

Upheavals in the Cultural Life of Internally Displaced Persons in the Centre-North Region of Burkina Faso: Understanding Their Experiences to Prepare for Their Return

Patrice Kouraogo

Institute of Social Sciences (INSS), National Centre for Scientific and Technological Research (CNRST), Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
Email: Kouraogopat@gmail.com, kou_patrice@yahoo.fr

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Abstract

The objective of this study is to analyze the cultural life of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the North-Central region of Burkina Faso with a view to identifying the various upheavals and their impacts, and, above all, to propose support actions for a peaceful return. We used a qualitative methodological approach through data collection tools such as questionnaires, interviews, direct and participatory observations, life stories, and documentary research. The fieldwork lasted six months and covered eight municipalities in the region. The results of the study highlight several types of upheavals experienced by IDPs, the main ones of which include changes in cultural traditions, dietary and clothing habits, the destruction and degradation of heritage, the abandonment of cultural practices, the disruption of customary and religious life, and the undermining of the achievements of social cohesion and Burkinabe cultural values. Primarily, this study highlights the cultural, psychological, social, and economic depth of these upheavals. We propose support measures for the reception methods for displaced persons in shelters that ensure cultural homogeneity and continuity of practices, and for cultural preparations for the return of displaced persons. In short, this research advocates for taking into account the cultural dimension in the reception and return of people in situations of forced displacement.

Keywords

Upheavals, Cultural Life, Displaced Persons, Centre-North

1. Introduction

The forced displacement of populations is a total social fact in the sense of [Marcel Mauss \(1950\)](#), fact because it is a multidimensional phenomenon, growing and exacerbated by armed conflict, climate change, economic inequality and persecution. “Cultural uprooting” is one of the direct consequences. The notion of “cultural uprooting” is developed in the social sciences, notably by [Pierre Bourdieu \(1964, p. 108\)](#) in his work on social and symbolic ruptures. He defines it as a “process of forced and brutal rupture between an individual or group and their original cultural ecosystem (territory, social institutions, ritual practices, and knowledge transmission frameworks), leading to identity disorientation and symbolic insecurity.”

Concretely, in the Burkinabe context, the cultural uprooting of IDPs is a traumatic process that manifests itself on three interlinked levels.

According to the [UNHCR \(2023\)](#), more than 110 million people are displaced worldwide, 62% of whom are internally displaced ([IDMC, 2023](#)), referred to in Burkina Faso as internally displaced persons (IDPs). The forced displacement of populations is a complex phenomenon, analysed from various angles (political, environmental, socio-economic). According to [Castles, De Haas and Miller \(2014\)](#) in *The Age of Migration*, contemporary migration is linked to globalisation, asymmetric conflicts and North-South inequalities. The work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR, 2023](#)) highlights a historic record of 110 million displaced persons in 2023, with a predominance of internally displaced persons (*Global Trends* report). [Zetter \(2021\)](#), in *Protecting Forced Migrants*, emphasises the notion of “protracted crises”, where refugees spend decades in exile. Studies by [Black, Bennett and Thomas \(2011\)](#) on climate displacement (*Migration as Adaptation*) highlight the role of natural disasters, a theme explored in depth by [Gemenne \(2015\)](#) in *Géopolitique du climat*.

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 30% of the world’s displaced persons ([UNHCR, 2023](#)), with major crisis hotspots. It is an epicentre of displacement. [Bøås and Dunn \(2017\)](#), in *Politics of Violence in the Sahel*, analyse the impact of armed groups and state fragility. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre ([IDMC, 2023](#)) reports that 40% of African internally displaced persons live in areas of chronic conflict (Sahel, Horn of Africa). [Pérouse de Montclos \(2018\)](#), in *Les diasporas africaines*, explores forced economic migration, while [Adepoju \(2022\)](#) deciphers cross-border dynamics and the exploitation of migrants in *Migration in West Africa*. The World Food Programme ([WFP, 2022](#)) warns of the link between food insecurity and mass displacement in countries such as Somalia and South Sudan.

While the causes worldwide include conflict, climate change, economic and humanitarian crises, social tensions and geopolitical dynamics, in Africa, armed conflict, violent extremism, climate change, structural poverty and fragile governance are cited.

As for the consequences, at the global level they relate to limited access to basic

needs (water, food, healthcare) for millions of people (UNHCR, 2023), overcrowding in refugee camps (Syrians in Türkiye, Rohingyas in Bangladesh), high costs for host countries (logistics, education, health), the rise of xenophobic rhetoric and nationalist parties (Europe, United States), ecological degradation, and

At the African level, these include regional instability, human exploitation, economic destabilisation, the spread of disease, the depletion of local resources, inter-community conflicts, exploitation and vulnerabilities, economic and environmental destabilisation, accelerated desertification, and waste and pollution in camps for displaced persons.

Burkina Faso, a Sahelian country, is becoming emblematic of the challenges associated with internal displacement. In 2023, 2 million Burkinabè (10% of the population) are displaced (CONASUR, 2023). The Burkinabè crisis is a textbook case of the intertwining of terrorism, climate and poverty. Hagberg and Kibora (2021), in *La crise sécuritaire au Burkina Faso (The Security Crisis in Burkina Faso)*, describe the rise of jihadist groups (EIGS, JNIM) and the breakdown of public services. The National Emergency Relief Council (CONASUR, 2023) documents 2 million internally displaced persons, with food insecurity affecting 20% of the population.

Ouédraogo (2020), in *Déplacés et résilience au Sahel (Displaced People and Resilience in the Sahel)*, highlights the survival strategies of rural communities in the face of climate shocks. The International Organisation for Migration (OIM, 2022) highlights the logistical obstacles to humanitarian aid in remote areas in its report *Burkina Faso: a forgotten crisis*. The causes can be summarised as jihadist insecurity with attacks on civilians and institutions (groups affiliated with EIGS and JNIM), climate change through declining agricultural yields, and community crises. The consequences include the collapse of basic services (closed schools and health centres), food insecurity (3.5 million people in need of assistance (WFP, 2023)), social divisions (tensions between displaced persons and host communities), and humanitarian emergencies (difficulties in accessing supplies).

Regarding uprooting or cultural trauma, cultural uprooting, previously defined as a disruption of the cultural ecosystem, can be conceptualized more acutely through the prism of cultural trauma and recent studies on forced migration in West Africa.

Thus, cultural trauma is seen as a disruption of the Signifying framework. The notion of cultural trauma (Alexander et al., 2004) goes beyond a simple loss of bearings. It describes a process by which a group suffers fundamental damage to its identity and understanding of the world.

In Burkina Faso, this trauma is caused by terrorist and intercommunal violence. It destroys not only lives and property, but also the fabric of social trust and the moral frameworks that governed coexistence (Hagberg, 2021). There is thus a rupture with the “sacred ecosystem”: Forced displacement often means separation from family altars, ancestral lands, and ritual sites, which amounts to a spiritual amputation for many communities (Kiéthéga, 2022).

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Also, the sociocultural dimension of forced migration is experienced as an uncertain reprojected. Recent work (Ouédraogo & Loada, 2023; UNICEF & WATHI, 2022) highlights that the IDP crisis in Burkina Faso is a crisis of social reproduction. The impacts are the collapse of local moral economies. Thus, the systems of mutual aid, gift and counter-gift (the *naam* among the Moose) which structured economic and social life are dislocated. Cultural transmission is interrupted due to the impossibility of practicing initiation rites, telling stories about places of origin or mastering specific agro-pastoral knowledge, creating a gap in the chain of transmission between generations. Identity recompositions are under tension because in host sites, displaced people are forced to negotiate their identity, often in a subordinate position. The cultural capital (in the Bourdieusian sense) they possessed (the status of cultivator, holder of ancestral knowledge) is devalued, leading to symbolic marginalization in addition to material insecurity.

