Research article
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On orality and the sociolinguistic situation of the Kholosi community

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Abstract: The present paper aims to present a sociolinguistic survey of Kholosi, an Indo-Aryan language that is in the process of being documented. It is spoken mainly in two villages, Gotāv and Kholos, in the Hormozgan province of Iran. It is entirely surrounded by Iranic languages. Data stem from interviews with the Kholosi people and linguistic information obtained by recording spontaneous texts. The results suggest that due to long-term contact with Iranic languages, not only has the Kholosi language been heavily influenced by Iranic features, but also their culture and oral traditions. The paper concludes that the Kholosi speakers have completely forgotten their oral songs and instead have adopted Iranic ones. In this respect they share a common cultural heritage with Iranic. They are narrating the same tales, e.g., Shāh Abbās and, Rostam va Sohrab, and they sing Iranic songs in Persian or Bastaki. The recent tendency toward using Persian and Bastaki with their children at home might accelerate language shift in their communities.

Keywords: Kholosi, orality, Iranic and Indo-Aryan

1 Introduction

The present paper provides a sociolinguistic overview of Kholosi and presents a Kholosi short tale which is transcribed, glossed, and translated into English. Information regarding sociolinguistic features has been obtained from interviews with members of the Kholosi community. I have modified a questionnaire earlier used for Laraki and Koroshi documentation projects (see Nourzaei et al. 2015, Anonby and Yousefian 2011, and Nourzaei and Anonby 2021) and used it with ten males and ten females between the ages of 30 and 88.

The linguistic information comes from two tales. It is of interest that the results from the sociolinguistic questionnaire show very little variation in answers across the speakers. In contrast to this, the observations of linguistic features in recordings of spontaneous speech demonstrate high linguistic variation across the speakers. This may be because the questionnaire is highly structured and tends to produce uniform responses.

Kholosi belongs to the Indo-Aryan branch of Indo-European. It is a verb-final language (for details on post-verbal arguments in Kholosi, see Nourzaei forthcoming), but exhibits mixed adpositional typology (with variation between speakers) and an accusative alignment system in both the present and past domains. Kholosi phonology has been heavily influenced by Iranic, as evidenced in its strong tendency to lose retroflexes, aspiration and vowel nasalization. Similarly to other languages spoken in the regions, Kholosi Intervocalic d/b/ and t are softened to fricatives (called Zagros d). Allophonic softening of intervocalic voiced consonants is an areal phenomenon of the Zagros region. Lention of /b, d, ɡ/ has already reported in Southern Luri (Anonby 2003: 51), Kurdish (McCarus 2009: 597) and Bakhtiari (Anonby and Asadi 2014, Anonby and Taheri-Ardali 2019). The Kholosi speakers have borrowed Iranic phonetic features such as the intervocalic softening. The data show a very un-
stable vowel system with a strong tendency toward losing the long vowels, e.g., ē, and ō (see Nourzaei forthcoming a).

Similarly, the results suggest that Kholosi has borrowed Iranian morphosyntactic features, e.g., plural markers, the ezafe construction, classifiers, the individuation marker, the comparative suffix, prepositions, the numeral system and the reflexive pronoun, as has been mentioned in theories of language contact (Matras 2009) and in studies of other language in contact with Iranian (Khan 2019). Finally, Kholosi shares Iranian syntactic features in the noun phrase, in that adjectives are joined to the preceding nouns either by means of the ezafe, e.g., rōbā-e nāmoratab ‘untidy fox’ or without it, e.g., rōbā nōkō ‘small fox’. Kholosi also follows the Persian general pattern that possessed precedes possessor, e.g., kasr-e ferawn ji ‘the palace of Pharaoh’, however, the data demonstrates some instances where possessor precedes possessed as well, e.g., ‘hazrat mūsāī māv ‘the prophet Musa’s mother’.

There is grammatical gender in Kholosi, though there is a strong tendency toward losing it (see Nourzaei, forthcoming a and b).

Kholosi was first introduced to the scholarly world in a paper by Anonby and Mohebbi Bahmani (2016). The second study was published by Anonby et al. in 2018. In addition, Arora has published an online Kholosi lexicon and an article titled “Historical phonology and other observations on Kholosi”. In addition, Arora et al. are in the process of preparing a paper on Kholosi phonology. Rezai gave an oral conference presentation in 2015 and also published a short article online in 2020.

My documentation project has been underway since 2017. I visited the Kholosi community and involved some community members in the project by training them in documentation skills, e.g., recording, filming and transcribing. So far, we have transcribed two tales titled Hazrate Mūsā ‘The prophet Musa’ (18 minutes 47 seconds) and Rūbā-e nāmoratab ‘The untidy fox’ (9 minutes, one second). This is the text that I have transcribed and translated below. So far, I have written on different aspects of Kholosi grammar (Nourzaei forthcoming a and b and under review), and I have also archived Kholosi data in WOWA and ELAR (Nourzaei 2022a and 2022b).

The paper is structured as follows. First, it deals with the geographical distribution of Kholosi speakers. This is followed by an overview of other Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Iran. It then studies the Kholosi people’s origin and identity, culture and way of life, traditional crafts, education, language use, vitality, and language contacts. The orality and storytelling traditions are then described, and finally a Kholosi text is transcribed, glossed, and translated into English.

2 Geographical distribution

The Kholosi speakers are scattered across large parts of Hormozgan province in southwestern Iran. In general, Kholosi speakers are found in villages near large towns and cities.

The main group of Kholosi speakers are settled in two large villages called Kholos and Gotāv, both located about 25 miles from the county seat of Bastak.

The second group of Kholosi are found in a village called Buchir, in the county of Pārsiyān.

