

INFLUENCE OF IGBO TRICKSTER TALES ON SOCIETY: A RE-APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

Among many aboriginal people, there exist trickster tales. The protagonists of such tales are mainly diminutive animals whose stock in trade is lying, cheating, stealing and so on. Such tricksters due to their size and limited strength make use of their cranial power so as to defeat their more powerful adversaries. But when these tales are looked into, one wonders if the children will not learn the negative behaviour of the tricksters in spite of the etiological summaries appended at the ends of the stories and the warnings from adult raconteurs. However, by looking at past happenings where people were forced to put the teachings of the tales into practice, also by looking at the sayings of the Igbo people whose tales are used in this study, it has been discovered that the ancestors who created these tales intended them to be put into use whenever somebody has been forced into a tight corner. But then, the manifestation of the negative aspect of the trickster's behaviour in many people may be as a result of the problems facing them because they have been taught to wriggle out of their problems using all available means.

Keywords: Trickster tales, Tortoise, Cheating, Lying, Ethics

Introduction

A lot of nations the world over have folktales with which they entertain themselves, with which they educate their young ones and with which they state indisputable truths, and in this way, build their culture. These tales are mainly used on children because they are the ones who are being let into the knowledge of their people. In this way, the culture of a particular nation is smoothly transferred from generation to generation.

This aspect of folktales has been looked at by many scholars among who is Aneke Foundation in an online paper which states that:

For several generations, stories from Africa have traditionally been passed down by words of mouth. Often, after a hard day's work, the adults would gather the children together by moonlight, around a village fire and tell stories. This was traditionally called "Tales by Moonlight". Usually, the stories are meant to prepare young people for life, and so, each story teaches a lesson or moral (n. p).

Actually, stories have ways of affecting the hearers most especially when such stories are dished out in an entertaining way. Therefore, these folktales with their strange contents have ways of shaping the traditional society in that the composers and the raconteurs use the strange and eerie backgrounds presented in the tales and the dark evenings during which the tales are told. In this way, these young ones are taught unforgettable lessons.

After looking at the influence of such tales on the puerile and impressionable minds of these young ones, another scholar Janet U. Ogbalu has the following as her conclusion:

Folktales are distinct, imaginative stories told by the folks. These stories play vital role in the education of the young; they provide a common line for action to members of the society. Folktales also provide for the members of the society, character models for them to emulate (13).

However, there are different types of folktales. Each has different areas of emphasis. In this study, the trickster tales of the Igbo nation of south-east Nigeria will be looked at. By trickster tale, what is meant is a type of folktales the protagonist of which is a small character who, against all odds, must survive by making use of his intelligence no matter how he does so. How he does so most often verges on such negative attitudes like lying, cheating, stealing, dissembling and even murder. The emphasis in such tales is survival at all costs. Among the Igbo people, the major trickster is Tortoise. As observed by Helen Chukwuma: "In animal trickster tales, the tortoise usually but not always fills the trickster slot. Nwaebunu-ako, the child-ram also takes the trickster role and so does nza, the little sun-bird" (121). But apart from these major ones, there are occasional ones who must fill the slot whenever the need arises.

These tricksters, especially Tortoise, are of similar behaviour with other tricksters all over the world especially in the African continent. This can explain why Kwawisi Tekpetey's description of the Akan trickster, Kweku Ananse fits Tortoise's behaviour. According to the researcher, "He [Kweku Ananse] is lawless, asocial, and amoral. One systematically finds him engaged in activities directed at gratifying his instincts for pleasure without regards for social conventions, legal ethics or moral restraints" (165).

For emphatic purpose, this researcher goes on to reveal more failings in the character of the trickster. As he puts it, the trickster:

is selfish, cruel, unscrupulous, vain, without gratitude to those that help him, and insensitive to the suffering of others. He is a parasite exploiting all opportunities to get something for nothing or almost nothing. He is constantly rebelling against accepted social behaviour. Among other things, he may be considered the evil nature of mankind (169).

It is in view of this untoward behaviour of the trickster and its possible negative influence on the impressionable minds of the children who are the major recipients of the stories that this research was born. One needs to know whether the children will be negatively or positively affected by such stories. Did our ancestors who created these stories and who knew the power of stories in forming and influencing human character take into consideration the possibility of negative impression on puerile minds? Did they know that in spite of their attaching etiological summaries on the tales so as to diffuse negative teachings that there is the possibility of something negative getting to the children? But no matter what people say, the stand of this enquiry is that trickster stories have corrupting influence on children.

