1. Introduction

Khoomei is a wonder, which Mongolians contributed it to the human cultural heritages. Recent 30 years many national and international scholars have been studying about khoomei and trying to explain its meaning and origin. Khoomei is spread widely among shamanists and Mongolians, Kyrgyzstan, Caucasian and Altaic people. It has been developed in connection with shamanist rituals and later became an art.
Mongolian scholars are explained the meaning of the word ‘Khoomei’; first it is meant Khoomei’s organ: the muscle of back of the mouth, tube with saliva and pharynx and the second it is meant that the human speaking organ plays as a role of musical instrument and makes two diphthongs at the same time. Khoomei means khuukh, khadvakh (swelling), tomrokh (getting bigger), tuukh, khaakh, huurukh, deeshlekh, (rising), huurnekh (speaking), yaria khoroo (conversation) and contains the meaning of words like tone, music and tube. Mongolians have a close connection with animals and they imitate sounds of animals. They have rituals of making sound so as to lure the animal one is hunting and herding their livestock. It is impossible to imagine Mongolians without khoomei and they use it in their everyday life. This is an example how people connect with animals and livestock using the sound, which come from the speaking organ. Also it shows that how Mongolians are close to nature. From early times Mongolians used khoomei in their everyday life and rituals and it is a proof of today’s types and forms of khoomei art.

2. The concerns on the term

The term of the khoomei is for throat singing takes place in Altai
languages. Throat singing is called “kömököi” in Kyrgyz\(^2\), “kömei” in Kazakh\(^3\), “kömyekyei” in Tuwan\(^4\), “küömei”\(^5\) in Yakut, “kömei” and “kömyekyei”\(^6\) in Altai and Shor Khakass languages.

However, the term was not mentioned in written sources such as the dictionaries of ancient\(^7\) and medieval Turkic\(^8\), Azerbaijan and Uzbek languages. Also, it cannot be found in "The Secret History of the Mongols", the most important Middle Mongolian source. In addition, the Mongolian - Arabic dictionary\(^9\), some dictionaries and other sources such as Nán Hán and Mongolian dictionary "Hua-e, e-yi"\(^10\), did not bring the word.

Accordingly, it is clear that the nomadic and semi-nomadic nations belonged to the altai language group have still kept the tradition, while the settled people of the group might have forgotten the art of throat singing. Throat-singing is most identified with parts of Central Asia, but it is also practiced in northern Canada and South Africa where the

\(^{7}\) Ancient Turkic Dictionary. 1969;
\(^{8}\) 4 DL-iT. Ceviren Besim Atalay Baski Cilt IV. 1999 Ahkara;
\(^{9}\) N.Poppe. Dictionary of the Mongolian language Muhadimat al adab. 1938;
\(^{10}\) Yo.Janchiv TB. Dictionary of the Nangiad Khua-i-yi. 2009;
technique takes on different styles and meanings. The term khoomei found different references in works of foreign scholars. French researchers imply the term for chant diphonique, dipnonique, voix guimbarde, and voix dedoublee. Originally it was brought into French (in 1922) as the name of a dance, however, later it began to refer to a musical instrument. Acoustically, the term is usually described as the shrilling sound of old worn guitar strings, or the rumbling reverberation of car engine. British scholars identify it under several styles such as singing in split-tones (as a single vocalist is singing in overtone simultaneously in undertone), throat singing (resonating chambers of the vocal tract), and overtone singing in more melodic styles or in double vowels tone. In German acoustical literature, the term refers to kehlkopfgesang, which means overtone chanting, harmonic singing, or throat singing. In some sources it is mentioned as zweistimmigen (singing in two tones at the same time), and as sologesang, or solo voice, a passage in music in which a single voice emerges with or without instrumental accompaniment. In Russian, it is also explained as the Overtone singing, or throat singing. Thus, the above-mentioned interpretations merely regard the term in comparison of common sounds. However, they could not clarify the

expression of “throat singing” according to its original Mongolian meaning.

