

## NUMBER, COLOUR AND ANIMAL MYSTICISIM IN *BEOWULF* AND *THE BOOK OF DEDEM KORKUT*

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### ABSTRACT

There are both similiarities and differences in the use of numbers, colours and the animal images in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. It is not known how the numbers, colours, and the animal images came into being, but they are used by the respective societies. Number, colour and animal mysticism was influenced by the pre-Christian and pre-Islamic legends, myths, and sagas both in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, and it may be emphasized that this tradition continued even after conversion to Christianity and Islam.

In this article the significance of numbers such as three, nine, forty and fifty; the colours such as black, white, red, yellow; and the animal images such as wolf, deer, raven, camel and pigeon will be studied by pointing out the similarities and the differences in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*.

**Key words:** *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, *Beowulf*, belief systems, numbers, colours, animal images

### ÖZET

*Beowulf* ve *Dedem Korkut Hikâyeleri*’nde sayıların renklerin ve hayvan imajlarının benzerlikleri olduğu kadar farklılıkları da vardır. Kullanıldığı topluma göre önem kazanan sayılar, renkler ve hayvan imajlarının nasıl ortaya çıktığına dair kesin yargılara ulaşmak oldukça zordur. Ancak *Beowulf* ve *Dedem Korkut Hikâyeleri*, Hıristiyanlık ve İslamiyet öncesinde sözlü edebiyattan yazılı edebiyata geçiş sürecinde ortaya çıkan efsane ve mitler Hıristiyanlık ve İslamiyet’e geçiş sonrasında da önemini yitirmemiştir.

Bu makalede iki destanda benzerlik ve farklılık gösteren üç, dokuz, kırk ve elli sayıları; kara, ak, kırmızı, al, sarı renkleri; kurt, geyik, karga, deve ve güvercin hayvan imajları inanç sistemleri açısından incelenecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Dedem Korkut Hikâyeleri*, *Beowulf*, inanç sistemleri, sayılar, renkler, hayvan imajları

### Number mysticism

One of the most important subjects pertaining to the belief systems is the implicit information related to the mysticism of numbers and colours both in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Schimmel states that:

Numbers influence the character of things that are ordered by them, thus the number becomes a mediator between the divine and the created world, it follows that if one performs operations with numbers, these operations work upon the thing connected with the numbers used. (1993: 16)

It is not known how and why number and colour mysticism came into being, but it can be stated that they are shaped by the era and culture they belonged to. Hopper draws attention to the fact that numbers are of importance and are derived from medieval philosophy, he states that:

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The nature of medieval philosophy is a combination of three distinct modes of thought: first of these is derived from man's original struggles to enumerate and his identification of certain immediately observable and fixed natural groups with their corresponding numbers. The second and the most prolific source of significant numbers, is an elaboration of the first. The third number theory is the Pythagorean Theory that fixed the relationship of the numbers to one another and accordingly the places of the astrological aggregates in the cosmic order (1996: i-ix).

This view asserts that each number embodies a special character, a mystique of its own, and a special metaphysical meaning. It is true that numbers exist before the objects described by them, hence the numbers in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut* are significant.

When studied in detail, it can be seen that the pre-Christian sagas, legends and biblical works have influenced number mysticism in *Beowulf*. Similarly, pre-Islamic literary works such as Turkic mythology, sagas and legends, Islamic works that have had a great influence on *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, in shaping number mysticism.

Mystical number repetition can be seen in both of the epics. As Dorson states the epic adheres to a grandiose "epic ceremonialism"- There are the repetitions, traditional formulas, and detailed descriptions of actions (1972: 107). These repetitions, traditional formulas, and the detailed descriptions in epics originate from oral culture and tradition. Boratav asserts that oral and written cultures are respectively established, and the former shapes written culture. The gleemen and scops recite epics and folk tales and they use repetitions, traditional formulas, and detailed descriptions in order to attract the attention of the audience (1988: 45). In this respect it may be pointed out that epics have been put down into writing, and have absorbed the values of the oral-formulaic tradition. Similar to Dorson and Boratav, Çobanoğlu states the repetition of the patterns such as the numbers, and points out that number three is a common rule for the construction of all the epics (2003: 19). The number three is repeated many times both in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*.

The number three was used by its early application to the gods. Hopper draws attention to the fact that many numbers have been used to express divinity or godlike attributes, but either because of its antiquity or because of its numerous simple analogies in the physical and social world; the all embracing three is the most universal number of deity (1969: 6). *Beowulf* is highly influenced by Scandinavian and Germanic paganism and the mysticism of number three may be traced back to these cultures.

In Scandinavian culture, the number three is frequently used; the three horns, three colours of the rainbow, three roots of Ygdrasil, and the three gods, Othin, Thor and Frey. Hopper also asserts that much of Teutonic mythology follows this triadic pattern (1969: 203). The most common social three is the triad of the family: male, female, and child. Similar to Hopper, Ekiz also asserts that the idea of generation is the most obvious reason for the existence of the world and the gods; it is a short step from the recognition of the family on earth to the hypothesis of the family in heaven (1986: 43). In this respect it may be pointed out that the number three within the family concept is of significance for the construction of the epics.

The holiness and the continuation of the family roots (kingdoms or tribes) and the throne are indirectly stated in *Beowulf*. For instance the Danes are

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called Bright-Danes, Spear-Danes, Ring-Danes, South-Danes and West-Danes; the Geats are called War-Geats, Sea-Geats, and Weather-Geats (Heaney 2002: 96). The societies embodied in *Beowulf* give importance to their roots and separate into groups befitting their location and family relations. When these societies are studied in detail, it will be observed that the father, the mother and the son triadic pattern construct the nucleus of a society. Hence, it may be asserted that the unity of male, female and child construct the triadic pattern in *Beowulf*. The son is especially considered to be a child for the continuation of the dynasty.

Similar to the triadic family patterns depicted at pre-Christian period, the number three is also seen after Christianity:

In The Old Testament it is mentioned, "a threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4: 12). This view refers that the significance of the number three is displayed in the biblical work. In Christianity, three is the three-lettered name of God, and it signifies the Christian trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Fowler points out that in the intellectual world three signifies the three hierarchies of angels grouped into three to represent the trinity (1970: 11). Henry, in his article, draws attention to the fact that as a distinctive Christian doctrine, the Trinity is considered as a divine mystery beyond human comprehension to be reflected upon only through scriptural revelation ([www.thewordsofeternallife.com/trinity.html](http://www.thewordsofeternallife.com/trinity.html)). Moreover The Trinity is a biblical concept that expresses the dynamic character of God. While the term trinity does not appear in Scripture, the trinitarian structure appears throughout the New Testament to affirm that God Himself is manifested through Jesus Christ by means of the Spirit. It is also observed that in tritheism, the distinctiveness of the Godhead to the point that the Trinity is seen as three separate Gods, or a Christian polytheism ([www.thewordsofeternallife.com/trinity.html](http://www.thewordsofeternallife.com/trinity.html)).

Henry also points out that the unity with the trinity is important in Christianity, and similar to his approach, Peck asserts that an extension of three is a marriage number and a sign of fruitfulness and the active life by referring to the father, the mother and the son (1967: 204-15). This triadic tradition supports the divinity of the family roots, which is indirectly established in number symbolism. In *Beowulf*, Schield is a mythical Danish king and the epic opens with his example of good kingship. His marriage ceremony is not depicted in the poem, but his son Beow and his heroic deeds are emphasized in the epic: "Shield had fathered a famous son: Beow's name was known through the North "(18-19)<sup>1</sup>.

