

Stith Thompson - The folktale p 154-155

Several of the tales already reviewed have shown the hero winning the princess through the help of his magic objects. The story known as The Rabbit-herd (Type 570) combines such magic means with cleverness and trickery. The king has offered the princess as a prize to the man who is able to herd all his rabbits. The king has a magic pipe which always calls the animals back. The hero, unlike his elder brothers, is kind to an old woman and from her he also receives a pipe, stronger in its magic than the king's with which he is able to call all the animals together. The success of the hero with his magic pipe causes great envy on the part of the king, the princess, or the queen. The versions differ as to which of them tries to obtain the pipe. In some, the queen bribes him by kissing him; in some, the princess lies with him; and in some, the king kisses a horse. In any case, the youth now knows a disgraceful story to tell. Before finally granting the princess to him, the king orders the boy to tell a sack of lies. He begins to tell great lies until the king or the queen sees that he is going to betray their disgrace. They make him stop, and give him the princess.

The characteristic trait in this story seems not to be the magic pipe so much as the hero's use of blackmail to gain his point at the end. For that reason, the story is frequently known as The Sack of Lies, or something similar. It is rather popular all the way from Iceland to the Caucasus, more than two hundred versions having already been noted. Sporadic variants have been collected on the Gold Coast of Africa, in the Philippines, from Cape Verde Islanders in Massachusetts, and very recently from persons of English stock in Virginia. Its general distribution would seem to indicate that it is essentially a European, rather than an Oriental tale.