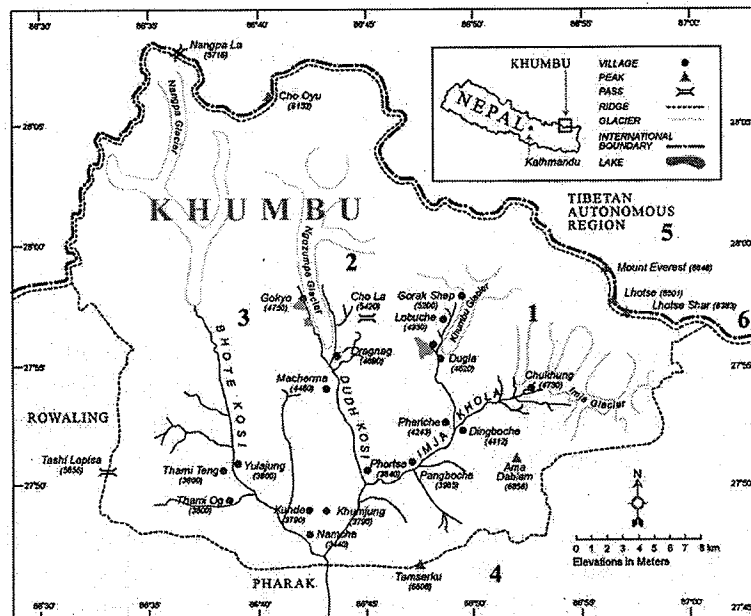


Everest's Yak-herders in the 21st Century: Sustainable Society Meets Rick Steves
Field project in Solukhumbu, Nepal, July 21-August 22, 2009

Barbara Brower
Geography Department
Portland State University
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<http://www.mountain.org/images/resedu/ev-khumbumap-lg.j>

Abstract

Globalization (manifest most dramatically in the effects of tourism) and climate change (reflected in waning glaciers and increased risk of environmental hazards) are radically reworking Khumbu Sherpa society and environment. One element in particular has been affected by change: Yak husbandry, the cornerstone of the traditional economy, the activity most marking the interface of people and environment, and a window into larger issues of cultural and environmental change. A complex suite of factors (including access to land and labor as well as cultural regulations on the timing and location of grazing) once served to control grazing impacts and allowed for generations of sustainable livestock management in a fragile environment. Recent transformations in society, economy, and environment have reportedly undermined traditional management with yet-unknown consequences for people and landscape. This research will measure contemporary Sherpa yak numbers, use, and management practices, and measure range condition in selected sites, allowing me to compare contemporary patterns and processes with data on the environmental and cultural dynamics of Sherpa animal husbandry that I have been collecting over the last three decades, in order to understand those consequences.

