LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE AND LANGUAGE SHIFT IN BURKINA FASO: THE CASE OF THE KOROMBA

Gérard Kedrebéogo
CNRST/Institut des Sciences des Sociétés, Burkina Faso
(c/o) norbert.nikiema@flashs.univ-ouaga.bf

The abundant literature published since the appearance of Fishman’s Language Loyalty in the United States 1966 is primarily European and North American in perspective. Most studies have dealt with binary language contact situations (mainstream language vs. non-mainstream language) and with communities already having a long tradition of literacy. Very few have been devoted thus far to African communities. This paper offers a survey of the situation of language maintenance and shift in the multilingual and multiethnic setting of Burkina Faso (West Africa) and studies the particular case of a shifting community: the Koromba. It is shown that the language configuration in Burkina Faso today is the result of a long period of contact between people differing in language and customs. Language shift mainly occurred in communities with a centralized socio-political system, whereas language maintenance has prevailed in those communities with strong decentralized tendencies. The more detailed study of the Koromba shows that language maintenance and shift are permanently at work in Burkina Faso. The factors that determine maintenance or shift, although varying from one community to another, are primarily internal. More than numbers, territory seems to play a key role in language maintenance in communities with an oral tradition.

0. Introduction

Language maintenance and language shift, as contact phenomena, have received a considerable amount of attention since the publication of Fishman’s 1966 pioneering work Language Loyalty in the United States. Studies on this topic have taken different perspectives (sociological and linguistic), and have mostly focused on European and North American settings. The contact situations that have been dealt with are essentially binary: mainstream language vs. non-mainstream language, English vs. Gaelic, indigenous or immigrant languages (Dorian 1973, 1981, 1989, Hoffman et al. 1972, Gal 1978, among others). Moreover, ‘the negative side of the maintenance/shift continuum’, as Fishman (1991: 397) rightly observes, has been ‘over-attended’, whereas the positive side (language maintenance) has been ‘down-played’. The general picture that emerges from the literature is, therefore, that of the ‘big fish swallowing the small fish’ (Pandharipande 1992). It would seem that language contact is ineluctably detrimental to immigrants and minority languages. Another observation that can be made about the literature is that most
language communities that have been investigated thus far are communities that already have a long tradition of literacy.

Research dealing with Third World countries, and especially sub-Saharan African countries, is rather scarce. Tabouret-Keller 1968, Sedlak 1974, Heine 1977, and Brenzinger 1992a, 1992b are the most significant studies that we are aware of. Given that language is human-specific, we can assume that language contact, and its subsequent outcomes (language maintenance, transitional or stable multilingualism, or language shift) are present all over the world and at all stages of human history. At all times and in all parts of the world, people from different linguistic backgrounds have, at some point, come into contact, and interacted with one another, through peaceful migration and trade, or by war, conquest, and annexation. If people are different in language, culture, and customs, we can then expect language behavior, attitudes towards language, and the very factors of maintenance or shift to differ from one area to the other, and from one language community to the other. Broadening the empirical basis of our investigations is therefore a necessity if we are to gain a deeper insight into the phenomena and to build an integrated theory of language maintenance and language shift that really has both a DESCRIPTIVE ADEQUACY and an EXPLANATORY CAPACITY.

Although it focuses on the Koromba, a language community that is undergoing language shift, this article also explores the situation of language maintenance and shift in Burkina. The objectives are to show that language maintenance and shift are at work in any given multilingual setting, to assess the extent to which the Koromba have undergone language shift, and to identify the specific factors of maintenance or shift in a community of oral tradition. Is the language shift of the Koromba reversible or should we expect their language to disappear in the near future?

The paper first provides a sociolinguistic profile of Burkina Faso so as to give a general picture of the language configuration and the setting of Koromfe in the country. Before introducing the specific case of the Koromba, an attempt is made to assess the overall situation of language maintenance and language shift in the multilingual and multi-ethnic context of Burkina Faso.

1. Sociolinguistic profile of Burkina Faso

Located on the west coast of Africa, Burkina Faso covers 105,000 square miles (about the size of the state of Illinois) with a population of 10 million people in 1996. Burkina Faso is bounded by the Republic of Mali in the west and north, the Republic of Niger in the east, Togo, Benin, Ghana, and Ivory Coast in the south. Burkina Faso acceded to political independence in 1960, after nearly a century of French colonial rule. French, the official language, is spoken by less than 10% of the population. The largest majority of the population (88.68%) lives in rural areas and the economy of the country is still largely based on traditional farming.

Fig. 1: Burkina Faso in southern West Africa
1.1 The number of languages

The national language survey that was conducted between 1979 and 1981 has led to the identification of 59 ‘ethnic languages’ spoken in Burkina Faso. The term ‘ethnic language’ here accounts for the coincidence between ‘language’ and ‘ethnic group’ or ‘nationality’. In other words, the 59 languages are primarily spoken by 59 different ethnic groups, regardless of their demographic weight or genetic relationship. Each ethnic group or nationality in Burkina Faso distinguishes itself from the others on the basis of its language and culture, its territory, and its socio-political organization. Table 1 captures this reality.

Table 1: People, language/culture, and territory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People*</th>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Language/Culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gulmance/Gulmanceba</td>
<td>Gulmu</td>
<td>Gulmancema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jootõ/e Joore</td>
<td>Joojânleen</td>
<td>Joowe(le)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasm/Kasna</td>
<td>Kasongo</td>
<td>Kas(m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moaga/Moose</td>
<td>Moogo</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pullo/Fulbe</td>
<td>Pulaari</td>
<td>Fulfulde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samen/Samaa</td>
<td>Samoko</td>
<td>Samoe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samo/Samoya</td>
<td>Samot</td>
<td>Samoma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San/Sanan</td>
<td>Sampoo</td>
<td>San</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The names of the people are given in the singular/plural forms.

The ‘territory’ factor, as well as the type of social organization, as it will be shown, have an important bearing on language maintenance and language shift in Burkina Faso.

