

## **Odjo Babalaho**

Ethnic group: Nago Yoruba

Language (dialect): Nago Yoruba (Ouidah)

Country: Benin

Recording date: May 10, 2017

Recording location: Ouidah Beach, Benin

Total Recording time: 30:00

Technician: Brian Nowak

### Group Members:

Odjo Babalaho – Lead vocals

Ipolitte Aganahi (to left of singer), Aganahi M-Si (to right of singer) -- Chorus

Vitorine Aganahi (with hat) – Chorus and Akko (chest and thigh slaps)

### Track names -- duration

1) Ikoi Mabogede -- 7:47

2) Once Ba Wa Leni Kan A Bere Kere Ki Ce Ni Mi Fun A Diye – 4:12

3) Igba Malo Odju Ma De Lio – 12:25

4) Song 4 – 5:11

5) Adi for Egungun (incantation) – 00:25

### Group Introduction:

Babalaho Odjo is from a family with strong roots in Ogun worship but is also a talented singer. She is particular about her accompanying singers and will ask friends from outside of town to come in for a special ceremony or when she is invited to sing as a guest. She is from a neighborhood close to the beach, near the lagoon inhabited by fishing families living on stilt houses in the grassy lagoon just inland from the beach.

### Recording Context:

For this recording, Babalaho Odjo requested to sing a song for Egun and although she did not sing exclusively for Egun, she wanted to go to the coast, to the Point of No Return slavery monument. A local from an old Ouidah lineage requesting to record at the tourist monument would normally seem simply as a way to have a grandeur backdrop with the large archway facing the ocean, aligning the marching of the slaves from town to the journey across the Atlantic. However it was not the large archway that interested Babalaho, it was the cement Egun statues that stand just beyond the larger monument. The Egun represent the returned ancestors and Ouidah's importance as a central port for the slave trade, and the two Egun statues location close to the buildings that once housed slaves and slavers alike, imbed them with

powerful meaning as they look at the very sea that received many of the corpses and sick individuals thrown overboard.