INTRODUCTION
Every human society aspires for a better wellbeing and this accounts for the constant renewal of its livelihood tools and methods. Cultural elements are borrowed from one culture to regenerate another. This consequently has an impact on the receptionist society. Anthropologists have pondered over time through theories on how, why and with what consequences do these changes occur. The concept of development was developed to design a positive change (progress) in a society. Its definition differed according to schools of thought. In 1982, UNESCO produced a generally accepted definition of Development.

Development is a complex, holistic, and multi-dimensional process which goes beyond mere economic growth and integrates all the dimensions of life and all the energies of a community, all of whose members must share in the benefits that result there from. The principle is therefore proposed that development must be founded on the will of each society and express its profound identity. (UNESCO: 1982).

Nevertheless, the Euro-American model of development based on economic growth is still in vogue and remains very attractive.

It is in this vein that third world countries had been striving to attain the Western level of development engaging their finances into great projects which gave birth to “white elephants”. By the mid 1980s, most African countries were under Structural Adjustment programmes under the World Bank. Sub Saharan Africa then went through grave economic crises whose effects shattered different sectors of its economies notably agriculture, industry, services, finances and transport. For the latter in particular, government intervention although effective has witnessed great difficulties.

Transport and mobility in Africa

Transport infrastructures are important for the development of exchanges in society. They are indeed indispensable for a country’s development. Hence, where the road passes; development follows. In central Africa, its evolution is handicapped by a very hostile environment made up of dense forests and a ramified hydrographical network. This is sometimes characterised by the absence of construction materials which leads to an increase in investment cost. The construction of one kilometre of road costs over 230 million FCFA. This situation explains the lagging behind of this region in relation to the rest of the continent. (UNCTADA II: 2005)

Likewise in other African countries, the dominant transport system in the interior of Cameroon just as for intra communities is road transport. It covers 80 to 90 % of transport of
goods and 80 to 99% of human transport. The country accounts for 49,598km of roads of which 4,830km are tarred, 16,468km classified as ground roads and 28,300km of unclassified rural roads. The essential part of resources are mobilised for the maintenance of a priority network of 27,935km defined according to criterion of economic profitability and rural development. The roads are generally in a bad or mediocre state. With a daily traffic of some 2000 vehicles on tarred roads and 500 on ground roads, an annual average of 5,000 cases of accidents resulting in 1500 deaths and 6,000 injured. 2/3 of these accidents are due to human causes (inattention, excess speed, overload etc), 12% to the state of the vehicles and 6% on the state of the roads. (CNCC: 2007)

Public transport enterprises have disappeared in most cities (SOTUC closed its doors in February 1995) as a result of the effects of the structural adjustment programmes which restricted government spending and subventions. Thus, government’s retreat from this sector and the absence of a coherent transport plan led to its deregulation favouring the development of a private offer. In this less controlled sector, operators of vehicles of great capacities (cars, buses and mini-buses) are more and more in competition with engines of smaller sizes which cover most often a greater share of collective transport. In such an atmosphere of growing population in towns and villages, there is a high demand for public transport as personal transport is still reserved for a minority. The rapid diffusion of private public transport has been boosted by the absence of firm regulation from the public services who adopt a lukewarm attitude over public transport. (Diaz Olvera: 2007) This private offer rests on the exploitation of varied type of vehicles among which second hand refurbished vehicles commonly known as /clandos/ (meaning clandestine transport vehicles). Used in public transport, they hold a preponderant place in the mobility system of most towns and villages whether regularly registered or not.

Most recently have appeared in towns and cities a new form of public transport: the commercial motorbike popularly known as motorbike taxi.

According to the Oxford Hachette Dictionary (2008 edition), “A motorbike is a small motorcycle with a low frame and small wheels and elevated handlebars”. 
Genesis and distribution of motorbikes

German born Gottlieb Daimler and Wilhelm Maybach invented the first gas-engine motorbike which was an engine attached to a wooden bike. This was the first internal combustion, petroleum fuelled motorbike. It was different from the safety bicycles or the boneshaker bicycles of the era in that it had zero degrees of steering axis angle and no fork offset, and thus did not use the principles of bicycle dynamics developed nearly 70 years earlier. Instead, it relied on two outrigger wheels to remain upright while turning. The inventors called their invention the Reitwagen ("riding car"). It was designed as an expedient test bed for their new engine, rather than a true prototype vehicle. That marked the moment in history when the dual development of a viable gas-powered engine and the modern bicycle collided. Gottlieb Daimler used a new engine invented by engineer, Nicolaus Otto. Otto invented the first "Four-Stroke Internal-Combustion Engine" in 1876. He called it the "Otto Cycle Engine" As soon as he completed his engine, Daimler (a former Otto employee) built it into a motorcycle.

Figure 1
Replica of the Daimler-Maybach Reitwagen, the first motorbike constructed in 1885
(Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/file:/Daimler-1-motorbike-1.jpg)

The construction of motorbikes has today been standardised on a steel or aluminium frame, telescopic forks holding the front wheel, and disc brakes. Some other body parts, designed for either aesthetic or performance reasons may be added. A petrol powered engine
typically consisting of between one and four cylinders (and less commonly, up to eight cylinders) coupled to a manual five- or six-speed sequential transmission drives the Swingarm-mounted rear wheel by a chain.

In numerous cultures, motorbikes are the primary means of motorised transport. According to the Taiwanese government, for example, "the number of automobiles per ten thousand population is around 2,500, and the number of motorbikes is about 5,000." In places such as Vietnam, motorbike use is extremely high due to a lack of public transport and low income levels that put automobiles out of reach for many. In Vietnam, motorised traffic consists of mostly motorbikes. The four largest motorbike markets in the world are all in Asia: China, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam. The motorbike is also popular in Brazil's frontier towns. Amid the global economic downturn of 2008, the motorbike market grew by 6.5%. Recent years have seen an increase in the popularity of motorbikes elsewhere. In the USA, registrations increased by 51% between 2000 and 2005. This is mainly attributed to increasing fuel prices and urban congestion.

In Latin America, to the exception of the moto conchos of Dominican Republic which developed in the 1980s, motorbike taxis has been timid to see the day. This is the case in Caracas where it appeared in the mid 1990s, at Lima in Peru and in other small towns such as Sincelejo in Colombia.

In Sub Saharan Africa, the ancestor of the motorbike taxi is the “bicycle-taxi” used in the transport of goods and men in rural areas since the colonial era. In Benin, transport by road /Akassa/ was done by bicycle known as /kèkè kannan/. The passenger transport known as /taxi kannan/ came later on to complete this activity. (Tossou: 1993).

In East Africa, Kenya and Uganda developed the /boda-boda/ in the 1960s. The /boda-boda/ taxis are part of the African bicycle culture; they started in the 1960s and 1970s and are still spreading from their origin on the Kenyan - Ugandan border to other regions. The name originated from a need to transport people across the "no-mans-land" between the border posts without the paperwork involved with using motor vehicles crossing the international border. This started in southern border crossing town of Busia (Uganda), where there is over two kilometres between the gates and quickly spread to the northern border town of Malaba (Kenya). The bicycle owners would shout out /boda-boda/ (border-to-border) to potential customers. In Kenya and Uganda, the bicycles are more and more replaced by motorbikes. The motorbike taxis have taken the name /boda-boda/ as well, though in much of Uganda, the Swahili term for motorbike, /piki-piki/, is used to describe motorbike /boda-bodas/. (Howe,
Mander: 2004). In 2004 it was estimated that more than 200 000 men in Uganda were working as bicycle /boda-boda/ and already almost 90 000 as motorised motorbike /boda-boda/.

In west and central Africa, it’s really in the 1980s that the motorbike taxis were introduced in Niger, Nigeria and Cameroon. In countries such as Benin, it’s as a result of evolution in the bicycle-taxi (Agossou: 2004) In Nigeria, the name /Okada/ (also: /achaba/, /inaga/) refers to commercial motorbikes. The name is borrowed from the then popular Airline in Nigeria, the Okada Air. This was a local airline that was not popular for its comfort but remained the most used local airline in the country. In an ironic metaphor the first group of motorbike transporters was then given this name /okada/. Because of the comic irony of this name being used for a cyclist and for the popularity of the airline, the name okada/ for the commercial motorcyclist was never to be forgotten and eventually became as popular as it is now. It is one of the chief modes of transport in Nigeria and, by far, the most common form of informal transport system in that country.

Table 1: Representation of motorbike taxis in sub Saharan Africa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Zémidjan (Take me fast. A rapid door-to-door transport)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Bendskin (the word originates from a traditional dance from the western region of the country)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>Boda-boda (Boarder to boarder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niger</td>
<td>Kabu-kabu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Okada (former Nigerian airline known for its rapidity of service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Boda-boda (Boarder to boarder)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Vélo-taxi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Togo</td>
<td>Oléyia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This name is used for bicycles as well as for motorbikes

This mode of public transport satisfies more and more the population’s needs in terms of public transport in Africa and Cameroon in particular, whilst raising critics from its users, other transport operators and government authorities. It can also be seen as a “Response from below” to the prevailing transport crises. This situation can better still be termed “development from below”.

Development being a fact in all societies (Mbonji: 1988), the Bakossi society of Tombel also develops adaptive mechanisms to favour its development. This is the case with the introduction of motorbike taxis into the lifestyle of the people. Historically, this society used to migrate seasonally from Bangem to Tombel to work in cocoa plantations. With time, they began settling in Tombel. Movements between the different villages were done by trekking. With the grading of the Tombel-Bangem road in 1990, landrovers became the main means of transport on this 60km lane, but trekking from one village to another remained the principal mode of movement. Due to poor road networks, contact between villages and peoples are limited as one travels by trekking from one village to another.

Our research topic “The socio cultural impact of the introduction of motorbike taxis into the rural community of Tombel, South West region, Cameroon” comes to throw more light on this activity which has today become part of the Cameroonian lifestyle. With the aim of collecting data and carry out analysis on this phenomenon, we are going to analyse its introduction and spread of commercial motorbikes in Cameroon with focus on Tombel, bringing out the impact of this activity on the lifestyle of these people. This research will thus bring out knowledge which can be used in finding possible solutions to the social ills caused by this social phenomenon.

1- CONTEXT OF STUDY

Introduced by the colonial masters, motorbikes have always existed in Cameroon. The relatively cheap price of a motorbike as compared to vehicles favoured its widespread use on Cameroon’s roads. They were used for personal purposes, transporting people and goods from one place to another.

Nevertheless, at the aftermath of the 1990 socio-economic and political crises, motorbikes progressively began to be used for commercial purposes; transporting people and goods at relatively cheap prices. The use of Asian brand motorbikes
(Nangfang, Sanili, Kymco, Sanyo etc) which are sold at relatively affordable prices; the increased unemployment rate emanating from the economic crises and structural adjustment plans, the activity of motorbike taxi became a solution for many to make earns meet. This has brought in a number of changes affecting the political, economic and socio-cultural landscape of Cameroon.

2- JUSTIFICATION OF THE TOPIC

Our motivation for the choice of this topic is backed by several reasons. Personality, the strong attachment we have to the town of Tombel as our birth place makes us arouse curiosity on the functioning of this town.

Socially, the sudden change in transport habits over the various roads leading to Tombel from the Littoral and South west regions is a call for concern. More so, traffic between the different villages found in the Tombel has risen in terms of movement of people and goods. Public transport has shifted from the use of vehicles to that of motorbikes.

In addition, news of accidents on various national television channels, in newspapers and radios relate regular scenes of accidents involving motorbike riders and passengers.

In an article published on afrik.com on July 25th 2002, J. Bertrand Temgoua writes on road security in Cameroon titling his report as thus: “Les moto-taxis ou la danse de la mort”.

This article relates the situation in Douala.

Extract:

“Bras cassés, entorses à la cheville, déboîtement de la hanche, double fracture de la jambe, crâne broyé...les horreurs dignes des films d’horreur sont le lot quotidien des passagers et des conducteurs des moto-taxis. " Sans casque et parfois ne maîtrisant pas les bases du code de la route, les conducteurs des " bend-skin " prennent très souvent des risques insensés ", s’indigne un habitant de Douala. Dépassement à gauche, excès de vitesse, non respect des feux rouges, arrêts intempestifs... Ces motocyclistes sèment la mort à presque tous les carrefours. Et pour cause, ils sont pressés, les yeux plus tournés vers la montre que sur la route. Les accidents causés par les " bend-skin " sont si récurrents que le pavillon des urgences de l’hôpital Laquintinie de Douala a été débaptisé. Depuis six ans, tout le monde l’appelle le " pavillon bend-skin ". Il accueille majoritairement les victimes des accidents des moto-taxis. La dizaine d’infirmières qui travaille dans ce pavillon reçoit tous les jours cinq à dix accidentés du fait des " bend-skin ". Des accidents, très souvent mortels, qui pour l’heure ne semblent pas préoccuper les autorités camerounaises, pas plus que les habitants de Douala. Ils sont toujours de plus en plus nombreux à recourir à ce moyen de transport dangereux »
This social hazard led to government’s reaction with the Prime Minister’s decree N°2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008 fixing the conditions and modalities regulating the use of motorbikes for commercial purposes. This discloses government’s attention to this activity. The exercise of political power by motorbike riders in cities and villages has created a new force to reckon with on the national scene. They are in a constant friction with the administration.

Le Messager newspaper of 22 April 2010 reveals conflict between motorbike taxi riders and the forces of law and order.

Extract:

« Plus d’une centaine de motos saisies et conduites à la voirie municipale. Des policiers blessés au même titre que les conducteurs de moto-taxi. Les traces de l’affrontement ayant opposé les moto-taxis et les forces de police sont visibles sur la chaussée. Cette triste scène a été vécue hier mercredi 21 avril 2010 à Bonapriso, au lieu dit carrefour Armée de l’air. Et pour cause, les policiers avaient érigé des barricades pour empêcher l’accès de ce quartier résidentiel aux conducteurs de moto-taxis. Ce sont donc plus de deux cent conducteurs de motos-taxis qui étaient opposés aux policiers dans ce duel sans merci, au milieu d’un carrefour obstrué par cette horde d’assaillants et de curieux de circonstance. «C’est quand les policiers ont refusé que les motos passent qu’ils se sont fâchés, dit Flaubert Ndédi, un habitant de Bonapriso. Les « bend skin » (moto-taxi, nldr) se sont mis à téléphoner et dix minutes après, il y avait plus de deux cent motos ici. Ils se sont mis à bousculer les policiers qui ne se sont pas laissé faire. Les pierres et les bâtons étaient utilisés comme armes et il y a eu beaucoup de blessures de part et d’autre».


Finally, the existence of an anthropological impact study of motorbikes in rural areas has not yet been carried out.

The choice of carrying out our research in a rural setting such as Tombel is motivated by the fact that this area is composed of people with a homogenous cultural background who have less public transport access and this affects their social milieu. Also, focus on the activity of motorbikes and its associated consequences have been laid on urban areas. The rural areas, usually vulnerable, are most of the time forgotten. Rural transport doesn’t have a high priority in the public transport system, let alone rural transport safety. Proof of this is the transport chart that is given to the transport operators which shows three categories of transport: urban, inter-urban and freight. Although with the recent development of a road safety awareness programme this may change. (Synthesis Rural Transport Safety Studies, IFRTD: 2007)
3- PROBLEM

Before the liberalisation of public transport by the state in 1994, the Bakossi of Tombel had a mode of life centred on agriculture in the cultivation of cash and food crops such as cocoa, coffee, cassava and cocoyam. Wealth and prestige were measured in terms of an individual’s cocoa and coffee production.

