



## THE TRICKSTER-ARCHETYPE AND TRICKERY IN IGALA ORAL NARRATIVES: IMPLICATIONS FOR CONTEMPORARY IGALA SOCIETY

NELSON ENEFOLA OYIBO PhD

Department of Arts Education,  
Prince Abubakar Audu University,  
Anyigba

[gatewaysharp@gmail.com](mailto:gatewaysharp@gmail.com)

07061627494

### Abstract

Trickster tales are copious and exist in variegated forms among the Igala of North Central Nigeria. They constitute an integral part of the Igala oral narrative tradition. Intrinsicly, the trickster archetype which is one of the major characters in Igala traditional tales, employs guile and intelligence to break law and order, and takes advantage of his victims despite his relatively small size. The roles of the trickster are culture-bound. This paper examined the Igala trickster-archetype and trickery in Igala oral narratives with close cursory look at the contemporary Igala society. Añeje, the Igala trickster as an epitome of the people's guile and crafty behaviours. Since the trickster tales are rampant among Igala, it therefore implies that their daily activities are characterized by deception and treachery for sustenance of life and continual survival in a hostile and highly competitive world. The objectives of the study among others are: to ascertain the frequency of trickster tale performance among the Igala people and to determine the importance of the trickster tales and the correlation with the people's social, cultural and psychological patterns. The study employed the survey design, gathering data from fieldwork which used random selection of oral narrators (two males and one female) from Idah, Otobo-Ajaka and Ogane-Enugwu towns in Kogi East Senatorial District. The archetypal theory of Carl Jung was engaged to determine the trickster figure as an embodiment of the people's collective unconscious and as an archetype of deception and crafty behaviour. The paper, among others, revealed that trickery is a means of survival employed by small and witty animals to outweigh other animals in the mist of scarce resources. The paper also found that the trickster tales are a mode of reaction from the social and psychological impulses of the people. The work recommended that for everyone to successfully cope with the social and psychological order of things, a bit of wit and intelligence should be employed in order to cope in the present social realities. The paper, therefore, concluded that the trickster archetype constitutes the core proportion of Igala mythology and folklore tradition, hence its relevance in contemporary society cannot be over emphasized.

**Key words:** Trickster-Archetype, Tricker, Igala, Oral narrative, Collective unconscious



## Introduction

The trickster archetype is a special figure and a fascinating personality found in the mythology, folklore and the oral literature of the Igala people of North Central Nigeria. It is a phenomenal being of cultural significance which exists in many societies around the globe. It is a complex and often mischievous figure who applies trickery and intelligence by challenging and disrupting the established order of things. Its characteristics, therefore, ranges from cunning practices, cleverness, and high propensity for playing tricks or practical jokes on his victims. Hence, trickery is the hallmark of the trickster. The trickster figure represents Jung's designation of what he referred to as 'collective unconscious'. The phrase "collective unconscious" was used by Jung in one of his essays to mean the contents, or "ancient memories" of a people which to him are synonymous with the term "collective unconscious" or what he also later referred to as "archetypes" in his prodigious writings. Jung said that different situations in life call for sundry archetypes, and human beings react to these situations in quite the same way irrespective of race and the level of one's enlightenment and location (1972:48). Among the ways through which human beings react to sundry situations in life is the trickster-archetype.

There are many characters that exhibit trickery in Igala oral narratives, but the widely known trickster in Igala folklore is Añeje also known as Abedo, that is the Tortoise. Some other less known tricksters are: Hyena, Hare, Mongrel, Jar bird, and a host of others. This article, therefore, explores the trickery propensities of the Tortoise in Igala oral narratives. It should be borne in mind that African folktales mainly consist of animal characters. The stories in Igala oral narratives are replica of the human experiential world.

One of this study's objectives is to unveil the inner contents and the psychology of the average Igala, as well as the pattern of the people reactions to the external world. It is evidenced from the fieldwork embarked upon among Igala, that there abounds copious presence of the trickster tales among the people, hence this paper establishes this fact by contributing to the existing works in this regard. The study applies the archetypal theory of Carl Gustav Jung of collective unconscious which avers that there are innate patterns of thought and behavior that strive for the realization within an individual's environment. He espouses further that there are primordial instincts which all members of the society are said to inherit from their forebears. These inherited patterns of thoughts are what Jung referred to as "archetypes". Hence, the trickster archetype is an exemplar of such inherited pattern of thought.