From this brief review, we can see that there are gaps in our understanding of the phenomenon, which has repercussions for how it is addressed and, above all, will be reflected in preparations for return. The main gap is that, when it comes to sustainable solutions, very few studies address post-conflict community reconciliation (a gap identified by Médecins Sans Frontières, 2023). In our view, it is specifically the cultural aspects of forced displacement and their implications for the likely return that are being royally ignored. We also note insufficient responses, despite the action of NGOs (e.g. MSF, Red Cross, UNHCR) through limited and, above all, targeted and even conditional funding, which does not offer the flexibility to integrate the analysis, understanding and consideration of the cultural aspects of the phenomenon of displacement.

To fill this scientific and epistemological gap, we have chosen to address the theme of the upheavals in the cultural life of internally displaced persons in the Centre-North region.

The Centre-North region of Burkina Faso is one of the areas most affected by terrorism, as its capital, Kaya, has been dubbed the country’s “capital of internally

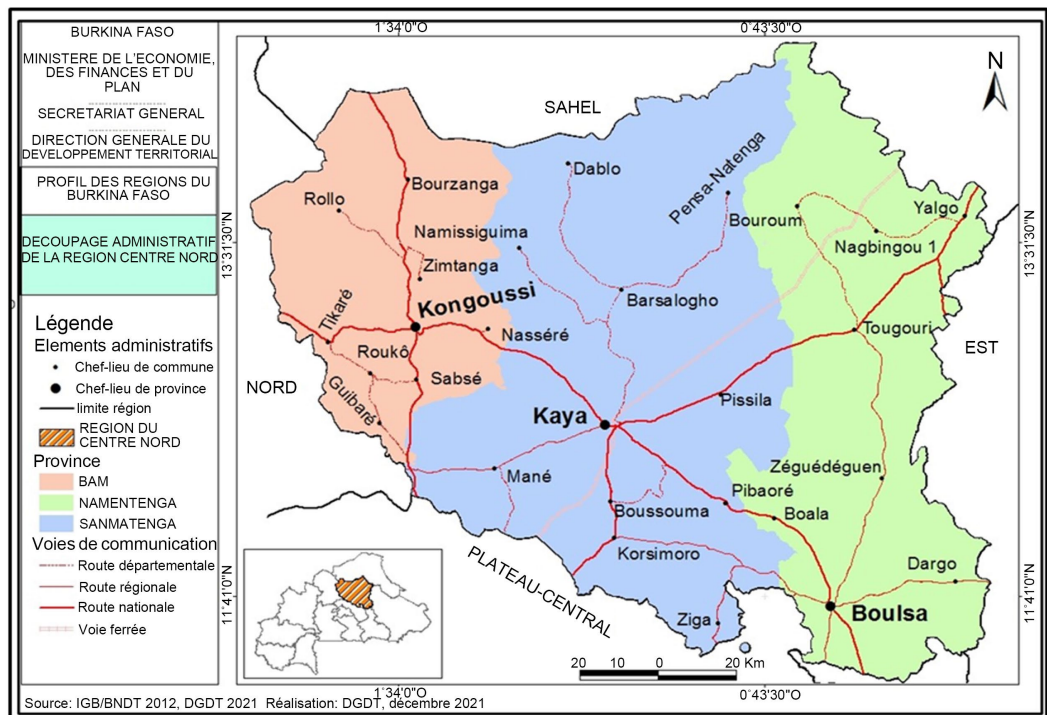
displaced persons”. The aim of our study is to analyse the various upheavals that occur in the daily cultural practices of displaced persons in order to understand their implications both in terms of their current experience and in terms of all the actions undertaken on their behalf. Indeed, one of the direct consequences of forced internal displacement is the phenomenon of upheavals experienced or observed in the individual or collective cultural life of those affected. Culture is a fundamental pillar for both the individual and the community, and when living conditions in a given environment do not allow for the full expression or exercise of this aspect of identity, an existential malaise ensues. As a result, all attempts to provide adequate care for displaced persons may seem futile if this cultural malaise is not taken into account, understood and analysed. Consequently, understanding this malaise could be key to the success of the three traditional durable solutions: return to the place of origin, local integration and reintegration. Our research question therefore asks: what significant upheavals have occurred in the cultural life of internally displaced persons in the Centre-Nord region and what impact do they have on their present and future experiences? Our main hypothesis is that the internal displacement of populations in the Centre-Nord region due to terrorism has caused various upheavals in cultural life that are impacting their present and future daily lives, which must be taken into account in care and return preparation measures.

2. Data Collection Methodology

2.1. Study Area: The Centre-Nord, a Region Rich in Culture But under Terrorist Control

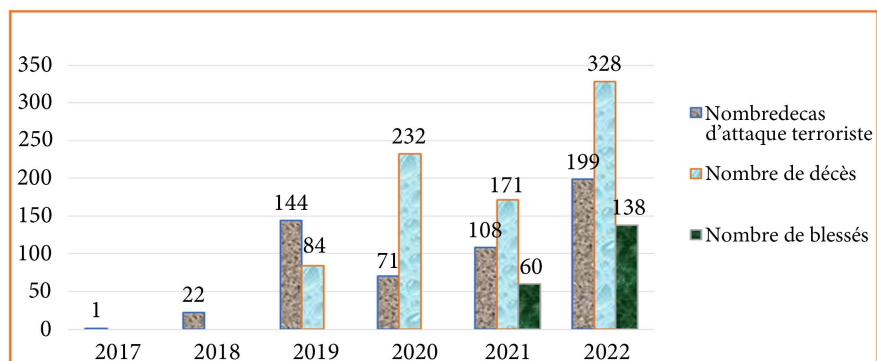
Map 1 shows that the Centre-North Region is rich in physical, historical and cultural diversity. According to quantitative and qualitative information contained in the 2018-2022 Regional Development Plan (PRD) and the governorate, the Centre-North Region covers an area of 20,890 km², representing 7% of the national territory. It comprises the provinces of Bam (4,041 km²), Namentenga (7,643 km²) and Sanmatenga (9,206 km²), whose capitals are Kongoussi, Boulsa and Kaya respectively, and which are subdivided into twenty-eight (28) departments, 28 municipalities and 968 villages (Kaya Governorate, 2023). This region is bordered to the north by the Sahel Region, to the south by the Central Plateau and Centre-East Regions, to the east by the East Region, and to the west by the North Region. The name “Bam” was given to the province after a village on the shore of the lake located ten (10) km north-east of Kongoussi, which was given by a Yarga (pedlar) to describe the expanse of water in the lake in the Moore language. The second province, “Namentenga”, means “land of Namende” in Moore, referring to the name of the founder of Boulsa in the 14th century. This is Naaba Namende. Namentenga, which is part of Moogo, falls under the sovereignty of Moogo Naaba of Ouagadougou. Its former occupants were the Kibsi or Dogon, the Fulse or Kurumba, the Saaba or Ninsi and the Bimba or Gulmanceba. The immigrants were the Yônyonse, the Yarcés, the Gigma or Yâm-weogo and the

Nobdamba. As for the province of Sanmatenga, it can be said that the first occupants of the area were the Yônyonse, the Nuni and later the Mossi, the Maransé, the Yarcés, the Fulani and the Hausa. Unfortunately, the region’s border with the Sahel, where the province of Soum has become the epicentre of armed actions claimed by the terrorist group Ansarul Islam created by radical preacher Ibrahim Malam Dicko (Barry, 2023), has made it even more vulnerable. Since 2017, the Centre-North region has experienced its first terrorist attack, followed by a wave of attacks, resulting in a humanitarian crisis and threats to the survival of state institutions. The table below depicts the situation of terrorist attacks recorded by the defence and security forces over the period 2017 to 202 (Figure 1).



Source: website of the ministry of territorial administration.

Map 1. Administrative division of the Centre-North.



Source: DREP/CNR, January 2023.

Figure 1. Evolution of attacks over the period 2017-2022.