1.2 The demographic weight of the languages
The number of native speakers varies considerably from one language to the other. For instance, languages such as Sillanka, Jenkunan, Byal, and others are spoken by no more than a thousand people in just one or two tiny villages. On the other hand, a language such as Moore has more than 4 million native speakers. Following the number of their native speakers, it is possible to range the languages of Burkina Faso into 3 categories as in Table 2:

**Table 2: The categories of languages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
<th>Number of Languages</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1,000,000 or more</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>100,000 to 800,000</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Less than 100,000</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>77.96%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 59 languages spoken in Burkina Faso, 46 languages have less than 100,000 speakers, 12 have more than 100,000 but less than 900,000 speakers, and only one language has more than one million speakers. In terms of their demographic weight, most of the languages of Burkina Faso (77.96%) are smaller than Ferguson’s 1966 ‘minor language’.2

The 1985 general census of the population included the following question: ‘Quelle langue parlez-vous couramment dans votre ménage?’, that is, ‘What language do you speak at home?’ From the answers to this question, the demographic weight of the languages was established as in Table 3. The population was then estimated at 7,909,425 people.

Although census data ought to be taken with caution, the figures in the Table above offer an image that is close to reality. These figures are important not for their mathematical precision, but for the scale of greatness that they establish between the languages. Interestingly, it shows that French, Jula, and other foreign languages (in bold) are predominantly spoken in urban areas, whereas national languages are mostly spoken in rural areas.

**1.3 Geographic distribution of the languages**

Based on the spatial configuration of the languages, two main regions can be distinguished in Burkina Faso: the eastern region which covers 29 provinces, and the western region with 16 provinces. From now on, I will refer to them as the East and the West. 41 languages are located in the 16 provinces of the West and only 18 in the 29 provinces of the East. The West, therefore, has a more complex language configuration than the East. In the West, there is an average of 3 languages per province, whereas in the East, the same language may cover several provinces. The language configuration also has an important implication for language contact, for multilingualism, and for language maintenance and shift in Burkina Faso.

**Table 3: Demographic sizes of the languages**
It is also interesting to know that the 18 languages in the East are spoken by 69.19% of the population, whereas the 41 languages in the West are spoken by only 30.80% of the same population. Moore alone is spoken by half of the population of Burkina Faso, and the 58 remaining languages by the other half of the population.

Based on the Table 3, I have determined that 90.11% of the population of Burkina Faso actually speak only 14 languages, whereas the other 45 languages are spoken by only 9.89% of the population.
The imbalanced distribution of the languages in the West and in the East is not random. This situation, I believe, has its origin in the history of settlement and in the nature of the socio-political organizations that developed in each region.

1.4 Classification of the languages

Most of the languages spoken in Burkina Faso belong to three major families: the Gur or Voltaic languages (about 60%), the Manden languages (about 20%), and the West-Atlantic languages represented by Fulfulde.

In addition to these, we have the Nilo-Saharan languages that are represented by Zarma, Kaadkiini, and Songokiini, the Chamito-Semitic languages with two sub-families: the Chadic languages (Hausa), and the Berber languages represented by Keltamaasaq. Finally, there are isolated languages such as Seme, a Kru language, and Dogon.

1.5 Status and functions of the languages

The Constitution of Burkina Faso (1991) recognizes French as the official language. All the 59 local languages are ‘national languages’. This recognition, however, does not give them any specific function beyond the fact that they are used primarily for in-group communication. The ‘Commission Nationale des Langues Voltaïques’ (a National Bureau of Languages) and its ‘Secrétariat Permanent’ (Permanent Secretariat) were created in 1969. The objectives of the Commission are: to promote national languages, to suggest, encourage, and coordinate the study of national languages, and to elaborate and regulate proper usage of spelling systems.

The creation of the National Bureau of Languages made it possible for each language group to have its own ‘Sous-Commission Nationale’ (National Sub-commission) if they so desire. There are twenty ‘Sous-Commissions Nationales’ today, and all the languages involved are used on national radio and for literacy campaign for adults. Fewer languages are used on national television. In 1997, there were about 60 newspapers and periodicals in 14 national languages.

1.6 Multilingualism

The situation of multilingualism varies from one region to another because it depends on the language configuration of the region. The West displays a greater rate of multilingualism than the East.

The density of the language configuration in the West brings people from various linguistic and ethnic backgrounds to resort to Jula as a lingua franca. In the East, it can be observed that multilingualism is related either to a person’s mobility or to the power relationship between the language groups in contact. In the East, the bilingual person is either a person who has traveled (outside his habitual language environment), or a person who belongs to a minor language group. It is the language of the major group that usually serves as mainstream language. Knowledge of the mainstream language is vital for linguistic minorities, unless they choose to stay in their territory. Members of the dominant languages will
learn the language of the minor group only when they move into the territory of that minor group where they find themselves in a minority position.

The outstanding pattern of multilingualism in Burkina Faso can be formulated as follows: \( L_1 + \{L_m, Jula\} \). This means that the bilingual person speaks the mainstream/major language \((L_m)\) or a lingua franca \((Jula)\) in addition to his first or ethnic language \((L_1)\). Actually, the pattern is \( L_1 + L_m \) in the East and \( L_1 + Jula \) in the West. \( L_1 \) in the East is any minor language and \( L_m \) a major language such as Moore, Gulmancema, Fulfulde, and so on. In the West, \( L_1 \) is any of the 40 languages and Jula is the link-language for all. In both regions, \( L_1 \) generally occupies the family or in-group domain, whereas \( L_m \) or Jula is used for mainstream (out-group) interactions.

It can be said that multilingualism is on the increase in Burkina Faso because of the linguistic diversity and, most importantly, because of the increasing mobility of the population. Linguistic minorities, in particular, have developed a stable multilingualism as a normal way of life.

1.7 Literacy

It is fairly wellknown that literacy plays an important role in language maintenance. Communities that have a long tradition of literacy also have a greater resistance to linguistic assimilation than those having only an oral tradition.

The rates of schooling in Burkina Faso are still very low. According to the National Institute for Statistics and Demography (1993:23), the illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso was 92.20% in 1991. Even though government agencies and nongovernmental organizations have been conducting literacy campaigns for decades, all the languages of Burkina Faso are still unwritten oral languages.

1.8 Conclusion

Burkina Faso is a country where 'people differing in language are in contact with each other' (Fishman 1964). It offers an interesting setting for the investigation of language maintenance and language shift. The linguistic and the socio-economic environment in this country is significantly different from that of the western industrialized world, where most investigations on language maintenance and shift have been conducted thus far. From both theoretical and methodological considerations, studies of language maintenance and shift in the setting of Burkina Faso not only broaden the empirical basis of the field but also can give us a new insight into language contact phenomena.

