

KOTIA:

Location: Koraput, Malkangiri, Kalahandi, Kandhamal

Language: Desia-Odia (Indo-Aryan)

Population: 7232

Major Festivals & Rituals: Chait Parab, Zakhar, Pus Parab, Nuakhia



Also known as Kotia Paika they are one of the endogamous section of Paika community who are known for their past history of military service under the then kings and feudal chiefs of south Odisha. They are a small hill tribe inhabiting Odisha and Andhra border area. The community is divided into two endogamous groups i.e. Bodo Kotia and Sano Kotia, which are further divided into a number of totemistic exogamous clans (Vansa) like Khara (Sun), Naga- Onthalu (Cobra), Goripitta (a bird), Killo / Pulli (tiger), Macha (fish), Bhall (bear), Khilo, Hanu (monkey), Khinbudi, Sukri and Pangi (a kite) etc. Kotia family is nuclear, patrilocal, patrilineal and patriarchal. Monogamy is common norm and the custom of bride price is prevalent. Marriage through negotiation is regarded as ideal. Cross cousin marriage and marriage by elopement and by service, junior levirate, junior sororate, remarriage of widow, widower and divorcees are allowed in their society. Inheritance of paternal property follows the rule of male equigeniture. They observe puberty rite for adolescent girls (Kanya uthani). Kotia have their own traditional community council headed by Nayak who is assisted by their sacred specialist Dissari, Pujari, Guru and their messenger the Barik / Chalan. Their most important deity is Mauli Debta, whose shrine lies under a kendu tree in their village. Nisaniguda is their goddess who protects them from smallpox. Both deities are worshipped in the month of Chaitra (March-April).