

Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari Temple at Sadiya: Sacred Geography, Deori Ritual Authority, and the Cultural Memory of a Frontier Shrine

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Abstract—This paper studies Kechaikhaiti, also known in later and Sanskritized usage as Tamreswari or Dikkaravasini, through the history of the shrine associated with Sadiya and the Chutia polity of medieval upper Assam. The argument is deliberately cautious: rather than treating the temple only as a site of legend, the paper reads it as a frontier institution where political authority, non-Brahmanical ritual practice, sacred geography, and later historical memory intersected. The available evidence comes from three kinds of sources: early textual references to Dikkaravasini in the sacred geography of Kamarupa, colonial and gazetteer descriptions of the ruined temple and its Deori priesthood, and modern historical and religious studies by scholars including Edward Gait, Maheswar Neog, Banikanta Kakati, Jae-Eun Shin, S. L. Barua, and Byomakesh Tripathy and Sristidhar Dutta. The paper finds that Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari is best understood neither as a purely tribal goddess outside history nor as a simple form of pan-Indian Shakti worship. She represents a layered regional tradition in which local goddess worship, Chutia state formation, Deori ritual authority, and later Brahmanical interpretation coexisted without fully erasing one another.

Index Terms—Kechaikhaiti, Tamreswari Temple, Dikkaravasini, Sadiya, Deori priests, Chutia kingdom, Assam, sacred geography, Shakti tradition

I. Introduction

Kechaikhaiti, also remembered in later historical writing as the Tamreswari Temple, occupies a distinctive and deeply suggestive place in the historical imagination of upper Assam and the adjoining Arunachal frontier. The site is not remembered merely as an old shrine or as an isolated religious monument. It stands at the meeting point of regional memory, political history, ritual practice, and frontier sacred geography. In popular tradition, the temple is associated with its copper-roofed structure, with the Chutia rulers of Sadiya, and with the priestly role of the Deoris, whose ritual authority gave the shrine a character different from many Brahmanically managed temples of the region. These memories continue to give Kechaikhaiti a strong local presence, while also making it an important subject for wider historical study.

In scholarly discussion, however, the significance of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari extends beyond the boundaries of local religious memory. The temple offers a valuable case through which one may examine how goddess worship developed in a frontier zone where political authority, community-based ritual specialists, and shifting cultural identifications met one another. The history of the shrine points toward a larger question: how did sacred power help shape, support, and express state formation in medieval upper Assam? By placing the temple within the world of the Sadiya region and the eastern Kamarupa frontier, this paper seeks to understand the shrine not as a single, fixed religious object, but as a layered historical institution whose meanings changed across time.

The need for a careful study arises from the way the subject is often surrounded by dramatic and sometimes competing claims. Kechaikhaiti has been discussed in relation to human sacrifice, hidden ruins, tribal religion,

Buddhist Tara traditions, and Sanskritic forms of Shakti worship. These themes cannot be dismissed, because they appear in different kinds of historical writing, oral memory, and later interpretation. Yet they also require caution. A serious account must distinguish between inscriptional and archaeological evidence, inherited legend, colonial description, and community memory. Without such distinctions, the shrine risks being reduced either to sensational folklore or to a neat religious category that does not do justice to its complex past.

For this reason, the terminology used in this paper is also deliberate. The name Kechaikhaiti is used when discussing the goddess as remembered in vernacular traditions and in contexts linked with Deori ritual practice. The name Tamreswari is used when the discussion turns to the temple's later historical identity, especially its association with the copper-roofed shrine and the political world of Sadiya. The term Dikkaravasini is used when the shrine is considered within Sanskritic sacred geography and the wider mapping of divine power in the eastern region. These names are not treated as simple synonyms. Rather, each one opens a different historical layer and reveals a different way in which the site was understood.

The central argument of this introduction, and of the study that follows from it, is that the historical importance of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari lies precisely in its layered identity. First, the shrine formed part of the sacred geography of the eastern Kamarupa frontier, where religious authority was shaped by distance, landscape, and cultural contact. Second, it functioned as a Chutia-period ritual and political centre in the Sadiya region, suggesting that the worship of the goddess was connected with ideas of kingship, protection, and territorial legitimacy. Third, the Deori priesthood preserved a form of non-Brahmanical ritual authority that was not completely absorbed into Brahmanical temple management. Fourth, later historical writing reinterpreted the shrine through wider categories such as Shakti worship, Tara traditions, tribal religion, and frontier state formation.

