CHAPTER 1

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF MIND: A COGNITIVE APPROACH TO CULTURE
Introduction

Every society exhibits variations within itself, and the Gujars of Himachal Pradesh are of no exception. The Gujars, who are considered as homogenous group having a common cultural identity, are actually a mosaic of differentiated cultures. This thesis provides a descriptive typology of Gujar culture and examines intra-cultural variations within its society in terms of two important foundations of culture: tradition and transformation. Singer (1964) suggested that culture can be viewed from several different standpoints - culture is not only an observed phenomenon, but can also be defined as a process and a pattern. While some historians, sociologists and anthropologists have studied Gujar culture as observed phenomena, cognitive anthropologists have argued that it is impossible to describe a culture properly simply by describing its behaviour and its social, economic and ceremonial events as observed material phenomena (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Tyler 1969). Cognitive anthropologists generally emphasize the notion of intra-cultural variation in a society based on several sets of organizing principles rather than the idea of treating culture as a unitary phenomenon (Tyler 1969). Smith (1978) postulated treating culture holistically by introducing a total system approach - he emphasized a cognitive approach in understanding the organizing principles and the underlying behaviour of the culture with respect to language, philosophy, religion, art, literature and social customs. The advantage of this holistic approach is to be able to discover and to describe principles of organization as they exist in the social group - rather than to impose a preexisting order on some putative reality (Berger & Luckmann 1967; Tyler 1969). Therefore, the ideas suggested by the cognitive anthropologists (Tyler 1969; Smith 1978) are here used to
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explain the traditions (with the transformations being treated as observed phenomena) of the Gujars of Himachal Pradesh.

In his introduction to the volume - *Questions of Tradition* (2003:3-30), Mark Phillips proposes an ‘enlarged conversation about tradition’ that could ‘dissolve the simple binary of tradition and modernity.’ He argues that once we stop defining tradition as resistance to modernity, the term ‘becomes again a way of raising essential questions about the ways we pass on the life of cultures - questions that necessarily include issues of authority as well as invention, practice as well as interpretation.’ Tradition becomes a newly complex, and open-ended, subject.

The Western idea of tradition, at least since the early-modern period, has typically been opposed to notions like progress, science, rationality, modernization, development, and now globalization - all terms associated with a dynamic future. Tradition is bound up in the past, the repetitive (Lévi-Strauss's 'cold' societies), the conservative, the religious, the native, the local, the non-rational, the non-Western (Phillips and Schochet 2003). Always a foil to the modern, tradition cannot be transformative or forward-looking. Mark Phillips performs the critical task, in Western intellectual history, of bringing into view an understanding of tradition which questions this constitutive opposition.

Released from its binary fix, tradition is recast by Mark Phillips as ‘the complex problem of cultural transmission.’ The move is persuasive and indeed urgent. But why now? What historical developments make ‘tradition’ today a genuine problematic, and a site for social negotiations, political claims, and fraught conversations? A new complex view of ‘tradition’ is inseparable from the decentering, the wavering, of its binary term ‘modernity.’ Over the past half century, diffusionist visions of progress have been
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challenged by two interrelated but distinct shifts: decolonization and globalization. Both unfinished changes, in different, interconnected ways, displace the coherent subject of a singular modernity (Blaut 1993).

Indigenous authorities, speaking out of distinct community attachments, have worked to both loosen and reclaim the notion of authenticity. When attributed to colonial ‘natives,’ or romantic ‘primitives,’ authenticity could be a straightjacket, making every engagement with modernity (religions, technologies, knowledge, markets or media) a contamination, a ‘loss’ of true selfhood (Appadurai 1996). Post-sixties indigenous movements - reoccupying lands, asserting and updating old ways, relearning languages, articulating larger tribal coalitions, rewriting colonial histories and ethnographies, filing legal briefs, making films - have pragmatically asserted a wide freedom of maneuver. Authenticity thus becomes a process: the open-ended work of preservation and transformation. Living traditions must be selectively pure: mixing, matching, remembering, forgetting, sustaining, and transforming their senses of communal continuity. The sharp antinomies of progress - before/after histories of colonial impact, acculturation, commodification - are frequently blurred, their vectors reversed. Moreover, in a context of decolonizing tribal activism, it becomes easier to recognize that native societies have always been both backward and forward looking. Loyalty to a traditional past is, in practice, a way ahead, a distinct path in the present (Clifford 2001).