Movements in Tombel and its surrounding villages were done on foot. The only roads linking the town to its outlets are the Tombel-Bangem, Tombel-Loum and Tombel-Kumba roads which are functional in the dry season and sometimes become practically unusable in the rainy season. The population of Tombel is obliged to trek from one village to another. More so, before 1995, very few people could afford a motorbike and its usage was generally limited for personal purposes. Lorries transporting cocoa and land rovers transporting passengers in and out of Tombel were the only means of locomotion.

Nevertheless, the introduction of commercial motorbikes has come to change the socio-economic and cultural scenery of the Tombel population whose basic economic activity was centred on cash and food crops and has today been extended to this tertiary activity. Motorbikes as a means of public transport has led to the creation of related jobs such as motorbike spare part retailers and motorbike mechanics). Motorbikes as a means of locomotion have become flexible in the transport of goods from one place to another, penetrating into enclave areas. This penetration has gotten major consequences in the economic, social and cultural functioning of the Bakossi society. This new activity is a source of revenue that goes a long way to influence the way of life of the population of Tombel. Thus, our problem is to study and analyse the change of habits in Tombel of the use of motorbikes which hitherto were used in personal transport and have today been transformed into taxis, affecting the lifestyle of the Bakossi people.

4 - PROBLEMATIC

It is generally known that motorbikes are a means of transport used to move from one place to another. With the policy of liberalisation of public transport by the government of Cameroon in the 1990s, commercial motorbikes were introduced in Cameroon’s cities and progressively into rural areas. The introduction and proliferation of these commercial
motorbikes in the Tombel municipality has come to influence the mode of life of its population which generally had the habit to move from one village to another by trekking and today uses motorbikes to move from one village to another. More so, this population that lives on agriculture in the cultivation of cash and food crops in the likes of cocoa, coffee, cocoyam, cassava and plantains; with the production of these products constituting references of wealth and prestige has also drifted in the riding and ownership of commercial motorbikes becoming a ready source of income and a new sign of wealth and prestige amongst the people of Tombel. More so, the activity has introduced new jobs as motorbike spare part retailers and motorbike mechanics. These changes in perception and activity have come to change the socio-cultural organisation of the Bakossi society.

5- RESEARCH QUESTIONS

5.1- Principal question
What is the impact of the introduction of motorbike taxis as a new means of transport in Tombel?
To better apprehend our principal research question, we subdivide it into four secondary questions

5.2- Secondary questions
➢ What is the profile of a motorbike taxi rider in Tombel?
➢ What is the role played by motorbike taxis in Tombel?
➢ What is the perception of the Tombel population over the activity of motorbike taxi?
➢ In what has the introduction and proliferation of motorbike taxis modify the lifestyle of the Bakossi society in Tombel?

6- RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis being a temporal answer to our research question that awaits confirmation, we are going to elaborate a principal and secondary hypothesis as follows:

6.1- Principal hypothesis
The introduction of motorbike taxis has brought changes in the cultural patterns of the Bakossi in Tombel.
6.2- Secondary hypothesis

- A motorbike taxis rider in Tombel is a man between the ages of sixteen and thirty five years old who earns a living by transporting people and goods on his motorbike.
- Commercial motorbikes are the major means of public transport in Tombel.
- The population of Tombel perceives the activity of motorbike taxi as an instrument of change.
- The activity of motorbike taxi has brought changes in the socio-economic and political organisation affecting cultural patterns among the people of Tombel.

7- RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

From the above hypothesis, we derive our research objectives as elaborated below.

7.1- Principal objective

The main objective of this research is to show that the introduction of motorbike taxis has modified the mode of life of the Tombel population.

7.2 - Secondary objectives

- To bring out the physical and social profile of a motorbike taxis rider in Tombel.
- To explore the role played by motorbike taxis in the life of the Tombel community.
- To show that the population of Tombel perceives the activity of motorbike taxi as an instrument of change.
- To show that the activity of motorbike taxi has brought changes in the socio-economic and political organisation affecting cultural patterns amongst the people of Tombel.

8 – METHODOLOGY

This is the presentation of the methods and working tools which have been used in the process of data collection. The quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the collection of data in order to carry out the present research.

8.1- Data collection tools and techniques

They are comprised of questionnaire, interview guide, documentary research, direct and participant observation, life experience and in-depth interview.
A questionnaire was administered randomly to over 800 inhabitants of Tombel. This was to collect data on the preferred means of movement from Tombel to the neighbouring towns and villages and within Tombel town itself. Three variables were included in our questionnaire; age, sex and profession.

**Documentary research**

This was carried out in Yaounde where we consulted documentation relative to transport in Cameroon with precision on commercial motorbikes commonly known as “bend-skin”. We equally consulted publications relative to the science of Anthropology. In Tombel, we consulted books on the history and social organisation of the Bakossi.

This research was equally carried out online with the consultation of Internet publications over aspects relevant to the public transport system, anthropology and commercial motorbikes in Cameroon and beyond. The objective of this research method

To accomplish the above task, we have been to:

- The National archives which permitted us to obtain knowledge on the evolution of transport systems in Cameroon.
- The IFORD library where we got in contact with documentation and statistics on transport infrastructure in Cameroon and the central African region.
- The “Circle Philo-Socio-Psycho-Anthropo” of the University of Yaounde I which permitted us to evaluate the research work covered in this domain.
- The Sub Service of Road Transport at the Ministry of Transport where we got in contact with the Prime Minister decree of 2008 regulating the activity of commercial motorbike riders in Cameroon.
- The Nkome’s library in Tombel where we got documentation on the town of Tombel, our research field with details on the lifestyle of the Bakossi.
- Internet cybercafés in Yaoundé where we made use of research engine such as www.google.com and Wikipedia, the online encyclopaedia.

**Direct observation**
This research method was used on our research field- Tombel. Direct observation concerned a daily observation of commercial motorbike riders at the Tombel central town which is their point of departure for all destinations in and around the town. We observed the different types of motorbikes used, the attires, behaviours and functioning of commercial motorbike riders. We also observed the behavioural patterns of the population of Tombel towards the latter.

➢ **Participant observation**
While observing our population under study, we participated in the daily life activities of the Tombel population linked to the use of motorbikes. Using motorbike taxis in our daily movements permitted us to be in the shoe of the public users and collect information from riders and users alike.

➢ **Life experience**
Life experience was an important technique of data collection for it permitted us to collect data on life stories of motorbike taxi riders and also users of whom some have been victims of motorbike accidents.

➢ **In-depth interview**
Through these interviews, data was collected from informants through their life experiences, vision of life and opinions which provided us with information on the culture of the Bakossi and most especially on the activity of motorbike taxis.
These are carried out through an interview guide with key informants such as the motorbike riders, holders of the Bakossi tradition, lay men, women and youths of the Bakossi society and other populations living in Tombel. Through these interviews, data was collected from the population concerning the role of motorbikes and motorbike riders in Tombel, the changes its introduction has brought and their perception of this activity. Another interview guide is focused on the motorbike riders themselves. This permitted us to collect data on the profile of a motorbike taxi rider and the impact this activity has gotten on him and on the society at large. A copy of these interview guides has been attached in the annex section of our work.
Our field research was facilitated by the use of a “facilitator” who eased out negotiations for interviews.
As field materials, we used a block note, a multimedia mobile phone to record interviews, observations and remarks; a digital camera to take pictures of motorbike riders and the road paths they use.

**9- DATA ANALYSIS**

The tape-recorded information was transcribed into a block note. With the data collected from documentary research and from the research field, analyses were carried out in relation to our research objectives and hypothesis. It’s from this data collected that we derived the various concepts used in our work.

- **Delimitation**

  The present study; *The introduction of motorbike taxis in the rural community of Tombel, South West region, Cameroon* is centred on motorbike taxi riders and the inhabitants of Tombel central and its attached villages. This study describes the activity of motorbike taxis in Tombel, bringing out its socio-cultural and economic impact on the lifestyle of the people. Our informants are essentially composed of the motorbike taxi riders and the inhabitants of Tombel and will be selected according to age, sex, ethnic background and location.

- **Plan of work**

  This dissertation is divided into five chapters; Chapter one is concerned with the definition of key concepts and literature review. Chapter two presents the ethnography of Tombel and brings out a description of the Bakossi society and its environment. Chapter three presents the profile of a motorbike taxi rider in Tombel. It presents the socio demographic data of the riders and their perception of the activity. Chapter four presents the perception of the population over the activity and chapter five is concerned with the impact of motorbike taxis on the lifestyle of the population. The implications that can be derived from the introduction of this activity and the verification of our stated hypothesis will conclude our research study.
CHAPTER I

DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS, LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE
I - DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.1 - Socio-cultural
This is defined as relating to, or involving a combination of social (relating to human society) and cultural (taste in art and manners that are favored by a social group) factors. Socio culture is the way people act and develop based around their surroundings. Socio cultural factors involve self-concept and self esteem. The socio-culture approach also is based upon people’s beliefs and what they stand for.

1.2 - Rural community
This term encompasses a range of approaches and activities that describes the livelihoods of people living in rural areas. These areas are large and isolated areas of an open country with low population density. Rural communities in developing world are usually associated to peasant farmers who have agriculture as main activity.
2- LITERATURE REVIEW

To attain the objectives and verify the proposed hypothesis, the research had to be based on a sub field of study in anthropology. Our present research finds its foundations into socio-cultural anthropology. To this, our literature review will be decentralised into two phases: A review of existing literature in our sub field of anthropology with an accent on development anthropology, one of its specialisations; The second phase will focus on road transport in Cameroon with a review of existing literature on motorbike taxis, their expansion and impact on the society. At the end of this review, we will be able to access the work carried out, bringing out the loop holes and give an orientation for the production of new knowledge destined to enrich existing literature.

2.1 - Socio-cultural Anthropology

Socio-cultural anthropology is that branch of anthropology whose focus is based on the study of interpersonal relationships, social groups, customs, traditions and values existing between people such as family, kinship groups, age groups, economic activities among others. Scholars such as George and Achilles Theodorson consider socio-cultural anthropology as “the study of the cultural and social structure of a community or society”. This subfield emphasizes on the understanding of the total configuration and interrelationships of culture traits, complexes and social relationships in particular, geographical environment and historical context. Thus, it is concerned with the influences of geographic and historical, as well as social and psychological factors in the analysis of the development of a culture, its present characteristics and the changes it is undergoing.

To move into specificities under social anthropology elaborated above, the anthropology of development stands as one of its sub branches that contributes to solve concrete development problems and gives room for adaptations of new cultural traits into cultures and societies.

Traditionally, institutional development projects have been based on three key assumptions: “a mechanistic and linear conception of history and development," which assumes that every society must go through the same stages before it can achieve development; “a technological approach to institutional development and management” that assumes that western methods and techniques of management are the only road to modernization; and an “ethnocentric approach to culture” that assumes that the basic goal of
any society is to achieve the same values characterizing the so-called "developed" countries (that is, the spirit of enterprise, profit motive, material security, and self interest) -countries not exhibiting such values are viewed as primitive and underdeveloped.

The logical conclusion of this approach is that Africa's development must be stimulated from the outside, requiring a transfer of culture, methods, and techniques from the industrialized world. But today’s evidence strongly suggests that none of these assumptions are valid. Many publications in development anthropology have come to comfort this assertion.

Over decades, the concept of development has been subjected to many discourse and critics. Nevertheless, it was contained in notions of evolution. Today, development cannot be limited to material progress, gadgets or economic growth. It has given rise to a set of contradictory literature in relation to anthropology.

Development anthropology refers to the application of anthropological perspectives to the multidisciplinary branch of development studies. It takes international development and international aid as primary objects. In this branch of anthropology, the term development refers to the social action made voluntary by different agents (institutions, business, enterprise, states, independent volunteers) who are trying to modify the economic, technical, political or/and social life of a given place in the world, especially in developing nations. M. Mosse (2007) treats the existing link between anthropology and international development, bringing out the crucial role that anthropologists could play in the reflection on development.

In this same vein, Crewe, Emma and Elizabeth Harrison (1998) examine, in ethnographic detail, the culture of international development and aid. Discussions concerning the interaction of “the stakeholders” in an organization, program or project are major elements of each chapter. The authors challenge some of the common perceptions, what might be termed ethnocentrism, of the “developers” and the “deep-seated assumptions” and “flawed notions” surrounding their relationship with local participants. All these discussions are illuminated and substantiated from the author’s field experiences in Africa and Asia.

Contrary to the above approaches, Long, Norman and Ann Long (1992) in a series of scientific articles explore the actor-oriented approaches both in social research and in development (intervention). Unlike ‘totalizing’ theories, actor-oriented approaches put the “subjects of development” (that is, peasants, workers, government officials and the
development practitioners and researchers themselves) at centre stage categorized into four separate parts: 1) *An Actor-Oriented Paradigm*, 2) *The Research Process*, 3) *New Perspectives on Old Problems*, and 4) *Theoretical Windows on Development Intervention*.

To today describe and understand the multiple relationships existing between development institutions (public and private) and the targeted local populations, Olivier de Sardan (1995) considers development in socio-anthropology as a particular social change than a set of complex interventionists (NGOs, national or international agencies, experts, technicians…) trying to impulse diversified “targeted groups”.

According to Mbonji (1988) there is no common measure of happiness. The fact of being besides a system of development could permit us to have another. He sees development as being part of all societies.

The remarkable vibrancy of the informal sector in Africa in the midst of generalised economic crises and difficulties of most modern sector enterprises illustrates the limits of the linear conception and affirms other systems of development which are developing alongside. Against the background of a hostile environment and lack of government support, the success of most of these microenterprises is best explained by their ability to reconcile African social and cultural values and traditions with the need for economic efficiency. Their management is largely a family affair, relying heavily on informal business relationships. This is the case with the introduction of motorbike taxis in the public transport system of Cameroon which has also been subjected to a number of publications reviewed below.

### 2.2- Transportation and motorbike taxis

A review of transport systems in Cameroon with a focus on road transport and the activity of motorbike taxis in particular will give us an insight of this research.

#### 2.2.1 - Transport systems in Cameroon

On a historical perspective, the colonial transport system was meant to facilitate the movement of essential raw materials from the hinterland to the metropolitan countries via sea; while the urban system sought to promote residential segregation along racial or class lines as well as rigidly compartmentalise land use activities. Both systems, which have been inherited by the country's indigenous authorities, have contributed significantly to problems ranging from accentuating the cost of maintaining existing, and developing new, transportation
infrastructure, to creating difficulties for intermodal coordination as a means of improving economic productivity and efficiency. It is argued that the problems have been compounded by negative trends in the country's economy, as well as by measures adopted to reverse these trends. Njoh (1998) addresses the implications of colonial spatial development policies and deteriorating economic conditions for urban public transportation in Cameroon.

The development of transport infrastructure in Cameroon has been one of the major setbacks in Cameroon’s economic development. On a global perspective, the public service spends an equivalent of 1% of the gross National Income (GNI) in transport spending while in return, this sector contributes to 5% of the realisation of national wealth (SSATP:2007). In the same line of action, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (2005) underlines the loop holes of transport systems in Central Africa with the lack of harmonisation of the rules and procedures governing transport infrastructure. This report goes further to present the objectives, strategic orientation and modalities of a consensual directory plan.

A presentation of the different transport modes in Cameroon is necessary to have an appraisal of the different means of movements before laying focus on road transport by motorbike taxis.

