

SAKHA POP MUSIC—A CELEBRATION OF CONSUMING¹

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In this paper I am going to discuss how commercial pop music and consumption, especially buying clothes, are related among youths in Sakha, in the eastern part of the Russian Siberia. I explore how consumerism in Sakha is affected by local show business and why music matters in channelling trends of buying consumer items like clothes, tapes and so forth. I want to show that being stylish and trendy is linked in this context to personal prestige and one's position in the larger social context.

In 2000 and 2001 I spent 14 months in the largest Russian region—Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in Eastern Siberia. I went there as a doctoral student of the Max Planck-Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle (Saale) to do research on changing property relations in the postsocialist transition society. But as it happens on long period fieldwork, one has plenty of time to learn about other spheres of the local life as well. Since I have always been interested in music, I was eager to see what the local music culture looked like. By the time I met local DJ-s, artists and promoters, made friends in the music scene, and visited many local clubs and other music involved events. I think, out of routine I always took notes and after returning from the field work, I possessed a solid amount of field notes about the Sakha music culture. These notes and my observations are the source for this article.

The Republic of Sakha is the largest subject of the Russian Federation covering more than 3,000,000 square kilometres. It is located in the eastern part of the country, belonging regionally to the Far East. The former Yakut Autonomous Socialist Soviet republic, contemporary Sakha declared its sovereignty in 1991 and changed its name to the Republic of Sakha. The population of the Republic of Sakha is quite small, reaching only one million. Approximately 55% of these are people called Russians (descendents of incomers and incomers from the European part of Russia). The titular ethnic group, the Turkic speaking Sakha, make up about 35% of the population. The rest are indigenous minorities, the so called Small Peoples of the North, including such groups as Evenki, Even, Yukagir and Dolgan. Population density is low, and most people are scattered over the vast

territory (Pakhomov 1999, Tichotsky, 2000). Therefore, the capital Yakutsk and industrial towns like Mirnyi and Neringri, where population density is high, are important centers for local social life. In fact, Yakutsk is the centre of every kind of cultural and social life for Sakha. In Yakutsk reside the national government, main theatres, national TV and radio, and main clubs.

In Russia, the Republic of Sakha is known as the region that produces 99% of Russian diamonds (Tichotsky 2000), but the wealth from this is distributed unequally. Southern and western Russian-dominated industrial towns are wealthier: people receive higher wages and have more social guarantees. The Sakha people and indigenous minorities, who live mainly in rural areas, in smaller non-industrial towns or in the capital Yakutsk, have smaller incomes on the average, with the exception of the so-called 'new Sakha' (*sanga sakha* in Sakha or *novye yakuty* in Russian). These 'new Sakha' are mostly people working for governmental structures, big state companies, or they are businessmen. The population is also divided along ethnic lines, with most of the indigenous population adverse to the newcomers who have better jobs and wages. This informal ethnic enmity has been decreasing in recent years along with the improvement of the general standard of living. However, in the cultural sense and in the context of the Republic of Sakha we can still speak about two separate communities, centred on their own language media, music, books and schools (see Ventsel 2004a, Ventsel 2004b).

Consumerism and urban culture in general have rarely been researched in the Russian context, especially in Siberia. There are some works that discuss music culture in Russian cities, but they are limited to the metropolises of western Russia (Cushman 1995; Pilkington 1994; Pilkington 1999). Nevertheless, new generations of scholars, working in Siberia and interested in music (Ventsel 2004a), sports games (Krist 2004) and other aspects of urban life are emerging. Unfortunately, consumption has not been a topic of studies conducted among the indigenous and newcomer populations to the east of the Ural Mountains. However, this is not comparable with studies on popular culture in other regions of the world. So-called urban studies, linking music, consuming and

identity with each other have gained attention since the publication of works of the Birmingham-based Centre of Cross-Cultural Studies (see Hall and Jefferson 1986). Many theoretical works in urban studies have focused on music—linking it with resistance, consuming, ethnicity and identity (Burke 1978; Cawelti 1990; Connell and Gibson 2003; Frith 1996; Fuller 1998). In time, solid data has been accumulated on youth in urban environments and their lifestyle related to music, consuming, and politics based on studies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America (e.g. Akindes 2002; Brusila 2002; Bryson 1996; Chye and Konk 1996; Friedman and Weiner 1999; Toop 1992).