In Africa, folktales are usually rendered by elders to teach children and youths alike moralities, values and cultural ethos. In Igala tales, like in every other ethnic group in Nigeria, animals are anthropomorphized. This implies that animals live as humans and play the roles ascribable to them. Jung (2003: 3) espoused that one of the manifestation of the archetypes is myth and fairytale. In the world of folktale, humans are replicated by the animals. Jung has said of the



archetype “thus applies indirectly to the “representation collective”, since it designates only those psychic contents which have not yet been submitted to conscious elaboration and therefore an immediate datum of psychic experience” (2003: 3). This implies that the concept of archetype depicts a communal perception of an idea which is inherited and passed down from one generation to another. The trickster is known for bending or breaking rules, defying authorities, and challenging societal norms through his unconventional behavior. He often possesses a quick wit and is skilled at outsmarting others, using his intelligence and resourcefulness to navigate difficult situations. Whenever he appears in a narrative, he always exhibits comparatively higher wit and wisdom than the rest of the animals. Trickery, therefore, is a defensive and a survival mechanism which Aneje, the trickster employs to live life and cope with the hard situations of life among other bigger animals. Palgrave (2013 :10) comments that

The upsurge of trickster literature since 1960 reflects insistence [sic], particularly on the part of groups affected by inequality that the country live up to its ideals . . . The Trickster discourses provide means of tracing and analyzing some of these developments in the stream of time.

The trickster, therefore, is perceived as a phenomenal being that reflects the stark socio-cultural realities that are reflected in the folklore and mythologies of different cultures all over the world. Similarly, Squibb (2005: 2) averred that “the trickster holds a central place in mythologies around the world and across the ages and that the mysterious trickster character predates major organized religion, civilization, and even literature itself”.

### **The Nature and Characteristics of *Aneje*, the Trickster in Igala Oral Narratives**

The nature and activities of *Aneje* in Igala oral tradition are complex and multifarious. The study of the trickster has universal relevance, especially as it is found in contemporary discourses and cultures round the globe. Hence, the trickster constitutes an important discourse in multidisciplinary studies as it is explored towards understanding the attitudes, behavioral mode of a people or an individual. It can be inferred that one of the most intriguing and famous sub-genres of the oral narrative is the trickster narrative. It is in this regard that Jung (1968:56) corroborated that the prevalent and recurring idea of the trickster is in the form of archetype, and that the trickster figure appears largely intact throughout numerous human cultures no matter the distance of time or place between them.

The trickster, transcends generational gaps; it continues to appear and reappear in stories, anecdotes, fables, and tales of people in all ages (Squibb 2005: 2). Similarly, Canonici(1995:7), quoting Radin (1972: xxiii), argued that the trickster, as viewed in many African cultures, belongs to the realm of mythology which is celebrated in rituals and also connected with the supreme Being. Therefore, having been originally entrusted with the ritual and connected with



the creation or the organization of the world, his energies were later poured into sowing chaos in the very universe he helped to order (Canonici 1995: 7). This affirms the fact that the trickster is ubiquitous and very important in various cultures. Sekoni (1990: 1) also reiterated that the trickster tale is universally pervasive, and that particularly among the Yoruba, it holds sway that “on the average, three out of five fictive narratives told in Yoruba homes or gathering, are trickster tales. . .” This observation on the Yoruba story-telling art is contiguous with that of the Igala. Therefore, Igala oral narratives most often relate the exploits of Aneje, the Tortoise within the Igala cultural sphere.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the trickster personality in African folktales, as Canonici (1995:7) observed, are relatively smaller animals and as a result of their diminutive nature, they find themselves often threatened by the bigger species. It is also opined by Radin 1972: xxiii that African oral narratives involving the trickster delve into the realm of myth. This author further emphasized that the trickster in many ways plays the role of both the “creator and destroyer, giver and the collector; he who dupes others and who is always duped himself” Radin (1972: xxiii). Consequently, the study of the trickster is bound to pose problems, not because he is represented by many figures in various cultures, but that there is also no unanimity in the extent to which he is sacred. This, therefore, translates to why the trickster is known in many ethnic communities by several appellations, attitudes and practices.

