

Research Note

Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá: The Unsung Burnish Black Glaze Wares Ceramist of Ìlorin

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Abstract

Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá of Alámọyọ, Adéta, Ìlorin in Nigeria is the thrust of this study. Fondly called Àyìnké Alámọyọ in the pottery ceramics circle. Túnráyò is a burnisher extraordinaire and indeed a veteran of several decades. Madame Túnráyò Àyìnlá is unarguably one of the few Nigeria's senior citizens still proficient in pottery practice with features in pockets of literature. Prolific as she is, it is sad to note that, her life, practice, and contribution have been masked and left unsung for too long. A vacuum this study attempts to fill; unveiling facts on her family, training, and practice. Finding revealed she is nee Àlìù, putting her training and graduation at ages eight and eighteen; coupled with over sixty (60) years of burnish black glaze culinary wares production. In conclusion, the study put Túnráyò's proficiency test and its findings hoped to place her on the global front of burnish ceramist.

Keywords: Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá, Àmọyọ,¹ Adéta, Ìlorin, burnishing ceramicist,

¹ *Amoyo* are the autochthonous people of *Gonmo*, a remote town in Kwara State. The people are itinerant artists with specialties in virtually all aspect of artistic vocations including pottery. The race, apart from their domiciliation in *Adeta*, they are equally present in other parts of Yorubaland. In Ilorin alone, they are located in more than twenty localities.

Introduction

Those skilled in the art of burnishing (Rothenberg 1972: 41 & 56) often called burnishers and are scattered around the globe. Their effort no doubt, pivotal to putting finishing touches to pot making globally. The role of burnishers is significant, only a few sung, while many remain unsung. The likes of Martin Smith of Britain, John Ablitt of Britain, Gen Asao of Japan, Siddig El Nigoumi of Sudan, Magdalene Anyango Namakhiya Odundo of Kenya, and Hajiah Ladi Kwali of Gwari, Nigeria were among the very few acclaimed burnishing ceramists with physical and virtual documental visibilities in the public domain, significantly on the Internet. Their contributions were unique and at the same time diverse, aptly apparent in their individual right.

John Ablitt developed a stronger and more varied palette than the more subdued colors, exemplified in fine grain red clay previously preferable (wikipedia 2020). Martin Smith being a professor of ceramics and glass integrated black and red burnishing into his sophisticatedly arrangement of metal and epoxy resin in architectural ceramic pieces (britishmuseum 2021). Gen Asao (Japan) achieves the ‘unka’ or cloud flower effect by touching the hot surface with vegetable oil. Siddig El Nigoumi’s contribution felt in burnished coffee-pots and similar household vessels he declared to be impervious obtained variations by smoke staining the fired pot over a twist of burning newspaper. El Nigoumi’s works were not only original but also a culmination of beautifully expressed Western and African influence (Winsor 2015). Dame Magdalene Odundo’s splendid large pots burnished to a black mirror finish (craftcouncil 2019).

Hajiah Ladi Kwali was unarguably the most acclaimed, decorated, and documented potter and burnisher of Nigeria’s extraction (Chukwueggu 1989: 136, Areo and Areo 2011: 5). Interestingly, not all Kwali’s contemporaries documented as her profile, only a few were captured. Madame Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá is lucky to be one of the few black glaze burnisher, though passively captured in some books, magazines, and possibly newsletters (Oyelola 2010: 65-70, Areo and Areo 2011: 9). The aforementioned, largely not commensurate to her stature and contribution to culinary burnished black glaze pottery, particularly in Ìlòrín and Nigeria at large. A vacuum this study attempts to fill through detailing of her nuclear family, her works, and the Ìlòrín pottery.

Ìlòrín, the present-day capital city of Kwara state is one of the outstanding towns in Nigeria noted for pottery practice (Jimoh 1994: 8, Akinde 2021: 667). Its pottery practice history can be argued inferably to two fundamental hegemonies the first being the Àfonjá hegemony, while the second is Cardew hegemony. The first hegemony traced to the unfortunate defeat of Bàlògún

Àfonjá (a generalissimo of Old Oyó saddled with the responsibility of protecting the territorial integrity of Oyó Empire) in a battle, which resulted in his fleeing the Empire with his trusted compatriot to a safe haven, later known as Ìlòrin. Among Àfonjá's hegemonic entourage are presumably potters, commencing the first phase of Ìlòrin pottery. The latter is further justified by the apparent pottery finds (foundry, crucible, and clay moulds), unearth in the capital city of Old Oyó (Kalilu 1992: 2-7, Akinde 2016: 3). This supposedly foreshadowed indigenous pottery of Ìlòrin, which hitherto play host to the trio of Òkeléle, Dàda and Adéta centers (Areo and Areo 2011: 55-60, Akintonde *et.al* 2014: 283).