Other concentrations of Kholosi speakers in Iran are located around big towns and cities such as Bandar Lenge, Khamir, Jenah, Bastak, Lār, Mināb, Kuhxerd, Bandar Abbas, Shiraz and Kong. Kholosi speakers live dispersed throughout these towns and cities.

Another main group consists of Kholosi speakers living outside of Iran, mainly in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Dubai, and Bahrain (see Anonby and Mohebbi Bahmani 2016). They originally migrated from Kholos or Gotāv to look for better job opportunities. The total number of Kholosi speakers is uncertain. However, in Kholos they number 1,283 (around 325 households), and in Gotāv around 600 (around 144 households). The Kholosi speakers in Qatar amount to around 50 households.

1 https://aryamanarora.github.io/kholosi/dictionary.html
2 County is defined here as a provincial subdivision.
and around 20 households live in the United Arab Emirates. Around 30 speakers live in Dubai and Bahrain.

Note that the Kholosi people are in touch with other Kholosi people both in Iran and abroad. The following map shows the location of Kholosi Speakers.

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**Figure 1:** Location of Kholosi speakers

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### 3 Closeness Languages to Kholosi in Iran

So far, two Indo-Aryan languages spoken in Iran have been reported. Baghbidi (2003:34) states that the Români dialect Zargari is spoken in some settlements in northern Iran, namely, Qazvin, Khurasan, and Alborz.

Another Indo-Aryan language is Jadgali. Barjasteh Delforooz (2008:27) mentions that Jadgali is a dialect of Sindhi, while other researchers consider it to be a dialect of Saraiki which belongs to the northwestern group of Indo-Aryan languages. It is spoken in Sistan and Balochistan province, in the county seats of Dashtiyārī, Chābahār, Qasr-e Qand and Nikshahr, and even all the way to Shamir, beyond the county seat Jāsk in Hormozgan province. In addition, the main population of Jadgal lives in Pakistan, and many Jadgal people reside in the United Arab Emirates and Oman (ibid. 25). My Jadgal speakers informed me that many Jadgal people live in Bandar Abbas, Minab, Bashgerd, Bastak, Kerman (in the southern part of the town Kerman), Jiroft, Lār, and Būhshehr (e.g., Dashtestan, Dashti). The children have switched to Bandari or Persian, but the parents can still speak Jadgali. Jadgal people in Kerman, Lār and Būhshehr have already lost the Jadgali language, and speak the dominant languages in these regions. The Jadgal people in Kerman, Lār and Būhshehr are in touch with their relatives in Sistan and Balochistan.
3.1 Possible Kholosi contacts with other Indo-Aryan communities

Considering the large distances between the Kholosi and Zargari (another Indo-Aryan language) communities, it is unlikely to be worthwhile to compare them for possible contact. It is also worth noting that the Kholosi speakers are not aware of Zargari communities. Instead, I will examine the potential connections between Kholosi and Jadgali communities, since there are some Jadgali communities in Shamir beyond the county seat of Jāsk in Hormozgan province, as reported by Barjasteh Delforooz (2008:25) and in Bandar Abbas, Bastak and Bashgard in Hormozgan province, as mentioned by my Jadgali informants.

The distance between the Kholosi and Jadgali communities in Sistan and Balochistan is more than 600 km (see map 2). From a language-contact perspective, it is interesting to determine to what extent these two languages have been in contact. These two communities were not in contact with each other until recently. One of my speakers reports that in 2010 one of his relatives “met a Jadgali man in Tehran and later invited him to Kholos. We only understood some of our common words, but we failed to converse in Jadgali or Kholosi. Finally, we had to use Farsi (Persian) for our communication.” Another one of my informants told me that their relatives in the United Arab Emirates met a Jadgali (he pronounced it Jaddal) man from Pakistan who spoke something close to Kholosi, but they failed to communicate in either Kholosi or Jadgali; instead, they switched to Arabic.

This observation suggests that these two languages have potentially been separated from each other for a long time, and due to a lack of contact, each has developed differently. On the one hand, because of Kholosi speakers’ long-term contacts with Iranic, Kholosi has almost lost its original features and has adopted Iranic features (for instance, a tendency to lose retroflex consonants, aspirations and vowel nasalization, Nourzaei, forthcoming a; Anonby and Mohebi Bahmani 2016). There is a strong tendency toward losing grammatical gender and genitive case. In a similar way as with Kholosi’s phonology, its morphosyntax has been influenced by Iranian. It is adopting light Iranian morphosyntactic features such as plural markers, the ezafe construction, indefiniteness strategies, the numeral system, numeral classifiers and the comparative suffix. Note that verb morphology, in particular, tense, aspect and mood, retains more Indo-Aryan features. Excluding the negation suffix, the

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3 The information was provided by Hasanniya (p.c. January 2021).

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Figure 2: Location of Kholosi and Jadgali speakers
markers such as person, aspect and mood follow the verb stem, e.g., \textit{paz-aya 'fix.PST.3SG.SUBJ'} (see Masica, 1991: 257).

On the other hand, Jadgal communities preserve more Indo-Aryan features, for example, retroflexes, aspiration, and vowel nasalization. Jadgali also shares Indo-Aryan syntactic features in the noun phrase, in that adjectives are joined to the following nouns and show gender and number agreement with the nouns, e.g., \textit{sōri kwānkī 'beautiful girl', sōriō kwānkō 'beautiful girls'}. In Kholosi, adjectives are joined to the preceding nouns either by means of the ezafe, e.g., \textit{rōbā-e nāmoratab 'untidy fox'} or without it, e.g., \textit{rōbā nōkō 'small fox'}. In contrast to Kholosi, Jadgali follows the general Indo-Aryan pattern whereby the possessor precedes possessed nouns, e.g., \textit{ferawn ġī kasrā 'the palace of Pharaoh'}; \textit{mūsā ġī māt, 'the mother of Muses', rōbā ġō dom 'the tail of the fox'}. The grammatical gender agrees with possessed nouns. In opposite, Kholosi follows the Persian general pattern that possessed precedes possessor, e.g., \textit{kasr-e ferawn ġī 'the palace of Pharaoh'}. In Jadgali plurality of number is marked on the nouns, as in \textit{tre kwānkō 'three girls', hekī kwānkī 'one girl'}. Jadgali has preserved the Indo-Aryan numeral system while Kholosi has adopted the Iranic system.