History of Sakha popular music

Sakha and non-Sakha people have always had music as part of their culture. Not only is the main national epos of Sakha, *Olonkho*, performed by singing, music as a leisure activity, entertainment, and accompaniment to rituals has always been present in the region (Safronov 2000; Vinokurova 1994). In the Soviet Union, the state declared great interest and provided support for maintaining and developing the culture of the “backward” groups that also included the Siberian indigenous peoples. This policy was applied by establishing village and town clubs—so-called Houses of Culture—and organising folklore practicing groups, teams of national sport, arts and groups engaged in handicraft. Not only the Sakha, but all minority groups had such groups in their villages and often more than one group focused on singing and dancing the folk songs and dances in their own language. During the Soviet period, imitating Russians and other ethnic groups of the state, the Sakha established and developed their own popular music culture. Since the 1960s, Sakha have had their own light music, similar to the entertainment music of the period. The artists—Arkadii Alekseev, Pter Toborukov, Marina Popova—are still remembered and loved today. To describe this kind of music, the Russian term *estrada* has been used. Less is known about the Evenki, Yukagir etc. *estrada* music and I doubt that there were ever any serious attempts to create light music in indigenous minority languages. The main obstacle was and is, to my opinion, the fact that most non-Sakha groups in the region switched to Sakha or Russian language after the introduction of compulsory school education. In western Sakha, Sakha language was in general used among all ethnic groups centuries ago already (see Ventsel 2005:chapter 8). In addition, there was always entertainment music produced by the local, rapidly increasing Russian population in the Russian

language. These artists recorded their songs at the local radio station while there were only a few records with the Sakha entertainment music released during the Soviet time. Thus, the native pop music was consumed mainly at live concerts or via the local radio and only a small portion of the music circulated among people on tapes and cassettes reproduced at homes.

The collapse of the Soviet Union changed this. Bars, clubs and discos mushroomed out of nowhere and within a decade established a permanent place in people's lives. Music became more important and visible. While there were new social spaces to consume it in, there were also other reasons for this. With the appearance of a private economy, private radio stations were established. Most of these played only Russian and Western music, but in 1996 the radio station of Victoria Sakhalyy was established, playing mainly Sakha music with the whole program run in the Sakha language. Another radio station that plays much Sakha music, especially older music, is the local state-owned radio NVK. With the appearance of places to consume music and numerous radio channels to transfer music, more musicians appeared. In fact, music became for young rural artists and musicians a means to leave their villages and set a foot in Yakutsk, as I have discussed in a previous article (Ventsel 2004b).

In time, various music styles developed, targeting different groups among the local population. The abovementioned *estrada* is a music style based on the melodies of the 1960s and 1970s dance music and is often performed by mature singers for the overwhelmingly “older” audience. Rock is another music genre practiced in Sakha. The first Sakha rock group, Dapsy, was established in the 1970s. They have maintained their leading position but the number of Sakha rock groups has multiplied since the 1980s. Rock music could be roughly divided into two types. There is Chris Rea-like dance rock music, popular among all age groups. Then there is the so-called shamanic rock, like Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin-influenced progressive rock with elements of Sakha traditional music (folk melodies, use of mouth harps and other traditional instruments) and wearing stylised Sakha folk costumes onstage (Tsolbon, Aital). The shamanic rock is more appreciated among older students and Sakha intellectuals and is also known in Russian metropolises like Moscow and St Petersburg and even abroad among world music circuits.

The “youthful” part of Sakha music is *popsa* which means in Russian, “pop music.”

Popsa is the average disco-pop, influenced by similar Russian and Western music. The salience of this cheap computer-produced music has increased since MTV launched its Russian programme where more than half of the music played is Russian. Active in the *popsa*-style are both male (Igor) and female (Varia Ammanatova) solo artists and boy (X-Up) and girl groups (Maxima). *Popsa* artists tend to be younger than *estrada* and rock artists, and their main audience is teenagers and young adults, and in cities mainly high school pupils and university students. The TV presentations of these artists are colourful and trendy, imitating Russian pop stars and foreign artists from the MTV.

The fourth music genre in Sakha is folk music. Folk musicians are not only those who are active at village Houses of Culture, but there are also many academically educated artists, especially singers who, among other styles, perform traditional music. Folk music is even more in demand abroad than at home and, therefore, established folk musicians travel a lot, visiting folk music festivals all over the world.