Looking at this table, we can see that over the period 2017-2022, the region recorded more than 545 terrorist attacks, resulting in nearly 815 deaths and 198 injuries. The year 2022 saw the highest number of terrorist attacks, with 190. The continuation of this trend of terrorist attacks has led to massive population displacement.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

The methodological approach was essentially qualitative due to the primacy given to the cultural and anthropological aspects of terrorism and internal displacement. We used questionnaires, interviews, direct and participatory observations, life stories and experience sharing in the field as tools to collect often highly sensitive information. We also used documentary research to reinforce our approaches, based on readings on the phenomenon of displacement, terrorism, and the cultures and history of the study area. Our investigations lasted more than six months as they were carried out intermittently on several subjects at once. We often used guides to gain access to areas that were quite difficult to reach, such as huts where masks are stored and strictly reserved for initiates, and certain cultural and religious sites.

2.3. Sampling and Theoretical Framework of References

In total, our sample of respondents is estimated at 70 people. The selection of the 70 respondents was made solely according to the principle of purposive sampling. We proceeded by mapping out the people capable of speaking with us sincerely about these sensitive security issues, based on a solid trust between them and the respondent, and finally, on their recognized positive involvement in the fight against the scourge of insecurity. Thus, in each of the eight municipalities, we targeted and interviewed eight key individuals, including combatants, relatives of those involved, power holders or those who embody values, and local residents. The other seven respondents were renowned resource persons (traditional leaders, religious leaders, guides, etc.).

We surveyed the populations, resource persons and administrative officials of the municipalities of Boulsa, Boala, Kaya, Zéguédouin, Pissila, Zitenga, Rolo and Kongoussi. Our analysis grid is based on the symbolic current in the sociology of culture, whose field and social form Pierre Bourdieu describes as a vector of power.

As a reminder, according to Bourdieu's genetic structuralism, culture is not a set of disinterested or purely aesthetic practices. It is a structured system of relationships (the field) in which agents, endowed with unequal capital and driven by a socially acquired habitus, struggle to impose legitimate hierarchical principles. This struggle is an essential dimension of the reproduction of relations of social domination, because legitimate culture is an instrument of distinction and the reproduction of inequalities.

For Bourdieu, culture does not evolve in a social vacuum but within fields (lit-

erary, artistic, intellectual). The field is perceived as a social space structured by objective positions and relationships, a relatively autonomous “microcosm” within the social world, functioning as a field of forces and a field of struggles. There is the social form of the field, which is the very social form of cultural activity as a competitive space where agents (artists, writers, intellectuals) struggle for a monopoly on cultural authority and legitimacy. There is culture as a vector of power because it is a fundamental power issue, power being not only economic or political, but also symbolic. Holding cultural authority (defining what is “legitimate,” “distinguished,” “vulgar”) confers a power to consecrate and impose a worldview.

This reasoning scheme, applied to our case study, allows us to measure the consequences of the loss of this symbolic power by internally displaced persons. This means no longer possessing cultural capital (know-how, skills, possession of cultural goods and diplomas), nor symbolic capital (prestige, recognition, accumulated authority), and even less social capital (network of relationships).

Also, since the “social form” of individuals’ cultural practices is governed by habitus. This concept is important for Bourdieu and designates a system of lasting and transposable dispositions, acquired through socialization (particularly family and school), which generates practices and perceptions.

In a situation of internal displacement, what does this habitus become as a principle explaining that cultural tastes and practices (“culture”) are socially structured and function as class markers? It also operates an incorporation of collective (class) history into individual history, making cultural practices seem natural and obvious to the individual?

The symbolic-identity level (cultural trauma) with the collapse of universes of meaning, the rupture with sacred geography and ancestors, leading to profound disorientation. At the structural level (Field and Capital according to Bourdieu), displaced persons are thrown into a new “social game” (the field of the host area) where their previous cultural, social, and symbolic capital is largely invalidated, depriving them of their status and their power to act. Finally, at the level of social reproduction (Moral Economy and Transmission), the disintegration of the mechanisms that ensured the group’s cohesion and the perpetuation of its way of life threatens its long-term sustainability. By integrating these concepts, the analysis goes beyond the simple observation of “cultural loss” to capture the active dynamics of dismantling the deep structures that underpin the identity and social life of affected communities.

It emerges that for internally displaced persons, this uprooting manifests itself in the disintegration of the cultural systems specific to their communities of origin, following their violent expulsion from their lands and their dispersal to host areas with distinct social norms. It constitutes a fundamental dimension of their vulnerability, in the same way as physical or economic insecurity.

The various principles and theories of displaced populations are also used to understand the phenomenon. Our results are structured around the analytical

repertoire of the upheavals in the cultural life of displaced persons (I) and solutions for effective care marked by good local integration and reintegration (II).

3. Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

According to the *Observatory on Displacement Situations (2019)*, “*Conflict and violence in cities can cause massive displacement within and outside cities, and the damage and destruction caused can create long-term obstacles to return and other durable solutions.*” To help the many displaced persons in urban areas who find themselves isolated and marginalised, it is essential to forge links with host communities. Authorities should also adopt participatory approaches to decision-making by including displaced persons and host communities.

The UN report explains that by 2020, the number of internally displaced persons had reached a staggering 55 million and is still growing, hence the need to view the phenomenon not only in terms of numbers but above all in terms of human suffering. Indeed, displaced persons are driven from their homes, cut off from their livelihoods and separated from their support networks and family members. For many displaced persons, the prospect of rebuilding their lives remains out of reach for years, even generations. OCHA points to community clashes and jihadist groups in the border areas between central Mali, northern Burkina Faso and south-western Niger as triggers for a sharp increase in displacement. These introductory remarks highlight the urgency of addressing the causes and consequences of population displacement. We have chosen to explore the upheavals in the cultural life of displaced persons in the Centre-North. This necessarily involves compiling a list of these upheavals.

3.1. Analytical Inventory of the Upheavals in the Cultural Life of Displaced Persons

According to the *Observatory of Displacement Situations (2019)*, internally displaced persons are:

“persons or groups of persons who have been forced or compelled to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, human rights violations or natural or man-made disasters, or to avoid the effects thereof, and who have not crossed the internationally recognised borders of a State.

Similarly, according to the *Report of the UN Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (2020)*, OCHA (2019), the Centre-Nord region has experienced a massive displacement of its inhabitants due to insecurity caused by recurrent and violent attacks by terrorists. This scourge has affected all twenty-eight (28) municipalities in the region. As a result, the three (3) municipalities that constitute the provincial capitals of Kaya, Boulsa and Kongoussi have been the destinations for people coming from other municipalities. This has led to significant upheavals in the cultural life of the displaced persons in several respects.

That is why, in this section, we propose to assess these major upheavals. To do

so, it is first necessary to briefly describe the essential stages and events in the process that led to the emergence and expression of the crises experienced by the displaced persons.

3.1.1. Threats, Attacks, Killings: Real Upheavals in the Lives and Cultural Roots of Internally Displaced Persons

The first stage occurs before the displacement itself. It is marked by threats, attacks and killings that inevitably lead to people leaving for places they believe to be safer and more secure. From that moment on, the lives of displaced persons are turned upside down, with their living conditions and cultural roots completely uprooted. Their daily lives are filled with fear, insecurity, stress and anxiety. For example, mass killings create psychosis, cause a dramatic increase in the number of “*ku-miidu*”, or “red deaths”, and lead to “soul departures”. As the Centre-Nord region is mainly populated by Moose, the testimonies of those surveyed illustrate that these two phenomena weigh heavily on the peace and life of this community. Among the Moose, the phenomenon of “red deaths” is opposed to that of “deaths with positive connotations”. According to A. Degorce (2010), “*red deaths are those whose death was bad, that is, by accident, as a result of injury, by bite, or far from the village. These souls are condemned to wander, trapped in an intermediate state between the worlds of the living and the dead.*” In contrast, there are the “black deaths”, i.e. those who have had a good death. These are generally elderly people who leave behind descendants, those who have died as a result of illness, or those who have died near the village. The rites performed in honour of the black dead are very long and complex. In the event of a violent death, they bury the deceased discreetly and without pomp at the place of their death, and everyone returns home in silence. According to her, a death with positive connotations concerns people (men or women) who have succumbed to old age or illness, who have reached an advanced age and who have been able to “*fulfil their lives*”. Badini Boureima (1978) speaks of “*death that is accepted, more or less expected*”. In other words, this is what we would call a ‘natural death’, which is one that occurs according to traditional norms of place, time and manner, and ‘*a death is good when it leaves the victim time to eat their porridge and make their last recommendations to their family*’. Conversely, “red deaths” are accidental, violent deaths that shock and surprise the community. Without being exhaustive, deaths by hanging, accident, or any violence inflicted on a victim are classified in this category. These are deaths that were not preceded by the onset of illness. They are a source of real disruption for the entire community and the victims’ loved ones. To ward off the fate of their occurrence, the Moose bury the victims of “red deaths” in a hasty and negligent manner (burial at the site of the accident, without care for the corpse or a final visit to the house, no condolences or funerals, etc.). As for the phenomenon of “soul departures”, it manifests itself in an individual who has suffered some kind of shock and loses their socio-psychological and physical balance. They show signs of confusion, memory loss, saturation and stress. The Moose then conclude that their *tuule* (soul) has departed and is wandering. Sacrifices and treatments

are required to bring this part of the being back. Any negligence in providing rapid care will result in the death of the person concerned.

