

# **The Role of SHERPA CULTURE in NATURE CONSERVATION**



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Writer & Photographer : Tenzing Tashi Sherpa

Typing & Translation : Tsherin Ongmu Sherpa

Editor : Professor Stan Stevens, Ph.D.

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# **The Role of SHERPA CULTURE in NATURE CONSERVATION**



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नेपाल सरकार  
गृह मन्त्रालय

## सीमा प्रशासन कार्यालय



पत्र संख्या:-  
चलानी नं.:-

मिति: २०७१/११/२०

**विषय:- शुभकामना**

प्रस्तुत सन्दर्भमा खुम्बु शेर्पा संस्कृति संरक्षण समाजले "प्रकृति संरक्षणमा शेर्पा संस्कृतिको भूमिका" नामक पुस्तक प्रकाशन गर्न लागेको शुभ अवसरमा यो शुभकामना व्यक्त गर्न पाउँदा हृदयदेखी नै खुशी लागेको छ ।

हाम्रो पृथ्वीमा मानवको उत्पत्ति भएदेखि नै मानव र प्रकृतिबीच अन्योन्यायचित सम्बन्ध रहँदै आएको सन्दर्भमा प्रकृतिको संरक्षण हुन नसके मानवको पनि संरक्षण हुन नसक्ने तथ्य जो कसैबाट स्वीकार्य भइसकेको छ । त्यसैले प्रकृति संरक्षणमा सबैले आ-आफ्नो ठाउँबाट प्रयास हुन आवश्यक भइरहेको अवस्थामा हाम्रो देशको प्राय उच्च हिमाली भू-भागमा बसोबास गरी वातावरण तथा प्रकृति संरक्षणमा ठोस योगदान पुऱ्याउदै आउनुहुने शेर्पा समुदायको संस्कृतिबाट प्रकृति संरक्षणमा पुऱ्याइरहेको योगदानको बारेमा चर्चा गर्दै यो पुस्तक प्रकाशन हुन गइरहेको शुभ अवसरमा यस पाठ्य पुस्तकभित्र रहेका विषयबस्तुको अध्ययनबाट सबै पाठक वर्गमा प्रेरणा जागरण हुने भएको समेत सन्दर्भमा यो पुस्तकको प्रकाशन र सफलताको लागि धेरै धेरै शुभकामना व्यक्त गर्न चाहन्छु ।

  
०६१/११/२०

अनन्त कुमार बस्नेत  
कार्यालय प्रमुख





नेपाल सरकार  
सङ्घीय मामिला तथा स्थानीय विकास मन्त्रालय  
**गाउँ विकास समितिको कार्यालय**



प.स.:- ७९/७२


च.नं.:- ७९

मिति २०७९/११/२०

**विषय: शुभकामना**

प्रस्तुत सन्दर्भमा खुम्बु क्षेत्रमा बसोबास गर्ने शेर्पा समुदायहरू चिसो र हिमपातको बाबजुद पनि प्रकृति र जैविक विविधतालाई आफ्नो धर्म र संस्कृतिबाट संरक्षण गर्न सफल हुनु भएकोमा खुम्जुङ गा.वि.स. र मेरो व्यक्तिगत तर्फबाट बधाइ दिन चाहन्छु ।

खुम्बु शेर्पा संस्कृति संरक्षण समाज (KSCCS) ले "प्रकृति संरक्षणमा शेर्पा संस्कृतिको भूमिका" नामक पुस्तक प्रकाशन गरी गाउँ समाजलाई संस्कृति र संरक्षण सम्बन्धी सचेत र जागरण पार्ने प्रकाशनलाई सफलताको लागि शुभकामना दिन चाहन्छु ।

  
**बिनोद बस्नेत**  
गा.वि.स. सचिव  
बिनोद बस्नेत  
गा.वि.स. सचिव



In 2015, a series of mega earthquakes struck Nepal, killing over 8,000 people, destroying over 500,000 homes, and damaging significant cultural structures. The aftermath of these earthquakes is placing the future of Sherpa cultural heritage at risk.

This tragedy ignited a passion to take action, and Altruistic Odyssey, Inc (AO) began. Through AO we have direct connections with local partners to support projects that are impactful, sustainable, and valued by the local community. The Khumbu Sherpa Culture Conservation Society (KSCCS) is one of those partners, and AO is proud to support this publication of *The Role of Sherpa Culture in Nature Conservation*.

**Altruistic Odyssey (AO) is a nonprofit organization providing cultural preservation to underserved communities** around the world. Our first project is formed to preserve the vital Sherpa culture in the Khumbu region and other remote areas of Nepal. AO funded projects include educational programs and repair of culturally significant structures. AO is dedicated to empowering communities to sustain these projects over time.

Our partnership with KSCCS allows AO to support the revival of Sherpa culture through nature conservation, reconnecting to the earth, and what it produces.

Proceeds from this publication will preserve monastic structures, which play a major role in everyday life, creating yearly tempos for the family cycle of birth, education, marriage, old age and death through rituals and celebrations. Through this revival, Sherpa leadership is bridging the generational gap of a "high tech versus low touch" world.

As global awareness about being much better caretakers of the Earth is expanding exponentially, AO believes that helping transmit the power of nature conservation through Sherpa culture in the highest mountains in the world is paramount. Therefore, AO is committed to supporting the Sherpa culture revival to share a better world in the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ed Antoine".

Ed Antoine  
President Altruistic Odyssey Inc.







## Acknowledgement

### **Tenzing Tashi Sherpa**

Khumbu Sherpa Culture Conservation Society  
Khumjung, Solukhumbu, Nepal

The role of Sherpa culture in nature conservation is among the world's most successful examples. I have published this book to put this example in the hands of lovers of culture and conservation.

I am not a professional writer, but I have written this book in order to reflect on the dedication of our ancestors and to discuss the important role of Sherpa culture in Nature Conservation. In the Khumbu area and the villages of the Sherpa people, we find that the Nature Conservation is done in a cultural and religious way. These are gems to be handed over to our next generation.

We aim to publish a future book about the role of Sherpa culture in Nature Conservation in the different regions of the Sherpa people. This will be more interesting, informative, and thorough with your support and suggestions.

The chapters of this book are based on direct, indirect, formal and informal study over a long period and in different places.

The many speeches, exhortations, and knowledge of Sherpa Culture and Nature Conservation shared by Tyangboche lama (monk) Ngawang Tenzing Jangbu are important sources for this book. My work would not be effective without help of Mahendra Bahadur Kathet (former principal) and Professor Stan Stevens, Ph.D., who pointed out important things.

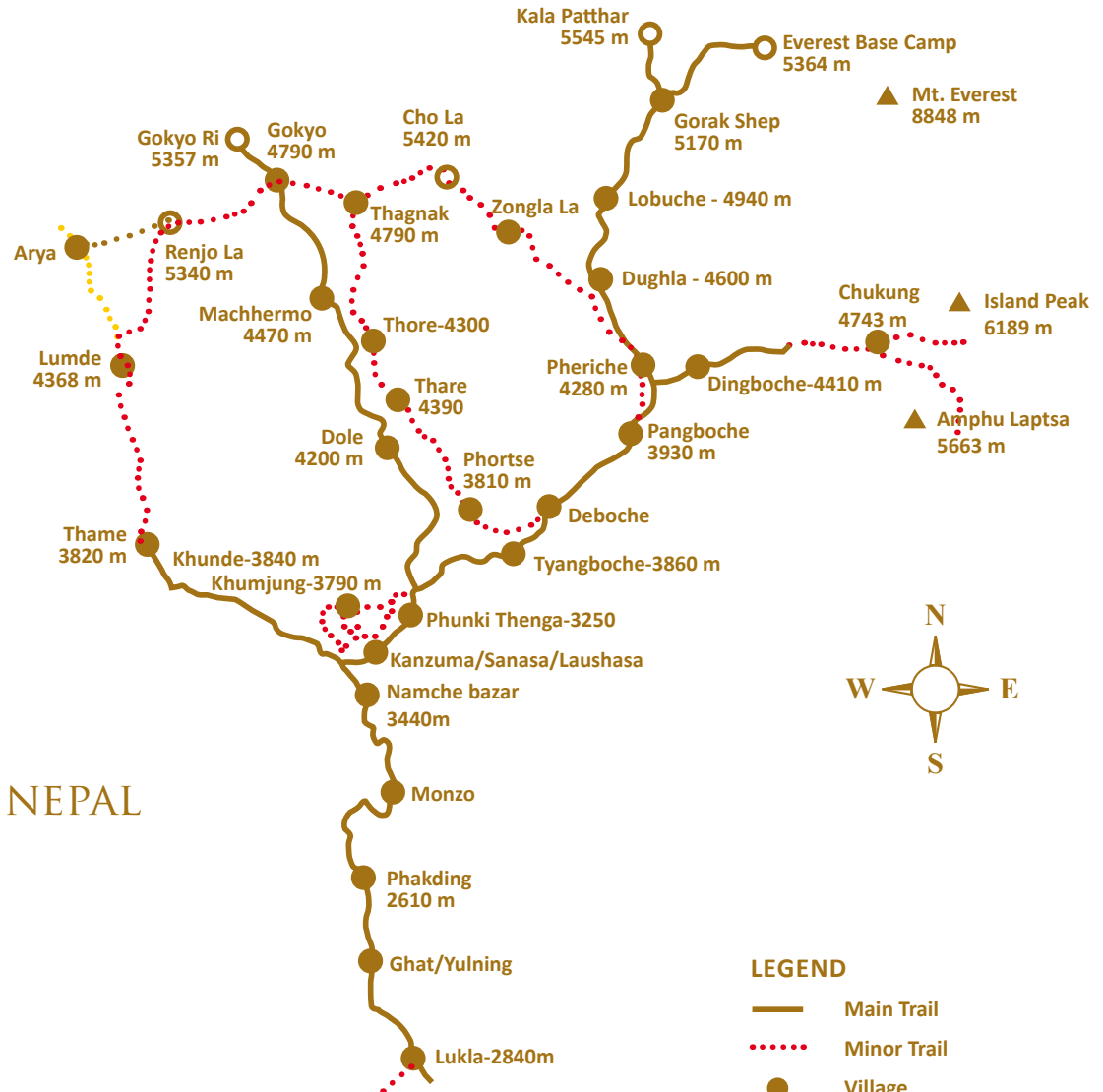
The collaboration for nature conservation by SNP/BZ/UC/UG, Khumjung VDC, Khumjung Gomba Management committee, Khumjung School, Khumjung-Khunde Youth Club, Khumjung-Khunde Women's Group, and Nawas of Khumjung VDC are appreciated, and the KSCCS family thanks them.

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I would especially like to thank Altruistic Odyssey for supporting the publishing of the English edition of this book, **The Role of Sherpa Culture in Nature Conservation**, and the Paul K. Feyerabend Foundation for their help and support for Nepali edition of this book and for respecting Sherpa Culture and Nature Conservation.