One particularity of the Sakha music is the lack of strict limits between genres. Not only do the best artists perform in all styles and can be very successful in this (Valia Romanova, Saina), but in the Sakha music scene there is no polarisation between rock and pop music, like we see in the West. Therefore, the audiences of artists can overlap—just as adults or seniors can enjoy the performance of a disco singer so can young people visit *estrada* concerts or drop in on a folk or rock festival.

Along with the increase of the salience of music for listeners and artists, local music industry developed. In the Soviet period almost all Sakha singers and musicians were cultural workers working in theatres or Houses of Culture. Their music was subordinated to a planned industry as any other field of Soviet life. Thus, all artists had a new program every year, approved by the council of arts (*khudosestvennyi soviet* in Russian) of their company, the plan determining how many concerts and tours with completely new content or repeating parts of old programs they were obliged or allowed to perform. According to these annual programs, the theatre or club financed the artists, paying the salary and for costumes, travel costs, costs of the background band, etc. Recording facilities were scarce. As my informants told me, in Yakutsk during the Soviet era there were very few possibilities to record music—only in provisional studios of local theatres or in the radio station.

After the collapse of Socialism, non-state-owned music business slowly emerged. When I conducted my fieldwork in 2000-2001 in the Republic of Sakha, a remarkable number of singers and musicians still worked for the Theatre of Light Entertainment (*Teatr Estrada*), although they were no longer strictly tied to a program and performed much outside of their theatre jobs. But there were many musicians who either worked somewhere else (one guitarist I knew was a security guard in the hotel and a police officer, one singer worked also as a journalist, and so forth) to earn extra money to finance their music career or who tried to earn money only by performing. Also, many independent promoters and producers appeared who organised concerts and tried to earn money with this. And, last but not least, there was a record company – Duoraan Records (*duoraan* ‘echo’ in Sakha)—that since 1998, issues all kinds of Sakha music from old Communist songs to upcoming pop artists. The CEO of the record company Pyökka Pötryöp (his Sakha name) or Petka Petrov (Russian) told me that he established the company out of necessity: he is a singer himself and had real difficulties with recording and publishing his music.

During my fieldwork the Sakha music business changed due to the appearance of one young man—Eduard ‘Edik’ Gavrilov. He used to work for Russian MTV in Moscow and decided to use his experience in Sakha music business. First, he started to produce expensive and colourful videos for the songs and artists he wanted to promote. While before his time the average Sakha music video showed the artist either in studio or in nature performing his or her song with a minimum movement, he introduced a more “advanced” approach of producing videos. By chance, I was able to attend the presentation of the first of such videos, a song ‘Dzol’ (‘luck’ in Sakha) by Varia Ammanatova. This video was full of effects and fashionably dressed youths in the background.

Edik started to produce videos for young artists and groups he wanted to promote. To make glamorous videos he cooperated with well known and talented stylists, photographers, fashion designers and computer graphics designers. It was easy, because in Yakutsk the graphics artists, stylists and so forth did not have many opportunities to exercise their art: local TV did not need so many specialists of this kind: the few local youth magazines were black and white with poor quality, and graphics design for Sakha enterprises was functional only. Thus, music videos quickly became not only a source of extra income but also

means for artistic expression for the local young creative elite.

Edik's attempt to start making music videos was also supported by developments in the local television station. Although there was no private TV in Sakha during my fieldwork period, the state television NVK TV initiated many programs that were oriented to the youth. Both in the Sakha and Russian languages, there were youth programmes that invited well-known artists to be interviewed. These programmes also reported on the main youth-related cultural events, such as festivals or big concerts. Beside artists, fashion designers were often invited to the programmes and fashion itself was often discussed in these shows. As a musical interlude, hosts of these programs played music videos and when attractive Sakha music videos appeared, they received massive airplay.

Young Sakha elite and fashion

In terms of the young Sakha elite I want to mention the fact that when the musical scene in Yakutsk was overwhelmingly ethnically divided and most clubs were either for the ethnic Sakha or the Russian, people who produced music and music videos were ethnically mixed groups. As I mentioned in the previous section, people from many professions were involved with the musical scene. These people, of both sexes, were the ones that filled VIP-zones on public events and the line between the common audience and the 'special persons' can be one marker signifying that one belongs to the local elite. In addition, local elite included people whose life and work was covered by the press and who had access to closed parties organised occasionally by promoters or politicians. These parties were famous in the whole republic because of their exclusivity. However, having attended a few of these events (due the fact that I was a foreigner and a DJ) I did not find any big differences compared to parties of the so-called common people, only that most guests were well-known artists, musicians, TV and radio people and so on.

