

The Kokorowé Pact as a Successful Case of an Endogenous Mechanism for Conflict Management in Burkina Faso.

Abstract :

Using the case of Kokorowé (Burkina Faso), this article examines how endogenous mechanisms (traditional chieftaincy, jokingkinship) contribute to conflict resolution and the restoration of social bonds within a context of institutional pluralism. The study draws on 18 semi-structured interviews focused on life narratives, conducted between September and November 2025, and on a thematic analysis of discourse (qualitative approach) collected from Bobo farmers, Fulani herders, customary authorities and administrative actors. The findings show that the chieftaincy acts as an effective mediator when the enforcement of judicial decisions is socially costly or materially difficult to implement, whereas jokingkinship enables the de-escalation of conflict by converting transgression into reciprocal obligations, notably through visible gestures of reparation. The article thus proposes a conceptualisation of endogenous mechanisms as relational infrastructures of pacification, while also discussing the conditions for their success and their limitations.

Keywords: Endogenous mechanisms; Jokingkinship; Institutional pluralism; Customary mediation; Social bonds; Kokorowé.

Introduction

Since the 1970s, conflicts over the exploitation and sharing of natural resources have intensified across Sahelian countries, driven by the combined effects of repeated droughts that have weakened ecosystems and contemporary land-use practices that place growing pressure on the environment (Ouattara et al., 2004; Badjagou and Mossi, 2024). In Burkina Faso, these environmental transformations have been compounded by rapid and often poorly controlled urbanisation, strong demographic growth and recent security crises, all of which have heightened tensions surrounding access to, and control over, resources.

Several authors indeed emphasise that the management of land and pastoral resources today constitutes a central focus of conflict in rural areas (Maïga, 2006; Kane, 2023). Access to land, water or pasture mobilises multiple actors and gives rise to competing strategies among social groups, local institutions and economic operators (Badjagou et al.,

2025). Natural resources thus appear not merely as material assets but also as vehicles of power, negotiation and contestation.

Among these tensions, those opposing farmers and herders over water and grazing land remain particularly frequent (Ki and Dabiré, 2021). They are embedded in structural dynamics marked by the increasing commodification of land, land speculation, the expansion of cultivated areas and growing livestock numbers (Alomasso, 2017; Ki and Dabiré, 2021; Badjagou et al., 2025). In response, public policies have multiplied regulatory mechanisms, notably through the creation of pastoral zones intended to secure mobility and reduce friction (Robert, 2010; Millogo et al., 2017; Ki et al., 2025). Yet, despite these interventions, conflicts persist, revealing the limitations of institutional approaches and the need for a more nuanced understanding of local settlement practices.

Within this context, a plurality of actors (customary authorities, administrative officials, community leaders and local organisations) intervene to prevent, manage or resolve disputes. These initiatives, at times complementary and at times competing, reflect the complexity of the regulatory regimes at work.

Numerous studies have examined the causes, forms and consequences of these conflicts, as well as the diversity of arbitration methods employed (Zongo, 2002; Baas, 2004; Maïga, 2006; Ki and Dabiré, 2021; Badjagou et al., 2025). The importance of customary authorities in the local resolution of disputes has likewise been highlighted in a number of settings. In the commune of Tchériba, for instance, Karambiri (2023) shows that most land disputes are brought before traditional bodies, and that their rulings are less prone to recurrence than those issued through the administrative channel.

While such work has firmly established the persistent role of these authorities, it more rarely examines the concrete processes through which a situation of violence is transformed, step by step, into a workable relationship once again. It is within this perspective that the present research, devoted to the village of Kokorowé, is situated. It addresses the following question: what endogenous mechanisms do actors mobilise to resolve conflicts and make the resumption of cooperation possible?

