

Article type:
Qualitative Research

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Article history:

Received 23 Mar 2026
Revised 18 May 2026
Accepted 24 June 2026
Published online 01 Aug 2026

How to cite this article:

Kerimbek, Z. S., Shegebay, A. S., Abuova, A. T., Suinzhanova, Z. K., Ryskulova, N. A., & Kerimbekov, T. (2026). Intercultural Transmission and Psycho-Cultural Reception of Qissa-i Jumjuma across Islamic Literary Traditions: A Comparative Study. *International Journal of Body, Mind and Culture*, 13(8), Article e2026-1690. <https://doi.org/10.61838/ijbmc.v13i8.1690>



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Intercultural Transmission and Psycho-Cultural Reception of Qissa-i Jumjuma across Islamic Literary Traditions: A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to examine the intercultural transmission and psycho-cultural reception of Qissa-i Jumjuma across Arabic, Persian-attributed, Turkic, Kazakh, Pamiri, and Southeast Asian literary traditions, focusing on narrative continuity, local adaptation, and cultural meaning-making.

Methods and Materials: A qualitative comparative literary design was employed, combining historical-literary contextualization, motif-based textual comparison, reception history, and source criticism. The corpus consisted of published texts, translations, manuscript studies, and documented performance materials. Nine focal version clusters were selected as analytical anchors, including Arabic, Persian-attributed, Turkic, Kazakh, Pamiri, and Southeast Asian traditions. Comparative analysis focused on narrative structure, encounter scenes, identity of the skull, representations of kingship, causes of punishment, eschatological imagery, literary form, and evidence of audience reception.

Findings: The analysis demonstrated substantial continuity in the narrative structure: Jesus encounters a skull, divine permission restores speech, a former ruler recounts death and punishment, and the story transforms eschatological fear into moral instruction. However, local traditions modified settings, royal imagery, infernal descriptions, literary forms, and performance styles. Kazakh/Turkic versions emphasized rhythmic repetition, direct exhortation, and communal recitation, while Malay versions expanded courtly imagery and royal spectacle. The evidence did not support a direct-copy relationship between Turkic traditions and the Persian text attributed to Attar; instead, a model of shared and multiply mediated transmission was more consistent with the available evidence.

Conclusion: Qissa-i Jumjuma represents a transregional narrative tradition whose durability resulted from the interaction of textual mobility, cultural adaptation, collective memory, and affective reception.

Keywords: Islamic Literature, Intercultural Transmission, Cultural Memory, Religious Narrative, Reception Studies.

Introduction

Religious qissas, didactic epics, and book-derived narratives occupy an important place in the literary history of the Kazakh steppe and the broader Turkic world. Their significance lies not only in their themes but also in their mode of circulation: written narratives were copied, recited, memorized, and repeatedly adapted for audiences whose access to formal textual learning varied. In this environment, the boundary between manuscript culture and oral performance was porous. A work could enter a community through a written source and then acquire new life through recitation, mnemonic repetition, local diction, and re-composition. Qissa-i Jumjuma (“The Tale of Jumjuma” or “The Story of the Skull”) offers an unusually clear example of this process because versions of its central plot occur across Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Judaeo-Arabic, Pamiri, and Southeast Asian traditions (Brakel-Papenhuyzen, 2002; Bursalı, 2018; Connolly, 2024; Ørum, 2017; Tottoli, 2003).

The narrative is built around a compact but highly adaptable structure. Jesus encounters a human skull, prays for it to speak, and hears the testimony of a once-powerful ruler who describes death, the grave, angelic interrogation, infernal punishment, and the inadequacy of worldly rank before divine judgment. The story thereby joins eschatology to exemplary narration. Its afterlife scenes do not merely describe punishment; they organize a moral causal sequence in which neglected obligations and sinful conduct are translated into vividly imagined consequences. Studies of Islamic eschatological literature have shown that descriptions of hell frequently worked through concrete, sensory images and through the cultivation of fear, warning, and ethical self-scrutiny (Lange, 2016). Qissa-i Jumjuma belongs to this wider moral imagination while retaining a distinctive dialogic form: the dead ruler himself becomes the witness who authenticates the lesson.

Within Turkic traditions, the narrative is especially important because it appears in multiple poetic and prose rewritings. Hüsam Kâtib’s Cümcümenâme/Jumjuma Sultan is associated with the Khwarezm-Golden Horde literary environment, while later Anatolian, Tatar, and Kazakh witnesses demonstrate continued recirculation and rewriting. Modern scholarship has identified substantial textual plurality. Bursalı (2018), for example, compares twelve

narrative forms, and Toker & Uygun (2022) reported six additional Kazan manuscripts beyond the four witnesses used in their 2020 edition. The implication is methodological: any fixed list of “versions” must be treated as a working corpus, not as an exhaustive census of the tradition.

