Sakha ethnic music business, upward mobility and friendship

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Abstract

The Sakha have had their own popular music since the 1970s. During the Soviet era, music culture was controlled by the state. Starting in the 1990s, new pop-music institutions and venues emerged and new entrepreneurs entered the music business as club owners, managers, producers, DJs, etc. In this article, I examine multiple social relations in the music business. Music has become a possibility for village youth to leave their villages and gain fame as artists. The Sakha music world contains various networks where criminal structures, artists, businessmen and media are interlinked. Through this linkage, music is used to gain a community's support for semi-legal business activities. At the same time, both the artists and producers present themselves to the public as the custodians of Sakha 'national' culture. The article discusses ways in which the artists' popularity is connected to their position in the music business, and how ethnic symbols are used to gain success.
The recent upward social, and centrifugal geographic, mobility of ethnics, particularly Catholics, has finally enabled them to enter the middle and upper middle classes, where they have been noticed by the national mass media, which monitor primarily these strata. In the process they have also become more noticeable to other Americans. Except in suburbs where old discrimination and segregation patterns still survive, social life takes place without ethnic clustering, and Catholics are not likely to find ethnic subgroups in the Church.