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Autor: Farid Ud-Din Attar

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Composed in the twelfth century in north-eastern Iran, Attar's great mystical poem is among the most significant of all works of Persian literature. A marvellous, allegorical rendering of the Islamic doctrine of Sufism an esoteric system concerned with the search for truth through God it describes the consequences of the conference of the birds of the world when they meet to begin the search for their ideal king, the Simorgh bird. On hearing that to find him they must undertake an arduous journey, the birds soon express their reservations to their leader, the hoopoe. With eloquence and insight, however, the hoopoe calms their fears, using a series of riddling parables to provide guidance in the search for spiritual truth. By turns witty and profound, The Conference of the Birds transforms deep belief into magnificent poetry.