Many studies among sundry ethnic groups have revealed to the tricksters as chiefly relying on their sharp practices, quick tongues, prompt wit and cleverness to keep them out of trouble and save them from harm. Canoninci (1995: 7) opined that the trickster figure becomes the externalisation of the perceived conflicts; he is enigmatic because his actions reveal positive aspects, while also outrageously running counter to religion, social and ethical codes. He commented that one of the earliest works on the trickster, is Radin’s seminal writings which clearly stated that each ethnic and cultural group has its own trickster with distinct narrative cycles which have, however, many narrative motifs and themes embedded in them.

In Nigeria, as it is in most African cultures, the trickster stories are pervasive and ubiquitous with diverse oral literary history. The trickster’s original mould in the Igala oral narrative tradition is the tortoise which is popularly referred to as *Añeje/Abedo*. The Igala trickster tales are moralistic and etiological in nature. The aim is to teach children and the youth the right values and behaviours and to explicitly acquaint them with the explanations on how the things around us came to be. For this reason, they offer explanations to natural phenomena in Igala society. According to Douglas (2013: 2), the trickster tales help to explain why the people accept or reject some practices of the society. Scheub (2005: 7), in his text: *Trickster and the Hero: Two Characters in the Oral and Written Tradition of the World*, he stressed that etiological tales provide explanations on why and how humankind has progressed from the world of the cosmological and has created checks and balances with rules and regulations.

The Igala trickster, *añeje/abedo*, therefore, exhibits behavioural traits that are in tandem with trickster archetypes of other culture. Many of these qualities possessed by the *añeje/abedo* are discussed by Jung who affirmed that “there is a trickster figure that exists as a universal



archetype to be encouraged within each of us and in most belief systems” (Qtd in Hyme 1975 4). Jung’s position here explains that the trickster traits are reflective in human beings, religion and in human culture and folklore. To corroborate Jung’s position above, Douglas (2013: 5) argued that the study of each trickster’s culture of origin is paramount when we attempt to decipher the themes and motives of the individual tales. Conversely, he asserts that the uniqueness of each culture and society makes it difficult to create a generic definition of the trickster. This is probably because the study of the trickster is not only targeted at deciphering the level of its tricks alone but it also assesses other characteristics of the trickster that stand them out in different cultures. Hence, Palgrave (2013:19) advanced reason for the level of trickster archetypes in African stories. According to him, “the precarious conditions of the trickster in sub-Saharan Africa [and of course, other parts of the world] had worked against the ideals of “harmony, friendship, and trust . . . while deception, greed, and cleverness emerge[ed] as valuable behavioural traits” [among the people] (Palgrave 2013:19).

There is no gain saying the fact that tricksters in various cultures exhibit virtually similar behaviours irrespective of their backgrounds, yet there abound some variances in their inherent characters. It is therefore for this reason that Douglas 2013: 5, asserted using the premise of his comparative study of the trickster figures among and between Africans, African-Caribbeans and African-Americans, that despite the tricksters’ similar physical appearance, there are marked differences in their unique cultures, traditions, history and discourse. He also concluded that there abound distinguishable results in the variances and uniqueness of their respective trickster figures and that there are only a few inherent features of the trickster that draw them together as a collective group (Douglas 2013: 5).

In spite of the obvious similarities in the nature of the tricksters of various cultures of the world, it is still a difficult venture to classify them together because of their diverse and complex nature. Hence, William and William (1993:2) in *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts and Criticisms* authenticated this stance of the trickster as they avow that the “trickster phenomena contain similar features in several societies (which) leads us to examine comparative social functions, psychological mechanism, literary trace, relationship to religious systems, and ritual transformations”. Squibb (2005: 2) asseverated that “whether one believes in archetypes or not, the trickster figure remains a prevalent and compelling figure in ancient and modern mythology”.

