

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4291



# Music of the Ga People of Ghana

RECORDED AND ANNOTATED BY BARBARA L. HAMPTON



THREE RATTLES (FAO) AND PERFORMERS

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

## Adowa - Volume I



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**SIDE I**

- Band 1 Emo ɔ̃man Nkranfo
- Band 2 ɔ̃barima Akape
- Band 3 Anfrɛ rehyew oo!
- Band 4 Akɔ̃le mo oo!
- Band 5 Yɛnkɔ̃ yɛnkɔ̃ ysahu no oo
- Band 6 ɔ̃baakɔ̃ asɛm m'adi m'adi fo
- Band 7 Asɛm a ɔ̃nnyɛ no na
- Band 8 Ekua sɛ • m'abɔ̃ wo din
- Band 9 Kwao ee

**SIDE II**

- Band 1 Asafo wɔ̃yɛ nam
- Band 2 Ee kɔ̃tu bra oo
- Band 3 Yaanom monsɔ̃ mu oo
- Band 4 ɛ̃yɛ odikro na m'aba wo fiee
- Band 5 Yɛ ara yɛ nam oo
- Band 6 Nam ewia
- Band 7 Mekɔ̃ka mabomu oo
- Band 8 Me baa ha akyɛ oo
- Band 9 Nam nyaa
- Band 10 Ekɛ enadzi ɛ̃tslɔ̃fɛ ee!
- Band 11 Owuo nni monnɔ̃ ee

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# Music of the Ga People of Ghana Adowa - Volume I

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BARBARA L. HAMPTON

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

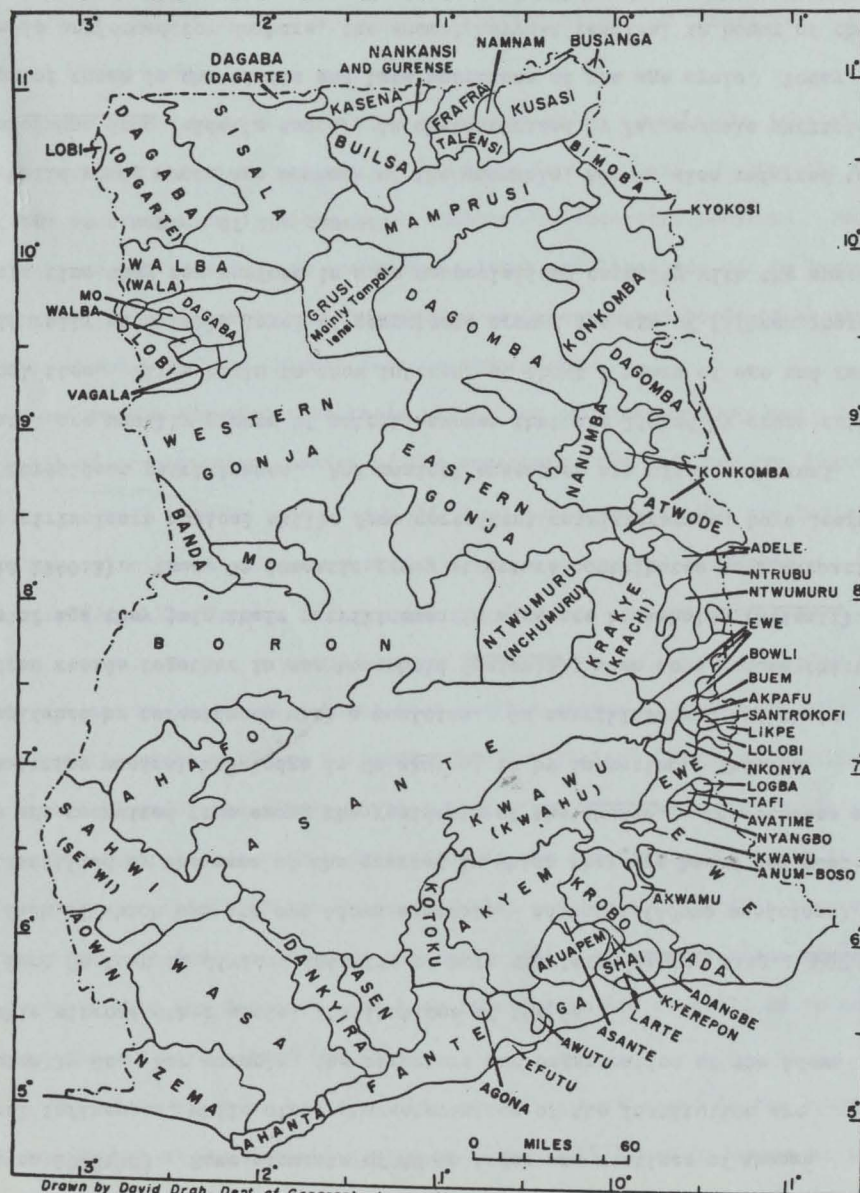
ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4291