Beyond a mere inventory of existing arrangements, the article shows that pacification rests on an identifiable sequence of social operations: the shared qualification of the transgression, a temporary shift towards the judicial arena, the public acknowledgement of wrongdoing, and,

62 finally, the materialisation of reparation. The issue at stake is thus to understand how these
63 mechanisms become genuinely capable of producing coordination within a context of
64 normative pluralism. The contribution proposed here consists in analysing the social
65 conditions underpinning the performance of these regulatory arrangements: the relational
66 legitimacy of mediators, the publicisation of wrongdoing, the conversion of conflict into
67 obligations of reciprocity, and the hybridisation between state sanction and
68 community reparation. Drawing on this case, we show that these arrangements function as
69 infrastructures of pacification, while also identifying the circumstances in
70 which their effectiveness may be limited. The article first presents the theoretical framework and
71 operational concepts, then the methodological approach, before setting out the results and
72 discussing their implications and limitations.

73 **Theoretical Framework and Operational Concepts**

74 The article draws on three complementary analytical perspectives on conflict-resolution
75 processes that speak to one another without being conflated. The first concerns the question of
76 legitimacy. Following the Weberian tradition, we consider that the chieftaincy may be described
77 as a form of what is termed traditional authority (Weber, 1922); however,
78 its concrete effectiveness does not follow mechanically from this classification. It stems, rather,
79 from its capacity to bring about a decision that is held to be valid by the parties concerned —
80 that is to say, recognised, appropriate and, ultimately, workable over time. In other words,
81 what matters is not merely that a ruling is made, but that people are able to continue living
82 with what has been decided.

83 The second perspective concerns social bonds, understood not as a normative abstraction but
84 as an observable relational property. Following Paugam, we approach this in terms of
85 what happens after the ordeal (Paugam, 2008): do the actors resume ordinary exchanges? Do
86 they once again circulate in the same spaces? Do they take part in collective
87 activities without avoiding their former adversaries? It is in this capacity to re-engage in
88 cooperation, sometimes in a minimal or cautious way, that the effective exit from conflict
89 is measured.

90 These dynamics are embedded within a situation of institutional pluralism. Disputes never fall
91 within a single register; they move between customary authorities, state mechanisms and
92 practical arrangements built up through interaction. Rather than viewing this as a simple
93 syncretism of norms, we propose to speak of pragmatic hybridisation. This perspective

aligns with work that calls for observing the concrete movement of actors between different arenas of regulation, rather than assuming the coherence of separate legal orders (see, for example, Cook, 2005). Actors move successively between different scenes, combine heterogeneous resources, and pass from complaint to negotiation and then to reparation, following trajectories that are often discontinuous yet socially intelligible.

These theoretical choices underpin the operationalisation adopted in this study. In the fieldwork, a mechanism is classified as endogenous when it rests on locally recognised authority, favours forms of mediation or conciliation, and results in tangible effects of pacification. These effects are not assumed in advance; rather, they are identified through concrete indicators: acceptance of the arrangement, compensatory gestures, and the resumption — however fragile — of ordinary interactions.

Method and Fieldwork

Research Setting

This research was conducted in Kokorowé, a village administratively attached to the urban commune of Bobo-Dioulasso. The choice of this study site is explained by the coexistence, within the village, of two major social groups: Bobo farmers and Fulani herders. These two communities traditionally maintain harmonious relations, owing to a joking-kinship bond that culturally obliges them to avoid any form of conflict. This deeply rooted social norm means that, even in situations of tension or potential conflict, interactions are expected to remain marked by banter, restraint and a search for appeasement.

A few years earlier, however, these two communities had experienced an episode of tension linked to a customary practice. Although this conflict ran counter to the norms of joking kinship that unite them, it revealed the fragility of local equilibria in the face of strong emotion. In order to restore social cohesion and prevent any resurgence of violence, Bobo and Fulani representatives concluded a reconciliation pact. Beyond its symbolic dimension, this pact was institutionalised through the integration of the Fulani into the organisation of an annual Bobo traditional festival. This celebration has since become a key moment for renewing bonds, recalling mutual commitments and reaffirming local mechanisms of social regulation. Kokorowé thus constitutes a particularly valuable setting for analysing dynamics of cohabitation, local mechanisms of social regulation, and modes of conflict prevention between groups whose activities and interests sometimes diverge. Through this research, we seek to document this singular experience of endogenous conflict resolution. The

aim is to analyse not only the conditions under which the pact emerged, but also the practices, rituals and social arrangements that enable this festival to play a lasting stabilising role in the cohabitation between Bobo farmers and Fulani herders.