Interestingly, the centers have being in operation even before Cardew's hegemonic experiments, which was prefigured by the likes of Dennis Robert and Kenneth Murray (Abiodun *et.al* 2013: 103). Nonetheless Cardew's experiment saw to the establishment of pottery centers within the three regions of Nigeria with Ìlòrin as an upshot of the Abuja center (Pius 2008: 17). Bringing to fore, a new dawn of neo-traditional pottery practices, integrating throwing on wheel, plaster mold cast for mass production and finishing with ash glazes as fundamental to contemporary ceramics, which were equally of great influence on Ìlòrin pottery (Abiodun *et.al* 2013: 103, Akinde 2009: 8 and Akinde, 2016: 3 and 16). Novel as these initiatives are, many of the local ceramists of Ìlòrin extraction, particularly those from Òkeléle, Dàda and Adéta centers, revert to their comfort zone; hand built pottery technique.

Among individuals that survive Cardew's neo-traditional incursion and reverted to hand built is Madame Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá, nee Àlìú of Alámọyọ lineage in Adéta community of Ìlòrin (Akinde 2021: 667-680).

Madame Túnráyò is a burnisher extraordinaire and to a large extent a veteran and somewhat octogenarian with professional experience of over six



Plate 1

Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla, nee Aliu orthodox pose
Field generated photograph.

decades to her credit. She specialized in culinary pottery with expertise in bur-nished black glaze wares; a practice she still engaged in even now, passively though. Prolific has her journey in culinary pottery is, its saddening to know that not much is known of her beyond the shores of her immediate commu-nity, Adéta: where she is acclaimed the oldest practicing culinary ceramist. To unveil locality from this astute potter/ceramist of note, this study digs into Madame Àyinké’s background (her lineage, vocation, training, and marriage) and practice (commissions, market, and test exercise).

Background: Lineage, Vocation, Training and Marriage

Chief Ebenezer Obey² in one of his songs, waxed a track titled “Ìgbà Mèta” (three periods), rendered thus,

*...Ìgbà mèta, nì ìgbà èdè láyé,
Ìgbà àrò, ìgbà òsán, ìgbà alé,
K’alé, sanwá ju òwúrò lọ,
Baba rere...*

...times are threefold, period of man on earth
Time’s morning, time’s afternoon, time’s night,
May night pays us than morning,
Father beneficence...

The above narratives, apart from recognizing the significance of morning, afternoon, and night times as fundamental to full circle of life; it aptly crave the indulgence of the transcendental being to graciously make nighttime, more favorable than morning for one. This is by no small measure, a rear privilege for Madame Túnráyò to witnessed and actively tell the tales of her life and times in sequential manner, starting with her morning through to the night.

Little Túnráyò Àyinké Àlíù was born on December 3, 1941, to the afflu-ent home of Bàbá Àjàdí Moşeşbalájé Àlíù and Màmá Àbèkè Sifàù Àlíù in Alámoyò compound of Ídí-Olówó, Adéta community of Ilorin. Observably, Túnráyò’s birth had palpable inconsistency, judging from her National Iden-tity Card, which put her date of birth to November 3, 1952.

2 Ebenezer Remilekun Aremu Olasupo Obey-Fabiyi is one of Nigeria’s foremost Yoruba Juju musicians, popularly known as “Chief Commander”. His music though, cir-cular it is noted for sound murals and philosophic teachings. He retired from circular music, but not tired, an energy he concentrated on evangelizing the gospel of Christ Jesus.



Plate 2a

Back view of Madame Tunrayo's ID
Field generated photograph.



Plate 2b

Front view of Madame Tunrayo's ID
Field generated photograph.