Though trickery is a major exploit perpetuated by *Añeje/abedo*, the Tortoise, it is nonetheless his exclusive behaviour in the animal kingdom. Other animals and figure in Igala oral narratives also exhibit trickery. For instance, animals like the fox, the jar bird and ogres also exhibit trickery in Igala narratives. However, since they are not the primary focus of this study, attention is exclusively on the Tortoise. In most cases, as it is obtained in Africa, trickster figures are usually, typically, smaller animals who would immediately be at a distinct disadvantage when they find themselves threatened by another animal character (Douglas 2013: 9). It is probably for this reason that the trickster relies on his sharp wit and quick tongue to



keep him out of trouble and safe from harm. Therefore, the Tortoise is exceptional when it comes to craftiness, trickiness and deception.

The Igala have a saying about the tortoise and his seemingly unbeatable mastery of trickery which has out-lived all ages: “ugbejuañeje kia du oji ko imie”. This is literally translated to mean that the Tortoise’s craftiness is usually, ironically, to his own disadvantage in most circumstances. Though the Tortoise’s tricks and craftiness are most times carried out with the utmost intention to dupe, outshine and deceive his victims and members of his community; whenever he does so, he meets undesirable ends.

Earlier studies on the trickster, like those carried out by Sekoni (1990) and Douglas (2013) and other scholars revealed that there are two categories of the trickster narratives. For instance, Sekoni (1990:30) categorises the trickster narrative into two genres namely tales of affirmation and tales of negation. According to him, the ‘tales of negation’ involve a trickster as “an ever-present need for liberation and emancipation in the face of a social system of domination and inhibition” (Sekoni 1990: 30). In the words of Douglas (2013:54), the ‘tales of affirmation’ vilify Ajapa (the trickster tortoise) as a rascally and tricky character who performs his deeds solely for his own entertainment (9). In the words of Sekoni (1990), the “tales of affirmation are usually concerned with such subjects as honesty, hard work, modesty, pride, greed, sincerity, and other factors of interpersonal relations”.

In further division of the trickster tales of affirmation, Sekoni (1990: 57) categorised them into uncritical affirmation and critical affirmation. The former category presents a trickster who is “overtly vilified”, often using his trickiness to subjugate characters smaller than he [like the cricket, the lamb, the dove, etc., as seen in the collection of Igala tales in this study]. In line with Douglas’ observation, the latter category is more of a middle ground between tales of negation and tales of uncritical affirmation (2013:75). Tales of critical affirmation suggest that societal norms can be manipulated under special circumstances (Sekoni 1990: 68).

In all, the trickster archetype serves several purposes within stories and myths. It can challenge the status quo, question authority, and provide a critique of societal norms and expectations. The trickster can also bring about change, disrupt stagnation, and serve as a catalyst for transformation and growth. They often blur the boundaries between good and evil, embodying both positive and negative qualities. In literature and storytelling, the trickster archetype adds an element of unpredictability, humour, and excitement. Their actions can provoke thought, challenge assumptions, and provide insights into human behaviour and the nature of society. The trickster archetype represents the unpredictable and mischievous aspects of the human nature. It reminds us to question authority, embrace change, and approach life with a sense of humor and cleverness. Subsequently, the sub-sections consider a few qualities of the Igala Aneje/ Abedo. In the following sub-heads, this paper examines some consequences of the trickster archetypes in Igala folktales.

### **The Trickster as an Epitome of Deception and Greed**

While the trickster archetype is often associated with mischief, wit, and cleverness, traits that exhibit the darker aspects of human nature, some of its well-known behaviours are deception



and greed. In many Igala folktales, the trickster archetype takes on a more negative and manipulative role, using their cunning and deceitful tactics for personal gain. Hence, it is seen to exploit others, bend the rules, and also engages in acts of deception to satisfy his own desires. In these portrayals, the trickster archetype as an embodiment of greed and deception, highlights the potential for corruption and unethical behavior within human setting. It may deceive and manipulate others for personal wealth, power, or advantage, often disregarding the well-being of others. One example of the trickster archetype associated with greed and deception is the character of Reynard the Fox in European folklore. Reynard is cunning, sly, and often depicted as a deceptive trickster who manipulates others for his own gain. He uses his intelligence to outwit his adversaries and acquire wealth and power at their expense (Radin 1972).