Note that both languages use the same oblique case -\textit{ak 'kasr-ak 'the palace'} /ke 'kasr-ke 'the palace', with slight variations. In addition, both use the same genitive case marker \textit{jo/ğī}, although in Kholosi this suffix is on its way to be replaced by Iranian Ezafe construction.

The main reason why Jadgali speakers are preserving their language could be their ongoing contacts with Sindhi and Urdu speakers in Pakistan via trade and intermarriage, apart from their contacts with Iranic (especially Balochi and Standard Persian in school and on radio and TV, as dominant languages).

4 Origins and identity

The origin of the Kholosi people is uncertain. The participants gave me various accounts of their origin. One account published by Anonby and Mohebbi Bahmani (2016:2) states that they came directly from India. Local people from their neighbouring regions mention that they came from India around one hundred years ago.

According to another account that has not been published, the “Kholosi people originated from the capital county of Dashtiyāri in Sistan and Balochistan and moved to their present location. Kholosi people are Jadgal. The Kholosi people believe that because the main occupation of the Jadgal people was agriculture and growing date palms. The fertile soil of this region (Kholos) attracted them to continue pursuing agriculture and growing date palms.”

The third account is that the Kholosi people migrated from Sindh in Pakistan, as a separate group via the Makoran Coast, during the Safavid dynasty (17th century), and are not Jadgal. Determining the actual facts regarding their origin is beyond the scope of the present paper; however, it seems that their first settlement was the village of Kholos. Gotāv was established later. The distance between these two villages is almost five kilometres. Note that the Kholosi people living outside of these two villages have either moved away from Kholos or Gotāv to look for work and get access to urban facilities, or in some cases perhaps to avoid social conflicts.

The Kholosi people are tribally organized, the main tribes “\textit{tīreh}” being Alshiri, Mahma Jamāli, Mahjamāl, Mahmādālī, Kahurīgāl, Malati, Ahmad Ali, Mazājīgar, Malāhī, Shenābūn, Mamād Nāserī, Mamād, Hamad Ḥasānī, Mundu, Adol Ḥasānī, Mad Ābāsī, Medāzūlī, Ahmad Malekī, Khorsīdī, Mezsānī, Hosayn Ali, Masudī, and Kahneh. The members of each tribe live near each other, and the part

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4 I am in the process of documenting the Jadgali language (see Nourzaei 2023a).

5 According to information supplied by an anonymous elderly speaker, the tribes Kahurīgāl/Kahurogāl, Khorsīdī, and Kahneh migrated from the Kang and Risheh, Kore, and Kahneh Evaz regions to Kholos more than one hundred years ago.
of the village where they live is named after the tribe; examples are Mahaleh (‘area’) Kahurogal, and Mahaleh Jamāli. This village social structure has been attested in other regions, for instance Balochistan (see Nourzaei, in print).

5 Culture and way of life

In the past, the primary source of income of the Kholosi people was agriculture. They had date palms and domestic animals such as cows, sheep, and goats and were economically independent.

Like other nomadic people in Iran, such as the Luri and Qašqā’i, the Kholosi people had winter and summer quarters. They spent the summer in two areas called Kohich and Sarmozūn harvesting their date palms and grain (wheat, oats, and corn), and their winter quarters were the villages Kholos and Gotāv, where they live now. The distance between these two areas and Kholos is about 13 kilometres.

Today, the Kholosi people have discontinued the tradition of separate summer and winter quarters. Instead, they use their former winter quarters for recreation and spending time with their family, mainly on the weekends and holidays, and live year-round in what used to be their summer quarters.

Some of the Kholosi men used to look for work outside of Iran, especially in Qatar, Dubai, and Bahrain, as merchants and workers. These men lived apart from their families while working and sent remittances home to cover their family’s daily needs. They came to visit their families briefly every six months or once a year, or at even longer intervals. Today the situation has changed; the Kholosi men who work abroad bring their families with them.

Today, most Kholosi men work in government jobs such as in a bank, at a telegraph office, teaching (at government schools and maktab-e dini ‘Islamic school’), or are engaged in agriculture or trade. However, a small number of them are continuing the old tradition of working abroad.

Like other regions in Iran, the main occupation of Kholosi women was housekeeping, including doing some work outside of the home such as helping their husbands gather dates and grain during harvest time.

Currently, the majority of the women are still working at home. However, some of them work as schoolteachers or in Xâne-ye behdâsh ‘local healthcare’. In addition, some women work as Islamic teachers at Islamic schools in the summer and winter seasons, with their salaries paid by local religious organizations.

A typical feature of the Kholosi community used to be their tradition of endogamy. Marriage outside of their community was considered to bring shame upon the family. This may be one of the crucial factors in preserving their language. However, the situation has changed recently (in the last ten years), and marrying an outsider is accepted by families.