On the contrary, a challenge in defining transformation is to avoid making it synonymous with any change (or invention). Even formal dictionary definitions do not distinguish the two concepts adequately enough (for our purposes). To transform means to change in form, appearance or structure; metamorphoses; to change a condition, nature
or character; to change into another substance. That is, while all transformation is change, not all change is transformation. Transformation is a change in kind; not a change in degree. While transformation occurs in a myriad of settings, the focus of this thesis is to discuss transformation in the context of the knowledge and systems. In this context, transformation will occur first in individuals and then be manifested through community performances.

Simply stated, our thinking is what it is today. And then we have a choice. If we want to hold on to our tradition, we will make incremental process improvements and will not "rock the boat." In this mode we are content, complacent, arrogant, or unaware. If we want to move to the next level of change, and yet be safe, we make transitions and change from Stage A to Stage B. We know where we are going (we go from manually taking inventory to bar coding); there is comfort in certainty. But if we want to create a better future, we have to let go and reach for the unknown. We need transformation. We adopt the most difficult and challenging strategy because we need to (Senge 1999).

In a very general sense, one of the central goals of anthropology has been to understand how groups of individuals perceive and construct their social and natural environment and how they interact with it. Within the realm of ethno-ecology much work has been done to explore how different cultures perceive the order of plants and animals.
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(i.e. all living kinds, including humans) surrounding them (Berlin et al. 1973, 1974; Atran 1998). Most of these studies report a wide universal agreement in how people order living kinds with respect to a general "multipurpose taxonomy" (Berlin 1992; Atran 1998; Lopez et al. 1997).

While these findings might seem surprising at a time when terms like "indigenous knowledge" are in vogue, they seem to depend at least in part on the perspective taken. For example, comparing Michigan students and lowland Itzaj Maya, Lopez et al. (1997) show both the cross-cultural similarities in the respective folk taxonomies and the clear differences in how members of each group reasoned about the species themselves. These differences, as well as related findings (Medin et al. 1997), urge us to go beyond simple models of semantic domains to explore the content of the knowledge, both across and within cultures (Hunn 1985). Cross-cultural studies are very instructive for our theories, but they often fail to address issues such as cross-cultural variations in expertise, and ignore the conditions causing the differences under exploration (Medin et al. 1997). Interviewing different kinds of tree experts in the Chicago area, Medin et al. (1997) found clear differences in reasoning patterns and taxonomical sortings according to kinds of expertise and individual goals. These intra-cultural differences open new insights into basic processes of knowledge formation and transmission in changing contexts, such as globalization.

Unfortunately, these topics receive little attention in ethno-ecology, and in environmental anthropology (in general) they are treated superficially. This is even more surprising given the attention local resource management has received in the last decades. While indigenous knowledge systems receive increasing attention (Zent 2001), they are
almost never explored as complex systems of knowledge. Instead, they are treated as static cultural resources and referred to as a natural resource (Warren 1991).

Given the relatively recent but pervasive changes that have affected indigenous people all over the world, it is urgent that we explore the dynamics of local knowledge in detail, with a particular focus on the potential loss of knowledge and consequences for resource management (Zent 2001). Understanding these knowledge systems as dynamic implies a need to address the differences among individuals (Boster 1987). In this view, culture is seen as a distribution of individual cognitions linked through causal chains (Strauss and Quinn 1997). These causal chains can consist of similar input conditions, exchange of ideas (Boster 1986), and common goals and activities leading to similar mental representations (Medin et al. 1997). This approach clearly sees culture as a constant process of creating and (the less than perfect) sharing of knowledge, ideas, and values that takes place within a certain environment (Boster 1987 and Garro 1986, 2000). Such a view allows the classification of different types of cultural knowledge as well as different forms of knowledge acquisition (Boster 1987:153).