However, as some scholars state, there is nothing to fear. One of such scholars is Luna Works who in an online paper has it that, "...kids really enjoy reading about characters who make mischief. Does that mean they'll be influenced by the characters and copy them? With the right discussion, no. Plus, we think kids are smarter than that" (n. p.).

In spite of this assurance, there is need for more scholars to look at the ethical influence of stories with negative contents on the impressionable minds of children. This is in view of the fact that people are usually euphoric when something has to do with ancestral inheritance. Anything that is handed to them from the ancestors must be good and life enhancing. But then, there is need to take a second look at the ethical impression of trickster tales on children.

The Ethics of the Trickster

Tricksters the world over are created to be of diminutive stature. This stature limits their physical strength. However, what is denied them in physical prowess is more than adequately compensated with cranial, deceptive and persuasive ability. In order for this to be well manifested, all the other beings surrounding them are created to be easily deceived and of less mental ability.

In the majority, of the tales, Tortoise has an upper hand. He controls the happenings and diverts everything to suit his whims and caprices. As seen by Troy D. Smith in an online paper:

For the "trick" to work, it was necessary not only for the tricksters to have a superior intellect to their adversaries but for the adversaries to act on a presumed mental inferiority in the trickster. The result was, as historian Charles Joyner puts it, "the triumph of the weak over the powerful through the sheer agency of wits" (n. p.).

Therefore, among the Igbo people, the major trickster, Tortoise, not only deceives others and controls them, he has to be enthroned as one of the leaders of the animal society. The other occasional tricksters only appear rarely. But no matter what they do, their actions cannot be compared with what Tortoise does. However, sometimes, these occasional tricksters are allowed to deceive Tortoise himself.

As an illustration, in F. C. Ogbalu's *Tortoise – The Fantastic Winner*, there is a story titled "The Tortoise and the Rabbit" (71). In this story, the two tricksters do invite themselves to each other's house where the host has to entertain the visitor sumptuously. When it is the time of Rabbit to host his friend, he tells his wife to pour the soup into the plate where he is hiding. While eating, Tortoise puts the supposedly big lump of meat aside,

proposing to eat it later. When he finishes eating and wants to start demolishing the gigantic lump of meat, he discovers that it is nowhere to be seen. Only then is it recorded that Tortoise is “greatly surprised that his friend could deceive even himself the king of cunning” (71).

When it is time for him to host his friend, he allows the wife to pour hot soup on him while he is hiding inside the plate. This suffocates him and he dies. It is then on record that, “On and on, the rabbit finished the entire meat and that was the end of the wise tortoise” (72). Therefore, Tortoise’s trick has pushed him into an untimely grave.

The stand here is that the behaviour of the trickster is laced with all sorts of atrocious acts. Cheating, lying, stealing, murder and so on are all child’s play to him. As far as he is concerned, what matters most is success no matter how it is achieved. What is observed by Kwawisi Tekpetey in the Akan trickster Kweku Ananse holds very well with the Igbo tricksters. According to that researcher, “Ananse’s greed equally explains his deficiencies. He is selfish, cruel, unscrupulous, vain, without gratitude to those that help him, and insensitive to the suffering of others. He is a parasite exploiting all opportunities to get something for nothing or almost nothing” (169).

The above observation is not far different from those of other scholars who study the character of the trickster. No matter what he engages his mind and hands in, dishonesty must be felt. If not that, something which is socially abhorred must be obtained. As seen by Jasper Ahaoma Onuekwusi, the trickster “is usually selfish and wants to have all advantages on its side. It is usually small and fragile but endowed with an extra ordinary intelligence with which it outwits and fools the DUPE” (88).

In view of this obnoxious character of the trickster, what can one say is the ethical inclination of such a creature? If every member of society is to adopt trickster behaviour, what will the state of that society? Will there not be chaos? It is in view of this that it is necessary to look at the ethical inclination of the trickster. The importance is that members of society will be informed of the possibility of unprecedented anarchy that will be hoisted on them if they are to imitate the trickster.