Most cases involve Kholosi men marrying a woman from the neighbouring regions (such as Mināb, Qeshm, and Jenāh.). For instance, one of the interviewed study participants married a woman

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6 The most common family names are: Sabui, Etebāri, Panereh, Ahmadi, Ahmadzadeh, Jamali, Khoftedel, Pur Pashman, Ali Neshad, Pishkhord, Sedighi, Hanpur, Hasanzadeh, Hansaniya, Pachang, Pahang, Etemadi, Rahmani, Fatehinezhad, Afrari, Jamalpuran, Rasti, Hosayni, Barcham, Hasaniyā, Barding, Badakhsh, Mobini, Alhojat, Heshmatiyan, Bīdak, Jamalpuran, Mohamadpur, Mohamadi, Badakhsh, Bichand, Fārbaḵsh, Pāzdak, Rasti, Ahmadi, Barhrami, Shraf Dōxt, Bornosī, Malahī, Tanoreh, Paterēh, Abbasi, Farari, Abdollah Pur. Note that some of the family names are new; for instance, Sabui and Hakiminiyā, have been recently registered. In addition, there are some Iranian family names, for example Hoseni and Timuri.

7 This lifestyle was also typical among other ethnic groups in this region, for instance, the Lāri, and Bastaki, and even Balochi. I noticed this in a village in Balochistan where I worked as a teacher; the man of the family worked in the United Arab Emirates and visited his family for two weeks every other year, but sent remittances to support the family.
from Bastak, and another found a wife in Bandar. In addition, one of my speakers married off her daughter to a man from Bastak. The husbands/wives might understand Kholosi, but prefer to speak their own language with the Kholosi speakers outside their own family. Only one case was reported by my informant where the wife learned Kholosi and used it as her children’s first language at home and with the other villagers.

The Kholosi ritual religious practices also play an essential role in their decisions about marriage outside the community. Their recent exogamic weddings have only been with families with whom they share a common religion (Sunni).

As in other ethnic groups in Iran and Balochistan, such as the Baloch and Jadgal, polygamy is common among the Kholosi men. Formerly, a man could have up to four wives. All his wives lived around the same courtyard and helped each other with cooking, cleaning, and helping the men in the fields. Today, a man can have one or two wives, and the wives live separately.

Divorce is considered shameful, and the divorce rate is low.

The Kholosi community adheres to the Sunni branch of Islam. Each village has its own mosque and Emam/Mullah; they perform their Friday and Iids prayers in their villages. Note that in Kholos there are three mosques, and the people do their Friday and Iids prayers in the largest one.

Kholosi wedding and funeral ceremonies (which last up to three nights) are the same as with other Iranian groups for instance, their Bastaki neighbours.

Kholosi men and women do not wear distinct regional clothing. However, there is a significant distinction in the dress style of the older and younger generations, typically among men. The old men dress like Arab men in a long robe with trousers, and wear a shawl around their head called an *agāl*. The young men wear shirts and trousers. The women wear long dresses and *chador*, which are decorated with beautiful needlework.

Traditional crafts are (a) *xos-e dūzi*, “Kholosi women decorate their clothes (typically on the surface of their trousers and dresses) and their Chadors (e.g., bride’s chador) with patterns or pictures consisting of stitches that are made directly into the material with a needle.”

b) Making things from date palm fronds such as a *gēr* ‘bed’, *taḡ/tak* ‘rug’, *gērō* ‘basket’, etc. These crafts can be found in other regions as well, e.g., in Bastak.

The Kholosi communities do not have regionally distinct food traditions. There are no differences in culture and traditions between the Kholosi and their Iranian neighbours such as the Bastaki. I have observed the same thing with the Jadgali and *Brahui* communities in Sistan and Balochistan.

### 6 Education

It was not so common to send children to school in the past, because there was no school in the village. However, if it was possible, a family’s boys had a good chance of attending school in a larger village nearby. When the school came to the village, the girls had an opportunity to be educated up to grade six but were forbidden by their families to continue their education at a higher level outside their village due to their culture restrictions. This tradition stopped around thirty years ago, and now both boys and girls have the same right to attend school and even university.

At present, Kholosi students are educated until grade nine in their village and then continue their education at higher levels in neighbouring counties, e.g., Bastak, and attend university in larger cities, e.g., Tehran. Unlike the older generation, all members of the younger generation have at least a grade-school education e.g., through grade six. Among the older generation, the number of men with

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8 I am in the process of documenting the Brahui language (Nourzaei 2023b).

9 There are two schools in Kholos (elementary and secondary) and one in Gotāv (elementary). Boys and girls are both taught in the same classroom. The teachers speak both Kholosi and Iranian. In addition, each village also has an Islamic school.
a grade-school education is higher than the number of women. Nearly all members of the older generation, both men and women, have Islamic school education for their religious practices, such as reading the Koran and praying.

7 Language use and vitality

Kholosi is used as the first language in the Kholosi community (for similar information, see Anonby and Mohebbi Bahmani 2016). Parents speak Kholosi with their children to a large extent. In Gotāv village, however, there is a tendency for the Kholosi residents to use Bastaki among themselves and with their children. In Kholos, there is a tendency among parents to speak with their children in Persian to prepare them for school. A similar observation has been made for other ethnic groups, such as the Lori, Balochi, and Bastaki. Outside these two villages, it is found that Kholosi speakers have lost their language and have switched to Bastaki/Lārestāni (known as Achomi, Khodemuni), which are the vernacular languages in these regions.

In Kholosi families with an exogamic marriage pattern, the Kholosi parents do not use Kholosi as their first language. Instead, the common language among parents and children at home is Bastaki, Lārestāni, or even Persian.

Among Kholosi speakers living abroad, e.g. in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Dubai, and Bahrain, a tendency to use Arabic at home is reported. Note that some of the Kholosi speakers have even forgotten their language and switched to Arabic.

Kholosi is not a written language, and it does not have a writing system. Instead, speakers use standard Persian when texting each other via cell phone or writing letters. There are no TV or Radio programmes in Kholosi either. The language of teaching is Persian, however if the teacher is a Kholosi speaker, Kholosi can be used in the classroom. For religious instruction, Arabic and Persian are used. In the past, Kholosi served as a language of religious instruction in Islamic schools; however today, only Persian is used. Their priests (Mullah) use Persian for their sermons after Friday and Ids (festival) prayers.