Returning to internally displaced persons, the majority have experienced this phenomenon and left their homes without a soul. Worse still, when one is running for survival and without a soul because one is disturbed by the shocks of “red death” and other disruptive cultural and psychological scourges, not even knowing one’s destination, how can one receive care to restore one’s soul?

Similarly, the fact that terrorists, who have come and are seen as enemies, parade and walk on the land of the ancestors of the displaced persons is perceived by the latter as a dishonour.

Finally, forced departures to an unknown land are a form of death, since, according to Edmond Haraucourt (1890) in *Rondel de l’adieu*¹, “*To leave is to die a little, it is to die to what one loves: one leaves a little of oneself behind, at all times and in all places*”. For displaced persons, it means leaving their homeland and, above all, often the place where their “*placenta is buried*”. Culturally, among the Moose, the place where one is born is designated by this expression and symbolises a sacred and symbolic place for each individual. Being forced to abandon it under the yoke of aggressors is not only a manifestation of cultural uprooting but also a dishonour, because a proverb in Moore (the language of the Moose) says: “*burkin saka kuum n zoe yande*”, “*a man of integrity prefers death to shame*”.

The second stage is marked by an exodus into the unknown, an uncertain welcome and settlement in other places. Internally displaced persons are now subjected to living conditions outside their social, family and, above all, cultural cocoon. As a result, their lives are disrupted. This is punctuated above all by dependence, begging and humiliation. Dependency because they can no longer do anything for themselves without the help of others. They are beggars in the sense that if the local population and support structures do not lend them a hand, they have nothing to eat. As for frustrations, they are diverse and stem from this extreme dependency. For example, the dignity of husbands and fathers is violated because they cannot properly fulfil their roles and statuses. One displaced person recounts: “*I cannot even fulfil my marital duties because of the promiscuity. Many displaced couples were forced to go to open spaces at night to fulfil their need for intimacy, which exposed them to indecent assault. It is a real frustration.*”

The third stage refers to the destruction of the cultural substrates of displaced persons. Under these conditions, living without a cultural life is tantamount to merely scraping by. They are outside their cultural homeland and territory. Often, they even live without a leader or spiritual or religious guide, because they themselves have been displaced and are searching for themselves. What would life be like for a man or woman who follows a traditional religion or believes in a revealed religion if he or she lived far away from fetishes, deities, sacred and venerated sites, or even far from his or her church, temple, or mosque?

¹<https://www.mon-poeme.fr/poeme-partir-cest-mourir-un-peu/> (The French Republic’s cultural life): accessed on 08/01/2025.

The consequence of all this disorganisation is the onset of the fourth stage. This involves difficult integration into the host communities due to the total impracticability of cultural life. Internally displaced persons live or scrape by because they have been torn from their cultural biotope. In their host community, they do not have access to places of worship and religious artefacts because it is impossible for them to have the same cultural rights as the indigenous population. As the Moaaga proverb illustrates so well, “Raog sâh kaos koome, a pa lebg yêbng yee” (*wood will never become a caiman, even after a long stay in water*).

After listing these upheavals, they must be analysed in depth to examine their various implications.

3.1.2. Analysis of the Upheavals in the Cultural Life of Internally Displaced Persons

In order to conclude on the upheavals caused by internal population displacement on a cultural level, it is necessary to clarify certain important concepts. We note that cultural life² refers to: “*the collective expression of a society’s values, beliefs and artistic achievements through various forms such as literature, art, music and philosophy*”. It is also important to revisit the definition of the concept of culture, as it is central to this study. Thus, “*in its broadest role, culture can now be considered as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It encompasses, in addition to the arts and letters, ways of life, fundamental human rights, value systems, traditions and beliefs*” (UNESCO, 2004).

Our study shows that the disruption to the cultural life of displaced persons is diverse and multifaceted. According to E. Schein (1991), culture refers to “*the way in which a group of people solves its problems*”. The most interesting aspect of his reflections is his reminder that culture is made up of overlapping layers. The first layer is the surface layer, or observable culture, which is the most apparent. It consists of language, food, buildings, houses, monuments, etc. Next is the middle layer, which consists of the norms and values of a group of individuals. Norms are what a group generally accepts as right or wrong. Values, on the other hand, define the aspiration to good or evil and serve as criteria for choosing between several possibilities. Finally, the core of culture covers assumptions about existence and, more specifically, how a group has organised itself over time to cope with its environment and ensure its survival. Following this logic, we can cite the upheavals in the lifestyles of displaced persons in the first layer, which relate to the observable layer.

1) Upheavals in the lifestyles of displaced persons: farming methods, eating habits and clothing

Among the factors that define the identity of a given community, farming, cul-

²[https://www.unesco.org/fr/sustainable-development/culture#:~:text=1982.%20La%20premi%C3%A8re%20Conf%C3%A9rence%20mondiale%20de%20l'UNESCO,un%20groupe%20social%20C2%BB.%20\(D%C3%A9claration%20de%20Mexico](https://www.unesco.org/fr/sustainable-development/culture#:~:text=1982.%20La%20premi%C3%A8re%20Conf%C3%A9rence%20mondiale%20de%20l'UNESCO,un%20groupe%20social%20C2%BB.%20(D%C3%A9claration%20de%20Mexico), accessed on 14/01/2024.

inary and dietary practices and clothing styles feature prominently. As the study area is predominantly Moaaga and rural, we can conclude that culinary and dietary practices and habits are strongly aligned with this. In terms of food, to, a flour-based dish made from sorghum, millet and maize, is the staple daily meal. Rice, cowpeas, tubers and vegetables come second. Unfortunately, due to insecurity, the cultivation of these species, their availability and access to them are becoming problematic and rare. For example, the following **Table 1** shows the amount of arable land lost as a result of terrorism.

Table 1. Area lost due to insecurity (ha).

Provinces	Sorghum	Millet	Maize	Rice	Groundnuts	Cowpea	Market gardening	Total
Bam	4,696.70	6,443.39	614.84	14.66	732.84	2,169.02	1,985.00	16,656.44
Namentenga	1,876.60	1,309.15	138.50	263.50	358.75	516.65	178.50	4,641.65
Sanmatenga	8,684.00	1,888.00	342	433	1,112.00	2,560.00	206	15,235.00
Total Region	15,257.30	9,640.54	1,095.34	711.16	2,203.59	5,245.67	2,369.50	36,533.09

Source: Statistics; DRARAH-CNR, 2021.

As a result, looking at this table, we note that the loss of territory due to terrorism prevents people from practising agriculture. However, in the Centre-North, agriculture is an endogenous rain-fed activity mainly focused on cereal crops, employing more than 80% of the working population. The region's exploitable potential, estimated at 749,973 hectares (ha) and 3,870 ha of lowlands developed in 2022, collapsed with the bans on cultivating tall species (millet, maize, rice and others) in 2023 and 2024. Only small-scale crops (peanuts, peas) and creeping crops (cowpeas, squash) are permitted. These bans exacerbate the loss of arable land, estimated in 2021 at 36,533.09 ha, or 46% in Bam, 13% in Namentenga and 41% in Sanmatenga. (DRARAH-CNR, 2021).

