

# The Baikal: is it a lake or a sea?

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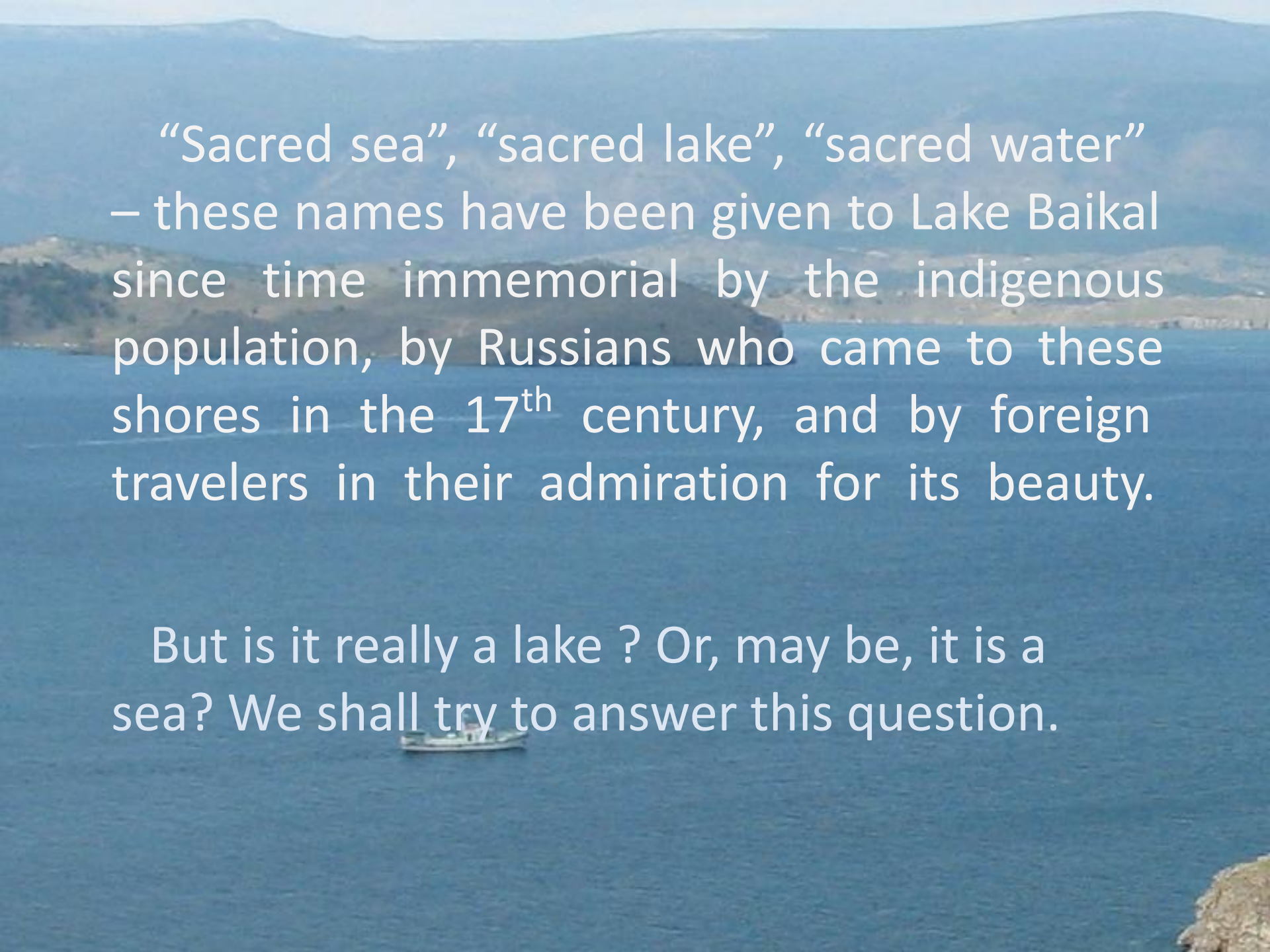
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Quotation:

We can hardly help repeating: how good it is to have Baikal! Regal and untamed, mighty, rich, majestic and beautiful in so many, many ways!

(V. G. Rasputin)

A scenic view of Lake Baikal with mountains in the background and a small boat on the water.

“Sacred sea”, “sacred lake”, “sacred water”  
– these names have been given to Lake Baikal since time immemorial by the indigenous population, by Russians who came to these shores in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and by foreign travelers in their admiration for its beauty.

But is it really a lake ? Or, may be, it is a sea? We shall try to answer this question.