Bringing its roots in Central Asia, khoomei or “throat singing” is indivisibly connected not only to its nature, environment, geographical system, but also with its inhabitants’ traditional customs, features of physiology, anatomy and their language and culture. So, any interpretation of the term should reflect these unique characteristics.

2. Meaning of the term

According to "Concise dictionary of Mongolia" compiled by Ya.Tsevel, the term “khuumei” has several uses: 1.1. Soft and hard palates; 1.2. khöömiidökh (creating resonating sound by vocal tract); 1.3. khöömiilökh (singing in overtone). 2.1. The strip part of belly skin of game, which has almost the same color of the main body (e.g. sable, fox, vulture); 2.2. khöömiilökh - cutting off the strip part of belly skin of a game.12

Inner Mongolian linguistics also brought some explanation to the term. Tsetsentsogt considers that “kugem-e” refers to 1. Larynx; 2.1.

The strip part of belly skin of game; 2.2. the part of skin under jaw nearby larynx of animals such as sable and fox\textsuperscript{13}. Then Rashdonrov refers it to the nasal and oral pharynx, which begins at the back of the mouth cavity and continues down the throat to the epiglottis, a flap of tissue that covers the air passage to the lungs and that channels food to the esophagus\textsuperscript{14}.

According to human mouth anatomical structure explanation, khoomei refers to creating resonated sound as air travels freely through the mouth cavity. The sound can be selectively amplified by changing locations where it is generated such as the upper - in the upper part of the nasal cavity; the middle - in the mouth cavity; and, the lower - in larynx and pharynx.

Similar depiction is given in Kazakh dictionary: 1.1. kömyei, kömyekyei (tandai arty) - palate; kömyei (kömyeilyei söilyeü) to throat-sing. 2.1. Püshpak, balak (tülkinin püshpagy) - the strip part of belly skin of game; 2.2. the part of skin under jaw nearby larynx of animals such as sable and fox (bülgannyn püshpagy)

These interpretations are usually connected with human and animal’s organs of the area of throat, organs of speech and sound vocalization process through the organs.

\textsuperscript{14} Rashdonrov. “Student's Mongolian Dictionary” 1988;
In this way the speculation of the term based on the field of linguistics lacks more detailed explanation.

Therefore, the throat singing study needs in more comprehensive attitudes and researches, which can bring lights into the origin of throat singing, investigation of the issue in connection with other sciences such as history, biology, ethnology, and linguistics, inclusive studies of air flow resonating through throat-singing process and its different styles. It is obvious that such studies will attract interest of domestic and foreign scholars, which in its turn will provide the audience with broad-spectrum knowledge on khoomei.

Terms related to livestock husbandry of the nomadic Mongols play significant role in formulation of a theory based on ethnographic and ethno-linguistic features of the Mongols, origin of Mongolian words, psychology of the nomadic people, particularly, their folk literature, and material culture as a main tool for Mongolian lexical studies according to Choi. Luvsanjav.

Hence, the origin of word and term definition of “khoomei” should be risen on the linguistic, cultural and lexical subjects of the ethnicity as a single concern for further studies.

On the other hand, the semantic interpretation of word “khoomei” should be considered in interrelation of natural aspects, including the extreme climate, geographical features and traditional livestock
husbandry, but also cultural factors of the Mongols, referring to intellectual knowledge and skills, beliefs, tradition and understanding of beauty and sublime.

3. Concerns on semantic concepts

First of all, it is worth to focus on linguistic and semantic explanation for “khoomei. In order to formulate and clarify comprehensively the ways of khoomei development, its styles and spread, it would be precise to ground the term interpretation if one takes account on the nation’s lifestyle, philosophy, mentality, traditional customs, language, culture, legends and folk, which gave birth to khoomei and have still kept the art of performance.