Thus, Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari cannot be adequately understood through any one label alone. It was at once a goddess shrine, a political centre, a frontier institution, and a site of continuing memory. Its history reveals how sacred places in medieval upper Assam could gather different meanings without losing their local force. To study this temple, therefore, is to study the relationship between devotion and authority, between regional tradition and wider religious classification, and between the memory of a place and the making of historical power.

II. Terminological Notes and Definitions

The terms used for the goddess and her shrine are not neutral labels. Each name preserves a different historical layer: vernacular memory, temple tradition, Sanskritic sacred geography, and community-based ritual authority. For this reason, the following definitions are meant not to fix a single final identity for the deity, but to clarify how each term will be used in this study. The aim is to keep the original associations of the shrine intact while avoiding the mistake of forcing all traditions into one simplified explanation.

Kechaikhaiti: The name Kechaikhaiti is commonly explained in Assamese as meaning 'the eater of raw flesh.' Edward A. Gait records the related form Kesai-khati and glosses it in this sense while discussing the worship connected with the Chutia religious sphere and the Deori priests (Gait). This definition is important because it preserves an older historical and ethnographic memory of the goddess as a fierce local divinity. At the same time, the phrase should not be treated as a complete theological definition. It tells us how the name was understood in a particular historical and linguistic setting, but it does not exhaust the ritual, political, or sacred meanings attached to the goddess. In this paper, Kechaikhaiti is therefore used mainly when referring to the deity as remembered in vernacular tradition, Deori-linked worship, and the regional religious world of upper Assam.

Tamreswari: The name Tamreswari is connected with tamra, or copper, because the shrine was remembered in historical descriptions as having a copper-covered roof. Tripathy and Dutta repeat this association in their account of the religious history of Arunachal Pradesh, and later summaries of the temple tradition also

preserve the same explanation (Tripathy and Dutta). The term should therefore be handled as a historical temple-name, not as automatic proof that the deity originated within fully formed Sanskritic Shakti theology. Tamreswari marks a remembered structure, a shrine, and a later historical identity attached to the Sadiya region. It is especially useful when discussing the temple as an institution associated with the Chutia rulers, the frontier landscape, and the material memory of the copper roof.

Dikkaravasini: Dikkaravasini refers to the goddess associated with Dikkara, or with the eastern direction and frontier in the sacred geography of Kamarupa. The Kalika Purana and later regional traditions place this divine presence near the eastern limit of Kamarupa, and modern scholars such as Banikanta Kakati and Jae-Eun Shin discuss such goddess traditions in relation to the formation of regional sacred space (Kakati; Shin). In this paper, Dikkaravasini is used when the discussion moves from local temple memory to Sanskritic sacred geography. The term is valuable because it shows how a frontier goddess could be drawn into a wider sacred map without losing the local force of her worship. It should therefore be read as a sacred-geographical identity rather than as a replacement for the vernacular name Kechaikhaiti or the temple-name Tamreswari.

Deori: In this context, Deori refers to the ritual specialists historically associated with the Chutia religious sphere and with the continuing community memory of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari. Gait treats Deori priests as central to the worship described in the Sadiya region, and Shin's work on regional goddess traditions also helps underline the importance of non-Brahmanical ritual authority in understanding such shrines (Gait; Shin). The word should not be used loosely as a synonym for all priests. Here it denotes a historically specific priestly authority connected with the shrine, its rites, and its continuity outside ordinary Brahmanical temple management. This distinction is important because the Deori presence is one of the clearest signs that the temple's religious history cannot be reduced to a single Sanskritic or Brahmanical category.

Taken together, these terms show that the shrine's history is layered rather than linear. Kechaikhaiti preserves the force of vernacular and ritual memory; Tamreswari identifies the historical temple and its copper-roof tradition; Dikkaravasini places the goddess within the sacred geography of Kamarupa; and Deori names the priestly authority through which the worship was maintained. A careful study must keep these distinctions visible, because the authenticity of the subject lies precisely in the coexistence of these names, memories, and interpretive traditions.