– **Air transport**

Seven airports realise the essentials of air traffic in Cameroon: The 3 international airports of Douala, Yaounde and Garoua and the airports of Ngoundere, Maroua, Bamenda and Bertoua. The management and exploitation of these airports is assured by the mixed economy company "Aéroports du Cameroun” (ADC). In addition, many airfields are distributed on the national territory are functional; 14 are owned by the public services while about 20 are opened and operated by private firms. Cameroonian airports register an average of more than one million passengers of which 40% from international traffic, 25% from domestic traffic, 20% in regional traffic (Central and West Africa) and 15% of transit. Douala represents ¾ of international passenger flow and Yaounde 1/5. Air freight is established at 20,000 tons (80% from Douala and ¼ from international trade). Annually, some 40,000 movements of airplanes are noted in Cameroon. (CNCC:2007)
– Rail Transport

The Cameroon railway network is comprised of 1,361 km of rail divided into several sections:

- TRANSCAM I (Douala - Yaounde) : 262 km
- TRANSCAM II (Yaoundé- Ngaoundere): 623 km
- The western road (Douala - Kumba) : 220 km

These routes transport mostly goods with the Yaounde-Ngoundere being the network having the greatest traffic.

– Maritime Transport

Cameroon has 3 maritime ports (Douala, Limbe and Kribi) and one river port (Garoua). The Douala port is the most important for it receives 95% of goods moving in and out of Cameroon. Wood constitutes 66% of exports while hydrocarbons represent 27.7% of imports. With the privatization of the national maritime navigation Company, CAMSHIP, traffic is assured by private firms of diverse nationalities.

- Road Transport

Cameroon’s road network is composed of about 65,000km of principal roads (National, regional, divisional and communal) of which more than 2,500km of tarred roads. Its pattern responds to the actual traffic density. About 300,000 vehicles are registered with an import rate of 6% increase per year. 90% of imported vehicles are refurbished used vehicles of which 70% are above 10 years of age. In 2000, the government of Cameroon took an option of liberalizing the exploitation of road transport with no particular obligation from the state or collectivities apart from the dispositions of public order, no tax or custom exoneration, no monopoly nor even imposed transport fares but a fixation of a price magnitude with the operators.

Inter-urban transport services are thus being exploited by private economic operators. About 50 organised regular transport companies can be denoted in the country (Garanti Express, Le Car, Binam, Centrale voyage, Finexe voyage, Musango, Orient Express, Tala Voyage, Kami Express, Confort, Castor, Tabo Express, Buca, Alliance, Amour Mezam, Azinmeda, Vatican, etc). They operate in the lines linking the principal towns of Douala,
Yaoundé, Bafoussam, Bamenda, Ebolowa, Betoua, Buea, Ngoundere, Garoua and Maroua. Travelling conditions are globally uncomfortable because of overload of passengers and untimely stoppages. Averages, the great transporters have about 200 to 250 buses of 27 to 30 seats. The bigger buses carry about 52 to 72 passengers. Most of these companies equally propose freight transport, money transfer and mail transport services.

The situation of rural transport in Cameroon is deplorable. Most of the rural roads are not tarred and as a consequence suffer from climatic conditions. The rains wash away the top soil giving room to muddy and unusable paths. Second hand vehicles (known as /clandos/ in some regions) are employed in the transport of passengers and goods. The main rural transport types in rural areas are walking and carrying, Intermediate means of transport (Bicycles, Motorbikes, Animal drawn carts, Pack and riding animals), Rural taxis Minibuses, pick ups, cars, 4x4s, Trucks (example, 3 tonne, 10 tonne), Buses (more than 20 seats), Water transport – large, medium, small (Starkey: 2007)

2.2.2 – Motorbike taxis in Cameroon
The activity of commercial motorbikes commonly known as /Bend-skin/ in the francophone regions of Cameroon and /Okada/ in the Anglophone regions is quite a recent activity in the country’s economic tissue.

a) Origin and spread of motorbike taxis in Cameroon

Motorbikes have been present on the Cameroonian soil since the colonial era. This was generally used for personal transport purposes. Its commercial use in the public transport system began in the 1980s. (Sadou A: 2005) This is a decade earlier than other countries such as Benin which entered into the activity in the 1990s. It’s through the Northern regions (Extreme north, North and Adamawa) that motorbike taxis became the principal means of public transportation of people and in most towns and villages of Cameroon. This constitutes the first diffusion circle (Spencer:1996) through which this activity expanded all over the nation as principal means of public transport in most towns and villages. The diffusion of this activity in the northern regions of Cameroon was favoured by several reasons;
The proximity and porosity of the long border with Nigeria gave way to the smuggling of goods which resulted in the reduction of prices of motorbikes sold in Cameroon. The Great North had become the dumping place of imported or assembled motorbikes from Nigeria. (Kaffo C, Kamdem P, Tatsabong B, Diebo L. M :2008)

At the threshold of the 1980s, Maroua, Garoua, Yagoua and Ngoundere, became the first diffusion homes of the activity of motorbike taxis in Cameroon. In Ngaoundere for example, it’s in 1988 that Mr. Haman Daligama, a young man of 32 years old had the ingenious idea of transporting Ngaoundere inhabitants from one of the new neighbourhoods on his Honda CG 175 motorbike for a token fee. He very fast abandoned his job of brick layer to that of a taxi motorbike rider: A new mode of urban public transport was born, that of motorbike taxis. This rapidly attracted other youths who adopted this new economic activity. Japanese brands of motorbikes (Yamaha, Kawasaki and Honda) were used at the threshold of this activity. (Sadou : 2005).

The following table depicts the dynamic evolution of this activity in the town of Ngoundere between 1994 and 2003.

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<tr>
<td>Number of Motorbike taxi</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>251</td>
<td>261</td>
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Motorbike taxi riders circulated in the peripheries of the city at the start of this activity. This is accounted for by two reasons. The first being that the centre of the town was covered by the regular yellow coloured taxi cabs and secondly, the activity was of a clandestine character which limited the expansion margins of its practitioners. Its clandestine nature was due to the lack of official recognition by the state and the absence of laws regulating this activity; the only available texts concerned taxi cars. A good example is the Ministerial order N° 291 of 30th June 1975 regulating the activity of taxis in towns. (Ngabmen: 1997). The motorbike riders were thus falling under article 226 of the Road Code.
which among others punishes this illegal activity with the seizure of their vehicle. This activity would then be condemned and fought against by the administrative authorities, notably the Governors Mineli Elomo Bernard and Oumarou Koue who succeeded each other at the head of the Adamawa region between 1989 and 1993. The latter even signed an order banning the activity of motorbike taxis all over the Adamawa region and the seizure of all motorbikes caught in the exercise of this activity on a profit base. (Sadou A: 2005) This created a social crisis that burst out between the riders and the administration. Tension only went down after intense negotiations. The Prime Minister’s decree N° 94/033/PM of 2nd of February 1994 came to recognise the activity of motorbike taxis laying down the modalities of its exploitation. The text which excluded the two most important cities of Cameroon (Yaounde and Douala) imposed the procurement of the following documents; a special licence, Global tax, public transport card(Carte bleue,), Insurance, vehicle stamp rights, a registration at the transport register for motorbike taxis.

More so, the riders should be of at least 18 years of age and be a holder of a Category “A” driving licence. This decree will be modified a year later by that of N° 95/650/PM of 16th November 1995.

According to estimations from the report published by the Division of Civil Security/MINPLADAT in 2004, we find over 30,000 motorbikes in Maroua, 20,000 in Garoua and 15,000 in Ngaoundere. These figures show how motorbikes have been assimilated by the population of these towns as the principal means of urban transport.

The diffusion of this mode of transport from one society to another, through migration and trade (Winthrop 1991:82) led to its spread to the East and Southern regions of Cameroon. Thanks to the trade routes and roads linking the Adamawa and East regions, it was easy for this mode of transport to be diffused down south. Through towns like Bertoua, Batouri and Yokadouma, motorbike taxis emerged to cover entire regions. This constitutes the second diffusion home of motorbike taxis in Cameroon. (See figure 2)

It’s only in the 1990s that motorbike taxis were introduced in the Centre, Littoral and Great West (West, South West and North West) regions of Cameroon, constituting the third diffusion home. (See figure 2). In Yaounde, the activity has been limited to the peripheries leaving the centre of the town to taxi cars. Anguissa S.B (2000) presents the exploitation of motorbike taxis considering it as a response from the Mimboman population of a neighbourhood in Yaounde to the transport crises of which they are the preys. His research reveals that this mode of transport, originally disregarded, ignored then fought down at its
beginning has entered into the mores, reinforcing its supply capacity and has today become the main means of transport for almost all inhabitants of the Mimboman neighbourhood of Yaounde. This phenomenon is much localised because of the hilly topography of the city of Yaounde and the Mimboman neighbourhood.

The city of Douala on the contrary has emerged to become the place of the greatest concentration of motorbike taxis. The exact number of motorbike taxis is unknown. A 2003 study of the Poverty and Urban Mobility research (PMU) realised on the account of the SSATP/World bank economic commission for Africa evaluated its number at 30,000. This figure has evolved over time and in 2008, estimates from the Douala Urban Council holds about 45,000, the number of motorbike taxi riders in Douala.(CUD: 2008). In April 2010, The Yaounde based NGO- COSA (Conduire Sans Accident) estimated the number of motorbike taxis in Douala at 100,000 engines. The available statistics are fragments or pure estimates to be considered with caution.

Buea, the South West regional headquarter constitutes one of the rare towns where motorbike taxis are absent. This activity has been forbidden by the Mayor of the town, Mbella Moki Charles.

Timid, negligible and clandestine at its beginnings as all over in Africa (AGOSSOU NOUKPO, 2003), this mode of transport has been gradually generalized as years pass by and has been diffused all over the national territory as an excellent means of public transport linking the city centres to the peripheries and villages. It didn’t give rise to any official registration just like the /clando/ vehicles which occupy the city peripheries. (KENGNE FODOUOP: 1985). This explains the anarchy in its mode of functioning especially in urban centres. As a consequence, motorbike taxis have risen considerably in numbers rendering difficult the distinction of a motorbike taxi from motorbikes used for personal purposes. More so, it’s today very difficult to give a real figure of the number of motorbike taxis circulating in Cameroon.
Map 1:
Map of Cameroon depicting the three diffusion homes of motorbike taxis and today’s zones of intense activity.

Source: C. Kaffo (2007): The integration of Motorbike Taxis in Cameroon’s public transport System or when the informal sector comes to the rescue of the State: A future solution to the problem of mobility and urban employment in Sub-Saharan Africa.
b) Factors favouring the emergence of motorbike taxis in Cameroon

Other than a simple integration phenomenon described above, several factors have contributed to the emergence of motorbike taxis in Cameroon. We can cite among others, a response to the prevailing transport deficit, the socio-political crises of the 1990s with the democratic wind and the acquisition of several public liberties, problems of mobility encountered by city dwellers and inhabitants of the interior.

- A response to transport shortages

In Yaoundé and Douala just as in all cities of Cameroon and worst of all in rural areas, the problem of mobility of persons, resulting from demographic growth is not always accompanied by the means to satisfy the surplus demand for public transport which is posed with acuity. The narrowness of the available roads gives rise to eternal traffic jams on certain road networks in cities. To move from one zone to another, the populations are sometimes obliged to forgo the regular taxi cars to hire the service of a motorbike taxi which has the possibility to slip between vehicles, baffling the elementary rules of the road code.

In the great cities of Cameroon, the populations witness great difficulties in their movements between September and May with exceptions of periods of academic holidays for the priority seems to be the transport of students (Kaffo C, Kamdem P, Tatsabong B, Diebo L. M : 2008)

In fact, the existing transport services (buses, cars and taxis…) are unable to satisfy the prevailing demand. In the early hours of the morning by half past 6 and also in the evenings between 4 pm and 7 pm, workers and students invade the streets and solicit the available means of transport for the movements between the different neighbourhoods. In Yaoundé, Mendong, Simbock, Biyem-Assi for example or Ekounou, Emombo Mimboman and the Mokolo, Nkolbisson road are all circles of high transport demands. The problem of mobility emanates from the fact that because of the bad nature of the roads, the regular taxi cars (yellow cabs) provide their services in the inner circles of the towns and most often only on tarred roads. In certain towns such as Garoua, the taxi cars are found but on the transport bus stations, in motor parks and railway stations. This situation almost identical to all regions of Cameroon where the implantation of motorbike taxis has led to the progressive drop in the use of regular taxi cars which are unable to compete notably as concerns costs and the personalisation of the services rendered. This has been observed in Bertoua where by the taxi cars gave way to motorbike taxis. Whilst a ride in a taxi car cost 200FCFA and even much according to the state of the road and distance covered, motorbike taxis ignore these
parameters and accept to undertake twice this distance at half the price. This has led to the complete resignation of taxi cars in Bertoua. In the Mimboman neighborhood of Yaounde, they have forced away the “clandos” (unregistered refurbished used vehicles) whose complementarily would have better served the neighbourhood. The value added is that it’s faster than the “clandos” and leaves the customer at his door. (DJOYUM: 2006).

In all regions of Cameroon, motorbike taxis are an individual response to the conjunction of a triple shortage: Shortage of private vehicles, shortages of public transport services and finally of road infrastructure. The development of road infrastructure and basic services has not evolved according to the spatial increase in population whose demands for movement are on a steady increase. The lack of viable infrastructure and the inadequate maintenance of the existing ones are very problematic. In the rainy seasons, the situation is worsen as motorised access to certain zones in the tropical regions are blocked rendering them enclave. The available public transport vehicles avoid these zones causing halts in the movement of people from peripheries to the cities and vice versa. Motorbikes through their flexibility have come to provide a ready solution as they can find their way through the muddy and slippery road tracks.

In towns such as Yaounde and Douala, the available public transport offers in had proven to be insufficient. The urban transport enterprise “Société des Transports Urbains du Cameroun -SOTUC created in 1973, with a capital of 270 million FCFA at its creation, transported about 400 to 500 000 people per day in towns of great spatial expansion like Douala. (YOUALE: 1990). For several reasons such as the rise in prices of maintenance cost and the suppression of government subventions, SOTUC went bankrupt and crashed in September 1994 with its eventual liquidation. This caused trauma on the population, jeopardising its movements. (Tcheuko: 1997) Then, on January 31st 2000, the “Société Camerounaise de Transport Urbain” replaced SOTUC for the exploitation of 13 transport lines in the town of Douala.

Because of the advanced degradation of public roads coupled with financial difficulties, the government will once more give up. This situation aggravated the mobility problem in Cameroon’s cities. To this, Bikoï (1998) ponders over the phenomenon; should the motorbike taxis be left to exercise freely? Are they to be rebuke or regularised? These questions raise contradictory reasoning and decision taking among the administrative authorities. This situation has made of motorbike taxis, a real social phenomenon in the Cameroonian society.
- **The degradation of the labour market and the decline of income**

In Cameroon, the macro-economic situation characterized by profound economic crises has greatly limited the chances of access to employment and revenue in many families. Between 1985-86 and 1991-92, as a consequence of economic crises, the population of job seekers reached 57.7% of Cameroon’s total population while during the same period, the salaries of State employees decreased by 19.2%. 85% of unemployed derived from the educational system. These statistics are according to the 1987 Cameroon general population and habitat census (RGPH :1987) and estimations from the Ministry in charge of plan and stabilization; As explained by INACK (1997), the degradation of the labour market is explained by

- The slow rate or even total end of great investment projects in the fields of construction and equipment which could have absorbed a good number of the workforce;
- The freezing of recruitment into the public service;
- The non payment of the internal debt, obliging several enterprises to lay off their personnel;
- The suppression or reduction of state subsidies to public enterprises resulting in the slowing down of their activities and the laying off of their staff;

The Para-public sector under reform paid a great social tribute to the economic crises and it’s in the private sector that the crisis was most felt. (LACHAUD, INACK et al, 1992). To this, one of the indicators of the degradation of the labour market remains the rate of unemployment, a phenomenon which has been intensified with the ongoing economic slump in Cameroon since 1985. (See Diagram 3a)
Diagram 3.a. Rate of unemployment declared between 1987 and 1993 according to the level of education in Cameroon (Inack Inack, 1997)

Diagram 3.b. Rate of unemployment according to the level of education and place of residence in Cameroon. (INS/EESI, 2005)

In 2005, unemployment rate estimated at 15% of the active population contrary to 6.7% in 1987. The rate of unemployment increases as the level of education rises. (See figure 3.a) Urban areas host most of these job seekers. (See Diagram 3.b) The cities of Yaounde and Douala are the most affected (with 14.7% and 12.5% of unemployed respectively as defined by the International Labour organization. Youths between the age ranges of 15-30 constitute around 57% of job seekers in the labour market. And this population is on a steady increase with the annual arrival into the labour market of over 5000 degree holders from higher institutions of learning and of the same number issued from secondary education generally with no professional qualification.