Methodological Considerations

For this research, a qualitative approach was adopted in order to grasp, with the necessary nuance, the endogenous mechanisms of conflict management at Kokorowé. This methodological choice responds to the need for an in-depth understanding of social dynamics, representations and local practices — dimensions that cannot be adequately captured through simple quantification. The qualitative approach makes it possible to access the meaning that actors attribute to events, the norms that guide their behaviour, and the informal arrangements mobilised to prevent or resolve tensions. The analysis of discourse gathered from the various interacting actors — farmers, herders, customary authorities and community leaders — proved to be an essential lever for uncovering the internal logic of the mechanisms of social regulation. It shed light not only on perceptions and lived experiences, but also on the strategies, arrangements and symbolic resources mobilised to maintain cohesion between the groups. This approach thus provides a nuanced and contextualised understanding of the endogenous forms of conflict management in the village of Kokorowé.

Techniques and Tools for Data Production

Data collection relied on two main techniques: on the one hand, a selective and in-depth documentary review, and on the other, individual semi-structured interviews conducted with the various actors. The documentary review drew on scientific studies, institutional reports and local documents relating to land dynamics, intercommunity relations and endogenous mechanisms of conflict management. The semi-structured interviews constituted the central source of empirical information. They were conducted in a manner that encouraged the free expression of participants while ensuring a thematic orientation consistent with the objectives of the research. Given the subject and aim of the study, the interviews were oriented towards life narratives in order to obtain the widest possible diversity of information. To structure and guide this process, two essential methodological tools were used: a reading grid designed to organise the documentary analysis, and an interview guide. These tools helped to ensure the rigour, comparability and depth of the data collected.

The survey was conducted between September and November 2025. A number of additional interviews were carried out in August 2026. Some interviews were conducted in French, others in Dioula and subsequently translated into French where necessary. All participants were informed of the objectives of the research and of the voluntary nature of their participation, and the names of individuals, along with certain identifying details, were anonymised. In view of the intercommunity sensitivity of the subject, group interviews on controversial episodes were avoided, and it was verified with several interlocutors that participants were not being placed at risk.

Sampling and Sample

This research was based on life narratives gathered from actors who had been involved in resolving the conflict arising from the Bobo initiation rite in the village of Kokorowé. The guiding principle of the survey was thus neither numerical representativeness nor informational saturation, but rather the depth of the discourse produced by the actors affected.

The main respondents in this research were the Bobo farmers and Fulani herders residing in the village of Kokorowé. Their day-to-day experience of cohabitation, of natural resource use and of local regulatory mechanisms lies at the heart of the analysis. In addition to these interviews with directly affected actors, semi-structured interviews were conducted with customary and administrative authorities, as well as with several community leaders. These actors play a central role in the mediation, prevention and resolution of local tensions. Their contribution sheds light on the institutional logics, social norms and endogenous arrangements mobilised to maintain balance between the two groups.

Informants were identified using a chain-referral method, also known as ‘snowball sampling’. This was initiated through key contacts, locally recognised for their in-depth knowledge of the village’s social dynamics. This strategy proves particularly relevant in contexts where interpersonal relationships, reputation and trust play a decisive role in gaining access to actors and information. As the survey progressed, each participant who was recommended helped to gradually expand the network of informants, thereby fostering the inclusion of diverse and socially significant profiles. Data collection ceased once the threshold of theoretical saturation had been reached — that is, once the interviews no longer yielded new or substantial elements. As Olivier de Sardan (2003) teaches us, the saturation threshold was reached after 18 people had been interviewed, whose profiles are set out in Table 1.

189 **Table 1: Profile of respondents (to be completed)**

Profile	Number	Status	Role in the conflict episodes
Bobo farmers	6		Indigenous ritual custodians
Fulani herders	8		Migrants and local mediators
Customary authorities	2		Guardians of tradition and local mediators
Administrative/judicial actors	2		Guardians of modern law
Community leaders/VDC	2		Guardians of development activities, involved in settling social tensions
Total	18		

190 *Source: Fieldwork survey, August 2026.*

191 *Note: 'Status' refers to a person's position within the social and political hierarchy.*

192 This principle guarantees not only the density and coherence of the empirical material but also
 193 the analytical robustness required for an in-depth understanding of the endogenous mechanisms
 194 of conflict management at Kokorowé.