Therefore, what is the meaning of ethics? According to Manuel Velsquez et al in an online publication:

Ethics is two things. First, ethics refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues. Ethics for example, refers to those standards that impose the reasonable obligations to refrain from rape, stealing, murder, assault, slander and fraud (n. p.).

From the above stated misdemeanors, Igbo tricksters have never been found guilty of rape and direct physical assault. Because they lack the physical strength, they can hardly assault their adversaries. But what they fail to do with their brawn, they accomplish with their brains.

Ethics here has almost the same meaning with morality. An immoral society is similar to the Biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Just as these two cities were destroyed, so it is likely that similar cities today may face the same fate, if not from God but from the inhabitants. Today, the way these two cities were demolished may be different from the way modern cities will meet their waterloo. With unhampered immorality, one expects such ends like failed economy, vendetta, fear, various types of diseases and reprisal

attacks. Such will abound in such a society with the result that a lot of deaths will be recorded. Therefore, there is need for people to uphold ethical or moral standard. The importance of this so motivated James Fieser that the following statement is credited to him in an Internet source: “Some answers to the question ‘Why be moral?’ are to avoid punishments, to gain praise, to attain happiness, to be dignified, or to fit in the society” (n. p.).

The distressing aspect of the immorality of these tricksters is that they are mostly animals most of which have defined good character with which they interact with others. Why our ancestors chose to make use of these animals to portray negative human behaviour is amazing. Or do we take it that the evils which are committed by humans have been hoisted on animals so that nobody would be offended? “Who did this?” one may ask. “Tortoise did it” may be the answer even when the human culprit is around. In this case, none is offended. But no matter what happens, the research of Peter Albert David can help to redirect us to the real offenders – human beings. According to this researcher:

With some exceptions, social animals generally either refrained altogether from attacking other members of the social group or if an attack does take place, do not make the ensuing struggle a fight to death – it is over when the weaker animal shows submissive behavior (n.p.).

Wolves and wild dogs take meat back to the members of the pack not present at the kill. Gibbons and chimpanzees with food will, in response to a gesture, share their food with other members of the group. Dolphins support other sick or injured dolphins swimming under them for hours at a time and pushing them to the surface so that they can breathe (n. p.).

But in our elders’ representation of these animals so as to teach the children, they have to twist out of shape their wonted behaviour. They turn their actions into negative dimensions, twisting their natural character to suit human disposition. But the problem is that it is necessary for us to know if the children for whom the tales are meant can copy these negative character portrayals. Or do they take only the good ones and jettison the bad ones as contained in the stories? The importance is that as far as the ethical teaching of children is concerned, it is the duty of the adults. Whatever that comes from them is deemed perfect and must be adhered to. In support that it is the duty of adults to direct the way children imbibe the ethics of the people is Fieser who states that “Adults... are responsible for instilling virtues in the young” (n. p.).

By these adults dishing these tales with their questionable and ethically misdirecting contents to children, will not these little ones develop negative behaviour? Some people do not agree that such can happen. This is in view of Igbo tales having etiological summaries some of which condemn the actions of the trickster. Some of them show the death of the tricksters. These can serve the purpose of frightening away the children from imitating the trickster. This, as stated by Ogbalu is that: “in telling the tales, the narrator makes it clear at the end of the tales that the character of the tortoise is not good or the children are meant to say so” (Significance 21).

In addition to making it clear that the character of the tortoise is abhorrent to many, there are some children who may not like the behaviour of the trickster and so they cannot imitate it. In this case, the story will not have any negative effect on society. The behaviour of such people as Ogbalu views it as follows:

He [Tortoise] can only succeed in cheating by deceiving others. Igbo people hate this character of *Mbe* [Tortoise]. They hate his fraudulent practices. In story telling session, children are told that such actions of tortoise should not be emulated. They should rather work hard to achieve greatness (Significance 16).

The stand of this researcher is that the stories of the trickster can never make the children to toe its obnoxious line. Such stories are there for entertainment. The worst that can happen is that the children will after admiring the trickster's character, jettison the negative ones and imbibe the good one. In pursuant of this idea, this researcher then states that: "The children are exposed to admire and at the same time despise the activities of tortoise. They are meant to cultivate these threats observed in tortoise but to use them wisely" (19).