III. Sources and Method

This paper uses a source-critical method. It does not treat every claim about the temple as equally certain. The strongest evidence is epigraphic and architectural: the reported Paya-Tamreswari inscription connected with the construction of a wall or enclosure in Saka 1364, corresponding to 1442 CE, and the descriptions of the temple compound by nineteenth- and twentieth-century observers. Maheswar Neog's article on a ruling dynasty of Arunachal Pradesh is important because it relates inscriptions and ruling-line evidence to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Tripathy and Dutta are useful for placing the temple within the broader religious history of Arunachal Pradesh and the Sadiya frontier.

The second level of evidence is historical-ethnographic. Gait's *A History of Assam* remains valuable because it records the Chutia-Deori association and the Ahom-era continuation of the goddess's worship. However, Gait wrote as a colonial administrator-historian, and his descriptions must be read critically. His terminology sometimes reflects colonial-era judgement, especially where he describes sacrificial practices. The facts he reports are useful, but his language should not be copied uncritically.

The third level is interpretive scholarship. Kakati's work on the mother-goddess tradition in Assam helps situate the deity within the larger Shakti landscape of Kamarupa. Shin's study of Kechaikhaiti is especially important because it treats the goddess as multifaceted: tribal, regional, political, and Sanskritized at different levels of historical memory. Gogoi's work on Tara traditions in Assam is useful where scholars have suggested connections between fierce goddess forms and Buddhist Tara, but this paper treats that relationship as an interpretive possibility rather than as a proven origin.

IV. Sacred Geography: From Dikkara to Sadiya

The eastern end of Kamarupa occupies a special place in early regional sacred geography. Textual traditions such as the Kalika Purana identify powerful goddess sites across the landscape, and Dikkaravasini is associated with the eastern side of that sacred region. This is important because it gives Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari a place within a wider map of sacred power rather than leaving her as an isolated local deity. At the same time, the Sanskrit name Dikkaravasini does not erase the local form Kechaikhaiti. The very coexistence of names is historically meaningful.

In a frontier zone like Sadiya, names often record layered authority. A sacred name may place a deity within Sanskrit geography; a vernacular name may preserve local ritual character; and a temple-name may arise from architecture or patronage. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari shows all three processes. The Sanskrit Dikkaravasini links the deity to the eastern sacred boundary; Kechaikhaiti preserves the fierce local goddess identity; Tamreswari records later memory of the temple structure. This layered naming is one reason the shrine has remained historically significant.

The term ‘frontier’ in this paper does not mean a marginal or empty zone. It means a contact region where plains, hills, river routes, and political formations interacted. Sadiya was such a region. It connected the Brahmaputra valley with upland routes and communities in what is now Arunachal Pradesh. The temple’s importance therefore lay not only in ritual, but also in its position within a politically and culturally strategic landscape.

V. Chutia State Formation and Ritual Authority

The Chutia kingdom, centred around Sadiya and the upper Brahmaputra region, is now understood by historians as one of the significant medieval state formations of Assam. S. L. Barua describes the Chutias as an important polity before their incorporation into the Ahom state. The religious life of this polity cannot be separated from Kechaikhaiti. Gait records that the Chutias worshipped forms of Kali through Deori priests rather than Brahman priests, and that Kesai-khati was a favoured form of the goddess. This observation matters because it indicates that royal or political religion in the Chutia sphere did not simply imitate Brahmanical temple patterns.

A state needs more than military power. It also needs symbols, rituals, and institutions that help make authority visible. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari appears to have served such a function. The deity’s fierce character, the temple’s association with the ruling centre, and the special status of Deori priests together suggest a ritual system tied to sovereignty. In this sense, the goddess was not merely worshipped by the Chutia rulers; she helped express the moral and supernatural authority of the polity.

The reported inscription of 1442 CE is especially important. If the reading is accepted, it connects the temple enclosure or wall with a named royal initiative in the fifteenth century. Neog’s epigraphic work gives weight to the historical presence of ruling families in the region during this period. The inscription does not prove every later story about the temple, but it does provide a firm chronological point around which the history of the shrine can be discussed responsibly.

VI. The Deori Priesthood

One of the most distinctive features of the Tamreswari tradition is the role of the Deori priests. In many famous temples of Assam, Brahmanical priesthood became dominant over time. In the case of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari, however, historical accounts emphasize the continued authority of Deori ritual specialists. Gait notes that the Chutias worshipped through their own priests, and Shin’s later study similarly highlights Deori control over the ritual sphere of Kechaikhaiti.