# MAP OF KHUMBU

TIBET



Source: Hello Himalayan Homes

# 1 The Role of Sherpa Culture in Nature Conservation

Humans are born of the earth. In order to survive human beings consume natural resources. They don't have any alternative. Natural resources demand and supply have to be in harmony. When demand increases, there is a struggle to meet the new demand. Humans suffer when there is a shortfall. Struggles to meet increasing demand have made people realize that only nature conservation can make human life easier and sustainable. Feeling this, the Sherpa people began conserving nature through religion and culture.



## Khumbu is a Sherpa Community Conserved Area



Chorten on hill above Syangboche in Khumbu



Monks doing prayers to Khumbu Yullha (Country protector God of Khumbu)

Firstly, Khumbu is a model among thousands of areas conserved by indigenous peoples. The rich culture and religion of this area contribute to a remarkable example of successful conservation. This is a living place of the world's highest mountain, Mt. Everest, and many sacred mountains, hills, rocks, lakes, forests and animals.

Around 1,200 years ago Guru Rinpoche declared Khumbu a *beyul* (a sacred hidden valley). It is believed that no kind of bad things can enter into a *beyul*. Sherpa communities that follow the Buddhist religion settled in this beyul. Buddhist religion emphasize peace and nonviolence. This is also an important trait of the beyul. Therefore animal hunting and killing are prohibited here.

The sacred mountains located in this beyul are worshipped as protector gods, *esta dev* (favoured gods), and *shaktidev* (powerful gods). Therefore burning fire near mountains, digging, and polluting, as well as climbing these sacred mountains are prohibited.



# Sacred Himalayas

## Five sisters of Mt Everest

- i) Tashi Tsiringma
- ii) Thinki Shyalsangma
- iii) Miyo Losangma
- iv) Chyopen Disangma
- v) Tekar Dosangma

## Five Chho (Chho family)

- i) Chho Oyu – Jyowoh  
Yukpi
- ii) Chho Polu – Jyowoh  
Bulo
- iii) Chho Ahwi – Jyowoh  
Chhiring Cheanga
- iv) Chho Rapshok – Jyowoh  
Rabjang
- v) Chho Garu – Jyowoh  
Garu

## Two Thechen Karu Mountain

These sacred mountains are protector gods:

- i) Khumbu Yullha Thechen Karu (country protector god of Khumbu)
- ii) Shorong Yullha Thechen Karu (country protector god of Shorong)



Goddess Tsiringma



Mt. Tsiringma (Gaurishankar)



Khumbu Yullha (Country protector God of Khumbu)



Mt. Khumbu Yullha

### Lhachen Karpos

There are many Lhachen Karpos, a kind of sacred mountain associated with a god of a particular place and clan:

Gyadjui Lhachen Karpo, Tagoh Chei Lhachen Karpo, Lobuche Lhachen Karpo, Ahyui Lhachen Karpo, Thonak Lhachen

Karpo, Bari Lhachen Karpo, Tagkaryi Lhachen Karpo, Palgyaryi Lhachen Karpo, Kyasobpi Lhachen Karpo, Arkamched Lhachen Karpo, Gyajui Lhachen Karpo, Aawih Lhachen Karpo



Mount Everest (8,848m)



Gokyo lake

## Sacred Lakes

- Gokyo Five Lakes (Khumbu)
- Womi Lake (Solu)
- Five Lakes (Mera)
- Imja Lake (Chukhung)

### Gokyo Lake

Gokyo is derived from two words, "Go" and "Kyo", where *Go* means head and *Kyo* means twisted to the side. Gokyo lake is a source of Dudhkoshi. This is a sacred area where five lakes are located in a series. Sacred mountains, worshiped as *esta dev* (favoured gods) by the Sherpa people, surround these lakes. Gokyo lake is high up the valley, and on the east side of the five lakes there is a flowing large glacier.

The three sacred snow mountains that are the water sources of the five lakes of Gokyo and the river Dudh Koshi:

- I. Lhong Gyok Lhachen Karpo
- II. Thonak Lhachen Karpo
- III. Bari Lhachen Karpo

We also receive blessings from other Lhachen Karpo sacred mountains in Khumbu:

- i) Tagoh Chyai Lhachen Karpo
- ii) Bari Lhachen Karpo
- iii) Tagkargyo Lhachen Karpo
- iv) Gyajui Lhachen Karpo

And there are also still other gods of sacred mountains that are not Lhachen Karpo:

- i) Jyovoh Yukpo
- ii) Jyovoh Ravjang
- iii) Yomo Miyolang sangma

Beside these there are also many others, which are not named here.

Gokyo lakes are lakes with expansive energy that protects Khumbu area from misfortune and external harm, which we conserve carefully so that they remain sacred.

The Khumbu region is a *beyul* (sacred hidden valley) not only in a geographical way but also in a religious way. There is story that a king of the ninth century "Khiwa Gyalu", who is also called "Ki Kha Ra Tho" (Goat head with Dog's snout), fled from Khenbulung and thought to live in a palace on the great rock at Mejong/ Monju, just south of Khumbu. The Gokyo god predicted that if he did so misfortune would happen to the Khumbu beyul, and so

he made it appear to Khiwa Gyalu in a dream that the Gokyo lake was huge and dangerous. In the morning the king Khiwa Gyalu thought: “My dream was not auspicious; this place is insecure. I must go from here.” And so he went west to Dolakha, a place some days walk from Khumbu, and died there.

There is a belief that innermost wishes can come true, and so when we ask for anything we must be clean and pray with incense and light. Gokyo is an important place for seeking blessings and making wishes.

When we go to Gokyo lake to receive a blessing, before reaching the lowest or “first” of the Gokyo lakes we arrive at a short bridge over the outflow stream. Just below this point we can see water flowing from the rock wall. There people put *khadas* (silk ceremonial scarves) for an offering. At this place one must purify oneself by bathing in that water. Afterwards, walking a little ways up valley to

the north, we reach a small lake after crossing the small bridge at Chyu Nakpo, the place from where a stream exits from a small lake. Here, forgetting all anger, greed, work, and ego, one has to be purified. Taking small stones from the bank of that lake, one has to build a stone cairn, a marker with three heaps. Without thinking of anything else, one has to pray to Buddha Amitayush for long life. We believe that the wish will come true.

Higher up valley there is a second lake. This lake is larger, and blue. Here, too, without thinking about anything else, one has to pray Gyalpo Chenpo Namthoshea for good luck, and that wish will be fulfilled.

Farther on, reaching the third lake, if we can receive the blessing with a pure heart, we receive glimpses of this life and of our destiny after death. This is called “Chea di tang chimaa ngi”. Here we have to pray for power. If one has a wish for a son or daughter, she or



Gokyo lake (third lake)



he must take a small stone from the lake and put in a pocket. Doing this, the wish will be fulfilled.

The stone received from the third lake must be kept safe. If that stone remains safe after the wish of the birth of a son or daughter is fulfilled, the child will be lucky. This third Gokyo lake is a powerful lake and can grant power.

The fourth lake is smaller in size than the third lake. It is deeper than the others, and has a slightly black colour. There we pray for wealth to Norki Nojin Jamba Lha (god of wealth), and that wish will be fulfilled. But if that wealth is used for a wrong purpose, misfortune will happen.

Reaching the fifth lake, we find it smaller than the others and notice that it has a bright blue color. The views seen here and the bright face of lake will make one forget all workload, anger, greed and envy. Here we must pray for renunciation, salvation, and nirvana to

Awaloketeswor, the god of mercy, and that wish will be fulfilled.

This sacred Gokyo is a place of deities. The one who reaches and enters this Buddhist land is among the lucky creatures. Sinful people will not reach here. After receiving a blessing from this sacred place, one no longer carries badness and sin (*hung thing nak*). According to our ancestors, these are the teachings of Buddha Chenjen.

One asking for a gift from the god from one of the five lakes must first be clean (washing face, hands and legs, taking a bath, and cutting the nails), and ask only for one wish, either long life, or the birth of a son or daughter, or wealth. Go to each of the lakes, and at each ask for one wish, and then return straight back without looking back until you reach the place where you first crossed the outlet stream and bathed and cleansed yourself.



Gokyo community people organizing Lhumbuk program for the Tyangboche Rinpoche



Gokyo community people organizing Lhumbuk program for Tyangboche Rinpoche

Beside the sacred lakes and the beautiful scenery, this entire area is holy. If one enters with a pure spirit and positive thoughts, this heaven will welcome you and what you have reflected about you will experience and your wishes will be fulfilled. This Buddha land of natural beauty is thus also a great pilgrimage place. You can return with purity, sincerity, and spiritual enrichment from here.

If you are far from religion, purity and positivity, there is nothing for you, because you don't have the capacity to believe and feel. You can't feel relatives, relationship, happiness, and satisfaction. Because of the sin enveloping you, you can't feel, believe and experience. Even your family, house and your body are not yours. They are all false. There is nothing and nobody for you in this earth. All are empty only empty, except for fear and anxiety.

After seeing the scene at Gokyo, when you take in the beauty and excitement, you have a strong feeling. The one who feels also believes, and the believer can achieve everything. And so she or he will return back rich in positiveness, freedom from sin, spirituality, and love from Gokyo. You have to feel, love, and believe.



Gokyo lake and Mt. Farilapcha during winter season

## Springs

- Syomarea lumu chuwa (Syomarea)
- Debuchea lumu chuwa (Debuche)
- Tyangboche lumu chuwa (Tyangboche)
- Dhonglapcha lumu chuwa (Deboche)
- Takshewih lumu chuwa (Tasingah)
- Worshyo lumu chuwa (Worshyo)
- Larea Nang lumu chuwa (Sanasha)
- Chermung chuwa (Khumjung)
- Tingjyung lumu chuwa (Khunde)
- Ri chuwa (Khunde)
- Lumu chuwa Nauche (Nauche, also called Namche or Namche Bazar)
- Fihsing chyukpu lumuthung syung chuwa (Kyongmoh)
- Chermulu lumu chuwa (Chermulung)

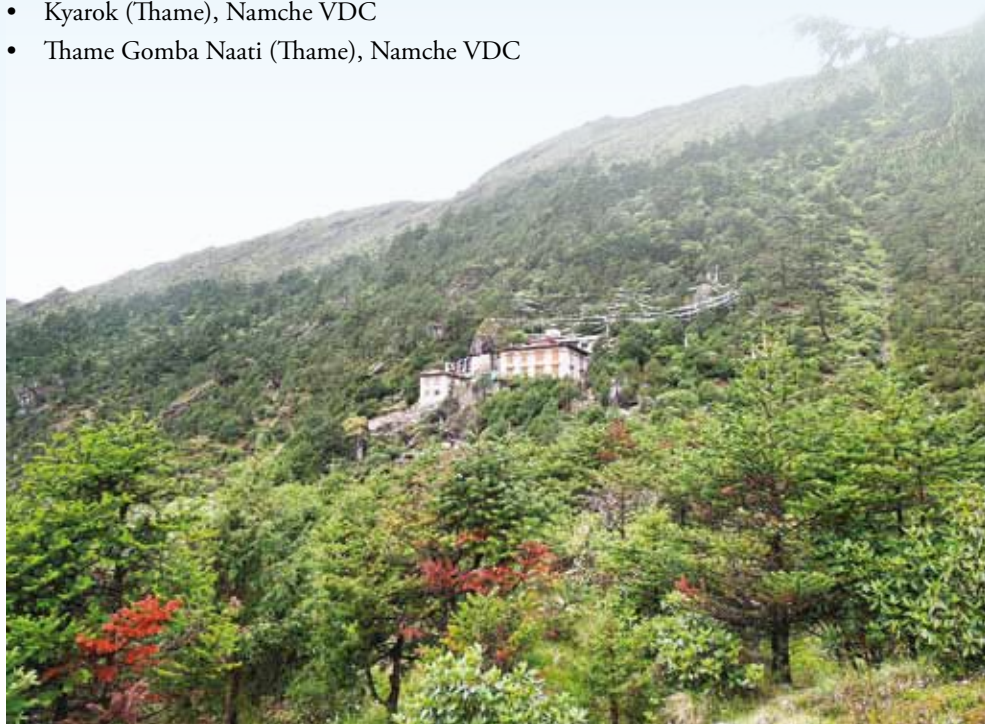
These are *esta dev* (favoured gods). Most of them are worshiped.