In these lines the unity of the father and the son is displayed, and the concept of the family is embodied. Similarly, the Danish king Hrothgar marries Wealhtheow and their first child is a son called Hrethric, who is one of the young followers, and stands to inherit the Danish throne:

The fortunes of war favored Hrothgar,  
Friends and kinsmen flocked to his ranks,  
Young followers, a force that grew to be a mighty army. (64-67)

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Similar to the triadic pattern of the Danish family, the Geatish king Hygelac marries Hygd, and their elder child is a son called Heardred. After the death of Hygelac among the Frisians, Beowulf is considered to fulfil the triadic pattern of family. Beowulf becomes a king to rule his uncle's dynasty and inherits Hygelac's throne:

A lot was to happen in the later days  
 In the fury of the battle. Hygelac fell  
 And the shelter of Heardred's shield proved useless  
 Against the fierce aggression of the Shylfings:  
 Ruthless swordsmen, seasoned campaigners,  
 They came against him and his conquering nation,  
 And with cruel force cut him down  
 So that afterwards the wide kingdom  
 Reverted to Beowulf. (2200-2209)

Similarly, in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, the social and holy three encapsulates the unity of male, female, and child. Traditional marriage and fertility are crucial concepts for the Oğuz society. Binyazar points out that if one of the kağans does not have a son, he is thought to be doomed by God, and he is looked down on by the other societies (1996: 40). In the Prologue of *The Book of Dedem Korkut* the importance of a son is emphasized as follows:

The son is the work of the father; he is the apple of his eye.  
 A worthy son is the fire of one's hearth.  
 What can the son do if his father dies without leaving him any  
 wealth?  
 What good is the wealth of the father if the son is unlucky?  
 Oh, my khan, may Allah preserve you from those who bring bad  
 luck. (4-5)<sup>2</sup>

In the first tale of *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, Dirse Kağan and his wife do not have a son, they served food to the poor, dressed the naked, paid off the debts of the debtors, they heaped up meat like hills, had kumis<sup>3</sup> like lakes. The kağans raised their hands and prayed that: "The wish of Dirse Khan is fulfilled, and his lady becomes pregnant; in due time she bore a male child" (12).

After the prayer of the kağans, Dirse Kağan and his lady have a son befitting the triadic pattern of the divinity of the family roots in an epic. The son of Dirse Kağan grows up and kills a bull on the playing field of Bayındır Khan at the age of fifteen, he proves his power and Dedem Korkut gives him a name: Boğaç Han. In the second epic Salur Kazan and Burla Hatun have a son, Uruz and Salur Kazan say that "Let my son, Uruz, stay behind with three hundred young men to protect my camp" (24).

In a similar fashion, the emphasis on the concept of the family and its reflection in a triad can be seen in the third story, Kam Püre and his wife have a son, his name is Bamsı Beyrek and Korkut Ata comes and gives the boy a name. He says:

Hear my words and listen to me, Bay Püre Bey,  
 Almighty Allah gave you a son, and may He preserve him.  
 May he ever be followed by Muslims as he bears his white banner<sup>4</sup>.  
 When he has to cross those snow- covered mountains lying yonder,  
 May Allah help him cross them?

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When he has to ride through bloody rivers,  
May Allah grant him safe passage?  
When he has fallen among the crowds of infidels,  
May Allah give him yet a chance? (44)

In addition to the social meanings and importance attached to the number three, the religious significance is obvious. The number three in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* is important also in the Sky-God belief and Altay shamanism. The Oğuz people are nomadic. The nomadic triangle of war, feasts, and hunting serve as the ethico-literary framework of the Oğuz peoples. Therefore it may be pointed out that the Oğuz economy has functioned and thrived on this triangle. War is a means of expanding, an economy of plunder not because plundering was done 'just for fun' but because it was a necessity. The identity of a tribe depends upon the total destruction of another. For instance Salur Kazan goes hunting, and the infidels plunder his homeland. He seeks for his son, wife and the other members of his tribe.

Similar to the concept of war, feasts and hunting also support an important link in the life cycle of the Oğuz society. As an instance when Boğaç goes hunting, he kills the bull at the age of fifteen and proves his power and virtue to protect the tribe of his father. After the depiction of his prowess, a kind of feast starts and Korkut Ata makes his appearance to give him a name:

O Dirse Khan!  
Give this young man a principality now.  
....  
Give a suit to this man and a coat that has birds on its shoulders  
Let him wear both of these; he has skill  
This young man fought and killed a bull  
Let your son's name be Boğaç.  
I give him his name,  
And may Allah give him his years of life. (13)

In the Oğuz society, feasts are celebrated by all the Oğuz tribes as it is observed in the story of Boğaç Han, and are of importance for the unity of the Oğuz society. Like Boğaç Han, the story of Bamsı Beyrek also reflects the nomadic triangle of war, feast and hunting:

Beyrek, the son of Bay Püre, married Banu Çiçek, and returned to his happy home, where he began his wedding ceremony. Some of the forty warriors were given girls by Khan Kazan, and some Bayindir Khan. They had forty tents erected. Their large weddings and banquets lasted for forty days and forty nights (69).

In these lines Bay Püre and Banu Çiçek have a wedding ceremony and they share their happiness with the other Oğuz tribes. Within the triadic pattern, feasts are important in uniting the society, and their marriage is important for the continuation of the roots depending upon the triadic pattern of the concept of the family.

When studied in detail, it will be seen that the mysticism of number three also varies depending upon the context of the epics. In other words, it may be asserted that beyond its indirect meaning and divinity as observed in the triadic pattern of the concept of the family and the war, feast, hunting ceremony, the

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mystic number three is directly embodied in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. In *Beowulf*, the hero Beowulf fights with the dragon. The dragon attacks him twice but Beowulf protects himself. When the dragon attacks for the third time, Beowulf gets his fatal wound, and this third strike foreshadows Beowulf's death:

When he wielded a sword,  
 No matter how blooded and hard-edged the blade,  
 His hand was too strong, the stroke he dealt  
 ( I have heard) would ruin it. He could reap no advantage.  
 Then the bane of that people, the fire-breathing dragon,  
 Was mad to attack for a third time.  
 When a chance came, he caught the hero  
 In a rush of flame and clamped sharp fangs  
 Into his neck. Beowulf's body  
 Ran wet with his life-blood: it came welling out. (2684-93)

Similar to the third strike in *Beowulf*, Basat wants to kill the supernatural giant, Tepegöz in the story of Basat, killer of the one-eyed giant in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. He attacks Tepegöz two times by shooting his arrow, but the arrows do not pierce his body, and they are broken. Then Basat realizes that the supernatural character has no flesh in his body except in his eye. Basat gets near Tepegöz's head, lifts his eyelid, and sees that his eye is really made of flesh. He puts the skewer in the fireplace, and it becomes very hot. Basat takes it in his hand, and then pushes the skewer so hard into Tepegöz's eye that he completely destroys it. This is his third challenge and in this last challenge he is successful.

It may be asserted that in Scandinavian mythology, Othin, Thor and Frey establish the triadic pattern of the gods. After conversion to Christianity, the triple pattern does not alter: it is observed in The Old Testament; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit relation is implicitly stated in *Beowulf*. In epic, instead of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit triangle, the triadic pattern of father, mother, and son is pointed out. Similar to *Beowulf*, the mystic number three is also seen in Turkic legends such as The Oğuz Kağan legend, and then it is indirectly visualized in The Book of Dedem Korkut. The father, the mother and the son construct the family pattern, and the triple social activities such as war, hunting and feast are depicted in the Turkish epic. Hence, it may be asserted that the mysticism of the number three is observed in both of the epics.

Another mystic number, which is used in these epics, is nine. The number nine and its multiples can be variously interpreted in terms of the belief system. First of all, its significance may be connected with Germanic, Scandinavian and the Central Asian traditions, and it seems to be typical of civilizations in the northern parts of the world (Schimmel 1993: 167). In this respect Schimmel asserts that nine comes to be preferred to eight as a symbol for the winter period, possibly because the sea remains locked for nine months, or because of the coincidence of this approximation of winter with the observed period of human gestation (1993: 173). By this reckoning, both human and vegetable life remains hidden in the womb for the same period of time. Such a partition of the year is also preferable by virtue of its use of the important base three; this tradition is embodied especially in northern paganism. Hopper states that in Havamal<sup>5</sup> Othin suffers torture for these nine months (1969: 207). On the windy days, Odin is hanging from the branch of Ygdrasil, the cosmic World Tree, with a rope around his neck. He also suffers from a wound that is pierced by his own spear.