The Kazakh reception adds a further dimension. Radlov’s nineteenth-century observations indicate that Jumjuma was not simply read as a private devotional text. He described public recitation, widespread memorization, and strong audience reactions to scenes of punishment and neglected religious obligations (Radlov, 1907). This evidence is important because it shifts attention from textual transmission to reception. Fear, anxiety, exclamations of religious formulae, and concentrated communal listening suggest that the qissa operated through affect as well as doctrine. Such evidence does not justify diagnosing historical listeners in modern psychological terms; it does, however, support analysis of culturally patterned emotional reception.

Previous studies have established important parts of the textual history. Tottoli (2003) traced the emergence and growth of the Jesus-and-skull story in Arabic literature. Ørum (2017) analyzed three nineteenth-century Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts, while Connolly (2020) compared Judaeo-Arabic and Muslim Middle Arabic versions and Connolly (2024) introduced an Arabic-script Cairo Genizah fragment in which the skull’s interlocutor is explicitly identified as Jesus. In Turkish studies, Bursalı (2018), Çabuk Çiftöğlu (2018), Bulut & Korkmaz (2022), and Toker & Uygun (2022) have substantially expanded knowledge of prose and verse witnesses and manuscript relationships. Southeast Asian scholarship has likewise demonstrated the adaptation of the narrative in Javanese and Malay literary environments (Brakel-Papenhuyzen, 2002).

Despite this scholarship, three problems remain when the narrative is approached from a Kazakh-centered comparative perspective. First, the relationship among Persian-attributed, Arabic, Turkic, Kazakh, Pamiri, and Southeast Asian forms is often summarized genealogically when the available evidence more securely demonstrates a network of shared motifs and repeated adaptation. Second, comparisons frequently identify similarity without using stable analytical categories, making it difficult to distinguish structural

continuity from local literary elaboration. Third, the emotional and communal effects documented in the Kazakh reception have usually been treated as anecdotal rather than integrated into a conceptual account of how eschatological narrative works in performance.

This article therefore asks four questions: (1) Which narrative components remain stable across the selected traditions, and which are most susceptible to local transformation? (2) How do poetic, prose, courtly, manuscript, and oral-performance forms alter the didactic function of the shared story? (3) What can the available evidence legitimately establish about the relationship between the Turkic tradition and the Persian work attributed to Farid al-Din Attar? and (4) how can Radlov's evidence of audience response be interpreted as psycho-cultural reception without imposing anachronistic psychological categories? By answering these questions, the study aims to move from a descriptive catalogue of parallels toward a more explicit model of textual mobility, intercultural adaptation, and affective reception.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Intercultural transmission, adaptation, and textual mobility

The study treats Qissa-i Jumjuma not as a single stable work that was mechanically copied from one language into another, but as a narrative tradition. "Transmission" here refers to the movement of a recognizable story structure through copying, translation, rewriting, recitation, and performance. "Adaptation" refers to the changes that make the story intelligible and effective within a new literary environment. These changes may affect setting, names, social imagery, genre, sequence, scale of description, and explicit moral commentary while leaving the core narrative grammar recognizable.

This approach is particularly appropriate for a tradition in which manuscript witnesses, printed editions, oral performances, and translations coexist. The same plot may appear as a qissa, hikayat, dastan, verse narrative, prose tale, or ethnographically recorded performance. Genre labels therefore describe local literary placement rather than mutually exclusive textual species. The analytical task is to identify which features travel and which features are re-coded by local conventions. Recent manuscript work reinforces this point: additional Turkic witnesses continue to alter the known textual map, and the Cairo Genizah evidence

reveals confessional and script variation within the Arabic-speaking world itself (Connolly, 2024; Toker & Uygun, 2022).

Psycho-cultural reception: emotion, moral imagination, and collective memory

The term "psycho-cultural" is used here in a deliberately limited humanities sense. It does not imply a clinical psychological analysis of medieval or nineteenth-century audiences. It refers to the interaction between culturally organized meanings and affective responses: narratives teach audiences what to fear, how to interpret suffering, how to imagine judgment, and which emotions are appropriate in relation to sin, death, repentance, and salvation. This understanding is compatible with historical approaches that treat emotion as socially situated practice rather than as an ahistorical inner state (Scheer, 2012).

In Qissa-i Jumjuma, fear of death is not presented as undifferentiated anxiety. It is structured as eschatological fear: worldly power is reversed, the body becomes helpless, angels enforce divine judgment, and suffering is linked to specific moral failures. The story therefore creates a "moral imagination" by making invisible consequences narratively visible. Islamic afterlife literature often cultivated precisely this permeability between present conduct and imagined otherworldly consequence (Lange, 2016). The narrative also contributes to cultural memory because repeated communal recitation stabilizes exemplary images—skull, grave, angel, fire, repentance—through which a community can remember and rehearse moral norms (Assmann, 2011).

