



Kyrgyz Jaramazan as a ritual folk practice: Structure, social functions, and cultural transmission

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Abstract. This article examined Kyrgyz Jaramazan as a ritual folk practice, focusing on its structure, poetic features, social functions, and role in cultural transmission. Although Jaramazan had long been classified as a genre of religious-calendar folklore, its compositional pattern, linguistic organisation, and contribution to cultural continuity had received little sustained analysis. The aim of this study was to examine the compositional structure, poetic features, regional variation, social functions, and role of Kyrgyz Jaramazan in cultural transmission. The study therefore analysed the genre in structural, linguistic, and functional terms, and considered how it preserved ritual tradition and cultural memory in Kyrgyz society. The corpus comprised 14 Jaramazan texts drawn from published folklore collections representing the Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy regions, together with anthology and contemporary examples, examined through comparative-historical, structural, motif-based, linguistic, and functional methods. The texts followed a stable compositional sequence: greeting, religious introduction, praise of the householder, blessings, a ritualised request for gifts, and a closing benediction. Their language rested on fixed formulas, lexical repetition, and syntactic parallelism, while regional differences appeared mainly in vocabulary and thematic emphasis. Talas variants favoured pastoral vocabulary and humour, the Osh and Jalal-Abad texts drew on a denser layer of Islamic terminology, and the Chüy material combined older formulas with more recent expressions. The analysis indicated that Jaramazan functioned as more than a seasonal religious song: it operated as a ritual practice that reinforced communal bonds, framed gift-giving as symbolic exchange, and transmitted cultural values across generations. A comparison of archival and recent materials showed that the tradition had retained its core language and ritual form even as its performance settings changed, remaining a living element of intangible cultural heritage sustained by its formulaic language, its performance, and its capacity to adapt

Keywords: formulaic language; regional variation; symbolic reciprocity; cultural memory; calendar folklore

Introduction

Jaramazan is one of the most distinctive genres of Kyrgyz religious-calendar folklore. Performed during Ramadan, it belongs to an old custom in which performers move from house to house across a community. At each home they greet the household, mark the sanctity of Ramadan, offer blessings and good wishes, and receive gifts or small rewards in return. Jaramazan is thus not only a poetic genre but a social and ritual practice through which religious values, communal relationships, and shared

cultural norms are reaffirmed each year. Recent scholarship has approached Jaramazan and the closely related Jarapazan tradition from several complementary perspectives. D. Arslan (2025), working within a linguocultural framework, situates Kyrgyz jaramazan within the wider vocabulary and cultural practices of Ramadan and highlights its association with house-to-house performance, blessing, gift giving, and the transmission of religious and communal values. Research on Kazakh Jarapazan has

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developed a more explicitly performance-oriented perspective. A. Maulet *et al.* (2024) identify a recurrent sequence combining spoken introduction, sung verses and refrain, and a concluding blessing, while also showing how praise, gift exchange, and benediction operate within the performance. From the perspective of cultural transmission, A. Maulet & A.S. Sabirova (2023) document both the persistence of regional performance forms learned from childhood and the partial loss of the tradition as social conditions change. Taken together, these studies show a recent shift from treating Jaramazan/Jarapazan primarily as a documented calendar-folklore genre toward examining its linguistic, performative, structural, and transmissive dimensions. At the same time, these dimensions have largely been investigated separately, leaving their interaction within a multi-regional corpus of Kyrgyz Jaramazan insufficiently examined.

Within Kyrgyz culture, Jaramazan developed through the interaction of Islamic tradition and local cultural practices. Although a substantial body of Jaramazan and related Jarapazan material has been documented, recent scholarship has tended to examine particular dimensions of the tradition separately, including its religious and linguocultural context, performance structure, regional preservation, and cultural transmission. What remains less developed is an integrated analysis of how compositional organisation, formulaic language, regional variation, and communicative function interact within Kyrgyz Jaramazan itself. In particular, published materials from different regions of Kyrgyzstan have rarely been brought together as a comparative corpus through which recurrent ritual components can be distinguished from locally variable poetic forms. The present study addresses this gap through a comparative analysis of Jaramazan materials representing the Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy regions.

The aim of this study was to examine the compositional structure, poetic features, regional variation, social functions, and role of Kyrgyz Jaramazan in cultural transmission. To achieve this aim, the study pursued three interrelated objectives: (1) to identify the compositional structure and principal poetic features of Kyrgyz Jaramazan; (2) to analyse regional variation in its textual organisation and formulaic language; and (3) to examine its social functions and role in the transmission of cultural memory and ritual tradition. The originality of the study lies in bringing these dimensions together within a single comparative analysis of a multi-regional Kyrgyz corpus. Rather than treating compositional structure, regional variation, social function, and cultural transmission as separate dimensions of the tradition, the study examines their interrelations within the same body of texts. By combining structural and formulaic analysis with ritual, performance, and gift-exchange perspectives, it offers an integrated account of how Kyrgyz Jaramazan maintains recurrent ritual and poetic patterns while accommodating regional variation and changing communicative contexts.

Literature Review

Jaramazan and Ramadan folklore in Turkic traditions

Jaramazan is one of the most widespread genres of religious-calendar folklore among the Turkic peoples. Known under various names – Jarapazan, Yaramazan, and related forms – it is an important part of the ritual and poetic practices tied to Ramadan. Its wide geographical reach and close link with the Islamic ritual calendar have drawn attention from folklorists, ethnographers, and scholars of religion and Turkic culture. Existing scholarship falls into several interconnected lines. The first addresses the genre's religious content and its relationship with Islamic culture. S.Kh. Esbergenova (2019) examined Yaramazan in Karakalpak folklore as a ritual genre that carried religious concepts and values into community life, and A.S. Kochkunov (2018) showed how Islamic belief became woven into traditional Kyrgyz culture through long interaction with indigenous custom. Both make the same essential point: Jaramazan served not merely as a religious song but as a channel through which religious knowledge was localised and transmitted within traditional society.

A second line concerns the historical roots of the genre and its ties to earlier cultural layers. A. Özdemir (2015) argued that several structural and thematic features of the Jarapazan tradition preserve traces of pre-Islamic ritual, while R.M. Mustafina (2020) demonstrated that Islam spread through Central Asia by continuous interaction with indigenous traditions rather than by wholly displacing earlier beliefs. Together these studies suggest that Jaramazan is best understood as a syncretic phenomenon, reflecting both Islamic practice and older strata of ritual culture. A third line approaches Jaramazan through performance and social practice. J. Sipos (2014) stressed that the meaning of traditional ritual songs cannot be separated from the settings in which they are performed, and A. Oralbek & U. Saidirakhman (2025) showed that contemporary Jarapazan has adjusted to new communicative environments without shedding its ritual functions. This work foregrounds the performative, interactive, and socially embedded character of the genre.