Contrary to the past decades, the actual unemployment rate since the year 2000 affects more and more degree holders. (See Diagram 3.b). This situation results from the almost permanent inadequacy between training and employment. While the minority of unemployed have retracted to rural areas for the practice of agricultural activities, the majority has taken refuge in the informal sector. (KENGNE FODOUOP, 1991). The progressive school drop out according to INACK (1997) is due not only to the economic crises but also to the slow rate of
the equation between the generated qualifications and the available employment structures. This gives an image of a school which according to ELA (1971) “produces” unemployed, thus questioning the doctrines of development in the third world through education.

The reconversion of degree holders in other activities other than that to which they have been trained for or specialized in is on a constant rise. Added to these educated youths, the coming of peasants and agricultural labourers who, discouraged by the low prices offered for the cultivation of their crops, migrate to the urban cities in the hope of finding a remunerated and descent job. In another case and not the least, the net reduction of nominal salaries in all sectors of activity has accentuated job insecurity. The two government measures intervening in January and November 1993 had decreased the nominal value of salaries to 60 to 70% and the devaluation of 50% of the FCFA in January 1994 had amplified the state of the economic crises.

It’s thus to curb the situation of the formal labour market that the precarious population developed particular survival strategies in the direction of the informal sector. The situation worsened such that certain youths had developed strategies to be able to combine school and work to gain an experience even if the perspectives in terms of professional achievement remained minute. It’s hence in the face of an uncertain future that the precariousness of employment has induced a tendency of “settlement” of youths in the informal sector and into the choice of an activity generating immediate revenue in the city’s streets. (Kaffo C, Kamdem P, Tatsabong B, Diebo L. M : 2008)

Transport by commercial motorbikes is one of the sectors which attracted many of the unemployed. The difficult economic and political situation of the 1990s offered an increment to this activity as a response to the series of lay-offs in several enterprises. If at the beginning the lay-offs embraced the activity of motorbike taxi riders as a result of the economic crises, the activity rapidly developed to become a job opening for many job seekers. With the volume of revenue generated by this activity, able businessmen got interested into the activity and began acquiring tens and even hundreds of motorbikes, offering jobs to the needy.

In an article titled “Douala: La furia des Bend-sikin, Paul Eboa of Cameroon Tribune presents the daily revenue of motorbike taxi riders:

“The daily revenue oscillates between 4 to 5000FCFA on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. 3000FCFA as the week runs by and 2000FCFA on weekends. Maintenance of the motorbike costs 1700FCFA per week and an engine consumes averagely 19600FCFA of petrol per week.” (Cameroon Tribune, N° 6678 of 8/9/1998)
The socio-political crises of the 1990s

The early 1990s saw the introduction of motorbike taxis in urban areas of Cameroon. This activity was formerly reserved to zones of low population density as in parts of the Great north of Cameroon (MAHAMAT: 1982). During the socio-political crises of the 1990s, successive strikes of regular taxi cars were common in towns, paving the way to motorbike taxis which became very common in public transport in towns. This is how motorbike taxis made their entry into the Western, North West, Littoral and Centre regions under the influence of “ghost town operations”(See Figure 2 ). Motorbikes therefore became a sure measure of public transport during these “ghost town” operations escaping from the prevailing public condemnation against taxis which tried not to respond to the call for strike. Coupled with the advanced degradation of tarred roads in the cities caused by the burning of tyres on the roads during these strikes and the progressive reduction of public transport offer (with the closing of SOTUC), the motorbikes have invaded the city centres and the idea of it becoming a real profession had been deeply rooted without time for the administration to take measures to contain the activity. (Cameroon Tribune N°4867 of 10/07/1991 and N° 6678 of 8/09/1998 put to light the power of taxi bikes presented as an unconditional actor in the public transport system of the major cities of Cameroon)

Henceforth, the phenomenon has taken a scale which has become difficult to contain. To this, certain owners of taxi vehicles reconverted themselves in the exploitation of motorbike taxis.

Motorbike taxi riders and political authority

In spite of this proliferation in the 1990s as means of common public transport, the motorbike taxis had not been totally accepted by the administrative authorities. Taken into a war of press releases and acts of intimidation, the services of urban transport and of the police force went at war against this activity. (Sadou: 2005). The permissive regulatory environment did not give to the motorbike taxis a reliable regulatory framework. The administrative authorities were lukewarm in regulating this sector which will compete with the regular city taxi cars that pay regular taxes. In the absence of clear regulatory measures and juridical absence and in spite of intimidations, the motorbike taxis have made their way and have finally succeeded in imposing themselves.

Extract of an article published by The African online Journal www.afrik.com, Titled: « Les motos-taxis défient les pouvoirs publics » Wednesday, may 5th 2004 by J Bertrand Temgoua
« Votre activité est en train de devenir extrêmement dangereuse au point du nuire et de porter atteinte à l’ordre public ». Pointant du doigt les nombreuses motos alignées à la place des fêtes de Bafoussam pour la circonstance, Amadou Tidjani a fait remarquer à tous qu’aucun de ces engins n’avait de numéro d’immatriculation.

« Alors, en tant que votre défenseur, je vous donne jusqu’à la fin du mois de mars. Nous sommes le 3. Ne vous méprenez pas sur notre capacité à vous interdire cette activité ici, à Bafoussam. Il est inadmissible que les motos circulent dans la ville sans même être immatriculées. Je dis que le 1er avril, une moto qui n’est pas immatriculée ne doit pas circuler », a-t-il ajouté, avant de rougir après avoir été ovationné par les conducteurs de motos-taxis. « Vous avez applaudi le préfet, et aujourd’hui vous m’applaudissez, mais nous allons nous retrouver le 1er avril. »

Dommage pour ceux qui s’attendaient à un événement majeur le 1er avril. Ils ont été non seulement déçus de ne pas voir le gouverneur Amadou Tidjani dans les rues, mais également, et surtout, de constater qu’une seule moto sur vingt affichait son numéro d’immatriculation. « C’était peut-être le poisson d’avril du gouverneur », déclare avec dédain un conducteur de moto-taxi de Bafoussam.

In certain zones, the public service logic became confronted with the economic logic which has over taken the latter. In the view of the texts and laws elaborated to this effect, the administration is found between the banning and the legalisation of the activity. (Bikoï: 1998).

In The Post Newspaper (2/07/2009), Elizabeth Mosima, presents an article over the implementation of the Prime Minister’s decree regulating the activity of commercial motorbikes in the city of Yaoundé bringing out the unpreparedness of the motorbike riders to meet government demands. She further goes on to report on the meeting involving officials of the Ministry of Transport who tabled on a minimum of documents required to begin the activity of a commercial motorbike.

Motorbike taxi riders have become a new socio-economic class who are becoming a powerful lobby in the cities and villages of Cameroon. The riders are perceived as out law citizens by the administration for they do not comply with the regulatory measures put in place by the latter. Motorbike taxi riders have spearheaded strikes and are at the backbone of a number of social unrest. The analysis of the rebellious attitude of motorbike taxi riders can paint a picture of them as outlaw citizens and untouchables (Cameroon -Tribune n°8634 of 05/07/2006, pages: 9-11) while being a necessary evil in a society where urban and rural dynamism evolves disproportionately to demographic dynamism.

c) Organisation and socio-economic advantages of motorbike taxis

In this part we are going to bring out a review of the functioning of this mode of transport and the advantages accrued from this activity.
Conditions of exercise and modes of access to the activity

Nearly all motorbike taxi riders " believe that the purchase of a motorbike or motorbike, that costs between 350,000 to 450,000 FCFAS according to the brand is sufficient to exercise this activity. In spite of the existence of texts it is evident from the existing field research that a driver on two doesn't have a driver's licence, let alone the other requirements stated by government to exercise this activity. Yet texts governing this sector of activity exist. It is notably about the decree n° 95/650/PM of 16th November 1995 fixing conditions and modes of exploitation of motorbikes on profit bases. It’s true that the measures were not respected by the riders. This led to a series of readjustments with the decree n° 2004/0607/PM of March 17, 2004 and the latest being the Prime Minister Decree N° 2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008 which has finally come to complete the texts and modalities of exploiting motorbikes on a profit making base as stated below:

A- Access to the Profession of motorbike taxi businessman

The access to the profession is subordinated by the following conditions:

✓ Have a special transport licence of category S2
✓ Register into the Transport Register by motorbike taxi

For each vehicle (motorbike taxi):

✓ Obtain at the departmental delegation of transport or other competent authority a public road transport card.
✓ Establish a certificate of technical visit at the approved organisations
✓ Establish an insurance police at an approved insurance company
✓ Payment of vehicle stamp rights (Vignette)
✓ Payment of global tax (impôt libéraloire)

NB: The technical visit for motorbike taxis is not obligatory for new motorbikes of less than 6 months of age.

B – Conditions to the exercise of the profession of motorbike taxi rider

All motorbike taxi riders have to fulfil the following conditions:

✓ Be of at least 18 years old
✓ Be a holder of a driving licence of category “A”.
✓ Be a holder of a capacity certificate of category “MT”
C- Characteristics of a motorbike taxi and its equipments.

All motorbike taxis before their commercial exploitation should:

- Be matriculated for the competent territorial service of the Minister in charge of Transports.
- Posses an identification number attributed by the council of the exploitation area.

For all information on the modalities of attribution and suspension of identity number of a motorbike taxi, request for information at your local council.

More so, each motorbike taxi put into circulation has to dispose of the following equipment and accessories:

- A fuel tank painted in yellow colour.
- Two place seat including that of the rider.
- Two pairs of foot-seats
- A maintenance tool kit
- Two back screens
- A complete dispositive of lightening and signalisation.
- A functional breaks dispositive
- A protective head-set for the driver.
- A protective head-set for the passenger.
- A front and back par shock.

For the Motorbike rider:

The riding of a motorbike taxi is conditioned by the obligatory wearing of a jacket and protective headset. The colour of the jacket is determined by the council where the activity is being carried out. This jacket has to be fit with a luminous reflecting horizontal band of ten centimetres in the front and rear. The jacket is also marked by the identification and symbol of the council covering the exploitation zone.

D- Sanctions previewed in cases of defiance

D1. Suspension or retreat of transport licence.
The public transport licence by motorbike taxi can be subjected to suspension or retreat by the minister in charge of transport following proposition of the departmental consultative commission for one of the following reasons:

- Use of fraudulent transport licence
- Use of a fraudulently acquired motorbike
- Exploitation of a motorbike taxi void of a valuable insurance or public transport card.
- Imprisonment for infractions to faults linked to proxenetism, paedophile to violence on minors.
- All other pertinent motifs declared by the departmental consultative commission.

Decisions suspending the exploitation of a transport licence by motorbike taxi fixes the period which should not be above a year. All suspension or retreat decisions of a transport licence by motorbike taxi is motivated and notified to the holder of the licence.

**D2. Retreat of driving licence and of the certificate of capacity**

Without prejudice on the aforementioned Article 14, the competent divisional officer can withdraw the driving licence and certificate of capacity of a motorbike taxi rider when the latter is the author of a homicide and of involuntary wounds as provided by Article 289 of the penal code.

All decisions of suspension and deliverance of licences or driving licence are executed with the contribution of the forces of law and order.

Without prejudices on more severe sanctions provided by the legislation and prevailing rule, the defaults to the dispositions of the present decree are punished in conformity with article R369 of the penal code.

The application of these dispositions varies according to time and space creating a socio-political tensed atmosphere between the promoters of this activity, users and public authorities.

According to “Le Messager” Newspaper of 24/06/2010, Information from the Douala city council says; “From the 47,000 enumerated, only 191 motorbike taxis have been duly registered in accordance with the Prime Minister’s decree of 2008”.

e) **The organisation of the activity and economic output**

According to C Kaffo et al, (2009), this activity provides solutions to the economic crises in terms of transport mobility and employment. They see motorbike taxis as a
consequence of the economic crises that have prevailed in sub-Saharan Africa since the 1980s, providing ready solutions to mobility of persons and employment opportunities helping the government who is trapped into a lukewarm attitude over this activity considered dangerous but which is a source of direct and indirect employment for many Cameroonians. It's in this wise that the activity is organised around several categories of actors following a particular logic. We have the permanent riders (to whom riding is a permanent activity and the temporal riders to whom riding of motorbike taxis constitute a secondary activity. Riding to them constitutes extra revenue. The group of permanent riders is subdivided into two subgroups: That of “owner-riders” who own their motorbikes and the “self payment” riders who work on the behalf of proprietors who own motorbikes.

Figure 2: A horde of motorbike taxi riders in Douala (2010)
Image Source: www.mboabol.com

In Bafoussam, proprietors of motorbike taxis have gotten two riders: One for the day and the other who works in the night. For Olvera Diaz (2009), a motorbike is acquired from personal income, family aid or even from personal financing networks. The “loan-riders” have the obligation of bringing back a fixed sum of money on a daily or weekly base. This varies according to the region or town. In Douala for example, an average sum of 3,000FCFA constitutes the daily revenue. Fuel expenditure stands at an average of 1500FCFA and feeding on a daily bases ranges between 500 and 1000FCFA. Thus the motorbike taxi has to work hard in order to make ends meet. Daily revenue oscillates between 7,000 and 9,000 FCFA. All inherent expenses in the exercise of the activity are levied on the rider. In some cases, the «work to pay» system is
applied. In this case, at the end of a certain period, the “loan-rider” owns the motorbike after haven paid a certain amount of money agreed upon at the beginning of the contract. When everything goes on well, the business becomes lucrative for its owner gets back his initial investment in less than a year and the revenue accrued is double. The average life span of a motorbike taxi is about four years.

Due to the Structural Adjustment Programmes I and II, recruitment into the public service has drastically decreased and the private sector doesn’t absorb the mass of youths. Due to this situation, the activity of motorbike taxi rider stands as a ready medium which offers employment to many. Douala alone absorbs about 50,000 youths who live directly from the activity. Secondary activities have seen the day such as the profession of motorbike mechanics who make a daily revenue of 5,000 to 10,000 FCFA (Kaffo C and al: 2009), motorbike part retailers, motorbike shops (COCIMECAM) company today represents the greatest importer of motorbikes brands NANNFANG, SENKE, KYMCO, DRAGON mostly used for motorbike taxi and motorbike mounting units. According to NGOUYAMSA V. (2008), the revenue of a motorbike taxi rider varies according to the tasks carried out and the working hours vary according to social mobility. This activity requires much energy from the riders who are mostly young males (20-40 years old) who have no knowledge of road regulations. Many have learnt to ride in rural areas before coming to the city of Douala.