2. Language maintenance and language shift in Burkina Faso

In keeping with the language configuration, the contact situations in Burkina Faso also vary from one region to the other, from the East to the West. As mentioned earlier, this divergence is not random but finds its justification in the history of land occupation by the various ethnic groups and in the socio-political organization that prevails in each region. Based on my knowledge of the language situation of Burkina Faso and on the scarce existing literature, I will explore, in this section, the general situation of language maintenance and language
shift as the result of the contact between people differing in language and customs. Today's developing societal multilingualism is the result of that language contact, which has been conducive to language maintenance, partial language shift, or language death. Since the contact situation varies from one region to the other, I will, for the sake of clarity, consider the East and the West separately.

2.1 Language shift in the East

I pointed out in section 1.2 above that 69.19% of the population of Burkina Faso live in the East and speak 18 languages. It is also in the eastern provinces that centralized institutional and political systems emerged in pre-colonial days. These are the Moose Empire, the Kingdom of the Gulmanceba, and the Emirate of the Fulbe. For this reason, I assume that language maintenance and shift occurred chiefly in the East and in a more spectacular way than in the West. The West is inhabited by a mosaic of small ethnic groups living in what European anthropologists (e.g., Hébert 1976, and Savonnet-Guyot 1986) have called 'fragmentary', 'acephalous', 'anarchical' or 'stateless' societies.

In the middle of the 15th century, according to historians, a horse-riding people from Gambaga in northern Ghana came to invade the territory that is now called the Moogo, that is, the country of the Moose. This group was the Dagomba. After the invasion and settlement by the Dagomba, the building of centralized institutional and political systems (the Moose Empire, the Kingdom of the Gulmanceba, and the Emirate of the Fulbe) induced language maintenance and language shift among the indigenous populations. I will first consider some of the cases of language shift that have been triggered by the contact with the Moose, the Fulbe, and the Touaregs.

2.1.1 The assimilation of indigenous populations by the Moose

Historians generally agree that the ethnic group of the Moose has emerged from the fusion of the Dagomba invaders with several indigenous ethnic groups, namely the Ninisi (plural of Niniga), the Yonyöose (plural of Yōnyōøaga), the Silmi-Moose (plural of Silmi-moaaga), and the Yarse (plural of Yarga), among others.

A. The Ninisi and the Yonyöose

The prevailing view in the literature considers the Ninisi and the Yonyöose as the first occupants of the land before the invasion of the Dagomba. They were distinct populations having their own languages, their own territory, and their own socio-political organization. According to Halpougdou (1992:209-11):

Les Ninisi, comme les Yonyöose, avaient leur moyen propre d'expression avant l'arrivée des Dagomba, selon tous les informateurs que nous avons pu rencontrer. Mais personne n'a pu fournir d'éléments linguistiques précis à ce sujet. Pour Lazare Ilboudo 'les Ninisi étaient des forgerons et avaient une langue qui leur était propre.' Mais lui-même ne sait pas une seule parole de cette langue. De même, Joseph Rouamba est persuadé que 'les Yonyöose avaient leur
Kedrebéogo: Language maintenance and shift in Burkina Faso

langue à eux. C’est le Moore de ceux qui sont venus de Gambaga qu’ils ont adopté aujourd’hui.

[According to my consultants (Lazarus Ilboudo and Joseph Rouamba), The Ninisi as well as the Yônyôose used to have a language of their own before the arrival of the Dagomba. None of them, however, was able to bring precise linguistic evidence to support their claim. For Lazarus Ilboudo, ‘the Ninisi were blacksmiths and were speaking a language of their own’, but he does not know a single word of that language. Similarly, Joseph Rouamba is convinced that ‘the Yônyôose used to have their own language. Later on, they have adopted the variety of Moore spoken by those who came from Gambaga] (my translation).

The Ninisi and the Yônyôose are now completely assimilated to the Moose, and no-one knows what their languages looked like. The terms ninina/ninini and yônyôaaga/yônyôose could be remnants of their languages. Morphologically, these terms can be analyzed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 /nin + ga/ [nînâ]</td>
<td>/nin + sî [nînî]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 /nini + ga/ [nînîâ]</td>
<td>/nîni + sî [nînîsî]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 /ninîn + ga/ [nînîgå]</td>
<td>/ninîn + sî [nînînîsî]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 /yônyô + ga/ [yôywâ: á]</td>
<td>/yônyô +se/ [yôyô:sé]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the singular and plural forms, we have the roots: nin-, nini-, ninin-, and yônyô- that are meaningless and rather unusual in Moore. -ga and -se/-si are the singular and plural class suffixes.

Similarly, Sâpôné is a place name that is said to have a Ninninga origin. In terms of its morphological structure, sâpôné is a ‘possible’ word in Moore only if it is analyzed as sâ+pôné. In this case, we have the root sâ- that means ‘rain’, but the second part, -pôné, would be meaningless in Moore. There is no other possible way to analyze sâpôné, or the other terms above (ningalninisi, ninigalninisi, niningalnininsi, and yônyôaagalyônyôose).

B. The Yarse

The Yarse (pl. of Yarga) are found all over the Moogo. It is now well established that they have a Manden origin. The Yarse are generally adepts of Islam and their main occupation today is trade and farming. Even though they remain conscious of their origin, the Yarse are now linguistically assimilated to the Moose. One linguistic peculiarity of the Yarse (as well as the Yaadse in the Yatenga) is that they do not make the distinction between informal/formal use of the personal pronouns fôolyâmâ. They invariably use the informal fôô in all of their interactions, regardless of the social rank of their interlocutor. In the Yatenga province, I have identified a few place names which constitute evidence that the Yarse used to speak a Manden language that is related to Bamanankan spoken in Mali.

C. The assimilation of the Maranse
The Maranse people call themselves Kaado (Singular) and Kaadeno (Plural). They are now scattered in the provinces of Lorum, Yatenga, and Sanmatenga, where they are renowned fabric dyers. The Maranse offer us another case of linguistic assimilation by the Moose. The Maranse have largely adopted Moore as their first language. Their language, which they call Kaadkiini, is still spoken, but mostly by elderly people. It is a language that belongs to the Nilo-Saharan family.

D. THE EMERGENCE OF A NEW ETHNIC GROUP: THE SILMI-MOOSE

Interruption of economic alliances between the Fulbe and the Moose have not only been conducive of language shift among some of the Fulbe, but have led to the emergence of a new ethnic group: the Silmi-Moose (pl. of Silmi-Mooaga). The term literally means ‘Fulbe turned into Moose’. Linguistically, the Silmi-Moose are assimilated to the Moose but socially and culturally, they are more closely related to the Fulbe.