## \*Adown-Volume I

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## DISTRIBUTION OF ETHNIC GROUPS IN GHANA



Drawn by David Drah, Dept. of Geography, Legon, Ghana.

*For Barbara L. Hampton,  
Institute of African Studies.*

Along the Gulf of Guinea in southeastern Ghana just south of the Akwapim Scarp is the homeland of the Ga, which is bounded on the east by the Laloi Lagoon and on the west by the Densu River (see Map). The Ga speak a Kwa language belonging to the Ga-Adangme cluster and have a population of about  $\frac{1}{4}$  million (Greenberg 1966:8, 173; Ghana Government 1964:8). Fishing, livestock grazing and crop production--maize, cassava, okra, garden eggs, onions, tomatoes--are traditional occupational pursuits and provide many of the women with market products.

While Ga musicians have played a significant role in the formulation of the new styles of Ghanaian cities, they continue to perform old, indigenous styles. Styles in the former category will be presented in later volumes. Adowa, Ga funeral music, belongs to the latter category which also includes religious songs from the four major cults--Akɔn, Me, Otu, Kple--work songs (esp. those sung by fishermen and farmers), recreational songs for the various age groups, music associated with political and military institutions and songs for social occasions, including ceremonies of the life cycle.

Many old musical styles or elements within them were adopted by the Ga from their African neighbors. The Ga have always borrowed such styles or elements dating back some three hundred years ago, not long after they arrived in their present homeland (Egharevba 1960:12 Ward 1967:58). These adaptations were made possible, largely, by the strategic position of the Ga in the overland and trans-Atlantic trade and by the relocation of the Gold

\* Adowa refers to a style of music that is especially prescribed for the Ga funeral and to the ensemble that performs it.



Coast capitol by the British to Accra in 1876 (Ward 1948:182-183).

Adowa was adopted from the Akwamu, an Akan group, between 1660-1680 (Hampton 1978:48). Some elements of Adowa today are vestiges of Akwamu musical influences, while other characteristics of the institution are endemically Ga. For example, the structure and organization of the Adowa ensemble mirrors other social institutions of the Ga.

Each Ga town is divided into two or more quarters (akutso sing.; akutsei pl.) each of which has its own Adowa ensemble. Adowafoi (Adowa musicians) are identified by the name of the quarter in which they are based and musicians are recruited from among the residents of the akutso. The process of transmitting musical knowledge in Ga akutsei is by imitation. This is accomplished by coresidence with a musician. Ga matrikinwomen and their children reside together in one household (yeiamli); when boys become thirteen years of age they join their patrikinsmen in separate households (hiiamli). (Field 1940:3). Thus, Ga domestic group structure contributes to a situation where girls learn musical skills from coresident matrikinwomen; boys learn from coresident patrikinsmen. And musical ensembles are often unisexual. Adowafoi are usually groups of matrikinwomen that are linked by cross-cutting affinal ties. Girls begin to show interest at about 8 years of age and reach a culturally acceptable level of competence around the age of fifteen years. At this time they may perform in some unspecialized capacity with the ensemble (e.g. as a member of the chorus).

While young women are members of the ensemble, Adowa, also referred to as an onukpa dzoo (elder's dance), is characterized by large-scale participation of those in the middle and late positions of the age cycle. Today Adowa is performed for durbars, the annual harvest festival in honor of the ancestors and, primarily, for funerals.

