these legends were sung or chanted in the courts and camps of political and military leaders. Even after they had been recorded in written form, they remained part of an oral tradition.

The present edition is the first complete text in English. The translators provide an excellent introduction to the language and background of the legends as well as a history of *Dede Korkut* scholarship. These outstanding tales will be of interest to all students of world mythology and folklore.

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