Attempt to reconcile the two dates proved the latter date as typographical error.³ Largely, her family affluence not only limited to their flourishing and thriving business in divination and pottery practices but a product inherent in the lineage praise name, substantiated thus.⁴

*Omo olá ni mí,
Bàbá mi n' joyè Alámòyọ ní
È dé Òkè Odò, kẹ tó kan Àmòyọ
Èkan ilú bàbá mi,
È yà nílẹ,
Èní láti òdò Àyìnké Alámòyọ ní Gọnmọ
Èní bá lónjẹ, nílẹ àfún yín ní Gọnmọ, Gọnmọyọ.
Child of wealth I am
My father certainly is a chieftain of Àmòyọ
You will reach Òkè Odò, before approaching Àmòyọ
Approach the land of my father
Alight at our domain
Say you are from Àyìnké Alámòyọ of Gọnmọ
Those with food at home will feed you at Gọnmọ, Gọnmọyọ.*

3 The error in the recoding of Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla Aliu's date of birth as evident in her National ID was a typographical data imputation. Her deposition validates the error.

4 Akinde Toyin E. Personal Communication with Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla in March 5, 2021 at her country home in Adeta Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

The above praise names of the Àlíùs, a true testimony and a pointer to their affluence in terms of wealth, origin, lineage, status, and inherent hospitality, which in any case is not the same as acumen in Western education.

Túnràýò's father was an indigene of Àmọyọ in Gọnmọ also known as Gọnmọyọ; a remote settlement, sharing boundary with Òkè Odò in Kwará state. Her mother hails from Offa, a much more urban settlement, also in Kwara state. The two lovebirds, met in Gọnmọ and later got married in the early 1930s. At this time, her father becoming known as a revered Ìfà divination priest and herbal doctor with consultations within and outside Gọnmọ. The quality of his prescriptions was efficacious that, they call it *a-jé-biídán* (potent-like-magic). This development attracted invite and eventual migration to Adéta; a more urban settlement by a client who later doubles as a friend. On arriving in Adéta, her father quickly settled down to practice, becoming the prime mover of traditional medicine in the community; pioneering its introduction in the late 1930s. Mama Àbèkẹ on the other hand took after the pottery vocation of her husband lineage (Àmọyọ) and later became a master potter with proficiency in culinary pottery.⁵

Mama Àbèkẹ Àlíù single handedly introduced culinary pottery to the likes of Àkúté, Àpaná, Pópó Òkasẹgi, and Àtótí's compounds of Ìdí-Olówó, Adéta community. In addition, in no distant time, news of her practice, competence, and exploitation spread to the looks and crannies of her newfound abode, Adéta, which consequently led to bumper patronage from prospective clients. Significantly noted in the late 1930s for evidential tranquility, exemplified in synergy between indigenous and foreign religions, devoid of prejudices (Akinde *et.al* 2014: 64). Being an herbal doctor cum Ìfà priest, Àjàdí Àlíù conducted his business successfully and peacefully, consulting for men and women from all works of life regardless of religious backgrounds. He practiced without hitch, because of the prevalent religious tolerance of the time. He also did not allow his priestly and medical responsibilities and their attendant vices to deter him from his marital vows.

He upheld monogamy because of his understanding of the vices, implications, and consequences of polygamy, which is full of jealousy and mongering. Àjàdí Mọşẹbalájé Àlíù amiably kept his fidelity to his wife, yielding to the call of having only one wife and they both lived happily ever after, seeing their children's children. Túnràýò is her parent's first daughter and doubles as their first child. She dreaded her position as the firstborn passion, simply for its innate responsibilities; some of which were the early exposure to coordinating her nuclear family. This responsibility was perturbing for Túnràýò at a

5 Akinde Toyin E. Personal Communication with Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla in March 26, 2021 at her country home in *Adeta* Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

point that, she voiced out and her father responded with this phrase in Yorùbá; ⁵ *ìkòkò tí ó bá j'ata ìdí è á kòkò gbóná*. However, the phrase recognized the place of heat in cooking with pot; it nonetheless implied “uneasy lays the head that wears the crown.”

Being the first child of her father in the midst of five other female siblings, saddled with male leadership responsibilities. Growing up in the early 1940s was exciting and full of hope and promising future for little Túnráyò. During this period Western education was not for everyone; it was largely a prerogative of the very privileged, particularly those in the city with insight into its advantages. She observed that, Western education was not as attractive as it is today; perhaps she would have enrolled in school but resolved to fate, joining the family medicine and pottery thriving businesses, submitting thus :⁵

*Mo ti ka ogbón orí mi,
B'emi ná ò kàwé oo
Ìwé yàtò;
Ogbón orí mà ló jé baba,
Ìwé yàtò;
Ogbón orí mà ló jé baba,
Mo ti ka ogbón orí mi,
B'emi ná ò kàwé oo... (Odòlayé Àrẹ̀mú)⁶
I have common sense,
Even if I have not attended any formal school
Education is separate
From common sense, that has more value
Education is separate;
From common sense, that has more value
I have common sense,
Even if I have not attended any formal school...*

The above lines imperatively gave primacy to wisdom (commonsense) over knowledge (bookworm), an idea that kept Túnráyò going until date.