In many African folklores, the trickster figure displays qualities of greed and deception. For instance, Anansi the Spider, while often portrayed as a helpful and wise character, sometimes exhibits traits of trickery and deceit to satisfy his own desires. He may exploit others for personal gain, trick them into giving him resources or favors, or engage in deceptive behavior to achieve his goals.

These portrayals of the trickster archetype as embodying greed and deception serve as cautionary tales, warning against the negative consequences of unethical behavior. They remind us of the potential pitfalls of excessive greed, dishonesty, and manipulation, and highlight the need for integrity and ethical conduct in our interactions with others.

Other than the trickster narratives, many other oral narrative genres in Igala oral literature encapsulate the greed motif. Greed and deception constitute common motifs in any typical Igala society. These traits are also common in virtually all human communities. Igala society is marked by survival of the fittest and outclassing of one another. Hence, it becomes a commonplace among the people to demonstrate these tendencies to inordinately acquire and amass possessions in their daily social world. The imaginative creation of the human world using animal activities makes the African oral narratives present the human realities with subtlety and near accuracy. Thus, in the various Igala tales studied here, one notices that *añeje* displays wit which consequently results to greed and deception, exemplifying the human behavioural pattern. In subsequent paragraph, there is attempt to examine the Igala trickster figure with the view to assessing the qualities of greed and deception it possesses.

The character of *Añeje/Abedo*, tortoise is, therefore, foregrounded in the analysis given here. In the story of the “The Tortoise and the Birds Travelled to Heaven for a Meeting”, the Tortoise is seen to display a high sense of greed and avarice by appropriating to himself all the food meant for the whole colony of birds that travelled with him. On entering heaven, Tortoise, introduced himself as the leader of the group. First and foremost, he initiated the idea that everyone must be identified by a proper name. Consequently, he referred to himself as “All of You”. At this



point, Tortoise begins to reveal his innate wit and greedy tendencies. Conversely, it is realisable that ....

At the Universal level, the trickster stories present a comparatively wise individual who by his actions demonstrates the foolishness of others. Squibb (2005: 5), citing Scheub (2012), depicted the attitudes of the trickster by exhibiting the traits of the Southern American Winnebago hare as trickster. Squibb (2005:5) affirmed that “the Winnebago hare shapes himself, and also learns how to outsmart his opponents and successfully pulls his tricks, and therefore, he also shapes the world of people”. As a corollary of the above traits of the Winnebago hare, the tortoise in Igala tales, in virtually all his social interactions with his folks, outshines them too. For instance, *Aaņeje* in tale three, five and six outsmarts his friends and villagers; he also outwits the birds, the lamb and the dove respectively. At the end of every encounter, he is seen to make his victims realise their weaknesses and teaches them lessons. Even at this, they tend to fall again for him in another encounter.

The trickster is gregarious, continually trying out his hands and venturing in sundry activities. In all these, he is either a victim or the vanquished. In the words of Sekoni (1990: 23), two things are likely to happen to the trickster: one, the trickster can be depicted either with sympathy identification, in which case the audience empathizes with an underdog trickster constantly at war with his oppressive society; two, an unconditional rejection, which is meant to elicit feelings of hatred for the trickster who sadistically tries to overthrow the working order of the community (Sekoni 1990:23). As seen in tales three, five and six where the tortoise faces “unconditional rejection”.

In the Igala tale titled: “How the Tortoise Deceived the Lamb and the Jar bird”, the Tortoise faced outright rejection from mother Sheep, whose son, Tortoise had subjected to untold hardship in their journey to the distant land. The mother Sheep demonstrated her dismay over Tortoise’s maltreatment of her son who accompanied him to the distant journey, hence she vowed that she will never have anything to do with Tortoise in her entire life because of his cruel attitude to her son.