Being part of the local elite brought also the obligation to be exclusively and well-dressed in public. In an earlier article (Ventsel 2004b) I argue that although Sakha artists often appeared in public well-dressed and in the company of local wealthy business people, in fact they actually lived sparsely, in small overcrowded apartments with their parents and spent all their money on new stage costumes and playbacks. Many local VIPs did not lead a significantly better life. Even Edik, who was one of the top promoters and event

organisers in the country, lived in a small one-room flat he shared with his sister.

However, all these young people did everything to create the impression of being the 'rich and beautiful' of the numerous soap operas broadcasted daily on Russian TV. They spent a big part of their income on clothes to constantly look up-to-date fashion-wise. During my fieldwork in Yakutsk and in a few other cities, small shops for western top brands like Mexx, Colors of Benetton, Diesel, Dr. Martens and others were opened, where all prices were one-fourth to one-third higher than in western Europe for similar models. And after the shops were opened, it was common for young journalists, musicians, photographers, etc. to spend one-third of their monthly salary on a new Mexx shirt or rare and fashionable sneakers. This consumer rush did not stop with that. There are many Sakha students living in metropolises, especially in Moscow, and they were asked to buy clothes and accessories like sunglasses not available in Yakutsk itself.

Being well-dressed signifies many important things. First of all, it signals the person's wealth. And indeed, most of the young Sakha elite can afford more than their "average" co-citizens. Thus, for them spending time in expensive cafes, clubs or restaurants is more affordable than for the wider population. And since dressing well is a sign of wealth it shows by itself a higher status, making investing into clothes an obligation in the name of prestige. Fashion consciousness is also a sign of social status (or as one my informants told me, 'I have to spend much money on clothes, otherwise people won't believe that I am a journalist.'). It shows that a person possesses know-how, the newest information about trends in the "outside world" and has access to commodities not available in every shop. As the quote of my informant proves, dressing well is linked to prestige.

It is impossible to be part of the local elite if one dresses incorrectly. In time I noticed that there are quite strict rules about what signifies "nice clothes." For instance, women were extremely reluctant to show themselves at festive events in jeans, arguing that nice tailor-made trousers or a longer skirt are necessary. In the summer, when I turned up in so-called casual wear to all festive events, I was the only one wearing short pants and every other man was wearing long expensive jeans or even suits. I noticed that people who ignore such dress code—like a few artists I met—are often described as "vulgar," "strange," or even "rude." So there was peer pressure to follow the dress code as a sign of social coherence.

Appearance of pop stars, prestige and consumption

Since Eduard "Edik" Gavrilov started producing music videos, the looks of artists, dancers and background staff in those clips changed radically. Edik supported mostly young *popsa* artists, and young people were the target group for his productions. Edik was not merely a calmly calculating businessman; he told me a few times that, for instance, videos are for him also a challenge as products of art and his organisational skills. But Edik also learned at MTV that music videos are first of all means to promote music and attract an audience. To do that, he had to bring in not only new technical effects but pay more attention to the artists' dress. Good examples of the changes in video aesthetics are two videos—"Naraana," by the artist Igor, and "Eder Saas," ("Youth in Sakha") by the successful boy group Xupp. In both videos all participants were dressed according to the hippest fashion of the season.

As is the case with hip-hop culture (Toop 1992), Sakha music videos set and spread fashion standards and formulated what was seen as proper clothing for the season. I will elaborate on this below. Another purpose of the music video in Sakha is to reach wider acceptance among the audience for the music by showing that artists are the same kind of young consumption-interested persons as listeners. For producers, this means that listeners identify themselves with artists and are more eager to spend their money on cassettes and concert entrance fees. But it means also that many listeners try to dress themselves as their icons, i.e. it motivates people from the audience to buy clothes, shoes and accessories.