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Odin remains there for nine days and nine nights, and he learns nine mighty spells, from his grandfather Bolthor, as well as drinking from the precious mead from Odrerir. The number nine is also significant, in term of symbolism and magic. In this respect the lines of Havamal confirms the mystery of number nine and it is as follows:

I know that I hung  
On the wind-stirred tree  
Nine nights long,  
Wounded by spear,  
Consecrated to Othin,  
Myself to myself;  
On the mighty tree<sup>6</sup>  
Of which no man knows  
Out of what root it springs. ([www.pitt.edu/~dash/havamal.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~dash/havamal.html)) (137)

In many of the Nordic traditions, nine is connected with the spheres, and the highest ninth heaven is located beyond the seven planetary spheres and the upper vault of the sky that contains the fixed stars (Schimmel 1993: 173). Number nine is similarly prominent in the Anglo-Saxon Germanic pagan world. Schimmel suggests that the Celtic Cymrians, the first inhabitants of Wales, used it in practical life as well as in legal affairs: nine steps are used to measure distance, thus a fire may be lit nine steps away from a house, and a dog that has bitten someone may be killed nine steps away from the house of his owner (1993: 173).

Similar to the Celtic faith, in Scandinavian and Germanic faiths, if nine people assemble to attack a person, it is considered to be a real attack. This tradition is observed in *Beowulf*: although nine creatures gather together to attack Beowulf, Beowulf kills nine of them and proves his prowess:

Light came from the east,  
Bright guarantee of God, and the waves  
Went quiet; I could see headlands  
And buffeted cliffs. Often, for undaunted courage,  
Fate spares the man it has not already marked.  
However it occurred, my sword had killed  
Nine sea-monsters. Such night dangers  
And hard ordeals I have never heard of  
Nor of a man more desolate in surging waves. (569-77)

In Christianity nine is connected with suffering because of the fact that Christ died at the ninth hour of the day (Bazelmans 1999: 92). This hour is the "none", subsequently marked by a special monastic devotion, while the word itself has become the noon. In *Beowulf*, although there is not such a direct statement about Christ, Beowulf is considered to be a Christ figura (Bazelmans 1999: 94). One may draw attention to the fact that Beowulf is like Abraham and Job, for this reason he is a figura. The time of the death of Christ is portayed; if Beowulf is considered to be a Christ figura, his death time is not explicitly observed in the poem. Bazelmans refers that Beowulf reflects some of Christ's virtues, not in his words but in his deeds, just as the good men in The Old Testament had done (1999: 94). Bazelmans also asserts that Beowulf's non-committal attitude towards God and his excessive trust in his own powers disappear when God gives him solace and support in his battle with Grendel,

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and when in his fight with Grendel's mother, He shows him the sword that will bring him victory. As from that time onwards, as was the case with Abraham, a true belief and trust in God takes root in Beowulf.

When the fire-breathing dragon attacks Beowulf, he discovers the deadly poison, but the death time is not known (2689-2715). For example Aegir is the God of the sea in Norse mythology, and has nine daughters; his nine daughters refer to polytheism ([www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%86gir](http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C3%86gir)), but there is no such a source whether these daughters are the goddesses. Another example is the nine orders of the angels in Christianity, which are interpreted as reflections of the perfect three. This perfection of three is observed three times in *Beowulf*. When Beowulf gets the fatal wound in the third strike, he dies like a noble hero that might be the nine orders of the angles as reflections of the number three:

To the everlasting Lord of all,  
To the King of Glory, I give thanks  
That I behold this treasure here in front of me,  
That I have been allowed to leave my people  
So well endowed on the day I die. (2794-98)

However, on the other hand number nine also suggests spiritual deficiency in that; it is one short of ten, which denotes perfection and a return to unity (Peck 1967: 207). Peck also states that another aspect of this "heavenly" interpretation of nine can be derived from its role as eight plus one, beatitude augmented and enhanced in *Beowulf*. In this respect it may be asserted that Beowulf may be a heavenly character whose funeral period lasted ten days:

Then the Geat people began to construct  
A mound on a headland, high and imposing,  
A marker that sailors could see from far away,  
And in ten days they had done the work,  
It was their hero's memorial; what remained from the fire  
They housed inside it, behind a wall  
As worthy of him as their workmanship could make it. (3156-62)

These lines refer to the funeral ceremony of Beowulf, and the preparations for his funeral last ten days. The work related to his funeral attains perfection in ten days as it is observed in the characteristics of a perfect hero and king of Geatland.

Similar to *Beowulf*, the mystery and mysticism of the number nine is used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. In the Sky-God belief, Tengri and his seven or nine children live in the seventh or the ninth layer of the sky (Güngör; Ünver 1998: 47). A similar role for nine can be observed in the muslim Brethen of Purity with its nine states of existence: one Creator, two kinds of intellects, three souls, four kinds of matter, five kinds of nature, the corporeal world determined by six directions, the seven planetary spheres, two times four elements, and finally, the three times three states of the animal, vegetables, and mineral kingdoms (Schimmel 1993: 167). Schimmel also draws attention to the fact that according to Islamic cosmology, the universe is built of nine spheres. Next to earth is the lunar sphere, above which are located the spheres of Mercury and Venus, the sphere of the sun occupies the central place among the seven spheres of the planets and is therefore often called "The Center of Universe" (1993: 168). Schimmel points out that the mystic number nine is important in the Sky-God belief, shamanism and Islam, and is of common use among Turkic people, and he asserts that the number nine is also observed in the name of one of the

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leading tribes of the Turks: the Tokuz (Nine) Oğuz (1992: 170). Among the Tungus shamans, meanwhile, shamans used to place nine innocent boys and nine innocent girls beside them before beginning their magical rites. Similar to this shaman ritual, Oğuz beys assembled to carry out their mysterious and magical deeds in one of the Hans' tent in spring or summer. The son of Ulaş, the hope of the poor, the lion of the Emet Stream, the tiger of Karaçuk mountains, the owner of the chestnut-brown horse, the father of Han Uruz, the son in-law of Bayındır Han, the pride of the crowded Oğuz people, the support of the young warriors in distress and all the other Hans are invited to the tent of Salur Kazan:

Salur Kazan had ninety large tents with golden tops erected on the black earth. He also had red silk carpets laid in ninety places. Nine beautiful infidel girls with black eyes, lovely faces, and braided hair, their hands hennaed up to the wrists, their nails all painted, all wearing dresses with red buttons on the breast, were offering drinks to the strong Oghuz Beys. (23)

Given these varied associations, it may be asserted that nine develops into a round number in Oğuz society in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Unlike *Beowulf*, number forty is of significance in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Number forty is important in Islam, but not in the Sky-God belief or shamanism. In Islamic lore the importance of forty is clearly stated both the Quran and in the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed who received his first revelation when he was forty years old (Schimmel 1993: 248). Schimmel also points out that in the Islamic tradition:

Forty is the numerical value of the letter mim found at the beginning and the middle of the Prophet Mohammad's name. Thus it is considered the typical number of the Prophet, all the more as it is also contained in his heavenly name, Ahmad and as the Sufis discovered, when the mim is taken away from this name, the word Ahad remains, and that means "One" an essential name of God. The difference between the divine One and the created prophet as humanity's representative was taken to point to the forty steps that separate mortals from God and that have to be passed in the course of human development. (1993: 250)

After conversion to Islam the number forty is strongly emphasized in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Schimmel in his book *The Mystery of Numbers* states that hadith, the sayings of the prophet, is important and one of these sayings is about the mysticism of the number forty. One of the prophets makes a promise that; "Whosoever among my people learns by heart forty hadith about religion will be resurrected at Doomsday along with the religious scholars and jurists" (1993: 251). The significance of forty is mentioned many times in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. For instance in the story of Emren, Emren prays to Almighty Allah and Allah helps him. Almighty Allah gives order to Gabriel: "O Gabriel, go to that young man. I have given him the strength of forty men" (143). In the story of Deli Domrul the significance of forty is stated as follows:

While Delü Dumrul was sitting and drinking with his forty companions, Azrail suddenly arrived. Neither the chamberlains nor the wardens had seen Azrail pass. Delü Dumrul's eyes were blinded, his hands paralyzed. (90)

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Hence it may be asserted that the holy number forty is emphasized after conversion to Islam among the Oğuz society in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Unlike *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, the number fifty is of significance in *Beowulf*. Schimmel states that in Christianity the number fifty is considered to be an allegorical exegesis as an expression of repentance and forgiveness, and it appears as an indefinite number in both Roman and Scandinavian mystic traditions: fifty is the age after which men are no longer required to perform military service (1993: 256). Hrothgar, the king of the Danes, forgave his enemies and his enemies faded from the earth in fifty years. In fifty years time he defended his country and fifty years later he also fades and cannot show prowess:

Just so I ruled the Ring-Danes' country  
 For fifty years defended them in wartime  
 With spear and sword against constant assaults  
 By many tribes: I came to believe  
 My enemies had faded from the face of the earth (1769-73).