Within Kyrgyz folklore studies, Jaramazan has come down chiefly through folklore collections, archival records, and ethnographic publications. Some of the earliest examples were recorded by K. Miftakov & K. Karasaev (1927) in the early twentieth century and later absorbed into scholarly collections of Kyrgyz folklore. More recent regional publications, notably the *El Adabiyaty* series, have substantially enlarged the available corpus with materials from Talas (Kolbaeva, 2018), Osh (Isaeva, 2018), and Jalal-Abad (Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019). Works such as *Kyrgyz Adabiyatynyn Ocherkteri* (Bogdanova *et al.*, 1943), *Kaada-Salttar*. Ak Batalar (Akmataliev *et al.*, 2003). G. Rysbaeva (2019) placed Jarapazan within the broader tradition of Turkic blessing expressions, underscoring its role in voicing communal wishes, prayers, and moral values, and bringing out the close kinship between Jaramazan, blessing traditions, and ritual communication. Taken as a whole, earlier scholarship has advanced our understanding of the

religious content, historical development, cultural functions, and performative character of Jaramazan. Most of this work, however, has centred on documenting texts, describing ritual custom, and explaining historical background. Far less attention has fallen on the compositional organisation of Kyrgyz Jaramazan, its regional variation, and the relationship between its poetic structure and its communicative functions – the questions that motivate the present study

Jaramazan within the broader context of Ramadan culture

To understand Jaramazan fully, one must place it within the wider culture of Ramadan. Across the Islamic world, Ramadan is observed not only as a sacred month of fasting but as a season of distinctive rituals, communal gatherings, and oral and performative traditions. These practices draw people together and renew the shared religious values and sense of collective identity that bind a community. Scholarship on Ramadan culture makes clear that the holy month is far more than a set of religious obligations; it is a whole socio-cultural world. H.Ö. Özden (2006) described how Ramadan traditions in the Turkic world encompass a broad range of ritual, poetic, and communal practices that shape both personal devotion and collective life, and G. Ünsal (2011) showed that Ramadan folk traditions – songs, poetic recitations, and ceremonial performances – carry educational, social, and symbolic weight, passing on religious knowledge and strengthening the ties between neighbours. The communal character of this culture is visible in many regional customs: the Ramadan drummers (*Ramazan davulcuları*) of Turk, and comparable pre-dawn calling traditions elsewhere in the Muslim world, show how religious observance can merge with public performance and shared participation.

Seen against this background, Kyrgyz Jaramazan stands out as one of the distinctive voices of Ramadan tradition. Through the house-to-house performance, blessings and gifts pass between performer and household, weaving religious symbolism into ordinary social exchange and tightening the ties between neighbours. Performed year after year, the genre also introduces younger members of the community to religious ideas, ethical expectations, and traditional forms of verbal expression, and so serves not only as religious-calendar folklore but as a means of sustaining cultural continuity and safeguarding the intangible heritage of the Kyrgyz people.

Research gap and contribution of the present study

The scholarship reviewed above has substantially advanced understanding of the religious content, historical development, cultural significance, and performative dimensions of Jaramazan and related Jarapazan traditions across the Turkic world. Recent studies have further examined particular aspects of performance structure, regional preservation, blessing practices, and cultural transmission. Three interconnected questions nevertheless remain insufficiently resolved in relation to Kyrgyz

Jaramazan. The first concerns internal form. Although individual structural and performative features have been identified in related traditions, less is known about how recurrent compositional components and formulaic language operate across a comparative corpus of Kyrgyz Jaramazan texts, or how these elements vary while retaining a recognisable ritual organisation. The second concerns regional comparison. Published Jaramazan materials from different regions of Kyrgyzstan have not yet been sufficiently examined together within a common analytical framework, limiting our understanding of which features are widely recurrent and which are locally variable. The third concerns language and communication. Existing scholarship has illuminated important folkloristic, ethnographic, religious, and performative dimensions of the tradition, but the relationship between formulaic language, ritual structure, reciprocal exchange, and communicative function within Kyrgyz Jaramazan remains insufficiently integrated. The present study addresses these questions together. Drawing on materials representing Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy, it compares compositional organisation and formulaic language across regional texts and examines how these patterns relate to ritual performance, reciprocal exchange, social function, and cultural transmission.

Materials and Methods

This study examined the structural organisation, poetic features, social functions, and cultural significance of Kyrgyz Jaramazan. The corpus comprises 14 Jaramazan texts from four regions of Kyrgyzstan – Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy. The primary sources were the *El Adabiyaty* series: *Folklore Materials Collected in Talas region* (Kolbaeva, 2018), two texts; *Folklore Materials Collected in Osh region* (Isaeva, 2018), two texts; *Folklore Materials Collected in Jalal-Abad region* (Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019), seven texts; and the corresponding volume for Chüy region (Mukasov, 2018), one text. Two further texts were drawn from Kyrgyz *Poeziyasynyn Antologiyasy* (Jusupov, 1999). The analysis also drew on archival folklore publications, ethnographic studies, and contemporary examples of Jaramazan circulating in modern communicative settings (Adilet Legal Centre, 2022; Oralbek & Saidirakhman, 2025). The uneven regional distribution reflects the differing volume of material available in the published regional collections rather than a sampling decision – a limitation addressed in the Conclusions section.

Although these collections appeared between 2018 and 2019, the texts were not collected by the author. It derived from the manuscript holdings of the Ch. Aitmatov Institute of Language and Literature (National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic) and represent folklore recorded during expeditions conducted from the 1920s onwards, including fieldwork carried out in 2015. Three criteria guided source selection. First, only texts explicitly identified as Jaramazan or Jarapazan in scholarly folklore publications were included. Second, preference was given to materials gathered during academic



expeditions and issued in peer-reviewed or authoritative editions, ensuring the corpus rests on reliable records. Third, the corpus was designed to span different regions, so that both shared features and regional variation could be observed. Scholarship on Kyrgyz folklore, Islamic tradition, and Ramadan culture supplied the historical and comparative background for interpretation (Özdemir, 2015; Kochkunov, 2018; Rysbaeva, 2019). Related studies further contributed to the analysis (Sipos, 2014; Esbergenova, 2019; Mustafina, 2020).

The research followed a qualitative design grounded in folkloristic textual analysis, with the individual Jaramazan text as the principal unit of analysis. A comparative-historical reading situated Kyrgyz Jaramazan within the wider field of Ramadan traditions among Turkic peoples, identifying typological parallels with neighbouring traditions while bringing regional characteristics into relief. Structural and formulaic analysis examined the internal organisation of each text by comparing recurrent compositional components across the regional corpus, including greeting formulas, announcements of Ramadan, Islamic motifs, praise of the householder, blessing formulas, and gift-requesting passages. Their distribution and variation were examined to distinguish recurrent ritual components from locally variable forms and to identify a compositional model within the corpus. Linguostylistic analysis focused on lexical choices, repetition, parallel constructions, epithets, and symbolic expressions, while motif analysis traced recurring themes of religious value, blessing,

generosity, reciprocity, and communal solidarity. Functional analysis examined the religious, social, communicative, and educational roles performed by these textual and ritual elements, with particular attention to community interaction, ritualised gift exchange, oral transmission, and the communication of cultural values. Given the modest size of the corpus, the analysis is interpretive rather than statistical: observations concerning the relative prominence of particular features are treated as qualitative tendencies within the texts examined rather than as quantified distributions. Some sources cited in the manuscript are not available in open access, although the full texts are available to the authors.

Results

The structural model of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

The corpus showed that Kyrgyz Jaramazan rests on a stable compositional structure, even as individual performances vary from region to region and from singer to singer. The materials from Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy unfold through a recurring sequence of structural components, and it is this sequence that gives the performance its ritual frame. A given performer may drop or expand a particular section, yet the overall organisation holds steady across the corpus – a sign both of the genre's formulaic character and of its long life in oral tradition (Jusupov, 1999; Kolbaeva, 2018; Isaeva, 2018). On this basis, a recurrent compositional model within the examined corpus can be identified as set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Structural model of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

Structural component	Main communicative function	Distribution in corpus
Greeting formula	Opening ritual communication	Present in all regions
Announcement of Ramadan	Introducing the sacred context	Present in all regions
Religious references	Emphasising Islamic belief and sacred history	Frequent in Jalal-Abad, Osh, and Chüy; less so in Talas
Praise of the householder	Establishing positive social relations	Present in all regions
Blessings and good wishes	Expressing prosperity and well-being	Present in all regions
Gift-request formula	Ritualised reciprocity and symbolic exchange	Present in all regions
Closing blessing	Concluding the performance and reinforcing solidarity	Present in all regions

Source: compiled by the authors

A greeting formula opens nearly every recorded performance, establishing ritual contact between performer and household and marking the start of the ceremony. One of the most widespread openings in the corpus runs:

*Assaloomu aleikum, Jaramazan,
On eki ayda bir kelgen Orozjan.*

Peace be upon you, Jaramazan,

O Ramadan that comes but once in twelve months (Jusupov, 1999).