But the problem here is that among these children are some whose behaviour is similar to that of the trickster. By such children being told the stories, what is in them is being brought out from the recesses of their minds. The current researcher can recall the name given to one of his playmates. That name is *Nnambe* (Father Tortoise) because of the child's behaviour. Therefore, those who said that the "children are exposed to admire and at the same time despise the activities of tortoise" have failed to face squarely the real problem and in this way, do not properly look at the influence of tricksters on society.

Take it or leave it, some people naturally like the activities of the tricksters and no matter what the etiological summaries say, no matter what you tell them so as to dissuade them from practicing trickster tactics, they will go on to do so. In fact, the tales help in goading them on because these tales help them to know more tricks.

Again, man tends to learn evil deeds quicker than good ones. It can be seen that in spite of the number of teaching and preaching going on here and there, evil is still in ascendancy. Attempts to use firing squad to quell armed robbery in Nigeria failed to efface robbery. No matter what you do, evil is in man and by simply telling children that trickster behaviour would ruin them is a way of enjoining them to come up with better ways of evading punishment.

This idea that evil is in man and that certain conditions help to bring it to the fore is not quite far from the stand of Thomas Hobbes as stated in an online paper. According to this stand, "Seventeenth century British philosopher Thomas Hobbes held that many, if not all of our actions are prompted by selfish desires. Even if an action seems selfless such as donating to charity, there are still selfish causes for this such as experiencing power over people" (Fieser n. p.). It should be noted here that the major failure in the character of the trickster is selfishness. It is this selfishness that goads him on for him to tell lies, cheat, steal or even kill for he takes himself to be above everybody.

In view of the fact that the trickster's character is nothing to write home about and in view of the fact it is used to teach our younger ones, is it possible that such stories may contribute to some negative social behaviour of today? Can it be that such newly developed social ills like Advance Fee fraud can be traced to the effect of such stories?

Possible Effect of Trickster Tales in Society

To say that such tales do not affect the children negatively because of the etiological endings is simple self deception. For one thing, the stories are not only entertaining but far longer than the etiological summaries which in most cases do not exceed a sentence. That can help to instill its message in the hearers. One may ask why the tricksters are of smaller sizes than their adversaries if not to make them to reap from their cranial matter. The message is that when one cannot fight physically, one can resort to what one's brain gives out.

Further, in order to instill trickster messages in the minds of the hearers, our ancestors over-created them. As recorded by Janet U. Ogbalu, "Tortoise tale accounts for over eighty percent of Igbo folktales" (13). With this number, the hearers are so inundated with trickster messages that they cannot easily forget them. Added to this is the ineffectiveness of the etiological summaries. This is because when children are given instructions, not all of them will obey and carry out the instructions. Some may forget and do whatever comes into their minds. In this case, this is how these summaries are treated. But the tales as entertaining as they are can hardly be forgotten.

The trickster message was instilled in the African slaves who were taken to the Caribbean. When they saw how far away they were from home, when they saw that their masters could go to any extent to punish them, they had to recall the messages of the trickster tales they were taught during their childhood days – not the etiological summaries and the instructions that accompanied the tales.

In an online study, Trudier Harris while citing Lawrence W. Levine makes this observation:

The records left by nineteenth-century observers of slavery and by the masters themselves indicate that a significant number of slaves lied, cheated, stole, feigned illness, loafed, pretended to misunderstand the orders they were given, put rocks in the bottom of their cotton baskets in order to meet their quota, broke their tools, burned their masters' property, mutilated themselves in order to escape work, took indifferent care of the crops they were cultivating and mistreated the livestock placed in their care to the extent that the masters often felt it necessary to use the less efficient mules rather than horses since the former could better withstand the brutal treatment of the slaves (n. p.).

The slaves employed all these tactics so as to get even with their masters. They saw their incapability in the face of their intimidating masters against whom they could do nothing. Just like African tricksters, they had to make use of what they got which was in the recesses of their brains. It is then not a strange idea that Harris writes that "Levine makes clear that there was a short distance between trickster tactics in life and those that constituted the tales black folks created" (n. p.).

But by these slaves resorting to trickster tactics, they were putting the tales to the correct usage which their composers had in mind. Or is it not the Igbo people who say: "*Aga ano mmadu mmadu na-ekwu muo muo* – Will humans be sitting together and be saying spirit spirit?" The simple meaning is that you have to put in place whatever that is handy and not be procrastinating. The modern equivalent of this proverb which has a *carpe diem* theme is: "Make hay while the sun shines".

