

# CULTURAL MARGINALITY AND ITS SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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**Abstract.** The article is devoted to exam the problem of cultural marginality. Due to the fact that nowadays, during the formation of new social forces and relations, many societies, including Kazakhstan's, more-less experience a vacuum of values and norms. Marginal individuals in the conditions of new landmarks formation are lacking the stable social orientations; it is very hard for them to identify themselves with sufficient certainty. A marginal state characterizes by the fact that a human, having left one culture, leaving it on the outer plane of his being, does not fit into a culture new for him, does not come to it, although he lives in the presence of its innumerable displays. The individual is in the stage of mastering new cultural features, but he cannot yet master them completely. This is the marginality as the natural paradox for being transitional, borderline social and cultural status. Usually, it is precisely in transition eras that the process of marginalization intensifies sharply and expands in its scale. People feel insecure and socially unstable. In this regard, the purpose of this article is to thoroughly exam the problem of marginality. In writing the article, we used the methods of cognitive-evaluative analysis, the methodology of cross-cultural-psychological research and the principle of the historical traditions unity. Based on the research of marginality problem, we conclude that the personality absorbs single and diverse, whole and detailed, universal and individual. In this regard, the problem of marginalization should be resolved through personal self-determination. This article was written by virtue of the works of various philosophers, sociologists and educators who studied the problems of marginality. The article offers a number of recommendations for solving the problem of marginality in the new realities.

**Keywords:** anomie, marginalization, marginality, marginal, culture, traditions, identity, globalization.

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## Introduction

Marginalization and the reality itself behind this conception relate not only to the individual, but also to entire

cultures when they enter a period of transition, when cultural orientations change drastically. The characteristic of the cultural situation in the newly formed independent states on the Eurasian

expanse (the territory of the former USSR) also lies in the fact that the major features or bases, traditional for the cultural space, do not yet exist or no longer exist (which is practically the same) in the sphere of actual cultural meaning. These features or bases must be formed together with the bounds of future cultural activities.

Currently, according to the definition of the French scientist E. Durkheim, during the formation of new social forces and relations, many societies, including Kazakhstan's, more or less experience a vacuum of values and norms, or so-called legal and moral "anomie" (literally – "lack of norms"). This is a state of society, when old social norms and values cease to function, and new ones are still have not been established. Anomie also characterizes the state of an individual with sudden and painful changes in social conditions. In general, anomie reflects the status of personal and social consciousness associated with the value system's decomposition being a result of the social crisis.

Under conditions of anomie, marginal individuals are lacking the stable social orientations; it is very hard for them to identify themselves with sufficient certainty and clarity. They are standing on the borderline between two cultures – old and new. In the borderline state a human, having left one culture, leaving it on the outer plane of his being, does not fit into a culture new for him, does not come to it, although he lives in the presence of its innumerable displays. The previous personal social and cultural characteristics are lost, though are not completely wasted: the individual is in the stage of mastering new cultural features, but he cannot yet master them completely. This is the marginality as the natural paradox for being transitional, borderline social and cultural status.

Usually, it is precisely in transition eras that the process of marginalization intensifies sharply and expands in its scale. During that time, people feel insecure and socially unstable.

At the same time, the marginal individual is characterized by ethnic elimination and ethnic nihilism. Being at the turn of two or more cultures, eager to be a member of several ethnic groups at once and not being able to realize the worldview of any of them in a life situation, that individual suffers from duality, internal contradiction and tragic discord with himself due to the impossibility of combining the allegedly incompatible cultural features. However, marginality is a widespread social phenomenon associated with a deep crisis of any identity, with the destruction of the previous system of identifications, with a breakdown of the objective social order, its norms, principles and values. Human becomes marginal in a situation of simultaneous and one-dimensional existence in the context of opposing social and cultural requirements. Therefore, marginality is being rightly perceived as cultural inertia, overcoming the environment.