Semantic speculation of the term has been found reflections in works of scholars in the field of Mongolian study. J. Badraa, a linguist, an art historian, developed and broadcasted some radio and TV programs and wrote several articles on throat singing. He enlightened the term from the linguistic point of view, considering it as a type of Mongolian folk music, particularly as the performance art using “the organs of speech”. In this way he has defined the further trend for khoomei research. Moreover, he has brought the khoomei
study into the theoretical investigation, exposing the importance of versatile studies of the subject from different scientific fields such as folk symbology, ethnology, history and linguistics. He pointed out that art of khoomei is an advanced stage of whistling art, when whistling was brought into curious technique of creating melodic sounds, making the organs of speech as the musical instrument. The art of khoomei is one of the amazing phenomena of the musical art created and developed by the Mongols. Throat singing is a kind of whistling with tongue tip and cutting teeth, creating beautiful adorned tone at the same time making vocalization of continual melody by resonance in the depth of mount or larynx area. This deep tone resonance suits perfectly with the simultaneous high voice. Thus, "the beauty of the throat singing lies in simultaneous performance of producing resonant melody and pitch by a person using only his or her speech organs, which can be possible only for a skilled musician playing on an instrument such as a flute or pipe”.

This definition brings light in description of Mongolian khoomei or throat singing integrating both linguistic and cultural studies. G. Gantogtokh, professor, doctor of Mongolian Philology, notes the semantic meaning of the term “khoomei” in the following way:

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“Khoomei refers to pharynx, an organ located in the throat chamber. Actually the sounds are divided into two types according to their produced location: resonant from the throat and vocalized in the mouth. In other words, the acoustic tone and vocal rhythm created in the throat is called the resonant melody, while the sound shaped in the mouth is called melodic vocal voice. Mongolian language appears to be the language which sounds are created in the throat or pharynx. So, when the Mongols speak they usually do not move their mouth too much. Then other languages (e.g. European, Russian) shape their sounds in mouth cavity, which causes much involvement of lips and mouth movement in speaking. Therefore, the throat singing art is popular phenomenon among the shamanists and people of Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, Khakass and the Altai region. Furthermore, he considered that these people have developed the art as a way of praying making throat resonant sound, allowed them act upon ceremonies to call deities, divinities and ancestral spirits. The explanation is interesting, and brought an important idea on the term to study it based on cultural semiology, ethnolinguistics and phonetics.

The notion “the word “khoomei” has been derived from the root “ko-ge-“ which means to swell (khuukh, khavdakh), to grow (tomrokh), to chase (khaakh, tuukh), to close (khaakh), to take off (khuurukh), to rise (deeshlekh), to speak (khuurukh, khuurnekh), talks,
speech (yaria khuuruu), also it has meaning melody “khug”, music “khugjim” and resonance “khundii” derived from the above words” mentioned by M. Bazarragchaa has importance for further researches.

Interpretating the term “khoomei” comprehensively based on the above definitions and notions of the scholars would be significant to further studies on throat singing.

Thus, the term related to “khoomei”, the vocal art performed by speech organs, needs in precise explanation beginning from its root and origin.

The word “khoomei” is originated from root of “khu”, which integrates explanation of phonemes and dialects of Mongolian languages of the nomadic nation. It is the original word expressing human and animal sounds and voices, melodies and tunes of musical instruments, and particularly refers to the throat singing overtone (even the phoneme “khuu” relates to vowels, it plays significant role in rituals, poetry and songs of the Mongols. For instance, the command words for animals such as “khug, kuuj, khuug, and khuus” in livestock husbandry; in nouns and proper names for sounds created by plants and animals, and “khoomei” and “khoomeeilekh” for the highest form of sound shaped by human speech organs).
4. The semantic interpretation of word “khoomei”

Art historian J. Badraa gives the following explanation: the word “khoomei” is associated with "kög-hog" derived from root "kö-hu", which has derivations of many words such as “khugijim” (music), “khugil” (develop, advance, progress), “kuur” (joy), “kuurug” (bellows), and “khudulguun” (move, movement), that express meanings of moving, and making sounds.