When populations are displaced to large centres due to terrorism, they no longer have access to a range of foodstuffs. They live in precarious conditions and eat whatever they can get their hands on. As a result, to made from sorghum or millet, or meals derived from these species, become non-existent. On the contrary, displaced persons are assisted through food donations that are often far removed from their usual dietary habits. For example, white corn and imported rice are the most readily available. As one respondent described, "*a farmer who is used to eating tô and is forced to eat poorly seasoned white rice every day due to a lack of adequate condiments no longer eats for pleasure but just to ensure survival*".

Even the tools and ingredients used to prepare meals are changing. Firewood, which used to be collected in the bush or around the concessions, is now inaccessible. Either it has to be paid for or it has to be collected from far away (see **Photo 1**). Similarly, well water, which was not saleable in the village, has become a fortune in the displacement areas. As proof, water towers for sale are proliferating and shopkeepers are doing good business. Condiments and ingredients for cooking are a luxury for displaced persons.

Similarly, in terms of clothing, the vanity of pretty braids and parade clothes no longer exists in displacement situations. Displaced persons wear makeshift clothing because some were unable to take a suitcase with them when they fled, and it is almost impossible to (re)build a wardrobe worthy of the name. Very often, it is the goodwill of others or social services that provide some of the recycled clothing.



Photo 1. Returning to search for firewood for displaced persons in the town of Boulsa.

It illustrates the quest for firewood by the people displaced from the town of Boulsa

2) Destruction and degradation of heritage and abandonment of cultural practices

When terrorists attack people in villages, there is significant direct damage to cultural heritage and multiple consequences for the communities of holders, practitioners and followers. We have recorded the complete destruction of cultural property such as cultural and religious sites, fetishes and altars, and traditional healing places and sites in the communes of Dablo, Baola, Rolo, Boulsa, etc.

However, as soon as these cultural properties and sites are destroyed or become inaccessible, a phenomenon of abandonment of cultural practices takes hold, akin to a second form of terrorism, as the individuals who were affiliated with them become disoriented, mistreated and terrorised in a psychological and cultural sense. The custodians of these sacred and ritual sites are forced to flee for their survival and are unable to take their possessions with them, let alone continue to practise the rituals associated with them. After fleeing to the cities, it became virtually impossible for followers and consumers of cultural products to find the new locations of the custodians of these goods, such as geomancers (baagba), diviners, healers and traditional priests, as testified by a displaced person from Boulsa. For him, *“curing your illness, consulting diviners to find solutions to ward off a curse on your family, protecting yourself from threats and attacks from evil tongues and sorcerers becomes almost impossible because you are here and your diviner,*

healer and protector has been displaced to Kaya or even to an unknown location”.

Other consequences include the impossibility of performing rites and celebrations marking the end of harvests, the beginning of the season, expiatory rites and requests for protection, as these cannot be performed far from the designated locations. As Dr Vincent Sedogo (interviewed as part of this study) explains: “*The agricultural activities of rural Moose were punctuated by rites and customs involving sacrifices and libations to the spirits of the earth and ancestors such as zaeenga, sakuré, tangana, beng-maasa, regembia, ki-toega, Ki-noodo, etc.*” None of this is possible in a situation of displacement.

Finally, the destruction of symbolic places and the abandonment of homes and villages disrupt the holding of certain ceremonies that are crucial for communities and individuals. Cases of engagements, marriages, traditional baptisms and funerals were mentioned during interviews with displaced persons. Once individuals are no longer in their villages and concessions, these ceremonies are difficult to organise because very important elements are missing to ensure that they are proper and meaningful. Here is the testimony of the son of a deceased displaced woman from a village in the commune of Boulssa: “*Even to ensure a dignified and normal funeral, we had problems. As the chief’s wife, my mother’s funeral should have been atypical, punctuated with rites and symbolic acts referring to her place of life, such as her hut, her personal belongings and her village (royal cemetery). Unfortunately, we are here as displaced persons and, worse still, my mother is being cared for by her own family. She died there. How can we respect the rites that should be performed at her home, in her hut, at her husband’s house? We had to settle for a hastily arranged, low-cost funeral. It’s no one’s fault. But we are still concerned about whether she will be able to rest with her ancestors with such an atypical ceremony.*”

The situation becomes more complicated if displaced village chiefs die in their places of refuge during displacement, i.e. outside their palaces. Here too, many rites (announcement of death, preparations, request for fadgo, etc.) are difficult to perform because the circumstances are not favourable.

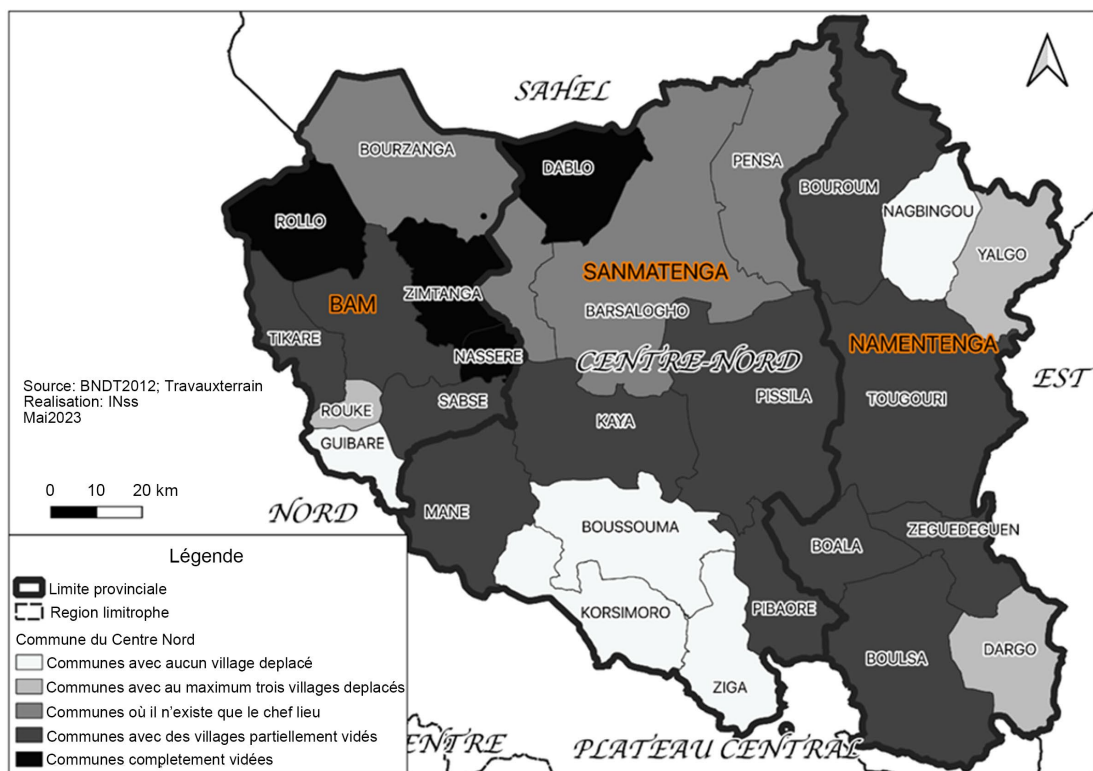
The same applies to traditional weddings. Not all stages of various ceremonies can be performed when travelling. In both cases, traditional funerals and weddings, the urban environment and security context do not allow for traditional celebrations and, above all, night-time entertainment. People are required to comply with specific times for gatherings. Outside these times, they face penalties.

It appears that internally displaced persons live in reception areas, but their cultural existence and souls remain in their villages. This indicates real upheaval, as individuals are without their cultural roots. Similarly, village chiefs and heritage holders are without the attributes of their power and can no longer act as bulwarks or resources for their populations. This leaves everyone in a helpless situation. Serious questions about the well-being of displaced persons are therefore being asked with urgency.