7.1 Language contact

Kholosi speakers are multilingual. Kholosi speakers in Iran are in direct contact with Bastaki and Lārestāni as local vernaculars, and Persian as an official language of Iran via TV, radio, and education, and Arabic as a liturgical language via reading the Koran and Islamic books. Likewise, Kholosi speakers outside of Iran, e.g. in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Dubai, and Bahrain, are in contact with Arabic as an official language (for similar information, see Anonby and Mohebbi Bahmani 2016: 2).

8 Orality and storytelling traditions

Before presenting the Kholosi text, it is necessary to give some background on the status of the storytelling and orality tradition.


10 The two most important festivals in the Islamic calendar are Id-ul-Adha and Id-ul-Fitr.
There was also a large number of Islamic stories such as Khezr va eleyās, Hazrat-e Yusef, Hazrat-e Davud, Hazrate Musa, Belal-Habashi and Ghārun, and stories regarding the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, Hazrate Ali, Kholafaye Rāshedin, Emām Hasan, and Hosyen. Moreover, there are some stories that do not have a name. It is of interest that all of these tales were mentioned by my Bastaki speakers, and some of them are common to other Iranic cultures such Koroshi and Balochi. This observation confirms that these ethnic groups share common stories.

There was no gender requirement for being a storyteller. Older men and women both recited their tales for family members and public audiences in Kholosi. In addition, some professional storytellers amused their audiences by telling stories at night. Some tales continued for several nights. The best setting for storytelling was during the long winter nights and in harvest time. Storytelling was forbidden in daytime.

Like other Iranic cultures (e.g., Bastaki), storytelling no longer figures as prominently as it used to do in society, and has mainly been replaced by reading various kinds of books and Islamic literature and watching TV. People are no longer interested in listening to older people’s tales. My fieldwork observations confirm this. When I was recording the older people, they said they have forgotten the stories because they have not practised them for so long, and asked me to give them extra time beforehand to remember their tales. Even during their recording, some of them interrupted the story several times or switched to Iranian (Lārestāni, Bastaki or even Persian). Some of them just left their story incomplete, and apologized for not remembering the rest of it.

Similar to my findings in the Koroshi community, it seems that the Kholosi speakers share the same tales with their Iranian neighbours. They are able to tell the tales in Kholosi, Persian and Bastaki. I have noticed this in the Jadgal communities, where they narrated the same Balochi tales that I have already recorded in the nearby Baloch villages. It is of interest that my storytellers opened their stories in Balochi, and quickly switched to Balochi while telling them. When I asked one storyteller to please speak in Jadgali, she smiled and replied, “I learned them in Balochi.”

The tradition of telling biographical tales or memories remains common among the Kholosi community. People are interested in listening to their older relatives’ memories and legends. The main audience is adults, but children also listen to some extent. The primary language of narration is Kholosi.

The Kholosi younger generation’s narrations are based on Islamic stories from the Koran or Persian written tales (see the following story). Note that, during their narration, most of the speakers use Kholosi and Iranian interchangeably, as can be seen in the following story, which uses goft (he said, Persian), vetaī (he said, Kholosi), rūbā kočūlū, (small fox, Persian) and rūbā nōkō (small fox, Kholosi). This can be observed in the older generations’ tales as well.

In the Islamic stories, they use Arabic phrases (Musa’s story) and translate them into both Kholosi and Persian, for example (halān āyeh gorān jo e ‘enahū belvādel mogadasetovā’ yanī attū dar sarza-mine mogadase tovā maye) ‘Here is the verse of the Koran; it means that you are in the land of Tova.’

8.1 Narrative Techniques

Opening the tales

In my data, the Kholosi storyteller has three options for opening a tale:

(a) hokō hū, hokō nū (with slight variation in pronunciation among the speakers) ‘There was one, there was no one.’ Some speakers give a title to their tale first and then use this formulaic phrase (see the following story).

This formulaic phrase is commonly used in Persian fairy tales and is common in Arabic, Turkish, Georgian and Koroshi (in each respective language).

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11 One of the interviewees noted that around a hundred years ago, old Iranian men who were storytellers came to their village and recited their tales in Iranian.
Besmellāh-e rahmāne-rahīm ‘in the name of God’ followed by saying “the story that I want to tell you is about X.”

hekō/yek/ya X ḥū, e.g., hekō pādešāh šāh abās ḥū ‘there was a king Shāh Ābās’, ya pačākaš-e ḥū ‘there was a king Shāh Ābās’, ya pačākaš-e ḥū

The Persian phrase befarmā zamāne xayle kadīm ‘well, in the past…’

Some storytellers do not use an opening phrase.

Closing the tales

The storytellers use:

a) Arabic phrases, the most common ones being asalāmoalekva rahmatollāh ‘peace be upon you and may God have mercy on you’ and bar Mohammad salavāt ‘peace be upon prophet Muhammad’.

b) Persian phrases, in ham dāstāne man būd ‘this was my story’ and tamām ‘finished’.

Some storytellers do not use a closing phrase (see the following tale).

The Kholosi do not have their own oral songs. Instead, they sing Iranic songs and lullabies, mainly in Bastaki or Persian. A similar observation can be made for other cultures; for instance, the Koroshi speakers sing their songs and lullabies in Persian or Qašqā’i (Nourzaei 2017). Another example is the Jadgal community; they sing their songs for a new mother-to-be only in Balochi (Nourzaei in print) and sing other songs in both Balochi and Jadgali. Barjasteh Delforooz (2008:33) states that Jadgal people use Balochi for singing ballads and reciting epic poems of Balochi origin in special ceremonies with musical instruments.

