

471 The Bridge to the Otherworld.

Three brothers one after the other set out to look for work, or to search for their lost sister [H1385.6] who is married to someone in the otherworld. They are given a difficult job: They must herd seven foals (oxen) and at the end of the day they must bring back a sample of the animals' food [H1251] (other things).

In some variants they have to accompany a supernatural being (sun, death) and are not allowed to talk or to be distracted.

The elder brothers fail: They are lured away by a bird, or persuaded by an old woman to rest, or they fail to cross a certain bridge. They are transformed to stone [D231]. The youngest brother follows the instructions and passes across the bridge [F152, E481.2.1]. He sees visions [F171]: Fat cattle in a poor pasture and lean cattle in a green one [F171.1], stones striking on each other [F171.3], and animals which, passing in and out of a church, become human beings and take part in the Holy Communion [F171.5].

The boy takes bread and wine from the altar and brings it to the supernatural being. The visions are explained [F171.0.1]: the fat and lean cattle in the different pastures formerly were rich and poor people. The striking stones were people who argued and are forced to continue their conflicts in the otherworld. The animals in the church are angels, priests, or transformed princes. The youngest brother is rewarded and his brothers are disenchanting [R155.1, H1242].

Combinations: 470, 750B, and 750*.

Remarks: Documented in the 19th century but the motif of the journey to the otherworld is much older. Contains many vision motifs.