Beyond marking the opening of the ritual, this formula is revealing in its composition. The line joins two registers: the Arabic-Islamic salutation *Assaloomu aleikum* and the vernacular Kyrgyz *Orozjan*, in which the religious term *oroza* (fasting) takes the affectionate diminutive suffix *-jan*. The pairing is not incidental. At the level of the opening formula itself, it enacts the syncretism that defines the

genre – an Islamic devotional frame domesticated through the intimate register of Kyrgyz oral tradition. That the fusion of Islamic and local elements appears already in the genre's first component, and recurs across the corpus, suggests that this blend is built into the ritual architecture of Jaramazan from its opening move. After the greeting, performers turn to the sacred character of Ramadan, invoking Islamic belief, fasting, the prophets, or holy places:

*Bul oroza janybar kaydan kelgen,
Makka, Tilla-Medina jaydan kelgen.*

From where has this blessed Ramadan come?

It has come from Mecca and noble Medina (Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019).

Religious references run through the whole corpus, clustering most densely in the Jalal-Abad and Osh materials. Words such as *Makka*, *Medina*, *paygambar* (prophet),

and *orozo* (fasting) set the sacred scene and anchor the Islamic identity of the tradition. What this component contributes structurally is a symbolic geography: by tracing the origin of Ramadan to Mecca and Medina, the formula binds the immediate setting of the Kyrgyz household to the wider sacred landscape of Islam, situating a local ritual within a global religious community. Within the examined texts, the prominence of these place-names, particularly in the Jalal-Abad and Osh materials, suggests the importance of Islamic sacred geography in the ritual language of Jaramazan. The next component praises the householder and the home, dwelling on prosperity, generosity, hospitality, and social standing:

*Üyüñ, üyüñ, üy eken,
Üyüñdün körkü düy eken.
Saba körkü tüy eken,
Sandyk körkü üy eken.*

Your house is truly a fine house,
its beauty like that of a grand hall.
The churn's beauty is the camel,
the chest's beauty is the home itself (Kolbaeva, 2018).

The praise section performs a distinct social function: it establishes respect and goodwill between performer and household before any request is made. The objects it names – the house (*üy*), the leather kumys vessel (*saba*), the chest (*sandyk*) – are drawn from the material world of pastoral life, but within the formula they cease to be mere possessions. Each is invoked as an index of the household's prosperity, honour, and standing, so that praising the beauty of domestic objects becomes a way of affirming the worth of the family that owns them. In structural terms, this section prepares the ground for the exchange to follow: by first honouring the household, the performer secures the social rapport on which the later request for gifts depends. Praise is commonly followed by blessings – wishes for prosperity, health, plentiful livestock, and many descendants:

*Jaramazan aytıp keldim eshigiñe,
Ak kochkordoy uul bersin beshigiñe.*

I have come to your door singing Jaramazan;
may a son as sturdy as a white ram be granted to your cradle (Isaeva, 2018).

Blessing formulas turn on optative, wish-bearing constructions paired with valued words for fertility, prosperity, family continuity, and divine favour. The imagery is drawn from the same pastoral world as the praise section: the blessing asks not simply for a son but for one “as sturdy as a white ram” (*ak kochkordoy uul*), where the ram stands for strength, virility, and the continuity of the herd, and the evaluative *ak* (“white”) carries connotations of purity and good fortune in Kyrgyz culture. To bless a household with such a son is to measure human increase against the most valued animal of the pastoral economy, folding the family's future into the imagery of flourishing livestock. The structure of the formula is itself significant: the performer first states his own act – “I have come to your door singing Jaramazan” – and only then voices the wish, so that the blessing is framed as a return offered for

a service rendered. The reciprocal logic of the ritual is already visible here: the performer gives words of blessing, and the formula anticipates the household's gift in turn. Through such formulas, performers symbolically transfer good fortune to the household – one of the central ritual gestures of Jaramazan. The request for gifts usually follows the blessings. Far from a blunt demand, it is couched in humorous, indirect, and playful formulas:

*Kozu bergin, koy bergin, baylap bergin,
Jürök oorum bar ele, kaymak bergin.*

Give me a lamb, give me a sheep, tie one up and hand it over;

my heart has been aching – give me some cream as well (Jusupov, 1999).

Structurally, this is the component in which the reciprocity at the heart of the ritual becomes explicit, and it is managed with notable social tact. A bare request would risk casting the performer as a beggar and embarrassing both parties; by recasting it as a shared joke – the plea for cream excused by a transparently mock ailment, “my heart has been aching” – the exchange is lifted clear of any suggestion of dependency, and both giver and receiver keep their dignity. The request thus completes the ritual bargain opened by the praise and blessings: the household, having been honoured and blessed, is invited to reciprocate, but in a form that keeps the transaction within the bounds of hospitality rather than obligation. Requests of this kind occur across the regional materials examined and constitute one of the recurrent features of the corpus.

The performance closes with concluding blessings addressed to the household, renewing wishes for prosperity, health, and divine protection. The exact wording shifts from singer to singer, but its purpose stays constant across the corpus: to seal the exchange and reaffirm the goodwill between performer and household on which the encounter has rested. Taken together, these components form more than a sequence of set pieces; they trace a coherent ritual logic. The greeting opens contact and, in its very language, announces the genre's fusion of Islamic and local tradition; the religious references locate the household within a sacred order; the praise establishes social rapport; the blessings transfer good fortune; the gift-request calls in the reciprocity that praise and blessing have prepared; and the closing benediction seals the bond. Regional differences touch mainly on word choice and on how far a given section is expanded or trimmed, not on this underlying order. That the same sequence recurs across Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy indicates that what oral transmission preserves is not fixed wording but a stable ritual structure – a framework robust enough to carry the tradition while leaving performers room for local variation and personal invention.

Poetic features of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

The corpus made clear that the appeal of Kyrgyz Jaramazan rests not on its ritual content alone but on a well-developed system of poetic and linguistic devices. However much the regional variants differ in length and thematic emphasis,



they are consistent in their use of formulaic expression, syntactic parallelism, lexical concatenation, repetition, epithet, hyperbole, sound patterning, and humour. These devices are not merely ornamental; they are characteristic resources of oral-formulaic composition that can support

memorisation, performance, and transmission. The analysis of the corpus revealed several recurring poetic and linguistic features that shape the structure, performance, and communicative function of Kyrgyz Jaramazan. The main features identified in the texts are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2. Principal poetic and linguistic features of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

Poetic feature	Linguistic realisation	Primary communicative function
Formulaic expressions	Fixed greeting, blessing, and gift-request formulas	Establishing ritual communication
Syntactic parallelism	Repeated clause structures and coordinated phrases	Creating rhythm and semantic cohesion
Lexical repetition	Repetition of key words and imperative forms	Emphasis and memorisation
Epithets	Positive evaluative adjectives and descriptive nouns	Praising the householder and expressing respect
Hyperbolic imagery	Exaggerated descriptions of wealth and prosperity	Reinforcing blessings and social ideals
Sound patterning	Alliteration, assonance, and rhythmic repetition	Supporting oral performance
Humorous expressions	Playful requests and exaggeration	Softening requests and preserving social harmony

Source: compiled by the authors

The first of these features is the genre's reliance on fixed formulas. As the structural analysis showed, performances open with conventional formulas that stay largely unchanged from one region to the next, and the same formulaic quality marks the blessings and closing benedictions. This is the condition that oral-formulaic theory identifies as the basis of unwritten poetry: in the account of M. Parry (1930) and A.B. Lord (1960), the singer of an oral tradition does not memorise fixed texts word for word but composes in performance from a shared stock of ready-made formulas. The recurrence of the same lexical combinations across the Kyrgyz corpus is what that theory would predict – evidence that performers draw on a common traditional repertoire rather than inventing each text anew, and that it is this repertoire, not any single fixed wording, that is transmitted. Syntactic parallelism is a second organising principle. Many verses are built on repeated grammatical patterns, in which successive lines hold the same structure while introducing new words. Such parallelism sets up a rhythmic balance and binds neighbouring lines in sense, but its deeper function is mnemonic and generative: a fixed grammatical frame into which fresh lexical material can be slotted gives the performer a reliable template for producing verse on the spot. It runs consistently through the Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy materials, which marks it as one of the genre's principal design features.