Singing in Kholosi is relatively new; currently, three men have sung their songs in Kholosi. I have not noticed any Kholosi poets. In their daily life, Kholosi people use proverbs which are either in Iranic (Persian and Lārestāni) or Kholosi. The same is found in Baloch communities in Sistan, where people use Balochi and Sistani Persian proverbs in their daily speech (Nourzaei 2017).

8.2 Musical instruments

Kholosi people do not have unique musical instruments. Instead, they use common musical instruments of the region, e.g., dol ‘drum’, sornā ‘woodwind instrument’, ġayčak ‘bowed lute’, nay ‘end-blown flute’, and naġāra ‘drum’, among others. Today, people prefer to invite Iranic singers and their accompanying bands, or even just have recorded music at their wedding ceremonies, rather than playing a traditional musical instrument themselves. Kholosi folk dance is similar to other Iranic types, for instance, Bastaki. The men and women dance separately.

9 Some thoughts and reflections

To sum up, due to long-term contacts with Iranic peoples, the language of Kholosi speakers has been influenced not only by their languages, but also their culture and oral traditions. They share a common cultural heritage with their Iranic neighbours. A similar observation has been made for another Indo-Aryan language (Jadgali), and a Dravidian language (Brahui). The primary language of narration is Kholosi, and Iranic is used for singing songs and reciting poems. Only their language distinguishes speakers of Kholosi from their Iranic neighbours.

The Kholosi phonology, syntactic features within noun phrases, and numeral system have all been highly affected by Iranic languages, although the tense, mood and aspect systems still display very archaic Indo-Aryan features.

The paper concludes that three main factors are accelerating language shift among Kholosi speakers: (a) their present exogamous marriages with non-Kholosi people, such as other ethnically Iranic people, and use of Iranic within the family at home, and (b) their recent tendency to speak Persian with their children and also amongst themselves. Their main motivation for this is to prepare
their children for school. A similar motivation can be observed among other ethnic groups such as Balochi and Lori. Finally, (c) education and TV play an important role. The language shift has already occurred for the Kholosi speakers in the village of Buchir. They shifted to the local vernacular languages of the region, and no longer remembered their former language. However, they have preserved their Kholosi ethnicity.

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Abbreviations

1 first person
2 second person
3 third person
(...) omission of text from FLEX in a glossed example
[ ] additional information to the text
... incomplete sentence
- affix boundary
= clitic boundary
/ alternative forms
OBL oblique
CLM clause linkage marker
COP copula (present indicative)
DIST distal demonstrative pronoun
EMPH emphasis
EZ ezâfe
FLEX Field Works Language Explorer
FRAG fragmentary utterance
IMP imperfective
IMPV imperative
IDV Individuation clitic
INF infinitive
lit. literal translation
NEG negation
PRS Present
PC person-marking enclitic (person clitic)
PL plural
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Appendix

In the following, I will present a Kholosi tale. A female speaker, 32 years old, narrated the tale titled “An Untidy Fox” (9: minutes), in Kholos in October, 2020. The speaker has a Bachelor’s degree in economics and is fluent in Persian and vernacular languages, e.g., Bastaki and Lārestani. In addition, she is an Arabic teacher at an Islamic school in Kholosi.

After the text was recorded, it was fed into ELAN software and transcribed phonemically. Clitics such as the enclitic pronouns, the ezafe, and the specificity marker are attached to the preceding words by a hyphen. The copula is written as a separate word (without a hyphen) unless it is part of a verb form (such as in the perfect) or an adjective.

The entire transcription was double-checked with the same speaker. The text was then divided into intonation units and numbered. The end of each intonation unit is defined by a strongly falling intonation contour. After that, a morpheme-by-morpheme glossing was carried out using FLEX software. Finally, a free translation of the texts was produced, unit-by-unit.

Note that the present data demonstrates that, in Kholosi, numbers, some verb endings – in particular the 1st, 2nd and 3rd person singular – adjectives, the genitive case marker and the comparative suffix distinguish masculine and feminine gender. Masculine adjectives are marked with (o/ō) and feminine adjectives with (ī). It is not marked in the glossing (see Nourzaei forthcoming a and under-reviewing). This text gives us a picture of what is going on in Kholosi from the perspective of language contact, which is underway.

Robā=e Nāmoratab
The Untidy Fox

1 ye rābā=e nāmoratab
one fox=EZ untidy
An untidy fox.

2 hōkō hū hōkō nū
one COP.PRS.3SG one NEG.COP.PRS.3SG
Once upon a time (lit. there was, there was not)

3 dar hōkō jangal=e xayle sāī mā hōkō xānavāda hīnkī sānda
in one forest =EZ very green in one family each other
zendegī kar-da=yaū
life do.PRS-IMP=COP.PST.3PL
In a very green forest, a family used to live with each other.

4 hē xānavāda kēn jo xānavāda hōkō rōbā jo
PROX family who GEN family one fox GEN
Who [is] this family? A fox’s family.

5 rōbā kočūlū yā rōbā nōkō dar he sere mā vādō
fox small or fox small in PROX house in big
tʰo
become.PST.3SG
The small fox or the small fox, grew up in this house.

12 https://tla.mpi.nl/tools/tla-tools/elan
13 http://fieldwork.sil.org
6  ho  sagān-d=ū  adad-en-ke  be  tartīb
pro.3sgprs=can.pers=can number-pl-oobl with order
šomār-aya
count.pers=3sg.sbjv
He could count the numbers in order.

7  ho  sagān-d=ū  pān  gazzī  joti=es.jo
pro.3sgprs=can.pers=can band shoes=pc.3sg.gen
paz-aya
fix.pers=3sg.sbjv
He could tie his shoelaces by himself.

8  valī  rōbā  hōkō  moškel=e  hosū  hē  jo  ke
but fox one problem= idv has.pst.3sg pro.3sg clm clm
xayle  nāmoratab=  ā
very untidy= cop.pst.3sg
But the fox had a problem; it was that he was very untidy.