195 **Data Processing and Analysis**

196 All interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and then fully transcribed in order to obtain a
 197 faithful and workable textual corpus. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic and
 198 interpretative approach designed to identify, organise and understand the recurring patterns
 199 present in respondents' discourse.

200 This approach required the development of a structured analytical grid, built around the
 201 theoretical axes of the research and the themes of the interview guide.

202 The analysis proceeded through a three-stage coding process. Open coding first
 203 identified sequences relating to mediation, sanctions, reparation, affect and power relations.
 204 These elements were then grouped axially into more stable categories (legitimacy, publicisation
 205 of wrongdoing, compensation, referral to the state). The whole was then linked to the
 206 article's operational concepts, notably social bonds and hybridisation. Memos
 207 written after each round of interviews accompanied this work, helping to refine the interview
 208 guide and progressively consolidate the interpretative framework.

209 The extraction and careful selection of particularly significant verbatim excerpts served to
 210 illustrate, nuance and empirically reinforce the main findings. These extracts, situated within
 211 their context, contributed interpretative depth to the analysis and conveyed the diversity of
 212 viewpoint expressed by the actors.

Results

Conflict is an inevitable social reality within any human grouping. Its occurrence is not, in itself, a sociological problem; rather, it is the manner in which it is resolved that determines its significance. In African societies, and particularly in Burkina Faso, a variety of resolution mechanisms are mobilised, sometimes exclusively, sometimes in combination. The findings of this research highlight the principal endogenous mechanisms of conflict management in the village of Kokorowé.

Traditional Chieftaincy as a Pillar of Conflict Resolution

For the purposes of this research, endogenous conflict-resolution mechanisms are understood as all avenues of recourse that do not pass through modern jurisdiction such as the departmental court, the courthouse or any other state administration. These mechanisms rest essentially on amicable settlement between the parties in conflict, recourse to institutions or individuals recognised for their reputation and integrity, or reliance on alliance relationships. In the village of Kokorowé, several forms of endogenous mechanism are mobilised to overcome disputes. The first avenue of recourse identified by the actors is the traditional chieftaincy. This institution, whose legitimacy is deeply rooted in tradition, enjoys great respect. Traditional chiefs, owing to their wisdom and integrity, command strong credibility and are attentively listened to. These qualities constitute genuine assets in the management of conflict. In this regard, the example of the conflict among the market women of Leguema Logo illustrates this role well. This conflict concerned the occupation of a market site, as explained by the following informant:

The site of Lègma Logo was located on a major thoroughfare and belonged to private land. During election periods, politicians had made use of it, but after the elections, and as governments changed, the women who worked there were ordered to vacate the premises. Some agreed to be relocated to the main fruit market, while others categorically refused. The latter then created a new site at Yéguéré. Subsequently, the town council intervened to develop this site for the benefit of all the displaced women, and stalls were allocated to all applicants, including those who had joined the fruit market. However, a conflict arose: the women who had originally created the Yéguéré site forbade those who had come from the fruit market from using the stalls that had nevertheless been allocated to them by the town council (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

Following these events, the parties involved were swiftly referred to the modern justice system. However, this body failed to provide a satisfactory solution. The parties were then referred back to the traditional chieftaincy which, through its authority and mediating capacity, succeeded in establishing consensus and restoring harmony between the women in conflict. The following extract testifies to the process by which this conflict was resolved:

The conflict involving the women of Lègma Logo went through several stages. The court had issued an initial ruling, but this did not resolve the problem. Even after the appeal, the situation remained deadlocked. A bailiff was then instructed to record the facts and enforce the rulings: the stalls allocated by the state and validated by the courts were to be made accessible. In practice, however, the beneficiaries were unable to make use of them, as the police could not maintain a permanent presence on site. Faced with this impasse, an amicable solution was sought. Mediation was conducted between the Fulani and Bobo chieftaincies. Through this process, the problem was ultimately resolved (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