Ghotcho C. (2001) presents the expansion and socio-economic impact of motorbike taxis in Douala insisting on its role in the fight against unemployment in Douala, its contribution to urban transportation and financial gains. The author goes further in presenting the problems inherent to this mode of transport and proposes possible solutions for its progress.

f) Setbacks of the activity

The activity of motorbike taxis has today become part of the mode of life of many Cameroonians both in cities and in rural areas. Today, it has a function to play in the organisation of the Cameroonian society. Nevertheless, this function has created certain setbacks or dysfunctions that have contributed in the suspension of the activity by many observers and its regulation by the state. Motorbike taxi riders are the cause of several road accidents on a daily bases on many roads in Cameroon. This is because of reckless riding and ignorance of the highway.

In a documentary entitled “Benskin” produced by Aristide Yentagwe in July 2007 and broadcasted on STV1 (Spectrum Television) on the 29th of June 2010, the Laquintinie
Hospital in Douala registers at least ten cases of accidents in their emergency unit everyday due to road accidents caused by motorbike taxi riders.

In the same light, Guy Rostand DJIEPMO NDJOUKYA (2008) raises concern on the stakes of road security in urban milieus of Cameroon with a case study on motorbike taxis in Yaoundé. The author is in search of a perspective in the amelioration of road safety through the activity of motorbike taxis in Cameroon, determining instruments of road security able to contain the irresponsible behaviour of riders on the roads.

Sadou A. (2005) produces a research on motorbike taxis and urban insecurity in the North of Cameroon with a case study of the town of Ngaoundere. Sadou brings out a historic background of this activity in the city; the numerous accidents caused by this activity and its use in robbery leading to the renaissance of car taxis in the town of Ngaoundere.

Extract: Page 5

“Pour comprendre la place du taxi moto dans le phénomène de l’insécurité dans la ville de Ngaoundéré, il importerait de considérer l’ampleur des accidents de la circulation mais aussi des actes de banditisme et de délinquance qui ont cours au sein de la localité depuis l’apparition de ce mode de transport urbain."

Sadou’s research focused on the town of Ngaoundere orientates his study of motorbike taxis on its relationship with urban insecurity.

Apart from these writings, newspapers have produced documentation on a daily basis concerning the activity of motorbike taxis in Cameroon. They describe the dangerous nature of this system of transport. J. Bertrand Temgoua on July 25th 2002 writes on road security in Cameroon on the online newspaper www.afrik.com titling his report as thus: “Motorbike taxi riders or the dance of death”. In this article, the author describes the dangerous nature of motorbike taxis as they contribute to urban theft and insecurity. He goes further to describe how the activity has evolved to become a necessary evil, a political force to reckon with as they are at constant logger heads with the public authorities.

In an article of the newspaper ”Le Messager” of 22/04/2010 titled: “Motorbike taxis jump on the forces of law and order”, A. Ekambi describes the tensed atmosphere between the motorbike taxi riders and the civil administration.

2.2.3- Perspective and orientation of study

The above literature review has produced an important data on the activity of motor bike taxis in the cities of Cameroon and a series of economic and social impact on the inhabitants of
these towns. Our research comes to throw more light on this activity, bringing out a new orientation in this research perspective.

In an anthropological perspective, we are going to orientate our research on the impact of motor bike taxis on the mode of life of a people – The Bakossi society. Our research is based on rural communities which differ from most of the literature produced on urban cities. In our case study, it’s the rural community of Tombel. To this, we are going to determine the profile of a motorbike taxi rider, his role in society, the perception of this activity by the inhabitants of Tombel. These elements will permit us have an appraisal of the impact of motor-bike taxis on rural communities.

2.3- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In order to give an anthropological perspective in the analysis and interpretation of data deriving from our research, a theoretical framework is necessary to determine the theories and concepts that will guide us in our analysis and interpretation of data. The typology of our research is Ethnological and it’s carried out in the field of social anthropology. Functionalism and Diffusion will stand as our main explicatory theories. Functionalism will be used to determine the role played by motorbike taxis in Tombel. In this theory, we are going to reflect in the same vein as Radcliffe-Brown in his structural functionalism theory. In the theory of diffusion, we are going to make use of the concepts of Acculturation and Assimilation in analysing the impact of motorbike taxis in rural areas of Cameroon with Tombel as our case study.

- Functionalism

Underlying functionalist theory is the fundamental metaphor of the living organism, its several parts and organs, grouped and organized into a system, the function of the various parts and organs being to sustain the organism, to keep its essential processes going and enable it to reproduce. Similarly, members of a society can be thought of as cells, its institutions its organs, whose function is to sustain the life of the collective entity, despite the frequent death of cells and the production of new ones. Functionalist analyses examine the social significance of phenomena, that is, the purpose they serve a particular society in maintaining the whole (Jarvie:1973).
Functionalism, as a school of thought in anthropology, emerged early in the twentieth century. Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown, two prominent anthropologists in Great Britain at the time, had the greatest influence in this development. Functionalism sought to be a corrective to the excesses of the evolutionary and diffusionist theories of the nineteenth-century and the historicism of the early twentieth century (Goldschmidt:1996).

Two versions of functionalism developed between 1910 and 1930: biocultural (or psychological) functionalism, the approach advocated by Malinowski, and structural-functionalism, the approach advanced by Radcliffe-Brown.

Malinowski suggested that individuals have physiological needs and that social institutions develop to meet these needs. He considered institutions to be "the concrete isolates of organised behaviour." Since such behaviour always involves a plurality of persons, an institution in this sense is therefore a social system, which is a subsystem of society. Malinowski believed that the central feature of the charter of an institution is " the system of values for the pursuit of which human beings organize, or enter organizations already existing (Malinowski:1944). As for the concept of function, Malinowski believed it is the primary basis of differentiation of institutions within the same culture. In other words, institutions differ in that they are organized about different functions. He believed institutions function for continuing life and "normality" of an organism, or an aggregate of organisms as a species (Firth:1957).

Radcliffe-Brown focused attention on social structure. He suggested that a society is a system of relationships maintaining itself through cybernetic feedback, while institutions are orderly sets of relationships whose function is to maintain the society as a system. Radcliffe-Brown, following Auguste Comte, believed that the social constituted a separate "level" of reality distinct from those of biological forms and inorganic matter. Furthermore, he believed that explanations of social phenomena had to be constructed within the social level. He believed that individuals were replaceable, transient occupants of social roles. Unlike Malinowski's emphasis on individuals, Radcliffe-Brown considered individuals irrelevant (Goldschmidt:1996).

Radcliffe-Brown's emphasis on social function is derived from the influence of the French sociological school. This school developed in the 1890s around the work of Emile Durkheim who argued that "social phenomena constitute a domain, or order, of reality that is independent of psychological and biological facts. Social phenomena, therefore, must be
explained in terms of other social phenomena, and not by reference to psychobiological needs, drives, impulses, and so forth" (Broce:1973).

In addition, Durkheim stressed the importance of studying social phenomena as they function to maintain the solidarity of social structures" (Broce:1973). Radcliffe-Brown shared this emphasis of studying the conditions under which social structures are maintained. He also believed that the functioning of societies, like that of other natural systems, is governed by laws that can be discovered through systematic comparison (Broce:1973). It is important to note here that Firth postulated the necessity of distinguishing between social structure and social organization. Social structure "is the principle(s) on which the forms of social relations depend. Social organisation refers to the directional activity, to the working out of social relations in everyday life". (Watson-Gegeo:1991).

Radcliffe-Brown established an analogy between social life and organic life to explain the concept of function. His emphasis on examining the contribution of phenomena to maintaining social order, and his disregard for individual needs, is apparent in this analogy. He argued that as long as a biological organism lives, it preserves the continuity of structure, although it does not preserve the unity of its constituent parts. That is, over a period of time, while the constituent cells do not remain the same, the structural arrangement of the constituent units remains similar. He suggested that human beings, as essential units, are connected by a set of social relations into an integrated whole. Like the biological organism, the continuity of the social structure is not destroyed by changes in the units. Although individuals may leave the society by death or other means, other individuals may enter it. Therefore, the continuity is maintained by the process of social life, which consists of the activities and interactions of individual human beings and of organized groups into which they are united. The social life of a community, then, is the functioning of the social structure. The function of any recurrent activity is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and thereby, the contribution it makes to structural continuity (Radcliffe-Brown: 1952).

- **Diffusionism**

Diffusionism as an anthropological school of thought was an attempt to understand the nature of culture in terms of the origin of cultural traits and their spread from one society to another. Versions of diffusionist thought included the conviction that all cultures originated from one culture centre (heliocentric diffusion). This emerged from the British school of thought led by W.H.R. Rivers. This group espoused the idea that all civilizations had
originated from Egypt where the birth of agriculture had stimulated the rapid development of literate society, the arts and cities throughout the world.

The German-Austrian school on its part postulated that cultures originated from a limited number of culture centres (culture circles) led by Fritz Graebner and Wilhelm Schmidt. Unlike the British school, they proposed that language, tool making and other basics of culture were invented in four or five primeval societies isolated in small bands. Each of these societies, they claim, had developed its own characteristic pattern of culture which later spread as their descendants migrated to different parts of the globe. The result was the formation of distinct culture circle or “Kulturkreise” – group of societies sharing similar cultures.

The American school of thought arose led by Clark Wissler and Alfred Kroeber. They carried out many studies on the social and geographical circulation of cultural elements.

Diffusion may be simply defined as the spread of a cultural item from its place of origin to other places (Titiev 1959:446). A more expanded definition depicts diffusion as the process by which discrete culture traits are transferred from one society to another, through migration, trade, war, or other contact (Winthrop:1991).

- **Acculturation**

Kroeber (1948) stated that acculturation comprises those changes in a culture brought about by another culture and will result in an increased similarity between the two cultures. This type of change may be reciprocal, however, very often the process is assymetrical and the result is the (usually partial) absorption of one culture into the other. Kroeber believed that acculturation is gradual rather than abrupt. He connected the process of diffusion with the process of acculturation by considering that diffusion contributes to acculturation and that acculturation necessarily involves diffusion. He did attempt to separate the two processes by stating that diffusion is a matter of what happens to the elements of a culture; whereas acculturation is a process of what happens to a whole culture (Kroeber 1948:425).

For Winthrop (1991), acculturation contrasts with diffusion of culture traits in that it is a process of systematic cultural transformation of individuals in a society due to the presence on an alien, politically dominant society The *Encyclopedia of Social and Cultural Anthropology* (1996) defines acculturation as the process of acquiring culture traits as a result of contact.
Acculturation, then, is the process of systematic cultural change of a particular society carried out by an alien, dominant society (Winthrop:1991). This change is brought about under conditions of direct contact between individuals of each society (Winthrop:1991). Individuals of a foreign or minority culture learn the language, habits, and values of a standard or dominant culture by the cultural process of acculturation. The process by which these individuals enter the social positions, as well as acquire the political, economic, and educational standards of the dominant culture is called assimilation. These individuals, through the social process of assimilation, become integrated within the standard culture (Thompson:1996). This concept will be used to analyse the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel and its impact on the population.

- **Assimilation**

Milton Gordon (1964) proposed that assimilation can be described as a series of stages through which an individual must pass. These three stages are *behavioural assimilation* (acculturation), *structural assimilation* (social assimilation), and *marital assimilation* of the individuals of the minority society and individuals of the dominant society. Although this proposal has been criticized, it does indicate that there is a continuum through which individuals pass, beginning with acculturation and ending with complete assimilation (Thompson:1996). An individual is assimilated when he is capable of entering social positions and political, economic, and educational areas of the standard society. If he cannot, he may simply remain acculturated, because he has learned the language, habits, and values of the standard or dominant culture (Thompson:1996). This concept will be used to elucidate how the activity of motorbike taxi has permitted its riders to get assimilated into the society.
CHAPTER II

ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE STUDY AREA
A good knowledge of the study area will help explain the way of life of those living in the environment. This is because people shape their cultures according to their environmental constraints. According to Clyde Kluckhohn (1961), "Culture is the man made part of the environment". Therefore, the understanding of a physical and human environment is essential in the understanding of a social phenomenon.

This chapter is concerned with the geographical, historical, political, economic and socio-cultural setting of Tombel in relation to the kupe Muanenguba division, the South west region and to Cameroon. It involves issues related to the physical, socio-cultural and economic environment of Tombel. It is important to know the organization of the people through time and space. This is going to be determinant in the impact analysis of the introduction of motor bike taxis into Tombel.

1. - GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL SETTINGS OF TOMBEL

1.1 - GEOGRAPHICAL PRESENTATION

1.1.1- LOCATION OF TOMBEL

Tombel is found in the Tombel sub division, Kupe Muanenguba division (Bakossiland) of the South West Region of Cameroon. Its coordinates and elevation are Latitude (lat) 4°45’16 N, longitude (lon) 9°14’22”E. It has a surface area of about 1.007 km². It is located on an extensive volcanic plain at about 498 metres (500m) above sea level, south of the extensive Mount Kupe. Between 1884 and 1916, this area was under the German Administrative Union known as the Johann Abrechts Hohe. It has boarders with Kumba in the South, Bangem in the North, Loum to the East and Konye in the West as can be seen on the map of Tombel sub division. It has attached villages with Southern Bakossi among which are Atiek, Baseng, Ngombo, Ebonji, Edib, Bekume, Ekenzu, Ehom, Ndom, Ngab and Peng. It also has attached villages in Northern Bakossi which include Bajaw, Bangone, Edib, Kodmin, Bakolle, Mbomut, Malongo, Mesake, Meyam, Muahunzum, Nyalle and Nyandong. It has derivative neighbourhood like the black bush, Ebubu, Kupe, Muasung, Ndip-Njock, Muanzung camp, Edise and Ekonebe. These villages and neighbourhood make up the territorial composition of our study area.
Map 2: Transport map of Cameroon indicating the town of Tombel
(Source: www.fausi.fr/mapage5/cameroun.png)
Map 3:
Map of Tombel sub division

1.1.2. - RELIEF

Tombel is found on the Bakossi trough which is an undulating plain of about 498 metres above sea level. The trough is hemmed by Mount Kupe in the North East and the Bakossi uplands “Edib Hills” to the west. The area under study is located somewhere in the eastern section of this trough on the Southern slopes of Mount Kupe. The Kupe Mountain with its height of 2050m is a rigid cone-shaped mountain with the sides so steep as to inhabit human approach. The origin of this horst – form is tectonic by which activity the mountain underwent successive uplifts. This gives the rigidity and step-form structure. Intrusion of syenite rocks into the massive gave the pointed structure. Many secondary peaks shoot out by the side which are possibly secondary sources of volcanic lava-flow.

Volcanic soils occupy the whole area of the Trough. This volcanic soil is the richest in the Bakossiland and its value is attested by the fact that all settlements are concentrated on it. It engenders and encourages the production of such rich cash crops as cocoa, coffee, rubber, tea, banana and a host of food crops.

Map 4: Structure and relief in Bakossi

1.1.3- CLIMATE

By its situation in the tropical zone, and especially so in the Equatorial region (between latitudes $4^\circ 36^1$ and $5^\circ 13^1$ North of the equator), Tombel enjoys equatorial climate: Hot and humid with constant temperature. Its situation in relation to the Atlantic ocean and the imposing barrier of Mount Cameroon play their influence too. This places the area in a local windward side of rain winds. Tombel sub division therefore receives an average of 3657 mm of rain per year. The rainy season lasts approximately 7 months, from April to October and the dry season from November to March. In the rainy reason, places are usually very cold due to low temperatures while during the dry season, places are quite hot.