Adowa was once the name of a company of women which was an auxiliary to the asafo (warrior's association). Their songs were performed to encourage the warriors. Hence, some Adowa songs performed today, having remained in the repertoire, make reference to war. It is the ideas concerning the

proper conduct in life and beliefs concerning the superordination of elders within the society, the ancestors and the dead which represent predominant expressions in the musical arena today, however.

The ensemble consists of the following offices which the Ga rank according to the level of expertise required of the officeholder. They are (ranked from high to low): nonotwalo, player of the bell; onukpa, elder and social leader; lalatsɛmɛi, vocal soloists; pamploshiloi, players of the bamboo tubes, or drummer; lalo, chorus members; and faoshiloi, players of rattles. Adowa drums are made from sacred trees in which gods are believed to dwell and are, thus, ritual objects, the playing of which is proscribed for women. Hence, when the drum is used instead of the three stamping tubes (pamploi), as is the case in some akutsei, a man plays it. When pamploi are used, one woman plays each of them.

When a person dies, the elder matrikinsmen and patrikinsmen of the deceased (yaratsɛmɛi) send a messenger with the news to the closest of kin, organizations in which the deceased held membership, neighbors and others whose participation is desired in the funeral (yarafɛm). Women begin immediately with funeral dirges and other emotional expressions.

When the elder sends the messenger or goes himself to the onukpa to invite Adowa musicians, two bottles of drinks are taken and details of the event are provided. The onukpa reports to the other musicians, and if they accept the invitation, she shares the drink with them. After they accept, she returns to the elder with the message and the family gives her the equivalent of five or six dollars and the cost of any transportation expenses that the Adowafoi might incur. The onukpa, subsequently, returns to the Adowafoi and distributes the money among them. If the Adowafoi refuse the invitation, the onukpa returns the drink to the patrons with the message. (They say that they only refuse when there is an unresolved dispute within the ensemble.) If the deceased is an Adowa musician or a member of an Adowa musician's kinsgroup, the Adowafoi bear all expenses and receive no fee for the performance.



Since musicians tend to specialize in one song corpus, the elders' invitations and their acceptance determine what kinds of music will be heard at the funeral. The family tries to invite as many different ensembles as they can afford. It is important to celebrate the new status of the deceased, whose life is believed not to have been terminated by death, but rather, transformed into that of a spiritual, immortal being (or "ancestral shade") (Field 1961: 92-99).

The funeral is held in an open courtyard under a sailcloth (abalai) hung over the street to protect participants from the sun. During the funeral the deceased lies in state in an elaborately decorated bedstead. Many gather and conversation, an occasional laugh and libations can be heard. The occasion is one wherein old friendships are renewed and bonds of kinship are cemented in a busy, almost festive atmosphere.

Before the Adowafoi take their places for performance, they say a prayer (ɲkpai) of propitiation, asking of the ancestors, the gods and the Supreme Being goodwill between mortal and spiritual participants, who are believed to be constantly watching over mortals, and a successful performance. They may say "Ataa Naa Nyɲɲm). . . . all grandfathers and grandmothers . . . . . we will gather here today . . . . we will play Adowa. May you assure (us) that a stone does not hit anyone or that harm does not befall anyone while we play and (when) we finish" (Hampton 1972:21-22). Deceased Adowafoi are always invited to perform with the mortal musicians.

The funeral ends with a procession to the cemetery. The route is guided by the spirit of the deceased, which possesses the coffin bearers. Their route is indirect because the coffin often stops at various houses of people whom the deceased once knew in order to bid farewell or to accuse those who may have caused the death.

The Adowa examples heard on this recording were taped in the courtyard of the onukpa at Osu-Ashanti akutso on 17 March 1971 and in Nungua at the king's (mantse's) palace on 21 March 1971 with the technical assistance of Michael Moore. Since many ensembles perform simultaneously and in close

proximity at the funerals, the recordings were not made at funerals, but, rather at special events for the kings. For both recording sessions, three Electro Voice RE 11 microphones and a Nagra monophonic tape recorder were used. One microphone was used for recording the soloist, one for the chorus and one for the instruments. These two ensembles were selected because they feature the two kinds of instrumentation by which Adowa ensembles can be distinguished one from the other. Osu-Ashanti Adowafoi use bamboo stamping tubes and Nungua Adowafoi use a drum. The two ensembles also represent akutsei with somewhat different origins and histories.