The example of the conflict among the women of Lègma Logo clearly illustrates the limitations of the modern justice system in resolving certain community disputes. Despite the rulings issued by the courts and the intervention of a bailiff, the problem remained without a concrete solution, since enforcing the verdicts required a permanent police presence that proved difficult to maintain. By contrast, recourse to endogenous mechanisms, embodied by the traditional chieftaincy (both Fulani and Bobo), made it possible to establish dialogue, mobilise the moral authority of the chiefs, and reach a consensus accepted by all parties. This illustrates that, in the local context, traditional institutions possess a legitimacy and practical effectiveness that complement, and at times surpass, modern jurisdictions in restoring social harmony.

Joking Kinship as a Mechanism of De-escalation: From Violent Conflict to Public Reparation

The example of conflict resolution through joking kinship presented here draws on the life narrative of a key resource person who had been involved in resolving the conflict in question, from its outbreak through to its complete resolution.

In Bobo custom, as well as in that of neighbouring villages, it is customary for certain individuals to be permitted, on the occasion of traditional ceremonies, to go out in search of what is known as 'meat for the sauce'. They enter all the encampments, and

everyone — Fulani, Mossi or Bobo — is aware of this custom. This practice is codified: only certain animals may be taken, such as goats, dogs and poultry. Cattle, sheep and guinea fowl, by contrast, must not be touched. Thus, when a goat is tethered by a rope, it may not be seized, in accordance with customary rules (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

Regarding the taking of animals, one informant adds that

In the past, wild animals were killed and dried by the future initiates. They would carry out hunts in the bush surrounding their village and kill whatever game they encountered. This game was dried and stored in a small dwelling known as the House of the Do. This dried meat is consumed only by the masters of initiation during the ceremony, the future initiates being formally forbidden from consuming it. However, with the disappearance of the bush, wild animals have also become scarce. So now, when the time for initiations comes, domestic animals are also taken. But it should be clarified that these are animals found straying — that is, when the future initiates enter the bush and see animals unsupervised, without a herder, they may slaughter them. Otherwise, if there is a herder behind the animals, they are not entitled to slaughter them, because those are not stray animals. And when this time comes, everyone is likewise on the alert to keep close watch over their animals (S.A., member of the Bobo community and former local elected official, interview of 06/08/2026).

These accounts reveal a shared norm that renders the conflict intelligible. They remind us that interaction between farmers and herders is governed by prescriptions known to all. Custom here functions as a shared grammar: it authorises certain forms of taking, forbids others, and provides criteria for distinguishing legitimate practice from abuse. This shared foundation does not prevent transgression, but it does immediately fix its qualification.

Over time, however, deviations occurred. Young men, often masked, began hunting herders and taking livestock arbitrarily. From the very first year, they were told that these practices were not in keeping with custom. They acknowledged the abnormal nature of their conduct, but no solution was found, and the situation persisted for nearly twenty years (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

Still on the subject of the abusive and irregular taking that led to the conflict, another informant testifies as follows:

311 *In fact, the cattle that were slaughtered were not stray animals. There*
312 *were herders behind the herd. It even turned out that among the herders was a young*
313 *Bobo man. So when the future initiates slaughtered the cattle and carried them off to*
314 *the small dwelling known as the House of the Do, the herders followed them.*
315 *These herders even managed to get inside the dwelling to take photographs of the*
316 *meat stored there. But entering the dwelling is not normal; the herders transgressed a*
317 *prohibition, since not everyone is permitted to enter that house (M.K.,*
318 *journalist who witnessed the conflict, interview of 10/08/2026).*

319 An analysis of this verbatim shows that acknowledging wrongdoing is not, in itself, sufficient
320 to produce regulation. In the absence of sanction or effective mediation, the repetition of
321 transgressions builds up a memory of injustice that progressively undermines coexistence.

322 The move to the small dwelling transformed the accusation into public evidence. The material
323 nature of the proof narrowed the space for contestation and compelled the community to take
324 a position. Once the offence had been established, the Bobo community, for its part, regarded
325 the intrusion into the sacred house as an affront that had to be washed away. Young Bobo men
326 then mobilised against the complainants: ‘Once this evidence was established, young men from
327 the village mobilised and violently attacked the complainants, going so far as to beat
328 them severely’ (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of
329 12/09/2025).