## Religious Conserved Forest

- Lumu Syukpa /Naag Than (lu sites), all three VDC
- Pangboche Gomba Naati (Pangboche), Khumjung VDC
- Pangboche Yaaren Naati (Pangboche), Khumjung VDC
- Deboche Gomba Naati (Deuche), Khumjung VDC
- Tyangboche Gomba Naati (Tyangboche), Khumjung VDC
- Khumjung Gomba Naati (Khumjung), Khumjung VDC
- Chamkhang Naati (Khunde), Khumjung VDC
- Chamkhang Naati (Khumjung), Khumjung VDC
- Lami Naati (around Tyangboche), Khumjung VDC
- Lapcha Naati (most of hilltop), all three VDC
- Chyarok Gomba Naati (Chyarok), Namche VDC
- Kyarok Gomba Naati (Kyarok), Namche VDC
- Laudoh Gomba Naati (Laudoh), Namche VDC
- Rimijyung Gomba Naati (Rimijyung), Chaurikharka VDC
- Phortse Lami Naati (Phortse), Khumjung VDC
- Mingbo (Deuche), Khumjung VDC
- Kyarok (Thame), Namche VDC
- Thame Gomba Naati (Thame), Namche VDC





## Community Conserved Forest (Kyaksing)

- Pangboche Yaaren Naati (Pangboche)
- Phortse Yulwi Naati (Phortse)
- Khumjung Yulwi Naati (Khumjung)
- Khunde Yulwi Naati (Khumde)



## Bird Conservation Area

- Lakyok Bird Conservation Area



## Grazing Management Area for Livestocks

### Private Pasture for Domestic Animals

- Tasingah and Laushyasa (pasture)
- Chermulung and Mong (pasture)
- Dole and Lhapharma (pasture)
- Machermo and Fangah (pasture)

### Pasture Around Gokyo five lake

Nah, Thaknak, Thorea, Khunar, Kele, Fungithanga, Sohsoh, Yaren, Lhapharma, Syomarea, Worshyo, Omaka, Dingbuche, Chukhung, Pherichea, Phulangara, Thukla, Lobuche, Kattarchea, Chukpi Lharea, Gorak Shep, Gurung Kharka, Lahthonang.

### Other Grazing Areas

Shyangboche, Kapsalea, Gyajoh, Kattarchea, Chhermulung, Chhuwa Whok, Chhuwa Teng, Ngolwih Goh, Mingwo Toldip, Shyajyonang, Chyugyumah

From every perspective, Sherpa indigenous religion, culture and tradition are seen to have played a role in managing and protecting sacred mountains, hills, lakes, forests, monasteries, human settlement, pastures, and grazing areas from ancient times.





Religious Conserved Forest

## Conservation Tradition

From the aspect of religion, there are many beliefs that have conservation significance.

- i) The gods such as *kelha*, *fohlha*, *mohlha*, *ruhlha*, *yullha* (birthplace, father's line, mother's line, village, clan, and regional protector gods) live in sacred mountains and hills in the form of natural power. They are worshiped respectfully and are saved from becoming impure. Different means are used to prevent desecration. If any mistakes offending the gods have been done unknowingly, *Sang Serkim* praying is done to ask for the god's forgiveness.
- ii) There is a belief that serpent spirits (*lumu chuwa luh*) reside in sacred lakes, rivers, springs, wetlands, and the surrounding trees. The sacred places with religious importance are protected by preventing pollution, digging, ploughing, cutting down trees, and other environmental destruction. These deities are prayed to annually for their respect.
- iii) The forests located around hill top monuments (made of stone and mud) are called *Lapcha Nati*. It is prohibited to fell trees and cut wood from these forests and it is also prohibited to dig or plow in these places.
- iv) The sacred forests near monasteries are protected by the monastery lamas. These protected forests are called *Gondea Nati* or *Lami Nati*.
- v) The forests around villages are protected by community initiatives as per cultural tradition. The forest aside in this way are protected as *Kyaksing* (restricted forest), through decisions of the villagers' assembly (*yulthim*).
- vi) Over time human population density and pressure have increased, with the the number of houses annually growing. Lumber for building is now brought from the neighbouring district rather than being obtained in Khumbu. Another change is that now the hotels and lodges use electricity, gas and dry dung for fuel. Due to these changes in forest use less demand is placed on the Khumbu trees and forest and they are better conserved.



## Nawa System for Conservation

The Nawa custom is practiced only in Khumbu. This tradition represents the community's law. *Nawa* means right. Literally, *Nawa* refers to authority. Behaviourally, the *Nawas* fulfill the role of custodians having authority.

There are two types of Nawas. One is *Singh ki nawa* (Wood custodian) and another is *Lothok nawa* (Crops and Pastures custodian).

The Nawa custodianship is changed every year. On the day of the Nawas' selection, a village general assembly (*yulthim*) and program is carried out, which is called *Worshyo*. This village assembly decides the required number of *nawas* according to the requirement of the village. In earlier times decisions used to be made about more different kinds of things in the village assembly. It used to be that decisions about theft litigation, disputes about division of property shares and transactions, and quarrels between husbands and wives used to be investigated and solved. There was the right to punish and to levy fines.

## The Rules of the Singhki Nawa (Wood Custodian)

The responsibility of the *Singhki Nawa* (wood custodian) is focused only on forest conservation. Strict *Di* (rules and regulations) are developed for forest conservation.

- i) No right to cut down trees
- ii) Deadwood to be used as firewood should be collected in a specified time period.
- iii) The *Nawa Shyu* (permission from the custodian) should be obtained before felling large trees.
- iv) A specific time is set for collecting litter and dry leaves from the forest.
- v) Fine should be paid for breaking forest uses rules and regulations and the offenders should ask for forgiveness by serving the Nawa *chyang* (rice alcohol) and tea.
- vi) In the case of great forest damage, a larger fine is charged by the Wood custodian. Notification is given of the date by which this must be paid.





## The Custom of the Lhothok Nawa (Crop and Pastures Custodian)

*Lhothok Nawa* (Crop and Pastures custodian) has a greater responsibility than *Singhki Nawa* (Wood custodian). Crop custodians protect the crops from loss and damage from livestock. They announce when livestock must be moved to other pastures and settlements. Anyone breaking the rules and regulations (*Di*) is fined. When there is large damage and loss the owner of the livestock is charged compensation.

Until the crop harvest time farmers move between their houses in different settlements and move their livestock one pasture to another according to the *Chhyungmi Di* (Livestock Rules and Regulations). During the crop growing period, no one is allowed to bring freshly-cut wood, leaves, forest floor litter, or bamboo into the village because this can cause crop rot. Digging and ploughing

cannot be done. These activities, including smell of painting, human death and quarrels, can cause a crop sickness called *Simbak* (foul), that rots the plants. *Nachyang* (fines) are charged for anybody doing the prohibited activities.

The *Lhothok Nawa* (Crop and Pastures Custodian) also is in charge of administering the *Tshea di* (rules and regulations for grass cutting) and announcing the time period when grass cutting is allowed. If grasses are cut before the time period designated by the Custodians, *nachyang* will be charged. After the crop harvest, the *Nawas* (Custodians) will announce, “Now you can bring back livestock to the village from the herding huts.” This notification is called *Chhyungmi di tonguh* (declaration of the livestock rules and regulations).



Farmers harvesting



Buckwheat

At present, besides the Nepal government laws related to forest use, five types of *Nawa di* (Custodian rules and regulations) are followed. These are;

- i) *Singhki Di* (Wood law) – rules about the authorized time for firewood collection.
- ii) *Saluk Di* (Dry leaves law) – rules about the authorized time for dry leaves and litter collection.
- iii) *Chyungmih Di* (Livestock law) – rules about the times and areas for pasturing livestock.
- iv) *Lhothok Di* (Crop law) – rules for protecting crops and plants.

The Nawa custom has been followed from ancient times, so these important things such as following the community rule, conservation, and controlled use of natural resources for living are older than the Nepal state's rule.

There is also a traditional grazing management custom of using different pastures in turn, according to which farmers manage their ancestral pastures according to the season of the year.

- i) *Yarsha* (Summer pasture) - Pasture to which livestock are moved in summer
- ii) *Tyonsah* (Autumn pasture) - Pasture to which livestock are moved in autumn season
- iii) *Gunsah* (Winter pasture) - Pasture to which livestock are moved in winter season

Private houses are built in these pastures, and those who don't have houses build small herding huts or use temporary rock wall and tarpaulin shelters (resa). Nawas fix the date to move animals to the pastures. The villagers make necessary gear and food ready ahead of their move up to the summer pastures, which is called *Yargya Chyambu* (summer ration).

## The Work and the Duty Term of the Nawa System and Worshyo

The time period of the Nawas' service is one year. Near the time they finish their duty period, they are authorized to collect two *manas* (a traditional unit of measure equivalent to a wood canister, little less than a liter) of grain from each village household, which is called *Worshyo dutuh*. Some grains are cooked for brewing into alcohol (*chyang*), and some are kept separate for use in offerings. The remainder are separated to eat. After the *chyang* brewing is ready, the *Worshyo* ceremony is carried out on a date that has been determined to be astrologically auspicious.

*Lamas* (Monks), the chief persons of the village, elderly persons, and *Chengma* (five virgin girls) are invited for circumambulating the village. All the participants invited for *Worshyo* (ritual for nawa selection) dress up in cultural dress.