The Deori connection is central for understanding the shrine’s historical originality. It shows that Sanskrit naming did not necessarily mean Brahmanical institutional control. A goddess could be identified with

Dikkaravasini or Kali-like forms while still being served by non-Brahmanical priests. This is not a contradiction. It is precisely how many regional traditions worked: local ritual authority, royal patronage, and Sanskritic interpretation overlapped without becoming identical.

The priesthood also helps explain why the tradition continued after the Chutia kingdom was absorbed into the Ahom state. Historical accounts indicate that Ahom rulers permitted the continuation of the worship, although under changing political conditions. This suggests that the shrine's authority was recognized beyond the Chutia polity. It also cautions against interpreting the Ahom conquest as an immediate religious rupture. In many cases, conquest produced incorporation, negotiation, and regulation rather than total replacement.

VII. Architecture, Ruins, and the Copper-Roof Memory

The temple's architectural memory is preserved through references to a copper roof, brick enclosure, stone gateways, and carved remains. The later name Tamreswari is commonly connected with the copper covering of the temple roof. This architectural feature is important because it gave the shrine a visual identity strong enough to survive in historical memory even after the original structure declined.

Nineteenth-century observers such as S. F. Hannay described remains in the Sadiya region, including walls, gateways, and stone blocks. Later summaries by Tripathy and Dutta discuss the temple compound, the use of sandstone and granite, and the eventual submergence or disappearance of remains because of the Paya river and siltation. The safest scholarly position is to say that the original temple is known today through reported remains, inscriptions, descriptions, and memory, not through a fully preserved standing structure.

The architecture matters for another reason. A substantial enclosure and stone gateways indicate organized patronage and labour. They suggest that the shrine was not a small household cult-site but a public religious centre. Even if the main temple is no longer visible, the reported compound scale supports the view that Tamreswari was an institutional shrine linked with regional power.

VIII. Ritual, Sacrifice, and Responsible Language

No serious historical study of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari can avoid the subject of sacrifice, including reports of human sacrifice. The theme appears in colonial historical writing, in later scholarship, and in discussions of the Deori-controlled worship of the goddess. Edward A. Gait, for example, refers to sacrificial practices while describing the religious world associated with the Chutia rulers and the Deori priesthood (Gait). Later scholars have also treated sacrifice as one of the difficult but important elements in understanding the shrine's ritual character. Yet the topic must be approached with care, because it is both historically significant and easily distorted.

The first point of caution concerns evidence. The available references do not give us direct modern observation of medieval ritual life. They come through historical reports, later scholarly interpretation, community memory, and texts written from particular social and political positions. This does not make the evidence useless, but it does mean that the evidence must be read critically. A report of sacrifice is not the same thing as a complete description of ritual meaning. It tells us that sacrifice was remembered, recorded, or interpreted as part of the shrine's worship, but it does not by itself explain the full theological, political, or social logic of the practice.

The second point of caution concerns language. Colonial accounts often used morally charged words when describing non-Brahmanical or frontier religious practices. Such vocabulary could make a ritual appear strange, excessive, or uncivilized to the colonial reader, even when the same account was recording something historically valuable. For this reason, a modern academic discussion should not repeat sensational language without distance or explanation. It should identify what the sources say, ask what kind of source is speaking, and avoid turning a complex religious tradition into a dramatic image of violence.

A responsible formulation may therefore be stated in the following way: historical sources report that the worship of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari included sacrificial practices, and some accounts mention human sacrifice under regulated political or ritual conditions. This wording keeps the claim within the limits of the evidence. It does not deny the seriousness of the reports, but it also does not present them as an invitation to stereotype the community, the Deori priesthood, or the Chutia religious world as inherently violent. The purpose of mentioning sacrifice is historical understanding, not sensational description.

The larger significance of this evidence lies in what it reveals about premodern sacred power. In many religious systems, fierce goddess worship was linked with protection, punishment, crisis ritual, royal authority, and the defense of territory. The goddess was not only a figure of devotion but also a power imagined as capable of guarding the kingdom, absorbing danger, and responding to moments of fear or disorder. In that setting, sacrifice could function as part of a political and ritual grammar through which rulers, priests, and communities expressed ideas of sovereignty, protection, and divine force. This does not make the practice morally simple; rather, it shows why it must be studied in its own historical context.