Madame Túnráyò's indoctrination into her parent's vocations was as early as age eight; assisting in clay prospecting and grinding, wood fetching, and firing pottery wares; while in medicine, she was involved in sourcing for and grinding herbal leaves. She was at a crossroad, deciding on whether to specialize in herbal medicine or pottery practice at precisely age sixteen. Her

6 The track “*Motika ogbon orimi bemina okawe o*” was released in the 1977 album “*Olowe mowe*” by Mohammedu Odolaye Aremu, a *Dadakuada* musician. Though, late he is remembered for his music and lyrical notes of socio-traditional reawakening.

competence in herbal medicine was later material to her acquaintance with specialists outside Ilorin's environ; an acquaintance that culminated into her being officially inaugurated as a member in 1994.



Plate 3

Membership Certificate of Tunrayo Ayinla
Field generated photograph.

This dilemma became apparent because of her unequivocal competence in both herbal medicine and culinary wares production. She eventually opted for pottery after deep reflection on the two vocations and the attendant financial base of her parent. Túnráyò's decision to major in pottery premised on the quick cash flow generated from pottery practice at the time with patronage coming from all works of life, including medicine.⁷

Túnráyò graduated from her mum's tutelage at age eighteen, exactly two years after her specializing in pottery with rigorous training. She recalled an incident that occurred to Chief Oḃáfêmi Awólówò and his campaign team, some days prior to her graduation ceremony. Chief Awólówò (Crowder, 1968: 254) being a political juggernaut and presidential candidate of Action Group political party at the time was antagonized by the then ethicized Ilorin political structure, identified as Northern People's Congress (Keay and Thomas 1965: 154-155, DPC 2002: 20-21). On reflection, she noted that, Chief Awólówò

⁷ Akinde Toyin E. Personal Communication with Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla in September 11, 2021 at her country home in *Adeta* Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

banished from entering Ìlọ́rin Township by the rival camp, an incident that corroborated with a song thus⁷:

*Inú igbó lẹ̀pẹ́ n gbé oo,
Inú igbó lẹ̀pẹ́ n gbé oo,
Ènì kan kì gbé lé adètẹ̀ sígboro,
Inú igbó lẹ̀pẹ́ n gbé oo.*

The palm tree resides deep in the forest,
The palm tree resides deep in the forest,
No one builds the abode of leapers in the city,
The palm tree resides deep in the forest,

The lyrics of the above song equated Chief Ọbáfẹ́mi Awólówò to the palm tree and a leper, whose place of abode is the forest according to his political rivals. Bàábòkò, was seen as a the most deserving space at the time to receive a castaway like him and his crew in a pre-independence political rally of 1958/1959.

Consequently, family and friends graced Túnráyò's graduation ceremony, with all the traditionally segmented rites observed, into two fold. The first being a practice proficiency test, and the second was a prophetic blessing in form of a prayer. The proficiency test availed her, the opportunity to prove her worth by putting her formed green wares to permanent state through firing as a graduating candidate. An exercise, she performed openly reciting the firing anthem as thus:⁷

*Ìyá Mọ̀pọ̀,
Ọlọ́yọ̀ Àjàkà,
Igi gbogbo tí n sowó,
Wọ̀nrin wọ̀nrin, ẹ̀sẹ̀ òkè,
Ìyá Mọ̀pọ̀,
Dásọ ró mi,
Ìhòhò ni mo wà,
Mother earth of creative wisdom,
Founder of Oyo-AJaka,
Woods plethora that produce money,
Sprinkling Tickling, foot track of the hill,
Mother earth of creative wisdom,
Cover me with fabric,
Naked I am.*

In addition, true to the words of the above sacred vocal composition, Ìyá Mòpó: the mother earth of creative ingenuity and good tiding, responded responsively to the call by Túnrayò Àyinké Àyínlá for coverage and successful graduation firing exposition. Moreover, to the admiration of all, the proficiency test exercise of ware firing was a success, and her mother prayed for by her. Other invited master potters from Òkélé and Dàda centers that graced the occasion, amidst family, friends, and well-wishers.