Radlov's observations provide the strongest reception evidence available in the present corpus. His account of fear, anxiety, devotional exclamations, and attentive silence during recitation is treated as a historically mediated ethnographic observation, not as transparent access to every listener's internal state. Even with that limitation, it shows that the qissa's effect depended on performance: recitation synchronized attention, amplified infernal imagery, and linked an imagined future judgment to immediate embodied and verbal responses. Psycho-cultural transformation in this article therefore means the reorganization of moral attention and communal feeling through repeated narrative performance.

Methods and Materials

Research design and corpus

This is a qualitative comparative literary study using four complementary procedures: historical-literary contextualization, motif-based textual comparison, reception history, and source criticism. The study does not claim to provide a stemmatic edition or a complete codicological reconstruction of all surviving manuscripts. Instead, it compares representative published texts, translations, documented manuscript witnesses, and reliable scholarly descriptions in order to identify recurrent narrative structures and culturally specific transformations.

The source base has two levels. Primary or near-primary materials include Radlov (1907) published record, the nineteenth-century Kazan print tradition associated with Maulekey Yumachikov, the 1823 English publication of *The History of Rajah Junjuma*, and published/transcribed Turkic witnesses discussed in modern editions. Secondary manuscript scholarship supplies evidence for Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic, Persian-attributed, Pamiri, and additional Turkic witnesses where direct consultation of every manuscript is beyond the scope of the article. Claims based on secondary reports are therefore phrased as reported or documented rather than as results of first-hand codicological inspection.

Nine focal version clusters are retained because they correspond to the principal comparison points developed in the original research: the Persian *Jumjuma-nama* attributed to Attar; an early Arabic prose tradition associated in earlier scholarship with al-Saksini; the Arabic prose tradition represented in al-Abshihi and related recensions; Hüsam Kâtib's Turkic *Cümcümenâme/Jumjuma Sultan*; Radlov's *Qubas*; the late nineteenth-century Kazan *Qissa-i Jumjuma*; the Pamiri *Hikayat Sultan Jumjuma*; the Southeast Asian *Rajah/Raja Junjuma* tradition; and a Xinjiang Kazakh form reported in regional scholarship. This list is explicitly analytical rather than exhaustive. Scholarship has documented additional Anatolian, Chagatai, Judaeo-Arabic, and other manuscript witnesses (Bulut & Korkmaz; Bursalı, 2018; Ørum, 2017; Toker & Uygun, 2022).

Comparative criteria and analytical procedure

The texts and documented witnesses were compared using a fixed set of categories: (a) opening formula and narratorial address; (b) setting of the encounter; (c) identity of the skull's interlocutor; (d) identity, rank, and territory of *Jumjuma*; (e) representation of wealth and kingship; (f) moral cause or explanation of punishment; (g) death scene and role of the Angel of Death; (h) grave interrogation and infernal punishment; (i) didactic message; (j) literary form and performance features; and (k) evidence of reception. This categorical comparison reduces the risk of treating any isolated shared image as proof of direct textual dependence.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, a common narrative skeleton was reconstructed from motifs that recur across otherwise distant versions. Second, differences were grouped according to likely literary function—for example, courtly amplification, oral-formulaic repetition, doctrinal explicitness, or localization of setting. Third, claims of textual relationship were ranked by evidentiary strength. Shared plot alone was treated as evidence of common tradition, not direct copying; distinctive sequential correspondences and documented translation history were given greater weight. The result is a network model of transmission rather than a simple one-source genealogy.

Terminology, transliteration, and translation

For consistency, *Qissa-i Jumjuma* is used as the umbrella English title of the tradition, and *Jumjuma* is used as the default form of the name. Historically attested titles are preserved when a specific witness is discussed (e.g., *Cümcümenâme*, *Qubas*, *The History of Rajah Junjuma*, *Qişşat al-Ġumġuma*). The variation *Junjuma*/*Jumjuma* is therefore not normalized inside bibliographic titles. Arabic and Turkic diacritics are retained where they belong to cited modern scholarship but are not imposed retrospectively on nineteenth-century English titles. Brief English renderings of Turkic or Pamiri passages are based on the published sources cited in the discussion; the Malay comparison relies on the 1823 English publication. Long parallel quotations have been removed in favor of analytical comparison, both to improve readability and to avoid treating translation wording as if it were direct evidence of identical source language.