Today there are three conceptual directions in the study of marginality: cultural, structural and role-based. Cultural marginality refers to the processes of cross-cultural contacts and assimilation, structural marginality describes cases of political, social and economic powerlessness of deprived of voting rights (or disadvantaged) groups within society, role marginality arises in the case of an unsuccessful correlation of oneself, one's social position with a positive reference group; with the choice of a role that contains elements of two roles, etc. In the context of the development of various subcultures, countercultures, elements of transformation in cultural marginality are observed, so the study of cultural marginality is important not only for understanding the phenomena of culture proper, but also for a deeper understanding of the general laws of development of the entire human culture.

The marginality of the individual in the period we are experiencing is a symptom

of the social crisis itself and the lack of comprehension of its social displays. Known, that the situation of uncertainty enhances the individual's needs for self-identification based on certain undoubted principles. However, the current stage of development of the post-Soviet society, including Kazakhstan's, is characterized by the absence of consolidating society values, senses and images (for example, the image of a morally-oriented, freely self-determined personality in its socially significant ideals and tasks). Everyone has to develop these moral foundations of social existence on one's own account and risk.

“...What is an identity crisis?

Its essence is the rejection of the “self” from the side of “I’am”. This rejection may not be completely open; “I’am” that despises its “self” may try to deceive itself with feverish activities that, like a senseless journey, have only one purpose – to divert the attention of “I’am”. To make the crisis explicit, to admit the further impossibility of identifying oneself with one's “self” is an important step to overcome the crisis of identity” [1, p. 113].

In other words, the matter is not only in society with its external crises and not only in the fact that it throws out a man, making him marginal. It is also in the fact that within the individual himself there is a struggle, a split, an attempt to displace one of his own “I”-s on sideways, background, to marginalize it.

Nowadays, the marginal is not so much a marginal (a person standing “on the brink” or “on the edge”), but a fragmented personality, disintegrated into many unrelated displays. Unless, of course, proviso that this man has given way to the destructive influence of modern mass culture and lifestyle.

## Methods

The use of the theoretical culturological concept of intercultural communication as a condition for the dialogue of cultures

has sufficient positive potential for the study of dynamically developing societies. It is a special way of seeing complex social problems that arise in the process of social reconstruction. The multidimensionality of this phenomenon makes it possible to study the various processes of acculturation, identification, occurring both at the local level, and, in our opinion, interfaith relations and, in general, in human relations. The impact of the globalized world with its mass culture accustoms a human to view the surroundings not by their own impressions, but the emotions caused by virtual (and often falsified) images. This impact changes not only the content, but also transforms consciousness itself from sustained to “mosaic” or “faceted”, reducing the possibilities of critical thinking.

The well-known philosopher and culturologist Aleksandr Dugin in his article-interview “Homo novissimus” published in the “Chelovek” (Human) magazine rightly points out: “... Earlier, a human's identity followed from a tradition that postulated the meaning lied behind. Then, the modern that subverts tradition, proposed its own largely nihilistic liberal anthropology freeing a man from ties with traditional identity parameters. Yet this nihilistic pathos has also used up its “evident” potential. The process of freeing a human from the influence of the inhuman has been finished in general, but pure emptiness and uncertainty, a post-modern game of ephemeral instantaneous principally imputed identities remain.

Having freed himself from the identity imposed by the traditional anthropology, at the same time a human has lost his wholeness and holism. Today he split. Now he is one thing, in a minute – another. Hereof the output of culture stylistics – television (chaotic switching of channels as a special form of contemplation – attention stops on a fragment, a vivid image), drugs – a man sinks in a series of incoherent but saturated impulses, without contextualization” [2, p. 100].

You can say that modern man has radically transformed his universal abilities. The human of de-constructivism era is no longer a microcosm, as in ancient Greece, and is no longer a “presence”, as it was in Martin Heidegger. Rather, it goes by the term “absence”, more exactly, by the fact that the human’s universality has now appeared as his breakup, destruction from within, as a variety of masks. Personality lost its face, its own self-identity.

In the world of “semblances”, “replica counterparts”, a human himself becomes a “simulacrum”. Though a replica copies the original or even a replica itself, it would seem to be the almost complete similarity to the original position, be identical to it. However, it does not happen in reality. In a secondary culture, which is a system of simulacrums, replicas are not identical to the original, and individuals are not identical to their human essence. The fact that the original spirit of the copied appearance is lost, especially when it occurs constantly and in a different progression explains everything in the process of copying.