The Igala *Aņeje* is an embodiment of Sekoni’s description of the trickster who said that the trickster’s daily transactions negate the social order of the society in which he lives. In tale three for instance, he deceives the birds into lending him their feathers in order to travel to the heaven for an important meeting. Unexpectedly, the tortoise only deceives them into letting him be a part of the meeting for his selfish reason. His greed is unveiled when he alone amasses all the food served them at the meeting. Two attitudes of the tortoise are exposed here: his deceptive inclination and his greedy nature. Further, in another story, Tortoise deceives the mother Sheep to release her only child, the lamb, to accompany him to a distant journey. Instead of taking good care of the lamb, Tortoise tricks the lamb by starving him to near death. The Tortoise is fond of venturing into any gathering because of what he stands to gain. In the tale between him and the Mother Sheep, we notice that the former begged that the latter’s son, the lamb accompanies him on a journey. In this journey, Tortoise used the Lamb to dignify acquire for himself. Instead of being kind to the Lamb, Tortoise paid the latter back with evil.





In another encounter, we also observe outright deception and greed perpetuated by Tortoise in the story titled: 'The Tortoise and His Friend, Dove'. Here, he is seen to take advantage of the Dove's innocence and ineptitude. Through the Tortoise and the dove encounter, we realise that every creature made by God has one form of natural disability or another. As a friend, Tortoise gave a condition on which the Dove must eat the cooked water yam drenched in palm oil with him. The condition given to the Dove was for him to render this sentence correctly: 'Ebina ekpoekepochochocho ...' In this regard, we realise that the dove possessed natural speech deformity, hence cannot pronounce the underscored utterance. It is this weakness that the tortoise capitalises on in insisting the later pronounces the word *ebina* (water yam), a word which the dove finds difficult to pronounce clearly. It is the Tortoise's greedy intention to eat up the yam all alone that made him to devise a trick that prevented the Dove from eating with him. In another encounter, the Dove paid the Tortoise back. Here, the Dove also capitalised on the Tortoise's physical disability to retaliate. Realising the tortoise's walking difficulty, the Dove instructed Tortoise to wash his hand in a bowl of water kept far away from the food set before them. He gave the condition that the latter must wash his hands before joining him to eat his food knowing fully well that the latter will definitely soil his hands before reaching where the food was kept. The tortoise fails to comply. Each time he tries, he smears his hands before getting to the food.

This total inability of the tortoise to wash his hands and get to the food without smearing them with dust again reveals his inherent physical disability. In the end, the dove eats his food alone. The story illustrates the fact that *Añeje*, Tortoise is constantly on the move to outsmart others, and he only achieves this, most of the time, through deception and pranks.

#### **The Trickster's Immortality, Indestructibility and Relentless Exploits**

Other important reference to the Igala trickster archetype is his immortal, indestructible and relentless behaviours. While the trickster is often portrayed as clever and mischievous, their actions cross ethical boundaries and exhibit a relentless pursuit of his goals, regardless of the consequences or the impact on others

In Igala folktales, the trickster most often engages in deceit, manipulation, and dastardly acts that are morally questionable or outright immoral. They may lie, cheat, and exploit others for personal gain or amusement. Their relentlessness can manifest as an unwavering commitment to achieving their objectives, even if it means disregarding the well-being or rights of others. This darker side of the trickster archetype serves to highlight the potential dangers of unchecked ambition, selfishness, and a disregard for ethical principles. It explores the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and confronts the consequences that arise from such actions. By embodying these negative traits, the trickster archetype provides a cautionary tale or a mirror to reflect upon the darker aspects of human nature.

One popular example of the trickster archetype known in world literature, exhibiting immorality and relentlessness is the character of Iago in Shakespeare's play "Othello (2000)" Iago is a master manipulator who orchestrates a series of deceptions to destroy the lives of those around him. His relentless pursuit of revenge and his willingness to manipulate and



deceive others highlight the depths of his immorality and his unyielding determination to achieve his malevolent goals.