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Table 3: Rainfall data in Tombel (mm)

Source: CDC Tombel rainfall fact sheets (2009)

Table 4: Temperature of Tombel in Celsius

Source: CDC Tombel rainfall fact sheets (2009)

1.1.4 - VEGETATION

Tombel has luxuriant ever green vegetation thanks to the abundant rainfall, rich volcanic soils and high temperatures. It had natural and man-made vegetation. Only the high slopes of Mount Kupe, above 700 metres in altitude are presently still covered by the original evergreen forest. Except for trappers, hunters and native doctors who are mainly after animals and medicinal plants, the forest has not been destroyed on the slopes. Another part of natural vegetation is the Forest Reserve. Tombel harbours the Mungo and Bakossi Forest Reserve. Here, cutting down of trees and hunting is prohibited. Unfortunately, laxity in government surveillance and the non application of existing regulations has resulted in some coverts trespassing into the forest, exploiting it for farming, timber, gathering and hunting.
The man-made vegetation was planted by man either permanently or temporarily. It included planting trees for wood, cash and food crop farms, peasant cocoa and coffee farms, fruit trees, kola nuts, orange, mangos and plum trees.

Also, certain parcels of land that were once farmed and then abandoned developed secondary vegetation because it grew on its own after man has used the land following the clearing away of the original vegetation that occupied the area.

Map 5: Vegetation and animals

Source: Ejedepang Koge (1986) Tradition of a People – Bakossi, Yaounde, SOPECAM P.16
1.2- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1.2.1 - Origin, Migration, Settlement and Road Transport Network

Tradition has it that the Bakossi are offspring of NGOE. They share their ancestry with several other people: Bafaw, Bakundu, Balong, Basssosi, Mbo, Mianmilo, Muamenan, Mwangel, Bareko, Bakaka, Babong, Balondo, Manechas, Bongkeng and Bakem. How these people trace their origin is a difficult problem to pursue but we are contented here with oral tradition as reencountered today and as was recorded in the past, to find these links in the chain of the descendants of Ngoe, the Bakossi ancestor. He was said to have just appeared on Mount Muanenguba, wondering from place to place in search of games. Another version holds it that, Ngoe was born of Mboe who lived north to the area which is today occupied by the Mbo.

During the course of his wanderings for game, he happened to come in contact with a woman, tall and fair who was also wandering alone. She revealed to Ngoe that her name was Sumediang and he asked her hand in marriage. The couple unceremoniously married, travelled to Ngoe’s home at Mwekan. Sumediang had several sons who spread out radically from the ancestral compound and founded several Bakossi clans. Asomengoe is said to be the first son and founded the Bakossi clan. According to oral tradition, he and his children stayed closed to the ancestral compound and appeared to have held together in the first and second generations in combination against the rest of their family.

Asomengoe founded the Bakossi clan and his five children founded the various kindred in the Bakossi clan. These five kindred are the Muanyo, Muetuk, Mbot-Mut, Muetan and Muasundem. It is all these kindred that had villages that made-up the Tombel sub-division, and eventually the town of Tombel. The Muetan kindred forms the majority of the population in this sub-division and hence dominant. It is for this reason that the Chief of the area must come from the Muetan clan since they claim ownership of the area.

Tombel central is today is an admixture comprising a combination of all the clans of Bakossiland and even foreign settlers like the Douala, Mbo and people from the western grassfields.
Map 6: Clans of Bakossi

2.1.1.1 - Subsistence agriculture

Agriculture is the mainstay of the population. In the past, agriculture was entirely of the subsistence system, producing various species of yam /Esel/, banana /Nyaké/, cassava /mëkwambé/, beans /kən/, and maize /Ngun/ of small stature, cocoyam /mbangé/ and different types of vegetables. The introduction of cocoyam by a slave at Bendume dramatically changed the Bakossi agriculture making it their staple diet. The cocoyam tubers are boiled and pounded into fufu /ésubag/ and the cocoyam leaves are boiled and grinned into sauce /nzab ngène/ (Ejedepang-Koge: 1985:280)

Shifting cultivation was practised in the past. This involved the exploitation of a piece of land and its desertion after exhaustion for a new piece. The exhausted land, now deserted, went back to natural forest for several years before it could be returned to. Today, with an increase in population, this method of farming is gradually being abandoned.

Cash crops were introduced by the Europeans and have become the principal source of income for most farmers. Cocoa /kaké/ and Robusta coffee /kofi/ constitute the main cash crops exploited by the natives while rubber exploitation is carried out by the CDC.

In 1920, Chief Ntoko Epie of Nyassoso encouraged his fellow kinsmen to plant cocoa in the Tombel-Ebonji-Peng plain. He set the example himself by opening a farm in Tombel. Since then, cocoa has become a very important crop. Many Bakossi migrated seasonally from northern Bakossi to the south to take care of their cocoa plantations. This seasonal migration was done by trekking from Bangem and related areas down south to the Tombel-Ebonji-Peng plain during the months of August to December for harvest of cocoa seeds. These migratory trends gradually ceased as more and more northern Bakossi settled in the south (principally in Tombel).

From the 1960s, people instead moved from South to north during the December period as they went feasting with their families and siblings left back home.
2.1.1.2 - Animal rearing

Pigs, goats, sheep, chicken, cats, horses are reared for home consumption but mostly for festivals, ceremonies and rituals. These animals are attached or hover around the compounds and feed from what they are offered. Most cooking residues are transformed into feed for these animals; such as cocoyam, cassava and fruit peelings. Pigs are slaughtered in death/funeral ceremonies; goats and chickens are always present in marriage ceremonies and other rituals.

2.1.2. - Hunting and gathering

In the past, the chief occupation of the Bakossi was hunting. This is practised in diverse forms in function to types of animals. Some of these are today out of use because the animals are either rare or because of forest conservation laws which protect animal species. Hunting is today carried out by use of traps /Melam/ with sticks and ropes. The use of dogs is also common. Animals haunted are rat moles, cutting crass, snakes, porcupine, monkeys and other games of small sizes. The activity of hunting is on a steady decline due to the reinforcement of animal protection laws and the WWF coastal forest project which aims at preserving the existing fauna and flora. To this, many hunters are being converted from hunters to touristic forest guides.

Gathering consists of the search of snails /nkor/ in farmlands and most especially in banana plantations. Snail gatherers go picking in the deep forests reserve of mount Kupe and in the banana plantations around Tombel. This activity is usually carried out in the night and the pickers carry sticks, bags, cutlass and torches in their search for snails. Snail meat is highly consumed in Tombel and their numbers have tremendously decreased. This has led to the development of home snail rearing mechanisms whereby individuals rear snails behind their homes and the production is either home consumed or sold in the market.

2.1.3- Trade and commerce

In the pre-colonial Bakossi, animals and such commodities as salt, palm oil, horns, elephant tusks, baskets and basket-traps /Moo/, Morters and pestles, spices etc were all articles of trade. They were exchanged first of all through barter and then came the use of cowries, iron bars as money. Finally, the Europeans introduced money and widened the scope of trade.
Today, trade and commerce are carried out over a wide range of products with Cocoa and plantains carrying a greater share of the revenue derived from the sale of these crops. Market days have been divided according to zones. The Mile 20 market opens on Mondays and plantains stand as the principal commodity sold; Tuesdays open the Three corner market where grains and vegetables are abundant; Wednesday is the turn of the Ngab market specialised in plantains and cassava; The Ebonji market opens on Thursdays where plantains, cocoyams, cassava and vegetables are sold. Finally, on Saturdays, the Tombel central market opens and sells a wide range of varieties especially manufactured goods are mostly sold.

2.1.4 - Tourism

Tourism is a recent activity in Tombel. With its natural evergreen rainforest, ecotourism has been developed through cooperation between WWF, an International NGO and the local communities. (WWF Coastal Forests Programme in the South West Region) Some biologists and other lovers of nature go up to the Mount Kupe virgin forest to view its beauty and rare fauna and flora. They are accompanied by touristic guides (reconverted former hunters) who earn a living through this activity. The chief of Nyassoso is a promoter to this activity. The bush stride is a rare bird specie found only on the Kupe Mountains. This has contributed in attracting tourists in the area.

2.2 – POLITICAL ORGANISATION

2.2.1 - Traditional rule

Politically, the people of Tombel were ruled by traditional rulers also known as /Ngwe/. This system seems to have developed from very humble stages. First of all, Ngoe the ancestor, his wife and their children formed a family. He was the patriarch and his ruling on all issues was accepted without distrust and always as the best that could be. Ngoe led his children to discover a method of arriving at decisions by a gradual process of contributions and elimination of facts and evidence without bitterness. This was called “Ngwe”, named after Ngoe.

This marked a stage in the administrative and political evolution of the traditional set-up. Power passed from the “Concentrated Patriarchal Stage” of one man to a “shared –authority” or representative authority through consent. Henceforth, the elders of the society sat together
to discuss their problems or offences against the society as a whole. Most of the time, the head of “Ngwe” was the eldest and most knowledgeable member of the society;

Chieftaincy was brought in Tombel by the coming of the Europeans. The Germans thus made use of the traditional system of traditional kings “/Keng/” but enlarged it by appointing chiefs with “wider territorial jurisdiction”. The widening of jurisdiction was extended by the Germans to complete what has been started but unfinished by some clan chiefs. The Germans had cordial administrative dealings with the strong chiefs who, in turn were in direct contact with the people through the village heads and Ngwe. It should be noted that no one was made a district head without having first been a village and clan chief, which were traditional legitimate institutions.

The system of administration is decentralised with power shared by a traditional council. The /keng/ together with his council of wise men decide on important decisions affecting the community.

2.2.2 - Lineage system

The Bakossi lineage is entirely patrilineal. The father is the head of the family and it is through him that succession is made. Once a woman is involved in marriage, she doesn’t have much to do with her parents or relatives. The relationship on the mother’s side is kept alive by constant remembrances. They are assigned names and special responsibilities attached which are resurrected especially at death. They are called “/Nlah/” and sometimes “/Nki/”

The eldest son usually has the greatest authority over his brethren, and it follows that he is the custodian of the father’s property bestowed to all.

3- SOCIO-CULTURAL ORGANISATION (Institutions of Bakossi)

The institutions regulate the Bakossi society. They are the ideals from which standards are taken. The institutions see the highest level to which the inhabitants can aspire and at the same time, set the lowest level below which no one ought to descend.

3.1 - Marriage /e-wonge/

Marriage is a very important institution among the Bakossi. It is seen as the union between two families through two individuals of different sex. The age of marriage today is 20-23 for women and 30-40 for men. The Bakossi being an exogamous society, the man and woman must get married out of their clan and family. The payment of bride price and dowry
seal the marriage after prior negotiations have been concluded between the elders (male and
table) of both families. The bride price signifies a real bond of friendship, an obligatory,
necessary contract, and a prestigious transaction.

3.2- Religion

Morality is considered as a product of religion. Man’s concept of deity and his services
to it determine his code of morals. The Bakossi religion has no well defined code of law. They
believe in their ancestors and perform ancestral rights to communicate with them. The coming
of Christianity has created a syncretism in the Bakossi religion. Among the religious bodies
present in Tombel, the Roman Catholics are the dominant faith followed by the Protestants.
This has not wipe away the traditional believes which hold a preponderant position in the
lives of the Tombel population.

In the Bakossi mythology, the myth of the creation of the universe doesnot very much differs
from the biblical story of Noah’s ark. The Bakossi believe that the whole universe, if not his
own universe started with a flood that took place in the Muanenguba plains after which, Ngoe
the founder of the Bakossi was saved with the help of a wooden ark. They believe in the
existence of a “superior-being”. This explains the existence of the idea of God-Almighty
known in Bakossi as “Dubengun”. The Bakossi generally believe that the dead are always
around. The dead ones “/Be-Nyamé/” serve as intermediaries between those still alive and the
Almighty God. They are also present to protect and take care of the living. At all ceremonies,
libation is poured to implore the protection and necessary assistance of /Be-Nyame/.
These dead ones are believe to form a link between the living and the dead. They are
necessary intermediaries between the living and the dead in Bakossiland.

3.3 - Sacred place

The Kupe Mountain is an extinct cone-shaped volcano whose volcanic soil makes for
the wealth of the surrounding country. The mountain rises to a height of 2,060m above sea
level. The steep slopes of the mountain are completely wooded with evergreen, virgin forest.
It rains very heavily on and around the mountain throughout the year.
Kupe is believed to be the greatest secret meeting place in all Bakossiland. On the summit,
according to this belief, there is a large town, better built than any in Bakossi. This town is not
visible to the ordinary eye, because it is supernatural. It is believed that the mountain contains
good and evil things. People with supernatural powers and double nature go there periodically
to take the wealth that the great Kupe offers, discuss important matters affecting their respective areas and interests, and the whole of their “world”.

3.4- Secret societies

Secret societies are an important social component in the life of the Bakossi in Tombel. Each juju society has what maybe termed its code of conduct by which each of its members is bound. These societies have developed and have helped too in the development of the Bakossi social, economic and moral life. Examples are the Ahon society which is the most honourable and is composed of men with a certain degree of material wealth. The Muankum society is a dreadful instrument or force for maintenance of peace and order in the society.

3.6 - Administrative structures

The Tombel rural Council is the administrative governing body which rules over the 100,000 inhabitants (TRC: 2009) of Tombel. It was created in 1978 from the then Bakossi Council or Kumba Eastern Council. Following a presidential decree No. 77/205 of June 29th 1977, splitting the Bakossi council into separate entities, namely the Tombel Rural Council and Bangem Rural Council, headquarter of the Kupe Muanenguba division. The Tombel Rural Council counts on income from the following sources: Physical revenue such as taxes, Additional council taxes collected through the government, Revenue from market tolls, Park fees paid by commercial passenger vehicles and motorbike taxis, Fees from Council approvals of building site and building plans, possible loans from FEICOM. These resources are used in staff salaries, stationary and transportation, provision of public utilities such as water and electricity, hygiene and sanitation, assistance to Community projects and a greater share on rural road maintenance. The council hardly covers all these items because of limited resources. (ABI:2010). Community labour is organised by the council to keep Tombel clean. Before the year 2000, “town criers” were used to announce the day of community labour. But since then, the council has fixed a specific date respected by all. That is, on every first Friday of the month. Everyone is obliged to clean around his home. Public spheres are cleaned according to social or professional groups. For example, the Tombel Rider’s Union take care of the cleaning of the motto parks.

3.7 - Health structures
Tombel has a district hospital in Tombel town and a missionary hospital at Nyassoso. These are the major health centres present. Other smaller hospitals are found in Ebonji, Ndibenjock and Baseng. These hospitals are equipped with maternities and treat common illnesses to the people such as Malaria, typhoid and many other tropical diseases. They are able to treat injuries and carry out minor operations. In cases of serious illnesses, they direct patients to the Njombe and Nkongsamba hospitals.

Traditional herbalists and other sorcerers are also present. They receive patients who believe to have been attacked from the “supernatural world”. They also receive people who desire to acquire preventive care through spiritual protection.

3.8 - Community organisations

The Tombel population is also composed of sub groups of common interest. These social groups play a big role in modelling and animating the socio-cultural life of the people. Amongst them, we have Njangi groups which come together especially on Sundays to contribute a solidarity fund; groups of economic interest such as the Tombel-Bangem Bee Farmers Association (TOBA) who produce and sell honey; the Community Action for Development or CADEV regroups farmers who promote the rearing and commercialisation of snails.

In the social domain, the “Tombel Aunties Association” is prominent in female reproductive health and the catering of single mothers. The Tombel Rider’s Union regroups motorbike taxi riders who come together to defend the interest of their profession.

These groups participate in national festivities such as the 11th February, 1st and 20th May festivities.