Theoretical Framework

Several books and articles have targeted the field of culture and cognition intending to study culture with an understanding of relevant cognitive processes. Recent research in folk biology showed the existence of universal principles in cognition (Atran 1998; Berlin 1992; Lopez, Atran, Coley, Medin and Smith 1997) like the taxonomical sorting of animals and plants. Subsequent research addressed the character of these universalities, but was also able to establish clear cultural differences that go beyond the commonalities (Medin, Ross, Atran, Burnett and Blok 2002; Ross and Medin 2005; Ross,
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Medin, Coley and Atran 2003). It is important to realize that these accounts go beyond the efforts of previous research in that culture and cultural differences are not assumed a priori, but are systematically explored with the help of formal methods. Also, cultural differences once identified are not regarded as the endpoint of the research, but as the starting point for the more important questions that target the origin and character of these differences.

In recent years, anthropology has faced two major questions that have largely gone unanswered. First: How do we deal with within-group variability? And second: How do we collect, analyze, interpret and present our data in ways that strip our work of the authoritative statements found in earlier ethnographies? (Greenfield 2000: 565). Both concerns are about the problem of an individual's performance in an anthropologist's account, and point to the larger question of what the processes are that lead to the shared aspect called culture.

Cultures develop knowledge based on experience and an adaptation to the local environment. This knowledge sustains the community and its culture, and is generated and transmitted over time by those who reside in a particular locality or region. We can expect that the knowledge of culturally specific beliefs and behaviors is shared among participants of a social group. Subsistence activities that sustain cultural identity are expected to be conserved across generations and be evident in the members' abilities to distinguish between practices that are shared by members of one's own cultural group from those that are practiced by another cultural group. Perception and knowledge of culturally autochthonous resources such as plant, animal, fodder etc. should be distinguishable by members of distinct cultural groups and culture specific knowledge.
should eventually give rise to culturally distinct sub groups. I have attempted to test these hypotheses by characterizing shared cultural beliefs among the different sub sections of the Gujar community.

The framework for this study is informant agreement (Ross 2004) and cultural domain analysis (Romney et al. 1986). A cultural domain is a set of items which members of a cultural group recognize as being related or associated (Borgatti 1999). These items jointly refer to a single conceptual sphere and derive their meaning, in part, from their position in a mutually interdependent system reflecting the way in which a given culture classifies the relevant conceptual sphere (Weller and Romney 1988). Whether a given set of items forms a cultural domain is an empirical question. A cultural domain is one type of knowledge members of a cultural group possess. Use of consensus analysis through informant agreement permits an estimate of cultural knowledge held by each informant and whether consensus is achieved for a particular set of items.

Plant, Fodder, Buffalo and cognition of space are the most important domain of knowledge for the Baniyara and Bhatliye Gujars of Chamba, and Hindu Gujars of Kangra are no exception. We can expect that knowledge of the selected domains should be well distributed in all sub sections, but we can also anticipate possible unequal distribution of knowledge in terms of age, gender, locality and expertise among the Gujars. Thus the research is not only the study of knowledge distribution but at the same time the study of knowledge and meaning production within specific conditions. By now it should be clear that I do not want to introduce the ‘isolated group’ studies but unless we know that certain types of subcultures do not include cultural specifics, we should not discard the possibility of explaining some of their features with respect to local conditions. Only
from this perspective are we able to compare the formation and content of sub groups across different cultures, highlighting their cultural specificity (Cerroni-Long 1999). For all these reasons, it is not plausible to construct tradition of a culture around topics and domains as Brumann (1999) suggests. Rather, it is necessary to understand the distribution of knowledge and its pattern around aggregates of people, recognized as such by their members, within which exist all functions necessary for the continuation of communal life (Cerroni-Long 1999).

Perspectives on Pastoralism

Pastoralism, the use of extensive grazing in rangelands for livestock production, is one of the key production systems in the world's drylands. Nonetheless, throughout much of its long history its reputation has been unflattering, and its practitioners marginalised by sedentary cultivators and urban dwellers. Pastoral societies have risen and fallen, fragmented into isolated families or constructed world-spanning empires and their demise regularly announced, often in the face of an entirely contrary evidence of their persistence. By some paradox, anthropologists and social theorists have conducted a prolonged love affair with pastoralism, at times seeing it as an inevitable stage in the growth of civilization or perversely caricaturing it as an anarchic institution ready to pull down that same civilization. Planners have denigrated the mobility characteristic of pastoral societies and novelists have romanticised the wanderings of these same nomads. Development experts, remarking on the enormous passing herds, first saw pastoral systems as rich in potential, and later castigated pastoralists as vulnerable and unable to invest in development. To all this, pastoralists have remained largely indifferent, since a
certain scepticism towards the schemes and impulses of the external world is an almost inevitable product of the independent image they have of themselves.