The people of Osu are said to have come ca. 1590 from Osudoku in the Krobo district under the leadership of Nɔte Doku. They settled the present Ashanti akutso, the home of the musicians heard on the recordings (Side A) and Nɔte Doku was installed as mantse.<sup>1</sup> Because of a succession dispute ca. 1657, Kinkawe akutso was established and the contender to the position of mantse succeeded to the office. Teinɔ, Nɔte Doku's grandson and heir, assumed the position of mankralɔ (deputy mantse). The lalatsɛ heard on the recordings by the Osu-Ashanti Adowafoi is Naa Akwele. Naa Otua is the ɲɔɲɔtwalo and the three pamploshiloi are Naa Afia, Naa Mootso and Naa Adukei. The Adowa ensemble consists of twenty-three musicians.

Nungua was established by the original Ga (Ganyo krong) who are said to have come from Benin in Nigeria to Nungua ca. 1500 under the leadership of Bɔkete Lawei and later by some Akwamu refugees from the Akwamu defeat of 1730 under the leadership of Odai Koto (Egharevba: loc. cit.; Field 1940: 196-199). Both groups settled between the Abokobi-Teshie road until war with the people of La depleted their numbers and they moved to their present location. The lalatsɛ (soloist) is Naa Botele; the assisting soloist is Naa Tawia; the ɲɔɲɔtwalo is Naa Akwete and the drummer is Nii Adokwei. There are fourteen Adowafoi and one male drummer performing.

The songs are never performed in a prescribed order, Adowafoi say, nor

<sup>1</sup>Personal interview with the Osu mankralɔ, Nii Nortey Afriyie II. See also Field, Social Organization, pp. 196-199.



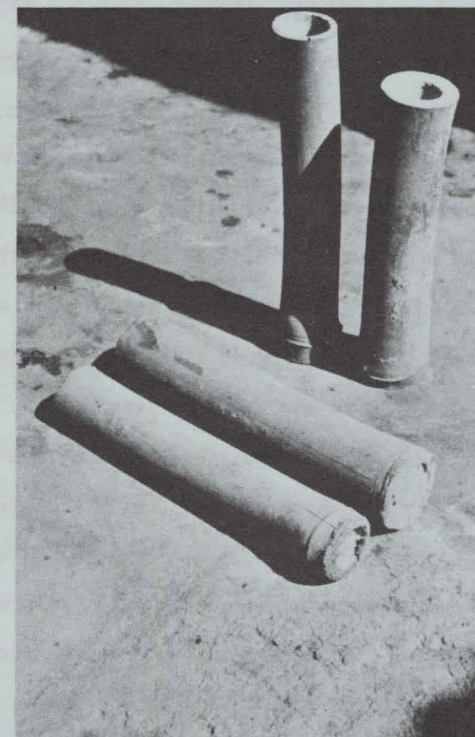


The bell (nono) and the performer illustrating the playing technique.

do those sung before or after a given song have any special relationship to it. Analysis of empirical data confirms this. Vocal parts are complementary. The position of lalatsɛ is usually held by two or more musicians who alternate or, occasionally, overlap in performance. A lalatsɛ introduces the melody and text of the song after which the chorus responds with a repetitive refrain or refrain fragment based upon or an exact duplication of the soloist's rendition.

The instruments are: 1) a single-headed drum (Adowami) carved from the trunk of a species of cedar tree, called ahimatsei, which is believed to be sacred; it is played with the hands and may be replaced by three tubes cut from the stalk of a bamboo plant and dried in the sun (pamploi); 2) a clapperless bell (nono) made of iron by a blacksmith resident in the akutso; the bell is held in one hand while the musician strikes it with an iron rod held in the other hand (nono); and 3) rattles (fao) made of gourd and covered by a net strung with beads; the rattles are shaken or struck against the

palm (fao). Instrumental parts, like vocal parts, are complementary so that all of the patterns fit together and saturation density (articulation of all pulses within the time span) is only achieved as the resultant of interlocking parts. The basic temporal unit, the time span, consists of twelve pulses (pulse = ♩). Instrumental patterns are repeated throughout, with the exception of the drum or master bamboo stamping tube (i.e. usually the pamplo of deepest pitch and highest carrying power). The bell establishes and maintains the rhythmic point of reference. The pattern is in two segments ♩ ♩ ♩ and ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩, beginning with the second segment. Musicians and dancers say that this is as it should be. The rattles play ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ the accompanying pamplo, which outlines the time span, plays ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ the intermediary pamplo which fills in the time span, plays ♩ ♩ ♩ ♩ and the master pamplo improvises patterns.



