

The Land of Sakha



The Yakuts call themselves ‘Sakha’, and their country ‘The Land of Sakha’. It is a vast territory occupying one fifth part of Russia. Although almost a half of it lies beyond the Arctic Circle, people began settling here in prehistoric times, during the early Stone Age. They came to the edge of the earth from far-lands driven by curiosity and daring .

Yakutia is the coldest inhabited place on Earth, rich in diamonds and legends. Today 99 % of all Russian diamonds are extracted in Yakutia. There are many legends in Olonkho – Yakut heroic epos about origin of diamonds in these lands.

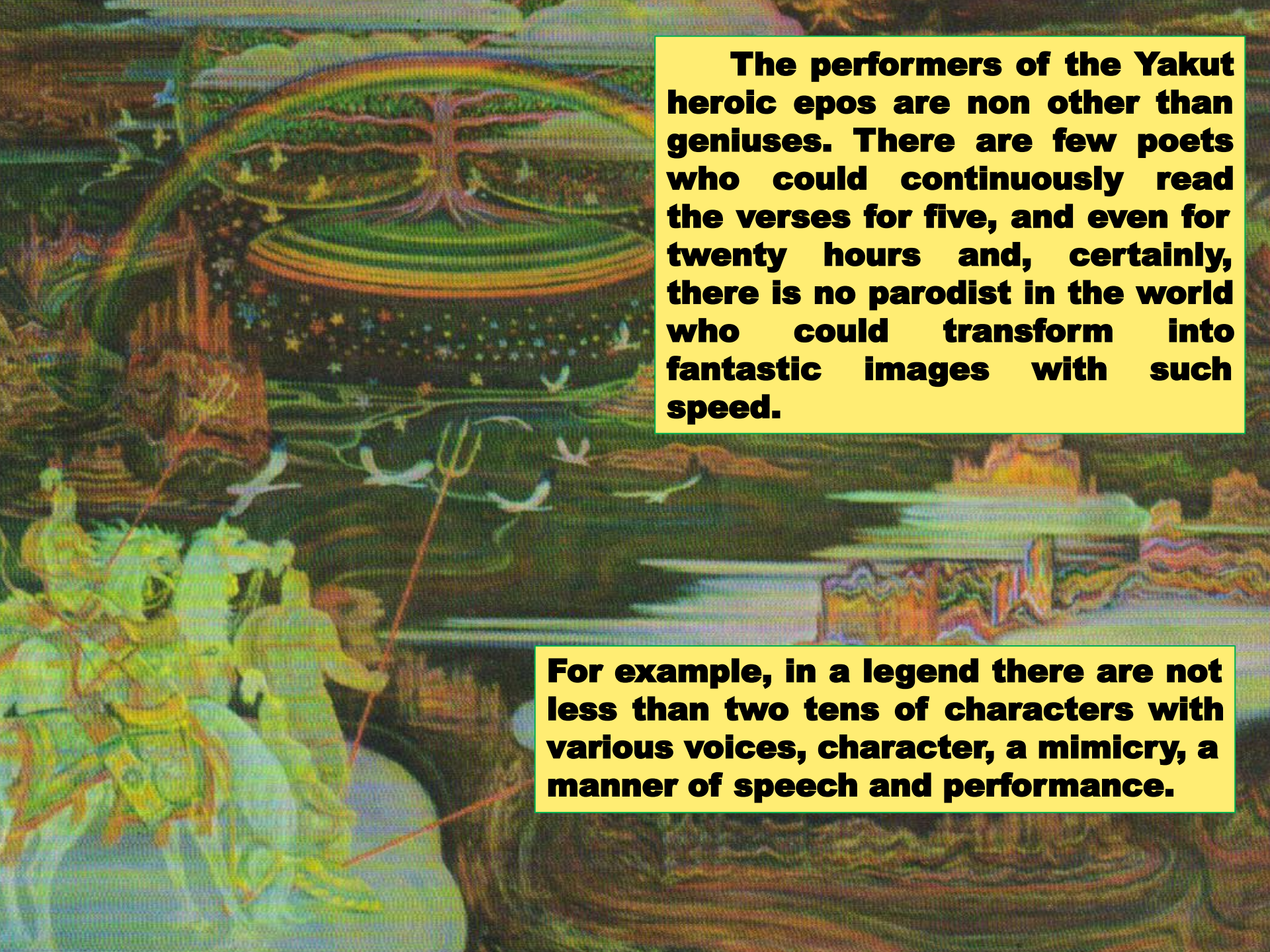
One of the local legends says when the Creator of the universe flew across the world carrying a big bag of diamonds and appeared to fly over Yakutia, his hands got cold and he just dropped the bag on the Earth's surface. The legend narrates that at those times it was as cold in Yakutia as it is now, and it were severe frosts to make the Creator drop the bag and thus give birth to the numerous diamond fields.