Closely related, and still more revealing of the genre's oral technique, is lexical concatenation – the chaining of lines by carrying a key word forward from one verse to the next. The praise passage cited earlier (Kolbaeva, 2018) is a clear instance: the words *üy* (house) and *körkü* (beauty) are picked up and repeated from line to line, so that each verse grows out of the one before it. Reinforced by the insistent end-rhyme *eken*, this chaining produces a tightly interlocked structure in which one phrase cues the next. In the terms of oral-formulaic theory, this is the mechanism that allows a performer to generate and recall such passages fluently: the sound and shape of one line summon the line that follows, so that the singer moves along an established track rather than composing each verse from nothing.

The corpus also draws heavily on lexical repetition, especially in greetings, blessings, and gift-request passages. Repeated imperatives, together with recurring nouns for livestock, household goods, and religious concepts, lend the performance its persuasive and ceremonial force. In the gift-request formulas, the reiterated imperative *bergin* ("give") presses the theme of reciprocity while keeping the exchange playful (Jusupov, 1999). Repetition of this kind also knits the text together and invites collective participation, since verses that repeat are easy to remember and recite. Epithets are a further recurrent device. Household holders are described through warmly evaluative words tied to generosity, hospitality, prosperity, and honour, while homes, livestock, and family members are cast in elevated terms that speak to social standing and communal respect. These epithets rarely work as literal description; it operated instead as conventional formulas voicing shared ideals of generosity and well-being.

Hyperbole works alongside them, and in two distinct registers. In blessings it magnifies wealth, fertility, and abundance – herds beyond counting, tables that overflow, households full of children – as a symbolic reach toward desirable social goods that deepens the ritual weight of the wish. In the gift-request, by contrast, exaggeration turns comic: the plea for cream excused by a mock ailment ("my heart has been aching") is implausible by design, its very extravagance signalling that the request is not to be taken literally. The same device thus serves solemn ends in one section and disarming ones in another. Sound patterning gives the verses much of their music. Alliteration, assonance, and end-rhyme – as in the chain of *eken* endings noted above – lend a musical quality that carries collective recitation and supports memorisation. Such patterning is not decorative but part of the mnemonic machinery of the genre: sound, like grammar and formula, helps fix the verse in memory and steer the performer from one line to the next. Similar patterns appear across all the regional corpora, though performers differ in how far they ornament their lines.

Humour, finally, is a poetic feature in its own right, bound up with the genre's pragmatics. It gathers above all

around the request for gifts, where the performer must ask without appearing to beg. The comic effect rests on a mismatch between grammatical form and social situation: the request is cast in the imperative – *bergin, bergin, bergin*, the grammar of command – yet the performer, a guest at the door, is in no position to command. All parties understand the imperative not as a demand but as a conventional, playful move, and the joke lets performer and householder complete the exchange while preserving the dignity of both. Humour here does real social work, turning what might be an awkward solicitation into an agreeable part of the ritual.

Taken across regions, these devices remain stable, with variation surfacing mainly in lexical preference rather than in the poetic system itself. The vocabulary shifts – pastoral in Talas, family-centred in Osh, densely religious in Jalal-Abad, more contemporary in the Chüy material – but the underlying repertoire of formula, parallelism, concatenation, repetition, sound, and humour holds steady; the regional distribution of vocabulary is examined in detail in the following section. What unites these devices is that they are at once aesthetic and

functional: they give the genre its verbal artistry while serving the concrete demands of oral composition – memory, fluent performance, and faithful transmission. That they persist across Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy indicates that the poetic design of Kyrgyz Jaramazan, like its ritual structure, is carried forward as a system rather than as a set of fixed texts.

Regional variants and local characteristics of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

Comparing the Jaramazan texts from Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy showed that the genre keeps a common structural frame while taking on distinct regional colouring in vocabulary, thematic emphasis, and style. Every regional variant carries the principal components described above, yet local traditions differ in the words they favour, the motifs they bring to the fore, and the attention they give to particular sections. These differences trace the meeting of a stable oral tradition with the cultural setting in which each regional version developed. The key regional characteristics of Kyrgyz Jaramazan across the selected areas are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Regional characteristics of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

Feature	Talas	Osh	Jalal-Abad	Chüy
Greeting formulas	✓	✓	✓	✓
Religious vocabulary	++	++	+++	++
Household imagery	+++	++	++	++
Blessing formulas	++	+++	++	++
Gift-request passages	++	++	+++	++
Humorous expressions	+++	++	++	++
Contemporary lexical elements	+	+	+	+++

Note: ✓ = consistently present; + = limited occurrence; ++ = frequent; +++ = particularly prominent. The symbols indicate qualitative prominence within the analysed corpus rather than quantitative frequency

Source: developed by the authors based on Oxford English dictionary (n.d.), Cambridge dictionary (n.d.), Merriam-Webster dictionary (n.d.)

Jaramazan in different regions

Within the two Talas texts examined, household imagery and vocabulary associated with pastoral life are particularly prominent. References to houses, livestock, dairy, domestic utensils, and everyday plenty appear more often here than in the other regional corpora (Kolbaeva, 2018). Praise formulas dwell on the beauty of the home, the abundance of the herd, and the generosity of the family, mirroring the region's traditional pastoral economy. Words such as *üy* (house), *koy* (sheep), *kozu* (lamb), *kaymak* (cream), *saba* (leather vessel), and *sandyk* (chest) recur throughout, tying material plenty to communal well-being. Humour is also especially frequent, above all in the gift-request passages, where performers reach for playful exaggeration and stock comic formulas rather than asking outright. This warmth marks Talas Jaramazan as a tradition oriented toward social solidarity.

The Osh corpus is the most consistent in its composition. Most recorded performances keep the full sequence – greeting, announcement of Ramadan, religious introduction, praise, blessings, gift requests, and closing

benediction (Isaeva, 2018) – which suggests that the traditional model has been carried on here with little structural change. Where Osh differs from Talas is in its stock of blessings tied to family continuity and descendants: words for children, sons, cradles, family fortune, and future generations recur throughout, and blessings for healthy offspring and a happy household are among the dominant themes. Religious vocabulary appears regularly, but compared with Jalal-Abad, Islamic terms tend to sit within short blessing formulas rather than extended religious narration. The result is a balanced tradition that holds ritual blessing, family-centred values, and a steady compositional shape together.

Of all the regional corpora, the Jalal-Abad materials are the most thematically varied and the most densely religious (Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019). Many performances carry extended reference to prophets, holy places, fasting, and charity, and their religious introductions tend to run longer and more elaborately than those of Talas or Osh. The vocabulary follows suit: terms such as Makka



(Mecca), Medina, *paygambar* (prophet), and *orozo* (fasting) occur more often here than elsewhere, deepening the sacred dimension of the genre and strengthening its role in carrying religious knowledge through the community. Alongside these religious motifs, Jalal-Abad texts often develop rich blessing formulas and detailed pictures of generosity, hospitality, and abundance, and their gift-request passages are more elaborate and frequently laced with humour or hyperbole.