These two sides of dealing with fashion go together. Buying new clothes is not the privilege of the local young elite only. All young people in the republic want to buy new clothes and dress according to the latest fashion. In Sakha, I was very surprised to observe that, even in the remotest settlements, young people constantly renewed their wardrobe and spent huge sums of their own and their parents' money on the latest fashions. To clarify what is so amazing in buying clothes, the reader must understand that the further away a village is from the capital, the higher the prices, and lower the people's income. In 2000/2001 the average adult's income per month in villages on the coast of the Arctic ocean was less than USD 100, compared to approximately USD 150-200 in Yakutsk, but the prices in villages were two to three times higher than in Yakutsk [Ventsel, 2005 #926]. Despite the fact that they had less money

and fewer clothes brought by traders that were not only more expensive but also of poorer quality, village youth expressed the same passion for new fashionable items. Moreover, it was an unwritten law in any settlement I visited to go out of the house only when dressed according to the season's fashion. For example, I often saw girls washing carpets on the boat bridge dressed as if they were going to a disco. When the weather got warmer during the first spring days in May, young people put on their best clothes and took walks on river banks or main streets of villages to chat with friends and, of course, to show themselves off.

In Yakutsk and other cities, orientation to current fashion was of course easier, due the cheaper prices, more available goods and because of better access to information, through TV and journals, but just as intense. I would argue that following current trends and dressing up was even more visible in Yakutsk. One reason for this was that most young students in the town originated from villages, and were now in town without the supervision of their families, more eager to spend money on new clothes. This newfound freedom far away from home gave the students also another freedom: the freedom to party, meaning visiting clubs, bars and open-air events—which in turn brought newcomers to a social environment where trendy dress was linked to prestige, so that there were additional pressures to consume.

I have already mentioned that artists as public persons were trendsetters for these young people. Sakha artists were overwhelmingly people of rural background who came to Yakutsk either to study or to start their musician's career. And the fact that they had become famous meant that they had managed to climb up the social ladder. For young students, who were not in a high socially valued position, artists personified the fact that raising one's social status from the rural girl or boy to a beloved and respected singer or musician is possible, in general that it was possible to join the local young elite. One way to raise one's social status was to show attention to changes of fashion, and that one can afford it. Moreover, looking good was necessary to contact people from the elite and eventually be admitted to their circuits. There was always the possibility of meeting a singer, musician, promoter or photographer from one's home district or even home village and to establish or renew contact with that person. But to be befriended by someone belonging to the local elite one also needed to "look right" (*vygliadil pravilno* in Russian), as one of my informants put it.

When a newcomer started to move around in the club and bar scene, he discovered that to be respected he needed some "know how" about proper dressing and behaviour. Being dressed in "country style" brought low prestige, less attention from the opposite sex, fewer friends, etc. As a friend told me, "Country youths, when they come to the city, are easily distinguishable. But they learn soon how to dress and be smart." They start buying clothes and accessories, first cheap Chinese products sold on local markets, and when possible, they move on to Western original brands available in boutiques.

In the situation where apparel was directly linked to social prestige, wearing the right "clothes" became important. The clothing public persons wore had much weight by channelling the consumption habits of young people. In videos and TV shows youths could see current trends and find inspiration for updating their own wardrobe. For singers, fashion designers, musicians, journalists and other people of the local elite, TV shows, concerts and music videos were a means to demonstrate their sophistication in current fashion trends and confirm their social status. Thus, there is pressure in all social groups from top to bottom to look fashionable. The local elite were forced to spend much money on expensive clothes to show and confirm their social status; young people tried to copy them at any cost to have higher prestige among their peers, but also to have a chance to socialize with the local elite and be accepted to their midst.

Discussion

The question of what makes people consume and what choices people make when consuming is, and has always been, one of the central topics in urban and subculture studies. Adorno and Horkheimer (2001) were convinced that all habits are created and manipulated by the "culture industry" and that the individualism in the post-War world is just an illusion that facilitates the capitalist in selling goods. Scholars from the Birmingham School challenge this view by opposing popular culture to the mass culture and saying that the first reflects people's choices by choosing from commodities available what they like and need. Having individual tastes, different social groups create their own aesthetic and dress code that gives them subcultural identity (Hall and Jefferson 1986). In this paper I do not discuss consumption on the subcultural level but instead on the mainstream level. However, the nature of the process is similar to that in a subculture: young people in the Republic of Sakha consumed certain

clothes, footwear and accessories following the group taste that linked them to other people in their peer group. Young people copied the style of their idols and the prestigious. I have travelled throughout Russia and noticed that there are regional fashions where trends were slightly different in every region and big city. Moreover, the difference in what is fashionable was often a matter of discussion on the local level. In Sakha, in newspapers or on TV, there are often interviews with students who have studied in other regions of Russia or even abroad. And the question always present in these interviews was "What is in fashion there? What do young people wear in Moscow, New York, Vladivostok and other cities?" Young people were well aware that in other regions people do have a different notion of "trendy." For example, I read an interview with a young female student who studied in Vladivostok. To the question about current fashion in Vladivostok, she said that the youth fashion there was much more conservative, i.e. it was not common to wear Dr. Martens boots that were very popular at that time among young girls in Sakha. In this sense, the local fashion of Russian regions is a matter of group choice, and people in the region are well aware about the existence of "other fashions."