Similar to the Hrothgar's reign, Beowulf rules his nation for fifty years:

Hygelac fell and the shelter of the Heardred's shield  
 Proved useless against the fierce aggression of the Shylfings<sup>7</sup>  
 Ruthless swordsman, seasoned campaigners,  
 They came against him and his conquering nation,  
 And with cruel force cut him down so that afterwards  
 The wide kingdom reverted to Beowulf. He ruled it well  
 For fifty winters, grew old and wise as warden of the land (2201-10).

Beowulf himself portrays his heroic deeds, and points out his fifty-year reign. His fortune is derived from his father, and he forgives all his enemies and shows his repentance to Almighty God as a good Christian:

Now is the time when I would have wanted  
 To bestow this armor on my own son,  
 Had it been my fortune to have fathered an heir  
 And live on in his flesh. For fifty years  
 I ruled this nation (2729-33).

The most significant thing is that the number fifty is repeated three times in *Beowulf*, and this also supports the idea that number three is important for the epic tradition. It can be said that the number is a fundamental principle from which the whole objective world proceeds. As it is emphasized in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, numbers are not merely quantitative, but in a way they are symbolically used in noting specific qualities. In this respect it may be concluded that numbers such as three and nine symbolize near perfection of the belief systems including the beliefs before monotheism in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, the number forty is only seen in the Turkish epic which refers to Islam, and the number fifty is merely observed in the English epic that stands for repentance in Christianity.

### **Colour mysticism**

Similar to the significance of numbers, colours implicitly embody the

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importance of the belief systems in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Birren points out that the ancient use of colour was by no means guided by aesthetics, but by mysticism (1988: 11). The inspiring beauty of colour had its origin in mysticism, in a sort of functional application of hue to interpret life and the world. In both of the epics colours play an important role in understanding the belief system. The colours black, yellow in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, and white and red in only *The Book of Dedem Korkut* are respectively emphasized depending upon their significance in the belief system.

In *Beowulf*, black is indirectly mentioned. This dark colour is almost always used to foreshadow a bad incident, disaster or death. Black is one of the sacred colours of most gods and goddesses worshipped by the traditions, especially in German and Scandinavian paganism. For instance Morrigan (<http://theoldpath.com/scc.htm>) is the goddess of war, death and destruction; she is said to appear in the form of a raven before and during battles, her sacred colour is black. For another example Hell is an underworld region in Germanic tradition; black, frigid, dreary, and toxic. It is both the name of the land, and the name of its ruler, the Goddess Hell, Queen of the Dead. This region seems to have been the final destination of most of humanity; only heroes gained admittance to Valhalla, in Asgard. About the best that can be said of the place is that the dead seem not to have been tortured and tormented as in the Christian redaction of this realm, but rather they seem to have been assigned to drag out their destinies until Ragnarok, when they would be freed to fight with Hell's legions against the gods and heroes ([www.web.raex.com/~obsidian/TeutPan.html](http://www.web.raex.com/~obsidian/TeutPan.html)). Hence it may be pointed out that the underworld region is considered to be black, and this abode symbolizes death. Grendel is one of the monsters in *Beowulf*, and he disturbs the Danes at night. The colour of night is black and it is a sign of disaster or trouble:

So after nightfall Grendel set out  
For the lofty house, to see how the Ring-Danes  
Were settling into it after their drink,  
And there he came upon them, a company of the best,  
Asleep from their feasting insensible to pain and human sorrow (115-20)

Clark draws attention to the fact that the pagan and superstitious practice of consulting omens evoke curiosity, and the dark colour is considered to be the colour of Grendel (1990: 53). Grendel harms Heorot, and eats people which may signify his wicked deeds in the dark:

Then a powerful demon, a prowler through the dark,  
Nursed a hard grievance. It harrowed him  
To hear the din of the loud banquet  
Everyday in the hall. (86-89)

As seen in Germanic and Norse traditions, the colour black is also emphasized in the monotheist beliefs. As Birren states black is the colour of death and regeneration in the Old Testament (1988: 49). Black is a dark colour and it is an emblem of Christ raised, a blend of the divine light of creation and the darkness of sin and death. In this respect it may be said that after conversion to Christianity, dark-death shadows may symbolize the darkness of sin and death in *Beowulf*:

All were endangered; young and old

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Were hunted down by that dark death-shadow  
 Who lurked and swooped in the long nights  
 On the misty moors, nobody knows  
 Where these reavers from hell roam on their errands. (158-63)

When Beowulf kills Grendel, the dark nights end till the mother and the dragon appear. The line "Because of last night, when you killed Grendel" refers to the heroic deeds of Beowulf and he himself destroys the chaos, which threatens the Danes till Grendel's mother arrives:

Then this roaming killer came in a fury  
 Slaughtered him in Heorot. Where she is hiding,  
 Glutting on the corpse and glorying in her escape,  
 I cannot tell, she has taken up the feud,  
 Because of last night, when you killed Grendel,  
 Wrested and racked him in a runious combat  
 Since for too long he had terrorized us  
 With his depredations. (1330-37)

It may be pointed out that the passages that the dark colours are referred to black and gray symbolize the wicked deeds of monsters that harm the societies or nations. When Beowulf gets his fatal wound, he orders Wiglaf to get the treasure from the dragon's lair which is depicted under a grey stone:

Go now quickly,  
 Dearest Wiglaf, under the gray stone  
 Where the dragon is laid out, lost to his treasure. (2743-45)

Similar to *Beowulf*, colours are of significance in the Oğuz society in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Among the peoples of Central Asia in the Middle Ages, the world was conceived to be as a high mountain. Tanyu asserts that its summit rose to a height beyond the reach of man hence provided a convenient dwelling place for the gods (1980: 15). On the summit of this mountain there is the North Star. This mountain was shaped like a pyramid with its top broken off. The sides facing the four points of the compass were hued and shone like jewels. As Birren describes, to the North was yellow, to the South blue, to the East white, to the West red (1988: 13). Before the composition of *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, the four-hued or three-hued mountains were also mentioned in the epic of Oğuz Kağan. In this epic, mountains are respectively called pearl, coral and diamond

([www.turkoloji.cu.edu.tr/CUKUROVA/sempozyum/semp1/alptekin.pdf](http://www.turkoloji.cu.edu.tr/CUKUROVA/sempozyum/semp1/alptekin.pdf) p.427). As the predecessor of this epic, the colour of the mountain in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* is black and "ala". In the Turkish lexicon black refers to two different words in Turkish: "kara" means black and is used by the Oğuz people before conversion to Islam (1998: 1202). "Kara" is used 317 times in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. "Siyah" also means black and is of Arabic origin, and is used after conversion to Islam (TDK 1998: 1995). "Siyah" is not used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. As stated by Kafalı, black symbolizes sadness, fear, helplessness, death and total passivity, and it is used as a colour of mourning (1996: 52).