In Igala folklore tradition, the continual existence of Añeje in Igala folktales does not make him to experience physical death, and even if he is seen to do so in one story, we observe his miraculous reincarnation and more actively exploiting his community again in a subsequent narrative. No matter the level of damage done to him, physically or otherwise, the Añeje bounces back with more vigour and resilience than ever in an endless chain of resonance. This ability of the Tortoise to reinvent himself is one of the reasons he is regarded as a hero figure in Igala oral narratives. He is, therefore, seen as one who is immortal and elastic too, and his elasticity has lent him numerous appellations. It should be noted that the trickster is not always a hero. Sometimes, he is a villain due to his tendency to cheat and deceive people. Again, it is observable that the tortoise is always at the receiving end and for this singular fact, he is termed the ‘duper’ and not the duped; he is always the one who causes things to happen to others, but he is not made ‘vulnerable’. Douglas (2013: 21) commented that

The didactic function of resurrecting the trickster after each foiled deed illustrates that life is full of second chances and that it is always possible to recover from a mistake.

While our trickster may make mistakes like a human, he is resurrected to fight another day in the very next tale.

These illustrations typify the Igala trickster situations. The illustrative nature and function of the trickster, as Douglas generally points out, can depict the Igala trickster in the narratives in a number of ways. For example, in the story of the “The Tortoise and the Birds Who Travelled to Heaven for an Important Meeting”, the Tortoise deceives the birds and eats up the food meant for all of them. Consequently, the birds decide to pay him back by collecting their feathers from him. The decision of the birds got the tortoise stranded immediately and he was unable to go back home. What happened next was that he took a huge leap from heaven to the earth only to crush his back on the rocks and stones that his wife was told to arrange for his landing. It should be noted that the trickster has the natural tendency to cheat and deceive his folks, but he does not go free with it. He is, therefore, the villain in most cases.

Ordinarily, one expects the Tortoise to die as a result of this action, especially when we consider the altitude he jumps from. All he suffers is just the fracture he sustains at his back which his wife later helped to nurse. Also, in the story of ‘Tortoise Who Imitates his Friend, Mr. Cricket by Jumping into a Red-Hot Pot’, we observe that Tortoise desired to produce oil from his back like his friend, Cricket did previously. Cricket had earlier jumped into his wife’s scorching pot of soup and had subsequently produced oil. While the Cricket is able to produce enough oil from his body by jumping into his wife’s red-hot pot on the fire without being harmed, Tortoise made frantic attempts to do same by jumping into the same red-hot pot on the fire. However, Tortoise’s attempt brought him very close to death. Consequently, his shell became terribly burnt, melted and battered. Tortoise was expected to be lying dead when we consider the level of burns and injuries he sustained. But to our greatest chagrin, he was seen



vibrantly going about his normal activities in the next story, even displaying more vigour than ever. This indicates that the Tortoise experiences near death but would not die as a result of the culturally ascribed role as an indestructible being.

In view of the tortoise's indestructibility and immortality, Radin, Kerényi and Jung (1972: 174) reiterated that "we must grant him [the trickster] the greater consistency, an unchanging, indestructible core that not only antedates all the stories about him, but survives in spite of them [all]". From the foregoing, it can be concluded that the nature of the tortoise, the archetypal trickster is one who never dies but continually lives with the Igala culture and tradition and reflected in the people's folklore and mythology.

In all, it is important to assert that the trickster archetype is not inherently good or evil in itself but rather a complex and multifaceted character who indulges in survival through his cunning and trickery activities.

### **Recommendations**

By way of conclusion, this paper examines trickery and the trickster activities in Igala oral narratives. Through the Tortoise' manipulative activities, the human psyche is unveiled. It is, therefore, evident from the foregoing, that this study considers character-types, specifically the trickster figure as a worthy artistic discourse for analyzing social and cultural issues in Igala oral literature and folklore. Hence, it should be noted that Igala oral tales about the trickster generally, and of course with regard to the act of trickery, are a means of survival amongst the people. The trickster tales, above all teach survival; develop children's intellect; they also sharpen their social and emotional abilities as well as enhance their cognitive growth and language skills.

### **Recommendations**

1. The paper recommends that since the trickster tales are cultural sources of wisdom, intelligence and means of survival, children and youth alike should be exposed early to them so as to help them cope with the social realities of the contemporary world.
2. Further, with the trickster's presence in trickster tales, this study recommends that children and youth must be guided not to fall victims of the any trickery and deception initiated by anyone.

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