3.9 - Road Transport

The nature of the Tombel soil did not allow for good roads. The presence of stones, volcanic rocks and tree roots rendered any attempt at road making difficult. It was practically impossible by 1920 to make anything but a road, which was only to be used by pedestrian. For this reason, many secondary roads linking villages or trade stations first opened by the Germans were not motorable;

The development of road transport in Tombel started with the appointment of Ntoko Epie by the British in 1922 as the head of Native Authority of Bakossi District. By 1922 an excellently graded road from the river Mungo through Tombel to Nyasoso (12miles) was completed by
the Native Administration under the initiative and relentless effort of the District Head Ntoko Epie. Before then, the road was only a bushy path. This was the only good road in the area. The rest were improved bushy tracks.

By 1923 bicycles and motor cars use the Mambanda-Tombel road during the dry season, but the road was permanently motorable for only three miles after Mambanda. That is, it did not reach the Mungo Bridge. Tombel could still not be reached by road from Kumba, the more reason why all cash and food crop evacuation was through the French territory.

By 1924, Ntoko Epie made another excellent road, which was wide, well dug and well graded from Tombel to the frontier with French Cameroon. This road was motorable by motorcars and lorries. This facilitated the movement and transportation from the heart of the cocoa and cocoyam growing Tombel to the market at Loum. By 1930, lorries carrying cocoa made use of the road. Another long road was constructed by Loum through Tombel and parallel to the French frontier through Nyasoso, Ndum, NgomboAku where it joined another road from Kumba past Mungo ferry to Ngusi,

In 1932 a new stretch of the Tombel-Nyasoso road was completed by a Swiss Lumber company. This road ran between Ebonji and Ngusi. Before these roads were constructed, the market days at Loum provided suitable occasions to observe the situation of non-motorised forms of transport in Tombel. Women and men were to be found walking in groups and carrying food items (cocoyam, cassava, plantains) and other goods on their heads and backs on their way to Loum market.

Since the introduction of cooperatives in 1946, Tombel witnessed an improvement of it’s road network. The Tombel cooperative embarked on the maintenance of roads in Tombel-Ebonji via Peng roads which were all maintained.

In 1957, the road linking Loum and Kumba was tarred. This road served Tombel very much since Tombel is situated along this road. Persons and goods were easily transported from Tombel to Loum and Tombel to Kumba. Lorries from Douala and Kumba frequently came to Tombel to transport foodstuffs and produce. After independence the road deteriorated because of inadequate maintenance. It became worst in 1977 when one Cameroonian engineer Mr. Ndingsa from Momo Division was asked to repair the road. In the course of the repairs, he crapped off all the remaining tar. At the beginning of 1980s the road was no longer different from the other road paths of the locality.

The High Ways Department of the Ministry of Equipment, which used to take care of the road almost, abandoned it too. By 1990, the road was completely destroyed by heavy
trucks, which transported produce from Tombel to the Littoral Region and Meme Division. These trucks were usually over-loaded with cocoa, coffee, banana, plantain and cocoyam leading to a further destruction of the road. This was also aggravated by the Dissolution of the cooperative body which helped to maintain the Kumba - Tombel road.

It was indeed difficult for Tombel to link its neighbours like Kumba, Loum and Nyasoso because the roads were muddy in the rainy season. Only four wheeled driven vehicles (land rover) could ply the roads in the rainy season. This situation rendered movement and evacuation of farm products almost impossible during certain months of the wet season. In Tombel town itself, the Rural Council did not regularly care for the streets. This was due to lack of funds and equipment. The streets remained for years without grading and sometimes during the rainy season, they became death traps to vehicles going to Nyasoso and Bangem.

The situation changed in 1997 with the up lifting of the status of the the Kumba – Tombel – Bangem road. Thanks to the European Union, the road from Kumba to Tombel and Bangem is now functional at all seasons depending upon the type of vehicle used. Public transport has improved with the use of land rovers and four wheels drive Toyota Hilux vehicles on the Tombel-Bangem road. The Tombel- Loum road has seen a steady decline of motorcars giving way to motorbike taxis which parade this road. Nevertheless, a good number of Tombel women and men are still found carrying food items on their heads and backs, while some ride on trucks and bicycles.

3.9.1 - Composition of the Tombel transport system

To respond to the movement needs of its more than 100,000 inhabitants, several means of transport co-exist, assuring transport in and out of Tombel and its vicinities.

- The mini-buses of about 15 places assure transport of passengers and goods between Tombel and Kumba during the dry season when the roads are usable.
- The small Toyota KE70 vehicles assure transport of passengers and goods between the Tombel –Kumba and Tombel- Loum roads.
- Land rovers and four wheeled Toyota pick-up transport passengers from Tombel to Bangem.
- Most recently, the motorbike taxis which transport passengers to all villages and towns in and around Tombel.
3.9.1 - River Transport

The only river linking Tombel and Kumba is the River Mungo. Before 1933 it was difficult to trade with British territory. This was because a route was not established which could make it possible economically to evacuate produce from Tombel since the Mungo River had no bridge. River transport from Tombel through the river Mungo has been used to a lesser extend as the inhabitants prefer movements on land than on water.
CHAPTER III

ORIGIN AND IDENTIFICATION OF MOTORBIKE TAXI AND RIDER
IN TOMBEL
1 – ORIGIN OF MOTORBIKE TAXIS IN TOMBEL

Tombel is relatively covered in road transport with three principal trade routes. Land rovers covering the Tombel-Bangem 65km road; Tombel-Loum road a 9.1km track covered by Toyota corolla vehicles and the Tombel- Kumba road covered by Toyota corolla cars and occasionally by mini-buses in the dry season.

The activity of motorbike taxi began with Mr. Mbappe, 42 years old watch repairer who in July 1992 started to use his motorbike for commercial use, carrying individuals from Tombel central to some villages in the suburbs. (All former motorbike taxi riders interviewed confirm the paternity of this activity to Mr Mbappe)

It is recounted that Mpappe had a distant farm at Ebonji (8.4 km to Tombel centre) and usually went to farm on his motorbike, a YAMAHA 100. During one of his trips to Ebonji, he met two men on the road to Ebonji awaiting a vehicle to Ebonji. He proposed to carry the men for 600FCFA to Ebonji, a proposal they accepted. On his way back, he did the same and got two passengers leading to Tombel. At that moment, he made it with 1200Fcfa which he noticed he could fuel his bike when going down to his farm and the remaining change to buy something necessary for him. From then onwards, he left his former job of watch repairer and embarked on becoming a motorbike taxi rider which was much more lucrative. His friend, Nsube, owner of a HONDA motorbike followed his example to other nearby villages which his friend Mbappe could not go there, so they both partitioned the town to ride in for transport.

By 1998, this activity gained importance and the demand for motorbike taxis increased. This led to the import of Japanese and Taiwan brand motorbikes (Honda, Kymco, Yamaha) of which KYMCO 125 was the most popular because it could be adapted to the nature of the roads (Interview with Ngome Ewang on November 2009). These motorbikes were bought from Nigeria at first by two individuals – Ngome Ewang and Ndobi who became experts, travelling to Calaba, Nigeria by road transport. Later on other young riders like Anguas, Elah and Sidy who are bike mechanics started going to buy from Nigeria and bringing the big model KYMCO 150. The motorbikes were bought at an average price of one Million Francs CFA and fuelled in Nigeria before riding back home to Tombel on the motorbike.

Farmers and businessmen entered the business through the acquisition of these Japanese brand motorbikes. Everyone passed through these two individuals to acquire a motorbike till
the year 2000 where preference of import was given to Douala. The falling prices due to Chinese imports from $2000 for Japanese to $600 for Chinese motorbikes (Starcey:2007) paved the way to cheap Chinese motorbikes (Nangfang, Sanili, Sanyo brands) flooding the market but rapidly could not last for more than two years without suffering constant repairs due to the bad nature of the road. The choice of Japanese made motorbikes has resurfaced but this time around, the bikes are bought in Douala and Tombel itself.

1.1 - Factors favouring the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel
Many factors have contributed to the introduction spread of motorbike taxis in Tombel. They can be sub categorised under natural, political and socio-economic factors.

- The natural factor
The nature of the terrain
The roads are bad for circulation of motor vehicles due to high precipitation: 3.657 mm of rain per year (Neba: 1987). The run off's wash away top soil leading to pot holes and mud flats. The soil is composed of volcanic rocks. These rocks are a constant nuisance to wheels of the vehicles which trespass these roads. This renders travelling time consuming as it takes so much time to travel on short distances with a vehicle. Tyres punctures are regular.

To travel the 60km from Tombel to Bangem took about three to four hours drive in the dry season and about four to five in the rainy season. It’s really a tedious journey for the roads are very bad. Today, with an Okada, it takes two to three hours as the Okadas easily oscillate around the impediments and use footpaths in places where the road is unusable.

Interview of Wang George (13/04/2010 at Nyassoso)
The maintenance of the road is executed by the Tombel Rural Council whose limited resources are unable to assure a regular use of these roads. The logistic support of the South West Development Authority (SOWEDA) has proven inadequate. Only land rovers and four wheeled vehicles could be used, hence limiting traffic between Tombel and its neighbours.

The flexibility and adaptability of motorbikes on these roads made it a better choice for the population for its movements. Motorbikes move through these roads and their small sizes permit them to create temporal short cuts into the forests to avoid these impediments.
• Political factors

**Government laxity in enforcing the law**

The emergence of motorbike taxis have been favoured by the absence of the application of local regulation on public transport by motorbike. In fact, at the genesis of the activity in the Northern regions of the country, the two wheeled cycle engines were considered as individual transport and no text existed on its regulation as a means of public transport. Order No 291 of 30th June 1975 regulates the profession of taxis in towns but did not mention the use of motorbikes as a taxi. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister’s Decree No 2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008 sealed the conditions of exploiting a motorbike for commercial purposes in the public transport system. But the enforcing of this law has been problematic. From all the rules slated by the law, motorbike taxi riders in Tombel respect just one: The payment of the global tax to the local council. The other requirements are more or less followed depending upon the rider. The council has a lukewarm attitude over this activity which procures revenue to its coffers. The police road control officers do not check the riders to be in accordance with the law. According to Ngome Ewang, (2009) a motorbike rider:

“We are never asked to present any papers at the road controls. All we do is to pay the way with 500FCFA once a day at every control. After payments, one is free to ride through and fro with customers.”

The fact that this activity provides employment to some youths accrues the state’s laxity in implementing the law which can burst out into a social crisis.

• Socio-economic factors

• **Increase in population and traffic.**

By 1953 the population of Tombel was estimated at 3,834 (Ejedepang: 1988). It has today increased to over 100,000 inhabitants (TRC: 2009). This increase in population has led to the increase in traffic on the routes linking the town internally to its various villages and externally to the neighbouring towns of Loum, Kumba and Bangem. Nevertheless, this increase in population was not followed by an increase in the number of transport vehicles. Land rovers were the only means to reach Bangem from Tombel. One land rover left Tombel
early every morning to Bangem. A passenger who missed the trip was obliged to wait the following day in order to travel.

Traffic between Tombel and its environs increased as the purchase of food crops such as bananas, plantains, cocoyam and cassava increased. The available vehicles on market days preferred the transport of goods which are more lucrative than that of passengers. This created an acute demand in the transport of persons. Motorbike taxis responded to this demand and thus flourished in Tombel.

- **Unstable transport fares**

Due to the prevailing poor road network transport fares have been varying according to weather conditions and most especially according to the will of the transport drivers who in a situation of monopoly dictated their prices to the population that became hostage of the situation. “To travel the 65km road from Tombel to Bangem costs 3000Fcfa. All passengers pay the same price not withstanding if a passenger’s destination is just 10km away from Tombel on the road to Bangem.” (Interview of Ehabe Nzang)

More so, the renowned ruthlessness of these drivers pushed the population to search for an alternative. This social grudge favoured a new public transport system, hence the motorbike taxi. According to Pa Joe Kang, “when you take a land rover from Tombel to go to Nsuke, one was forced to take the car leading to Bangem. Unfortunately, the driver leaves you at a road junction and goes his way. One is then obliged to walk all the way from the road junction to the Nsuke village.” (Interview of Pa Joe Kang 20/12/2010).

- **Increase rate of unemployment**

The structural adjustment programme of the 1990s coupled with the liberalisation of the Cameroonian economy led to the laying off of many civil servants to reduce government expenditure. The rate of unemployment grew all over Cameroon as the private sector did not prove to be strong enough to soak these unemployed citizens. Many then turned to the informal sector to sustain their livelihoods. This situation also affected the Tombel population as well. Among the growing population of youths (scholars and non scholars) who are unable to find jobs in the cities, some turned back to their home towns (urban-rural migration) considered a more favourable environment to sustain a living. They earn up idling around. These youths between the ages of 15 to 35 provided a labour force quickly absorbed by the activity of motorbike taxi, thus offering self employment
• **Fall in cash crop prices**

The closing of the cocoa and coffee marketing board liberalised the cash crop sector. With no protective price barrier, many farmers were left in the hands of cocoa and coffee middlemen who bought their productions at very low prices. Moreso, the drop in prices of cocoa and coffee at the London stock exchange market in 1994 was a great blow to most farmers who depend on revenue from these cash crops to earn a living. Agriculture absorbs more than 80% of the population’s working force. Very few Bakossi carry out tertiary activities and there exist no manufacturing industry in the town.

(Cocoa production began in Tombel in 1920. Hence for almost a century, the Bakossi from Tombel has adopted the cultivation of this cash crop as a means to assure their livelihood. Prestige was acquired through one’s production of cocoa. A favourable condition to become a suitor in prospect of marriage was the ownership of one or several cocoa farms.)

As a long term result, many farmers looked for alternatives to assure their livelihood. This led to the reconvention into tertiary activities such as the activity of motorbike taxi rider.

• **Easy access to the business**

Another factor which favoured the activity of motorbike taxi in Tombel is the relative ease in commencing this activity. Motorbikes were acquired at affordable prices (1 million FCFA) at the start of this activity and today, the prices of these engines have dropped. Due to the policy of liberalisation and increasing imports from Asia and China in particular, thousands of brand new motorbikes have flooded the Cameroonian market. A Nangfang motorbike at the BIKE HOUSE in Tombel is sold at about 350.000FCFA. The fuel consumption of its engines is more economical as compared to other vehicles. The payment of global tax to the Tombel Rural Council and contribution to the Tombel Rider’s Union (2000FCFA) gives the right to ride after purchasing the daily entry ticket sold by the TRC to motorbike taxi riders at 250FCFA. Moreso, spare parts are available at relatively cheap prices and maintenance is done at a cheap cost. All these facilities have favoured the introduction and spread of motorbike taxis in Tombel.
2 IDENTIFICATION OF MOTORBIKE TAXI AND RIDER IN TOMBEL

2.1 Identification of a motorbike taxi

Physical characteristics

It is well known that a motorbike taxi is a lightweight motorbike. In Tombel, most of the motorbikes used for public transport are of an average cylinder (Suzuki Fr 50m³; Yamaha 50m³ and 100m³; KYMCO 125m³ and 150cm³). These are the same types of motorbikes used in the city of Douala (GHOTOCHO: 2001). Nevertheless, these have some characteristics peculiar to Tombel. The exhaust pipes of many motorbikes are burst with holes. This is meant to increase the noise produced by the motorbike and attract customers. According to Kolle Emmanuel (Interviewed on 22/12/2009),

“We burst the exhaust pipes because as we ride around, it increases the noise quality of our machines and creates awareness of our presence in an environment”.

They all have two saddles, one for the rider and the other; two pairs of foot-seats; a head lamp and for most do not have matriculate numbers.

Appellation of motorbike

Unlike in other towns of Cameroon and Africa, the popular name used in the appellation of motorbike in Tombel depends upon the age of the individual. The table below brings out the particularities of naming a motorbike in Tombel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appellation of motorbike</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/Okada/</td>
<td>15 - 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/méchine/</td>
<td>71 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Naming of motorbikes in Tombel according to age.

