

## 653 The Four Skillful Brothers.

(Including the previous Type 513C\*.)

Three (four [P251.6.2] or more) brothers leave home and acquire extraordinary skills [F660.1]. The first is a huntsman, the second a ship-builder (astronomer), the third a thief (the fourth a tailor). When they return home they demonstrate their skills to their father [F642, F642.1, F661.1.1, F661.4, F662.1, H504, H1151.12, K305.1].

They all help to rescue a princess who was captured by a dragon [R166, R111.1.3]: The ship-builder builds a fast ship to carry them to the island where the princess is imprisoned (the astronomer discovers the place of her imprisonment), the thief steals her, and the huntsman shoots the dragon (the tailor sews the ship destroyed by the dragon back together [F662.2]). Later each of the brothers claims that he should marry the princess [H621.2, R111.7].

In some variants either their dispute remains unresolved [Z16], or the brothers' father marries the princess. She may decide herself whom to marry. Sometimes it is proposed that she should be divided, and only her true lover objects (Solomon's judgment, cf. Type 926). Or, the winning suitor is decided by lot, or the brothers are given money or half the kingdom instead [Q112].

Combinations: This type is usually combined with episodes of one or more other types, esp. 857, 945, and 1525A.

Remarks: Indian origin see Vetālapanavimsatikā (No. 5). Oldest European version is the Italian Novellino (No. 23) of the 13th/14th century. Other early treatments see Straparola, *Piacevoli notti* (VII,5) and Basile, *Pentamerone* (V,7).