E. TWO ENDANGERED LANGUAGES: DOGON AND KORONFE

Marcel Griaule is undoubtedly the most famous of the anthropologists who devoted years of research on the Dogon, an ancient population found in the region of Bandiagara, Mali. The Dogon are also found in Burkina Faso, where they are called Kibsi (pl. of Kibga) by the Moose, and Haabe by the Fulbe. The Dogon, according to the information given to us by the Moose, the Sillanko, and the Koromba, were the first inhabitants of the Yatenga, the Lorum, the Baam, and the Sanmatenga provinces. Today, most of the Dogon population have been linguistically assimilated to either the Moose or to the Koromba. Their language is still spoken by the elders in a few villages around Tou, in the north of the administrative Department of Thiou in the province of Yatenga.

The great majority of the Koromba (pl. of Koromdo) in the Yatenga, the Lorum, and the Zondoma provinces have abandoned their language in favor of Moore. I examine their case in some more detail in the second section.

2.1.2 The assimilation of indigenous populations by the Fulbe

We also know from history that the Liptaako and the Yaaga regions were inhabited by the Gulmanceba (pl. of Gulmance) prior to the arrival of the Fulbe from Macina, Mali in the 17th century. After a period of peaceful coexistence, the Fulbe, led by Ibrahim Seydou and supported by the King of Sokoto and the Moose King of Boulsa (in the Province of Namentenga), came to wage a war against the Gulmanceba, who were repelled towards the East and the South-East. Ibrahim Seydou then established an Emirate in 1810 (Guissou 1998). The foundation of the Fulbe Emirate of the Liptaako resulted in the assimilation of some of the indigenous populations, such as the Gulmanceba.

During my field research, I have identified many place names which have a Gulmance origin. For instance, Dori, the capital city of the province of Seeno, has a Gulmance origin. The Gulmance population who remained in the Seeno and the Yaaga provinces has been linguistically assimilated by the Fulbe. The linguistic assimilation included other indigenous people who were captured and enslaved.
The terms Macube (plural of Macudo) or Rimaybe (plural of Rimayjo) refer to these assimilated indigenous populations. The Macube or Rimaybe speak Fulfulde as their first language, but they do not have the same social status as the Fulbe.

2.1.3 The assimilation of indigenous populations by the Keltamaashaq

The Touaregs, also called Tamashek, Tamaashaq or Keltamaashaq are found in the north of the province of Udalan. The Touaregs have a Berber origin, and their language belongs to the Berber branch of the Hamito-Semitic family.

Like the Fulbe, the Touaregs have captured and enslaved indigenous people who now form the group of the Bellabe (pl. of Bellajo). The Bellabe, who are the equivalent of the Rimaybe in the Fulbe community, have no idea of their original language(s). They have adopted the language of their former masters with whom they continue to live. The Bellabe do not have the same social status as the Keltamaasaq.

Except for the Ninisi, the Yônyôose, and the Yarse, all the other cases that I have reported here are cases of partial language shift. Almost every language group in the East has experienced partial language shift. This includes the Moose, who constitute the dominant group in Burkina Faso. In a recent study, Gommimbou 1998 reported that some of the Kasna population in the areas of Tiébélé and Po have a Moaaga origin. They are the descendants of former Moose migrants from Ouagadougou and Loumbila. They are now linguistically assimilated to the Kasna. Partial language shift may cause the shrinking of a language, but in no way its death. The Gulmanceba in the Seeno and the Yaaga, for instance, have shifted to Fulfulde, but Gulmancema is still well alive and is spoken by nearly 700,000 people in the provinces of Gulmu, Komanjaari, Tapoa, and Yânyâ.

2.2 Language maintenance in the East

Language maintenance has been down-played in the literature, and understandably so if we consider that shift is more spectacular than maintenance. Language maintenance, for most people, is taken for granted. It becomes interesting only when a language survives in a contact situation where it is normally expected to disappear.

The coexistence of ‘major’ languages with tiny minor languages, (for example Sillanka, Songokiini, Byari, Moba, Kusa’al) in the East implies that some of the indigenous populations have successfully resisted linguistic assimilation by the dominant groups. As I pointed out in 1.5, above, linguistic minorities in the eastern provinces are typically bilingual, as opposed to members of the largest linguistic communities. The stable bilingualism the minority groups have developed can be seen as a strategy of survival. Bilingualism does not seem to impair their attachment to their ethnic language, which they systematically use in the family domain as well as in in-group interactions. The learning of the dominant languages is simply motivated by the need for mainstream interactions and for mobility in the wider society. The Sillanko, who probably constitute the smallest ethnic group in Burkina Faso, provide us with the most striking case of language
maintenance in the East. In 1989, their language was spoken by only 780 people, and most of them (88.1%) were trilingual.

Two main factors can explain the language maintenance of linguistic minorities. The first factor is internal and has to do with their strong attachment to their ethnic language. Linguistic minorities feel that language is the first and most important element that gives a certain substance to their identity as a people. To lose one’s language, in their view, is equivalent to losing one’s substance and to becoming worthless. Many Sillanko I interviewed made the following observation: ‘A person who is right does not abandon the language that he has suckled!’ This observation implies that language loyalty is a moral duty. The territory factor is the second most important factor of language maintenance for linguistic minorities. Regardless of its demographic weight, each language group in Burkina Faso has its territory that is recognized and respected by the others. The territory of the Sillanko, for instance, is restricted to their village (Bāgkeemde) and to their farming lands. The neighboring Moose, who constitute the dominant group in this region scrupulously respect the territory of the Sillanko. It is taboo for the chief of the Moose to pass through the territory of the Sillanko, as this could be regarded as a voluntary intrusion.

### 2.3 Language maintenance and language shift in the West

Although it has a more complex language configuration, the West presents an interestingly different situation. There are fewer cases of language shift, and these cases follow a different pattern than those in the East.

#### 2.3.1 Language maintenance

The 41 languages in the West are spoken by only 30.81% of the population of Burkina Faso. The number of speakers of these languages varies from about 1,000 (for example Jelkunan, Wara, Natioro) to 300,000 people (for example Dagara, Jula, San, Bobo). The average number of speakers for each language represents only 0.75% of the population of the country. In spite of the density of the language configuration, the West shows fewer cases of language shift, and there are three main explanations for this situation.