330 The establishment of the facts did not produce the pacification that might have been expected.
331 On the contrary, it triggered a defensive, identity-based reaction and accelerated the escalation
332 of the conflict, prompting the intervention of the security forces and the formal justice
333 system.

334 *The intervention of the fire service was required to rescue the victims, so serious was*
335 *the situation. The police and gendarmerie were subsequently called in as well. The*
336 *gendarmerie intervened on site, while the fire service carried out the evacuation of*
337 *those involved. After these events, the community remained in a state of expectation:*
338 *one week passed, then two, then three, without a definitive solution being reached. By*
339 *the fourth week, our organisation judged it necessary to encourage the victims to lodge*
340 *an official complaint. This was registered in 2020, at the height of the Covid-19*
341 *pandemic. Owing to the health measures then in force, it was impossible to arrest the*
342 *suspects and place them together in the same cells. This constraint slowed the*
343 *proceedings, such that the case took a considerable time to be processed and*

344 *only saw significant progress after a month and a half. The defendants were summoned*
345 *and heard. Following the hearing, the public prosecutor stated: 'No, they must*
346 *be remanded. They are thieves, and thieves must be brought before the courts' (B.Y.,*
347 *member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).*

348 Judicial treatment introduced a logic of criminal classification that temporarily removed the
349 conflict from the community arena. Yet despite the case being taken up by the justice system,
350 the customary route was not abandoned. Certain actors continued to work towards pacifying
351 the situation. It was in this spirit that the elders of the Bobo community were led to go and
352 offer their apologies to the Fulani community:

353 *At the time, it seemed to me that the judicial route alone could not fully bring the*
354 *conflict to an end. Mechanisms had to be found to soothe the feelings of both sides and*
355 *to allow the two communities to continue living together after these events. Because*
356 *once the case had gone to court, the community had decided that no Fulani*
357 *would ever again reside in the village. So, when I heard this, I approached the Bobo*
358 *elders to urge them to go and ask for forgiveness of the Fulani community, all the more so*
359 *as we are joking kin. And it was in this way that the Bobo elders indeed agreed to ask for*
360 *forgiveness (S.A., member of the Bobo community and former local elected official,*
361 *interview of 06/08/2026).*

362 The public confession made it possible to shift the terms of the debate: the reality of the
363 wrong was no longer at issue, but rather the conditions for living together thereafter. The
364 acknowledgement of the wrongdoing reopened the path to relationship, thereby making
365 mediation possible. The fact that the Bobo recognised that their children had overstepped the
366 prescriptions of custom, and came to ask for forgiveness, opened the way to reconciliation.
367 The public acknowledgement of wrongdoing is an essential step in the restoration of trust. The
368 Fulani agreed to forgive:

369 *In the end, they came to offer us their apologies. When the Bobo elders came to*
370 *present their apologies, they acknowledged that the young men had overstepped the*
371 *prescriptions of their custom. We accepted their apology and, in the course of the*
372 *discussion, we asked them what could be put in place to prevent such a conflict from*
373 *happening again. It was agreed that, on the occasion of their annual festival, the*
374 *Fulani would henceforth be invited as full participants in its organisation, so as to*
375 *give concrete expression to the joking-kinship relationship that unites us. This festival*

isheldeveryyear, on 2 January (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

This illustrates that jokingkinship can facilitateforgiveness. However, the request for forgivenesswas not yet the end of the matter: the young Bobo men whohadcaused the damage had been convicted by the courts, and a solution to thisstillhad to befound:

A difficultyneverthelessremained:theirchildrenhad been sentenced to ninemonths in prison. The question thusarose of how to manage this situation. Wereplied that wewouldtakeresponsibility and find the means to deal withit. The Fulani went to see the prosecutor to withdrawtheir complaint. He toldthem that theycouldindeedwithdraw the complaint, but that thiswould not beenough to secure the release of the Bobo whohadalready been convicted. One of our sons, a businessman, thenoffered to cover the costsrequired for their release, which the prosecutoraccepted (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

Following the release of the young Bobo men, efforts to pacify relations between the two communities continued. The Fulani communitydecided to make structural investments for the benefit of the Bobo community. Thus, at the followingyear's Bobo traditional festival, the Fulani presented the Bobo with grain mills, sewing machines and otherequipment.