The participants of program carry three sets of *tripitak* (collection of Buddhist teachings)

books, a buddha's statue, a special prayer flag called a *Tshyaptar*, a *Jhyamta* (similar to cymbals), a *Dhyangro* (a frame drum), two *Gyaling* (a musical instrument similar to an oboe), a *Damaru* (a small two headed drum) and a *Thilu* (bell). At least five lamas and five virgin girls are adorned with *Ringa* (ceremonial headgear) on their heads. They carry incense, *thuh* (pure water) in their hands. Some blow a shell, some carry *thok dambu tharsing* (flags which is planted in four directions to designate an important area) and book volumes. One carries *chyondu* (rice for offering) and sprinkles this while circling the village.

The out-going nawas burn incense in the house which is held for prayers. The household's woman does *Suchyang* prayers, offering water and *chyang* and blowing a shell. During the prayers an accordion instrument is played. The journey starts with the *Chyaptar* flag in the front. Hearing the sound of the instruments, people burn incense at their houses.



Virgin girls during Worshyo





Nawas doing Worshyo

The procession of the worshyo ceremony, the sounds of the instruments, the people's colourful dress, and the different *tharsing* flags make it delightful. The blue colour of the smoking incense and its fragrance make us feel that it is a sacred holy land or Buddha's land.

One among the procession announces "Worshyo la fewa hei" (Come for worshyo ceremony). He gives oral notification saying, "If anyone wishes to be nawa, come to X's house." Chyang, tea and other food items are provided in the place where the flags are set up which represent the four directions and designate this as an important area. *Suchang* (chyang offering) is done burning incense for welcome. After finishing setting up the prayer flag and praying, the nawas are selected. Nawas are selected in a fair election from the volunteers. Their responsibilities are handed over to them with a *Torma* (a cone of rice or tshampa) made by lamas, which is called "*Lahtor*". Their responsibilities are given to them with best wishes for successful work in

the coming year. Worshyo helps for fostering plants. There is belief that the bad sins and natural disaster such as landslides will not happen.

### Yulthim (Community Assembly)

After the new nawas are given responsibilities, they will see the astrologer to fix the date for the village assembly (*yulthim*). After fixing the date, the new nawas then organize the village assembly in a public meeting place. In Khumjung this takes place in Chyokhang Gangdok and in Khunde in Pangi Jyung, which are the historical places for holding the village assembly. On the appointed day, the Nawas prepare tea, chyang, and different breads. They offer pure water for *Serkim* (praying) and invite the villagers by announcing; "Yulthim shea fewa hei." (Please come for the assembly).

The villagers who attend this assembly then come with a tea pot or a jug of chyang (or donate an amount of money equal to the value of a jug of chyang). This is not a





compulsory payment, but is a donation and is used for covering the day's various expenses. The people who attend the assembly inform everyone else that they are going to it.

According to tradition, every person in the village, old and young, rich and poor, all should meet on the Yulthim day. On this day, there is discussion of how to improve on past weaknesses and mistakes in the Nawa operation, the time regulations can be modified, fines are announced, compensation and penalties are decided, and necessary changes are made. If required, additional Di rules can also be made by the assembly.

Moreover, in earlier times, there used to be decisions made on other matters on the day of the Yulthim. Discussions were held and decisions were made about settlements for thefts, division of property, transactions, and quarrels between husbands and wives. Decisions made on that day about public complaints and about exemptions from public rules and regulations were popular subjects in people's talk.

Gradually, with the increasing application of rules and laws of the Nepal state, the community's laws (*thim*) that were discussed and enforced through the *Yulthim* were abandoned. Eventually only the *Di* (rules) related to agricultural protection, *Singhki di* (forest law) and the *Gon thim* (Religious law) of the monastery were maintained.

### The Rules and Laws of Community

Yulthim - Village assembly for community's law

Di – Rule

Thim – Law

Nachyang – Fine

Cherpa – Punishment

Ngorkyang – Compensation

Dikhpa Khiru – To integrate

Gyu bulu – Pleading

Thiwa tonguh – Clarification

*Worshyo* (assembly and program for nawa's selection) and *Yulthim* (Village assembly) are managed according to the time that is favourable for a particular village community. They may be different in other village communities.

## Short Story by the Reincarnated Lama Ngawang Tenzing Zangbu about Nawa

Small species were first created on the earth. Time flew on. Human life developed from that small species. In the beginning sex was not divided. They had the power to fly. They used to go from one place to another by flying. They also had a light within their bodies that shone by itself. They didn't have feeling of hunger and thirst.

In that time, there was a yellow cream (like the thick cream on milk) on the surface of the earth. One day a human licked that cream from his finger. That was very tasty. Then others also started eating the cream. For years that substance was enough for humans to eat. Eventually, though, the cream was exhausted because humans ate it all. Now the humans started feeling hungry. Now a white substance froze on the earth. Humans started eating that substance, but one day it also had all been eaten. Now the humans began eating mud. After they began eating mud the light within the human body was extinguished. From that moment they started feeling cold.

Time passed, and edible plants grew on the earth's surface. Rice grew on plants that humans could eat without needing to cook it. After picking the rice grains, new rice grains would grow on the plants. Humans started storing rice for food. Greed and jealousy among the humans also started growing. After a long period of harvesting that rice also became extinct. At that time human beings lost their ability to fly. Now wheat with awns started growing from the plants. Over time the humans now changed further. Body parts denoting male and female developed. The sense of shyness developed in them. Relations between male and female began. They moved to caves to hide their shyness. Accordingly shelters began and families settled. Fruits became scarce in the forest. Food became difficult to find.

Distortion began in society. People began hurting each other, stealing, and the strong



began oppressing the weak. With this series of developments and changes in humans and society, leaders also began to be seen. The selection of leaders began and they began to distinguish justice and injustice. The rightful leader selected by the community was called a Nawa. Nawas started leading the society, started to assemble the villagers, designed the rules, designed the rules of land and property and publicly proclaimed these. The rules developed by nawas were called Di. The assembly meeting of the community was called Yulthim.

Human began to seek ways to produce food. They gained knowledge about planting seeds and how plants come up, grow, and thrive. The leaders began to claim productive land. The system of growing crops in fields with teams of workers developed. The crop harvest now was divided into six parts. One part was received by the nawa (selected leader) and the remaining five parts were divided among the farmers. The nawa system created over the course of human history shows that human society has developed over time. It is our responsibility to conserve and continue this.



## The Sacred Areas Respected and Protected by Khumbu's Sherpa People for Religious Purposes

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### Nangajong

While looking upward from Dingboche village, there is a small cave lying in the lap of Mt. Fokalden. Sherpas call this cave *Nangajong*. We don't find the meaning of Nangajong in the dictionary, but if we understand the word *Nanga* to have been *Namkha*, the name might have been *Namkhajong*, meaning Sky peg. But elders do not remember that name being used.

The name Nangajong has been in use for more than a century, without the name itself carrying meaning. This sacred place is renowned for its historical use as a meditating place by Lama Sangwa Dorji.

The Fokalden mountain with Nangajong cave is called *Dolmi Ri* (Star's mountain). It is considered a pilgrimage place with the same importance as *Dolma ngisyu chachik* (Goddess

of twenty-one stars), Tibet's Mount Chibri and Boudhgaya's Mount Mirgayogi (*Syawa Ri Gombu Thakphuk*).

There is a story that long ago, before Pangboche monastery was built, the statue of *Gombusungjen* that is now in the monastery flew from India and landed and stayed in Nangajong cave. From contemplation and from negotiation with the gods, the great lamas (who have such power to negotiate with gods) realized that *Gombusungjen* is an *Esta dev* (favoured god) of Naag Arjun / *Gombu Ludup*. Therefore that cave became named Naag Arjun, not Nangajong.

After Lama Sangwa Dorji did important meditation of *Ku, Sung and Thug* (body, speech and mind) here he became successful. This mountain and the Naag Arjun cave are a magnificent and holy place.

## Worshyo

Above Pangboche, before reaching the place where two trails separate that lead to Pheriche and Dingboche, there is a place called Worshyo. Upslope there is a spring. The forest surrounding that water source is called Worshyo. It is a delightful and holy place which is protected by Lama Sangwa Dorji and local deities. Lama Sangwa Dorje started the famous festival Dumji from this place around four centuries ago.

In the middle of the trail, between the spring and the teashop, there is a short *mane* (rock slabs carved with Buddhist inscriptions) and 4-5 foot tall stupa. There is a belief that the stupa is *Swoyambhu* which emerged by itself.

A little above of the stupa, less than 10-12 meters away, there is a *Lokpar Torma* (a figure of god made of tshampa) that has been turned into stone after being thrown by Lama Sangwa Dorji during Dumji prayers. Beside it a stone hearth can also be seen.

Realizing the importance of such a sacred place, *lama* (monk) Geshi thought to build monastery there. But his wish couldn't be fulfilled due to the running period for cultivation and his financial condition. The Buddhist religion's three-gemstone's work is strenuous and cannot be done in an easy and cheap way. This sacred holy place, protected by god, goddess, and people remains valuable for the religionist.

## Phortse

Phortse is located in the lap of the Thakri Gombu hill, below Mt. Tagochertaujea, a protector of Khumbu. Phortse is a special place because Sherpas live there in the traditional way. Up until half a century ago there were still great and saintly monks living

in this village. They used to give more priority to their religious practice and deeds than to earning a living. Therefore we can see many meditating caves in the rock wall, where those lamas used to do contemplation. During their meditation it is said that birds had even built nests in their hair. Some meditators had





even meditated without leaving the imprint of their footsteps on the land. Even when the cave became covered by weeds and leaves, they remained focused in meditation. These stories are still fresh in memory.

Humans survive by retrieving *sha*, *chyu*, *meh*, *lung* (soil, water, fire and wind). *Lamas* (monks) thought to save these kinds of natural things. From time to time they used to give sermons to the religious villagers. The villagers used to listen to them attentively.

One day, a monk, the son of the great religious teacher Ka Gyu Chyoki Lotte, assembled the villagers and performed prayers for keeping them far from harming the forest and wildlife around Phortse. He led all to promise not to cause harm to the wildlife. In front of the villagers he did *serkim* (prayers) to the god of surrounding nature, *esta dev*

(favoured god) and *kul dev* (totem) with the raw blood of animals. In front of the villagers, the monk's sister let down her hair and said "We are doing prayers with this raw blood in the name of god for our protected forest and wildlife. Therefore from today onward nobody will harm its biodiversity. If anybody causes harm, generations far to come will have misfortune". Therefore in Khumbu, Phortse is an example of a place that is rich in biodiversity. The existing Nawa system there has been a model.

Phortse is surrounded by old trees and forest. That is evidence of the conservation values and practices of the village community. This history of Phortse conservation is told by Bayo Buddha Karma Tshering Sherpa. The unity of Phortse people in this regard has led to the community receiving a Biodiversity Award from WWF.

## Pangboche

Pangboche is a village located southwest of Mt. Amadablam in the watershed of the Imja Khola. Pangboche has two parts, known as Upper Pangboche, Telim, and Lower Pangboche, Walim. Upper Pangboche is the old village and is the site of Pangboche's monastery and other religious sites, while Lower Pangboche is the main tourism business area.