# The Baikal in figures:

**Age:** about 25 million years

**Length:** 636 km

**The maximal width:** 79,5 km

**The minimal width:** 27 km

**Length of the coastal line:** 2000 km

**The maximal depth:** 1637 m

**The total area:** 31500 km<sup>2</sup>

**The volume:** 23000 km<sup>3</sup>

**Number of flowing rivers:** 336

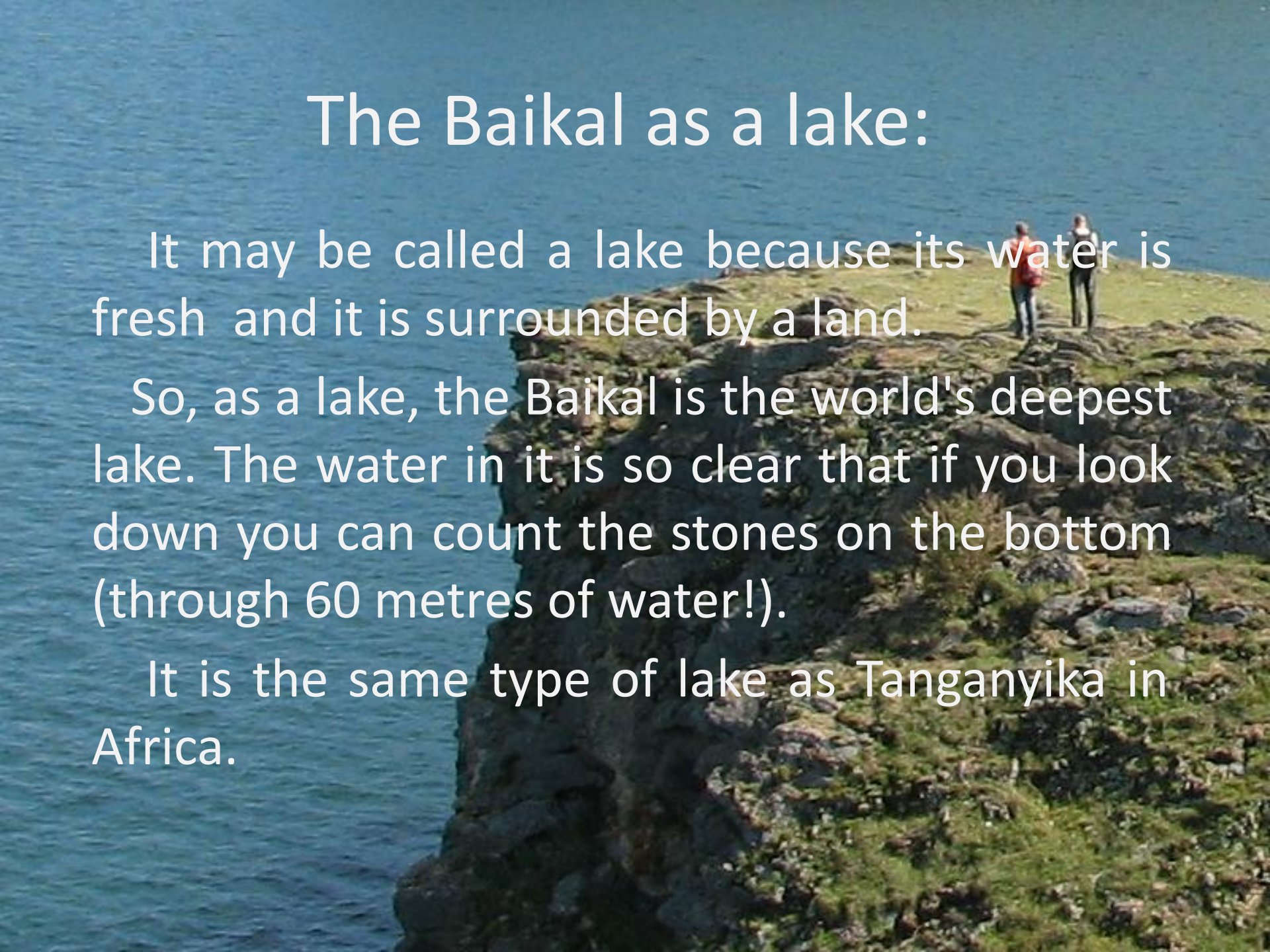


# The Baikal as a lake:

It may be called a lake because its water is fresh and it is surrounded by a land.

So, as a lake, the Baikal is the world's deepest lake. The water in it is so clear that if you look down you can count the stones on the bottom (through 60 metres of water!).

It is the same type of lake as Tanganyika in Africa.