9  har  vaġt  hōkō  kām  konǰān-do=sū  hon-ke  saxtī
each time one thing want.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg dist-oobl difficult
gor-d=ū
find.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg
Every time, he wanted [to find] a thing, he used to find that one with [some] difficulty.

10  hattā  čiz-hā...  hattā  gām-hā=ye  ke  ham  xaylī  xāter-ān
even thing-pl... even thing-pl=ez clm you know very love-pl
konǰān-do=sū  jā  ponǰī-te
want.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg place refl-gen.in
na-līn-d=ū
NEG-put.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg
Even things... even things that he liked very much; he did not put [them] in their place.

11  barāye  ham=īn  hamešā  por-d=ū  pal=e
for emph=pro.3sg always search.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg prev=pc.3pl
Because of this, he was always looking for [them].

12  hōkō  rōz  rōbā  rōbā  šamšer=es  pal=e
one day fox fox sword=pc.3sg prev= pc.3pl
por-d-ū
search.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg
One day, the fox, the fox was searching for his sword.

13  ho  šamšīr...  šamšer=es  xayle  konǰān-do=sū
pn.3sg sword... sword=pc.3sg very want.prs=imp=cop.pst.3sg
He liked (lit. wanted) the sword... his sword very much.
For this, because, he himself had made it from [a] box and, [a] stick and [a] rope.

He wanted to go to his friends to play together.

He searched for it everywhere.

His bag... his bag [and] the things [that] he thought he had lost, [he] found them.

He also found [the remains of] an apple that he had already eaten.

Even his hat, he also found his hat.

But his sword was not [there] (lit. there was not that, there was not).

He asked his mother.

Mother, have you not seen my sword?

His mother looked inside his room.
You know, she nodded (lit. she moved a head) and said.

The only thing that I see is [an] untidy and cluttered [room].

Before going out of the room (lit. from the room door) tidy [it] up, please.

The Fox said something (lit. one thing) under his lip.

Oh, which part (lit. where) of my room is untidy?

Why [does] my mother make this so big.

I have a big problem; if I do not find my sword, I cannot go to play with [my] friends.

The small fox or this fox quickly opened his drawer.

And he ... took some books, and he put [them] in pile at one side of the room and,
33 čan-tāhamtābokvasatotāgmāla-i
some-CLyou knowblockmiddleroomin put.PST-3SG
he also put some blocks in the middle of the room.

34 talpak=āsyak...hekke...yaktaraparatka-ivaha=PC.3SGoneFRAGonesidethrowingdo.PST-3SGand
sīb-en...a bāġimāndehsī必要 jo ham dar kešo=e
apple-PLfromremainappleGENalsoin drawer=EZ
komod=asmāla-i
commode=PC.3SGin put.PST-3SG
He threw his hat [to] one...one...one side, and the apples...He also put the remains of the apple in the
drawer of his commode.

35 badveta-i xobsāmxāhāla xo...sokom moratab t'o
then say.PST-3SGgoodnowgo...thingtidybecome.PST.3SG
Then he said, well, now the thing [has] become in order.

36 valibāzhamsīr=oi kē=e
but you knowsword=PC.1SGwhere=COP.PRS.3SG
But, you know, where is my sword?

37 rōbā kočolū yāham=e rōbānōkōyavāšyavāš
foxsmallorEMPH=PROXfoxsmallslowlyslowly
sere xers-tevi-o
housebear-to go.PST-3SG
The small fox or this small fox slowly [and] slowly went to the bear’s house.

38 rafik=āsamātayawhēnkīsandaray-ēniya
friend=PL.PC.3SGredy.be.PST.3PLEach otherplay.PRS-3PL.SBJV
His friends got ready to play with each other.

39 xersbāsamsīr=osebehavā-tebezarba
bearwithsword=PC.3SGwithhair-intowithbeat
čīn-d-ūhit.PRS-IMP=COP.PST.3SG
The bear was striking with his sword into air.

40 samūreābīvašetanat-hā=yexiyālpornj=ös
otteranddemon-PL=EZimaginationREFL.GEN=PC.3SG
jangān-d-ūfight.PRS-IMP=COP.PST.3SG
The otter was fighting in her demon imaginations with [her sword].

41 xersfaryāḍxeta-ićereki-yāszūdzūd
bearshoutcall.PST-3SGcallhit.PST-3SGfastfast
a-e rōbāzūd a-e
come.PRS-IMPV.2SGfoxfastcome.PRS-IMPV.2SG
The bear shouted, called, come fast, fast, fox come fast.
42  rōbā  kočūlū  yā  ham=ē  rōbā  nōkō  havālo  veta-ī
    fox  small  or  EMPH=PROX  fox  small  slowly  say.PST-3SG
māe  ne-sag-ī
PN.1SG  NEG-can.PRS-1SG
The small fox or this small fox said slowly, I cannot.

43  xers=o  sağāro...  xers=o  samūre  ābī  a  ray-ēn-tāv  hat
    bear=and  FRAG...  bear=and  otter  from  play.PRS-INF-from  hand
kadda-vān  va  soāl  ka-vān  čerā  čʰaw
pull.PST-3PL  and  question  do.PST-3PL  why  why
The bear and ... the bear and the otter gave up on playing (lit. they pulled their hands from the playing) and they asked why, why?

44  rōbā  kočūlū  veta-ī  ne-sag-ī  šamšīr=oe
    fox  small  say.PST-3SG  NEG-can.PRS-3SG  sword=PC.1SG
gor-īa
find.PRS-1SG. SBJV
The small fox said, I cannot find my sword.