Classifying pastoral systems:
Pastoral strategies categorized by Blench (2001: 6) in the following ways,
a) By Species
b) By Management System
c) By Geography
d) By Ecology

Pastoralism evolved as a response to two factors, medium human population densities and the presence of extensive rangelands. These rangelands are usually in semi-arid regions, although the reindeer pastoralism found across the circumpolar regions of Eurasia is an exception to this. Where human population densities are too low, i.e. hunting-gathering is relatively easy, and then the impetus to herd animals is absent.

Pastoralism has had a vertiginous history in the realm of development agencies. The potential of the world's rangelands and the large numbers of livestock using them was, for a long time, seen as a major and underused resource. This stimulated a vast body of research and development projects, both technical and social. The perceived failure of many of these projects, and the linking of livestock to a spectrum of environmental damage, caused a major retreat from support to pastoralism in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s saw the realisation that pastoralism remained in place, and moreover, the opening up of Central Asia (the largest pastoral region in the world) stimulated a renewed interest in, if not necessarily a wise application of, lessons learnt in the previous decades. The new millennium therefore seems quite an appropriate time to review the status of pastoral production worldwide, and particularly to focus on the insights gained by comparing
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Asian and African pastoralism, as well as to review policy in the light of recent concerns about poverty and vulnerability.

**Pastoral enterprises:**

The most common categorisation of pastoralism is by the degree of movement: from highly nomadic, through transhumant, to agro-pastoral. Cultivators also keep livestock for work or as marketable products, but these are not usually regarded as pastoralists. Any classification of this type must be treated as a simplification; pastoralists are by their nature flexible and opportunistic and can rapidly switch management systems as well as operating multiple systems in one overall productive enterprise. For example, West African cattle-herders can practise a system of regular transhumance for a long period, building up patronage relationships with farmers on their routes. However, in a case of extreme drought or disease stress, they will switch to highly ‘nomadic’ patterns, moving to new areas and breaking these relationships. When the crisis has passed they may revert to their former routes or move into an entirely new management mode.

**Nomadism:**

Exclusive pastoralists are livestock producers who grow no crops and simply depend on the sale or exchange of animals and their products to obtain foodstuffs. Such producers are most likely to be ‘nomads’ i.e. their movements are opportunistic and follow pasture resources in a pattern that varies from year to year. This type of nomadism reflects almost directly the availability of forage resources; the patchier these are, the more likely an individual herder is to move in an irregular pattern.

In reality, the pastoralists’ landscape is flecked with an invisible constellation of resources. They have to balance their knowledge of pasture, rainfall, disease, political
insecurity and national boundaries with access to markets and infrastructure. They prefer established migration routes and often develop longstanding exchange arrangements with farmers to make use of crop residues or to bring trade goods. Pastoralists usually only diverge from their existing patterns in the face of a drought, a pasture failure or the spread of an epizootic. Nonetheless, this flexibility is often the key to their survival. Highly mobile camel people such as the Rashaida retained a much greater proportion of their herds than the neighbouring Beja in the droughts of the early 1980s because of the Beja attachment to set routes and pastures (RIM 1989). In some regions of the world, nomadism is an ancient and relatively static subsistence strategy; for example among the 'nomads of the nomads' in the Empty Quarter of Saudi Arabia (Cole 1975). However, along the ecotone between rangeland and arable land, movement between different strategies can be quite fluid. The tone of much of the literature suggests that the process of sedentarisation among nomads is irreversible, but as Glatzer (1977, 1982) shows clearly, limited opportunities for agriculturists in northwest Afghanistan have impelled some to turn to pastoral nomadism.