First, there is the absence of a clearly dominating language. Second, and most important, there is no centralized socio-political system comparable to the one found in the East. Hagberg (1998:31) observes that ‘a common characteristic of the autochthonous groups is that socio-political authority has traditionally not transcended the village. These groups demonstrate strong decentralized tendencies and appear to have remained relatively independent, even in times of outside influence of more or less hegemonic states.’ This observation is confirmed by Kone (1988:1), the President of the Sous-Commission Nationale du Cerma, who also remarks that ‘l’organisation sociale de ces populations comportait des traits structurels communs ou du moins fréquents tels que absence de gouvernement central et autonomie villageoise ... [the social organization of these populations included common structural features such as the absence of central government and autonomy of the villages...].’ Finally there is Jula, the lingua franca in the West, that serves as a link language between the various ethnic groups.
In precolonial days, the West was shared by the Jula Kingdom of Kong (Ivory Coast) and by the Kingdom of the Kenedugu (Mali). These are the 'outside influence of more or less hegemonic states' that Hagberg referred to. Given its peripheral position, however, the central authority of Kong (and Sikasso as well) was unable to exert a direct and permanent control over the West. As a consequence, the mosaic of people who inhabit the region were able to keep a relative autonomy. Whereas the indigenous populations in the East were directly and constantly in contact with the power system (the emperor and his representatives at various levels: the kingdom, the canton, the village, or the district), those in the West were less dependent and could organize their social life as they wished within their territories. A general context such as this is more favorable to language maintenance than to language shift. The few cases of language shift that we encounter in the West have a quite different pattern from those in the East.

2.3.2 Language shift in the West

To my knowledge, only the Cefo (Tyéfo) and the Komono (Cesa) in the province of Comoe and the Fulbe in the province of the Kossi are communities experiencing language shift. A fourth case of language shift in the West could be related to the urban phenomenon of Bobo-Dioulasso, the largest city in the West.

A. The Cefo

The term Cefo designates both the people and their language, which is a Gur language. During the field research I conducted among the Cefo, it was noticeable that language shift was in progress in this community. The ethnic language was still spoken in a few villages (Dramandougou and Degue-Degue, for instance), but mostly by adults and elderly people. The community as a whole is shifting to Jula, the lingua franca of the region.

Language shift among the Cefo started with their violent contact with the troops of Samory Toure in 1897 (Kambou-Ferrand 1993:230): 'La marée samorienne provoqua en quelques semaines dans ces régions, et pour longtemps, un chaos indescriptible, inscrivant dans le paysage une sorte d’image biblique de fin du monde [It only took a couple of weeks for the troops of Samory to create an indescribable chaos, and to instill a biblical vision of the end of the world]'. According to Kambou-Ferrand 1993, most of the Cefo adults who engaged in the battle against the troops of Samory were exterminated.

B. The Komono or Cesa

The Cesa constitute a linguistic minority found in the south-east of the province of Comôé. The weak demographic weight of the Komono today is the result of their long contact with the Jula of Kong whose cultural, economical, and political supremacy is unquestionable. Kambou-Ferrand (1993:323) speaks of a 'cultural genocide' of the Komono due to their contact with the Jula of Kong:

Les observateurs sont toujours surpris par la faiblesse numérique des groupes ethniques qui occupent la zone comprise entre les fleuves Comôé et Bougouriba. Contrairement aux Tyéfo, cependant, la fai-
blesse démographique des Komono ne serait pas imputable à l'invasion samorienne; il n'y eut pas ici de grandes batailles et de massacres. La disparition progressive de ce peuple semble plutôt procéder d'un génocide culturel, provoqué par son contact prolongé avec les Dioula de Kong. L'acculturation profonde qui en résulte s'accompagna de la 'disparition' de l'ethnie.

[Observers are always surprised by the low number of people of the ethnic groups that are located between the Comoe and the Bougouriba Rivers. Contrary to the Tyéfo, however, the weak demographic weight of the Komono is not the consequence of the invasion of the troops of Samory. No big battles or massacre took place here. The progressive disappearance of this people rather seems to stem from a cultural genocide due to the long period of contact they had with the Dioula of Kong. The profound acculturation that followed this contact went along with the disappearance of the ethnic group] (my translation).

C. THE FULBE

An important community of Fulbe moved from Macina and came to settle in the province of the Kossi, and created the independent principalities of Barani and Dokuy in the 18th and 19th centuries, respectively (Kambou-Ferrand 1993: 173). In spite of their military, political, and economic predominance over the Bwaba, the major ethnic group in the Kossi, the Fulbe have adopted Bwamu, the language of the Bwaba. Moreover, those Fulbe who left Macina in order to escape forced conversion to Islam and who now live in the area of Dokuy have not only shifted to Bwamu, but have also adopted the culture of the Bwaba. They are known as the 'Boofwa', that is, 'Fulbe turned into Bwaba', like the Silmi-Moose 'Fulbe turned into Moose'.

D. THE MELTING POT OF BOBO-DIOULASSO

Bobo-Dioulasso (originally called Sya), the largest town in the West, has been and still is an important center of trade. For this reason, it has attracted people of various ethnic groups from the different parts of Burkina Faso. Economic activities and social mobility require the mastering of Jula, the lingua franca, by these migrants. In the long run, the lingua franca starts to invade and then to take over the family domain, so that the ethnic languages are no longer transmitted to the children: there is an inter-generation language shift among the migrants. Language shift is even faster when the parents do not have the same first language. A child born to parents who speak different ethnic languages has little chance of learning his/her parents' languages because Jula, in such a case, already serves as a link language for the parents. As time goes on, Jula is acquiring native speakers, whereas the ethnic languages are falling into obsolescence.

Following Prost 1968, Sommer 1993 reports Natioro, Wara, and Jelkunan (Blé) as moribund languages. These languages were still very much alive in 1988 when I conducted field research on them. There was nothing that showed that these languages were endangered. Like the other linguistic minorities that I know
of, the Natioro, the Wara, and the Jelkunan are all bilingual. Generally, they use their ethnic languages in the family domain and within the group, and resort to Jula for mainstream interactions.

The presence of the lingua franca, the territory factor, and the socio-political organization of the different groups have influenced language maintenance in the West of Burkina Faso. The relative complexity of the language situation in the West can be seen as the result of language maintenance.

