



MONGOL *khöömei* (LARYNX CROONING)



is an imitation of the sounds of nature, mountains, water, wind and animals

Researchers suppose that *khöömei* could have been developed also in connection with *argil* (a throat timbre), which is an epic-telling vocal technique; it is also used in the sound of the wooden *tsuur* (vertical flute). The sound of the *tsuur* is based on the sounding of a fundamental tone which sounds very close to *khöömei*.

According to ethnomusicologist Johanni Curtet, we can classify *khöömei*'s vocalization into two styles:

***Kharkhira* *khöömei*:** The singer inhales deeply and applies breath pressure to his pharynx and abdomen, producing a deep harmonic sound that vibrates one octave lower than the fundamental note produced. What you hear is a very low-pitched sound. The singer actually vibrates not only his vocal cords but also his ventricular folds. It is this deep harmonic sound that is heard in the foreground and that

characterizes the *kharkhira* style, although in some variants a melody of high-pitched harmonics can be heard above the fundamental sound.

Isgeree khöömei (also called as *nariin khöömei*, *uyan-giin khöömei*, or *altain shingen khöömei*): The singer inhales deeply and applies breath pressure to his pharynx and abdomen, producing a harmonic sound that vibrates several octaves above the fundamental tone. A melody using the pitches of the harmonics, sounding like a high-pitched whistle, can then be heard.

In both cases, the harmonic melody is sung in the same fashion. The singer changes the pitches by altering the size and shape of his mouth cavity by opening and closing his lips or by moving his tongue backwards, sticking its tip on his palate, or else by moving the central part of his tongue from front to back, and its tip against his bottom teeth. To this are added techniques aiming to enrich the tone colour and to add melodic ornaments. Moreover, all these techniques can also be combined. The more than 20 techniques of *khöömei* include the *Bagalzuuriin khöömei* (throat *khöömei*), *Tsuuraa khöömei* (echo *khöömei*), *Hamryn khöömei* (nasal *khöömei*), and *Dangildakh khöömei* (syllabial *khöömei*). The singers use the *Shakhaa* vocal emission to sing the *magtaal* (praise song), in which the basic tone is close to *khöömei*.

Mongol *khöömei* is an outstanding heritage representing the nomadic Mongolians' contribution to the cultural heritage of humanity. Created, maintained and inherited by the Mongolian people from generation to generation, *khöömei* is a type of ancient vocal art that emphasizes the essential cultural identity of the Mongols.

Khöömei is a unique and exceptional art form in which singers create several sounds at once using their vocal apparatus. The singer articulates harmonics that sound above a fundamental tone, which is in the depth of *khöömei*. *Khöömei* literally means "pharynx", referring to the main body part used to produce this vocal technique. The harmonics originate from the fundamental tone by contracting the pharynx and diaphragm.

When performing *khöömei*, the performer sends air through chest cavity, pharynx, larynx, his mouth, nasal cavity to create a sound and melody. *Khöömei* is a *khün khögjim* or "human-music," which uses the human vocal organ as a music instrument. The Mongolians developed the *khöömei* art as a unique vocal art.

Among the nomadic people in Central Asia, Mongolians have been living in close interaction and harmony with nature. Mongolians created *khöömei* in reciprocal correlation with nature and their land. Ethnomusicologists studying *khöömei* mark it as an integral part of ancient nomadic pastoralism, which is still practiced today. The basis of *khöömei*