Figure 1.1: Time-Space diagram for different types of pasture utilisation in mountain areas. (Source: Kreutzman 2004: 55)
Transhumance:

Transhumance is the regular movement of herds between fixed points to exploit seasonal availability of pastures. In mountain regions such as Switzerland, Bosnia, North Africa, the Himalayas, Kyrgyzstan and the Andes, this is a vertical movement usually between established points and the routes are very ancient. There is strong association with higher-rainfall zones; if the precipitation is such that the presence of forage is not a problem, then herders can afford to develop permanent relations with particular sites, for example building houses. Horizontal transhumance is more opportunistic, with movement between fixed sites developing over a few years but often disrupted by climatic, economic or political change. Transhumant pastoralists often have a permanent homestead and base at which the older members of the community remain throughout the year. Transhumance is often associated with the production of some crops, although primarily for herders’ own use rather than for the market. In many temperate regions, where snow is likely to block animals’ access to pasture, haymaking is an important component of the system. ‘Make hay while the sun shines’ is very significant advice in such systems; if the grass is not cut, dried and bundled during the summer, it may rot while being stored. Hay production in tropical systems is less common because the movement of the herds is between higher and lower rainfall zones, in the expectation that there will be forage in both sites. In West Africa, for example, there is a broad pattern of movement south in the dry season, when grass is available and insect problems are minimised, and a return movement north in the wet, when humidity-related diseases increase and there is pasture in the regions further north. A characteristic feature of transhumance is herd-splitting; the men take away the majority of the animals in search
of grazing, but leave the resident community with a nucleus of lactating females. There are many variations on this procedure and moreover the development of modern transport has meant that in recent times, households are not split up as radically; members can travel easily between the two bases. The kind of animals (whether milking females, weak animals or work animals) that are left behind differs substantially between one system and another, and may even vary within an individual system on a year-by-year basis.

Transhumance has been transformed by the introduction of modern transport in many regions of Eurasia. Many pastoralists in North Africa and in India, as in the case of Gujars of Chamba, send their animals on transhumance by truck or on trains (Trautmann 1985). Wealthier countries in the Gulf, such as Oman and Saudi Arabia have made vehicles available at subsidised rates to pastoralists to assist with animal transport and it seems likely this pattern will be more and more frequent, especially as the problem of controlling animals in increasingly densely settled environments can only get worse.

Agro-pastoralism:

Agro-pastoralists may be described as settled pastoralists who cultivate sufficient areas to feed their families from their own crop production. Agro-pastoralists hold land rights, use their own or hired labour to cultivate land, and grow staples. While livestock are still valued property, their herds are on average smaller than other pastoral systems, possibly because they no longer solely rely on livestock and depend on a finite grazing area around their village which can be reached within a day. Agro-pastoralists make greater investment in housing and other local infrastructure and if their herds become large, they often send them away with more nomadic pastoralists. The Gujars of Kangra actually fit in this category of pastoral activities. Agro-pastoralism is often also the key to
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interaction between the sedentary and mobile communities. Sharing the same ethno-
linguistic identity with the pastoralists they often act as brokers in establishing cattle-
tracks, negotiating the 'camping' of herds on farms, which potentially exchanges crop
residues for valuable manure, and arranging for the rearing of work animals which adds
value to overall agricultural production.

This thesis includes the agro-pastoral (Bhatliye and Hindu Gujar) and transhumant
(Baniyara) form of pastoralism. It is important to mention that the degree of dependence
on pastoral species among the Bhatliye is much higher than the Hindu Gujar. The Hindu
section on the other hand is leading a much more sedentary lifestyle, and combined their
farming practices with modified form of pastoralism.