The number factor, although it is important, does not seem to be decisive in language maintenance and shift. In the Sanmatenga province, as mentioned earlier, the 780 Sillanko have successfully resisted to linguistic assimilation, whereas the Koromba have shifted to Moore in spite of their demographic weight, a hundred times superior to that of the Sillanko. It is the case of the Koromba that we are now going to look at in some more detail.

3. The case of the Koromba

The Koromba are undergoing language shift. This section analyzes the ongoing sociolinguistic situation of that community so as to assess the extent to which this group has actually shifted to the dominant language (Moore), and to identify the specific factors that are responsible of the language shift.

3.1 The people

The Koromba are called Flse (pl. of Flga) or Yönyöose by the Moose, and Haabe by the Fulbe. They call themselves Koromba (pl. of Koromdo). Their language is Koronfe and their territory is the Lorum. The Koromba people live in the provinces of Yatenga, Zondoma, Lorum, and Soum, which are all located in the north of Burkina Faso.

The Koromba are considered to be the first occupants of the land. According to their tradition, the Koromba descended to earth in a metallic box, for one version, or by a thread, for the other version. There is a third version in which some of Koromba claim that Egypt is the point of departure of their long migration, which ended in the Lorum.11

The Koromba are farmers and cattle-breeders. Their traditional religion is animism but more and more Koromba are becoming converts to Islam or Christianity.

3.2 The language of the Koromba

According to Manessy 1969, Koronfe is a Gur language related to the Gurunsi languages. The same author in 1979 distinguishes Kurumfe and Gurunsi, and both are classified as ‘langues voltaïques’. More investigation is probably still needed for a proper classification of Koronfe.

3.3 The questionnaire survey for data collection

The data that are analyzed here were collected through a questionnaire survey conducted in 17 Koromba villages located in the provinces of Lorum, Yatenga, and Zondoma. In each of the villages that were selected on the basis of their geo-
graphic position, 1/10th of the population aged 12 and over, or a total of 537 individuals, were interviewed.

The questionnaire was structured in three main parts. In the first part we wanted to know the characteristics of the subject, such as sex, age, religion, marital status, schooling, main occupation, and mobility. In the second part, we wanted to know whether the subjects' first language was transmitted to the younger generation or whether there was already an inter-generation language shift. It was therefore important to know the first language spoken by the parents of the respondent and then to compare it with the first language of the respondent himself or herself. In the second part, we also considered the language repertoire of the respondents. The third part of the questionnaire was devoted to actual language use of the respondents in different domains, namely the home, the marketplace, and ritual ceremonies. These three domains were the only relevant domains to be taken into consideration.

As we were conducting the questionnaire survey, which lasted 4 weeks, we had the opportunity to observe the interactions of the Koromba in different situations: in their homes, in the marketplace, within the group, and with people from different ethnic groups, such as the Moose and the Fulbe. These observations were to confirm or to falsify the results of the questionnaire survey.

3.4 Data analysis and results of the study

This section analyzes the data that have been collected. It first presents the characteristics of the subjects and their language repertoire. Language maintenance and shift among the Koromba is determined through the comparison of the first language of the respondents with that of their parents. This comparison shows whether or not Koronfe is regularly transmitted to the younger generation. The domains of language use reveal areas where language shift is advanced, and areas of resistance to linguistic assimilation. Finally, the factors of maintenance and shift will be examined.

3.4.1 Characteristic of the subjects

Of the 537 subjects, 281 were males and 256 females. As Table 4 shows, three age groups were distinguished: the young, the middle-aged, and the elderly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age groups</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 - 20</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 40</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 and over</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>281</strong></td>
<td><strong>256</strong></td>
<td><strong>537</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the Koromba that we interviewed were farmers. Only 5 children had attended primary school. Most Koromba practice animism, the traditional religion. Only a few of them are Christians or Muslims.

3.4.2 Language repertoire of the Koromba community
Table 5 presents all the languages spoken by the 537 Koromba we interviewed. It actually represents the language repertoire of the Koromba community as a whole.

Table 5: Language repertoire of the Koromba:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>L1</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L2</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L3</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>L4</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>384</td>
<td>71.37%</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>25.83%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koronfe</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>28.43%</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11.89%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfulde</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4.28%</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>12.47%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jula</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3.35%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.11%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.74%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.37%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agni</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baule</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.18%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sillanka</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table shows that 71.37% of the 537 subjects who responded to the questionnaire speak Moore as their first language (L1), whereas only 28.43% speak Koronfe as their first language. Moore is also the most important second language (L2), since it is spoken by 25.83% of the subjects, whereas Koronfe comes in second position with only 64 speakers. It can be assumed that Moore has a greater influence on the Koromba than Fulfulde, which is spoken by only 23 persons as a second language.

The mobility of the subjects shows through what can be seen as ‘foreign languages’, that is, Jula, Agni, Baule. Indeed, the speakers of these languages had traveled and lived in the Ivory Coast for a few years. The mobility, however, is weak and concerns only the male population: only 22 male adults (7.82%) had traveled and lived abroad. Only 6 people claim to ‘understand’ some French: a sixty-five year old man who served in the French army during the Second World War, and 5 other male adults who attended primary school. None of the children I interviewed was attending school.

3.4.3 The demographic weight of the languages

The demographic weight of the languages that make up the repertoire of the Koromba is assessed through the total number of speakers (regardless of the degree of proficiency) of a given language in that repertoire. Table 6 confirms the predominance of Moore, Koronfe, and Fulfulde, which are the main languages spoken in the three provinces. Moreover, it shows that Moore is spoken as first or second language by 523 (97.21%) of the 537 subjects, whereas Koronfe is spoken by only 217 (40.33%) people as a first or second language. This is already an indication of an advanced language shift among the Koromba.

Table 6: Language repertoire and demographic weight

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number of speakers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Spoken as</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>97.21%</td>
<td>L1 or L2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3.4.4 The first language of the parents

Table 7 shows that most parents have different ethnic languages. Koronfe is spoken as L1 by 63.80% of the fathers, but only by 40.48% of the mothers. Inversely, Moore is spoken as L1 by 59.51% of the mothers, but by only 36.19% of the fathers.

**Table 7: The first language of the parents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>36.19%</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>59.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koronfe</td>
<td>342</td>
<td>63.80%</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>40.48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be assumed that the 194 fathers who speak Moore as L1 have already shifted to that language. The majority of mothers (269) speak Moore as first language because they are either Moose or have already shifted to Moore. Intermarriage between Koromba men and Moose women is common, and it is difficult to imagine a Koromdo young man taking a Moaaga young girl as a spouse unless he is already a fluent speaker of Moore. Intermarriage appears here as being the most evident factor of language shift among the Koromba.

