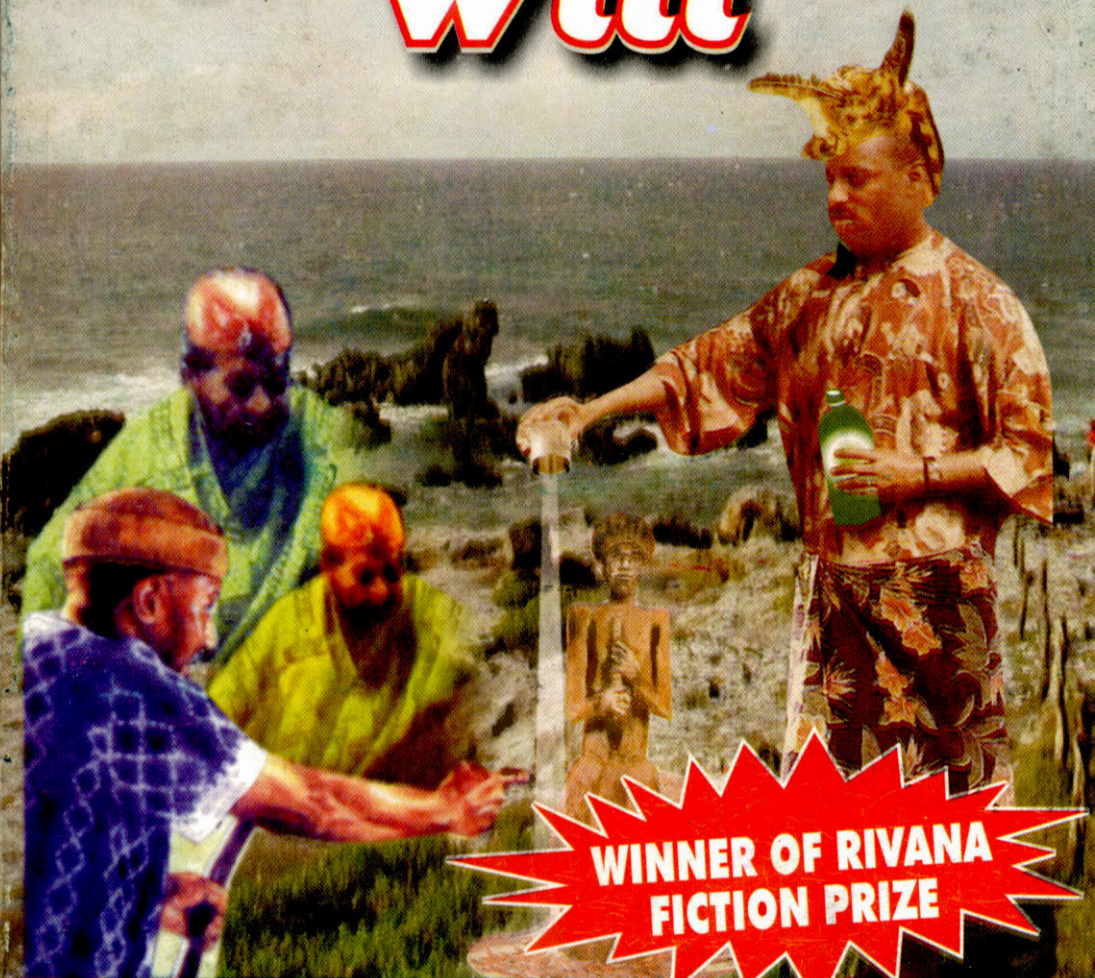


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# ANCESTRAL Will



WINNER OF RIVANA  
FICTION PRIZE

ROWLAND WORLU, Ph.D

# **ANCESTRAL WILL**

**ROWLAND WORLU**

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## DEDICATION

To Ezechimeru, my son  
And  
To my ancestors

## INTRODUCTORY NOTE

The novel opens with a revelation of two recurring social problems - land dispute and infidelity on the part of Aminike's wife. Wagbara is named as the man behind this infidelity and his intransigence leads to his murder by Aminike who consequently goes on exile leaving his estate in dispersal.