Pangboche's Telim *Gomba* (monastery) is the oldest monastery in Khumbu. Among the three sons of Buddha Chenchin, it is said that the elder son, Lama Sangwa Dorji, built a monastery in Pangboche. As per Lama Sangwa Dorji's wish and his instruction to conserve the juniper forest surrounding the monastery and the Yaaren forest seen across the river from the monastery's window and

door, both forests are still protected and are safe. The Lama also commanded people not to build houses in front of monastery that could block the view across to the Yaaren forest. Therefore no one has built houses there. Since Telim, the upper part of Pangboche is a religious area, the forests, meditating place, and different stupas there are all conserved. The stupas have several different types, and importantly some types may not be found in other places. *Gyalwa Ringak Tsyorten*, a stupa with five heads (one in each of the four directions and a center one) is not found anywhere else. There are a number of meditation caves. Sangih Cave is sacred, and is a famous cave meditated in by Lama Sangwa Dorji. Elderly nuns and local continue to live in and do meditation in Genchyo, a place where elderly people

practice religion that is located in the Teungma meditation area. The forest of that meditation area is a religiously protected area.

According to tradition, the Nawas at Pangboche manage the forests, hay fields, wood collection, rotational pasture management, and agriculture fields through the Di (rules and regulations).

The *Worshyo* (the assembly for nawa selection), which is done at the annual time of changing the Nawas, is very important religiously in Pangboche. The Nawas, five virgin girls, lamas (monks) and villagers do a circumambulation of the village while carrying the important *Gombu Sungchen* statue, a statue which is not found in any other place in Khumbu. The group walks

while chanting “Lha doh yeh, luh doh yeh, Gombu Sungchen doh yeh” (God is present, *Lu* spirit is present, god protector Gombu Sungchen is present). This event has cultural importance and is also enjoyed by the villagers. During Pangboche’s *Dumji* festival, villagers from Phortse come to pray to the natural protector *Pawo Syukpa* (the god resided on the big juniper tree in Telim). The people of Pangboche go out to receive and welcome them as they approach the village.

Pangboche monastery carries special importance also because, before the Pangboche monastery was built in Telim by Lama Sangwa Dorji, there was a magical occurrence associated with the future monastery. At that time Lama Sangwa Dorji was meditating at Naag Arjun cave above





Dingboche, farther up the Imja Khola valley. The statue of *Gombu Sungchen*, which is the deity of *Gombu Ludup* (Naag Arjun), flew from *Gyakar* (India) to Naag Arjun cave and gave a blessing to Lama Sangwa Dorji. He welcomed the statue of Gombu Sungchen and later placed it in his monastery at Pangboche. He taught the assembled villagers

about the statue of Gombu Sungchen and its importance. Lama Sangwa Dorji told them that the statue would be kept in the monastery and requested the villagers to be the witness of this, saying, “Pangbuche” which means “you will be the witness of it”. Thereafter the village has been called Pangboche.

### Places in Between Fungi Thyanga Bridge and Pangboche Bridge

The land in between the Milingo Bridge on the Imja river and the Fungithanga Bridge on the Dudhkoshi river is an important holy place which is blessed by god, goddess and the famous Tibetan monk Rumbuk Sange (Ku Khongma).

The forest, wildlife and environment there are not only protected by humans but also by supernatural powers.

There are so many aromatic plants in this area, which fill it with fragrance, and there are many beautiful flowers. In this area of forest the fragrant jungle and the rare musk deer make us feel as fresh as we were in our childhoods. The sound of rare pheasants and different birds transports our minds.

The qualities of this place, moreover, change according to different seasons. It is filled with



supernatural power and has the right weather for each season, which is called "Chyarchu Thusu Fawa" in the Sherpa language.

The land between the Milingo Bridge and the Fungi Thyanga Bridge is dedicated by the people of Khumjung and Pangboche into five different areas with religious purposes.

### 1. First area

The land between Fungi Thyanga bridge and Tyangboche monastery is called "So so lo". This area is designated for the domestic animals of the monastery's monks as a grazing area and pasture. Animals are shifted to this grazing area or pasture during midsummer.

This area is designated for the grazing area of livestock of the monastery monks.

### 2. Second area

*Tingpuje*, presently renowned as Tyangboche village, is a beautiful village located on a ridge with the shape of a pig's back which extends from the Dudhkoshi up to Khangteka mountain. The monastery at *Tingpuje* is dedicated as a place for males to receive education in the Buddhist religion. It is a beautiful place to view and visit.

Before the monastery was established, some of the chief Sherpas visited the reincarnate lama of Rongfu, Tibet and petitioned him to name a suitable place to establish a monastery. The Lama Rongfuka Sange observed the region in a vision and told them of a land formation where there was a *dhop* (footprint) on a rock that would be a good place for a monastery. Later, he himself came



there and consecrated the monastery that is now known as Tyangboche Monastery. Males can join this monastery to gain a religious education, while females can join nearby Deboche Monastery. That's why this monastery is famous in the Solukhumbu region of eastern Nepal. Manirimdu, a religious festival carried out at this monastery, is internationally famous. It is performed by the reincarnate lama, monks, other monastery staff, and others. This festival has won the trust and belief of all Sherpa people.

The people in the Khumbu region follow the Buddhist religion. The reincarnate Tyangboche Lama is regarded as both a leading religious and social intellectual and the Sherpa people follow his teachings and guidance. At Tyangboche the sounds of prayers, with the resonating music of the folk oboe, frame drum, cymbals, bell, and conch, make us sense that nature is bowing towards religion.

### 3. Third area

Deuche is one of the important places where female nuns enter into the Buddhist religion, leaving the conjugal and social life to spend their daily life in prayers in the monastery in the same way that male monks do. This sacred place is called Deuje.

The land around monasteries of *lama thawa* (monks) or *abni* (nuns) must be in a peaceful environment. Therefore, these are the places, selected accordingly by our ancestors, which give comfort and peace, and where our heart is attracted to religion.

One of the *abni* (nuns) of this monastery spent her whole life in one house at Deuche without seeing anyone's face. She is called *Ahni Chenchampa* in the Sherpa language.

In respect of her long and difficult meditation, the reincarnate Lama Thulsik Rinpoche and reincarnate Lama Tyangboche Rinpoche both asked Ahni Chenchampa in her very old age to give a blessing on behalf of other humans and creatures. Then she allowed the public to visit her briefly.

It is difficult to find a person like her in the world today. Ahni Chenchampa's original name is "Ani Ngawang Pema". The birds and animals gather around her meditating place in the peaceful times of morning and evening.

From the time of the establishment of this monastery, Khumbu girls who wish to receive religious knowledge and be *abni* (nuns) have been admitted here.

### 4. Fourth area

Donglamcho is a very important place for the Rai people. Before this modern age, it was not easy to reach this place from the lowland territory of the Kirati (Rai). Khumbu was a remote and difficult place to visit. The Rai people believe that coming to Khumbu to visit "Donglamcho" ensures that they will not go to hell in their afterlife. It is a pilgrimage site for them. And above this pilgrimage site they believe there is danger of getting altitude sickness. In their villages they do prayers with their shaman, and when the shaman invokes the god, s/he first calls on Donglamcho and does prayers.

Donglamcho is situated in between Deboche village and the Milingo Bridge. There is a small water source in the forest above the trail and because it is inside the deep forest the water is covered with algae. There are many nettles on the rock around that water source which also stay green.



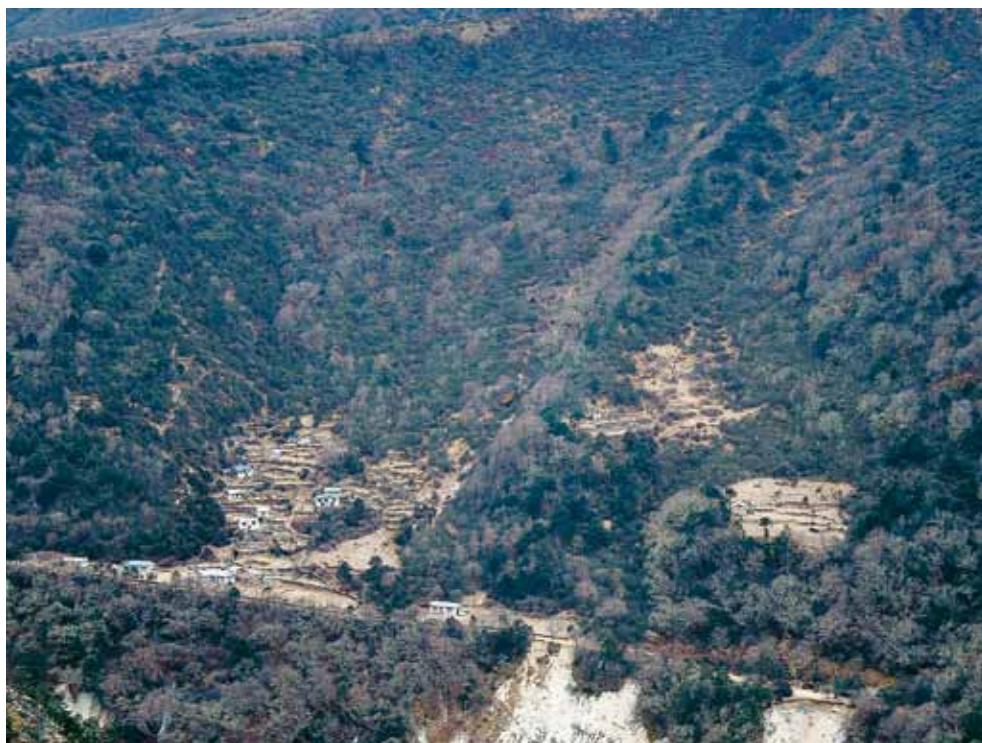
Around Donglamcho Cedars, Blue pine, Abies Pindrow, Pine and many other trees have added greenery. Animals such as musk deer and pheasants among others come to this place to drink the water. The Rai people believe that after visiting Donglamcho they are free from the threat of hell. And that's why the Sherpa people also keep that area clean.

### 5. Fifth area

Milingo, is a village where we can see small old Sherpa houses and potato fields. The people farming there are mostly elderly. The small lower village, called Milingo, and the upper village, called Chyangmi Teng, are not places of poor and weak people. Rather this

village is called Genju or Gechy, a place where in old age people come for religion and leave behind all family stress and the sinful world. Before the land survey carried out by the national survey officer for this area, it was regarded as a community public area called Gechy. Wild animals in this area are safe and also enjoy the potatoes farmed by the old people, eating 30% to 40% of the plants. The Sherpa people don't scare or kill those animals because of their religious practice. Thus, it is a peaceful and holy land.

Some distance above Milingo we can find the Imja River Bridge. The land from that bridge to Fungi Thyanga Bridge is a holy land dedicated by our ancestors for religious purposes.