### 3.4.5 The first language of the respondents

The comparison of the first language of the respondents and that of their parents indicates the degree of transmission of the ethnic language and simultaneously reveals the degree of language maintenance and language shift among the Koromba. The comparison shows that even though Koronfe is spoken by 525 parents (342 fathers and 183 mothers), most of their children (71.50%) now speak Moore as their first language (L1'). Only 28.49% of the children continue to use Koronfe as L1. Language shift among the Koromba is therefore at an advanced stage and is due to a severe impairment in the transmission of L1.

**Table 8: Degree of language shift among the Koromba**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L1</th>
<th>L1'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Koronfe</td>
<td>Moore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>153 (28.49%)</td>
<td>384 (71.50%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4.6 The domains of language use among the Koromba
Moore, Koronfe, Fulfulde, and Jula are the main languages spoken by the Koromba interviewed. The question now is to find out how these languages are actually used: 'who speaks what, to whom, under which circumstances, and for what purpose?' To answer that question, I have considered three domains of language use by the Koromba: the home/family, the marketplace, and rituals ceremonies. These are the most relevant and the most important domains of language use for the Koromba. Table 9 offers a synoptic view of language use in these three domains.

### Table 9: Domains of language use among the Koromba.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Marketplace</th>
<th>Ritual ceremonies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koronfe</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfulde</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KM</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFu</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KMFu</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NR</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

KM=Koronfe+Moore; MFu=Moore+Fulfulde; KMFu=Koronfe+Moore+Fulfulde; NR=No response.

As Table 9 shows, Moore prevails in the family/home domain, whereas Koronfe is predominantly used for ritual celebrations (the religious domain). Moore has also started to invade the religious domain, where it is used by 86 subjects (32.33%). As one could expect, the 3 most important languages of the region (Moore, Koronfe, and Fulfulde) are all used in the marketplace. However, most subjects (309) did not respond to the question related to their language use in the marketplace because there was none in their village.

### 3.4.7 The family domain

In the domain theory, the family/home domain plays an important role in language maintenance. It is the family domain which generally offers the greatest resistance to language shift. In the chart below, we can distinguish two situations of language use in the family/home setting: the use of just one language (either Moore or Koronfe), and the combination of the two languages (Moore and Koronfe). In the first situation, the use of Moore in the family domain is more important (66%) than the use of Koronfe (13%). In the second situation, it appears that 21% of the respondents use both Moore and Koronfe. Only 2 persons claim to speak Fulfulde or combine Koronfe, Moore, and Fulfulde altogether. In the chart of the family domain, these two persons show as 0%.
There is no doubt that language shift is at an advanced stage in the Koromba community where Moore is replacing Koronfe in the family/home domain, which is the domain of intimacy.

3.4.8 Ritual ceremonies

Besides the family/home domain, religion is another important factor of language maintenance. The ritual ceremonies of the Koromba are generally conducted by adult men rather than by women and youngsters. 266 male adults responded to the question related to the ritual celebrations. The chart below shows that Koronfe and Moore are the only two languages used for ritual ceremonies. Even though language shift seems to be at an advanced stage, Koronfe is the language used most in the religious domain. 180 Koromba (67.66%) conduct ritual ceremonies in Koronfe, whereas only 86 persons (32.33%) claim to use Moore in that domain. The predominance of Koronfe in the ritual ceremonies confirms the fact that religion is also an important factor of language maintenance. It is to be noticed, however, that Moore has started to invade that domain too.

3.4.9 The marketplace
The marketplace is an interesting setting for the observation of multilingualism because it is the place of interaction between people from different linguistic backgrounds. Moore, Fulfulde, and Koronfe, the main languages of the region, are also the main languages used in the marketplace.

Although most of the interviewees did not respond to the question related to their language use in the marketplace, the greatest tendency (61%) is to use Moore, Fulfulde, and Koronfe (KMFu) in the marketplace. The fact that 71 Koromba (31%) use only Moore simply means that this language is preponderant in the region.

3.4.10 Factors of language shift

The comparison of the first language of the parents and that of their children clearly shows that Koronfe is not being transmitted to the younger generation. In the family domain, Moore is replacing Koronfe. The use of Koromba is prevalent only in the ritual ceremonies, although Moore is also present. All these facts show that language shift among the Koromba is not only real, but is also at an advanced stage. The question that arises now is: what are the specific factors that have triggered that language shift?

3.4.10.1 Historical factors of language shift

As I pointed out in section 2.1., the invasion of the Dagomba and the subsequent establishment of centralized political systems (the Moose empire, the kingdom of the Gulmanceba, and the Fulbe emirate) have induced language shift and/or the assimilation of some of the indigenous populations. This seems to be the case of the Koromba that we are dealing with here. The Lorum, that is, the homeland of the Koromba, is now located within the Moose Empire. In most of the Koromba villages that I visited during field research, I was surprised to find that the chief of the village is a Moaaga, whereas the chief of the land is a Koromdo. The fact that
the chieftaincy of the land as a function is assumed by a Koromdo is an evident recognition that the Koromba were the first occupants of the land. The historical factors that induced language shift among the Koromba are primarily the military and political supremacy of the Moose. The demographic size of the Moose has increased with time and was not present at the start.

3.4.10.2 Internal factors of language shift among the Koromba

The internal factors of language shift among the Koromba are the most important. From what I observed and heard from the elders, the Koromba, and especially the youngsters, make a correlation between the 'monolingual speaker of Koronfe' and 'backwardness' or 'ignorance'. They seem to have a rather low image of their ethnic group and of their language and this probably explains their eagerness not only to learn Moore but also to adopt some of the cultural features of the Moose. Many Koromba, for instance, have adopted the facial scarification and the patronymics of the Moose. The rather low self-image they have corresponds to a certain desire to identify with the Moose. Intermarriage with the Moose is not only frequent but is also perceived as desirable. The Koromba are traditionally animists. To a certain extent, it seems that their adoption of Islam or Christianity is also a result of the influence of the Moose.