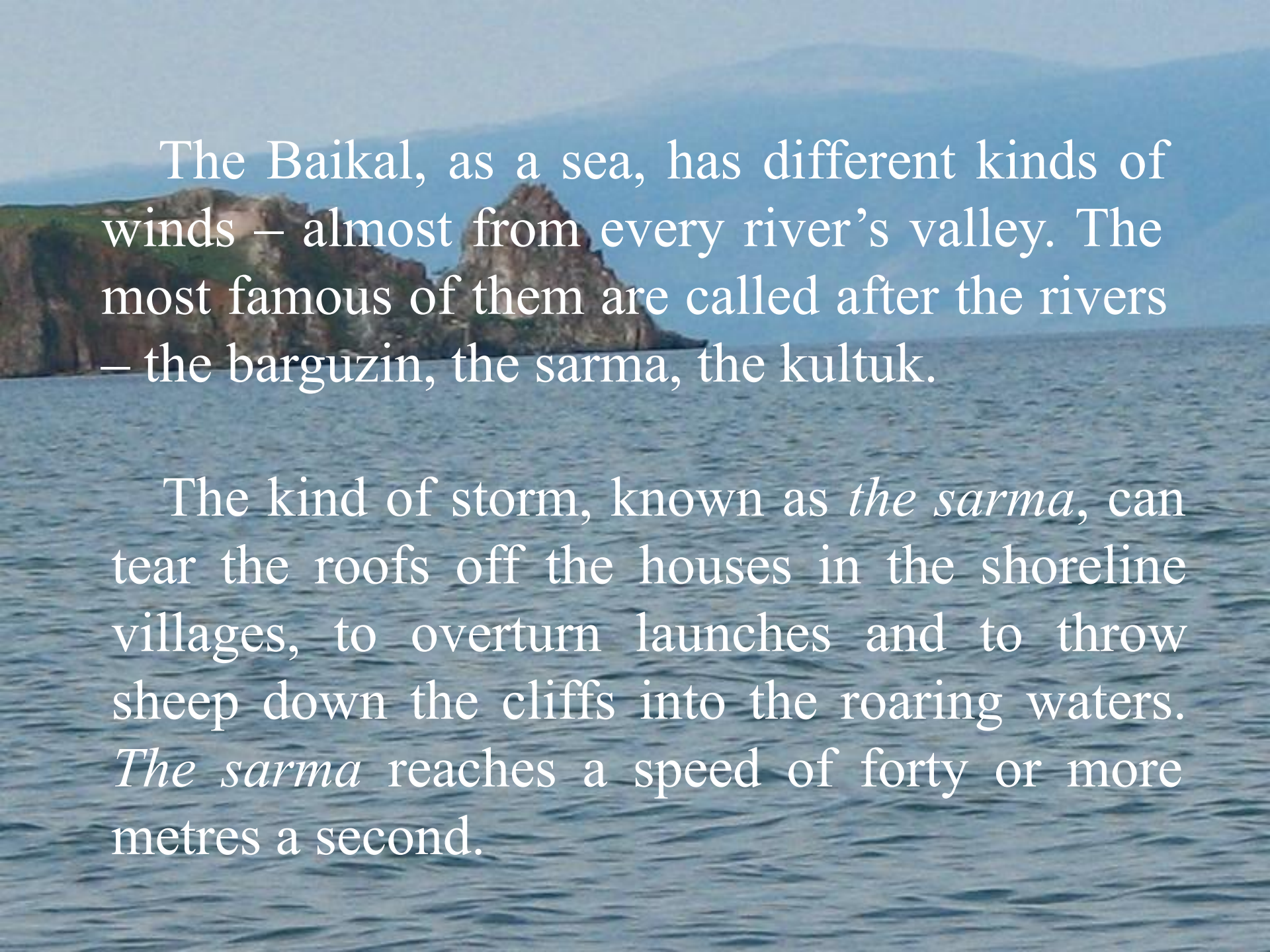


# The Baikal as a sea:

It is much smaller than the Baltic Sea, but there is much more water in it than in the Baltic Sea. Its depth – the depth of a sea or even an ocean!

The Baikal has not only separate islands (Olkhon is the biggest of them) but also some “archipelagoes” (Ushkanyi Islands, for example).



The background image shows a vast, blue body of water in the foreground. In the middle ground, there is a prominent, rocky island with some sparse vegetation. The background features a range of blue mountains under a clear sky. The text is overlaid on this scene.

The Baikal, as a sea, has different kinds of winds – almost from every river’s valley. The most famous of them are called after the rivers – the barguzin, the sarma, the kultuk.

The kind of storm, known as *the sarma*, can tear the roofs off the houses in the shoreline villages, to overturn launches and to throw sheep down the cliffs into the roaring waters. *The sarma* reaches a speed of forty or more metres a second.





As a sea, the Baikal has a great variety of living creatures. It hosts 1,085 species of plants and 1,550 species and varieties of animals.

More than 80% of the animals are endemic. Among them there are such animals (usually known in seas) as sponges (the Baikal sponge), seals (Nerpa), crustaceans (the Baikal epishura) etc.

The golomyanka (oil fish)





# Conclusion:

On the one hand, the Baikal can be called a sea because of its area, depth and wildlife. On the other hand, it is a lake because of its fresh water. But scientists say that the Baikal is a future ocean because it is widening and becoming deeper!