Qissa-i Jumjuma within Kazakh Religious Epic Traditions

Kazakh religious epics have been classified in different ways, but a useful thematic distinction separates narratives that foreground the propagation or defense of Islam, narratives that teach exemplary social and ethical conduct, and narratives that dramatize death, judgment, paradise, and hell. This simplified classification is adapted from categories used in Kazakh folklore scholarship rather than proposed as a new universal taxonomy. The multi-volume Babalar sözi ("Words of the Ancestors") places religious dastans within a broader corpus of orally and textually transmitted narrative heritage, while Kerimbek's earlier studies emphasized the religious-didactic position of Jumjuma within this field (Kerimbek, 2015, 2016).

Qissa-i Jumjuma is most distinctive within the third category because its primary dramatic action occurs after worldly power has failed. Other religious epics may narrate conversion, struggle, prophetic biography, or exemplary virtue, but Jumjuma concentrates on retrospective testimony. The skull is simultaneously a remnant of bodily mortality and a speaking archive of moral consequence. This formal device compresses an entire theology of accountability into a dialogue: the listener sees the final condition of a ruler before hearing the story of how he arrived there.

This feature also explains why lengthy summaries of unrelated epics are unnecessary for contextualization. Salsal, Zarqum, Yusuf-Zulaykha, and other narratives demonstrate the breadth of Kazakh religious storytelling, but they do not share Jumjuma's distinctive combination of memento mori, revived testimony, grave interrogation, infernal journey, and direct warning to listeners. The comparison is therefore most useful at the level of function: Qissa-i Jumjuma belongs to religious-didactic epic, yet its pedagogical force is unusually concentrated in afterlife witness and affective warning.

The Kazan publication history further illustrates the fluidity of authorship in this tradition. Maulekey Yumachikov is associated with a late nineteenth-century Qissa-i Jumjuma that circulated widely and was reprinted. Earlier scholarship alternately describes him as author, translator, compiler, or transmitter. The more defensible formulation is that the Kazan text represents a late Turkic/Kazakh-oriented rewriting within an already established narrative tradition. Hüsam Kâtib's much earlier Cümcümenâme provides a major Turkic

precedent, but later versions show enough reorganization and localization that "copy" is too strong a description unless direct textual dependence can be demonstrated.

Textual Mobility and the Multi-Variant Tradition Turkic and Kazakh witnesses

Radlov's Qubas and the Kazan Qissa-i Jumjuma share the central encounter and afterlife testimony but differ in the organization of infernal detail. In the material preserved by Radlov, the seven hells are individually differentiated and linked to categories of wrongdoing; the Kazan-oriented version can compress these infernal divisions into a shorter account of burning and punishment. The contrast is analytically important because it shows that variation does not always change doctrine. Instead, it changes the degree of visualization. A more elaborated infernal taxonomy invites listeners to map particular sins onto particular punishments, whereas a compressed version emphasizes the totality of suffering.

The poetic form of Kazakh and related Turkic witnesses strengthens direct address. Exhortations concerning faith, fasting, prayer, and charity frequently frame or interrupt the narrative. Repetition is not merely ornamental: in oral or semi-oral performance it functions mnemonically and rhetorically, turning doctrinal statements into recurring cues. The listener is repeatedly moved from the king's past to his or her own present obligations. This makes the narrative less like detached description and more like a sermon embedded in story.

Modern manuscript research complicates any attempt to treat "the Turkic version" as singular. Bursalı (2018) surveys multiple prose and verse rewritings in Eastern and Western Turkic traditions. Çabuk Çiftöğlu (2018) examines an early prose Turkish translation, Bulut & Korkmaz (2022) publish and analyze an Old Anatolian Turkish verse witness, and Toker & Uygun (2022) identify additional manuscripts relevant to the Khwarezm Turkic Cümcümenâme. These studies demonstrate that variation exists within Turkic literary history before comparison with Kazakh or Southeast Asian forms even begins.

Pamiri and Southeast Asian pathways

The Pamiri evidence is especially important for transmission history because the narrative survives not only as text but as performance. Earlier regional

scholarship reports a Hikayat Sultan Jumjuma performed in Ishkashim with instrumental accompaniment. The preserved opening motif—Jesus encounters a severed human head—closely matches the transregional narrative skeleton. Yet the performance context is itself a local transformation: musical delivery situates the story within a religious song tradition and demonstrates that textual mobility can culminate in a distinct performative genre rather than simply a translated manuscript.

The Southeast Asian tradition offers a different kind of localization. The History of Rajah Junjuma, published in English in *The Asiatic Journal* in 1823, presents Jesus encountering a skull and hearing the testimony of a ruler associated with Egypt and Syria. The Malay-derived narrative dwells at length on royal retinues, clothing, weapons, concubines, precious stones, and palace luxury. Brakel-Papenhuyzen (2002) study of the Javanese “Tale of the Skull” confirms the broader integration of this eschatological story into Southeast Asian Islamic literary culture. These versions preserve the central moral reversal—wealth cannot prevent judgment—but express it through courtly aesthetics familiar to regional hikayat traditions.

Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic, and Persian evidence

The Arabic tradition makes clear that the Jesus-and-skull narrative did not depend on a single Turkic or Persian textual source. Tottoli (2003) documents the growth of the story in Arabic literature, while Ørum (2017) shows its later life in three nineteenth-century Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts from Egypt. Connolly (2020) further compares Judaeo-Arabic and Muslim Middle Arabic versions and demonstrates both linguistic divergence and shared narrative structure. This multilingual Arabic evidence is central to the argument because it reveals circulation across confessional and script communities rather than a single linear pathway.

Connolly (2024) Cairo Genizah fragment adds a particularly valuable witness. The Arabic-script

fragment explicitly identifies the skull’s interlocutor as Jesus, unlike some Judaeo-Arabic recensions in which the interlocutor is less specifically named. Its contents—including royal status, death, the grave, and hell—place it within a developed narrative family. For the present study, its significance is not the claim that it is the source of the Turkic material, but that it confirms the story’s long-lived Arabic transmission and its capacity to cross communal boundaries.

The Persian Jumjuma-nama attributed to Farid al-Din Attar remains important as an early and influential comparison point, but attribution and genealogy require caution. Similarity of plot does not by itself establish that Hüsām Kâtib or later Kazakh versions directly copied this text. Turkish scholarship has long debated the relationship, and variant evidence shows substantial additions, omissions, and reorganizations (Bursali, 2018; Toker & Uygun, 2022). The safest conclusion is that Persian and Turkic texts participate in a shared story complex shaped by translation and rewriting; a direct-copy model is not sufficiently demonstrated by the evidence used here.

Comparative Analysis of the Kazakh and Malay Versions

The Kazakh-oriented Qissa-i Jumjuma Sultan and the Malay-derived History of Rajah Junjuma preserve enough shared sequence to make direct categorical comparison productive. Both begin from the same theological device: Jesus encounters a skull, petitions God, and receives permission for the dead to speak. Both then shift from miracle to testimony. The dead speaker identifies himself as a male ruler of extraordinary wealth and authority, narrates his decline into illness and death, encounters terrifying angels, and describes punishment in the grave or hell. The shared sequence is stronger evidence of a common narrative tradition than any single lexical similarity in translation. Comparative matrix of the Kazakh and Malay versions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1*Comparative matrix of the Kazakh and Malay versions*

Analytical category	Kazakh/Turkic Qissa-i Jumjuma	Malay-derived History of Rajah Junjumah	Interpretive significance
Opening and address	Poetic exhortation addresses listeners directly and links the tale to faith and religious duties.	Prose invocation and narrative opening introduce the history of a powerful ruler.	The Kazakh form foregrounds communal instruction; the Malay form foregrounds hikayat narration.
Setting and encounter	Jesus travels through an open landscape and encounters a human skull.	Jesus crosses a plain in Syria and finds a dry skull on the road.	Shared encounter motif; regional prose provides more specific geographic framing.
Restoration of speech	Jesus prays that God give the skull a tongue and voice.	Jesus petitions God to allow the skull to converse with him.	The miracle establishes divine authorization for the testimony in both versions.
Identity of Jumjuma	A male king associated with Sham/Damascus, described through immense numbers of servants and ministers.	Raja Junjumah, king of Egypt and Syria, described through a large court, soldiers, concubines, and luxury objects.	Both dramatize maximal worldly status; local aesthetics determine how magnificence is visualized.
Cause of punishment	Neglect of prayer, fasting, and other obligations receives explicit didactic emphasis.	Disobedience and moral failure are central, but courtly description occupies more narrative space.	The Kazakh form intensifies direct normative instruction.
Death scene	Illness, fear, and the arrival of Azrael/angels are rendered through compressed, highly emotional poetic imagery.	Illness and angelic arrival are narrated in extended prose with descriptive detail.	Form shapes pace: verse intensifies repetition and immediacy; prose expands spectacle.
Angelic/grave punishment	Terrifying angels, bodily seizure, grave interrogation, and infernal suffering are prominent.	Comparable angelic violence, interrogation, and punishment appear in detailed prose.	The shared eschatological sequence is one of the strongest signs of common tradition.
Didactic function	Listeners are repeatedly redirected to prayer, fasting, charity, repentance, and preservation of faith.	The ruler's fall demonstrates the impotence of wealth and status before divine judgment.	The same moral logic is retained but differently weighted.
Literary form and reception	Poetic, performative, repetitive, compatible with public recitation and memorization.	Courtly prose hikayat, expansive descriptive narration.	Localization occurs through genre as much as through plot detail.