Furthermore, another son, a businessman based in Ouagadougou, havingheard about the conflict, travelled to Bobo to find out more. Havingfamiliarisedhimselfwith the situation, heannounced that hewouldtake part in the Bobo festival and would have a surprise for them. On the day of the celebration, hepresentedtensewing machines for young women, alongwith an electric grain mill, whichheofficiallyhanded over to the Bobo. However, the village had no electricity. Efforts thereforehad to becombined to finance the connection to the electricitygrid. Thanks to this collective initiative, we are nowboundtogether like the twocolours of a single eye: black and white (B.Y., member of the Fulani chieftaincy in Bobo-Dioulasso, interview of 12/09/2025).

This life narrative concerning the conflict in the village of Kokorowé, and the manner in whichitwasresolved, shows that this customary system remains a powerfultool for easingintercommunity tensions. The invocation of symbolic bonds makesit possible to transform a violent conflict into a space for dialogue. The conflict alsoshowed that the two systems must coexist:formal justice (the prosecutor, convictions) ensures legal sanction, while customary justice (the canton chief, elders, jokingkinship) fostersreconciliation and

social cohesion. The gestures made by the businessmen (payment for release, gifts of sewing machines and a mill, financing of electrification) reinforced reconciliation and turned the conflict into an opportunity for community development. This experience demonstrates that joking kinship, when activated within a framework of sincere dialogue, can not only resolve conflicts but also strengthen social bonds and open up prospects for lasting cooperation between communities.

The experiences discussed above highlight the effectiveness of endogenous conflict-resolution mechanisms. By drawing on dialogue, mediation and the legitimacy of local actors, these arrangements make it possible not only to settle disputes but also to preserve existing social bonds. They foster reconciliation between parties, establish a climate of trust and help to restore community cohesion. Beyond the immediate resolution of tensions, these mechanisms contribute to consolidating a harmonious post-conflict coexistence. They strengthen solidarity, give value to traditional knowledge, and offer lasting solutions suited to the socio-cultural context. They thus appear as essential instruments of social regulation, capable of maintaining a convivial climate and ensuring peace within communities.

Discussion

The survey conducted at Kokorowé does not merely attest to the existence of endogenous conflict-settlement mechanisms; it also makes it possible to describe their operational dynamics. The material gathered shows that their effectiveness derives neither from an abstract fidelity to tradition, nor from a simple alternative to state law, but rather from a series of successive transformations through which a situation of rupture once again becomes governable.

A first decisive element lies in the existence of a shared normative framework. The prescriptions governing ritual taking are known to all groups and constitute a common frame of reference for evaluating conduct. From this perspective, the legitimacy of an authority depends less on its institutional position than on the recognition it actually enjoys, in the sense intended by Weber (1922). The norm does not prevent transgression, but it does make it possible to stabilise its interpretation immediately.

That said, qualifying the wrongdoing is not, in itself, sufficient to restore peace. When infractions recur without a collective response deemed satisfactory, they nurture a memory of injustice that undermines the minimal trust required for ordinary interaction. The case

examined here illustrates what Paugam (2008) terms the ‘ordeal of the bond’: the question becomes one of the practical conditions for the continuity of the collective after the injury.

In this phase of uncertainty, actors turn to the judicial apparatus. Recourse to the gendarmerie and the public prosecutor introduces a penal logic that individualises responsibility and temporarily suspends local negotiation. However, as Crook (2005) has shown in his work on legal pluralism, movement between arenas does not mechanically produce closure of the dispute. It may, on the contrary, shift the problem towards the unresolved question of future coexistence.