"Ala" is the mixture of colours, and it is the colour of spiritual knowledge, wholeness, and search for inner and outer awareness, it is the acknowledgement of eternal knowledge and the ability to access its secrets, the gift of inner communication (Heyet 1996: 58). In the Sky-God belief and Altay shamanism the black mountain is the dwelling place of Tengri Ülgen. In *The Book of Dedem*

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*Korkut Ülgen* dwell on the summit of these black and “ala” mountains. Ülgen is the representative of the eternal world. Korkut Ata is considered to be a shaman, and he is the representative of Ülgen in the Sky-God belief and shamanism. Although the Oğuz society converted to Islam, the traces of the pre-Islamic belief still exist in the epic. Korkut Ata goes to the mountains or he is sometimes in disguise of Ülgen:

Hear my words and listen to me, Bay Püre Bey,  
Almighty Allah gave you a son, and may He preserve him.  
May he ever be followed by Moslems as he bears his white banner.  
When he has to cross, those snow-covered black mountains,  
Lying yonder, may Allah help him to cross them. (44)

Korkut Ata does not want the son to be hurt or perish when he crosses the black mountain. He is in contact with Ülgen and he saves the boy. Although the black mountain is the colour of helplessness and death, Ülgen or Korkut Ata preserves him in keeping with the Sky-God belief and shamanism. Although Korkut Ata is considered to be a shaman, he prays to Allah to protect his folk from helplessness and death after conversion to Islam:

I have come to cross that black mountain of yours lying over there.  
I have come to cross your beautiful running streams.  
I have come to cross, to take shelter under your wide mantle  
And security beneath your wing

I have come with the command of Allah and the consent  
of the Prophet, to ask for the hand of your sister, Banu  
Chickek, brighter than moonlight and lovelier than day, for  
Bamsi Beyrek. (48)

Korkut Ata crosses the black mountain and Allah protects him. He is expected to find Banu Çiçek, and thanks to his spiritual powers, he does not die while crossing the black mountains. Other characters in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* also refer to the importance of the black and “ala” mountains. Burla Hatun in the story of the “Capture of Uruz Bey”, prays to Ülgen, and wants her son to be found and protected from disasters:

Son, son, oh son!  
My symbol of courage  
The peak of the black mountain lying out there, son!  
The light of my eyes in darkness, oh, my son (78)

Burla Hatun addresses his son by pointing to the peak of the black mountains; she is implicitly addressing Ülgen to save his son from disasters. She also prays and begs Ülgen to help Uruz Bey. Another example occurs when Kan Turalı wants to marry a girl, but the girl’s father wants to test his skills and prowess. He orders his men to bring the bull and he wants Kan Turalı to fight with the bull. In this respect the kinsmen of Kan Turalı praise him:

Kan Turalı, O my sultan,  
Did you not arise one day,  
And mount upon your black-maned, high bred horse  
Did you not cross the arch-backed Ala Mountain,

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Hunting as you rode along? (104)

“Ala” is the colour of spiritual knowledge, wholeness, and search for inner and outer awareness, and the kinsmen of Kan Turalı believe that he will win the fight with the bull by using his spiritual knowledge. The line “Did you not cross the arch-backed Ala Mountain” refers to his sensibility and he can easily kill the bull as he has easily crossed the Ala Mountain. Salur Kazan in the story of Basat, Killer of the One-Eyed Giant, crosses the black mountains without any trouble thanks to Ülgen, but he cannot kill Tepegöz, the black monster, which is the symbol of death. Tepegöz eats forty sheep, and when he is not served any sheep, he eats people. Hence, Salur Kazan wants his son Basat to kill this black monster:

So black a monster came oh, that was Tepegöz!  
I chased him everywhere to no avail.  
So black a tiger came oh, that was Tepegöz!  
I chased him through black mountains, but in vain, Basat  
Be a hero, be a bey,  
But do not be like me, Basat.  
May your white-bearded father not lament,  
And may your white-haired mother never cry. (128)

In these lines Basat is expected to kill the black monster, Tepegöz. The colour black is identified with Tepegöz, because he kills and eats people, so again this black monster’s attitudes towards people symbolize death. Salur Kazan encourages and implicitly urges his son to kill Tepegöz through his prayer.

In Eastern mythology it was believed that the rise and the fall of the mountains created day and night. The eastern mountains were white and caused the day, the western mountains were yellow and brought twilight, the northern mountains were black and covered the earth in darkness, while the blue mountains to the South created dawn (Birren 1988: 15). The meaning of the black colour of the mountains in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* resembles the three mystic colours of the Uphanishads, which dated back to seventh century B.C (Birren 1988: 16). The mystic black is also used in society as the colour of morality in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, black is considered a mean and unlucky colour among the Oğuz people and for anyone to appear dressed in black is held to be ominous of disaster and evil. In the story of Boğaç Han, Bayındır Han indirectly denounces Dirse Han because he does not have a child:

Bayindir Khan, Khan of Khans, had three tents set up at three different places: one was white, one was red, the third was black. He ordered that whoever was without children be accommodated in the black tent with a black felt rug spread under him, and that he be served the stew of the black sheep.  
(9)

These three tents point implicitly to the social structure of the Oğuz society: those who have sons are allowed to accommodate in the white tent, those who have daughters are allowed to accommodate in the red tent, and those who do not have sons or daughters are allowed to accommodate in the black tent. Dirse Han is implicitly excluded from his society by referring to the colour black. Another example for the use of black is in the story of “The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan”. The son of Ulaş has a terrible dream, and in his dream the colour

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black is a symbol of illluck in terms of the Sky-God belief:

It was a terrible dream. I saw my falcon dying in my hand. I saw a lightening bolt strike down my tent with the golden top. I saw a black cloud descending upon my camp. I saw my black hair rise like spears and cover my eyes. (27)

In his dream the son of Ulaş, receives an implicit message that his dynasty is in a dangerous condition. In his story his nightmare turns out to be real. It may be concluded that black is used as a symbol of bad events, such as death, a sign of doom and disaster in both *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*.

Like black, yellow is of significance in both of the epics. As mentioned by Heyet yellow generally symbolizes enlightenment, brightness and light, and foreshadows good events (1996: 60). In this respect it may be pointed out that the colour yellow is observed in both of the epics. In the Anglo-Saxon epics the significance of yellow comes from the Druids who are considered to be the ancestors of the English heroic society that produced *Beowulf* and are considered to worship the heathen deities (Kendrick 1994: 1). The head of the Druidic Order was the Arch-Druid. He wore a tiara to represent the sun's rays, and the Druids built temples to the sun way (Birren 1988: 28). Similar to the image of yellow in the Druidic tradition, the sun or the colour of gold is pointed out in *Beowulf*:

They marched in step,  
Hurrying on till the timbered hall  
Rose before them, radiant with gold.  
Nobody on earth knew of another  
Building like it. Majesty lodged there,  
Its light shone over many lands. (306-11)

The hall Heorot is the dwelling place of the Danes, and the gold of the hall shines like the sun, which is a sign of ease in Heorot in daytime. In the early days of Christianity the Trinity of God became associated with the colours blue, yellow, and red. God the Father was blue, God the Son yellow and God the Holy Ghost was red; the triangle and the shamrock symbolized the deity (Birren 1988: 47). God the Son is considered to be yellow, and the yellow colour is used by referring to Christianity in *Beowulf*:

Almighty had made the earth  
A gleaming plain girdled with waters,  
In His splendour He set the sun and the moon  
To be earth's lamplight, lanterns for men... (92-95)

Resembling the holiness of yellow, the warriors wear golden clothes with which they symbolize their brightness and valor in the battles:

My armor helped me to hold out;  
My hard-ringed chain mail, hand-forged and linked,  
A fine, close fitting filigree of gold,  
Kept me safe when some ocean creature  
Pulled me to the bottom. (550-54)

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Beowulf kills Grendel, and the feast starts at Heorot. Hrothgar and Wealtheow show their respect to Beowulf and they honour him by giving invaluable gifts:

Then Halfdane's son presented Beowulf  
 With a gold standart as a victory gift,  
 An embroidered banner; also breast-mail  
 And a helmet and a sword carried high,  
 That was both precious object and token of honour. (1019-23)

Yellow or the colour of gold is considered to be the colour of enlightenment in paganism especially in the period of Druids. The meaning used in the polytheist period alters after conversion to Christianity. In Christianity the pious people are considered to believe in the colour yellow as the colour of curse. As suggested by Owen and Crocker, gold set in a pre-Christian society, is literally heathen. When gold is hidden in the earth, hoarded by a dragon it is heathen and by association evil, but the burial of the treasure in Beowulf's barrow save the society from the curse (2000: 101).