OLONKHO



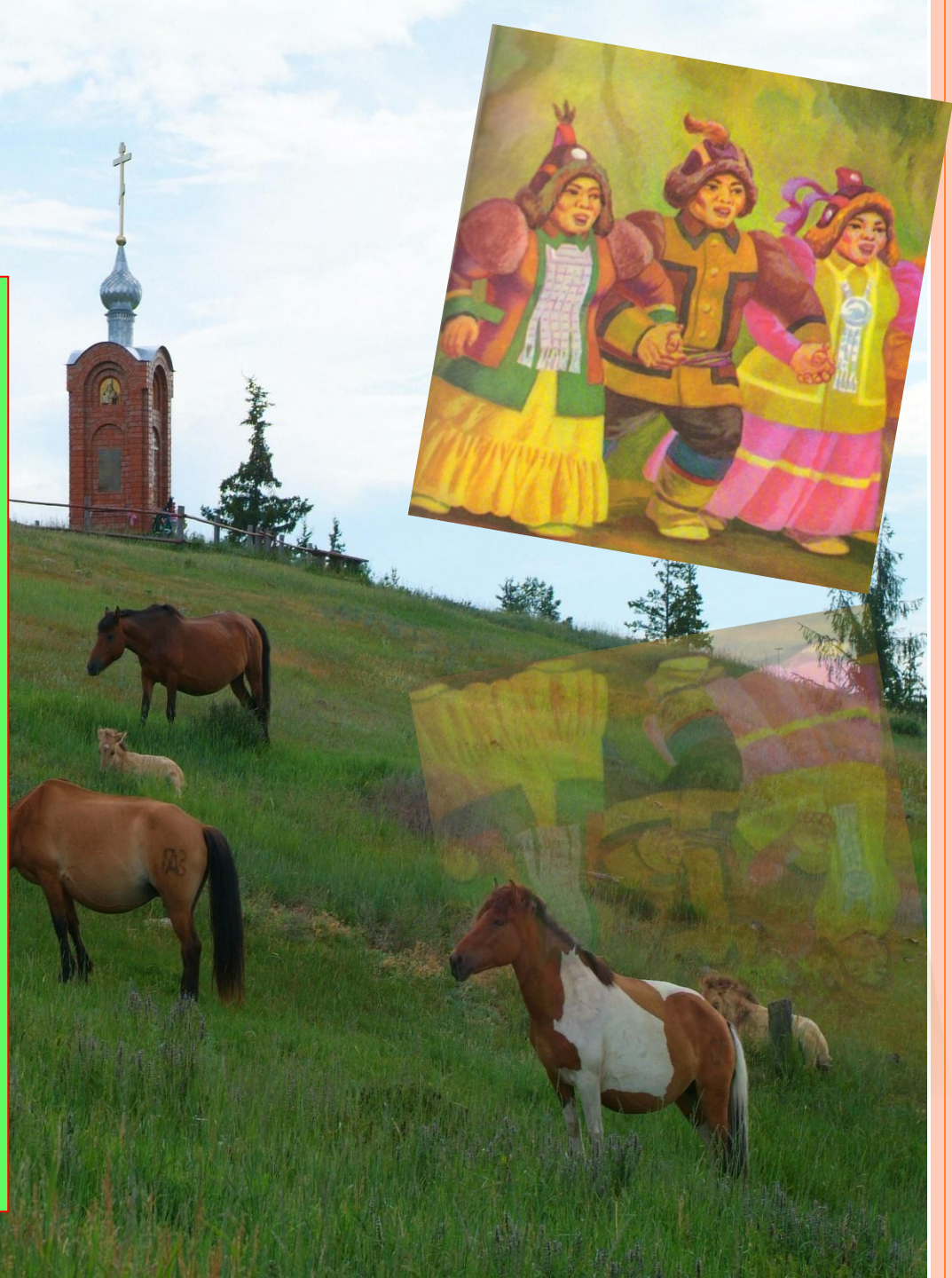
The Yakut people created beautiful pieces of folklore. Yakut folklore is rich and various. The ancient heroic epos Olonkho occupies the main place in it. In 2005 Olonkho was proclaimed as one of the «masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage of humanity». Olonkho consists of numerous tales that are similar in subject and style. Tales vary in length from 10 to 15 thousand verse lines which alternate with rhythmic prose. They are performed by folktale narrators, or olonkhohuts.



The performers of the Yakut heroic epos are non other than geniuses. There are few poets who could continuously read the verses for five, and even for twenty hours and, certainly, there is no parodist in the world who could transform into fantastic images with such speed.

For example, in a legend there are not less than two tens of characters with various voices, character, a mimicry, a manner of speech and performance.

Olonkho has become a masterpiece not only for size, but also for other reasons: the meaning of life and the idea of human existence. It gives us an idea of the indigenous inhabitants of Yakutia and helps to understand their culture and faith, life and customs. People all over the world shouldn't miss the chance to visit the land of Olonkho and listen to singings of the famous Olonkho performers. They are worth listening!