While in exile, he is persistently trailed by the deceased's family whose resolve to revenge seems irreversible. On discovery, he runs from Oroevo to Atali where he is eventually killed by a gang of masked men who are apparently sent by the family of the deceased. The death of Aminike witnessed the return of not only the remnant of his estate, but also peace, sanity and succour to the whole land of Eburueno.

To a casual and undiscerning reader, this account is nothing short of personal or family history, albeit in fiction. Such a reader may, in other words, view the whole piece as an attempt by the author to recall and perpetuate the culture of a people whose heritage has been polluted by the spread of urbanization. Such perception may not be immaterial because when a man fails to live by his culture, he is bound to pant aimlessly on the dry land like a fish thrown out of the river. Moreso, when it is considered that culture is not the creation of any "present man". It is rather his heritage. Thus culture has a role to play where precision is sought in the analysis of the entire work. For it is only by so doing that one can underscore the demerits of colonial or western

influence on our environment. But beyond such conscious attempt to reminisce about our pre-colonial heritage, a critical reader may wish to spot a political perspective depending on his interest and background.

Most literary enthusiasts will wonder that a famous wrestler, wine tapper and farmer of Aminike's standing should refuse to perform the second burial of his father despite his participation in the second burial of others. This pictures him as both a defender and debaser of tradition. By extension, we notice that some societies breed inordinately ambitious leaders who profess to be proponents of democracy but fail to live up to its tenets. They hold it out with their left hand and hold the sword to slaughter it with their right hand; just as Aminike achieves a position of influence through his knowledge and projection of the custom of the land. At the same time, he is involved in a battle against this same custom.

In the same vein, neighbours and friends to our society cast a cold eye on evil hatched and plotted in our midst only to punish the offender alongside the innocent members of our community as soon as such evil bears some fruits: When Wagbara rejoices in iniquity, everyone sees it and no concrete step is taken to discourage his intransigence. On several occasions, Aminike raises alarm against Wagbara, and the elders prove too slow to act but are quick to execute judgement on Aminike and his innocent family members.

The double standard that emit from these neighbours and friends (who aptly depict themselves as neo-colonial

masters) are inexplicable. Leaders of nations perpetrate damnable crimes, and once they are to face the music, they flee into the waiting and amiable hands of colleagues who probably participated in the condemnation of the misdeed, all in the name of political assylum.

These same friends and neighbours claim success in the diagnosis of our socio-economic and geo-political ailments, but the prescriptions they offer tend to cause more complications, just as attempts to solve Aminike's psychological problems in exile by marrying for him two wives complicated his problems. The question now is: Why will a man not make an input in the solution of his problems? In our contemporary political society, Aminike represents a desperate politician who strives to actualise himself by seeking the acquisition of political power. He had in the past sponsored the ouster of political leaders who (in some cases) lost their lives. This represents past world in Aminike's circumstance and is akin to past government, while the present world may stand for a new government.

This politician's inordinate ambition exposes him to a turbulent environment, and results in his consultation of oracle (political mentor and allies) who advise that all will be well if power brokers consent. He attempts to elicit this consent by placating power brokers in his own way and picking his running mate from amongst them. This scenario finds expression in Aminike's sacrifice at his family shrine.

An omen occurs shortly after the sacrifice as anti-democratic forces overtly mount opposition. Aminike

succeeds in killing his opponent which in our case implies a success in surmounting the opposition. Yet the end is inglorious and contrary to expectation.

Further to the foregoing is a religious undertone. Aminike is a tragic character who deserves our sympathy because the difficulties he must overcome are designed by fate (god and ancestors) on account of his misdeeds.

This is where the principle of sowing and reaping comes in. A man who sows wickedness must reap wickedness. Some important religious virtues (e.g. patience and tolerance) have also been underscored in the novel. According to Oriekwu, if one is not tolerant of his fellow men, how can he tolerate the gods and ancestors who make absurd demands from the living. We are also told that intractable anger can ruin a man's career and this is typified in Aminike's misfortune.

On the whole, Ancestral Will has a logical and captivating plot. The ingenuity with which the author handles description and dialogue gives credibility to the novel. The key character (Aminike) goes through a series of mounting problems, one complication following another on the principle that it never rains but pours. The ending coincides with the climax of the plot, leaving an impression of finality or even achievement.