The comparison shows that literary form affects moral function. In the Kazakh/Turkic version, rhythmic recurrence and direct address repeatedly collapse the distance between Jumjuma and the listener: the dead king's failure becomes a warning about the listener's own prayer, fasting, charity, and faith. In the Malay prose tradition, the abundance of courtly description initially expands the ruler's worldly grandeur. This makes the later reversal more spectacular: the larger the palace world becomes, the more striking its powerlessness before death.

Localization therefore does not erase the shared Islamic narrative. Rather, it determines what must be amplified for a particular literary public. Nomadic and semi-oral poetic culture favors mnemonic repetition, direct moral appeal, and performative intensity. Courtly

hikayat favors descriptive accumulation, rank, luxury, and spectacle. Both strategies serve the same underlying moral logic: worldly distinction is temporary, divine judgment is unavoidable, and the testimony of the dead should alter the conduct of the living.

Nine Focal Version Clusters and Their Evidentiary Status

Table 2 converts the former narrative list into an explicit research corpus. Dates are approximate where the underlying tradition is earlier than the surviving or published witness. "Relationship" describes the most defensible connection on the evidence used in this study; it does not imply a complete stemma. The table also distinguishes directly published witnesses from versions known primarily through secondary manuscript scholarship.

Table 2

Nine focal version clusters used in the comparative corpus

Version / cluster	Language & region	Approx. date / witness	Form & source status	Distinctive features and relationship
Jumjuma-nama attributed to Attar	Persian / Iran	Medieval attribution; textual history debated	Verse; known through Persian/Turkic scholarship	Early comparison point; shares the Jesus-skull/afterlife complex, but direct-copy claims for Turkic versions remain unproven.
Hikayat al-Jumjuma associated with al-Saksini	Arabic	Reported as medieval in earlier scholarship	Prose; used here through secondary scholarship	Elaborated hell punishments; supports an Arabic eschatological narrative layer. Attribution/date require further codicological verification.
Arabic prose recension associated with al-Abshihi and related traditions	Arabic / Middle East	Late medieval and later transmission	Prose anthology/manuscript tradition; contextualized by Tottoli, Ørum, and Connolly	Confirms long Arabic circulation and a developed death-grave-hell sequence; not treated as a single fixed source.
Cümcümenâme / Jumjuma Sultan of Hüsam Kâtib	Khwarezm/Golden Horde Turkic	c. 14th century tradition	Verse; multiple manuscript witnesses and modern editions	Major early Turkic literary realization; extensive afterlife detail and subsequent copying/rewriting.
Qubas recorded by V. V. Radlov	Kazakh/Kyrgyz dialect area / Steppe	Published 1870	Ethnographic printed record of verse narrative	Detailed differentiation of hells; exceptionally valuable reception context through Radlov's account of public recitation.
Qissa-i Jumjuma associated with Maulekey Yumachikov	Tatar/Kazakh-oriented Kazan print culture	Late 19th century; repeated print circulation	Printed verse adaptation/compilation	Condenses some infernal detail and foregrounds explicit religious exhortation; authorship best treated as transmission/rewriting.
Hikayat Sultan Jumjuma (Pamiri tradition)	Pamirs / Ishkashim	Modern survival of older oral tradition	Performed religious narrative; known here through regional scholarship	Jesus-and-severed-head opening; musical performance demonstrates adaptation into local religious song practice.
Hikayat/The History of Rajah Junjumah	Malay/Southeast Asia	English publication 1823; regional tradition earlier	Prose hikayat; published translation; related Javanese forms documented	Extensive courtly imagery, Egypt/Syria kingship, and detailed angelic punishment; preserves the common narrative skeleton.
Xinjiang Kazakh Jumjuma tradition	Kazakh / Xinjiang, China	Date uncertain in accessible reporting	Oral/textual regional form; limited published documentation in present study	Evidence of eastern Kazakh diffusion; retained as a provisional cluster requiring dedicated manuscript/performance documentation.

The Table clarifies two points that are easily obscured in a simple list. First, the “nine versions” are not nine total surviving texts; they are nine focal clusters chosen to represent major linguistic and regional pathways. Second, not all clusters have the same evidentiary status. Radlov (1907), Rajah Junjumah publication, and modern edited Turkic witnesses can be analyzed from published texts, whereas the Pamiri and Xinjiang clusters require further first-hand documentation. Recognizing this asymmetry strengthens rather than weakens the argument because it separates established textual findings from research priorities.

Psycho-Cultural Reception: Fear, Moral Discipline, and Collective Memory

The strongest basis for retaining a psycho-cultural dimension is the interaction between narrative form and documented audience response. Radlov's report of

public readings indicates that listeners did not encounter Jumjuma as neutral information about doctrine. They listened collectively to graphic descriptions of punishment for neglected religious duties, displayed fear and anxiety, and punctuated the recitation with devotional expressions. Whatever the limitations of a nineteenth-century ethnographer's interpretation, the scene demonstrates an affective economy in which narrative, bodily response, verbal formula, and communal attention were connected.

