



The Sheep Dogs of Anatolia: Yörük Koyç?s

Guvener Isik

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The Sheep Dogs of Anatolia, Yörük Koyç?s, is not intended to be a guide or instruction manual, and the material in the book is presented by integration into stories and the author's personal observations. The author has worked on this book since 1997. Although the focus is the Anatolians, the information provided here is applicable to all Large Guardian Dogs, such as Great Pyrenees, Kuvasz, Alabai, and Ovtcharka. The reader is not forced to accept rules and laws dictated by the author or any club. On the contrary he is encouraged to mold his own methods based on the practices in the rural Anatolia. Rights and wrongs in sheep dog raising are not confined to rules; rather they reside in understanding the mindset of the shepherds, the nature of the flocks, and the dogs, which are summarized in principals. The main source of information in this book is from the authentic shepherds instead of white collar data collectors and the sedentary farmers. No ready- to -swallow pills are provided in order to successfully live with sheep dogs and to benefit from them. Once the reader understands the aboriginal conditions of the sheep dogs, only then can she start seeing where they are coming from and why these primitive dogs act in certain ways. The book helps the reader to understand the source, which allows a smoother journey to the destination. The first half of the book provides general information on the sheep dogs in Anatolia in terms of historical background, descriptions, various strains of dogs, traditional selection, conditioning, feeding, numerous practices, fundamental characteristics, and determining standards of Anatolian sheep dogs in relation to the requirements set by the shepherds. The second part of the book is mostly discussions about the common misunderstandings related to the sheep dogs, such as breed descriptions, training problems, and the concept of primitive breeding. The approach to tackle these issues is radically unconventional, which challenges the show mentality which consists of pedigree based breeding and artificial selection criteria, as well as other practices related to conformation showing. The author also looks at the dog-wolf interaction in terms of flock guarding. The format of the book allows the reader to pick up any chapter from the second part, independent from the first part, and read without having to have read the preceding chapters or accordingly, choose to be done at the end of the first part of the book. In other words, one can feel free to stop reading at the end of Part I if he is not interested in the philosophy behind pastoral sheep dogs. The second half of the book follows with 63 pages of original photographs from the author's private collection and is composed of 119 dog photos from all corners of rural Anatolia.

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