

Sherpas

The Sherpas are originally from Tibet but fled the area due to turmoil (war) in the area around the 16th century. The largest Sherpa population resides around the base of Mount Everest, which the Sherpas call Chomolungma (“Mother of the World”) in Tibet and Sagarmatha (“Goddess of the Sky”) in Nepal. There are other Sherpa communities in other areas of China, Tibet, Southern India, Sikkim and Nepal.

Today there are over 5,000 Sherpas in NYC.

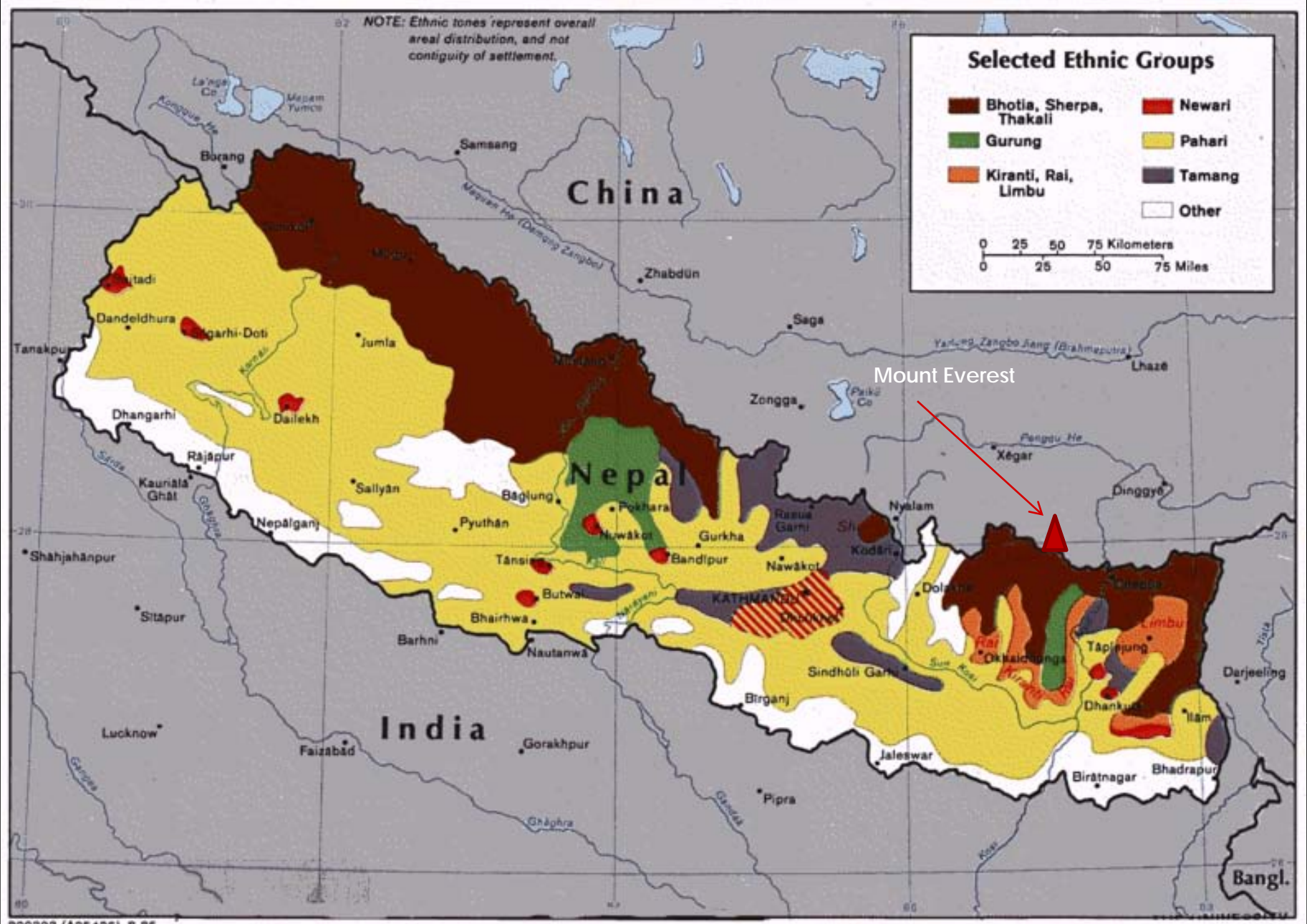
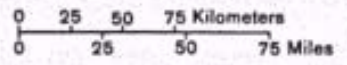


Sherpa schoolhouse in Nepal

NOTE: Ethnic tones represent overall areal distribution, and not contiguity of settlement.

Selected Ethnic Groups

- Bhotia, Sherpa, Thakali
- Kiranti, Rai, Limbu
- Gurung
- Pahari
- Newari
- Tamang
- Other



Sherpa Culture

Marriage – Unlike many other groups in nearby India, Sherpas do not have arranged marriages. Additionally woman can take more than one husband (this is not common and is considered a sign of prestige).