Similar caution is necessary when comparing Kechaikhaiti with Kali, Tara, Kamakhya, or other fierce female deities. Such comparisons can be useful because they place the shrine within wider patterns of goddess worship in eastern India and the Himalayan frontier. However, comparison should not erase local specificity. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari should not be reduced to a mere local version of another goddess, nor should the presence of fierce imagery automatically be taken as proof of one single origin. The more careful approach is to recognize overlapping ritual languages while preserving the distinct history of the Sadiya shrine, the Deori priesthood, and the Chutia political setting.

Thus, the study of sacrifice at Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari requires a disciplined balance. It must not avoid difficult evidence, because avoidance would weaken the historical account. At the same time, it must not exaggerate that evidence into spectacle, because spectacle would obscure the shrine's larger importance. The most responsible language is precise, contextual, and humane: it acknowledges what the sources report, identifies the limits of those sources, and interprets sacrifice as part of a broader world of sacred authority, frontier kingship, and goddess-centered ritual power.

IX. Sanskritization, Shakti, and Possible Tara Associations

The history of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari also reveals a process that may be described as Sanskritization, although the term must be used with care. In this context, Sanskritization does not mean that an earlier local tradition simply disappeared or was replaced by a polished Sanskritic form. Rather, it refers to the gradual interpretation of a regional goddess through Sanskritic names, myths, sacred geography, and theological categories. A deity who was remembered in local ritual and community practice could, over time, also be identified with wider categories of Shakti worship and placed within the religious map of Kamarupa.

This process is especially important in the case of Kechaikhaiti because the goddess cannot be understood only through one name or one tradition. The vernacular name Kechaikhaiti preserves a local and fierce identity; the temple-name Tamreswari connects the goddess with the historical shrine and its copper-roof tradition; and the Sanskritic name Dikkaravasini places her within the sacred geography of the eastern frontier. These identities do not cancel one another. Instead, they show how a shrine could carry several levels of meaning at the same time.

Banikanta Kakati's work on the mother-goddess tradition of Assam is useful here because it helps explain how local goddess cults entered the larger Shakti imagination of Kamarupa (Kakati). The religious history of Assam was not formed by a simple movement from local religion to Sanskritic religion. It developed through contact, adaptation, reinterpretation, and coexistence. In such a setting, the sacred power of a regional goddess could be recognized within broader Shakta categories while still retaining older ritual associations, local priesthoods, and frontier meanings.

Jae-Eun Shin's study of feminine divinities in early medieval Kamarupa and the wider eastern region also supports this more layered understanding (Shin). Rather than treating the goddess as belonging to one fixed religious category, Shin's approach helps us see how goddess traditions in the region could be multifaceted, moving across local, political, Tantric, and Sanskritic frames. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari therefore should not be read as a deity who became important only after Sanskritic identification. Her importance lay in the fact that she could be locally powerful and, at the same time, capable of being drawn into wider sacred language.

Some scholars have also suggested similarities between the fierce form of Kechaikhaiti and Buddhist Tara traditions. This comparison is understandable, especially in a region where Buddhist-Tantric imagery, Shakta goddess worship, local protective deities, and frontier ritual practices may have shared symbolic ground. Kakoli Gogoi's work on Tara traditions in Assam provides useful background for considering such possibilities (Gogoi). Tara, in several eastern Indian and Himalayan contexts, could appear not only as a compassionate saviour but also in more powerful and protective forms, which makes comparison with fierce goddess traditions historically suggestive.

At the same time, this paper avoids claiming a direct Buddhist origin for Kechaikhaiti unless stronger evidence is presented. Similarity is not the same as origin. A fierce iconographic mood, shared ritual vocabulary, or overlapping sacred landscape may point to interaction, but it does not automatically prove that one tradition directly produced the other. The safer conclusion is that Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari belonged to a religious environment in which Shakti traditions, local tutelary deities, Buddhist-Tantric imagery, and frontier ritual practices could meet, influence one another, and remain partly distinct.