Development Issues

For most of human history and for traditional societies, the principal form of
human capital has been formal, folk, tacit, local, or 'traditional' knowledge (including
domains of religion, kinship, mythology, space, and the environment, etc.) transmitted
over generations (Frake 1962; Atran 1998). Though culture exists at the level of
individual members of any society, the cultural models of these individuals are not
identical (Casson 1981:269). The idealized composites, resulting from the processes of
reason and the mind (Nisbett 1998; Peng & Nisbett 1999) and testable at higher levels of
abstraction, are generally designated as the culture of a community (D'Andrade 1996).
The maintenance of balance between consensus and the diversity of knowledge, for being
culturally adept in new situations (Boster 1991) may relate to the variability of
diachronic change - even in terms of linguistic nuances (Kay 1975), as it also appears in
the present context.
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The discovery of a traditional local knowledge (much of which is gradually disappearing), as an adaptive management and as applications within the cultural systems (Berkes et al., 2000; Bews 1935; East 1936; Keesing 1974; Muller 1974; Bates 2000; Barsalou 1991; Cox 2000; Brodt 2001) offers prospects for development. The increasing realization of the need of innovative ethics and policy to conserve biodiversity and to maintain ecosystem functions (Tilman 2000) is derived from the processes by which societies cultivate them. This may be illustrated by the particular system of food production and cultural-historical influences in Gaddi culture (Bhasin 1988) resulting in interrelated and interdependent elements (e.g. social relations, technology and environment as variables). In the Indian scenario, the context-specific local knowledge, and varied operative institutional mechanisms, are seen as some of the very effective attributes (Sengupta et al. 1992; Sengupta 2003). Their documentation should not only consist of descriptions of knowledge systems, their categorization of a ‘Cultural World’, their actions and uses, but also information on the threats to its survival (Gadgil 1994, 1996; Gadgil et al. 2000; Gadgil and Guha 1995) and the links between sedentarization and cultural transformation, even in case of the non-tangible cultural heritage of the Gujar, India’s largest Pastoral community (Tambs-Lyche 1997, Bhardwaj 1994; Das 2000; Negi 1998; Verma 2004).

Traditional knowledge embodies the ecological adaptations of humans to diverse environments and has the potential to serve as a basis for the preservation of biological and cultural diversity (Brush 1993; Maffi 2001). Many of the ecological relations recognized by traditional peoples are often little, if at all, known to Western science because they tend to be place-specific and shared only by the resident cultural groups.
The concept of culture as "shared knowledge" or a "pool of shared information" (Reyes-Garcia 2001) is well established in anthropology and implies that people differ in the amount of information they share. Scholars have studied the intra-group variability of knowledge (Romney, Weller and Batchelder 1986; Berlin 1992; Boster 1986; Ellen; 1979; Hunn 2002) and have found that this distribution is not random, but patterned. Among the variables that have been found to pattern, in particular the intra-cultural variation of knowledge, are age (Phillips et al. 1993), gender and kinship (Boster 1986), acculturation (Zent 2001), level of integration with the market economy (Benz et al. 2000; Caniago et al. 1998; Reyes-Garcia 2001), national language (Benz et al. 2000; Zent 2001), ethnicity, and informants' type of activities. Studies on the intra-cultural variation of ethno-botanical knowledge in various cultures have given clues to the reasons and the extent of knowledge loss and decay (Zent 2001; Hill 2001), the patterns of ethno-botanical knowledge transmission (Lozada et al. 2006), the implications for the conservation, protection and resilience of traditional knowledge and biodiversity (Nemoga 2004; Ghimire et al. 2005), and to mechanisms of adaptation to environmental changes (Muller-Schwarze 2005) in various populations. Since the 1990s, numerous studies have raised our awareness of the fact that "the ongoing loss of biodiversity is paralleled and interlinked with the "extinction crisis" affecting linguistic and cultural diversity" (Maffi 2001: 15). Many of the knowledge systems of the innumerable traditional cultures in India have not been documented and are currently facing growing threats of knowledge erosion related to language loss, acculturation, migration, growing population densities, and rapid changes in social structure.
An exploration of these individual models and their knowledge allows us to explain emerging patterns of agreement as well as deviances therefrom. These emerging patterns can then be explored with respect to their origin and the kind of knowledge involved. Boster (1987: 151) distinguishes between a 'particle model' and a 'wave model' of cultural knowledge, with the particle model representing independent knowledge bytes that accumulate. The wave model focuses more on knowledge that is related to other knowledge by invisible rules and theories. Both types of knowledge are relevant. The latter, however, might be of particular importance because it allows us to understand how members of a social group acquire tremendous amounts of knowledge similar to each others' when bit-by-bit learning seems implausible (Atran et al. 2002).