One topic in urban studies is the role of media in affecting people's strategies of consumption. Already Gramsci (1999) noted the importance of the press manipulating peoples' opinion. Gramsci was interested in how the ruling class spreads its morals and world view, while in urban studies the importance of media is discussed from the perspective of how media creates common identities and how these identities enforce people to consume certain commodities. Dick Hebdige argues that the "style" of youth subcultures is also created in the media space by creating and spreading "codes" which recipients "decode" and adapt into their identity (1979).

The same pattern works when we discuss consumption habits of Sakha youths. Media—TV programs and music videos—are encoded by the artists but also by promoters, stylists, photographers, designers and other people involved in the production process. These mediums present to youths a blueprint of how a fashion conscious person must dress herself when she wants to be 'up to date,' i.e. among the respected. I argue that copying fashion from what they see on stage and on TV, young people decode it through the prism of prestige because being dressed "properly" can make people (at least mentally) feel close to the elite. This is how Hebdige links "source" and

"receiver": there must be a meaningful message that is transferred, but it does not mean that both sides understand signals in completely the same way.

In the larger context, knowing how to dress not only makes a person respected in the disco circuit, it gives a person a good chance to become one of the young elite by getting the attention of promoters, journalists or other people, and ending up at one of the closed insider parties. In Yakutsk and especially in smaller settlements, everyone knows somebody of the young elite or someone who knows somebody from the circuits of the elite. Another important thing is that fashion conscious dressing also signals to friends, co-students and others that one has established a relationship with the elite. Thus, Friedman's statement that consumption is driven by fantasy (1995:168-169) is only partly true. Fantasy, undoubtedly, played a large role in motivating young people to spend huge amounts of their income on clothes; the fantasy being one of being part of the urban scene and at the top of it. But Friedman is right, stating that consumption is linked to power (1995:172). According to Bourdieu's concept of taste, the right clothes and the knowledge of how to choose them are also cultural capital. This cultural capital can, on the one hand, symbolise a person's affiliation with the local young elite. On the other hand, clothes can provide someone from the average audience not only prestige among the peer group but also access to the elite circuit.

Simon Frith says in his classic writing that music is leisure, entertainment. In another work he states that music is an aesthetic activity that creates a common identity among the audience. But music is also a commodity, an object of consumption. Moreover, development of music has created a complex form of consumption where music is only one and sometimes the less important commodity. Bloom (1990) argues that there are many aspects that form a mass culture. There are forms of mass media that developed through the technical progress and that were able to raise and channel in people the desire to consume. There must also be production to satisfy that desire and the urban consuming audience. In Sakha there were both media and audience, and Chinese and Western industry took care of providing commodities to consume. Identity is based on shared taste not only in subcultures (Hebdidge 1979; Willis 1990), as I have shown above. The common identity of the Sakha mainstream audience is based also on shared taste and a concept of prestige. Time and

development of means of communication, and heavy movement of young people between the city and villages brought urban commercial mass culture to rural settlements, creating in this way an overwhelmingly widespread youth identity. All these aspects together formed a larger mass culture in the rural and urban settlements of the Republic of Sakha.

Conclusion

The collapse of the Soviet Union brought many changes. On the one hand, for many people it meant a decrease in the standard of living. For other people it meant the opening up of possibilities to consume all these commodities that were unavailable before. With the development of privatization, new clubs, shops, bars, private radio stations and magazines have been opened. These changes in people's lives reached even the remotest regions of Russia, Siberian towns and villages.

Consuming has become an important part of the life of young people in the Republic of Sakha. In this paper I showed that being fashion conscious and spending a lot of money on clothes, footwear and accessories is an activity with social implications. In the situation where financial resources are quite limited, consuming for social reasons can become especially important. I showed that fashionable clothes can convey many things: social position, a strategy to increase one's social position, and support to one's identity. In the context of Sakha I demonstrated how music and visual expressions of music in various forms of media can play a central role in channelling consumption and setting standards.

Notes

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