This balanced approach protects the argument from overstatement. It avoids reducing the goddess to a single origin story, whether tribal, Brahmanical, Buddhist, Tantric, or royal. Such labels may each explain part of the shrine's history, but none of them can explain the whole. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari is better understood as a layered historical formation: a local goddess of regional memory, a Chutia tutelary power, a Deori ritual focus, Dikkaravasini of sacred geography, and later Tamreswari of historical and temple memory.

The originality of the shrine lies precisely in this layered identity. Its history does not move in a straight line from one religious form to another. Instead, it shows how sacred power in the eastern frontier could be translated, renamed, politically supported, ritually preserved, and intellectually reinterpreted across time. To study Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari, therefore, is not to search for one pure beginning, but to understand how several religious worlds could gather around a single goddess without dissolving her local force.

X. Cultural Memory and Present Significance

Although the original Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari temple is no longer available as a complete architectural monument, its memory remains active in the historical and cultural imagination of upper Assam. The absence of the full structure does not mean the absence of significance. On the contrary, the shrine continues to live through remembered sacred geography, Deori ritual identity, local narratives of Sadiya, and the broader heritage consciousness attached to the eastern frontier. The temple's material loss has made memory even more important, because memory now carries part of the work that architecture once performed.

The deity remains closely associated with Deori identity and with the historical importance of Sadiya as a political, ritual, and cultural centre. For communities connected with the shrine, Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari is not only a subject of academic inquiry. She is also a presence within inherited memory, ritual continuity, and collective belonging. This living dimension must be treated with respect. A historical study should not separate the shrine so completely from community memory that it becomes only an archaeological problem, nor should it accept every later tradition without critical examination.

Modern temples, relocated forms of worship, and community-based continuities should not be confused with the original medieval structure associated with the Paya or Sadiya region. They belong to later historical

moments and must be identified as such. Yet they are still important because they preserve the afterlife of the shrine. They show that sacred geography can survive even when architecture is damaged, displaced, submerged, or lost. A temple may disappear as a complete monument, but the sacred memory attached to it can continue through names, rituals, stories, routes, festivals, and community identity.

For heritage studies, Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari raises important questions about how ruined or submerged shrines should be documented. A site of this kind cannot be studied only through standing architecture. It requires the careful use of inscriptions, colonial reports, archaeological records, local oral traditions, community testimony, and later religious practice. Each type of evidence has its own value and its own limits. Archaeology may clarify location and material form; textual sources may preserve names and historical associations; community memory may reveal how the shrine continues to matter.

At the same time, heritage work must guard against turning memory into unverified legend. Community tradition deserves respect, but respect does not require abandoning historical method. The more useful approach is to record memory carefully, identify who preserves it, note how it changes over time, and compare it with other forms of evidence. This allows scholars to honor living tradition while also protecting the study from unsupported claims. In this way, memory becomes a source to be interpreted, not a problem to be dismissed.

The site also raises the question of how scholars should write about sacrifice and other difficult ritual themes. As argued earlier, sensational language can distort the larger significance of the shrine. A heritage approach should therefore combine clarity with restraint. It should acknowledge what historical sources report, but it should also explain the limits of those sources and avoid using ritual practice as a way to stereotype a community. Responsible writing is part of preservation, because the way a shrine is described can shape how future readers understand both the place and the people connected with it.

The answer lies in careful documentation, community consultation, and source-based writing. Any future archaeological or ethnographic study should distinguish between the original Paya/Sadiya shrine, later Tamreswari temples, and continuing Deori or community ritual traditions. These should be connected historically where evidence allows, but they should not be collapsed into one undifferentiated object. Such distinctions make the account more accurate and also more respectful, because each layer of the tradition is allowed to stand in its proper place.

The present significance of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari therefore lies in more than the recovery of a lost monument. It lies in understanding how a sacred site continues to shape identity, memory, and regional history after its original structure has faded from view. The shrine remains important because it links the medieval Chutia world, Deori ritual authority, Sadiya's frontier history, and the living heritage of upper Assam. Its memory shows that cultural heritage is not only preserved in stone; it is also preserved in names, practices, cautionary scholarship, and the continuing attachment of people to a sacred past.

