

# [Technology and economy](https://assignbuster.com/technology-and-economy/)

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In his book Nomads of South Persia, Frederik Barth (1967) descibes the social, political and economic structure of the Basseri tribal group. This essay aims to summarize the details on theenvironment, technology, shelter, transportation, economy, and distribution and consumption of goods and services of the Basseri tribe as explicated by Barth (1961).

First of all, the Basseri tribe of the Khamseh Confederacy occupies the region from the Persian Gulf to the desert ranges of Lar. The climate in these areas is hot and dry. However, during winter it is cold in the highlands while it is slightly cold in the grasslands. There are four seasons of the year such as winter, spring, summer, and fall in this part of the world.

The geographical structure of the land is mountainous from 2, 000 to 3, 000 feet above sea level and its mountains are as high as 13, 000 feet. Water in this area comes from rainfall. The amount of rainfall is higher during the winter unlike the amount of rainfall during spring. This water causes vegetation such as sugar cane, dates, fruits and vegetables to grow. These foods together with flour are consumed by the Basseri people.

As nomads, the Basseri tribe raises animals such as sheep, goats, donkeys, camels and horses. This animal husbandry causes them to move from one place to another based on the needs of their animals. These animals have varied uses for the tribe. Goats and sheep are useful to the Basseri people for their milk, meat, wool and skin. On the other hand, camels, horses and donkeys are used for transportation especially during the time of migration. In addition to this, camels share a part of the tribe’s source of wool.

Even when the Baserri ethnic group is nomadic, it uses technology in the form of its tools and systems. One system is in making butter and buttermilk out of sour milk. This process is done by storing milk in a goatskin placed on a tripod to churn milk into sour milk. Next is the use of wool in weaving and making of ropes. Another is when wool is processed by spinning it on spindle whorl. Lastly, a technology they utilize in continuously producing healthy milk is by placing a small stick through the mouth of a lamb to press down its tongue and is stuck in place with stings (Barth, 1961, 7).

Likewise, the Basseri people live in tents which are considered the basic social and economic unit of the tribe. The tents are well-made and are woven out of wool. Tents are usually made when a man and a woman gets married. The mothers of the couple are the ones who weave the tent. Then, the couple begins their lives as a separate unit when they live in the tent.

In addition, the Basseri use donkeys, horses and camels for transportation. Donkeys are used to carry women and children. Horses are ridden by men. Camels transport heavy objects or things. Consequently, when it is time for the Basseri to move out from one location to another, they use animals as means of transportation. These animals are the camels, horses and donkeys. When they migrate, thefamilymembers ride on the donkeys, camels or horses which are already laden with the family’s belongings while one family member walks by foot in order to guide their herd of animals. Barth (1961) does not mention about the Basseri tribe travelling on water maybe because they are basically land-based.

Furthermore, the Basseri’s economy is based on their cyclical migratory patterns. They are known to be “ pastoralists” for they move to the high lands during the summer season and they transfer to the plains during thewinter seasondue to the presence or absence of pasture that their animals need (Microsoft Student). As previously mentioned, they raise sheep, goats, camels, donkeys and horses which are done by the male members of the tribe.

The women, alternatively, are the ones who plant vegetation. The division of labor in the tribe is grounded on the age and sex of the person. However, there are certain tasks which are stereotypical to gender. Domestic work in the form of household chores is the task only for the girls and women of the tribe. These tasks may be preparingfood, washing dishes, washing clothes, spinning wool and weaving tents. On the other side, boys and men are mainly assigned to provide water and wool, and to repair damaged equipment and tents. They also watch over the herd and they lead their animals and their family when migrating. They might be allowed to help prepare food, or wash clothes but are not allowed to participate in spinning or weaving.

Just like any economic system, the people of the tribe distribute goods and services within its constituents. It employs a system of reciprocity where everyone works and contributes for the mutual benefit of everyone in the tribe. The distribution of goods and services similar to the division of labor starts within each household. In the family, each member, depending on the gender, has a task to accomplish and this task has an implication to economy. For example, when women or men milk the sheep, there is an effect to their economy or when the men look after the herd. There is also distribution of goods or services to outsiders as they trade off externally to other tribes and other markets. They also purchase or trade clothing materials, ready-made clothing and footwear, cooking tools, and glass (Barth, 1961, 9-10).

Finally, the Basseri ethnic group is an egalitarian society because they do not put emphasis on material goods or wealth especially that they do not have a permanent place to stay. Their concept of wealth and property is focused on the livestock that a family possesses. They consume the meat of sheep and chicken and milk from the sheep.

To sum it up, the Basseri tribal people dwell in areas where their animals can find pasture and they move out when this is no longer available. They have their own economic system and they use low technology. They are also not too concerned about their economic status due to their migratory life.

References

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Pastoralism. (2007). Microsoft® Student 2008 [DVD]. Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.