Similar to *Beowulf*, yellow is employed in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* as a part of its belief system. In Turkish mythology the palace and the throne of Ülgen is made of gold (Genç 1996: 42). As pointed out by Karabaş gold symbolizes yellow, and this idea shows the importance of the dwelling place of Ülgen in the Sky-God belief (1992: 28). The symbol of gold is mentioned in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, and similar to Ülgen's palace, which is embroidered with gold, gold is used in the interior and the exterior of the Oğuz tents:

Let it carry his goods; he has virtue  
 Give a large lavish tent with a golden pole  
 To provide him shade. (13)

When Boğaç Han kills the bull, Korkut Ata comes and gives him a name befitting his bravery, and he wants his father to erect a tent with a golden pole, which is obviously a sign of the Sky-God belief. In the story of "The Sack of the House of Salur Kazan", the infidels plunder Salur Kazan's house. In the end of the tale the infidels are killed, and Salur Kazan erects a new tent:

The strong Oghuz beys took great amounts of booty.  
 Kazan Bey recovered his son, the members of his household,  
 and treasury, and turned homeward. He sat again on his  
 golden throne. (38)

In the story of Emren, Begil is not pleased with the remarks of the Han and he leaves the council, he drops the gifts given by Bayındır Han, and revolts against the rules of the council. He returns home but does not talk to his white-faced wife, so she addresses him:

My bey, the master of my golden throne,  
 You whom I loved with all my heart  
 When I opened my eyes. (136)

In the council of Bayındır Han, Salur Kazan does not praise his horse or his skills, but he praises Begil as a good hunter, but Bayındır Han is not satisfied with him, and Begil returns his home. Although his house is his golden throne, he is not well treated in the golden throne of Bayındır Han.

After conversion to Islam yellow changes to green: yellow symbolizes

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warmth and blue symbolizes silence, the mixture of yellow and blue is green, which symbolizes eternity and religion (Heyet 1996: 59). Genç, in his article "Türk Düşünce, Davranışı ve Hayatında Renkler ve Sarı, Kırmızı, Yeşil" points out the importance of green, and draws attention to the fact that this colour is one of Ülgen's son's names (1996: 41). Genç also states that green is the symbol of Islam and Mohammad, and those who wear green are considered to be Muslims (1996: 42). Although the Oğuz people converted to Islam, there is no explicit sign of green in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*.

Unlike the colours of importance used in *Beowulf*, red and white are of significance in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. The white colour is conveyed through two different words in Turkish. In the Turkish lexicon "ak" means white, and is a common colour in the Oğuz society before conversion to Islam (1998: 51). "Beyaz" also refers to white, and its origin is Arabic which was introduced after conversion to Islam (1998: 279). "Ak" is used 99 times in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, but "beyaz" is not used at all although the Oğuz society converted to Islam. As suggested by Heyet white (ak) is the symbol of purity, age and innocence in the Oğuz society (1996: 56). The white-bearded father and white-haired mother are the common terms used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. The white tent symbolizes luck, and refers to the Han who has a son. When Bayındır Han arranges a feast he erects tents of three colours. In the Turkish epic those who have sons go to the white tent, those who have daughters go to the red one, and those who do not have sons or daughters go to black tent (9). As Ögel states the process of whitening (Aklama) symbolizes innocence in the Oğuz society (1984:11). Ögel's statement is also true for the use of this colour in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* as follows:

He arranged for a bride with a red trousseau for his brown-eyed son. He sent one-fifth of all his spoils to white-browed Bayındır Khan. Taking his son with him then, he went to Bayındır Khan's council. He kissed his hand. The ruler showed a place to the right of Uruz, the son of Kazan. (144)

The white-browed Bayındır Han is experienced enough to understand the innocence of a bride, and Uruz deserves this bride due to his heroism. Similar to the white colour, red is employed in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. The colour red refers to two different words in Turkish. In the Turkish lexicon "kıızıl" means red before conversion to Islam (1998: 1318). "Kızıl" is used 26 times in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. "Kırmızı" also means red, and originates from Arabic that and is used after conversion to Islam (1998: 1301). The colour "kırmızı" is used three times in the epic. Another colour "al" refers to red and it is of common usage before conversion to Islam (1998: 69). "Al" is used 34 times in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. As Heyet states red in general is the colour of matrimonial ceremony (1996: 57). In *The Book of Dedem Korkut* the bride and the bridegroom are clad in red (kıızıl) garments and the colour of the tent of these married couples is red, and those who wear red clothes imply a sign of nobility in the Oğuz society:

During the time of the Oğuz, when a young man was to be married, he would shot an arrow into the air and wherever the arrow fell, there he would have his nuptial tent erected. Beyrek Khan too shot his arrow and had his nuptial tent set up where it

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landed. A long red gown was sent to him as a gift from his betrothed. (51)

It may be interpreted that the definitions of the colour red vary, and the sentence "A long red gown sent to him as a gift from his betrothed" refers to the nobility of Bamsı Beyrek.

### **Animal mysticism**

Similar to the importance of numbers and colours, animal images indirectly reflect the belief systems in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Animal image or in other words bestiary is a type of literature in which the habits of beasts, birds, and reptiles were made the text for allegorical and mystical depending upon its religious teachings (Abrams nd: 48). These bestiaries often ascribe human attributes to animals. The bestiary in one form or another has been currently used in the English and the Turkish literatures.

The English epic, *Beowulf* embodies some elements that may have descended from the bestiary in terms of its belief system. Most of the animals in *Beowulf* portray pre-Christianity, and Christianity. Fulk and Harris assert that the hero's name Beowulf may have originated from the animals bee and wolf, meaning woodpecker or bear, but they also refer that beo "bee" may have originated from Beow, a pre-Christian god, and the structure of this name is the same as the common Norse Thor and wolf or the English god Tiu and wolf (2002: 98). If Beowulf is considered to be the wolf, he is observed as the pre-Christian god of The Norse: "Beow's name was known through the North" (18).

This line may refer to the god of The Norse, that depicts the hero in *Beowulf* in terms of the animal image or as Orchard asserts that it may be interpreted as Beow or Beowa that is the god of fertility who comes across water (2003: 103). There are also animal images like Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon that might have contributed to the animal allegory. Sisam points to the fact that the texts in the *Beowulf* manuscript were composed in different dialects and the core-collection of Wonders, the Letter, and *Beowulf* was put together referring to the monsters (1953: 64-7). Similar to the assertion of Sisam, Rypins draws attention to the fact that like *Beowulf*, Wonders depicts a natural world inhabited by dragons, and other-man eating creatures, the land beyond the so-called River Brixontes. In *Beowulf* Grendel and his mother are considered to be the monsters or dragons that signify evil in pre-Christian Scandinavian animal. Dragons in Norse mythology are viewed as giant serpents. The three major dragons are Nidhoggr, Fafnir, and the World Serpent. Nidhoggr is known as the Dread Biter. He lives at the foot of the world tree and grows at its roots. Since the world tree supports all life of the world and Nidhoggr attempts to destroy it, Nidhoggr is personified as evil itself. It is Nidhoggr that will bring about the end of the world. Fafnir was once a humanoid (giant or dwarf, depending on the source) that was transformed into a dragon covered with impenetrable scales. Fafnir's blood is caustic, but when his blood is tasted it gives one the ability to hear another's thoughts and understand the language of birds. The World Serpent is also called Jormungandr. He is noted for his poisonous breath and as the enemy of Thor. Jormungandr lives in the water that surrounds the human world and eventually grows so long he lives all around the world at once and eats his own tail ([www.dragon-warrior.com/Bestiary/dragon.shtml](http://www.dragon-warrior.com/Bestiary/dragon.shtml)). Such a description of the Scandinavian dragon resembles Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon:

The iron-bracer door turned on its hinge  
When his hands touched it.

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Then his rage boiled over, he ripped open  
The mouth of the building, maddening for blood,  
Pacing the length of the patterned floor  
With his loathsome tread, while a baleful light,  
Flame more than light flared from his eyes. (721-27)

*Beowulf* poet's description is of Grendel's eyes stating that there shone an unlovely light, most like a flame may be referred to the evil in pre-Christian societies. After conversion to Christianity the concept of the dragon does not change and again it stands for the reality of the evil in the world. God's punishment the serpent/dragon had been to "crawl on its belly", it may be surmised that, this reptile walked upright in medieval art. He also sports wings, two lion's claws (or, in some cases, birdlike feet), and a substantial tail. After conversion to Christianity the fear of hell is vastly used to deter medieval man from sin and considering that dragons who are known to have fiery, poisonous breath ([www.gloriana.nu/bestiary.html](http://www.gloriana.nu/bestiary.html)). In this respect it may be asserted that Grendel, Grendel's mother and the dragon may imply the evil in pre-Christianity and Christianity. It may also be pointed out that *Beowulf* draws from Norse, Celtic and Germanic animal symbols that existed before conversion to Christianity. After *Beowulf* was put down into writing, Christian animal symbolism is observed, and as in the case of the animal dragon, it signified evil or satan in Christianity, or it refers to the sin of human beings.

