

Loobia Katoo, Banda-Ahenkro¹

Loobia Katoo provides the custodian (Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun) of the Jafun fetish. This fetish is located on the outskirts of Banda-Ahenkro--the god Jafun never enters town but looks after the whole town of Ahenkro. Loobia Katoo is one of the seven founding families of Banda-Ahenkro.

Jafun was brought to Banda from the village of Senyon, near Bole. This was a time when the Nafana were staying north of the Black Volta. Here they were engaged in a conflict with some people from Côte d'Ivoire known as the Sofire.* The Nafana were, in this instance, allied with the Gonja in this battle against the Sofire. The fighting occurred in the vicinity of Senyon where Jafun was located. The shrine released some bees which attacked only the people fighting on the side of the Sofire. This was in the time of the Bandahene Dabla. Subsequently, when the Nafana decided to move south to the Banda area, the spirit of this fetish followed them. Upon Dabla's arrival in this area, he established the fetish in Banda.

The first person to offer sacrifice to the fetish in Banda was a Gonja man by the name of Fili (which means red-coloured, in reference to his hair). The first man from Loobia Katoo to hold the position of Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun was Sie Yaw, younger brother to Fili. He assisted Fili and Fili taught him about the fetish.

The Jafun shrine is the centre of the annual Yualie festival when the harvest of guinea corn is celebrated. Yualie takes place on a *Fofie* (Friday that coincides with a *Sumbɔɔ*). In preparation for the Yualie, the female head of house is responsible for brewing pito. A batch of sorghum pito [beer] and a batch of millet pito must be brewed. On the first day of the festival, a chicken and a goat are killed on the fetish. Tolɛɛ (Omanhene) and his elders should be present at the fetish on this day. Tolɛɛ is given a thigh (hind quarter) of the goat for his house. Sorghum and millet pito, as well as tapioca made from each grain, are also offered to the shrine. A calabash full of sorghum pito is brought and sorghum powder sprinkled into it. Similarly, a calabash of millet pito is brought and millet powder sprinkled into it. The food is prepared by the female head and offerings/sacrifices made by the male head. Both individuals wear white cloth during Yualie rites. While offering sacrifices to the shrine, the Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun says the following in Nafaanra: "A full year has come to meet us, and it is custom that you should first taste the first fruit of these new grains. So this is for you to eat, bless us and the grains to grow well." After this, all the people who have ever prayed to the fetish for assistance must slaughter an animal and bring some of the meat to the Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun. On the third day of the festival more pito, from the same batches of millet and sorghum beer, and more tapioca are offered to Jafun.

The Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun must not eat hot pepper on the day of the Yualie festival. If an offense is committed in town and the Jafun fetish betrays the guilty party, the accused must offer a goat to Jafun. Similarly, if you swear by the fetish, a goat must be sacrificed.

Former Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifuns

1. Fili
2. Sie Yaw
3. Kofi Kɔɔma
4. Wulo Jiniŋge
5. Kwadwo Kamlekunu (title holder in 1986)

* The “Sofire” refers to soldiers in the army of the Imam Samori who was attempting to forge a jihad state to the north and west of the Banda area in the final decades of the 19th century. Samori and his forces occupied Bouna in the 1890's and the wars with Samori caused widespread destruction and loss of life to the north of the Black Volta. Additionally, many people were enslaved by the Sofire. (A.S., based on written documentation).

Interview held on July 24, 1986 with Kwadwo Kamlekunu (Jafun Bɔɔnyiiifun) and Amman Nyiimor (Female Head).

Interview by Dr. Ann B. Stahl and Mr. James Anane

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