Here, in summary, is a short list of these religious places:

- 1) Chyangmi Teng Milingo: Religious area for elders
- 2) Donglamcho: Pilgrimage area for Kirant (Rai) people
- 3) Debuche: Monastery area for Buddhist Nuns
- 4) Tingpuje or Tyangboche: Monastery providing education for monks
- 5) So So Lo: Area for summer grazing of the monastery's livestock

### **Khumjung and Khunde**

Before establishing living places, either houses or farmhouses/herding huts, the Sherpa people first make sure if the location is architecturally correct.

According to Sherpa scripture the location should be:

"Syar Gyat Thau" which means "May the trail be seen entering village from the east."

"Lho Yundum Ngurmu" which means "May the lake or water flow facing toward the village on the south."

"Nup Mecha Marpu" which means "May the hill, as the body of a big red elephant, be to the west."

"Chyang Rubal Gyau" which means "May

the rock hill, as the body of a tortoise, be to the North."

"Sa Pema Depgay" which means "May the land be like sitting on a lotus flower."

"Nam Khurlo Chepgay" which is "May the sky be seen circling round the mountains that surround the village."

Fulfilling the above suitable qualities, the beautiful valley of the villages of Khumjung and Khunde is located in Sagarmatha Zone, Solukhumbu District in the eastern Himalayan region of Nepal, the homeland of the Khumbu Sherpa people. This valley is in the shape of sleeping horse, with its head toward Rolpiling Beyul in the west and its tail toward Khenpalung Beyul in the east.

It is said that the name of the Khumbu region was taken from the name of this village. On the north side of this village there is the "Khumbiyullha" mountain, which is protector god of Khumbu. Some people may know this mountain as "Sumeru Parbat".

According to sacred books, the Yak, Goat, and Sheep are the animals in the care of this god, who is white coloured, holds a red flag on his right hand and the heart of his opponent in the other hand, with a sword on his right side and a bow and arrow strapped on his left. A red horse is his vehicle. And he is surrounded by other gods, goddesses and evil beings as mentioned in the sacred books.

On the south side of these two villages there are other sacred hills, including Khunde





Lapcha, Sangdok Pari, Khumjung Lapcha, Alang Melang, Pomjung, and Om Lhasa. These hills remain evergreen as well as there are different kinds of incense plants (six kinds), different kinds of flowers, and many kinds of trees. To protect these beauties of nature, local Sherpa people proclaimed this area as "Kyaksing" (Restricted area), where nobody is allowed to cut trees or firewood or to kill any animals. In this area activities such as firewood collection, dry leaves collection, grass cutting, grazing and doing harm to the fields are prosecuted under the *Di* made by the *Yulthim*.

The villagers respect the Nawas' *ongjya* (rules and power) and don't break the *thim* (system) inside the area boundaries where *Di* are enforced – this area is called *Garcha*.

This *thim* (system) has helped *Sherwa* (Sherpa people) maintain their identity and pride. Here religion, culture, conservation and customs (*tole*) are ancient.

On the north, high above the village there is a meditating cave "Akang Dhupkang", where Guru Padmasambava (Rinpoche) meditated. This is a holy and popular cave. About 250 meters down from Akang Dupkang, there is *Chamkhang*, another old meditating cave. There Lama Gulu (Renowned Tyangboche Rinpoche Ngawang Tenzing Zanbo's previous incarnation), Lama Gumchen Rinpoche, Lama Chyakchenpa, and many others have meditated and gained success. The last meditator in that holy place was "Ani Ngawang Thati" who had the opportunity to meditate there until her death in B.S 2065 (A.D 2008/2009).

On the upper west side of the village there is "Khunde Chamkhang," another meditating place. This was founded by the proficient Khampa "Gen Lama," who came from Kham (a place in Tibet).

At the initiative of Khumjung and Khunde people, in Khunde Chamkhang (meditation



area) a monastery was built in A.D 2014 (B.S 2070/71). Every two years there is a "Nyungne" (vow and fasting) held here.

On the north side of Khumjung there is a monastery, "Samden Choling Gomba," which is associated with both Khumjung and Khunde villages. Here, in this 400 year old monastery, is kept the rare Yeti's scalp. Every year in this monastery there are popular Sherpa religious festivals such as, *Kangyur* (study of the tripitak/108 volumes of the words of the Buddha), *Ngjungne* (vow and fasting) and *Dumji* or *Dupcho*. It is considered to be among the prosperous monasteries because it benefits from the support of the two villages.

To the east of Khumjung there is the approximately 500 year-old ruin of the

famous "Lho" monastery. Also to the east of the village, about 6 km walk on the trail to Gokyo, there is a Boudha stupa "Mong Chorten" which was built of stones from the ruin of the collapsed "Bhudha Tsenchen Gomba".

On the south side of Khumjung, in the area commonly known as Syangboche, there are several important cultural sites, including a big tree which is used to tie the horse of the guardian god Khumbiyullha, a big stone *Rule Thendi Nang* which is a boundry that is believed to prevent snakes from crossing into the village territory, and *Dolangbochea* (elephant stone), a boulder that marks the boundary between Nauche and Khumjung-Khunde.

### Present Numbers of Population, Houses and Clans of Khumjung and Khunde

There is a total of 230 houses in the two villages of Khumjung and Khunde (165 houses in Khumjung and 65 in Khunde), with a combined population of approximately 1,250 people.

Different clans of people who live in Khumbu:

Paldorje	Dokpa
Thaktokpa	Khamba
Pangkarma	Lowa
Mendewa	Gurung
Sherwa	Khartewa
Chu-sherwa	Ferukpa
Garcha	Khas Sherpa
Lama sherwa	Magar Sherpa
Lhukpa	Thew thari
Sheere	



## Khumbu's Chortens (Stupas)











## Agriculture of Khumbu

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The potato is a famous and tasty product of Khumbu farming. There are many kinds of potatoes available because different ones have begun to be grown here at different times. The history of potato isn't exactly known, including which one was first grown and when this started. According to legend Bhudha Tsenchen used to do potato farming when he stayed about 400 years ago at Mongdada during summer and in Gormuchea Tashinga during the winter season.

### A context

When I went to participate in the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 10) in Japan in 2010 a foreign participant asked me, "Tenzing Tashi, you told us about Khumbu region which has been and will always be protected by the Khumbu God, but you didn't tell us about farming and foods. What did your ancestors used to eat?"

I replied, "Potato was our important crop, and apart from that buckwheat, pea, radish, spinach and others were also farmed. And they are still farmed today." He said again, "But wasn't potato growing first started by South Americans." And I replied, "According to legend about four centuries ago, Buddha Tsenchen's wife went down to Gurmuche

(Tasinganh) to farm potatoes at a time that he and Khumbiyullha God planned to find a salt mine in the Gejyo area. It's been only sixty years since westerners entered in our country and it's only been seventy years since English people left India who ruled for 104-105 years. At that time the potatoes introduced by English people were called Balahati (from Belayati, meaning British), and this variety is still around. But potatoes were already grown here before that which were smaller but tastier." After COP 10 I decided that this is an interesting question, so I started to talk to the elderly people in Khumbu about this, but they did not know the history of the potato introduction in Khumbu other than the legend from Budha Tsenchen's story."

According to the legends, Guru Rinpoche mentioned many edible foods that grow wild. I have found the following in Khumbu:

### Edible plants that grow wild in crop fields

Tho-thow/Pidalu (Tarotubers)  
Ramba (look like a tiny red millet grain)  
Aaur (Aur)  
Asyour (a white nettle)

### Spices

Gokpa Rigok (wild garlic)  
Gokpa Sergok (large wild garlic)  
Khomak (found in hills)  
Aarmang (a small spicy chili)  
Jinbu (garlic)

### Vegetables

Sathukpa (nettles)  
Chami Cherma (nettles spinach)  
Magey Cherma (spinach)  
Lu Cherma  
Bu Kilu  
Aaur Cherma (aaur spinach)  
Thokchar  
Bachyak

### Mushrooms

Shyarsha  
Tarsha  
Chagong Maru  
Jhip Chagong (bitter mushroom)  
Martip  
Martip Gorpu  
Kyujir Shamung  
Chuldim Baje  
Dangba  
Feshamung (mouse mushroom)  
Petok Nampu  
Lyangmu

Ta Shamung  
Kalsir  
Tukor Shamung  
Homi Shamung (milk mushroom)  
Che Shamung (grass mushroom)  
Ewe Shamung (mother in-law mushroom)  
La Shamung (musk mushroom)  
Femar Shamung (can eat without cooking)  
Chusya (water mushroom)

### Types of parasitic mushrooms growing on trees

Wo Felip (found on Blue pine)  
Takpi Shamung (found on tree stump)  
Shukpi Nap (found on junipers)  
Sekum Amjhok

### Raw eatable botanic

Aakcho  
Gom Dang  
Yalo longjar  
Kysar  
Dhansi (a kind of coriander)  
Ngyalu Maru

### Berries found in grasslands

Lumu  
Fum Lhamu  
Guhrom

### Fruits on thorn trees

Shey Oldok  
Ko Wow  
Cheldim  
Aak Hrilo  
Yangjung  
Ashyou Khumbu (peach)  
Aahra Mung Mung (a small egg-shaped grain)





### Mountains Around Khumbu



Mt. Khumbu Yullha



Mt. Tauche (Tango Che)



Mt. Everest with Lhotse



Ama Dablam



Mt. Khang Tega



Mt. Tham Serku



Mt. Khang Tega. Tham Serku. Kusum Khang



Mt. Kongde



Mt. Teng Khangboche. Pharchamo.  
Tengkirengi Tau



Mt. Everest and Amadablam



# 2 The Role of KSCCS in Nature Conservation

## A. Cultural Interaction

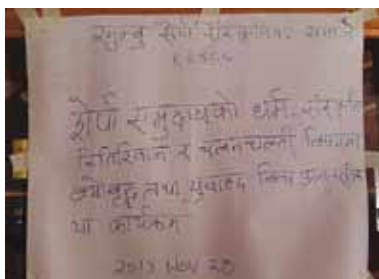
### 1. Elders and Youth gathering



Organized community meeting by KSCCS



Tenzing Tashi Sherpa, President of KSCCS, delivering a speech on Culture and Conservation



Pamphlet of cultural interaction program between youth and elders, 2013.11.28



One of the elder participants sharing about culture with youth



KSCCS members and participants writing down points raised during discussion



Elder participants having lunch

## B. Cultural and ICCA Educational Tour

### 1. Community Tour



KSCCS Members at Pangboche Chorten, returning to the lodge after a long day discussion about role of Sherpa culture in conservation



Mr. Lhakpa Nuru Sherpa, member of KSCCS, briefing about Sherpa culture and conservation during tour



Group photo in front of Phortse Gomba



Sherpa cultural group heading towards Phortse village. Sacred Mountain Tauche and Mongla village at the back.



