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DEPARTMENT: COMBINED ARTS (ENGLISH/HISTORY)

COURSE CODE: ELS 102

COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO NIGERIAN LITERATURE

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QUESTION: SHOULD HUMANITY AVENGE DIVINITY? DISCUSS USING CHINUA ACHEBE'S "DEAD MAN'S PATH" AND RUBEN ONYISHI'S "CLASH OF DIVINITY".

Human understanding about the individual inter play in defending or going extra miles into the judgment and verdict for the divinity protection is obvious in "Achebe's dead man's path" and "Clash of Divinity" by Onyishi. This can be literary inappropriate as seen in dead man's path.

The Priest of Ani called on the headmaster, Mr Obi in his attempt to close the path. Although it was hardly used, it connects the village shrine with their place of burial. The path has been there before their birth and it is a belief that the path is also a route of which children coming in to be born passes through. The principal, Mr Obi, tends to follow his western civilization and culture.

He believes that the path is irrelevant and insignificant and closes the path but to the village and the priest of Ani, he sees the path as a useful route for both the living and the dead. The priest of Ani in Achebe's dead man's path was fair enough to give warnings to the principal on the implication of his action but the school headmaster insisted that walking through the school premises, the thoroughfare was against the regulations of the school. The god of Ani avenged for himself. Mr Obi woke up in the morning and found his works ruined as one of the school building pulled down.

In Onyishi's "Clash of Divinities", similar scenario was encountered though in this case it was more serious and outrageous. In Imobi, its post colonial era, the people believe in deities and cultural practices. One of which was the worship of

Omaba masquerade cultural practices. It was believed that Omaba was a spirit masquerade and the female gender was never allowed to join.

The village community of Imobi has been in this cultural practice even before the emergence of Christianity mainly the Catholic and the Assemblies Divine Church. Under Rev. Udo, cultural practices were allowed so as to maintain the growth and stay of the congregation. The Omaba ceremony was allowed by the church in respect to their culture. Rev. Dinma having taken over with a new protocol, unlike Rev. Udo's leadership role in the church, Dinma has no regard for culture rather he cultured the people to Christian religious absolutism practice. Cooking food for the masquerade was kicked against. So, many women began to leave the church and the men began to take second wives.

On the day of the Omaba celebration, the women of Assemblies Divine Church, Imobi came out in a group, singing and dancing as they trudged the route from Amuzu which led to the boundary between Ekwa and Ezenagu. The men at Ogorigo who escorted the spirit arrived at night, made incantations, poured liberations and bid the spirit goodbye and met the women in their reverberating ululation and song of praise. Divinity was up to a clash.

Now, the people did not take it likely. Same thing occurred in dead man's path when the priest had to give a fair warning. Here, they called the community hearing, on which Ozo Elihe Ezeja simply told them that "it is not our duty to avenge the spirit of Omaba, the spirit will avenge itself". But an angry group led by seventeen-seventeen who fought for the gods, bulldozed the church, rushed to the pastor, lifted him up and dashed him on the ground and fought the members. Him and his men raped the wife and staged them inside the church and burnt it down to ashes.

The Onyishi of Eluama wondered why they should take laws into their own hands, "is it that Omaba cannot avenge himself or what? Why do you young men of Ezeagu want to bring a curse upon yourselves and generations?" he argued, "if the man has offended Omaba. Does it mean that Omaba can no longer fight for himself?" Hence, humanity has no good effect protecting or fighting for divinity. If the gods can see then it can fight for itself.

In the book “Clash of Divinities” by Onyishi, the police arrested the angry mob headed by seventeen-seventeen which were later released by Zeus complicity. God’s wrath was ready to befall the Imobi people. In Achebe’s “Dead Man’s Path”, the god of the land brought the reputation of the principal to the mud. That’s divinity fighting for itself not humanity fighting or making a defenceful justice for divinity.