Furthermore, he claimed that the "kö" root of "ku-hu", which constitutes the part of initial phrase of the Mongolian rhythmic drawing songs such as “Oh, zee, hu” or “zee-hu”\(^1\), should be considered as the melodic remains of the prehistorical cheers or whoops, so they also might be the abbreviated form of them.\(^{16}\)

Mongolian folk songs have some specific styles. For example: they include optional dyphtongs such as “khoo, khii, khui, köi, khoe”, and “kuge-khu”, which are usually followed by phrases of “khuu, shuu, dee, lee, zee”, the syllables ended with vowels. Also, many Mongolian songs’ lyrics have dyphtongs in its closed with vowels. These features can explain the main characterisctis of Mongolian songs, based on its vital sound - the vowels, which provides melodiousness and clearness

of tenor tunes. The root of "khu" is not the vain and vacant lexical unit. The "khu" root of word "khoomei" is associated with the word roots of "khu", "kho", "khom", "khug" and "khun".

Moreover, the root "kho" originated from Altaic languages has derived word roots "khi" and "ki", which shape "kho" with meaning "hun" or human, and "mei" with meaning of sounds as muu (cow) or baa (sheep). Therefore, the roots "kho" and "khi" can be originally related to biological sounds.

In addition, the root has some derivations creating the following words such as "khom" - tanned and processed soft skin of sheep and goat (except kids), "khom" - stuff or things, "khomul" - a kind of wild onion, and "khun" or "khomun" - man or human, who is able to create and use labor tools, and can build up language and intellect, and communicate with sounds creating them using their speech organs or "khoomei".

On the one hand human is the natural product. On the other hand, it is the social product. However, "khommei" or pharynx has more precise explanation behalf of the human body anathomy. So, it should be rational to be called "hun" or "human" behalf of the most unique part of its body, which is named after in Mongolian as "khum" and "khomuun".17

In Mongolian the vertical groove extending from the procheilon to
the nasal septum is called the “khun erkhten” or philtrum. Similar named part of body or “khun makh” (in Mongolian) can be found in anathomy of marmot. Also, human’s lower lip, sometimes called in Mongolian “khumkhii”, can express their displeasure being bitten with teeth (“khomkhiiguu zuukh”). In this way the root “khu”, also has association with lower lip. In this way, other derivations can bring long list in body parts of animals and plants.

When somebody makes sounds using mouth cavity or soft palate, it is called as making sounds through philtrum or speaks as human. The most distinguishing part of human body from animal one is its philtrum.

Since human beings have philtrum, they could develop their pharynx, throat and larynx, which in its turn caused creating and using their language. So, in Mongolian philtrum is named “khun khonkhor”, which can be translated into English as the “human cavity”.

Therefore, human might be named as human or “hun” in Mongolian for his “human cavity” or philtrum, which makes man different from other animals. Might be this part of body helped us to form our speech organs, reached the highest stage of development, that can initiate the sounds of nature and animals, creating the most progressive

tunes and melodies. Perhaps this part of body have given birth to the most important ability to make sound for the humanity to name the man after it.

In case of considering the term “khoomei” dividing it into lexical structures as “ku-ge-me-i”, the part “ku-ge-“ or “khokhee” (stokehole)\(^8\) can associate with words such as throat cavity of human and animal; flue, connecting stove to the chimney”; and loading chamber of a gun, which have association with resonating process produced within a hollow, or empty space. For example, in a riddle about flintlock has the similar meaning of word “khoomei”:

“There is Khoomei, the sharp-sighted in the valley

There is Jiimii, the sharp-sighted, sitting his legs straight, waiting for silently”

Why it has the word “khoomei”? Because the flintlock has gun powder in its burnet cartridge, which is always ready to burn up, when it will burn up then there would be a loud sudden sound.\(^19\)

Moreover, the riddle says about the pose of the hunter, or the flintlock, as that one is sitting for the game sitting his legs straight and waiting for silently shutting up his mouth.