The novel records a sharp, interesting start which is necessary to arrest the reader's immediate attention. In other words, the opening deals with some significant detail,



striking the keynote of the whole story. Furthermore, the characters that people the novel have their own peculiarities of speech. In this way, the author succeeds in raising the literary and dramatic qualities of the material. And in accordance with the setting of the novel which is the pre-colonial Ikwerre society, proverbs are well sprinkled in the dialogue.

However, what has been said so far is intended to fire the imagination of the critical reader and provoke some thoughts from the reader. There are more angles to what has been said. It is open to all and sundry.

**Remi Akujobi, Ph.D** (*Comparative, Literature*)

## CHAPTER ONE

It was a rough morning amidst a cloudburst. All reputable tappers ran helter skelter as they hurried to their respective tapping bushes in a bid to escape the imminent rainfall.

Suddenly a great fury pervaded Aminike. He refused to be stampeded by a voice that approached him menacingly as he tapped the last palm tree for the morning.

“Who are you in that bush?” Are you deaf?” Wigwe queried from a distance. “Who are you there? Are you deaf?”

“Who is that asking and why?” Aminike retorted. “Eh! Aminike Wongodo, Is it you again today? The alligator pepper that does not go out of poison, Is it you? What business have you got in my bush?”

“Wigwe! Have they sent you this morning? I have told you and your allies that you’ll all perish in this village because of me”.

“Aminike, do you say you’ll be the fowl that left its killer only to bend its back for the pot. You have left the thorn in your flesh to claim what is not yours. Why can’t an animal like you meet those who share your bed with you and leave my palm tree for me? Ah? I’m asking you?”

Aminike maintained sudden quiet to digest that statement as Wigwe was still fuming and advancing to the scene. Eventually, he got there only to discover that the palm-tree was not his. It actually belonged to Aminike, except that it was almost on the boundary between Aminike’s portion and Wigwe’s. Seeing that he was grossly mistaken, he kept

mute as remorse enveloped him like a silken web. Aminike became more furious now.

“Wigwe, who did you say is sharing my bed with me? Is it not you I’m asking? Alright, by the time I finish with you, your mouth will not taste food anymore”. He was now charged for a physical combat as he hastened to come down and meet Wigwe.

“I’m awfully sorry for all that happened”, Wigwe apologized. “I am quite at fault because I did not verify before flaring up. The palm-tree is actually yours; so go ahead and tap. However, my allegation is true. The whole village knows it. Wagbara is keeping illicit affair with Wakwu, your wife but don’t say I told you”.

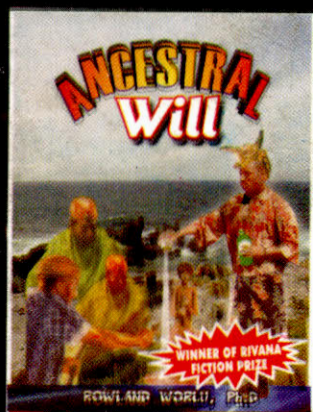
Aminike became restless at the revelation and even fumed the more.

“Could it be why he interrupts and challenges me unnecessarily in every gathering.”

‘We, his friends, came to know it and when we advised him to put off his hands, he refused promising to impregnate her before contemplating a withdrawal. I do not know what he intends to achieve by that, Wigwe added.

‘How do I approach the matter now?’ Aminike asked after several nods of surprise.

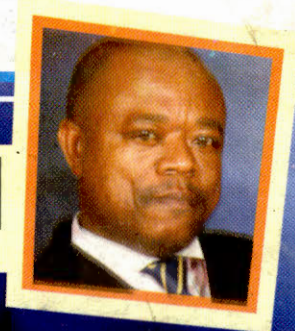
‘Well, no one would advise you to be ruthless in the circumstance; but you should go home and be the man you are. I am leaving you!



**A**ncestral Will is a powerful story which derives its theme from the principle of 'Sowing and Reaping'. It is built around AMINIKE - a man of strong but

indeterminate fibre, whose valour and prowess cannot save from the inexorable WILL of his forefathers. Each attempt he makes towards extrication brings him close to the fulfilment of the WILL until his misdeeds are expiated.

**R**owland Worlu was born in Eliozi-Port Harcourt. He is a London-trained writer who has demonstrated literary adroitness in poetry, drama, and fiction with some notches in literary award. He is currently a lecturer in Covenant University, Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria.



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