Language: Sherpa (also known as Sherpali) which is a Tibetan dialect

Population: 45,000

Religion: Bön or Tibetan Buddhist

Naming: Sherpas are often named after the day of the week on which they are born.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Dawa	Migmar	Lhakpa	Phurba	Pasang	Pemba	Nyima

To that name another name is added on, often to describe what the hopes are for that child.

Activity – Choose a Sherpa name for yourself and then write your name in Tibetan using the [alphabet guide](#).

Sherpa Name	Virtue Meaning
Gyal-tshen	Courageous Speech
Lha-mo	Beautiful Goddess
Ta-shi	Good Luck
Cho-ti	Religious Devotion
Do-rje	Diamond
Ten-zing	Good Supporter
Gya-tsho	Ocean
Gyel-tsen	Royal Courage
Jangbu	Clever or Skillful
Ka-rma	Hard Work
Lob-sang	Disciple
Nam-kha	Spacious Sky
Nor-bu	Precious Jewel
Rin-che	Great or Precious
She-rap	Wisdom
Zopa	Patience



Sagamatha (Everest) National Park Sherpa Village

The Puja Ceremony

Once Base Camp is established, it is time to hold the Puja ceremony. During the Puja, the Sherpas ask and pray to the gods for permission to climb Mount Everest and for a blessing for a safe and successful expedition. Until the Puja is held, no one from the expedition is allowed to climb, for fear of angering the gods. As a Buddhist religious ceremony, the Puja is presided over by a Lama, a Buddhist holy man.

During the Puja, the flag pole is raised upon the chorten and prayer flags strung across the camp. The climbers and Sherpas place their ice axes, crampons, and other items against the chorten to be blessed during the ceremony. The Lama chants as everyone throws tsampa (a roasted barley flour) toward a stone altar covered with offerings.



Prayer flags can be seen all throughout camp and Buddhist Tibet/Nepal. They are said to purify the air and pacify the gods, as they flutter in the wind and release the prayers written upon them to the heavens. The five colors of the prayer flags - red, green, yellow, blue and white - are symbolic of the earth's five elements: fire, wood, earth, water and iron.

Major Issues facing Sherpa Communities

➤ Poverty

- Jobs – [Annual Schedule](#)
- Farmers
- Trade Porters across the Himalayas
- Mountaineer Porters

[Information on Sherpa Culture](#)

➤ Education

- [Youtube Video](#)

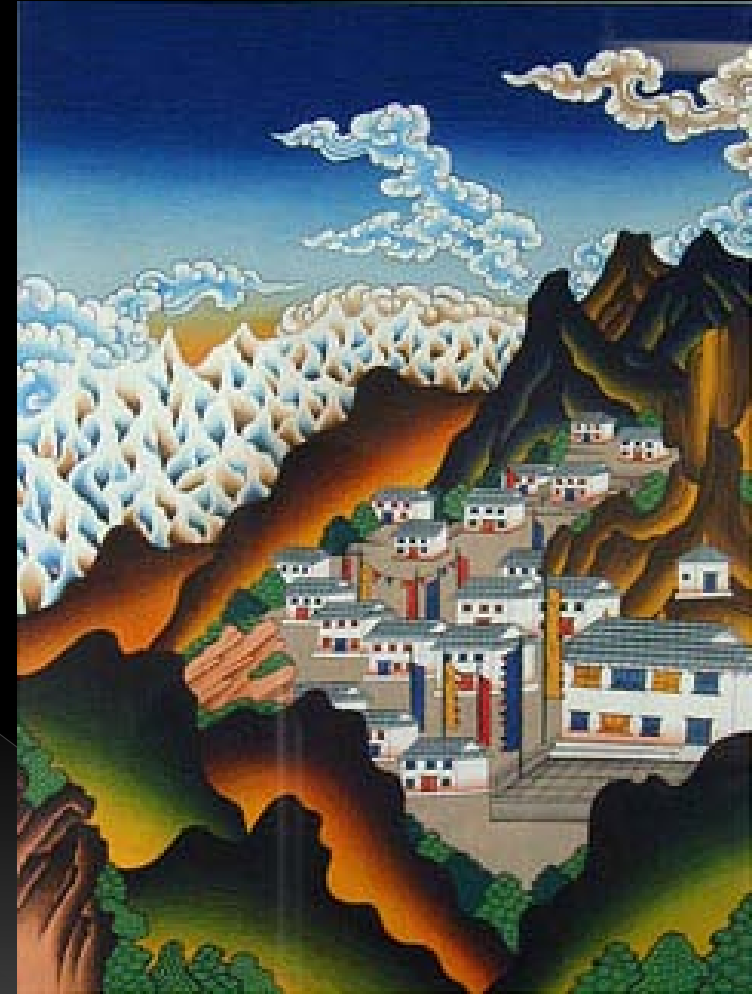
➤ [Tourism](#)

- Environmental concerns
 - deforestation
 - pollution
 - Sagarmatha National Park Regulations

Read More

Sherpas: Reflections on Change in Himalayan Nepal by James F. Fisher

The Sherpas of Nepal: Buddhist Highlanders by Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf



*Sherpa Village on the
Way to Namche Bazaar
Nepal, c. 1996
Mineral pigment on
fabric
(18" x 13 1/2")*