Fear in this context has a regulatory structure. The qissa repeatedly moves from a particular act or omission to a visible punishment. Prayer neglected in life becomes suffering after death; pride in wealth is answered by bodily helplessness; royal command is replaced by submission to angels; social hierarchy is reversed by the equality of judgment. Such scenes transform abstract

religious obligations into memorable causal images. The narrative's psychological force is therefore inseparable from its cultural coding: listeners know what the duties are, recognize the moral categories, and experience the story through a shared religious vocabulary.

The skull motif intensifies this process. A skull is materially anonymous: wealth, clothing, army, and rank have disappeared. Speech then restores biography only long enough to explain why those worldly distinctions failed. This alternation between visual anonymity and narrated grandeur creates a compact *memento mori*. The listener is invited to imagine not simply the ruler's death but the collapse of every social marker on which he had relied. The effect is less a speculative theology than an exercise in moral perspective-taking.

Collective performance also converts the story into cultural memory. Repetition of the same narrative sequence across generations—encounter, testimony, death, angels, hell, repentance—provides a portable mnemonic structure. Different communities can localize the ruler, the court, the geography, or the punishments while retaining the sequence. Assmann (2011) concept of cultural memory is useful here because the tradition persists not through exact textual identity but through socially maintained forms of remembrance. In *Jumjuma*, moral memory is carried by memorable scenes and by the authority of the dead speaker.

This framework also explains why “psycho-cultural transformation” should not be treated as a claim that the *qissa* permanently changed personality or produced measurable mental states. The available sources cannot support such a proposition. What they do support is a more modest and historically grounded claim: repeated narrative performance organized attention around death and judgment, mobilized fear and repentance as culturally intelligible responses, and reinforced a shared moral vocabulary. The term reception is therefore essential to the revised title and argument.

Qissa-i Jumjuma and Other Medieval Afterlife Narratives

Qissa-i Jumjuma belongs to a much broader field of medieval eschatological storytelling. Islamic traditions developed extensive images of the grave, angels, hell, categories of sinners, and punishments proportionate to conduct. These motifs appear in Qur'anic exegesis, renunciant literature, ascension narratives, popular religious tales, and later didactic compilations (Lange, 2016). The relevance of this context is typological:

Jumjuma draws on a shared repertoire of infernal imagination while organizing it through the testimony of a revived skull.

Turkic works such as *Kisekbaş* may be mentioned in this context because they likewise demonstrate the use of extraordinary bodily or post-mortem motifs for moral and religious instruction. Their importance for the present argument is not that they are additional titles of the same *Jumjuma* text, but that they show how medieval and early modern Turkic literary culture repeatedly incorporated didactic religious materials into memorable narrative forms. This distinction removes the earlier tendency to collapse related religious narratives into a single version history.

Dante's *Divine Comedy* provides only a distant comparative parallel and should not be used to imply direct influence. Both traditions dramatize moral order through a mapped afterlife and through the relationship between earthly conduct and post-mortem consequence, but they arise from different theological, literary, and historical systems. The comparison is useful only at the level of medieval moral imagination: across traditions, descriptions of the afterlife could make ethical abstraction concrete by converting sin, judgment, fear, and salvation into narrated space. No genealogical relationship between Dante and *Qissa-i Jumjuma* is proposed here.

Discussion and Conclusion

The revised comparison supports a model of resilient narrative grammar combined with flexible cultural realization. Across widely separated versions, the story repeatedly preserves five functions: miraculous authorization of the skull's voice, retrospective autobiography of a ruler, reversal of worldly power, sensory narration of judgment, and conversion of testimony into warning. These functions explain the story's portability. A translator or performer can change geography, royal imagery, numbers, details of punishment, and genre while still preserving the mechanism that makes the tale recognizable.

The Kazakh/Malay comparison demonstrates that adaptation is functional rather than merely decorative. Kazakh poetic repetition increases mnemonic force and direct moral address, making the *qissa* suitable for recitation before an audience. Malay courtly prose

increases descriptive abundance, making royal magnificence itself a narrative resource. The shared moral reversal is therefore achieved through different aesthetic means. This is precisely what intercultural transmission looks like when a narrative is not simply translated but re-authored within a new literary ecology.