3) Disruption to traditional and religious life: emirs, sheikhs, priests,

imams, pastors and traditional chiefs displaced

As we mentioned earlier, displacement has serious consequences for the lives of communities. When populations are threatened and displaced, the resource persons who hold customary, traditional and religious authority, such as the *Nanamse* (traditional and customary chiefs), priests, catechists, emirs, sheikhs and pastors, are also and above all victims. These prominent figures are prime targets for terrorists who, in order to destroy their proximity to the population and, above all, to reduce their ability to dissuade people from joining their deadly and unjust cause, attempt to eliminate them in order to impose their will. Beyond the physical elimination of these leaders, terrorism and displacement strip them of their communities, their territories and, therefore, their influence.



Source: Author of the article.

Map 2. Situation of displacement of traditional/customary and religious leaders in the Centre-North region.

A small list of physical attacks can be drawn up by way of illustration. The newspaper *lefaso.net* ([Lefaso.net](http://lefaso.net), 19 March 2023) reports that His Excellency Hamadou Hamadoun Dicko, Emir of Baraboulé in Soum, a commune adjacent to the Centre-Nord, had to flee his locality because of terrorism and has been living in exile in Ouagadougou for seven years. Like him, several imams, sheikhs and emirs in the area under study have fled threats and are now outside their former territories.

In mid-March 2019, Abbé Joël Yougbaré (Cath-Info, 2019), parish priest of Djibo in the north of the country, was abducted by armed individuals. His body was found near Djibo, according to residents of the town, although the Catholic

Church, which had reported his disappearance, has not confirmed this information. In addition, five worshippers and a pastor were killed by jihadists (Cath-Info, 2019) on Sunday 28 April 2019 in a Protestant church in the province of Soum, specifically in Silgadji. Six people, including a priest, were also killed on Sunday 12 May 2019 during an attack on a Catholic church in Dablo (AFP, 2019a), a commune in the province of Sanmatenga, in north-central Burkina Faso. Similarly, on 1 January 2019, “unidentified armed individuals attacked (...) the village of Yirgou and killed six people, including the village chief” (AFP, 4 January 2019b). This attack was followed by inter-community reprisals in Yirgou (46 dead), a village in the municipality of Barsalogo.

In addition, Sister Suellen Tennyson, an American national, was kidnapped on the night of 4 to 5 April 2022 in the commune of Yalgo in Namentenga.

Finally, an attack on the church in Nagbingou in Namentenga took place in January 2023, followed by the burning of some of the chapel’s equipment and threats to the faithful. All religious communities have been affected.

The second case involves the mass displacement of these leaders fleeing terrorism. **Map 2** further illustrates this situation, which has become very worrying in that it compromises the normal and harmonious functioning of community cultural life.

Looking at the map, five (5) situations can be identified: Communes with no displaced villages or leaders (5), communes with a maximum of three displaced villages and leaders (4), communes where only the chief town and many leaders have been displaced (4), communes with partially emptied villages and many displaced leaders (12), and communes that have been completely emptied and therefore have all their leaders displaced (3). We conclude that the phenomenon of chief displacement is a reality and a worrying situation that concerns everyone.

Taking the example of traditional chiefs alone, for the Samnaaba³ of Bousma, among the Moose, the chief is divine in essence, which is why he is called the *Kiendwende* King, meaning that he returns only to God. This indicates that he recognises only the authority of God. After God, he is *next*: “*We can deduce that it is God who sent the chieftom to govern men, but with a certain fairness and righteousness based on rules that could be described as a constitution, passed down from generation to generation.*” By focusing on the role and place of traditional and customary chieftom, this description also highlights the risks and consequences of the vacuum created by the displacement of chiefs in areas where terrorism reigns. Again with regard to traditional and customary chieftainship, we realise that the absence of the chief disrupts the community, which is genuinely limited in its ability to carry out certain activities and actions. Worse still, when the chief is absent from his territory at the same time as his population, and moreover for reasons of forced displacement, no political or customary administration is yet possible. No territorial, cultural or heritage reference points can be established. Thus, there can be no hope of ensuring a sense of belonging to the same culture, to a single and harmonious community in

³Interview with the Samnaaba of Bousma, Minister of the King of Bousma in the Centre-North, on 15 May 2023 in Ouagadougou at his office at 5 p.m.

terms of symbols, beliefs and material conditions. As can be seen in the traditional institution of chieftdom, the same can be extrapolated to other aspects of culture, such as the Muslim, Catholic, Protestant and traditional religions. The displacement of populations causes them to lose their spatial control and influence over behaviour, individual and collective consciousness, in short, over the lives of their followers. Consequently, the upheavals can be measured in terms of the degree of disarray, imbalance and socio-cultural reorientation of the masters and disciplines. The same realities are also apparent in the areas of tourism, hotels and cultural events.

4) Terrorism and internal displacement: the executioners of cultural products in the Centre-North

The Centre-North was a region renowned for its wealth and cultural potential. Cultural products are characterised by their low functionality in the sense that their value is based on symbolic, hedonistic and aesthetic dimensions. According to the [Digital Institute \(2014\)](#), cultural products can be divided into four main categories of artistic expression, production and dissemination: cultural services (heritage, museums and visual arts, live performances), the written word (book publishing, press), sound (phonogram publishing, radio) and images (cinema, television).

For this study, we will refer to data collected on cultural potential ([Kouraogo, 2019](#)) in the Centre-North region. It appears that three (3) categories of goods can be used to measure cultural and tourist offerings.

Firstly, there are cultural events in the form of markets, rituals, shopping streets, traditional dances, popular entertainment, performing arts competitions, performances by modern artists, and exhibitions and sales of handicrafts ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2. Summary table of cultural events by province in the Centre-North region.

Province	Events	Observations
Sanmentenga	08	1 with national significance
Bam	15	2 with medium reach
Namentenga	10	No significance
Total	33	

Source: author of the article.

Secondly, in terms of tourism potential, we have those awaiting development ([Table 3](#)).

Table 3. Summary the tourism potential of the Centre-North region

Provinces	Potential	Observations
Bam	08	None developed
Namentanga	08	None valued
Sanmentenga	12	2
Total	28	

Source: author of the article. NB: only the Kaya Museum (national heritage list) and the Tiwèga kilns (world heritage list) can be considered to be promoted, the other 26 properties are neglected.

Thirdly, we consider the region's hotels, which contribute to the promotion of sites and events. The following **Table 4** illustrates the reality.

Table 4. Summary table of accommodation capacity in the Centre-North region.

Provinces	Number of rooms	Observations
Bam	187	None
Namentenga	71	None
Sanmentenga	309	3 large 3-star hotels
Total	568	

Source: author of the article.

These 3 successive tables show the very rich cultural and tourist offerings of the region before the outbreak of the scourge of terrorism. Unfortunately, terrorist acts and internal displacement have had a devastating impact on these cultural products. They have either prevented cultural events from taking place, with the dispersion of actors and the abandonment of sites, or destroyed cultural and religious sites and attractions. For example, while in 2022 the region had forty-one (41) cultural events and twenty-five (25) tourist sites and attractions, ten (10) of which were promoted, today they are all struggling to survive for several reasons, mainly related to security issues. Only one, Kaya-Nooma, was able to be held in the region between 2020 and 2024. As for hotels, the region had two (02) classified hotels, fifteen (15) unclassified hotels, twenty-seven (27) hostels, two (02) campsites and four (04) residences. Nowadays, it is difficult to ensure optimal functioning because terrorist attacks and mass displacement have completely disrupted the vitality of these cultural productions. In the same vein, social cohesion, built sparingly over centuries thanks to the genius of our ancestors, is being called into question.