Not only, Harris and Levine see the relationship between trickster behaviour and the actual behaviour exhibited by slaves especially those sold from Africa. That we do not

condemn these slaves is that we have known the precarious situation they were in. Another scholar that related trickster tales content with its actual life manifestation is Pascale De Souza. According to him: “Many slaves coming from West Africa carried with them the tales of trickery spun by Anancy that would eventually help them spin strategies for survival on plantations across the Atlantic” (103/4).

So, despite all the etiological endings and all the pieces of advice the children are furnished with, they still retain the techniques of the trickster. If the people of the olden days with all the religious dictates could move to far away Caribbean Islands with these tales and in spite of all they suffered, what of modern day children with the get-rich syndrome of today?

The fear of those who brought them to this strange land, guarding them with utmost wickedness never rubbed off the tricks from them. Rather, they put in every trick in the repertoire of their brains for them to get even with their oppressors. If they dared these foreign oppressors, the strangeness of the land, the hardship of the journey, losing some of their colleagues whose corpses they saw as they were thrown overboard for them to be converted into food for the fishes, and so on, how much more the modern people who can do anything and when caught, can bribe themselves out?

The truth is that when marginalized people can see no way of wriggling out of their desultory positions and when their use of force or power can bring them into more problems, they resort to trickery. This trickery can be classified as being good or bad depending on the perspective and the person that looks at it. But to say that the etiological summaries have killed the desire of the children to put trickster tactics into practice is sheer self-deception and inability to face realities.

From the foregoing, it seems that only these Africans especially those from the West African sub-continent, who were sold into slavery, practiced the tactics. That is not so if one were to listen to Matthias Guenther who insists that:

The trickster figure is also relevant to the life experiences of contemporary acculturated Bushmen, who work on farms owned by white or black cattle ranchers or herders. The figure provides a suitable narrative device for lampooning and subverting the power of the white Boer baas or the black patron on whom Bushmen have become economically or politically dependent... (23).

The truth is that when people are in a distressing position, they can resort to any available

tactics so as to escape. To them, that approach is good. To the person the approach is used on, it is bad. Therefore, to the above white or black cattle ranchers and slave owners, the trickster tactics are bad and horrible. Therefore, saying that the trickster tactics portrayed in the tales do not affect society negatively is, to say the least, an incorrect observation for in actual fact, they do. After all, is it not the Igbo people who, in support of using questionable approaches in solving problems coined the proverb that says: “*Eji egbe nri di na nke nri adighi welu anata ndi ilo mmadu* – Loaded and unloaded guns are used to recapture people from the enemies”. Therefore, to the traditional people whatever that can be used to achieve something good must be employed. Here, going against the enemies with guns which have no bullets is a trickster approach that can yield positive results. This, in other words, shows how acceptable trickster tactics are acceptable to the people and why they teach such.

No wonder that some Bushmen whom Guenther talked to about the character of the trickster as can be seen in Nharo folklore and religion have no word of condemnation for the trickster. To one of them, the trickster “is not so bad”. There are others who tell him that the trickster, Gauwa “is our Jesus of old time ...” (24). Such people who benefit from such dubious means do not see anything wrong there. But forthright people see such as being bad.

This situation of trying to cut corners so as to benefit is not only obtainable among the Bushmen of southern Africa. From the foregoing, it is the deliberate intention behind the creation of trickster tales. Therefore, any group which admires trickster tales can easily adopt their message of lawlessness, greed, cheating, lying and so on. Therefore, among the Igbo people, it is on record that the: “Traditional Igbo child is expected to be wise, industrious, and calculative in all his endeavors. He is expected to come out of difficulties especially difficulties that will cost him his life by hook or by crook just as tortoise had done”. This is the view of Ogbalu in the journal paper “Significance of Trickster in Igbo Folktales...” (21).

But the distressing aspect of coming out of difficulties may verge on socially abhorred behaviour. In that case, trickster tactics can come into society without being hindered by any social consideration.

Current Social Malaise as Partly Fallout from Trickster Tales

That it is now clear that our ancestors created these tales for their offspring to put them into use whenever they were in distress is no longer in doubt. What is still not fully established is whether their descendants could put them into use only when they are in distress. But who says that they are too respectful and obedient to ancestral inheritance and will not use them to gyp and perpetuate a lot of atrocities? In other words, some practitioners of advance fee fraud and pilfering may be putting into use the teachings of our ancestors.