This idea of “silently waiting for” expresses that any sound is

\(^{19}\) G.Gantogtokh. “Oral poetry tradition of Mongolian customs”. 2007;
created in a hollow and empty space.

In this way, any interpretation of "khoomei" has related to description of the organs such as piltrum, throat or pharynx, named in Mongolian as “khun” or “khoomei”, which in its turn demand us to explain the term based upon on them.

Therefore, it has become clear that the organ “khoomei” or throat was brought to the name of the performance art of “khoomei” due to its features of creating vocal resonance, and producing live communicative language.

In the other words, it is worth to mention that the airflow running through throat creates sound in pharynx. Moreover, this process of sound formation in “khoomei” can be expressed that human speaks with its organs “hun” (piltrum) or “khoomei” (pharynx).

According to the Oriental mentality everything in the world is a constitute part of an organism. So, any sound spelling has meaningful reason for giving birth to a space organism brought by the throat.

An organism is “mahbodi” in Mongolian, which originates from "mahu-bhuta”, a Sanskrit word, with meaning of body, element, thing, material, and matter.

The concept has reflects in ancient philosophy of Greece, India and China, according to which the innumerable phenomena of the Universe come from the key organisms and elements.
The notion of producing sound in throat also associates with the idea of another sound formation location, namely in the mouth cavity.

So far, the Sanskrit sources mentioned that the Universe is the highest destination, which is too far for any substance to reach and grow. Thus, likewise the Universe, any sound, produced in the throat and comes from it without touching any of tongue, lips, and teeth, has the the same identification as the airy element for its phenomenal characteristics.

For the current studies in phonology, it has the following explanation: “all the organs, including respiratory system, lungs, bronchiole, laryngeal and vocal cords, pharynx, oral and nasal cavity, and other related organs, involved in human speaking are called organs of speech”. Hence, the role of the sound-generating organs should be considered in linguistics, and it also should be associated in interpretation of the term “khoomei”.

In Mongolian linguistics the sounds are classified into the labial, front or pre-dental, palatalized, and guttural sounds.

Choji-Odser distinguishes the Mongolian phonemes into the elements referred to letters according to speech organ function in producing the sounds. He related the speech organs to five organs

such as lungs, liver, heart, spleen and kidney. It is interesting that each of the organs has been associated with five elements or bodies including wood, fire, earth, metal and water. Then letters or sounds were classified into the five organ-element groups in the following way: seven letters such as a, e, ng, q, k, j and g, which were considered as produced in throat or born in space, went under universal or bearing embodied tone; i, y and s were taken into the group of air embodied (emission) tones as they are created because of pre-dental and palatalized sounds; j, l and c sounds, come through the guttural parts, related to fire (burning) body tones; eight sounds such as o, u, o, u, m, b, p and v, produced labially, referred to the water (flowing) body tones; and the remained five sounds d, l, n, l and s, made by the front of the tongue and teeth, were classified into the earth (absorption) embodied group.21

In this way the concept of body or element classification of consonants and vowel sounds of Mongolian due to the function role of the speech organs in speaking of them should be taken not only as the linguistic study issue, but also the reflection of religion rituals and customs such as spelling mantras.

21 Danzandagva Mr. jir b ken- b tolt-ybn taijilbur b s b g- b n endeg b rel- b n daranggui-yi arilpapči optarp b i yin mani neret b orusibai. Buriad modon baryn sudar.
The word “khoomeilekh” is originated from a word with meaning of describing actions and nominations such as chooing or pursuing, fermenting, going up or rising, narrating or talking, moving or movement, making sound, music, and bellows. The name of speech organ “khoom” (kugeme) and “khoomei” are the nouns for the term. The verb of action done by the organs is expressed in Mongolian as "khöövlökh" and "khoomeilekh" or sing throat-singing. Thus the word has the real Mongolian origin root.