Túnrayò, after graduation decided to tarry for a while at her mother's center, precisely for seven years before starting up professionally. This post-graduation internship further availed her the privilege of sharpening her trade and skills in terms of ware productions and customer service relations. The waiting period of skills perfection got her noticed by neutral and new clientele that later became her patrons. Túnrayò's start up as a professional culinary burnish potter/ceramist was precisely in 1965, under the watch of her mother at the Adéta center. Incidentally, the era also marked a significant turning point in Túnrayò's love life. It was indeed the period she met Yèkìni Àyínlá; the love of her life and a devoted Muslim. Their relationship was vehemently frowned at by her parent, solely for her romance with a polygamist. They show their displeasure to her idea of having an affair with a married man and the probity of becoming a third wife, stating that, *òrìṣà jé n pé méjì, obìrin ò dé 'nú*, that is, idol dualistic advocacy as wives is not wholehearted.⁸

Her father even went to the extent of reciting to her, the sixth chapter of Òyèkú Méjì (Abimbola 2006: 28-29), an Ìfà corpus which goes thus;

*Títítí lórí ogbó...
A díá fún Oòduà atèwòrò...
Òkan soso pòró
Lobìnrin dùn mọ lówọ ọkọ
Bí nwon bá di méjì
Nwon a dòjòwú.
Bí nwon bá di mэта,
Nwon a dэта n túlé.
Bí nwon bá di mэрin,
Nwon a di iwọ lo rín mi...*

Continual-continuous is the head of the aged...
Defined for Oòduà who descended by chains...
One singular and nothing more

⁸ Akinde Toyin E. Personal Communication with Madame Tunrayo Ayinke in November 20, 2021 at her country home in Adeta Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

Is woman joy in the hand of husband?
 If they became two
 They become jealous
 If they became three
 They become home-monger
 If they became four
 They complian about each other
 They become you are ...

Túnráyò recalled that, her father used the above Ìfà corpus to spelled out jealousy, mongering, etcetera, as implications and consequences of polygamy (man, having several sexual partners at a time as wives). Noted life longevity, peaceful matrimony, healthy living, and aging as resultant evidence of monogamy. He went further to site himself as a living instance, but Túnráyò deeply involved and blinded by love, she declined the advice from her parents and family.

Túnráyò eventually betrothed her heartthrob, in 1968 as the third wife of Yèkìni Àyìnlá. Yèkìni later became an Alhaji, having paid a pilgrimage to the Holy land of Mecca Medina. Their marriage blessed with nine children (male and female) from which five survived until date. The marriage was however short-lived because of the sudden death of the father of her children; Alhaji Yèkìni Àyìnlá in 1988. Túnráyò became perturbed for the second time, reflecting on all that was said about her affair and eventual marriage to her late husband, Alhaji Àyìnlá and the reality at hand. However, the shock of the sudden demise of her husband was very devastating, the young widow who has been practicing from her husband compound revolved to be strong for her children and herself. This resolution took her back to the primordial Adéta center in 1990, where she operates until date her culinary burnish black glaze wares.⁹

The Practice: Commissioning, Marketing, and test Exercise

Retrospectively, Madame Túnráyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá's professional career commenced, precisely in 1965 at the Adéta center as a practicing burnish culinary ceramist, under the watchful guardians of her mum. Àyìnké Alámọyọ as fondly called by her peers in the pottery/ceramics circle, mainly for her background, skill and proficiency in burnish black glaze ceramics. Adéta center (Plate 4), reminds her of the good old days, when her products were procured mainly through commissions by clienteles; somewhat wholesalers with

9 Akinde Toyin E. Personal Communication with Madame Tunrayo Ayinke in February 24, 2022 at her country home in *Adeta* Ilorin Kwara State, Nigeria.

outfits as far as Zaria and Maiduguri to the north, Ìbàdàn and Abèòkúta to the south and Èkìtì and Òndó to the east of Nigeria.



Plate 4

Present day front view of *Alamoyo* compound in *Idi-Olowo, Adeta, Ilorin*
Field generated photograph.