As Arlette Farge points out, marginality is now experiencing a very peculiar moment. Considering all undesirable elements as victims of marginality, society feels the destabilization of piers fundamentally shaken from within by all economic processes. “Not only strangers are now in circulation, but also mostly their own ... Rejection appears as a product of society’s disintegration, affected by the crisis. Marginal is no longer some kind of an outsider or leper. He is similar to everyone, identical to them, but at the same time, he is a cripple among his own kind – a man with cut off roots, torn to pieces in the very heart of his native culture and environment” [3, p. 143].

This statement was made at late 80’s of the last century. Then, what can we say about the nowadays, when these processes have escalated multiple times?

In social psychology, a condition called by researches as “culture shock” is well

known. Its essence lies in the conflict of old, customary and new cultural norms and orientations. The old ones are usual to the society that the individual has left, and the new ones represent the society he joined. In other words, culture shock is a conflict of two cultures within the consciousness and psyche of the individual.

In the same way, “returnees” to their historical homeland sometimes feel themselves like outsiders in a country that, as they felt for many years, was once their homeland. For example, some “oralmans” – immigrants who returned to Kazakhstan from China, Mongolia and other countries, where they lived as part of the Kazakh diaspora. This phenomenon has received the name in the scientific literature as “reversed culture shock”.

Frankly speaking, those researchers who assess marginality sharply negatively, the concept of “marginal” was been identified, willingly or unwittingly, with the concept of an “outsider”. This is not entirely correct, as will be seen from further conclusions. Moreover, the concept of an “outsider” implies that a man was been thrown outwards the borders of his social and cultural niche, while the concept of “marginal” means a man living on the border of two or more social and cultural worlds. Firstly, we are talking about the elimination of the individual and its isolation from the “mother culture”, and in the second – about the dual position of the individual, he deprived of his culture but not completely, and at the same time he is not completely entered another new culture for him.

What about marginality in culture, can we consider it as a purely negative phenomenon? Obviously, there is only one radical way: to establish bans on overstepping the framework and boundaries of the traditional culture currently established. Although historical practice proves that taboos and prohibitions never had and cannot have creative potential in general. Consequently,

the ban on marginality is not only impossible in modern conditions. Even with the assumption of its reality, it cannot serve as a source for resolving the essential contradiction in cultural marginality phenomenon.

However, today there is an understanding and interpretation of marginality as a positive phenomenon. Many researchers believe, that only through a marginal chronotope, an individual and a whole culture can achieve truly creative results.

## Results

Argumentation for this thesis lies in expanding our perception by leaving the bosom of our native culture and entering into the adaptation process for the new one. We notice and see things that split and at the same time bring these two cultures together. Thus, we master a wide range of new cultural rules and value systems, and as a result, our culturally induced life experience is expanding vastly.

To understand this important factor better, it is necessary to consider thoroughly the process of ethnic identification: how it occurs, whether ethnic identity changes in the process of a human's life, etc.

Taking the scheme of E. Giddens as a basis, the process of identifying an actor with an ethnic group follows by the next scenario: a human is born into a family where each member is a representative of a particular ethnic group. Hereby, a just born human is included into the ethnic area, surrounded by objects with a certain value for this or another ethnos and by a certain language native to a distinct ethnic group. I.e., a human exists in an area filled with cultural artifacts valuable for an ethnic group.

When a man grows, his world expands its horizons. Therefore, the value space also expands. A huge number of institutions are included in the process of his socialization,

claiming to be ethnic ones (such as school, the environment, religious institutions, family as the most important institution of ethnic identity formation, and many others). Thereby, it is the institutions that offer the value-normative basis for the formation of ethnic identity. This is happening everywhere and all the time. However, the existence of ethnic marginals proves the fact that a human is directly involved in the formation of his identity, since the structure of values and value orientations offered by the institutions of socialization are not mastered by everyone in the form it is offered.