On the one hand, the lexical meaning of “khoomei” refers to the nominative noun of the speech organ “khoomei” or throat; on the other hand, it indicates the action of singing vocals using the organ, creating an amazing echoing sound.

Otherwise, it is a precise process of creating harmonic tunes or overtone-singing, handled by “khoomei” or throat through rising airflow through it.

So, the “khoomeilekh” or overtone-singing means making growling or chunking sounds, amplifying the resonance through selective changing of airflow in the throat, and harmonic vocalization of two different pinches simultaneously.

Based upon on the above-mentioned concepts, it would be conceivable to note that the art of “khoomei” has been one of the arts, which has developed the singing performance ability of the humanity,
contributed by the nomadic Mongols, and their traditional art.

It would be absolutely accurate to note that "Mongolian is the most advanced classical language due to its rational reflection of knowledge, experiences, mentality, ways of thinking and tradition gained from their nomadic life stock husbandry culture". Therefore, from the perspectives of this concept the term “khoomei” has the original Mongolian lexical root of the language of the nation, who have created and developed the art, deriving the nominative noun for the performing art of “khoomei”.

Thereupon, the term “khoomei” refers to throat of human and animals, also means singing overtone, or the action of making sounds using the organ. The one who could create the sound in the highest level of master has become the human, producing simultaneous pitches with beautiful and harmonic melody.

The term “khoomei” not only has the ancient original root, used widely among the other traditional unique cultural terms for the nomadic people, in association of their lifestyle, environment, husbandry, but also it refers to the independent type of performance art, developing as the modern individual stage of art.
5. Conclusion

Throat singing is one of the wonderful contributions by Mongolians to the human arts collections. Nowadays studying cultures and languages of Central Asia and Altaic language nations is widely developing. Especially, several attempts to study the throat singing and explain its invisible nature are being gone actively by both foreign and home researchers.

At the time when the overtone singing, considered as musical art, was first originated in the cultural frame of Central Asia and Altaic language people and their special features of nomadic lifestyle, it was spread with progressive forms in Altai and Khangai Mountains and Ikh Nuuruu Khotgor regions, more commonly, Jargalant Mountain, and Khyargas and Chandmani soums of Khovd province, Bayantes, Bayankhairkhan and Aldarkhaan soums in Zavkhan province, Tsaatan (Reindeer People of Uriankhai) in Khuvsgul province, Tuva, Yakutia, Khakassia, Kyrgyzstan, Uul Altai, Kalmykia, Turkic and Uighur people of Xian Jian region in Russia.

There are some facts in which Hunnu(s), Mongolian ancestors, used to have the throat singing and further it was recorded in Mongol Yuan Dynasty’s Monuments, a historical source about great khan(s). Throat singing has being told traditionally in oral literatures and in myths
from generation to generation, and has being also involved in a course
of intoning an epic, moreover; it is a very peculiar art form, which is
related to Mongolian ways of lifestyle, and religious rites of both
Shamanism and Buddhism.

Therefore, the art of throat singing is one of the ancient arts of
Mongolian origin and can be called a vocal song if you look at it
from the Mongolian dictionary.

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THE CONCEPT ON THE TERM OF MONGOLIAN THROAT SINGING

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Summary

Mongolian “throat singing” has been developed in association with life, religion and traditional customs of the Mongols since ancient time. Today, being considered as one of the authentic art of the nation, khoomei finds its significance in academic research of scholars not only from Mongolia, but also from other countries. The preliminary and important subject of the study related to throat singing refers to the origin of term "throat singing", its meaning, and appellation. The Mongols have created and developed their unique culture in the context of their lifestyle, economy, natural environment and their traditional customs for the centuries in their history. Khoomei is definitely an essential part of their culture, and an exceptional category of the nation’s art, which was brought up to the days as the true “Mongolian” piece.

Key words: Throat singing, khoomei, Mongolian throat singing