Similar to the images of wolf, and the dragon, the stag is also used in *Beowulf*. The palace of Heorot means hart or stag (Heaney 2002: 5). Heorot is considered to be the palace of the Danes, and at this stage it also refers to the animal stag that stands for royalty in Scandinavian symbolism:

And soon it stood there  
Finished and ready, in full view,  
The hall of halls. Heorot was the name  
He had settled on it, whose utterance was law (76-79).

It is interesting that the stag is the enemy of the serpent, which may be interpreted to imply that if Grendel is the serpent, Heorot is the stag, and Heorot is disturbed by this serpent; at the end of the English epic Grendel is killed by *Beowulf* who is the representative of the stag. After conversion to Christianity the concept of royal alters and stands for Christ, who tramples and destroys the devil (White 1984: 37-39). As the stags help each other when they cross a river, so should the Christian crossing from the worldly life to the spiritual life help others who grow weak or tired. As the stag is renewed and sheds its horns after drinking from the spring, so those who drink from the spring of the spirit are renewed and shed their sins ([www.bestiary.ca/beasts/beast162.htm](http://www.bestiary.ca/beasts/beast162.htm)). Hence, it may be asserted that Heorot may be considered to be the holy place of the Danes after conversion to Christianity, although Hrothgar is observed as pure pagan.

Like the image of the stag, another animal symbol embodied in *Beowulf* is the raven. Raven is the bird in Celtic lore that is associated with deities of war, and features as the helper and protector of warriors and heroes. It is an important Celtic figure but is ambivalent as helper on the one hand and connected with death and the Raven-Crow goddess, 'The Blessed Raven', had a three-fold function as war, procreator and prophecy ([www.celticgrounds.com/chapters/encyclopedia/r.html](http://www.celticgrounds.com/chapters/encyclopedia/r.html)). The raven is also associated with the wren in prophecy and divination, which appears with the swan in solar symbolism, and is connected with the dovecote as a house-symbol, this probably being pre-Celtic also. The Raven of Battle symbolizes war,

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bloodshed, and malevolence (Rutherford 1993: 61). Morrigan as a raven goddess watches over battles. Bran has a raven, and Lugh or Lugos, who has two magic ravens, is an all-purpose and wise raven-god like the Teutonic/Scandinavian Woden/Odin. In *Beowulf* it may be asserted that the raven is considered to be the god of prophecy that is also seen in Celtic and Teutonic symbolism:

Many a spear dawn-cold  
 To the touch will be taken down  
 And waved on high; the swept harp  
 Won't waken warriors, but the raven winging  
 Darkly over the doomed will have news,  
 Tidings for the eagle of how he hoked and ate,  
 How the wolf and he made short work of the dead (3021-27).

From these lines it may be asserted that, the raven is a sign of doom and also stands for the Celtic god Bran (Ward 1993: 61). Stanley points out that the appearance of a raven is devilish according to Christian conceptions, reminded the Germanic warrior of the presence of Woden who ruled battles (2001: 79-80). In Christianity the raven first pecks out the eyes, so the devil first destroys the ability to judge correctly, leaving the mind open to attack as well ([www.bestiary.ca/beasts/beast251.htm](http://www.bestiary.ca/beasts/beast251.htm)). Hence it may be pointed out that the raven is used as the god of doom in *Beowulf*.

Similar to the image of the raven that is both observed in *Beowulf*, the image of the boar or in other words bull is of importance. *Beowulf* originated from the pre-Christian life style and religion, hence the context and the structure of *Beowulf* is highly influenced and shaped by Celtic, Germanic, and Teutonic literatures and the belief systems. Before Christianity, polytheism and paganism are the most important belief systems, and it may be asserted that the animal image of a boar is easily observed as a pagan deity in *Beowulf*. Nora Chadwick draws attention to the fact that the bull/boar is mentioned, and boar is the symbol of strength and virility in Celtic belief system (1974: 153, 161). Chadwick also draws attention to the fact that:

The boar also appears on the Gundestrup bowl, and also of considerable interest is the representation among others on this vessel of the horned, but otherwise human, squatting god. It is assumed by most scholars that this is Cernunnos, whose name has been translated various as 'the horned one' or 'the god with head of the deer'. (1974: 153-54)

Similar to the descriptions of the boar image in Celtic polytheism, the boar as a god of fertility and success is mentioned in Teutonic polytheism (<http://www.wizardrealm.com/norse/gods.html>). Freyr is Freya's twin brother in Teutonic mythology and he is the horned god of fertility. The boar is his sacred symbol and is both associated with war and fertility. The boar images may influence *Beowulf*, on the grounds that the boar symbol is repeated many times (1113, 1287, 1327, 1453, 2151):

Boar-shapes flashed  
 Above their cheek-guards, the brightly forged  
 Work of goldsmith, watching over  
 Those stern-faced man (303-307).

The boar is used as a symbol of war and success. In Christianity the boar is also a symbol of Christ because of his strength, jealousy, and fearless passion

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for the children of God ([www.netnitco.net/users/legend01/pig.htm](http://www.netnitco.net/users/legend01/pig.htm)). In this respect, it may be asserted that the boar image both preserves the pre-Christian and Christian elements in *Beowulf*. Beowulf does not only carry the boar-helmet as the god of war in pre-Christianity, but he also stands for the figure of Christ after conversion to Christianity. Unlike these pagan animals in *Beowulf*, there are other animals such as the horse, swan, and whale that have no allegorical significance related to the belief systems.

Similar to the animal references in *Beowulf*, there are animal images that are used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. In the Turkish epic, monsters such as dragons, serpents are not used frequently, but there are animals like deer, horse, camel, and pigeon that have allegorical meanings both in the Sky-God belief, shamanism and Islam. Similar to the image of the stag in *Beowulf*, the deer or stag is mentioned in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Although it does not signify the royalty depicted in the English epic, Çoruhlu asserts that it stands for the spirit of the ancestors in Sky-God belief and shamanism (2002: 142). Çoruhlu also draws attention to the fact that the colour of the deer defines the characteristics of the animal, and if the colour is white it stands for the spirit of an innocent ancestor, if it is brown or reddish, it stands for the underworld ancestors that cause death. In *The Book of Dedem Korkut* the deer is depicted as follows:

Some said, "It is enemy dust," while others said". It must be dust raised by deer". Most agreed, "It is enemy dust, all right." Kazan said: "if it were caused by deer, it would have risen in only one or two columns. Let it be known to you that this is the enemy coming. (73)

If it were the dust of the deer, they would lead Kazan and his friends to die, for the spirit of a deer invites people to the under world that implicitly stands for the death of a person in pre-Islamic beliefs. After conversion to Islam the negative allegory of the deer disappears, and as Çoruhlu draws attention to the fact the deer is considered to be one of the holy animals in Islam which is almost always the subject matter of the didactic Islamic stories (2002: 143). Albayrak also states that the deer image is employed in stories after conversion to Islam (1993: 62). Although *The Book of Dedem Korkut* keeps both pre-Islamic and Islamic values of the animal images, the deer is not directly mentioned after conversion to Islam, but as Ögel asserts the image of the deer is used as a token in reciting stories of Islam (1998: 569).