The Chüy materials show continuity and adaptation side by side. The principal components – greeting formulas, religious references, praise, blessings, and gift requests – remain fully in place, while the corpus admits a larger share of vocabulary drawn from contemporary life and changing habits of communication. Set beside the southern and western corpora, Chüy texts work with a more flexible lexical range, in which traditional Islamic and pastoral vocabulary sits comfortably beside words for modern realities. In this text, contemporary lexical elements coexist with traditional ritual formulas, illustrating one possible form of lexical adaptation within the genre. The contemporary elements appear more often here, yet they leave the underlying composition untouched – a sign of how readily Kyrgyz Jaramazan can absorb social change without loosening its core ritual structure.

Set side by side, the four corpora confirm that the structural organisation of Kyrgyz Jaramazan holds steady across the regions examined. Greeting formulas, announcements of Ramadan, praise sections, blessings, ritual gift requests, and closing benedictions recur in every region, pointing to a shared compositional tradition. Within the examined corpus, regional variation appears primarily at the lexical and thematic level rather than in the overall compositional sequence. The Talas texts give particular prominence to household and pastoral imagery; the Osh texts to blessings associated with family continuity; the larger Jalal-Abad subcorpus to religious vocabulary and Islamic motifs; while the single Chüy text contains several contemporary lexical elements. Given the small and uneven regional sample, these patterns should be treated as corpus-specific tendencies rather than as definitive characteristics of the regional traditions themselves. Kyrgyz Jaramazan thus couples structural stability with lexical and stylistic variety. A shared compositional model persists alongside regional linguistic difference – which is precisely how oral tradition works: inherited formulaic structures are preserved while performers adapt vocabulary and imagery to their own cultural surroundings. That balance of continuity and variation is much of what keeps Kyrgyz Jaramazan alive as an element of the country's intangible cultural heritage.

Social functions of Kyrgyz Jaramazan

The corpus showed that Kyrgyz Jaramazan does more social work than its label as religious-calendar folklore might suggest. Bound as the performances are to Ramadan, they also serve as vehicles of ritual communication: they strengthen communal bonds, set reciprocal exchange in motion, pass on ethical norms, and safeguard shared

cultural values. These functions recur across the texts and performance practices of Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy. First, Kyrgyz Jaramazan marks the holy month of Ramadan and heightens the religious awareness of the community. Greeting formulas, references to fasting, Islamic belief, prophets, and sacred places, together with expressions of blessing, set the sacred frame of the performance and remind listeners of what Ramadan means (Jusupov, 1999; Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019). This work is carried by stable ritual formulas and religious vocabulary: words such as *orozo* (fasting), Makka (Mecca), Medina, and *paygambar* (prophet), alongside the conventional blessings, recur throughout the corpus and form a stable lexical layer of the genre. Their constant return shows that ritual communication here rests on inherited formula rather than spontaneous speech, making Jaramazan an important medium through which religious belief is reaffirmed and ritual tradition kept alive within Kyrgyz communities.

A second function is the strengthening of social cohesion. During a performance, participants move from house to house, exchange greetings, deliver blessings, and enter into direct contact with members of the community, turning the event into a collective occasion that draws people closer and fosters mutual respect. Language carries this function through praise formulas and evaluative words for generosity, hospitality, prosperity, and family honour. To call a householder generous, prosperous, and respected is less to describe their wealth than to affirm, symbolically, a set of shared social values. By joining ritual performance to face-to-face communication, Jaramazan helps hold the community together and renews its sense of common identity.

Gift exchange lies close to the heart of the genre's social life. Throughout the corpus, requests for gifts arrive as conventional parts of the performance, voiced in indirect, humorous, formulaic language rather than as plain demands (Jusupov, 1999; Kolbaeva, 2018), with references to livestock, dairy, food, clothing, and household goods recurring across every regional tradition. The recurring imperative *bergin* ("give") shows how thoroughly conventionalised these requests are: for all their imperative grammar, they function as accepted moves in ceremonial communication, not as commands. The reciprocal trade of blessings for gifts reveals that what changes hands has symbolic rather than merely economic worth; through it, performers and householders reaffirm their mutual generosity, hospitality, and social reciprocity, and the ties of community are drawn tighter. Viewed through the perspective of speech act theory (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1969), these recurrent ritual formulas perform distinct communicative functions within the structure of Jaramazan. Greeting formulas establish ritual interaction between performers and householders, blessing formulas function as benedictive illocutionary acts expressing wishes for health, prosperity, and divine favour, while gift-request formulas operate as culturally sanctioned directive acts embedded in reciprocal exchange rather than ordinary requests. Considered together, these speech acts organise the communicative

sequence of the performance and reinforce the ritual, social, and symbolic functions of Jaramazan.

Kyrgyz Jaramazan also serves to pass on religious knowledge, ethical principle and traditional norms of conduct. Performed year after year, it acquaints younger members of the community with Islamic concepts, valued turns of phrase, and the established patterns of ritual communication. Ethnographic evidence points to children and adolescents taking part alongside their elders, absorbing both the texts and the conventions that govern their performance (Kolbaeva, 2018; Isaeva, 2018). This teaching happens through repeated blessing formulas, moral expressions, and culturally weighted vocabulary bound up with generosity, respect for elders, family continuity, and religious devotion. Because these expressions are formulaic, they are easy to remember, and that ease is precisely what carries the oral tradition from one generation to the next. Jaramazan thus works not only as ritual entertainment but as an informal school through which religious, ethical, and cultural knowledge is passed on.

Beyond its immediate ritual setting, Kyrgyz Jaramazan helps preserve the values of Kyrgyz society. Across the corpus, performers return steadily to hospitality, generosity, mutual aid, family prosperity, respect for elders, and communal responsibility, voicing them through praise formulas, blessings, and symbolic images of abundance and well-being. These ideals are carried by a stable stock of evaluative words for prosperity, honour, kinship, abundance, and divine favour; the particular words vary from region to region, but the system of values beneath them stays remarkably constant. Jaramazan thus works as a cultural mechanism through which collective values are preserved, reaffirmed, and handed on. Taken together, these findings show that Kyrgyz Jaramazan fulfils several interlocking social functions that reach well beyond its religious origins: it strengthens religious identity, fosters community solidarity, sets ritualised reciprocity in motion, supports moral education, and preserves cultural values. All of this is achieved through a blend of stable compositional structure, formulaic language, ritual performance, and symbolic communication. For all the regional differences in word choice and style, these functions hold steady across Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy – a measure of the genre's continuing importance to Kyrgyzstan's intangible cultural heritage.

Cultural transmission and the continuity of tradition

Comparison of the published folklore materials and the contemporary examples examined here indicates substantial continuity in several core compositional and formulaic

features, despite differences in period and communicative setting. For all the regional differences in vocabulary and style, the genre's core composition, ritual functions, and poetic organisation have stayed steady across its long history. The materials from Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy tell the same story: the fundamental components identified earlier – greeting formulas, announcements of Ramadan, religious references, praise of the householder, blessing formulas, ritual gift requests, and closing benedictions – recur alike in older and more recent variants (Jusupov, 1999; Isaeva, 2018; Murzagulova *et al.*, 2019). Performers may reword a line or draw out a particular section, yet the general model has held firm over time.

This endurance is a measure of how well oral transmission works. Stable formulas, parallel syntax, rhythmic repetition, and conventional blessings make the texts easy to remember and let performers reproduce them with little variation, so that each generation inherits not merely the words but the whole set of conventions that govern their ritual performance. Ethnographic materials add that the genre has long passed down through family and community: children and adolescents commonly learn the texts by trailing older performers during Ramadan, absorbing the verbal formulas and the manner of performance together (Kolbaeva, 2018; Isaeva, 2018). At the same time, the corpus showed the tradition adapting to new means of communication. Beyond the old practice of visiting households, Jaramazan now also travels through digital platforms and social networks. One example circulating on social media shows a traditional performance shared in virtual space, its greeting formulas, blessings, and ritual vocabulary intact (Adilet Legal Centre, 2022):

*Jaramazan aytamyn telefondon,
Baralbadym üyüñüzgö yraak joldon.*

I sing Jaramazan down the telephone;

I could not reach your home, for the road was too far (Adilet Legal Centre, 2022).