Others are in pockets of smaller towns around the country. She recalled that, her wares hardly retailed for sales in markets, public or private; except for few appearances at trade fairs, particularly in Ìlòrìn and Ìbàdàn.⁸

The latter was a result of the high demand for her wares, mainly ordered for by commissions. Interestingly, payments for her ware items often done by “cash and carry” or “cash advance”. She observed that, most of her customers preferred advancing their bookings with cash deposits as takeoff grants. The idea suits her best, because such payments enable her put in place necessary materials for eventual production of culinary burnished black glaze wares.⁸ Regrettably, many of these wares have been lost mainly for their broken nature. In other to redeem the times, Madame Túnràyò Àyìnké Àyìnlá has put to live production exercise, detailed as clay mining, grinding and batching, wares forming, burnishing, and firing.

Clay mining or prospecting

The norm or tradition of sourcing clay, which was by mining from natural deposits in Òkeléle axis of Ìlòrìn is today impossible, because of the structural development that has taking place in the locality (Abiodun and Akinde 2014:

170-171). Potters like Madame Túnráyò now resolved to sourcing clays from vendors who bagged clay for sale.



Plate 5

Array of bagged clays at vendor's depot
Field generated Photograph.

These clays are in twos of black and off-white colors and transported to the Adéta center from Òkelélé. The clays are sundried because of their moist state; they are consequently grinded after thorough evidence of dehydration (Plate 6). Dehydrated clays were ground by pounding (Plate 7) in a wooden mortar with piston, mostly by her grandchildren.



Plate 6

Sun clay dehydration
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 7

Clay pounding by Munira Ayinla
Field generated Photograph.

Clay batching and balling

Madame Àyinké commenced this clay batching with sieving of the grinded clays (black and off white) and consequently too batch measurement at ratio 2.5: 2.5 (Plates 8-11).



Plate 8

Kneading aggregated clays
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 9

Measuring white and black clays
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 10

Aggregating white and black clays
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 11

Wedging in progress by Madame
Tunrayo
Field generated Photograph.

The black clays are apparently fine while the off-white clays are coarse. Black clays are referred as *ojú amò* (primary clay) while off white clays are called *àbùmólẹ̀* (secondary clay). After the aggregate measurement has been taken, the clay body is then kneaded or mixed with commensurate water to avoid messy or marshy operational surface (Akintonde et.al 2015: 219-222, Akinde 2017: 51-52). The sticky or messy parts of the kneaded clay batch scraped with improvised metal spoon having sprinkle dry powdery clay dust on the surface. The latter gives kneading of clay body a sense of wholeness, which makes clay balling possible. For clay balling, she took desired proportion of kneaded whole on one part of her palm and use the other palm for dressing or shaping to ball by spontaneously slamming and alternating both palms until a ball is achieved. This process of balling repeated until the kneaded wholes are finished.⁸

Wares forming

The journey to wares formation began with clay ball treatment. Clay balls (Plate 12) individually treated to a flat plate like substance or pizza on a sturdy surface.



Plate 12

Making of balls

Field generated Photograph.



Plate 13

Mould mending by Tunrayo

Field generated Photograph.

The sturdy surface in this case was the base of a used wooden mortar (Plate 13), which usually requires amendment to be functional. For this exercise, Madame Túnráyò mended the wooden mortar base with leather hard clay before commencing the first phase of the forming exercise, known in local parlance as *ìpamò* (Kneaded clay beating). *Ìpamò* was achieved through clay slamming on a powdered mortar base (to avoid sticking) and consequently hits in circles with a flat stone until it looks like a pizza as if surface was attained (Plates 14). This process repeatedly done for each ball and successive pizza-like bats piled on each other through to the last one. The second phase of the wares forming also entails mending of the potholes on the concave aluminum mould (Plate 15).



Plate 14

Bats making on mould
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 15

Mending of aluminum mould
Field generated Photograph.

Thereafter, the pizza like clay bats were one at a time placed on the mould and consequently shaped to the mould form and size (Plates 16- 19).

Burnishing and motif making

Burnish or burnishing is clarified as an aspect of pot finishing, defined as making shiny or lustrous by rubbing especially material surface with a tool for compacting or turning edges of pottery piece (Mifflin 1996: 96). Burnish is equally, the art of polishing leather hard clay by rubbing with a hard object like a smooth pebble, back of a spoon or strip of spring steel (Harmer 1975: 41). Burnishing according to Fournier (2000: 45), is the compacting and polishing of clay surfaces by rubbing with smooth tools, giving considerable visual and tactile pleasure with a consequent sense of unity between body and

**Plate 16**

Bat placement on aluminum mould
Field generated Photograph.