The group of leaders talking about the nunnery conserved area in Pangboche



The groups visiting Pangboche nunnery conserved area

## 2. Sherpa Culture and Conservation Tour for Khumjung School Students Organized by KSCCS



Khumjung school students at tour organized by KSCCS



Khumjung school students at tour organized by KSCCS



Khumjung school students on tour organized by KSCCS



Mr. Tenzing Tashi Sherpa, Former Headmaster Mahendra Kathet giving speech to students during culture tour



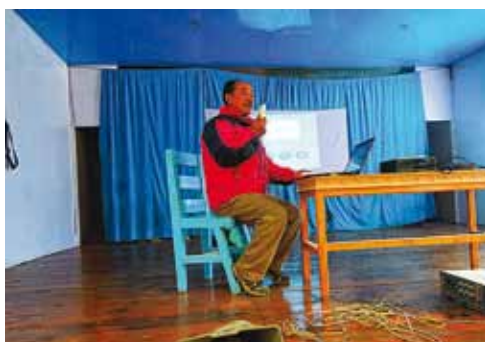
### 3. KSCCS Giving Presentation to Khumjung School Students



Teachers, Parents and students listening to the presentation at Presentation hall of Khumjung High School



Slideshow about 12 Lortha, Laza, Shojza and Shiza



Tenzing Tashi Sherpa, President of KSCCS, giving presentation





#### 4. KSCCS Organized Chorten Repair (Khunde Village - 2014)



Doing Puja prayers before repairing Chorten in Khunde



Khunde Chorten before repair



Chorten repair in Khunde



The workers with KGDMC President at Khunde Chorten repair



Mr.Tenzing Tashi Sherpa, the President of KSCCS painting Chorten after repair in Khunde

## 5. KSCCS Organized Chorten Repair (Khumjung Village - 2014)



Repairing Chorten in Khumjung



During Khumjung Chorten repair



The Villagers helping for Chorten repair



Community helping for Chorten repair in Khumjung



Painting Stupa after repair



Chorten after complete repair, Khumjung



## 6. KSCCS Organizing the "Resilience and Security Evaluation Tool" For ICCAS



Mr. Tenzing Tashi Sherpa, the President of KSCCS briefing about the program



Participants discussing the subject



Women's group participating in the program



Participants having lunch

## 7. KSCCS organizing GPS point readings of cultural sites in Khumjung



American Student and Local Sherpa Student locating the main shrines and cultural sites at Khumjung with a Geographic Positioning System (GPS).



Taking GPS points of cultural sites at Khumjung

### 8. Organized the "Losar Puluk" Sherpa Festival for Fundraising for the Repair of the Akang Dupkang Meditation Cave









## C. Data Collection by KSCCS

### 1. Gombas of Solukhumbu District

S.N	Name of Gomba	VDC and Ward no	Types	Sect of Gomba	Established	Name of Head Lama
1	Loding Khola Gomba	Tama Khani 9		Nyingmapa	More than 91 yrs ago	Anga Dawa Lama
2	Dernasa Gomba	Tama Khani 1		Nyingmapa	BS 2028	Jyamyang Yeshe Sherpa
3	Phaplu Gomba	Salleri 2		Nyingmapa	More than 100 yrs ago	
4	Salleri Gomba	Salleri 5		Nyingmapa	BS 2025	
5	Khoriya Rato Gomba	Salleri 6		Nyingmapa	More than 73 yrs ago	Jyamyang Sherab Lama
6	Thukten Choling Gomba	Salleri 8		Nyingmapa	BS 2039	Tawang Sange Lama
7	Guru Gomba	Salleri 8		Nyingmapa	BS 2036	Thulshi Rimpochhe
8	Samling Gomba	Salleri 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2005	Namgel Lama
9	Khoria	Salleri 6		Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	Passang Nima Lama
10	Nimare Gomba	Garna 8		Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	Pemba Gyalgen Sherpa
11	Samden Choling Gomba	Garna 3		Nyingmapa	BS 2013	Passang Nima Lama
12	Bitta Kharka Gomba	Garna 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2031	Nuri Lama
13	JunBesi Gomba	Beni 4		Nyingmapa	More than 81 yrs ago	Tenzing Lama
14	Gangchek Gomba	Beni 9		Nyingmapa	More than 81 yrs ago	Nima Wangchu Lama
15	Mapung Kangyur Gomba	Beni 5		Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	Ang Kami Lama
16	Khangri Choling Gomba	Bakanje 1		Nyingmapa	Before 51 yr	Rein. Lama Pema tharling
17	Sang Choling Gomba	Bakanje 4		Nyingmapa	More than 76 yrs ago	Yula Genjen Lama
18	Tashi Choling Gomba	Bakanje 7		Nyingmapa	More than 86 yrs ago	
19	Pema Choling Gomba	Goli 8		Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	Ani Zangmo Lamini
20	Thulo Goli Gomba	Goli 8		Nyingmapa	More than 101 yrs ago	Chungti Rikpa Dorje Lama
21	Ngaur Gomba	Goli 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2001	Guru Rangdu Lama
22	Ghimil Gomba	Tapling 9		Nyingmapa	More than 66 yrs ago	Zangbo Lama

S.N	Name of Gomba	VDC and Ward no	Types	Sect of Gomba	Established	Name of Head Lama
23	Tapting Gomba	Tapling 6		Nyingmapa	BS 2008	Passang Nuru Sherpa
24	Danda Gomba	Gora Khani		Nyingmapa	More than 71 yrs ago	Chong Nuri Sherpa
25	Tashi Gangdo Gomba	Gora Khani		Nyingmapa	BS 2036	Sonam Tenzing Lama
26	Pema Choling Gomba	Lokhim 6		Nyingmapa	BS 2032	Nima Lama Tamang
27	Tashi Choling Gomba	Lokhim 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2033	Pemba Wamchu Sherpa
28	Ranga Choling Gomba	Lokhim 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2022	Dukpa Sherpa
29	Dechen Thiling Gomba	Sottang 6			BS 2000	Phurwa Passang Sherpa
30	Pema Choling Gomba	Sottang 6		Nyingmapa	BS 2000	Ang Zangbu Sherpa
31	Rithi Laming Gomba	Gudel 6		Nyingmapa	BS 2015	Zangbu Sherpa
32	Nukarm Gomba	Gudel 6		Nyingmapa	BS 2009	Nima Dendi Lama
33	Saenam Gomba	Gudel 4		Nyingmapa	More than 57 yrs ago	Ang Kami Lama
34	Samden Choling Gomba	Kaku 9		Nyingmapa	BS 2001	Dorje Lama
35	Kuluk Chambaling Gomba	Bung 9		Nyingmapa	More than 106 yrs ago	Ngawang Tenzing Lama
36	Cherem Gomba	Bung 9		Nyingmapa	More than 81 yrs ago	Dawa Sherpa Lama
37	Sherap Choling Gomba	Takshindu 7		Nyingmapa	BS 2026	Ani Phurwa Lama
38	Utshe Choling Gomba	Chauri Kharka 1		Nyingmapa	BS 2037	Gegen Sango Lama
39	Tekhumo Gomba	Chauri Kharka 5		Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	
40	Kengma Gomba	Chauri Kharka 3		Nyingmapa	BS 2020	
41	Gende TambeGomba	Namche 5		Nyingmapa	More than 121 yrs ago	Avtar Tenzing Lama
42	Namche Gomba	Namche 3		Nyingmapa	BS 2014	Avtar Nawang Tenzing Zangpo
43	Tashi Sanga Choling Gomba	Jubing 8				Nangel Lama
44	Buksa Gomba	Jubing 5		Nyingmapa	BS 2006	
45	Namdoling	Jubing 1		Nyingmapa	BS 2016	Dorje Lama
46	Juwe	Jubing 3		Nyingmapa	More than 200 yrs ago	Lhakpa Dorje Lama
47	Sanga Choling Gomba	Cheskam 2		Nyingmapa	BS 2040	Dawa Dorje Lama

S.N	Name of Gomba	VDC and Ward no	Types	Sect of Gomba	Established	Name of Head Lama
48	Chaduk Gomba	Waku 4		Nyingmapa	BS 2016	Nima Nuru Lama
49	Ser lo Gomba	Beni 5		Nyingmapa	BS 1956	Sange Tenzing
50	Paider Reaw Gomba Pangbochehaling	Khumjung 8, Telim	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 421 yrs ago	Nawang Fende Lama
51	Sangag Choling Gomba Namche	Namche 9	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 421 yrs ago	Tenzing Lama
52	Dechen Chokhor Thame Gomba	Namche on the way to the Nangpala	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 421 yrs ago	Avtar Nawang Gyalzen
53	Phungmuche	Beni 5 Phungmuche	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 65 yrs ago	Nawang Zimba Lama
54	Dechen Choling Gomba	Lokhim 9	Community	Nyingmapa	BS 1990	Passang Wangchu Lama
55	Langa Pangdo Gomba	Goli 8 Goli	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 196 yrs ago	Ngawang Lama
56	Pema Choling Gomba	Chauri Kharka 5, Rimjiung	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 321 yrs ago	Ngawang Zepa Lama
57	Tengyur Gomba	Gora Khani 2 Gora Khani	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 171 yrs ago	Sonam Rinchen Lama
58	Nangbuk Gomba	Chauri Kharka 3	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 171 yrs ago	Kilu Lama
59	Tengyur Gomba	Berung 1	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 146 yrs ago	Passang Kaji Sherpa
60	Lukla Gomba	Chauri Kharka 8	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 146 yrs ago	
61	Pemacholing Gomba	Tapling 7, Lussa	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 145 yrs ago	Kussang Lama
62	Tashi Lumbu Gomba	Garna 1, Garna	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 122 yrs ago	Ngawang Chetten Lama
63	Gyurmi Samden Choling Gomba	Salleri 8	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 121 yrs ago	Ang Babu Lama
64	Debuche Ani Gomba	Khumjung 6, Debuche	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 101 yrs ago	Ani Nawang Dolka
65	Tyangboche Gomba	Khumjung 6 Tyangboche	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 96 yrs ago	Avtar Nawang Tenzingbo
66	Chiwong Gomba	Salleri 1, Chiwong	Community	Nyingmapa	BS 1980	Zikku Lama
67	Tashi Wongmon Gomba	Beni 4, Junbesi	Community	Nyingmapa	BS 1692	Tenzing Zangbu Lama
68	Zaapre Gomba	Tapling 6	Community	Nyingmapa	More than 121 yrs ago	Tenzing Lama
69	Taksindu Gomba	Taksindu 7	Community	Nyingmapa	BS 2002	Chultim Lama
70	Samden Choling Gomba	Khumjung 3, Khumjung	Community	Nyingmapa		Lhakpa Nuru Lama
71	Thupten Choling Gomba	Beni 5	Private	Nyingmapa	BS 2002	
72	Fun chog Choling Gomba	Gudel 5	Private	Nyingmapa	More than 121 yrs ago	Ongchug Lama.