3.4.10.3 Factors of maintenance

The fact that language shift is at an advanced stage does not imply that the group has totally surrendered. Resistance to assimilation is still felt in the community and is especially strong among the elders. Resistance to linguistic and cultural assimilation takes the forms of language taboos. One of these taboos concerns the Ayo, the supreme chief of the Koromba. Once the Ayo takes office, he no longer speaks a language other than Koronfe. When I visited the Ayo of Tulfe and that of Pobe Mengao, they pretended that they could not speak Moore and had to resort to a translator. The other language taboos relate to religion. In all the Koromba villages that I visited, it was forbidden to speak Moore in the sacred places that shelter the shrines or the tombs of the ancestors. The fact that Moore and Moore alone is forbidden indicates that the Koromba are conscious that Moore is the threat to the survival of their language.

Another important factor that will contribute to the maintenance of Koronfe stems from the creation of the 'Commission Nationale des Langues Voltaïques'. The Koromba elite are presently on the move to get the creation of a 'Sous-Commission Nationale du Koronfe', that is, a National Subcommission for Koronfe. That Subcommission is likely to contribute to the promotion of Koronfe through its study and its use for adult literacy efforts. Thus, the Koronfe Sub-commission can be a factor that not only enhances resistance to assimilation, but can also reverse the current trend toward language shift.

Similar language taboos are found in other linguistic minorities of the East, such as the Sillanko and the Samoya. They have sacred places and rituals where the use of Moore is formally prohibited.

4. Conclusion
Paulston (1994:9) observes that ‘ethnic groups within a modern nation-state, given opportunity and incentive, typically shift to the language of the dominant group’. In this study, several cases of language shift have been reported that indeed support Paulston’s observation. The language shift of the indigenous populations in the East, in particular, occurred either in already existing nation-states (the Moose empire, the kingdom of the Gulmanceba) or in the process of their creation (the Fulbe emirate of the Liptaako). Politics, the military, trade, and religion, are the main decisive elements in the processes of language shift reported here.

The examination of the particular case of the Koromba confirms that this community is shifting to Moore, the dominant language.

The language repertoire of the Koromba truly shows the language configuration of the 3 provinces in which they live. Moore, Koronfe, and Fulfulde are indeed the major languages in these provinces. The mobility of the Koromba, a rather weak mobility, shows through the presence of Jula, Agni, and Baule in their language repertoire. These languages were acquired during the time of their migration in the Ivory Coast. Moore has the strongest demographic weight with 384 speakers against only 153 speakers of Koronfe. Even though 525 fathers and mothers have claimed to speak Koronfe as their native language, most of their children (71.50%) consider Moore as their first language, and only 28.49% continue to speak Koronfe as their first language. Clearly, this shows that the transmission of the native language (Koronfe) to the younger generation is seriously impaired and that language shift is nearly complete. Language shift has probably already started with the 463 parents (194 fathers and 269 mothers) who adopted Moore as their first language.

The factors of the language shift among the Koromba are external and internal. The external factors, as it was shown, are mainly historical. They originated in the contact of the Koromba with the Moose intruders and in the relationship that developed between the two groups, a relationship in which the political, economical, and military predominance of the Moose is unquestionable. The demographic size of the Moose is far greater than that of the Koromba. Although it is important in some cases, the number factor has little relevance in the case under consideration. It is not always a decisive factor in language maintenance or shift. In spite of their very limited number, the Sillanko have resisted linguistic assimilation, whereas the Koromba, with wider territory and a population size that is far more important than the Sillanko, have massively shifted to the language of the dominant group. The Sillanko have a strong attachment to their language. They would spontaneously use it, unless the context imposes the use of a different language. On the contrary, the Koromba, as a group, do not seem to hold their language in much esteem, since it has been stigmatized. It is then true that language maintenance and language shift depend heavily on the attitude the group has towards its own language.

The internal factors play the most important role in the group’s choice to either maintain its language or to shift to the language of the group it wishes to
identify with. The internal factors here have to do with the self-image the Koromba have toward their own group and their own language. From their language behavior, their attitudes toward their own language, and their inclination for exogamy, I am inclined to believe that the Koromba are eager to identify with the Moose. Except for the language taboos that I have mentioned, there is nothing or very little in their language behavior that shows that they value their language as a means of self-identification. The efficiency of the language taboos are uncertain, because they are not strictly respected by the younger generation.

According to Fennel (1980:39), 'a shrinking linguistic minority can be saved from extinction only by itself; and on condition that it acquires the will to save itself, and is not prevented from taking appropriate measures but assisted in doing so'. I have recently been approached by some Koromba elite who wanted to create the ‘Sous-Commission Nationale du Koronfe’ (National Subcommission for Koronfe). The Koromba's desire to create that commission is, I believe, a manifestation of their will to save their language. At any rate, the Subcommission offers a better chance for the survival of Koronfe than the language taboos. Learning to read and write in Koronfe is likely to reduce the current trend toward shift, and to restore the prestige of Koronfe within the community. This is possible if the government’s decentralization policy is implemented with a grass roots language policy.

NOTES

1 Several of my colleagues claim the existence of 62 or even 72 national languages in Burkina Faso without giving any information about the additional languages. For that reason, I will stick to the 59 languages that have been identified through the language survey which I conducted nationwide between 1979 and 1981.

2 According to Ferguson 1966, 'a minor language is a language which has one or more of the following characteristics:
   a) it is spoken as a native language by no more than 25% of the population and by either more than 5% or more than 100,000 people,
   b) it is used as medium of instruction above the first years of primary school, having textbooks other than primers published in it'.

3 'Other national languages' represent a group of 35 individual languages with an average number of speakers of 12,837 people each.

4 Kru languages are normally found in the southern region of the Ivory Coast. The presence of a Kru language in Burkina Faso is therefore quite surprising.

5 The singular and the plural forms have different pronunciations: [ninia], [niniga] or [nina] for the singular, and [ninisi], [ninins] or [ninsi] for the plural.

6 The King of Sokoto in question was Ousmane Dan Fodio, a Pullo who founded the theocratic Empire in northern Nigeria.
7 The terms Bellajo and Bellabe are Fulfulde.
8 It is common for members of linguistic minorities to be fluent speakers of 3 languages or more.
9 According to the 1989 census of the administrative Department of Pensa.
11 This claim of the Koromba of Windigi (in the province of Lorum) is quite surprising because these illiterate peasants have no way of knowing about the existence of a country called Egypt. Further in-depth research is necessary to find out if this claim is to be taken seriously or not.
12 Eighty four (84) subjects did not respond to the question related to the first language of their parents who died before they were grown up.

REFERENCES