Similar to the deer, the pigeon image is also used in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Before Islam the pigeon was considered to be a holy animal in shamanism, and the Sky-God belief. The pigeon is a bird that can fly, and in pre-Islamic belief system "to fly" means "uçmağ" that refers to the wings of the birds, and these birds may reach the sky where the god of goodness, Ülgen, lives. In this respect the word "uçmağ" has two important meanings: the first one refers to the wings of the shamans who reach Ülgen by flying, the second one refers to the death of a person whose soul is believed to fly to the sky where god of goodness, Ülgen, lives or to the underworld where the god of evil, Erlik, lives. Ögel draws attention to the fact that before Islam the shamans wore clothes, which were embroidered with pigeon images, and they turned into pigeons in order to reach the spirits of the gods or ancestors (1998: 203). In this respect it may be asserted that shamans are considered to be in disguise of pigeons that attain the Sky- God(s). After conversion to Islam, the allegory of the pigeon image was changed to some extent, and it stood for the angels of Islam. In Islam angels

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are believed to be as the creatures that have wings, and similar to this idea the angel Azrail turns into a pigeon in the story of Deli Domrul:

He drew his big black sword, held it in his hand, and tried to strike Azrail with it, but Azrail became a pigeon and flew out of the window. Delü Dumrul, a monster of a man, clapped his hands and burst out in laughter. He said: "My friends, I frightened Azrail so much that he ran out, not through the wide open door, but through the chimney. To save himself from my hand, he just became a pigeon and flew away. I shall have him caught by my falcon. He mounted his horse, took his falcon on his wrist, and started pursuing Azrail. He killed a few pigeons . On the way home, however, Azrail appeared to the eyes of the horse. The horse was frightened and threw Delü Dumrul off its back to the ground. His poor head grew dizzy, and he became powerless. Azrail came and pressed down upon his white chest. He had been murmuring a short while ago, but now he gasped out through the rattle in his throat:

"O Azrail, have mercy!  
There is no doubt about the unity of Allah. (91-2)

It may be asserted that Deli Domrul understands the power of Azrail and also Allah, and converts into Islam. Azrail as a pigeon appears and he implies to those angels who have wings in Islam. The pigeon symbol is also observed in some of the religious stories, and it is used as a token that gives moral and allegorical religious messages. Albayrak states that after conversion to Islam eating the meat of a pigeon was considered to be a sin (1993: 71-5).

Similar to the deer and pigeon images in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, the image of the camel is of significance. The camel image is not mentioned in the Sky-God belief, but it is portrayed in shamanism. Çoruhlu asserts that in shamanism and Turkish mythology the camel stands for the prowess of the shamans and also the kağan (2002: 146). The type of the camel changes depending upon its characteristics. For example a male camel is called "buğra", the female camel is called " naka"(Albayrak 1993: 75). The male camel symbolizes power, and it implicitly stands for the power of the shaman or the kağan. After conversion to Islam, the camel does not explicitly signify this meaning, and Albayrak states that the camel is used as a symbol in the Islamic stories to show the prowess of the prophet. When *The Book of Dedem Korkut* was put down into writing, Islam was accepted and the doctrines of this new religion influenced the epic. For example the power of a male camel is likened to the power of the kağan, and he is expected to kill the male camel in order to prove his prowess:

Kan Turalı prayed to Mohammed, his name be praised. He then gave the camel such a kick that the beast roared. He kicked it again, sending it crashing to the earth. He pressed it down and cut its throat in two places. He then cut two long strips of hide from its back and laid them before the king, saying, "These may be handy for horsemen to repair their saddles and stirrup straps". (108)

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It is worth of notice that the camel does not have the Islamic meaning, but refers to the powerful kağan who is Muslim.

The deer, pigeon, and camel have Islam meanings attached to them in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. Unlike these animals which have religious significance, there are animals which are mentioned. Gökyay divides animals into categories and explains the literary significance of these animals (2000: CDXIV).

Animal images are employed in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. In both of the epics animal symbolism in polytheism, paganism, the Sky-God belief, shamanism and monotheism (Christianity and Islam respectively) are used. The animals such as dragon, stag, raven, and boar in *Beowulf*, and deer, pigeon, and camel in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* have the allegorical meaning related to the belief systems. Unsimilar to the idea of animal allegory, it may be stated that some animals such as the horse, swan, and whale in *Beowulf*, and birds except the pigeon, sheep, cow, goat, and some domestic animals in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* are also observed that they do not contribute to the belief system of these epics.

Numbers, colours and animals have been used in *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut* with reference to various beliefs. The numbers such as three and nine are used in both of the epics significantly. These numbers depict the triadic patterns of the gods and social patterns such as the triadic family relations and other social events within the belief systems. In addition to this, the number nine is used for perfection by attributing the pre-Christian and pre-Islam beliefs, and is considered to be the number of spiritual deficiency in Christianity and Islam. Number forty is only observed in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, and number fifty is merely observed in *Beowulf*. The number forty and fifty do not have a significant meaning in the belief systems, but they are of significance in understanding the moral values in both of the epics. In addition to this, the colours such as black and yellow are stated in both of the epics. The colour black is almost always used to foreshadow a bad incident, disaster or death. The colour yellow generally symbolizes enlightenment, brightness and light, and foreshadows good events. After conversion to Islam yellow changes to green: yellow symbolizes warmth and blue symbolizes silence, the mixture of yellow and blue is green, which symbolizes eternity and religion in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. In addition to this, the colours white and red are only stated in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*, which do not have explicit religious meanings, and are not used at all in *Beowulf*. The colour white is conveyed through two different words in Turkish. In the Turkish lexicon “ak” means white, and is a common colour in the Oğuz society and “beyaz” also refers to white, and its origin is Arabic which was introduced after conversion to Islam. In general white (ak) is the symbol of purity, age and innocence in the Oğuz society. Like the colour white, the colour red is also depicted in *The Book of Dedem Korkut* and it refers to two different words in Turkish. In the Turkish lexicon “kıızıl”, “kırmızı” and “al” refers to the red colour, and it refers to the colour of matrimonial ceremony. In *The Book of Dedem Korkut* the bride and the bridegroom are clad in red (kıızıl) garments and the colour of the tent of these married couples is red, and those who wear red clothes imply a sign of nobility in the Oğuz society. Similar to the other colours, Ala” is the colour of spiritual knowledge, wholeness, and search for inner and outer awareness in the Turkish epic that is not depicted in *Beowulf*.

The animal images are also depicted in both *Beowulf* and *The Book of Dedem Korkut*. The Animal image or in other words bestiary is a type of literature in which the habits of beasts, birds, and reptiles were made the text for allegorical and mystical depending upon its religious teachings. In *Beowulf* Grendel and his mother are considered to be the monsters or dragons that

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signify evil in pre-Christian Scandinavian animal. Dragons in Norse mythology are viewed as giant serpents. Similar to the dragons, the stags and the ravens are also used in *Beowulf*. Raven is the bird in Celtic lore that is associated with deities of war, and features as the helper and protector of warriors and heroes and a boar is easily observed as a pagan deity in *Beowulf*. In addition to this, there are other animals such as the horse, swan, and whale that have no allegorical significance related to the belief systems. Unlike *Beowulf*, monsters such as dragons, serpents are not used frequently, but there are animals like deer, horse, camel, and pigeon that have allegorical meanings both in the Sky-God belief, shamanism and Islam in *The Book of Dedem Korkut*.

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<sup>1</sup> In this article Seamus Heaney's *Beowulf* (Norton &Company, New York 2003) translation into modern English has been used and further quotations are from this translation

<sup>2</sup> In this article the quotations are from *The Book of Dedem Korkut* (Sümer, Faruk, Ahmet Uysal and Warren Walker trans and ed... Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991)

<sup>3</sup> The modern Turkish version of Kumis is "kımız". It is made of fermented mare's milk and a traditional drink of all Turkish speaking peoples as well as of others in parts of Central Asia. The Oğuz people, for some reason or other, discontinued the custom of drinking kımız after they reached Anatolia.

<sup>4</sup> The flags of Turkish rulers were usually white.

<sup>5</sup> It is a famous northern pagan legend of Odin; which is considered to be the origin of the *Beowulf* epic.

<sup>6</sup> The mighty tree is called Igdrasil (Yggdrasil), at the roots of the world tree there are nine worlds of Niflhel "dark hell"-where the dead men dwell.

<sup>7</sup> After Hygelac was killed in the raid on Frisia, his son Heardred became king of the Geats.The Swedish ( Shylfing ) king Onela later invades and kills Heardred, after which Beowulf becomes king.

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