Having analyzed the possibility of using the structuration theory to study the phenomenon of ethnic identification, we can make the following conclusion. Ethnic marginals are the most active agents that transform ethnicity. Therefore, the structuration of the ethnos is mainly due to the marginals that transform the rules, resources and rituals. The transformation of ethnicity occurs under the influence of ethnic marginals. A vivid example of creative marginality is the work of the outstanding Kazakh poet Olzhas Suleimenov. His artistic, social and cultural achievements would have been inconceivable without the assimilation of cultures adjacent to the Kazakh culture and even completely different from it. For example, a thorough linguistic research "The Language of Writing" was impossible without sufficient knowledge of various Turkic, Slavic and European languages [4, p. 15].

Another rather vivid and characteristic example of positive marginality is Bakhyt Kenzheyev, descendant of Kazakh ethnicity, living in Canada and writing poetry in Russian.

In his recent interview, to the question why he calls the experience of emigrant life "good" and "generally positive" and what kind of experience it is, B. Kenzheyev replied, "My answer will be trivial. This experience is life, broadening one's

horizons. Nothing else. I believe that the future, the 21st century in general, belongs to young generation, I call them international people, who get their education abroad and who then live either abroad or in Russia. It would be better if they lived in Russia. They are very helpful. The main thing is that Pushkin had never been abroad but passionately dreamed about it. If he went there, he would be even better. Just the experience of someone else's life, someone else's society. It is like speaking a foreign language. It is just useful" [5, p. 10].

To say in general, in different countries – from Denmark to Kazakhstan, there is plenty of poets existing within one language. Some of them create new poetics and largely determine the movement of modern literature [6, p. 25].

So what, in this case, really happens to the personality: its "gradation" or the formation of a universally evolved human? What is "struggling" in the phenomenon of cultural marginality – the tendency to destroy human culture or, on the contrary, the need for a truly human attitude to the world?

From all above mentioned, both are expressed in the phenomenon of marginality. Accordingly, the scenarios for the development of the global modernity process include the expression of culture crisis, and at the same time – the need for proper human development and the revival of a genuine, spiritualized culture.

## Discussion

For the first time the term "marginality" was used in 1928 by the American sociologist Robert Ezra Park, one of the founders of the Chicago school, in his essay "Human Migration and the Marginal Man" [7, p. 882]. According to Park, a "marginal man" is an individual who stands on the border of two different, often conflicting cultures. A marginal personality, in his opinion, is a product of the natural cultural process expanding interaction of cultures.

Everett Stonequist supported and developed Park's idea in his monograph "Marginal Man" [8, p. 115]. The name of Stonequist is associated with the final consolidation and legitimation of the marginality concept. Stonequist's concept of a "marginal man" characterizes a social identity participating in a cultural conflict, an individual who stands at the edge of each of the cultures, but does not belong to any of them. Stonequist views the marginal man as a "key-personality" in cultural contacts.

A. Amirova (a Kazakh researcher of the problem of marginality) writes in this regard, "It should be noted, that according to R. Park, a marginal person is a man at the border of two cultures and two societies that will never completely fuse. As a result, he will never be accepted into a new society, staying as a man with split consciousness and a disordered psyche. While Stonequist believed, the adaptation process can lead to the formation of a personality with new features... This is an important point in a positive perspective of considering the marginality problems" [9, p 129].

Indeed, one can agree with A. Amirova that E. Stonequist is closer to a positive understanding of a marginal man. Although, both points of view reflect two different sides of the problem. A marginal personality, including a culturally marginal one, is never unambiguous and one-dimensional. This personality always has different hypostases, in different situations and social relationships and roles it shows its new sides. In this sense, a marginal personality should be assessed not only as passive and bifurcated, but as active, creative and integrative in the merits of two or more cultures [10, p. 338].

It is also impossible to assess marginality as something only negative and destructive for the reason that a man usually has a certain time interval to get used to and prepare for the transition to a new cultural environment or to new cultural realities. Western researchers (for example,

representatives of the Cardiff psychological school N. Ellemers [11, p. 161], A. Van Knippenberg [12, p. 1008], etc.) have long noticed this subtle psychological moment. When individuals or communities try to accept a new desired identity and at the same time, perhaps, reject the old one, at a certain level, the so-called “expected” or “anticipated” identity often appears. This is called “readiness” for changes.