**Plate 17**

Bat shaping to bowl on mould
Field generated Photograph.

**Plate 18**

Bowl edge trimming
Field generated Photograph.

**Plate 19**

Bowl sun dehydration
Field generated Photograph.

surface. In other word, burnishing is simply rubbing vital science of clay surfaces, achievable through externally smooth but hard substance or tool. Amusingly, tools engaged in burnishing can be any conveniently shaped smooth object exemplified in water-worn pebble, metal spoon, bone, plastic or hardwood (Fournier 2000: 46).

Similarly, Areo and Areo (2011: 29) added shells to the list of burnishing tools; while specialized glasses meant for gold burnishing are not left out in

the mix (Fournier 2000: 46). The aforementioned tools usually employed to smoothing convex sharp corners and edges of wares. Steadily working with even pressure in small circular movements on wares (Plates 20-24). The process well articulated by Madame Túnráyò, after many years of practice. She has succeeded in using diverse stone pebbles for her ware surface burnishing and motifs making.



Plate 20

Array of stone pebbles
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 21

Bowls staking for burnishing
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 22

Lid burnishing of the bowl
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 23

Outer motif marking on bowl
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 24

Outer motif marking
on bowl
Field generated
Photograph.

Wares drying and firing

Wares drying and firing are the penultimate and ultimate phases of this production exercise (Akinde 2017: 244-246). Having perfected the burnishing and motifs on wares, subsequently gathered at a spot for sun dehydration in an open space (Plates 25-26). The latter quickly followed with baptism of fire (Akinde et.al 2013: 52-55, Akinde 2021: 597). Madame Àyìnké would observe as *sine qua non* to wares burnishing, an exercise that bring to fore black glaze coloration.⁹ Fournier (2000: 46) suggests that, burnished ware firing operation should be at low temperature of not more than 850° C, to avoid loss of visual effect on wares. This observed rule or somewhat rule of thumb well understood by Madame Àyìnké as early as her training days, an understanding that is apparent in her firing exercise even now. The firing involves fuel sourcing, kiln bedding, wares staking, preheating, full firing, fire halting ware blacking or glazing, ware bathing and ware steaming (Plates 27-34). The firing finale observed by taking stocks of the firing outcome after the exercise (Plate 35).



Plate 25

Sun dehydration of bowl wares
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 26

Zoomorphic motif marking
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 27
Kiln circular walls
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 28
Kiln bed formation with
wastes
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 29
Fired/green wares staking
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 30
Fanning ember for ignition
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 31
Kiln firing
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 32
Uncovering the kiln
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 33

Wares sawdust blacking and concoction
bathing
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 34

Steaming blackened wares
Field generated Photograph.



Plate 35

Stock taking by Madame Tunrayo
Ayinke Ayinla after a success
firing
Field generated Photograph.

Conclusion

Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla is a prolific artist, considering her length of service of over sixty years as a professional culinary ceramist with specialty in burnish black glaze wares. Putting figure to the numbers of wares produced by her is no doubt herculean, but one thing is sure, the figure by now must be running into tens of thousands of pieces. Her activities can be likened to the Yoruba *Onírèsé* epigram, which goes thus;

Bí Ónírèsé
Ò fin ígbámọ́
Èyí tó ti fin
Kò ní lè parun
 If Onirese
 Halt gourd carving
 Those he had carved
 Cannot be obliterated



Plate 36

Madame Tunrayo Ayinke Ayinla
 majestic stepping
 Field generated Photograph.

The above epigrammatic lines are true to the nature and stature of Madame Túnráyò Àyinké Àyínlá (Plate 36), having contributed to the development of pottery/ceramics of Ìlòrín in particular, and Nigeria at large. In addition, true to her prayers to God, the transcendental being has graciously grants her vigor and agility that has sustained her till now. Her story can be surmised in Yoruba as *pírí lologo n̄ jí; a k̄ì rí òkùn-rùn ẹyẹ lórí itẹ́* (Smartly the bird wakes; no one sees a sick bird, on its nest).

Interestingly, Madame Túnráyò Àyinké Àyínlá will be marking her eightieth anniversary and joining the league of octogenarian in a couple of months, precisely in November 3, 2022. She is indeed a true blessing to humanity, particularly to the pottery/ceramics circle. Conclusively, this finding believed to provoke further studies on her and bring her contributions to ceramics to the global stage.

Acknowledgments¹⁰

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