The evidence also requires a more cautious position on origins. The Persian Jumjuma-nama attributed to Attar is clearly relevant to the comparative history, but the presence of Arabic, Judaeo-Arabic, and multiple Turkic witnesses makes a one-directional “Attar → Hüsām Kâtib → all later versions” model too simple. Tottoli’s Arabic evidence, Ørum’s Judaeo-Arabic manuscripts, Connolly’s comparative Middle Arabic work and Genizah fragment, and the plurality documented in Turkish scholarship point instead to long circulation and recurrent rewriting. The Turkic tradition can therefore be described as creative adaptation within a shared transregional story complex, but not as demonstrably independent of all Persian influence. The important correction is that it should not be reduced to a direct copy on the basis of plot similarity alone.

The psycho-cultural analysis adds a second layer to the transmission model. Texts survive not only because they can be copied but because they can do cultural work. Jumjuma’s dramatic reversal of king into skull and its vivid punishment scenes create a highly transmissible moral image. In the Kazakh evidence, public recitation linked this image to fear, devotional response, and communal listening. The narrative thus operated simultaneously as literature, religious pedagogy, performance, and affective discipline. This helps explain why a relatively simple plot could remain productive across languages and centuries.

Finally, recent scholarship changes the contribution of the present article. Its value does not lie in claiming the first discovery of a fixed number of versions. [Bursalı \(2018\)](#) had already compared a wider set of narrative forms, and [Toker & Uygün \(2022\)](#) expanded the manuscript record further. The contribution here is instead synthetic and comparative: it places Kazakh materials in dialogue with Arabic/Judaeo-Arabic and Southeast Asian scholarship, uses explicit comparison categories, distinguishes evidence levels, and integrates historical audience response into an account of psycho-cultural reception.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has four principal limitations. First, it is not a critical edition and does not inspect every surviving manuscript directly. Some version clusters, especially the Pamiri and Xinjiang materials and certain early Arabic attributions, are represented through published scholarship rather than first-hand codicological examination. Second, dates attached to narrative traditions should not be confused with dates of surviving manuscripts or later printed witnesses. Third, the 1823 English Rajah Junjuma text is a translated publication and therefore cannot be used for fine-grained lexical comparison with Turkic originals. Fourth, Radlov’s reception evidence is exceptionally valuable but comes through a single ethnographic observer and cannot establish uniform responses among all Kazakh audiences.

Future research should therefore proceed in three directions. A manuscript census linking shelfmarks, scripts, dates, paratexts, and textual incipits would permit a more rigorous transmission map. A digital motif alignment of complete Arabic, Persian, Turkic, Kazakh, and Southeast Asian texts could distinguish shared sequence from independent elaboration. Finally, performance-centered fieldwork in Pamiri and Xinjiang communities, where ethically and practically possible, could document melody, recitation style, audience participation, and contemporary memory of the story. Such work would test the hypothesis advanced here that the durability of Jumjuma depends on the interaction of textual mobility and affective performance.

Qissa-i Jumjuma is best understood as a transregional narrative tradition rather than a single work reproduced through direct copying. Across Arabic, Persian-attributed, Turkic, Kazakh, Pamiri, Judaeo-Arabic, and Southeast Asian environments, the tale preserves a stable moral architecture: Jesus encounters the material remainder of death; divine permission makes the dead speak; a former ruler narrates the collapse of worldly power; and the afterlife becomes evidence addressed to the living. The persistence of this architecture explains the story’s recognizability across major linguistic and generic transformations.

The comparative evidence also shows that localization changes function as well as form. Kazakh/Turkic poetic versions intensify direct exhortation, repetition, and suitability for public

recitation, while Malay hikayat elaborates courtly spectacle. These differences do not weaken the common tradition; they reveal how shared Islamic motifs were made locally persuasive. The Turkic materials should therefore be understood as creative literary realizations within a multiply mediated story complex, not as demonstrable direct copies of the Persian text attributed to Attar.

The revised psycho-cultural argument rests on reception rather than speculation. Radlov's account of fearful, devotional audience response, read alongside the narrative's systematic conversion of conduct into imagined punishment, shows how the qissa could organize moral attention through culturally patterned emotion. Its durable power lay in joining eschatological imagery to collective performance and memory. This combination of textual mobility, local aesthetics, and affective pedagogy makes Qissa-i Jumjuma an important case for understanding how religious narratives travelled and remained socially meaningful across the Islamic world.

Acknowledgments

The authors express their gratitude and appreciation to all participants.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

This study is a comparative literary and historical analysis of published texts, translations, manuscript scholarship, and documented oral/performance traditions. It involves no human participants, interventions, or identifiable personal data; formal ethics approval was therefore not required. The article distinguishes direct use of published textual witnesses from claims based on secondary manuscript descriptions. No claim is made that all cited manuscripts were inspected first-hand. Historical translations are identified by source, and the comparative argument relies primarily on motifs, sequence, genre, and documented reception rather than on unverified lexical equivalence.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

Funding

This research was carried out independently, with personal funding, and without financial support from any governmental or private institution or organization.

Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

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