It is at this point that joking kinship becomes operative once again. The public acknowledgement of wrongdoing by the Bobo elder transforms the nature of the disagreement: once the truth has been admitted, discussion turns instead to the terms of the relationship going forward. This persistence of a shared sense of belonging echoes what Akoun identifies as the symbolic foundation that allows members of a group to continue recognising one another despite their differences (Akoun, 2019: 77).

The stabilisation of peace subsequently proceeds through the materialisation of reparation. The financial contributions, the equipment offered and the electrification of the village produce lasting attachments that make rupture costly for everyone involved. This finding echoes the observations of Karambiri (2023), who shows, in the commune of Tchériba, that customary settlements are less prone to recurrence when they commit the parties to socially binding compromises.

Endogenous mechanisms thus appear less as vestiges of tradition than as relational technologies of pacification. Their effectiveness presupposes the recognition of mediators, the possibility of making wrongdoing public without irreversible humiliation, and the availability of resources that can be converted into visible reparation.

These findings must nonetheless be situated within their conditions of production. The presence of an annual ritual that keeps the memory of the bond alive facilitates, in this case, the reactivation of the alliance. Other contexts, marked by strong commodification of land or by rigid social hierarchies, might limit this performativity. What is at stake here, therefore, is less a transferable model than an arrangement contingent on specific social configurations.

Ultimately, customary institutions endure not simply because tradition continues to weigh upon practice, nor because they operate at a remove from the state. Their strength also lies

in their capacity to bring together people who, after the conflict, must continue to live side by side, to farm neighbouring plots of land, to trade and, at times, to help one another. At Kokorowé, settling a land dispute is thus not simply a matter of determining who is right or wrong. It is also a matter of making the relationship between the parties possible once again. The case therefore invites us to move beyond the classic opposition between formal justice and customary settlement, and to focus instead on what these mechanisms actually manage to preserve or rebuild within social relations.

It is from this angle that the establishment of the Faso Bū-Kaoore¹ in 2026 in Burkina Faso takes on its full significance. It reflects a recognition of the place that endogenous mechanisms continue to occupy in the settlement of disputes. In land conflicts in particular, their value lies in their proximity to local realities and their knowledge of the people, family histories and arrangements that have been built up around the land over time. The issue at stake is thus not merely to bring the immediate conflict to an end, but to find a compromise sufficiently acceptable to allow the actors to continue living together. The Faso Bū-Kaoore can thus be read as institutional recognition of a way of settling disputes that seeks, beyond arbitration, to preserve the conditions for social coexistence.

Conclusion

Drawing on the study of the conflict that occurred at Kokorowé, this article has sought to understand how endogenous mechanisms can help transform a situation of violence into a renewed possibility of coexistence. The analysis was not intended solely to inventory customary practices, but to bring to light the social operations through which these arrangements acquire concrete effectiveness.

The empirical material has made it possible to identify a recurring trajectory: the shared qualification of the transgression opens up a common space of interpretation; when this form of regulation proves insufficient, the dispute shifts towards the judicial arena; however, the lasting stabilisation of the bond requires a return to the community stage, made possible by the public acknowledgement of wrongdoing and the implementation of visible reparation. Pacification thus appears as a cumulative process rather than the effect of a single decision.

This dynamic sheds light on the way in which customary institutions continue to produce coordination in contexts marked by normative pluralism. Their strength lies neither in

¹Law No. 003-2026/ALT of 14 January 2026 establishing the Faso Bū-Kaoore.

complete autonomy from the state nor in a mere survival of tradition, but in their capacity to re-embed actors within forward-looking relationships of interdependence.

The survey also underlines that this effectiveness is conditional. It presupposes the recognition of mediators, the possibility of making wrongdoing public without irreversible humiliation, and the availability of resources capable of being converted into tangible reparation. Where these elements are absent — in the presence of overly pronounced power asymmetries, high economic stakes or strong identity-based polarisation — endogenous mechanisms may lose their integrative capacity.

The case of Kokorowé thus does not invite the establishment of a universal model of conflict resolution. It leads, rather, to viewing these arrangements as situated relational infrastructures, whose performativity depends on the social configurations within which they are embedded. In this sense, the article contributes to shifting the focus from the opposition between formal justice and custom towards an analysis of the practical conditions that make the resumption of cooperation possible once again.

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