Where the traditional performance turns on face-to-face contact, this example answers to changed conditions while keeping the genre's conventional poetic shape: the greeting, the rhythm, and the language of blessing remain recognizable, even as words for modern communication find their way in. Digital circulation does not unsettle the cultural identity of Kyrgyz Jaramazan; it testifies rather to the adaptive reach of oral tradition. What technology has changed is the channel of transmission, not the ritual, poetic, and social work the genre does. The main modes of traditional and contemporary transmission of Kyrgyz Jaramazan are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Traditional and contemporary modes of cultural transmission

Mode of transmission	Principal characteristics	Evidence
Family performance	Learning from parents and elders during Ramadan	Ethnographic materials
Community household visits	Collective ritual performance and oral interaction	Regional folklore collections
Folklore publications	Documentation and preservation of traditional texts	El Adabiyaty, anthologies, archival collections
Digital communication	Online sharing through social media and messaging	Contemporary online materials (Adilet Legal Centre, 2022)

Source: compiled by the authors based on Adilet Legal Centre (2022)



Traditional and contemporary transmission thus differ chiefly in the channels through which Jaramazan travels, not in its inner organisation: formulaic expression, compositional sequence, blessing formulas, and symbolic functions carry on much as before. Kyrgyz Jaramazan is therefore best understood as a living tradition rather than a fixed relic of the folkloric past. Recent media reports document performances during Ramadan in public spaces – streets, markets, cafés, and restaurants – while also noting its continued transmission among children and its circulation through digital media (Super.kg, 2010; Kaktus, 2024; Azattyk, 2026). These reports do not permit conclusions about the frequency or geographical distribution of contemporary performances across the country, but they provide independent evidence that the tradition continues to be practised in present-day Kyrgyzstan. By preserving its core ritual structure while adapting to new social and communicative contexts, Jaramazan continues to transmit religious knowledge, cultural values, and collective identity across generations.

Discussion

Ritual continuity and communal solidarity

The recurrence of comparable compositional and ritual features across the regional materials examined suggests that the significance of Kyrgyz Jaramazan lies less in any single text than in the continuity of a shared ritual practice. Jaramazan is not a fixed literary text but a recognised ceremonial event through which communities reaffirm their religious identity and social cohesion during Ramadan. This reading accords with V.W. Turner's (1969) account of ritual as a social process, though the Jaramazan performance invites a more specific application of his framework. V.W. Turner's (1969) central insight is that ritual moves participants temporarily out of their ordinary social positions into a liminal condition, within which the everyday hierarchies of status and rank give way to the levelled, momentary bond he calls *communitas*. The house-to-house performance can be read in just these terms. Viewed through V.W. Turner's (1969) framework, the house-to-house encounter may be understood as temporarily reorganising ordinary relations between guest and host, younger and elder around the ritual: the performer, who might otherwise be a child or a person of modest standing, is licensed to praise, to bless, and even to demand, while the householder is bound to receive and to give. For the duration of the performance, both parties inhabit a shared ritual frame set apart from ordinary interaction – a small enactment of *communitas* in which hospitality, reciprocity, and mutual recognition are foregrounded over everyday distinctions of status. The playful licence of the gift-request belongs to precisely this liminal space, where speech that would elsewhere breach etiquette becomes not only permissible but expected.

From this perspective, the continuity of the tradition can be understood as depending not only on the preservation of verbal formulas but also on the repeated enactment of the social relationships embedded in the ritual

encounter. In this respect, V.W. Turner's (1969) model provides a useful way of interpreting the household-based interaction documented in the Kyrgyz materials, particularly the temporary ritual framing of hospitality, reciprocity, and social recognition. Comparable ties between ritual stability and local variation have been noted in other Turkic Ramadan traditions. H.Ö. Özden (2006) observed that Turkish Ramadan performances retain their ritual meaning despite regional differences in poetic style and musical setting, and G. Ünsal (2011) found that Turkish *Ramazan manileri* keep their ceremonial functions while varying widely in vocabulary and performance context. The examined Kyrgyz materials show a comparable pattern: lexical preferences and poetic imagery vary across the regional subcorpora, while recurrent elements of the compositional sequence remain recognisable. Within the limits of the present corpus, this pattern suggests that regional variation operates primarily at the lexical and thematic levels rather than indicating fundamentally separate genre structures.

The comparison also brings out a real difference between the two traditions. In many parts of Türkiye, Ramadan performance is bound up with public celebration and with the Ramadan drummers (*Ramazan davulcuları*), who announce the pre-dawn meal (*sahur*) in public space (Özden, 2006; Ünsal, 2011). Kyrgyz Jaramazan, by contrast, turns on the household visit, where performers enter a personal exchange with each family through greeting, blessing, and ritual verse. Different as these settings are, both do comparable social work, sustaining communal solidarity, religious awareness, and a shared sense of cultural identity during Ramadan. These parallels suggest that continuity alongside local variation is a recurrent feature of the Turkic Ramadan traditions considered here: language, stylistic devices, and modes of performance may vary while recognisable ceremonial functions are retained. The materials examined suggest that the continuity of Kyrgyz Jaramazan is associated with this balance between recurrent ritual conventions and adaptation to changing cultural contexts.

Formulaic language and regional variation

The linguistic evidence points to a close relationship between the stability of Kyrgyz Jaramazan and its formulaic mode of expression. Rather than forming a corpus of fixed texts, the examined materials display conventional formulas, parallel constructions, and recurring blessings that are consistent with resources supporting memorisation and oral delivery. These resources provide a flexible compositional framework: the ritual structure is maintained while lexical and stylistic variation is accommodated in each performance. The oral-formulaic theory of M. Parry (1930) and A.B. Lord (1960) offers a useful lens on this pattern, though the Kyrgyz material suggests that the shared formulaic repertoire functions not only as a mnemonic aid for composition but also as a mechanism for maintaining ritual organisation across the regional materials examined.

Comparable features appear in other Turkic Ramadan traditions. In Turkish *Ramazan manileri*, formulaic openings, recurrent blessings, and rhythmic repetition form the backbone of the poetry, whatever the regional differences in vocabulary and performance style (Özden, 2006; Ünsal, 2011), and studies of Kazakh Jaramazan note the persistence of standardised greetings, religious vocabulary, and parallel constructions passed down in performance (Esbergenova, 2019). Across these traditions the same division holds: local vocabulary and imagery shift with the regional setting, while the formulaic structure and communicative functions stay largely fixed. Within the Kyrgyz corpus, the regional differences identified in the Results are most visible at the lexical and thematic levels, while recurrent compositional elements remain recognisable across the materials examined. This pattern is consistent with an oral formulaic tradition in which recurring formulas coexist with textual variation. Within the materials examined, formulaic language appears to contribute to structural continuity while allowing lexical and stylistic variation. Kyrgyz Jaramazan shares the principal linguistic traits of Turkic Ramadan folklore while retaining the regional features that reflect the cultural range of Kyrgyzstan – a coexistence of stable structure and localised variation that helps explain the genre's long survival as a living ritual form.