45  xers  bā  nārāhatī  soāl  ka-i...  kezā  hinki  sānda
    bear  with  sad  question  do.PST-3SG...  how  each  other
ray-ā
play.PRS-1PL. SBJV
The bear asked sadly, how should we play with each other?

46  rōbā  kočūlū  hinā  negāh  ka-i  hinav  āxāt
    fox  small  this.direction  look  do.PST-3SG  this.direction  look
ka-i  hōkō  teka  teka  lat  jo  gorra-ī
do.PST-3SG  one  piece  piece  wood  GEN  find.PST-3SG
The small fox looked in that direction, (lit. this direction) looked in that direction (lit. this direction) [and] found a piece... piece of wood.

47  hon-ke  pāra-ī=o  veta-ī  xob  hē  ham
    DIST-OBL  take.PST-3SG=and  say.PST-3SG  good  PROX  well
šamšer  mōjo
sword  mine
He took it [and] he said, well this [is] my sword.

48  ače-e  hinki  sānda  ray-āya
    come.PRS-IMPV.2PL  each  other  play.PRS-1PL.IMPV
Come, [let’s] play with each other.

49  rōbā  kočūlū  yā  ham=e  rōbā  nōkō  veta-ī  sabā
    fox  small  or  EMPH=PROX  fox  small  say.PST-3SG  tomorrow
šamšīr=öi  gor-ī
sword=PC.1SG  find.PRS-1SG
The small fox or this small fox said, tomorrow I will find my sword.
50  bad  sag-ā  xānom  samūr  yā  zayfā  samūr ābī-ke  az  hat
then  can.PRS.1PL  Miss  otter  or  Miss  otter-OBL  from  hand
hezdēhā-tāv  nejāt  di-yāā
dragon-from  save  give.PRS.1PL.SBJV
Then we can save Miss Sam... or Miss Otter from the dragon (lit. from the hand of dragon).

51  māe=ō  xers  ham  naģšah  bahrā  šoḡāli-hā  kārēn  jo
PN.1SG=and  bear  well  plan  two  knight-PL  black  GEN
kadd-ā  ke  ray-āya  vali  sabā  čon
draw.PRS-1PL  CLM  play.PRS-1PL.SBJV  but  tomorrow  because
alān  šamšīr-oī  bennoe
now  sword=PC.1SG  lose.PST-1SG
I and bear plan to play [as] two black knights... but tomorrow, because now, I have lost my sword.

52  samūr ābī  pʰāčv=os  pī-te  xeta-ī  va  veta-ī  māe
otter  tail=PC.3SG  ground-on  beat.PST-3SG  and  say.PST-3SG  PN.1SG
na-konǰ-ī  mā-ke  nejāt  di-ysiya
NEG-want.PRS-1SG  PN.1SG-OBL  save  give.PRS-2PL.SBJV
The otter beat her tail on the ground, and she said (lit. she called and said), I do not want you to save me.

53  māe  konǰ-ī  hōkō  az  hoven  tʰi-ya  ke
PN.1SG  want.PRS-1SG  one  from  PN.3PL  become.PRS-1SG.SBJV  CLM
šamšīr  hat=es  maya
sword  hand=PC.3SG  in.be.PRS-3SG
I want to be one of them with a sword in her hand.

54  rūbā  kočūlū  veta-ī  baša  attū  ham  sag-e  šamšīr
fox  small  say.PST-3SG  ok  PN.2SG  also  can.PRS-2SG  sword
hat-mā  gon-ū
hand-in  hold.PRS-2SG.SBJV
The small fox said, alright, you can also hold a sword in [your] hand.

55  bad  ham  sāf  hīnkī sānda  van-ā  hākem-ke  nejāt  di-yāā
then  well  all  each  other  go.PRS-1PL  ruler- OBL  save  give.PRS-1PL
Then we will go all together [and] save the ruler.

56  xers  veta-ī  ammā  attū  bāyad  šamšīr=ov
bear  say.PST-3SG  but  PN.2SG  must  sword=PC.2SG
gor-eya  rōbā  kočūlū  veta-ī  bale  māe
find.PRS-2SG.SBJV  fox  small  say.PST-3SG  yes  PN.1SG
hon-ke  gor-i  fardā  hatman  gor-is
DIST- OBL  find.PRS-1SG  tomorrow  for sure  find.PRS-1SG.PC.3SG
sabā  hatman  gor-i=x
tomorrow  for sure  find.PRS-1SG.PC.3SG
The bear said, but you must find your sword. The small fox said, sure, I will find it, tomorrow, for sure, I
will find it.
When the small fox went to his house, his father was very sad, this apple...

He showed the apple to the fox [and] said I have found this in your commode drawer.

My dear child, the drawer is not place for trash; this your hat also had fallen in the room.

The small fox... he took the apple from his father’s hand and put it in the trash bin.

He took his hat [from his father] and hung [it] in its place, and he said under his lip:

My room is a little untidy, why [does] my father make it so big?

Miss Goose came to get the books that she had lent to the fox.

Miss Goose came to get the books that she had lent to the fox.
This Miss Goose said, she said, give me back my books.

The room of the little fox was very untidy and he could not find them.

He said, alright, well inside commode... he said alright, he said alright... maybe they are in my commode.

He came and opened the door of his commode, suddenly all the stuff in the commode fell down on the ground.

and sword he found that broken sword, he found it.

Father, mother..., his father and his mother also came into the basement, they brought some boxes.

that each .... was written on them, was written on each box, the box of toys, one box of clothes, one ... you know, one box... and extra.
Then you know they came [and] hung a hook on the door of the room, and they said to the fox that
hung his sword in other direction [and] tidy...

Tidying up the room took a lot of time, but they found Miss Goose’s book.

The next day, the small fox dressed up [as] knight, he went out of [his] house.

He was so happy because he had found a new sword and shield.

The mother of the small fox wrote on his shield, a small brave tidy fox knight.