Three of these four bamboo tubes (pamploi) will be used for performance. Note the differences in length and thickness.



The different levels of discourse are complementary rather than conflicting or competitive. Sung texts rhythmically follow the spoken texts almost exactly. Rhythmic, verbal and melodic levels of discourse each have elements which serve as terminal points on their respective levels. Elongated duration-al values, and particles (e.g. ee, oo, or aa) and notes of the low pitch level, respectively, are coterminous and interdependent boundary markers for phrases in Adowa songs. These phrases are characterized by sequences of short syllables within a line or couplet and a descending sequence of tones from the high and/or middle pitch levels.



If a drum replaces the bamboo tubes,  
the drummer must be a man.

#### Side A

1. As is the case for Adowa songs, generally, this song is in the Akan language and means that a good person is usually not valued until he is gone. It refers to the Akwamu representative who presided over the Ga during the fifty years following their defeat by the Akwamu in 1681. People complained about visible signs of their subjugation, but later realized the value of his services when he was gone. "Emoɔman Nkranfo mose Gyaasehene nyɛmpo . . . Nkwaseafo besu no da bi oo" ("You people of the Ga nation; you say that the Gyaasehene is not good at all . . . Foolish people will weep for him someday").

2. This pentatonic melody also illustrates the descending melodic contour of many Adowa songs. The singer has discussed a problem with a brave man (ɔbarima), a valiant member of the Asafo, as the appellation Akapɛ ("sharp scissors") suggests. The singer says that the brave man should not worry or be sad about her (the singer's) problem because it will be resolved with his support.

3. This is probably one of the songs sung when Adowa musicians performed to encourage the warrior company or asafo. The text of the song is about victory and the heavy casualties suffered by the opposing faction.

Anfrɛ rehyew oo! Boa me ee!  
ɔhene agoro bue, bue ee!  
Yoo okogyetuo ee, yoo a yo ei! Hmmm.  
Gyama, ɔhene Kwao akɛ ɔman bi akɔko agye yɛn.  
Agyae nkrɔfo akye yɛn! ɛhɛɛ  
ɔhene Kwao akɔko agye yɛn ee. Boa me ee!  
Yee, boa me ee! ɔhene agoro bue, bue!  
Yoo okogyetuo ee yoo a yo ei! Hmmm.

Members of the Asafo are burning! Help me!  
The chief's play, help, help!  
Yoo, one who is invulnerable to bullets.  
Yoo a yo ei! Hmmm.  
Perhaps Chief Kwao has gone to the town.  
He has gone to the town to fight to save us.  
He left the people to capture us! Yes.  
Chief Kwao has gone to fight to save us. Help me!  
Yea, help me! The chief's play, help, help!  
Yoo, one who is invulnerable to bullets, yoo a yo ei! Hmmm.



4. There are songs in the corpus that were composed in honor of distinguished Adowafoi. This song was composed about thirty years ago on the death of a distinguished lalatsɛ, called Akɔle. "Akɔle mu oo" means "Akɔle you have done well."

5. The Akan provenance of many Adowa songs is strongly suggested in this song of praise to a Queen Mother. While Ga women play important roles in government, the Ga do not have the institution of Queen Mother. In Akan societies, the Queen Mother is the official head of the Adowa ensemble, although this position neither bars nor requires her participation in performances.

6. Emphasizing the importance of kinship ties, this protest song is directed against injustices in the traditional courts. The singer says that she lost the case because she had no family to support her as did her opponents. Describing herself as a poor lonely person (ɔbaakofo mɔbrɔ), a naive person without hope (Otwea okrabirifo) and a victim of bias (Otwea kɔnkɔnsani), she refers to her opponent, Tawia (the name of someone born after twins) and his brothers. The proverb (Metu mlɛ mekyerɛ Osu) ("I bring mushrooms to show the people of Osu"), which constantly recurs in the Osu songs, means "I come in peace". The Ga say that a good song is one whose words do not incite negative feelings such as anger in listeners. Yet to them, songs are a better medium than speech for expressing criticism and scorn. With respect to protest songs, this seeming paradox is resolved by composing song texts that are oblique.