The study of how individuals handle novel situations and introduce new ideas and concepts into their existing framework is of great importance here. These possibilities and their implications are by no means solved yet, and much empirical work remains to be done: exploring different domains of knowledge, their acquisition, transfer and transformation. On the other hand, within-group differences might represent an ongoing process of cultural change (Ross 2002) or differential access to information, often coupled with interest or professional necessity (Ross and Medin 2005). Several pieces of research show that this can be achieved. However, this kind of work is tedious, expensive and time consuming. Still, if we want to understand process of culture and cognition for the benefit of (and the development of) society, it is probably the only way to go.

**Study Objectives**

The present research is an endeavour to understand the life-ways of the multi-traditional ethnic community, identified as 'Gujar'. The research is principally guided by...
qualitative (e.g. cognitive anthropology) methodology, in order to understand the intra-cultural diversity of traditions of the Gujar of Himachal Pradesh as well as to comprehend their cultural transformation. The study also seeks to ascertain the contribution of variations of cognition, the compulsions leading to cultural transformation, and its significance for the ethnic identity of the people. The methodology remained primarily flexible in order to unveil the observed association of and interfaces among variations in language, religion, cognition (Individual), recognition (Culture), movement, environment and strategies of living in the realm of the Gujar culture. The present research is also tries to evaluate and contribute to the theories of cultural models and developmental contexts related to it.

After a primary review of the literature, and after the reconnoiter survey for exploring the different sections of the Gujar living in varied natural settings of Himachal Pradesh in India, the nomadic sections were seen as being more 'traditional' and 'wealthier' than the other sections, (although the nomads are mostly exposed to external forces). Such stimulating observations and other significant implications—like intra-cultural variation and distribution of knowledge and cognition, cultural transformations, development potential etc.—emerged as initial objectives for the selection of the study of the Gujars.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis explores the cultural life and livelihood of communities engaged in pastoral activities of differing scales. The dilemma faced by the anthropologist in defining tradition, and transformation, as a cultural process from cognitive perspectives is the basic theme of the thesis. The existence of within group differences and similarities
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are unveiled to understand the dynamics of transformation. Chapter 1 presents the background of the study by exploring different concepts related to tradition and transformation, citing the different ongoing debates of scholars working in this field. It introduces the main arguments and the literature which forms the theoretical foundation of this thesis. The review focuses on the concept of cognitive perspectives of culture, of intra cultural variability, knowledge distribution and the pattern of informant agreement in understanding the dynamics of tradition and transformation. Chapter 2 presents the context of the study. It provides a brief overview of the state, block, and the panchayat selected for the study. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology adopted in this thesis, beginning with the rationale for conducting the research. The research idea and theoretical paradigm are also presented. The chapter also outlines the sampling procedures, and the process of data collecting applied in the study. An outline of the various data collection methods - like free listing, cultural domain analysis, schedule, interview etc. - are also presented. Chapter 4 depicts the ethnographic profile of the Gujars of Chamba and Kangra district. It highlights the socio-cultural perspectives, economic life, the pattern of seasonal migration and its relation with the perception of space and time. The chapter is of special importance because it provides valuable information about the Gujar community; information that serves as a foundation for understanding the classification of different domains of the Gujars in the forthcoming chapters. Chapter 5 deals with the classification of different aspects of Gujar culture and exploratory analyses of the different domains of knowledge. This chapter outlines the perception of space and its relation with livelihood and social relations. Apart from this the chapter provides the classification of plant domain, buffalo names and their
associated meanings, the knowledge about different human and animal diseases with their curative practices, etc. Chapter 6 provides the quantitative results from free lists, saliency, and consensus analysis that were analyzed with the aim to find patterns in the variation of knowledge with regard to naming and identification. The chapter also highlights the levels of knowledge sharing by analyzing consensus among informants as well as the pattern of agreement and disagreement within a group. The factors influencing knowledge distribution and patterning are also mentioned in this chapter. Chapter 7 presents the overall conclusion of this thesis. This chapter attempts to provide an explanation of the research objectives by reviewing the different questions generated in this thesis. The challenges faced during the course of this study, the limitations of the study, and the potential areas for future research are also presented in this chapter.
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