5) Undermining of social cohesion and Burkinabe cultural values: fertile ground for terrorism

As we (Kouraogo, 2020) repeatedly emphasised in 2020, “*When the cultural foundations of social cohesion and core values are severely tested, as is the case in Burkina Faso, all prospects for development become virtually non-existent.*”

Exploiting every possible source of division among the Burkinabe, terrorists are working in two ways. In the Centre-North, for example, they are eroding social cohesion by inciting, through carefully calculated and deliberate acts, community conflicts, religious mistrust and religious opposition. The tragedy in Yirgou mentioned above and others in the villages of Barga-Peulh and Dinguila-Peulh illustrate these scenarios. In reality, the Fulani community in these villages has suffered attacks by self-defence groups in retaliation for jihadist-d actions in which the Fulani are accused of participating. As a result, community conflicts have arisen, reawakening tensions, religious mistrust and religious opposition. The Burkinabe model of religious tolerance, inherited from a “deep-rooted religious pluralism”, has been shaken. Gradually, we are witnessing the “ethnisation” of

terrorism and opposition between ethnic groups. Yet the Fulani and Maaaga have always lived and coexisted together, sharing cultures and spaces without any major clashes. As evidence of this, in every Maaaga village there is a Fulani neighbourhood, such as Bakuin Moose/Bakuin Fulani, Sanbin Moose/Sanbin Fulani, and Foubè Fulani/Foubè Moose, as attested by a municipal authority. There is also an ethnic subgroup called Fulani-Moose or Silmimoose in the Maaaga community, symbolising the marriage ties between these communities. The divide has been so deep and dangerous that many initiatives to restore the friendly atmosphere of yesteryear have been launched under the leadership of traditional, customary and religious leaders, with a view to mediating for social cohesion (Sambuó, 2022).

This reality on the ground regarding cohesion and values will weigh heavily on the displaced. In their place of refuge, they are paying a heavy price for the negative repercussions of these upheavals.

In terms of values, it was well known that the Burkinabe people were characterised, defined and recognised by a number of principles, customs and traditions that were dear to all. These values include respect, solidarity, tolerance, integrity, hard work, honesty, fraternity, courage, hospitality, humility, honour, sobriety and altruism.

However, terrorism will lead to some of these values being called into question.

It seems to be becoming a vital necessity to scale back the expression of these values in order to ensure survival. As a result, hospitality is being compromised in a context of terrorism that sees foreigners as a threat and, above all, a danger, contrary to the words of Ki-Zerbo, for whom “*having a stranger in your home was a blessing*”. Solidarity, which imposes reciprocal duties between members of a society and requires a kind of generosity, has also suffered setbacks due to the long duration of terrorism, which breaks momentum and depletes resources. Wanting to help nine poor people, one becomes the tenth, which is now becoming a rule of conduct. As for tolerance, it is crumbling appallingly among the Burkinabe, who are becoming increasingly belligerent, and one gets the impression that the springtime of physical and verbal violence is in full swing. There are some issues with the virtue of courage. It is true that terrorists come with sophisticated means of combat and that it would be pointless for ordinary people to try to confront them practically empty-handed, but the fact that men are constantly fleeing to save themselves and abandoning their wives and children proves that there is a lack of even minimums for organising a defence. This is contrary to our traditions and history, which teach us how our ancestors defended themselves with whatever means they had at their disposal.

3.2. What Are the Solutions for Effective Care: Good Local Integration and Reintegration?

The ideal outcome for any forced displacement of population is the effective return of the victims to their homes with a view to resuming a normal life on the

land of their parents and ancestors and among their loved ones. But before that and in the absence of such a return, we want to improve the reception and settlement of displaced persons in order to facilitate this return.

From all the observations made, we have come to the conclusion that the successful return of displaced persons must be prepared at the time of displacement. To this end, on a cultural level, we believe that several actions will help to better prepare for this.

3.2.1. Welcome Displaced Persons to Accommodation Sites without Separating Them from the Rest of Their Culture that Follows Them

It has become apparent that in the race against death and for survival, many cultural assets have been left behind or even destroyed. However, some have been taken to the reception sites. We believe that, in addition to working to improve housing conditions, food provision, access to drinking water and healthy, income-generating activities, it is necessary to ensure the continuity of cultural life for displaced persons. It is therefore desirable to set up sites for storing objects, fetishes and cultural and religious artefacts. In practical terms, a kind of spontaneous museum could be set up to house these items. This would help to protect them from the elements and therefore from deterioration. Above all, this makeshift museum would ensure that displaced persons remain close to their cultural property. Taking the example of the best-known and most widely used cultural property in the villages of Zambanga, Bonaam, Gaouga, Belga and even other municipalities (Zeguédégouin, Dargo and Boala), namely masks, these ended up in Boulsa, the capital, during the mass displacement. They were reportedly crammed into bags and exposed to rain, sun and wind. If there had been infrastructure in place to recover and preserve them, their owners would not have hesitated to entrust them to it, as they would have been sure to find them in better condition thanks to proper preservation.

Therefore, following the same logic, it would be beneficial to provide spaces dedicated to traditional healing, consultations with diviners, and places of worship. For revealed religions, finding places of worship and prayer is not a major concern, as displaced persons can join existing mosques and churches. However, for traditional religions, integration is virtually impossible.

For effective traditional care, it is necessary to create clean consultation and treatment spaces that respect basic hygiene rules. Furthermore, the traditional practitioners who will practice in these dedicated spaces must be trained not only in hygiene compliance but also, and above all, in diagnosis and the dosage of medications they administer to patients. Indeed, the main criticisms made of traditional Burkinabe medicine revolve around these three issues: lack of minimum hygiene in the places of service, in the products administered (roots, leaves, tree bark), the bad diagnosis which calls for bad treatment because a single medicine can claim to treat a dozen diseases. Finally, the hypothetical equation of dosage must be resolved. Traditional healers often force-feed the sick decoctions, powders which often become real poisons.

In addition, providing cultural activities through the production of shows would be a good way to maintain cultural dynamics. Indeed, if displaced persons are settled according to geographical and cultural areas, traditional music and dance shows, specifically from the territories, storytelling sessions, legends and historical reminders, and language practice are effective ways of keeping displaced persons immersed in their culture and preventing adults and children from losing their socio-cultural identity, with a high risk of disorientation towards learning other cultures, especially dangerous modern and worldly ones.

Finally, for displaced persons, having the facilities and opportunities to organise dignified funeral, wedding and burial ceremonies at reception sites is already a victory against cultural uprooting. As we noted above, the reception sites and conditions do not offer the possibility of conducting ceremonies properly. However, these ceremonies are very important for the lives of displaced persons. Births, deaths and marriages occur at the place of displacement and will occur upon return. Traditionally, if certain ceremonies are botched, even in times of return and peace, subsequent ceremonies can no longer be properly organised. *“Tradition knows no exceptions. It is unique and unanimous for all,”* as one guardian of traditions observes. Taking the example of a hastily arranged funeral for an elder during displacement, he explains: *“When we return to the village, other funerals can only be carried out in a hasty manner as well, otherwise the ancestors will accuse us of being impartial and may punish us.” On the other hand, if we make an effort in the places of displacement to hold funerals that are acceptable in terms of organisation and richness of ritual execution, the others that will take place in the villages after the displacement will be approved by our ancestors in the after-life.”*

3.2.2. Welcoming Displaced Persons in Municipalities by Geographical and Cultural Areas

In order to maintain cultural homogeneity in the event of displacement, to ensure continuity in the cultural practices of communities and, above all, to maintain solidarity and cohesion among displaced persons from the same area, it is imperative to welcome them in accordance with this recommendation. Indeed, when victims of attacks arrive at reception centres, the urgent need to provide shelter means that they are gathered together haphazardly and dispersed among makeshift sites and shelters. Those who have host families also go there, and a breakdown in ties between members of the same family or neighbourhood begins to emerge. The displaced community becomes a “melting pot” without cultural or social coherence. It does not form a culturally solid group that used to share the same joys and sorrows, the same dreams and social representations. To ensure the maintenance of social and cultural cohesion, one solution is to accommodate displaced persons by geographical and cultural areas. This approach has the advantage of bringing together people who shared the same cultural and religious beliefs and practices, enabling them to continue what they did together in their villages. This is the case in certain displacement sites in Kaya and Kongoussi,

which are home to entire villages, including all their various chiefs and spiritual leaders. In this case, displacement seems to be a change of location without breaking ties and overall habits. If we refer to the analyses made by the Ouidi naaba of Zitenga (Kouraogo, 2023) on the consequences of the displacement of traditional and customary chiefs, three situations stand out. The first involves populations displaced to another locality but who have remained as a village entity. The village remains intact: *“From then on, the chief has a territory, which is the site, and its population. He continues his political and administrative management, but customary management becomes difficult because the deities are absent. Despite everything, he can perform rituals or send people to the village to carry out these important cultural practices,”* he recalls. This situation is better than the other two, where a chief has been displaced, as has his population, but he is not with his people. In this case, he cannot manage his region administratively or customarily. In the third case, a displaced chief, even if hierarchically superior to the chief of the host village, remains under the latter’s control because the displaced chief is supposed to be on leave. This example of chiefs and the consequences of their displacement on cultural practices illustrates the need to settle displaced persons by geographical and cultural area.