In the conditions of transformation of mass man’s being and consciousness, the problem of preserving Homo sapiens, a humane man becomes urgent [13, p. 215].

Returning to the question of the cultural marginality’s axiology, it should be re-emphasized, that in itself it cannot be a source of either only positive or only negative displays.

According to A. R. Masalimova essentially universal cultural codes or a single social and cultural field is emerging during the era of modern globalization. Accordingly, the problem of intercultural communication obliges to reach a completely new level of its statement and solution. The unity of cultural codes either makes the question of intercultural communication meaningless, or requires it to be in different plane and new level, perhaps a deep psychological, cultural, ethical, or even noospheric one [14, p 176].

A marginal situation arises at the borders of different forms of social and cultural experience. It is always very tense and comes true in different ways practically. It can be a source of neuroses, demoralization, private and group forms of protest. At the same time, it is also a source of new perception and understanding of society, the Universe in general, and non-trivial forms of intellectual, artistic and religious creativity.

Speaking of the marginal, A. Farge tells, “He is similar to everyone, identical to them, but at the same time, he is a cripple among his own kind”. Here we are talking about so-called marginals of their own free will [15, p. 145]. Therefore, the evaluative

definition of cultural marginality will depend only on a man’s own choice, on how he sees and feels himself in conditions of cultural marginalities. Everything depends on the man himself, on his independent choice of his cultural identity.

As a rule, in the process of personal development, on individual life path, a man faces several stages or phases. At first, a human does not yet distinguish himself from the surrounding society and the usual culture and actually serves them. At the second stage, when a man realizes himself as a unique individual, he seems to step back from the social dimension of his being and goes into internal emigration. Here the danger of the aforementioned bifurcation, the loss of identity with the matrix culture arises: being alone with his dreams, a man falls for a hurtful state of psychological and social loneliness. Not always and not everyone reaches the third stage of life advancement, when, breaking free from a self-estranged state, an individual identifies himself with a deep, essential human origin, harmonizes his inner world and its outward demonstrations.

## Conclusion

Based on the performed analysis, the following summing conclusions are:

1. The problem of marginalization should be resolved as follows: the personality absorbs single and diverse, whole and detailed, universal and individual. Ideally, the confrontation between globalism and local cultures should be resolved through personal self-determination. Generally, a human can choose a uniform world if it seems convenient, or he can choose a pluralistic one. There is also a third possibility: a man as personality chooses the path of unity in diversity, i. e. becomes internally whole and one with other people, and externally creates privately unique works and cultural articles.

2. Man is a transcending being, i. e. is able to cross and outgrow any existing

frameworks. In this sense, the marginality phenomenon has not only negative, but also positive and creative significance. At present times, marked by radical transformations in various areas of life, it appears as a man's self-determination, as an opportunity to overcome crisis in global and local cultures.

3. In modern conditions, the growing role of ethnicity is a natural reaction to the so-called effect of uncertainty. Intolerance for uncertainty is a pronounced psychological trait of a human. The effect of uncertainty affects the reversibility-

irreversibility interaction of the socio-psychological triad: personality – ethnos – civilization. Yet, there are univocal signs that the identification of people goes beyond the state borders and the time is coming for the “we-are-identity” group at the level common to all humanity.

4. No culture exists by itself, in a confined space. The conditions of modern history dictate that today we are on the verge of giving birth to a new type of personality that will be social and psychological product of the mutual influence of different cultures.

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### **Вклад авторов**

К. А. Темиргалиев – осуществил разработку и формирование концепции исследования, сформулировал проблему исследования, произвел концептуализацию выводов.

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### **Contribution of authors**

K. A. Temirgaliev – development and formation of the research concept; formulation of the research problem; conceptualization of conclusions.

G. Zh. Jamaliyeva – analysis and revision of the text; preparation of the literary review; conceptualization of conclusions.



