Processes of settling constitute one of the two basic themes in rural settlement geography, the other being their landscape results. The processes and their landscape results have material foundation and express the terrestrial existence of culture groups. The material foundation is provided initially by nature and is, later, converted into a cultural complex by culture-ecological processes, a statement which is as axiomatic as the Sauerian formulation 'culture is the agent, natural area is the medium and cultural landscape is the result.'

An extensive search through the published bibliographies reveals that the landscape results have been discussed to some extent by the Indian geographers but the processes have been neglected, even of those areas where they could have been studied easily.

This chapter focuses on the identification of different processes of settling which have operated in different parts of the study area. It includes an investigation of the culture succession and of the variations in the effectiveness of a
particular process among the constituent culture groups. The chapter is comprised of two sections, the settlement processes and the culture succession.

Settlement Processes

Settlement processes* refer to the discovery, acquisition and clearing of territory for cultivation, establishment of settlement, and construction of roads and secular and religious landscape features. In the region, in terms of the nature of landscape, two processes have operated: (i) those which have operated in a wild primeval landscape and are termed 'settling an area' and (ii) those which operated in an already settled area and are termed 'settling in an area.' (4)

Fundamental to 'settling an area' has been territorialisation. The formation of territory involves two processes, clearing of the forests and woodlands, and laying claims on the cleared land with definite boundaries for perpetual ownership and settling through administrative decisions. (5) Of these, removal of forests has been the most widespread and effective process. Prior to 1861 when the

*Settlement processes and processes of settling have been used interchangeably in the present discussion.
Forest Preservation Act was passed, the villagers utilized the forests without check or hindrance.(6) This is evident from a comparison of the nahar region with the des.(7) The des has been almost entirely stripped of its vegetation. On the other hand, in the hills, which were occupied later, the clearing has been far less extensive.

'Settling in an area' is generally through belligerency and use of force and even burning of the already existing villages. This process involves a struggle between two culture groups, the settled and the invading, and can be explained as a chain sequence of five steps: attrition .... confrontation .... clash .... emergence of new culture group ..... settling in an area. It starts with attrition and proceeds through the stages of confrontation and clash, resulting in the emergence of a dominant group which at last brings about settling in an area. This process results in a partial settlement of the area in which the vanquished group continues to stay though over-powered by the stronger one.

Four major culture groups, Rajputs, Kanets, Jats and Gujars have lived in the study area through different historical periods. However, extensive field investigations reveal that the number of Rajputs and of Jats is now small. The Rajputs are landowners but their land is cultivated mainly by the Kanets. On the other hand, the Jats form less than half
of the population of some of the villages in the Dun. They are concentrated in the middle and lower segments of the Dun whereas the Gujars are the most numerous in the Siwalik Hills and in the upper segment of the Dun, and the Kanets in the Himalaya. (Fig. 8) The other culture groups, such as the Brahmins, Kolis, Chanals, Kumhars and Chamaras are dispersed throughout the region.

The Rajputs, formerly inhabiting mainly the Plains, moved into the Himalaya during the Muslim and the Mughal times (thirteenth to eighteenth centuries A.D.). In the late eighteenth and in the early nineteenth century their settlement extended southward to include the pahar region of Nalagarh. (8) Because of their aversion to holding plough, derived from their ritual social status and reinforced by the feudal mode of living, they almost and everywhere depended on hired labour, mostly drawn from the lower castes of the hills, for the cultivation of their lands. For them clearing of forests to settle an area was not an enthusiastic venture. (9)

In order to settle and create agricultural fields, Kanets had to clear the natural vegetation of the land irrespective of whether it belonged to themselves or was allotted to them by the Rajput landlords.
The Jats, aggressive as they are, have always cleared the territory by felling, burning, and uprooting the natural vegetation, without having a sense of guilt. They, along with Gujars, migrated from the Plains into the Dun on the invitation of the Raja of Nalagarh. They were not granted the ownership of land but were simply tempted to settle here by the reduction in revenue tax and the provision of paying it in kind instead of cash.

The Gujars were pushed by the Jats to the marginally productive agricultural and grazing lands of the Siwalik Hills and the upper and more rugged parts of the alluvial fans. They settled these areas by removing open woodlands and establishing settlements and agricultural fields.

The territory has also been acquired through other processes as well. The Brahmin villages scattered throughout the district represent old endowments granted by the former rulers of the area. Muafis and pattas were also given to families belonging to different culture groups on different occasions as charitable gifts, or as rewards for the services rendered to the state. Rajputs, the landlords, allotted lands in their territory to Kanets, their tenants and peasants.