Symbolic exchange and reciprocity

The reciprocal exchange at the heart of Kyrgyz Jaramazan shows that the genre is not only a religious performance but a socially regulated system of symbolic communication. The exchange of blessings and gifts is no mere economic transaction; it reinforces social relationships, public recognition, and communal obligation, so that the act of giving takes on a cultural weight well beyond the material value of the gifts themselves. This follows M. Mauss's (2001) theory of the gift, in which gifts establish and sustain lasting social relationships through reciprocal obligation. Within Jaramazan, performers offer verbal gifts – blessings, praise, wishes for prosperity – and householders answer with food, money, or other offerings; both sides contribute, and both are needed to bring the ritual to a close. The Kyrgyz material also extends M. Mauss's (2001) account in one respect: here reciprocity is sustained through ritual humour and indirect speech – communicative strategies that receive comparatively little attention in his original discussion of exchange.

Symbolic reciprocity of this kind is not unique to the Kyrgyz genre. In Turkish *Ramazan manileri*, poetic praise and comic requests are likewise met with hospitality and small gifts (Özden, 2006; Ünsal, 2011), and comparable practices are reported for Kazakh Jaramazan (Esbergenova, 2019). While the particular rewards vary with local custom, the reciprocal structure remains constant – evidence that gift-giving functions less as an economic transaction than as a mechanism of social bonding shared across Turkic Ramadan traditions. What distinguishes the Kyrgyz case is the manner of the request: gifts are asked for through

indirect, humorous, formulaic language rather than open demand. Humour, exaggeration, and playful imperatives lift the sense of obligation from the exchange, recasting the act of giving as a gesture of generosity and goodwill and keeping relations cordial throughout the performance.

A. Oralbek & U. Saidirakhman (2025) argued that traditional ritual practices retain their social meaning even when performed in changing cultural settings, and the present findings agree: the contexts of Jaramazan have shifted, yet the principle of reciprocal exchange stays stable. Whether in a village of old or a community of today, the trade of blessings for gifts still speaks of generosity, mutual respect, and social solidarity. Material gifts take on meaning only within the ceremonial frame, where they express gratitude for the blessings received and reaffirm the mutual obligations that bind the community. The social value of Jaramazan, in the end, lies not in the material exchange itself but in the relationships that exchange creates and renews.

Cultural memory, adaptation, and the continuity of tradition

The long life of Kyrgyz Jaramazan chimes with J. Assmann's (2012) concept of cultural memory, in which communities preserve their collective identity not by fixing the past in unchanging texts but through recurring practices that reactivate shared knowledge across generations. The yearly performance of Jaramazan renews religious values, ethical norms, and a sense of common history; each re-enactment works as an act of cultural remembrance in which communities reproduce inherited systems of meaning rather than merely repeating inherited words. This is what keeps Jaramazan an active part of Kyrgyz cultural life rather than a relic of the folkloric past. Within this frame, adaptation is essential to continuity, not a threat to it. New vocabulary and new channels of communication do not unsettle the ritual identity of Jaramazan; they show how readily oral tradition answers to changing conditions while holding its core ceremonial functions. A. Oralbek & U. Saidirakhman (2025) reached a similar view, arguing that elements of intangible cultural heritage stay viable when communities adapt traditional practice to new settings without abandoning its symbolic foundations. The same continuity-through-adaptation appears in other Turkic Ramadan traditions: studies of Turkish *Ramazan manileri* show that communities have reworked the settings, poetic expression, and modes of presentation while the tradition goes on serving its principal religious and social ends (Özden, 2006; Ünsal, 2011).

Performance theory helps account for this. As R. Bauman *et al.* (1977) stressed, each performance recreates the tradition within a particular social context while remaining recognisable to the community through shared convention. The Kyrgyz material illustrates the process cleanly: performers hold to the established greetings, blessing patterns, and ritual sequences while introducing the linguistic innovations that reflect contemporary experience. Continuity, in other words, is achieved through



repeated performance rather than through the exact reproduction of identical texts, so that cultural memory and adaptation operate not as opposing forces but as complementary mechanisms – preserved symbolic meanings, ritual conventions, and collective values providing the stability, while linguistic flexibility and changing modes of transmission let the tradition go on meaning something under new conditions. Kyrgyz Jaramazan thus emerges as a dynamic form of intangible cultural heritage whose continuity is secured through adaptation rather than resistance to change. The interplay of cultural memory, ritual performance, and social innovation has allowed the tradition to retain its religious, social, and cultural significance while answering to the evolving communicative habits of Kyrgyz society, and confirms its continuing role in transmitting collective identity across generations.

Read as a whole, the findings present Kyrgyz Jaramazan as a dynamic ritual tradition whose continuity rests on the interplay of stable compositional convention and adaptive performance. Rather than a fixed body of folkloric texts, the genre operates as a living cultural system in which linguistic formula, ritual performance, symbolic reciprocity, and collective memory work together to transmit religious and social values across generations. The theoretical perspectives drawn on in this study illuminate complementary dimensions of that process: V.W. Turner (1969) explains the temporary ritual reordering of social relations; M. Mauss (2001) clarifies the reciprocal exchange through which the encounter is completed; M. Parry (1930) and A.B. Lord (1960) accounted for the formulaic resources that make performance reproducible; R. Bauman *et al.* (1977) showed how each enactment recreates tradition within its immediate context; and J. Assmann (2012) situated these recurring performances within the broader frame of intergenerational cultural memory. Taken together, they show that Jaramazan endures because ritual interaction, reciprocal exchange, formulaic composition, contextual performance, and cultural memory operate as interconnected processes rather than as isolated features.

Comparison with neighbouring traditions shows that Kyrgyz Jaramazan shares many structural and functional characteristics with the Ramadan folklore of other Turkic peoples. Formulaic language, ritualised blessings, symbolic gift exchange, and regional variation all correspond to features reported for Turkish *Ramazan manileri* (Özden, 2006; Ünsal, 2011) and other Turkic oral traditions. At the same time, the Kyrgyz tradition retains distinctive features – household-based performance, a rich regional vocabulary, and the incorporation of local cultural values into ritual discourse – and so belongs to the wider Turkic ritual world while keeping a distinct historical and cultural identity.

The findings also contribute to broader discussions of oral tradition by showing that linguistic variation and ritual continuity are complementary rather than contradictory. Where earlier scholarship has at times read regional variation as evidence of fragmentation or competing

traditions, the Kyrgyz material suggests instead that variation and continuity operate on different levels of the same system: the former concerns lexical realisation, the latter the preservation of formulaic structure. Oral traditions endure precisely because their conventionalised compositional framework allows performers to respond to local circumstances without disrupting the tradition itself. The Kyrgyz case further contributes to current discussions on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. Technological and social change are often viewed primarily as threats to the authenticity of traditional practice; the evidence here suggests a more nuanced picture. The movement of Jaramazan into new communicative settings has altered its modes of transmission without diminishing its ritual functions or symbolic meanings. Cultural continuity therefore depends less on the preservation of identical texts than on the continued reproduction of a tradition's social and symbolic roles across changing conditions.

Methodologically, bringing together regional materials from Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy within a single analytical framework has made it possible to examine Kyrgyz Jaramazan comparatively. Integrating structural, linguistic, functional, and comparative approaches provides a fuller account of the genre than studies confined to a single regional tradition or to descriptive presentation of texts and responds to the need for more systematic comparative research on Kyrgyz ritual folklore within the wider Turkic context. Overall, Kyrgyz Jaramazan emerges as a resilient form of intangible cultural heritage that continues to fulfil important religious, social, linguistic, and cultural functions in contemporary society. By situating the genre within the broader Turkic Ramadan tradition while highlighting its regional diversity and distinctive features, this study offers a more integrated account of how oral ritual traditions preserve continuity through adaptation, renew themselves through performance, and remain meaningful across generations.