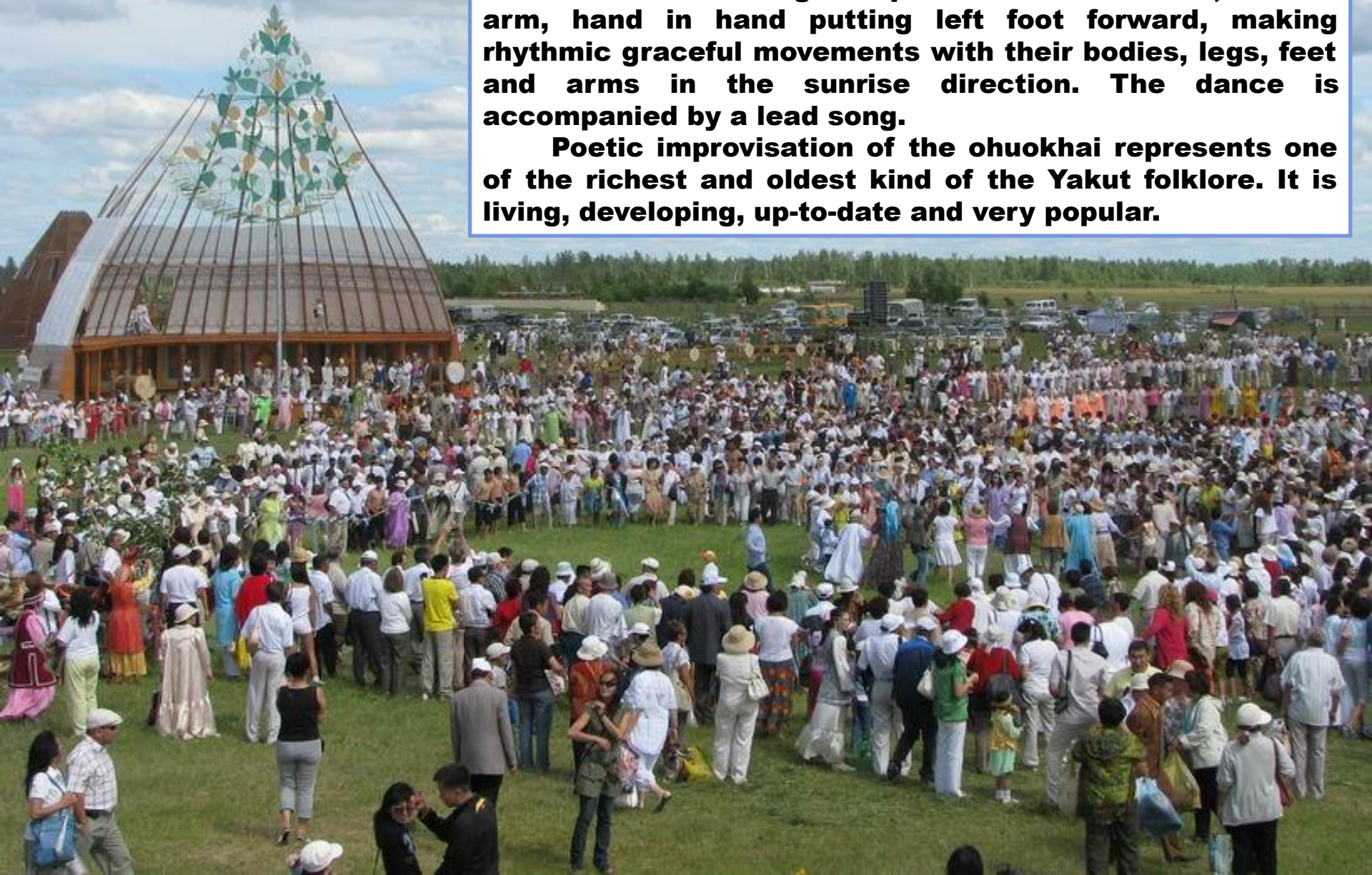


The festival begins with the giving of thanks to those powers which control the lives of the Yakut. There is the ceremony of feeding the fire, the address to the spirits that protect horse-breeding, the ritual sprinkling of grass and trees with kymys. Only when all this has been performed people can play national games, eat national dishes, drink kymys and perform the round-dance Ohuakhai that marks the culmination of the festival.

THE OHUOKHAI

The ohuokhai is a national dance, a unique creation of the Yakut people. It includes three forms of art: dancing, singing and poetry combined together. It is a round dance-and-song. People dance in a circle, arm in arm, hand in hand putting left foot forward, making rhythmic graceful movements with their bodies, legs, feet and arms in the sunrise direction. The dance is accompanied by a lead song.

Poetic improvisation of the ohuokhai represents one of the richest and oldest kind of the Yakut folklore. It is living, developing, up-to-date and very popular.





Melody of ohuokhai is used in every possible way in different types of music from marching tunes to operas. There are many songs based on the different melodies of the ohuokhai.

Being very simple to perform it has a beneficial effect on everybody. This dance is also called a healing dance. It helps a person overcome his/her difficulties, troubles and stresses. It is healthy for a person as any physical exercise. This dance is the most effective means of self-perfection.



Today the Republic of Sakha has its own constitution and its own president. Sakha has embarked on the path of sovereign and independent development. It is offering to cooperate with other countries on the basis of equal relations in trade, science, politics and culture. The culture of Sakha brings its own special contribution to World Culture.

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