## Dilapidated Condition of Chamkhang (Meditating Houses) in Khumbu Region

1. Phurte chamkhang	Phurte
2. Lang Muje Chamkhang	Jamngakushyo Thame
3. Jamnge Ritu	Tarnga Paari
4. Palki Chang	Kyarok Dupkang
5. Ri Tu Teng	Empty
6. Tulku Ngawang Dorje Dupkang	Thame Teng
7. Khumjung Chamkhang	Khumjung
8. Akang Dupkang	Khumjung
9. Lakyok Gomtchen Kyu Chamkhang	Khumjung
10. Chyuptsho Chamkhang (Thadar)	Khumjung
11. Lhonang Gomba	Khumjung
12. Mong Gomba (Mong)	Khumjung
13. Gomurtche Gomba	Khumjung
14. Ting Jung Chamkhang (Lama Phurba Tendi)	Khumjung
15. Ri Nging Gomba (Mong)	Khumjung
16. Mendre Lo Ritu	Khumjung
17. Thaknak Chamkhang	Khumjung
18. Menche Lo Ritu	Khumjung
19. Phortse Chamkhang (Upper Phortse)	Khumjung
20. Yela Jyung Chamkhang	Thame
21. Namkha Jong Chamkhang (Dingbuje)	Dingbuche
22. Nauje Chamkhang	Namche
23. Thumbuk Chamkhang (Jorsalle)	Chaurikharka
24. Fem Karwa Chamkhang (Farak)	Chaurikharka
25. Rimi Jung Ahni Chamkhang	Chaurikharka
26. Chu Serma Chamkhang	Chaurikharka
27. Pema Khyung Ding Chamkhang	Chaurikharka
28. Kyongmo Chamkhang	Chaurikharka
29. Lukla Ahni Ngimale Ritu	Chaurikharka
30. Lukla Gomche	Chaurikharka
31. Thakka Gyalpo Chamkhang	Chaurikharka

*Source : Tenzing Tashi Sherpa*


### 3. List of Domestic Animals of Khumjung VDC 2070/2071

Summary total	Total	Yak	Nak	Cow	Bull	Dzopkyok	Dzom	Koyak	Horse	Dog	Cat	Poultry	Sheep	Goat	Mule	Remarks
		Large Yak	Small Yak			Large Dzopkyok	Small Dzopkyok	Male	Female							
Ward No. 1	Total A	48	17	151	27	11	1	0	2	6	1	4	0	0	0	315
Ward No. 2	Total B	46	9	35	39	21	0	2	1	13	3	0	0	0	0	218
Ward No. 3	Total C	32	5	29	19	4	0	0	1	5	1	0	0	0	0	137
Ward No. 4	Total D	31	0	36	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	101
Ward No. 5	Total E	55	15	24	15	3	0	3	1	7	4	0	0	0	0	154
Ward No. 6	Total F	5	0	0	8	2	0	0	2	12	0	0	0	0	0	37
Ward No. 7	Total G	132	43	140	11	4	4	2	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	394
Ward No. 8	Total H	124	15	165	17	9	0	0	5	6	3	0	0	0	0	476
Ward No. 9	Total I	185	116	254	58	22	0	1	2	5	1	0	0	0	0	697
		658	320	834	197	79	5	9	17	61	13	4	0	0	0	2529

Collected by: Bhesb B. Ghimire  
 N.P.S. Pra. Yak Farm  
 Syangboche

## D. KSCCS Gov. Reg. Organization

### 1. Certificate of Registration

		<p>अनुसूचि - २ (नियम ४ संग सम्बन्धित) नेपाल सरकार गृह मन्त्रालय जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय सोलुखुम्बु</p>
<p>श्री अध्यक्ष ज्यू, खुम्बु शेर्पा संस्कृति संरक्षण समाज खुम्जुङ - १, सोलुखुम्बु ।</p>		<p><b>संस्था दर्ता प्रमाण-पत्र</b></p> <p>दर्ता मिति : २०६७/०२/२० दर्ता नं. : २३२</p>
<p>संस्था दर्ता ऐन २०३४ को दफा ४ बमोजिम मिति २०६७/०२/२० गतेको निर्णय अनुसार दर्ता गरी यो प्रमाण-पत्र दिइएको छ ।</p>		
<p>स्थानिय अधिकारीको सही नाम, थर : कृष्णप्रसाद पोखरेल दर्जा : का.मु.प्र.जि.अ. कार्यालय : जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय, सोलुखुम्बु</p>		<p><i>(Signature)</i> २०६७/०२/२० जिल्ला प्रशासन कार्यालय, सोलुखुम्बु</p>

### 2. Name List of Committee's Founder Members (BS 2067)

S.N.	Name	Designation	Address
1.	Tenzing Tashi Sherpa	President	Khumjung 1, Solukhumbu
2.	Lhakpa Thundup Sherpa	Vice-president	Khumjung 2, Solukhumbu
3.	Lhakpa Nuru Sherpa	Treasurer	Khumjung 2, Solukhumbu
4.	A. Chhiring Sherpa	General Secretary	Khumjung 2, Solukhumbu
5.	Pemba Tshiring Sherpa	Secretary	Khumjung 3, Solukhumbu
6.	Ang Temba Sherpa	Member	Khumjung 3, Solukhumbu
7.	Pasang Futi Sherpa	Member	Khumjung 4, Solukhumbu
8.	Mingma Doma Sherpa	Member	Khumjung 2, Solukhumbu
9.	Nima Lhaki Sherpa	Member	Khumjung 2, Solukhumbu



**KSCCS**

## About KSCCS

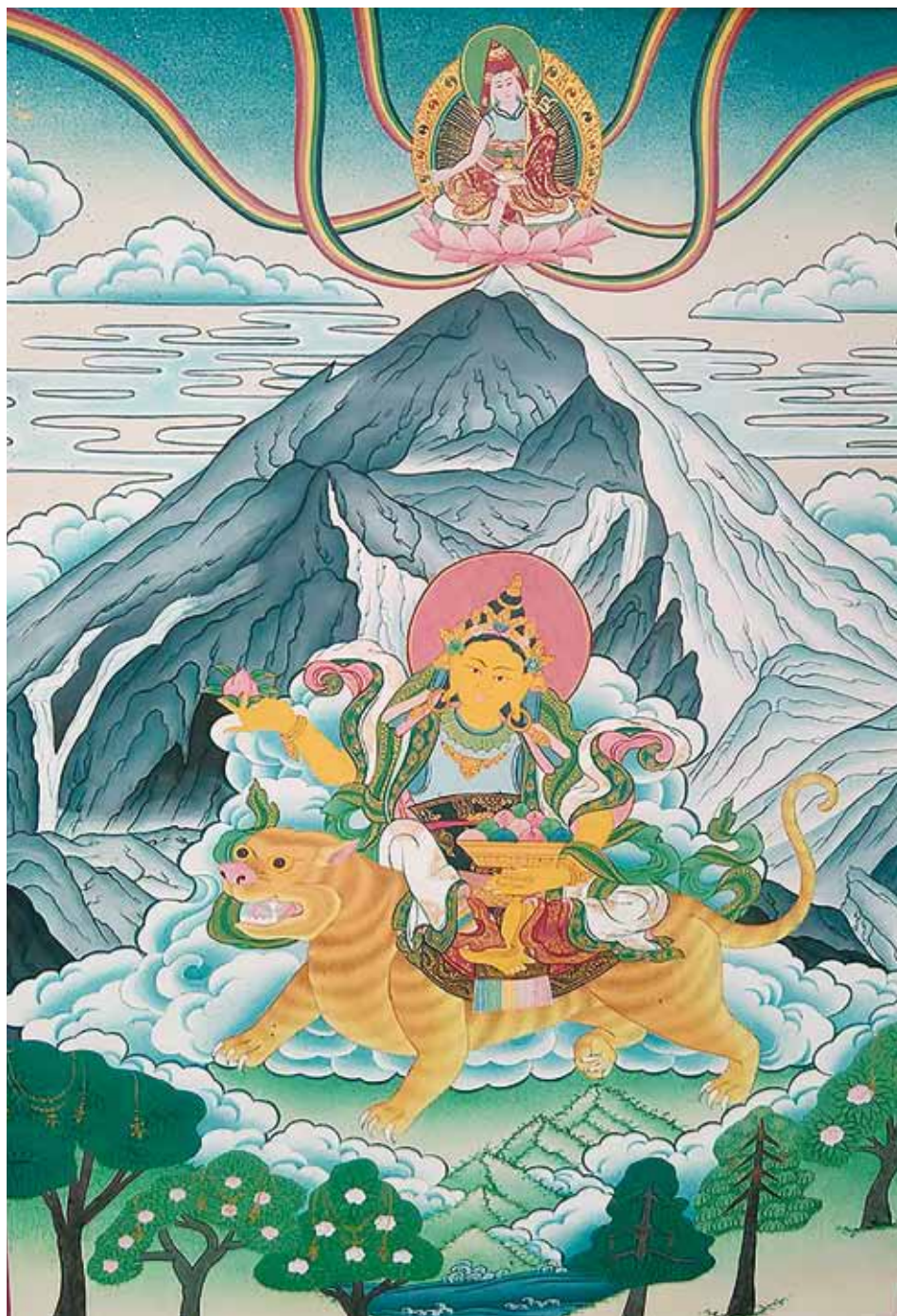
### Introduction

In the Khumbu region of Solukhumbu district, i.e. Khumjung, Namche and Chaurikharka VDCs, the Sherpa ethnic group has been living for centuries carrying out community, culture, religion, biodiversity conservation and the Nawa (Custodian) custom. The Khumbu Sherpa Culture Conservation Society was established for the purpose of administering and managing them effectively, and to achieve multi-party benefit from proper utilization. This organization is registered in the district administration office, Solu Salleri, with reg. no. 2066/12 under Reg. Act 2031.

### Aim of the Organization

- To become a social interest and welfare non profit organization.
- To help to identify, conserve, develop, strengthen, publicize and extend the religious, cultural, historical, tourism importance, archaeological and natural property and heritage of the Sherpa ethnic people in Khumjung, Namche and Chaurikharka V.D.C.
- To operate awareness programs about Sherpa culture and environmental conservation.
- To operate various formative programs to help for development of tourism and conservation.
- To coordinate and share with Nepal government, local bodies and non governmental organization.
- To operate programs related to prevention of Global warming, Biodiversity loss, Erosion and Natural disasters.
- To motivate and make involvement to people for social work under current Nepal's law.
- To operate other formative programs for welfare of the organization.

**Goddess Miyo Losangmah (resides in Mt. Everest)**



**Objectives of this Book**  
**“The Role of Sherpa Culture in Nature Conservation”**

To explain ancient important conservation and hidden dedication.

To reflect the importance of Sherpa Culture.

To elucidate the curiosity existed in public opinion about “what is KSCCS?”



*"The articles herein are based on the tales of our  
ancestors, customs, rituals, and shared experiences"*  
-Tenzing Tashi Sherpa