Conclusions

This study examined Kyrgyz Jaramazan as a genre of religious-calendar folklore, comparing materials from the Talas, Osh, Jalal-Abad, and Chüy regions. Bringing structural, linguistic, functional, and comparative analysis together, the study identified recurrent compositional patterns alongside lexical and thematic variation across the texts examined. A central contribution of the study was its analysis of how recurrent linguistic and formulaic patterns contribute to continuity within the examined corpus. The examined Jaramazan texts displayed a highly conventionalised system of formulaic language, including recurrent greetings, blessing expressions, imperative gift-requests, lexical repetition, and syntactic parallelism. Within the examined corpus, the Talas texts gave particular prominence to pastoral vocabulary, the Osh and Jalal-Abad materials to Islamic vocabulary, while the single Chüy text contained several contemporary expressions. Despite these differences, recurrent formulaic and compositional features remained recognisable across the texts examined,

suggesting that variation within this corpus is more evident at the lexical and thematic levels than in its overall compositional organisation. The comparison also indicated that the Kyrgyz materials share important structural and linguistic features with the Turkic Ramadan traditions considered in this study while retaining locally specific lexical and thematic features. The coexistence of recurrent ritual formulas with localised variation was consistent with the view that continuity in oral tradition can be maintained through conventional patterns of expression without requiring the exact reproduction of fixed texts. The findings further supported understanding Jaramazan not simply as a religious-calendar song but as a multifaceted cultural practice in which communal interaction, ritual reciprocity, and the communication of cultural values were closely interconnected.

Several limitations should be noted. The analysis rests on a corpus of 14 texts unevenly distributed across regions, with the Chüy tradition represented by a single text; the regional characterisations offered here – particularly for Chüy – should therefore be read as preliminary observations rather than definitive regional profiles. The corpus does not cover the full regional range of Kyrgyzstan, and the comparative analysis was confined to the Turkic Ramadan traditions available in the existing literature. Future

research might widen the geographical reach of the field materials, draw on larger and more balanced regional corpora, and undertake broader comparative studies of formulaic language, ritual performance, and cultural adaptation across Turkic oral traditions. Taken together, the findings suggest that the continuity of Kyrgyz Jaramazan is associated with the interplay of formulaic language, ritual convention, and cultural adaptation. The coexistence of recurrent formulaic and ritual patterns with lexical, regional, and communicative variation suggests a tradition capable of maintaining recognisable continuity while adapting to changing cultural contexts.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Кыргыз жарамазаны ритуалдык фольклордук практика катары: түзүлүшү, социалдык функциялары жана маданий трансмиссиясы

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Аннотация. Бул макалада кыргыз жарамазаны ритуалдык фольклордук практика катары каралып, анын түзүлүшүнө, поэтикалык өзгөчөлүктөрүнө, социалдык функцияларына жана маданий трансмиссиядагы ордуна өзгөчө көңүл бурулду. Жарамазан көптөн бери диний-календардык фольклордун жанры катары каралып келгени менен, анын композициялык түзүлүшү, тилдик уюшулушу жана маданий мурастын уланышына кошкон салымы ушул кезге чейин комплекстүү илимий талдоого жетиштүү деңгээлде алынган эмес. Изилдөөнүн максаты кыргыз жарамазанынын композициялык түзүлүшүн, поэтикалык өзгөчөлүктөрүн, аймактык вариативдүүлүгүн, социалдык функцияларын жана маданий салттарды муундан муунга өткөрүүдөгү ролун аныктоо болду. Изилдөөнүн материалын Талас, Ош, Жалал-Абад жана Чүй аймактарына таандык жарыяланган фольклордук жыйнактардан, ошондой эле антологиялардан жана заманбап булактардан алынган 14 жарамазан тексти түздү. Талдоо салыштырма-тарыхый, структуралык, мотивдик, лингвистикалык жана функционалдык методдордун негизинде жүргүзүлдү. Изилденген тексттер туруктуу композициялык түзүлүшкө ээ экени аныкталды: саламдашуу, диний кириш сөз, үй ээсин мактоо, бата-тилектер, белек суроонун ритуалдык формасы жана жыйынтыктоочу бата. Алардын тили туруктуу формулаларга, лексикалык кайталоолорго жана синтаксистик параллелизмге негизделет, ал эми аймактык айырмачылыктар негизинен лексикасында жана тематикалык басымдарында байкалат. Талас варианттарында мал чарбачылыгына байланышкан лексика жана юмордук элементтер көбүрөөк кездешсе, Ош жана Жалал-Абад тексттеринде исламдык терминология кеңири колдонулат, ал эми Чүй материалдарында салттуу формулалар менен катар кийинки мезгилде пайда болгон тилдик элементтер айкалышат. Изилдөөнүн жыйынтыктары жарамазан жөн гана сезондук диний ыр эмес, коомдук байланыштарды чыңдоочу, белек берүүнү символдук өз ара алака катары түшүндүрүүчү жана маданий баалуулуктарды муундан муунга өткөрүп берүүчү маанилүү ритуалдык практика экенин көрсөттү. Архивдик жана заманбап материалдарды салыштыруу аткаруу шарттары өзгөргөнүнө карабастан, жарамазан өзүнүн негизги тилдик жана ритуалдык өзгөчөлүктөрүн сактап калганын жана формулалык тилинин, аткаруучулук салтынын жана жаңы шарттарга ыңгайлашуу жөндөмүнүн аркасында материалдык эмес маданий мурастын жандуу элементи бойдон калып жатканын тастыктады.

Негизги сөздөр: формулалык тил; аймактык вариативдүүлүк; символдук өз ара алака; маданий эс тутум; календардык фольклор

Кыргызский жарамазан как ритуальная фольклорная практика: структура, социальные функции и культурная трансмиссия

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Аннотация. В статье рассматривался кыргызский жарамазан как ритуальная фольклорная практика с акцентом на его структуру, поэтические особенности, социальные функции и роль в культурной трансмиссии. Несмотря на то, что жарамазан традиционно классифицировался как жанр религиозно-календарного фольклора, его композиционная организация, языковая структура и вклад в сохранение культурной преемственности до настоящего времени не получали всестороннего научного анализа. Цель исследования заключалась в изучении композиционной структуры, поэтических особенностей, региональной вариативности, социальных функций и роли кыргызского жарамазана в передаче культурных традиций. В связи с этим жанр был проанализирован в структурном, языковом и функциональном аспектах, а также с точки зрения его значения для сохранения ритуальной традиции и культурной памяти кыргызского общества. Корпус исследования составили 14 текстов жарамазана, отобранных из опубликованных фольклорных сборников, представляющих Таласскую, Ошскую, Джалал-Абадскую и Чуйскую области, а также из антологий и современных источников. Анализ проводился с использованием сравнительно-исторического, структурного, мотивного, лингвистического и функционального методов. Исследованные тексты демонстрировали устойчивую композиционную последовательность: приветствие, религиозное вступление, восхваление хозяина дома, благопожелания, ритуализированную просьбу о дарах и заключительное благословение. Их язык основан на устойчивых формулах, лексическом повторе и синтаксическом параллелизме, тогда как региональные различия проявляются главным образом в словарном составе и тематических акцентах. В таласских вариантах преобладали пасторальная лексика и юмористические элементы, тексты Ошской и Джалал-Абадской областей характеризовались более насыщенной исламской терминологией, а материалы Чуйской области сочетали традиционные формулы с более поздними языковыми элементами. Проведённый анализ показал, что жарамазан представляет собой не только сезонную религиозную песню, но и ритуальную практику, способствующую укреплению общественных связей, осмыслению дарообмена как формы символического взаимодействия и передаче культурных ценностей от поколения к поколению. Сопоставление архивных и современных материалов свидетельствует о том, что, несмотря на изменение условий исполнения, традиция сохранила свои основные языковые особенности и ритуальную форму, оставаясь живым элементом нематериального культурного наследия благодаря формульному языку, исполнительской практике и способности адаптироваться к меняющимся условиям.

Ключевые слова: формульный язык; региональная вариативность; символическая взаимность; культурная память; календарный фольклор