For us to state unequivocally that the ancestors planned *ab initio* that the trickster tales would go beyond using their teachings so as to wriggle out problems, it is necessary to look at some stories of the land. In one of the tales, Tortoise and Pig are returning from the place where they worked and were paid as it is in Ogbalu’s *Tortoise -- The Fantastic Winner* (64). On seeing something he wants to buy, Tortoise borrows Pig’s money telling him that he, Tortoise would refund the money when they get home.

From one day to the next, he keeps on dribbling Pig till the day Pig in annoyance, goes to his house, snatches and throws away a grinding stone from Tortoise’s wife who in spite of Pig’s asking questions about Tortoise’s whereabouts refuses to vouchsafe him an answer. When Tortoise comes back, he angrily states that he inherited that grinding stone “from his great-great-grandfather” and it was being used by the wife to grind medicine for him, Tortoise to be healed (61)

According to Tortoise, Pig is heartless for throwing away such an important item without minding the health of his friend. He finally concludes that he would refund his money as soon as he gives him back his grinding stone. Unknown to Pig, the stone in question is Tortoise himself.

From this story, Tortoise is now richer. But from our ancestors, is it not true that “*Azu erighi ibe ya, o dighi ibu* – When a fish does not eat another, it will not grow?” So, for Tortoise to grow finally, he has to cheat his friend Pig. One may argue that Tortoise

“can only succeed in cheating by deceiving others. Igbo people hate this character of *Mbe*. They hate his fraudulent practices if we are to go with Ogbalu’s view in the journal paper “Significance of Trickster in Igbo Folktales...” (16)

In this, where is the demarcation between using tricks and cheating so as to wriggle out of desultory situations and using the same to enrich one’s self? Cheating is cheating no matter the motivation. Watch the children who are being told trickster tales and see the air of admiration oozing out from them. Some of these children will not end up admiring Tortoise. As was earlier stated, the power of etiological summaries is not strong enough to frighten them away. They will in future practice both the good and the bad aspects of the tales. Why? According to an Igbo saying: “*Nwa ya na-okuko na edina na-esi akpana* – The child that sleeps with a chicken smells of its droppings” (Onwudufor 356). Since the tricks have been sown in them, in future they would start manifesting the teachings of the tales in various ways both to wriggle out of intimidation, to exploit and to cheat others.

Therefore, certain teachings and practices should not be for children with their undeveloped view of life. This is because these teachings may affect them negatively. Take it or leave it, “*Nkpuru akwu balu n’ikwe aghaghi ibu apa* — The palm nut that enters into the mortar will never escape being wounded”. In other words, both the positive and negative teachings of such tales will never fail to make an impact on the children. Such impacts are felt today in the young ones who call themselves yahoo boys, four-one-niners and so on. But to be factual, it is not only the tales that created these but they contributed in one way or in another, no matter the extent.

Conclusion

Trickster tales are obtainable in many parts of the world. In these tales, the protagonists use guile, lying, cheating, wit and a lot of tricks to go on in life. Normally, they struggle to be one of the leaders of their society and they are seen as being wise. That puts them in important positions that can enable them to dupe others. As seen by one analyst in an online article:

tricksters are animals or characters who ... [are] ostensibly disadvantaged and weak in a contest of wills, power, and/or of their larger, more powerful adversaries. Tricksters achieve their objectives through indirection and mask-wearing, through playing upon the gullibility of their opponents. In other words, tricksters succeed by outsmarting or outthinking their opponents (Harris n. p.).

These tactics of the tricksters were noticed among Negro slaves sold to work in the Caribbean Islands. Apart from those days, today, they are also being seen in southern Africa among some agriculturalists working for White and Black employers. But then, the stand of this research is that among the Igbo, these trickster teachings are in operation not only to help those who put them into practice out of problems but to cheat others. Therefore, trickster tales introduced by our ancestors are today both destructive and sometimes helpful to those who make use of them to wriggle out of problems.

That we have not noticed its bad effect is the euphoria we feel that everything inherited from our ancestors must be good. To be precise, trickster tales must have contributed to the spate of fraud raging on in our society today.

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