XI. Conclusion

The history of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari Temple demonstrates that the shrine cannot be understood as a single, simple religious monument. Its importance lies in the way it brings together sacred geography, political authority, Deori ritual practice, architectural memory, and the continuing cultural imagination of upper Assam. The different names of the goddess are themselves historical evidence. Dikkaravasini places the deity within the sacred geography of Kamarupa and marks the eastern frontier as a meaningful religious space. Kechaikhaiti preserves the force of vernacular memory and the fierce local identity of the goddess. Tamreswari recalls the later temple-name, the copper-roof tradition, and the historical memory of a shrine that once stood as a visible centre of power in the Sadiya region. These names do not compete with one another; they reveal the layered life of the same sacred site.

The temple's connection with the Chutia polity gives this layered identity a strong political dimension. The shrine was not merely a place of private devotion or isolated worship. It appears to have functioned as a ritual centre through which authority, kingship, protection, and territorial identity could be expressed. The reported inscriptional evidence, the association with Sadiya, and the memory of royal patronage all suggest that the goddess stood close to the symbolic life of the state. In medieval upper Assam, sacred power and political power were not separate worlds. A ruler's authority could be strengthened through association with a protective goddess, and a goddess's public significance could be intensified through patronage, enclosure, ritual, and memory.

Equally important is the role of the Deori priesthood. The Deori connection gives the shrine its distinctive historical originality because it shows that Sanskritic identification did not necessarily mean complete Brahmanical control. Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari could be interpreted through names such as Dikkaravasini, compared with Kali-like or Shakta forms, and yet remain attached to a non-Brahmanical ritual authority. This is one of the strongest arguments against reducing the temple to a single label. The shrine belonged to a world where local priesthood, regional kingship, frontier communities, and Sanskritic sacred language overlapped without becoming identical.

The discussion of sacrifice also requires this same care. Historical sources report sacrificial practices, including accounts of human sacrifice under regulated political or ritual conditions. Such evidence cannot be ignored, but it must not be turned into sensational description. The significance of these reports lies not in stereotyping a community, but in understanding the wider religious logic of fierce goddess worship in premodern societies. Sacrifice, protection, punishment, crisis ritual, and royal authority could be connected within a sacred system that understood the goddess as a power capable of guarding territory and absorbing danger. A responsible history must therefore acknowledge the evidence while also resisting colonial moral vocabulary and modern exaggeration.

The processes of Sanskritization and possible Tara association further show why the shrine should not be forced into a single origin story. Sanskritization, in this context, should be understood as a gradual interpretive process through which a local goddess entered wider Shakti and sacred-geographical frameworks. It does not mean that the earlier local tradition disappeared. Similarly, possible parallels with Buddhist Tara traditions are historically suggestive, especially in a frontier region shaped by Tantric, Shakta, and local protective religious currents. Yet similarity is not the same as origin. The safest and most authentic conclusion is that Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari developed in a religious environment where several traditions could meet, interact, and leave traces without one entirely absorbing the others.

The architectural loss of the original temple does not diminish its historical value. On the contrary, the partial disappearance, ruin, or submergence of the monument makes the study of memory even more important. The shrine survives through reported remains, inscriptions, textual references, regional histories, Deori identity, modern ritual continuities, and the remembered sacred geography of Sadiya. Modern temples and relocated traditions should not be confused with the original medieval structure, but they remain important as living cultural memory. They show that sacred geography can continue to exist even when the architecture that once marked it is no longer fully visible.

The most defensible scholarly conclusion, therefore, is that Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari belongs to the history of religious layering in Northeast India. The shrine was local and regional, political and ritual, non-Brahmanical and Sanskritized, remembered through architecture and sustained through living community memory. It resists narrow classification as merely tribal, Hindu, Buddhist, royal, or local. Its authenticity lies in precisely this resistance to simplification. A publishable account must preserve that complexity by distinguishing evidence from legend, inscription from memory, colonial description from ritual meaning, and later interpretation from earlier practice.

In this sense, the study of Kechaikhaiti or Tamreswari is not only a study of a lost or ruined temple. It is a study of how sacred power operated in a frontier landscape, how regional states used ritual authority, how

communities preserved memory, and how later scholars must write about difficult traditions with caution and respect. The temple's enduring significance lies in the fact that it still compels historical attention: as a Chutia-period ritual centre, as a Deori-linked goddess shrine, as Dikkaravasini of the eastern sacred geography, as Tamreswari of copper-roofed memory, and as a living symbol of upper Assam's layered cultural heritage.

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