Adopting different processes of settling the culture groups have created their own distinctive cultural landscapes which include relict features. Through culture succession
some of these features have been completely and others partially obliterated. The culture succession in this context purports to the successive phases during which the culture groups entered the area and settled it.

Culture Succession

The present landscape, cleared of its forests, woodlands and scrubs and with the endless succession of cultivated lands, orchards, paths, roads and settlements, has involved generations of human effort. The transformation has been achieved by a combination of different genres de vie of a succession of culture groups.

The origins and affinities of contemporary pahari castes and tribes are not clearly understood and have become subjects of controversy. The process of settling began with the Khasas, the original inhabitants of these hills, during 1500 - 1000 B.C. (circa). (12 and 13) They were the early Indo-Aryans who had probably come from central Asia. The tribe is mentioned in ancient Indian epic and religious literature such as Vayu Purana, Varaha Samhita, and the Markandeya Purana. (14) The Khasa race has been widely recognised as the descendants of the Kauravas who, after suffering defeat in the Mahabharta war (circa 1000 B.C.),
were driven out from the Plains into the hills which, by then, had become a part of the Pandava Kingdom. (15)

Firm historical data are not available for the subsequent centuries until about sixth century A.D. when the Khasa had apparently penetrated along the southern slope of the Himalaya as far east as Nepal and, by the twelfth century, they had settled in the hills of the study area. (16) They dominated the region, in number and status, till the end of the nineteenth century. (17) The succeeding waves of the Gujar immigrants entered the region around sixth century A.D. A majority of them continued practising their traditional pastoral mode of living and the rest became identified with the Kshatriyas. (18)

In the subsequent periods, the Kanets became numerically more important than the Khasa because of the preponderance of the former among the groups which moved into the region. Presently, they account for over half of the total population of the region. In course of time the Kanets became assimilated with the Rajput clans and thus came to be known as degraded Rajputs. (19)

From the twelfth century onward the tide of Muslim conquests and bigotry began to sweep the Brahmins of the Plains into the neighbouring hills. As a result of intermixing in the hills some of the Khasas adopted the names and status typical
of the Brahmins and the Rajputs. (20) Thus, the two existing constituents of the Khasas, the Bhats and the Kanets, became analogous to Brahmins and Rajputs of the Plains. (21)

The culture contacts between the hills and Plains continued till late nineteenth century. (Fig. 6) This is inferred from the movement of the second wave of the Gujars with the Jats and Sainis in the late eighteenth century. The Kanets moved from the districts of Kangra and Bilaspur to the area in the early nineteenth century. (22) The migrations to the hills and the Dun were promoted by the invitations of the local chiefs. (23)

In essence, the process of settling began with the Khasas around 1500 - 1000 B.C. They were followed, in succession, by the Rajputs, the Kanets, Brahmins, Gujars, Jats and Sainis. But there was never a complete replacement of an earlier by a later culture group. During every stage more than one culture group contributed to the creation of characteristic cultural landscape. Cultural heterogeneity has been the rule and cultural homogeneity an exception. The region is an area of cultural plurality and cultural transition, the two features are revealed in the distinctive cultural landscape. Also, it illustrates the condition of areal-cultural pluralism in which the distribution of culture groups is mutually exclusive and minor culture regions display characteristic cultural landscapes of rural settlements. (24)
Conclusion

Deforestation has been the most important process of settling. The extent of its operation and effectiveness has varied with the differences in the genre de vie of the culture groups. The study area has experienced culture succession. The differences in most aspects of rural settlements are related to the cultural characteristics of the communities inhabiting the region.

References and Notes


4. Personal communication from Professor A.B. Mukerji, Chairman, Geography Department, Panjab University, Chandigarh.

5. Administrative decisions during the pre-British period used to be taken by the Rajas, but during the British period it was a function of the Government.


10. See ref. 9, p. 345.

11. See ref. 7, p. 17.


19. The interview with a knowledgeable informant of the study area revealed that the name 'Kanet' has been derived from 'kuniti' or bad practices. Those Rajputs who started practising karewa (regarded by others as an irreligious practice) came to be known as Kanets. Cunningham however opines that they are the descendants of Khasas (see ref. 16, p. 126).


21. See ref. 13, p. 12.


23. See ref. 7, pp. 9 & 17; and ref. 22, p. 123.

24. See ref. 9, p. 338.