7. A pentatonic melody is continued by the chorus, after having been introduced by the soloist, and harmonized in thirds. With the harmonizations the scale becomes heptatonic. These characteristics are reminiscent of the Akan variety of Adowa. The song admonishes women not to continue in bad marriages for "a marriage that is bad will spoil a good woman . . . it affects Adzua . . . bad speech is full of sadness; we should not follow (it)." ("Aware bone sɛ ɔbaa pa, sane Adzua. . Kasa bone, awerɔho nkonkonko yenndi ekyiri oo.")

8. When two people quarrel, they should not mention each other's names until the matter is resolved; this pledges the matter to secrecy and prevents it from growing to unmanageable proportions. The singer is criticizing Ekua because she violated this rule of conduct. Again the criticism is oblique. "Ekua you have done well for mentioning my name."

9. Kwao was a man who made wise decisions when cases were tried before him. This song is in honor of his valuable service to the community.

#### SIDE B

1-3. These three songs are in praise of the Asafo. The first says "Asafo who are powerful, they do well; they do well. .when you meet the Asafo drummers (who lead the line) you meet disaster." Asafohene Nyarko and Asafohene Prekwa, courageous warriors, are the subjects of the second song and the third song encourages bravery, saying that cowardice is disgraceful. The first and third songs are heptatonic; the second is hexatonic as are a few other Adowa songs. All use the unison chorus, which is characteristic of indigenous Ga music (cf. the Akan practice cited under song 7 Side A).

4-5. In honor of the political head or mantɛ, these songs emphasize the historical link between the Adowa ensemble and the secular chieftaincy which were, along with the Asafo, adopted from the Akwamu in the seventeenth century. When the Ga migrated to their present homeland, they were ruled by priests, but the exigencies of their new environment soon demanded that they go to war. Due to certain ritual sanctions associated with the death of priests, they could not lead the men in battle. Therefore, the Ga created the secular political office of mantɔ for the younger man who was chosen to lead the Asafo companies. The first song is hexatonic and features harmony in thirds. "It is the chief's house that I am going to. . .Adowa musicians are calling you." The second uses six tones, but the sixth tone



appears only as an extension of the opening choral phrase in collocation with the end particle ee. It is a song used to greet the chief; one of its textual phrases is "Chief Akoto of Akwamu's Adowa musicians dislike quarrels between nations" referring to the four wars the Ga fought against the Akwamu from 1660 to 1730.

6. Children are important and a woman is especially deserving of praise if she has sons. "I'm walking in the sun, but I'm feeling cold." refers to the disparity between external appearance and feeling. A woman who looks content is miserable because she has no sons. "Manwo mmanin ee" means "I did not give birth to sons."

7. The singer relates her attempt to solve a problem that separated two persons who were her close friends.

8. The attitude towards strangers is described in this song. "They gossip about you. . . the stranger in town is a beast." The singer says that she will return to her father's town where she will have familial support and will not be one who is mistreated because she is a stranger.

9. "Nam nyaa" means "I am walking slowly". The meaning of this song is best expressed in a proverb: "Little by little a fowl drinks water (but he satisfies his thirst)". It extols the virtues of patience and persistence which help to ensure the attainment of goals.

10. This is the only song performed by either ensemble whose text is in the vernacular (Ga) language. It ridicules the officious person. "She with her legs dips ee! . . . . Girl who likes meddling. .that is the reason you don't sleep at midnight." The scale is hexatonic and the chorus sings in unison, a practice indigenous to the Ga.

11. One of the few Adowa songs that make direct reference to death, this text emphasizes the fact that life is transformed by death rather than terminated, thus communication between individuals can not be conducted in the same way. "A message is not sent to the dead. . The spirit world has no messages. . .If so, I would have sent a message with the dead to you, my mother." It is a heptatonic melody with harmonization in thirds.

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