The consequence of all these situations is the existence of negative cultural and social interactions between displaced persons and host communities.

Indeed, cultural differences or similarities have an impact on the integration process and the feeling of being uprooted. Even within the same cultural space, cultural practices, values, and rituals are not homogeneous. They always depend on family and community customs. Especially in cases of forced displacement that uproots a family community to relocate it to another community that does not share the same cultural references, the breakup rarely takes hold. It can work if the two groups (host and host) already maintain proven cultural similarities, such as ways of marrying, burying the dead, paying homage to ancestors, educating their children, and living with others. If these cultural aspects were diametrically opposed or disharmonious, interactions would remain difficult and would be experienced or perceived as torture for the displaced. As a result, integration into the new space would become almost impossible, and the feeling of uprooting would intensify.

3.2.3. In the Action Plan for the Return of Displaced Persons, Cultural Preparations Must Not Be Overlooked

Based on certain experiences observed in the field, in order to prepare for the return of internally displaced persons, the fulfilment of security conditions, the existence of minimum vital conditions such as functioning health centres, the availability of drinking water, the presence of places and spaces for selling and buying goods, and the reopening of schools are sufficient to initiate the resettlement process. However, while we believe that these material conditions are necessary, the immaterial conditions, which are part of the superstructure, are also important. At this level, there are many different types of actions that can be taken.

Firstly, encouragement and awareness-raising actions are needed through discussion sessions on cultural and religious practices. Internally displaced persons are shaken physically, psychologically, culturally and religiously. As a result, their beliefs and representations of these practices are fraught with doubt. In concrete terms, they are asking legitimate questions about the effectiveness and even the veracity of the cultural ‘things’ they used to defend and protect themselves, because why were they unable to protect them and leave them in the hands of ‘*little terrorists who came and mistreated them on their own land to the point of driving them out*’, as one respondent indignantly put it.

Next, it would be useful to include in the preparations for return a mystical and cultural preparation of the places of residence. This is necessary because it is not appropriate to return after one or more years away from one’s home or village, where all or most of one’s cultural roots remain, without any formalities. Given that nature abhors a vacuum and, above all, that the places have been defiled by terrorist practices and even that corpses have decomposed in houses, villages and everywhere else, sacrifices and expiatory rites must necessarily be performed before returning to one’s home. For heads of families, buud-kaasma, and village chiefs who were displaced, it is essential to purify the premises before resettling. Several of them who neglected this preparatory step returned immediately but died as a result, as reported by a respondent from Boala.

In addition, to reassure displaced persons wishing to return and followers of all religions that their faith and beliefs are guaranteed, it is necessary to help rebuild altars, places of sacrifice and prayer to give new cultural life. With terrorism and displacement, these sacred places have often been abandoned or even desecrated, as in the case of the bodies found in a mosque in a village 7 km from the town of Boulsa in Namentenga. The altars and other places are in ruins. Their reconstruction is a symbol of cultural resurrection and a victory over the obscurantism that had taken hold of the village, as it will contribute to greater serenity for the new arrivals.

Finally, in the same vein, those who animate these spaces, who are the guardians of traditions and faith, have seen their image tarnished by the repercussions of acts of terrorism, especially during displacement. Thus, chiefs, land chiefs, diviners, healers, and religious leaders have been mistreated in front of their people and followers. To repair this damage and help restore their reputation, NGOs, associations and humanitarian organisations can get involved in rebuilding their positive image to strengthen their authority and responsibilities, as experience has shown that they often have more influence over the population than the public administration. As proof, here is the testimony of the parish priest of Yalgo: “*Traditional and religious leaders play various roles, the most essential of which may be the spiritual role, as they intercede between God and men by organising and leading prayers and sacrifices, and the moral and ethical role through their influence on the behaviour, actions and deeds of their followers and adherents in accordance with the principles laid down by customs and traditions and according*

to the will of God and the guidelines specific to each religion. They also play a psychological role by listening to people, supporting them and helping to resolve the problems of the population in general. In addition, their social role is embodied in their influence on relations between different sections of the population and in their constant quest for social cohesion by promoting tolerance between these different sections. Finally, they play a role in preaching, governance and administration, as religious leaders interpret the holy books specific to each religion and traditional and customary leaders govern and administer communities through customs and traditions.

In concrete terms, helping these dignitaries to rebuild their palaces, altars, churches, mosques and temples is a positive contribution to strengthening cultural redemption.

3.2.4. A Plea for Governments and Partners to Take Cultural Considerations into Account When Providing Care for Displaced Persons and Facilitating Their Return

From our numerous exchanges with various stakeholders from public administrations, non-governmental organisations and technical and financial partners (TFPs), it appears that cultural aspects such as those discussed here are very rarely addressed in the care of displaced persons in Burkina Faso in general and in the Centre-North region in particular. Indeed, in their financial plans (budgets, programmes, activities and actions) and approaches, donors do not include cultural parameters relating to displaced persons. Culture is excluded from what is considered vital for displaced persons. This has consequences for the holistic treatment of the phenomenon of population displacement and its many repercussions. To address this, we advocate, first, that importance be given to the cultural difficulties experienced by displaced persons and that these be integrated into the overall problems experienced. Second, that a list of these cultural difficulties be compiled and that they be treated in the same way as problems relating to food, water, housing, employment and children's education. Finally, it would be wise to allocate part of the budget to addressing these cultural issues that are inherent to their lives, but above all to allow flexibility in the management of funds provided by partners so that it is possible to redirect part of the funds to the reconstruction of collective cultural symbols and identities, the foundation on which other aspects are built.

4. Conclusion

Setting out to analyse the various upheavals affecting the daily cultural practices of displaced persons in the Centre-North, with a research question focusing on what the significant upheavals might be and their impact on the cultural life of displaced persons, this study put forward the main hypothesis that the internal displacement of populations in this region due to terrorism causes various upheavals in cultural life that impact their present and future daily lives, which must be taken into account in care initiatives and those preparing for their return.

It is clear that these upheavals are numerous and multifaceted. From the moment threats, attacks and killings begin, displaced persons experience real upheavals in their lives and cultural uprooting. Among other things, we see upheavals in farming methods, eating habits and clothing styles, the destruction and degradation of heritage, the abandonment of cultural practices, the disruption of customary and religious life, and the undermining of social cohesion and Burkinabe cultural values. In response to this, we cannot help but propose solutions for effective care, *i.e.* those that will ensure successful local integration and reintegration. This involves welcoming displaced persons to accommodation sites without separating them from the rest of their culture, welcoming them to sites by geographical and cultural areas in the hope of maintaining cultural homogeneity and continuity of practices, and not overlooking cultural preparations in the actions taken to prepare for the return of displaced persons. Finally, our advocacy for the cultural dimension to be taken into account in the reception and return of displaced persons by governments and partners remains our strong recommendation. In simple terms, the phenomenon of displacement has created cultural disintegration because the priorities of survival have drowned out cultural needs, which are often relegated to the background. However, if they become too alienated, displaced persons' personalities become disturbed and their return home can pose even more problems. Just as we think about food, clothing, employment and housing kits for displaced persons, we must also think about kits or conditions for their cultural survival.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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