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**МӘДЕНИ МАРГИНАЛДЫЛЫҚ ЖӘНЕ ОНЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК САЛДАРЫ**

**Аңдатпа.** Мақала мәдени маргиналдылық мәселесін зерттеуге арналған. Қазіргі уақытта жаңа әлеуметтік күштер мен қатынастардың қалыптасуынан көптеген қоғамда, соның ішінде қазақстандық қоғамда қандай да бір дәрежеде құндылықтар мен нормалардың вакуумын сезінуде. Жаңа бағдарларды қалыптастыру жағдайындағы маргиналды тұлғалар тұрақты әлеуметтік бағдарлардан айырылады; оларды жеткілікті сенімділікпен анықтау өте қиын. Маргиналды мемлекет бір мәдениетті қалдырып, оны өзінің сыртқы жоспарында қалдырып, ол үшін жаңа мәдениетке сәйкес келмейтіндігімен сипатталады, бірақ ол өзінің сансыз көріністерінің қатысуымен өмір сүреді. Адам жаңа мәдени ерекшеліктерді игеру сатысында, бірақ оларды әлі де толық игере алмайды. Мұндағы маргиналдылық өтпелі, шекаралық әлеуметтік және мәдени мәртебенің табиғи парадоксы ретінде түсініледі. Әдетте, өтпелі кезеңдерде маргинализация процесі күрт күшейіп, ауқымы бойынша кеңейеді. Адамдар өздерін қорғалмаған және әлеуметтік тұрақсыз сезінеді. Осыған байланысты, осы мақаланың мақсаты маргиналдылық мәселесін мұқият қарастыру болып табылады. Мақала жазу кезінде біз танымдық-бағалау талдау әдістерін, мәдени-психологиялық зерттеулердің әдістемелік және тарихи дәстүрлердің бірлігі қағидаларын қолдандық. Маргиналдылық мәселесін зерттеу негізінде біз жеке тұлға біртұтас және әр түрлі, тұтас және егжей-тегжейлі, әмбебап және жеке тұлғаны қамтиды деп тұжырымдаймыз. Осыған байланысты маргинализация мәселесі жеке өзін-өзі анықтау арқылы шешілуі керек. Бұл мақала маргиналдылық мәселелерін зерттеген әртүрлі философтардың, әлеуметтанушылар мен мұғалімдердің еңбектері негізінде жазылған. Мақалада жаңа шындықтағы маргиналдылық мәселесін шешуге арналған бірқатар ұсыныстар бар.

**Тірек сөздер:** аномия, маргинализация, маргинальность, маргинал, культура, традиции, идентичность, глобализация.

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**КУЛЬТУРНАЯ МАРГИНАЛЬНОСТЬ И ЕЕ СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ПОСЛЕДСТВИЯ**

**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена исследованию проблемы культурной маргинальности. Из-за того, что в настоящее время формируются новые социальные силы и отношения, многие общества, в том числе и казахстанские, в той или иной степени испытывают вакуум ценностей и норм. Маргинальные индивиды в условиях формирования новых ориентиров лишены устойчивых социальных ориентаций; им очень трудно идентифицировать себя с достаточной уверенностью. Маргинальное состояние характеризуется тем, что человек, оставив одну культуру, оставив ее на внешнем плане своего существа, не вписывается в новую для него культуру, не приходит в нее, хотя и живет в присутствии ее бесчисленных проявлений. Индивид находится в стадии усвоения новых культурных особенностей, но еще не может овладеть ими полностью. Маргинальность здесь понимается как естественный парадокс переходного, пограничного социального и культурного статуса. Обычно именно в переходные эпохи процесс маргинализации резко усиливается и расширяется по своим масштабам. Люди чувствуют себя незащищенными и социально нестабильными. В связи с этим целью данной статьи является тщательное рассмотрение проблемы маргинальности. При написании статьи мы использовали методы когнитивно-оценочного анализа, методологию кросс-культурно-психологического исследования и принцип единства исторических традиций. На основании исследования проблемы маргинальности делаем вывод, что личность вбирает в себя единое и разнообразное, целое и детальное, универсальное и индивидуальное. В связи с этим проблема маргинализации должна решаться через личное самоопределение. Эта статья написана на основе работ различных философов, социологов и педагогов, изучавших проблемы маргинальности. В статью предлагается ряд рекомендаций по решению проблемы маргинальности в новых реалиях.

**Ключевые слова:** аномия, маргинализация, маргинальность, маргинал, культура, традиции, идентичность, глобализация.

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