According to our table above, individuals aged between 7 and 70 popularly use the word /Okada/ to design a motorbike and those above the age of 70 uses the word /méchine/. This is
explained by a generational difference whereby the aged present in the colonial era attributed the name machine to many new western material cultures which possessed an engine.

The name /Okada/ designing a motorbike and /Okada man/ designing a motorbike rider is popularly used among the children, youths and adults. (7 – 70 years old). This name is originated from neighbouring Nigeria. In a process of acculturation defined by Winthrop as the process of acquiring culture traits as a result of contact (Winthrop 1991:83), the first riders who went to buy these motorbikes in Nigeria came back with this name and began using it in designing a motorbike. This was accentuated by the production and broadcast of the successful Nigerian movie titled “Okada man” in 2005, with Nkem Owoh (a popular Nigerian actor) as the main figure in the movie. The success of this movie reached Tombel through the Video CD ROMs sold in the markets and also through its projection on Nollywood Television, a free Satellite TV station which is captured in Tombel and in other parts of the South West region.

Originally, the name /Okada/ is borrowed from the then popular Airline in Nigeria, the “Okada Air”. This was a local airline that was not popular for its comfort but remained the most used local airline in the country. In an ironic metaphor the first groups of motorbike transporters were then given this name /Okada/. Because of the comic irony of this name being used for a cyclist and for the popularity of the airline, the name /Okada/ for the commercial motorcyclist was never to be forgotten and eventually became as popular as it is now. /Okada/ began to gain popularity in the late 80s when because of economic difficulties in the last years of the first decade of the Nigerian economic crunch, some jobless youths began to use this age-old transport system for commercial purposes, to transport some stranded but willing passengers through the narrow or bad roads to the far inaccessible parts of the cities or villages.

The name /Okada/ has today been diffused from Nigeria to Cameroon and widely used in the South west and North West regions of Cameroon to design a motorbike. This contrasts with the appellation of motorbikes in other regions of Cameroon such as Douala, Yaounde, Bafoussam and Bertoua better known as /bend-skin/.

Drawn from Pidgin English, /bend-skin/, designs a traditional dance from the Western region of Cameroon reputed for its frenzy and rhythm and most especially the stooping position of its dancers. The first brands of motorbikes used by motorbike riders had an elevated seat giving to the transported passengers a position similar to a /bend-skin/ dancer.
Today, this word designs not only the motorbike but equally the entire activity of motorbike taxi. (NDJOUKYA: 2008).

Names to design motorbike taxis differ according to regions and circumstances. In other parts of Africa, varying conditions have given rise to varied names. Thus, in Benin, motorbikes are called /Zémidjan/ (take me fast; a rapid door to door transport), between Kenya and Uganda, /boda-boda/ (boarder to boarder), in Togo /Olévia/ and /Vélo-taxi/ in Senegal.

2.2- PROFILE OF A MOTORBIKE TAXI (OKADA) RIDER

Looking at the term profile, we can look at its definitions from two perspectives (According to the Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary: 2009 Edition)

- In the first place, profile would mean a short description of some one’s life, work, character, etc.
- In the second place, the amount of public attention and notice that something receives, (position where they are noticed).

Thus having a closer view on the profile of a motorbike taxi rider, both definitions would be accepted and made use of, in the illumination of the thematic conditions of this activity in Tombel. How then do we assess a motorbike taxi rider’s profile with reference to the above definitions?

From the first definition of profile, being a short description of some one’s life, work, character, etc. Our informants will serve as references in order to deduce the profile of a motorbike taxi rider. They are in a total number of 31, most of whom are motorbike taxi riders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Number of informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motorbike taxi riders</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional elders</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other occupations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table N° 6 : Professional distribution of Informants

Mesumbe Princewill, Ngome Richard, Tchamba Festus, and Wang Ferdinand, all motorbike taxi riders are part of the 16 riders/informants as slated above. They will help us pursue our study to a satisfactory conclusion.
The above mentioned names are youths born and bred in Tombel, in the late 70s and early 80s. They are averagely 25 to 35 years old. They pursued their Primary and Secondary Education in Tombel, but due to financial and other social constrains, they had to jump out from Secondary school. Some entered into petit trades while others remained idle and others took to the farming of cocoa. It’s from such milieus that they all entered into riding of motorbikes which proved to be more lucrative and a provider of immediate cash.

According to Wang Ferdinand, former cocoa farmer:

“I worked as an employer in someone’s farm in a two-party deal. But with such engagement, you will have to work the whole cocoa season, taking care of the cocoa plants from the time they bear fruits to the time of harvest. It takes months to reap the fruits of our labour. While with an Okada, the revenue accrued from the activity is immediate. The choice to enter the activity was thus easy to make.

Their life therefore revolves around this activity for their livelihood, prestige and future families are built out of it. Most of them are proud to beat their chests of having wives, with at least a child, a rented house or family house, where they and their families live together happily with everything coming from the proceeds of motorbike taxi riding. For example, Mesumbe Princewill, recounts:

“/Okada/ riding offers me much “balance” so much so that I can take care of my family, send my two kids to nursery and primary schools and even sponsor my junior brother and sister at the Government Bilingual High School Tombel. My responsibilities have increased but I succeed in fulfilling them all. Before I became a rider, I was looked low upon in my family, but since I’ve indulge into this activity and making money, I’m now being given consideration and respect. Thus our lives revolve around this activity”.

Talking about the work proper, it is a very difficult task indeed. To go about their activity, the riders have to put on clothes adapted to their activity. To this, a general physical description of the riders is necessary.

2.2.1- Physical description of an “Okada” rider.

All motor bike riders in Tombel, whether on a private ride or for an income purpose are males. This is contrary to some regions in Cameroon such as the Adamawa region where some women posses and ride motorbikes. (Sadou: 2005).

Their attires however vary according to the seasons. A typical dressing of a rider is composed of a thick jacket, jeans trousers, rubber-plastic shoes (commonly known as /Dschang shoes/) or rubber boots. (The Sub divisional officer of Tombel published in December 2008 an order forbidding the use of slippers in riding. This order is enforced by the State Council. This order
was justified by the fact that slippers were a cause to severe motorbike accidents. For it was realised that the consequences of accidents with drivers wearing slippers were much more grave than others wearing shoes.

In the rainy seasons, the morning attire is composed of warm clothes in order to face the morning cold. They have to cover their heads with a cap, neck with mufflers; their hands with gloves (for some). The rains are not a hindrance to the activity for they ride under the rains. Many of the riders posses raincoats to protect their body. There is no additional protection previewed for the customers who most often have to bear the consequences of the climatic conditions. (Soaked in the rains or covered with dust in the dry season). Nevertheless, to protect the customers from mud, the riders try to ride of the best possible paths. A cocoyam leave is usually attached at the rear of the motorbike such that the mud sprinkling from the rear tire doesn’t wash the passenger’s back, which will dirty his clothes.

Figure 3: **Motorbike taxi riders in Tombel town:** Cocoyam leaves are attached to the rear of the motorbike to protect the customers from mud flushed by the rear tyre.

Source: Fieldwork, Lawrence Nkede Njie (2010)

In dry season, the riders have additional gadgets they wear to face the dusty roads. They tie their noses with a headscarf. They also put on sun glasses to protect their eyes. Occasionally, some riders put on the green jackets recommended by the council. Generally, they put on dirty
clothes to carry out this activity. This is justified by the fact that many of the riders are former farmers or farmer still in activity. The pioneer of this activity in Tombel was himself a farmer and began motorbike taxi riding on one of his riding trips to his farm. These farmers go to their farms dressed in their “bush clothes”. This is the attire used for farm work. It is always dirty because hardly washed and used on a daily bases. Farmers entering into this activity brought in their “bush clothes” which they now use in motorbike taxi riding.

New comers into the activity copied the prevailing dressing patterns. This way of dressing is equally justified by the nature of the activity.

According to Ngome Richard, a motorbike rider interviewed in January 2010;

We put on this attire because it suits our activity. We run our motorbikes under the dust in the dry season. The rainy season brings mud. Through many villages, we have to push our motorbikes through the mud. This accounts for our constant dirty clothes. Secondly, it’s also a distinctive sign to distinguish an Okada rider from a mere motorbike rider. Customers are used to our dressing and if they need a ride, they will only stop an unclean rider. If you are well dressed, let’s say with a nice pair of trousers, shirt and tie, no one will dare stop you to take a ride. You will be taken for an ordinary motorbike rider.

According to Section C of the Prime Minister’s Decree N°2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008, the riding of a motorbike taxi is conditioned by the obligatory wearing of a colourful jacket with a distinctive luminous horizontal line. This decree is not respected by the riders or even enforced by the local council. The riders put on their own desired jackets and clothes.

Figure 4: A typical motorbike taxi rider in Tombel
Source: Fieldwork, Lawrence Nkede Njie (2010)
2.2.2 - Socio-demographic structure of motorbike taxi riders in Tombel

To better apprehend the profile of a motorbike rider, his social status has to be known. In this perspective, we are going to exploit socio-demographic data such as the number of riders; their ages; origin (professional and ethnic), educational, religious and matrimonial statuses. Ownership patterns of the motorbikes would equally be brought out to light.

The following tables are the result of field research data collected from the records of the Tombel Rider’s Union association and interviews of informants.

2.2.3- Age range of riders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of riders</th>
<th>Age range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>15-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91</td>
<td>23-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>31-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>39+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Age range of riders

**SOURCE:** Field Research and Tombel Rider’s Union database (January 2010)

The above table elucidates the socio-demographic structure of motorbike riders in Tombel in terms of age distribution. The town accounts for 161 permanent motorbike taxi riders. There also exist temporal riders who can be estimated to be of about 45 and are not registered into the rider’s database. Riding constitutes a secondary activity for these temporal riders. These temporal riders come from all works of life but they are mostly composed of students of the secondary and High schools of Tombel. They ride most often during the weekends to make some money to cover their academic expenses; Farmers who migrate between cultivation of crops and riding of motorbikes when the cultivation season is on the recess. That is, after the December harvest of cocoa and coffee, they indulge in motorbike riding from January to March. (Interview of Nkale Eugene, president of the Tombel Rider’s Union 11/01/2010)

The riders fall between the ages of 15 to 43 years old. 15 years old is below the age required by the law (18 years old according to the Prime Minister’s decree of 2008) but it’s
equally an age where a young Bakossi is considered on the way to maturity and thus has to prove his manhood through the /muankum/ initiation. The riding of motorbikes to prove one’s courage and manhood has pushed many teenagers to embark in riding first for pleasure, pride and with time adopt riding of motorbike taxis as a profession. The oldest rider is 43 years old. The forties stand as the age limit of riders. Above this age, it is difficult to find a rider. This is explained by the tedious nature of this activity. The motorbikes are exposed to the scorching sun, run on the volcanic rocky soils which are dusty and stony during the dry season. In the rainy season, they are under the soaking rains, windy, muddy gorges and pot hole roads. This account for constant bumpy rides which affects the rider’s physical health and strength to control the handlebars of the motorbike. All these conditions make the job at times a nightmare and difficult to be exercised for more than 5 years. At a certain age (about 40), the older riders have to give way. The bulk of the riders are aged between 23 and 30 years old. (91 motorbike taxi riders). From here, as age increases, the number of riders decreases in number. (27 between the ages of 30 and 38 and only 9 riders who are equal to or above the age of 39) More so, at more than 35, the aged riders are gradually driven from the profession by the younger ones through series of intrigues, slangs and constant booing.

According to Ngome Ewang (44 years old, interviewed on 29/12/2009) and former rider; “The younger riders have their own ways to tell us the time has come for us to leave the profession. They would throw slangs in Pidgin English at a constant rate to our attention. For example “Whooo whooo! Old man, leave that Okada. You no get pikin for house? A beg, go retirement. You go make man fall for Okada.”

This process has generally pushed aged riders to leave the profession and their motorbikes are transmitted either to their younger brothers or to a tierce person to continue riding their motorbikes on the roads.

According to Mesumbe Princewill, a 36 years old rider interviewed in January 2010:

“I’m going to very soon retire as a rider for the youths at the park boo at me everyday that I come to the park to take service. I know time is approaching and when the youths start throwing slangs and intrigues on you, it is high time to leave and give way to our younger brothers. The slangs and intrigues are generally centred on our age. They keep this on till we can’t bear it anymore.”

Motorbike taxi riding in Tombel is thus essentially a youthful activity.

2.2.4-Professional background of motorbike taxi riders

Motorbike taxi riding is quite a recent activity in Tombel. This new profession embraces people from various sectors of the socio-economic landscape of Tombel. Being an essentially
agricultural area, most inhabitants of Tombel are farmers who either work in the CDC plantations or cultivate cash and food crops to earn a living. The cultivation of cocoa is the main income generating activity. But this activity is carried out on a seasonal base. Harvest only comes out from October to December. The rest of the year, farmers are for most idle. Riding of motorbike taxi appeared as a lucrative activity and in order to occupy themselves and make more money, many farmers entered the activity, firstly on a temporal base (after the cocoa harvest season) and later on adopted riding as a full time activity. More so, the pioneer of this activity was himself a farmer and it’s during one of his trips to his farm that he began riding his motorbike on a profit base.

The student environment constitutes a nursery for the profession of motorbike taxi rider. According to Ndille Enang teacher at the Government Bilingual High School Tombel (interviewed on 18 December 2009); “Due to the presence of several high schools, the student population of Tombel constitute more than three quarters of the youths. Many of these students take care of their academic needs due to the fact that their parents are unable to provide of them. In order to make ends meet have to carry out an income generating activity. Thus, they constitute the majority of the temporal riders. They mostly ride during weekends and their number increases during the academic holidays.”

Ekwembe Francais, lower sixth arts student (interviewed 12 January 2010) affirms that it’s thanks to his weekend ridings that he succeeds in paying his school fees and covers other academic expenses. Other students resident in different regions of the country too become temporal riders in Tombel during the academic holidays. This is true with students of the Yaounde I and II Universities who once back in Tombel for holidays involve themselves in motorbike taxi riding to make some rapid cash which is usually destined to be used once back to school. The students do not posses motorbikes. The motorbikes they ride are the properties mostly of someone with whom they share the same kindred or a close friend. Other students like those that could not foster their education due to financial constrains or the lust for money find themselves in motorbike taxi riding to earn something that could help them earn a living or foster their education in the future.

Many are the youths of Tombel who were unemployed and idled around the town. Those who could not find a job in the cities too came back to Tombel and found a job in riding motorbike taxis. Tombel is void of any enterprise which can soak in all the diploma holders produced by its high schools. These youths ended up doing nothing in Town for many relented into agricultural activities for its yields were on a long term bases while riding
becomes a suitable job for it produces immediate cash. These unemployed have found a profession as they are now recognized as riders.

2.2.5 Religious background of motorbike taxi riders

The Bakossi religion is present in the daily life of the Bakossi of Tombel. Believe in ancestors is prominent and seen in many daily activities. Moreso, every male Bakossi to be fully integrated and be recognized as a man in the society has to be initiated into /mwankum/ or “the power”. This circle is represented by a dreaded invisible juju whose voice can be heard but who is not seen. Entering the /muankum/ is a stage to acquire courage, manhood and to be respected in society. Most of the riders of Bakossi origin have passed their initiation stage into /mwankum/. This is done as from the age of 15. Christianity dominates the public spheres. According to Mesumbe Princewill, (interviewed 13/12/2009) Peul riders of Muslim faith were present at the threshold of this activity. They came from the Northern region of Cameroon. Due to problems of theft and banditry involving some of the Peul riders, they were driven away and today, their number is quite negligible.

Most of the Christian riders are of the Roman Catholic faith which is the dominant faith in Tombel. On Sundays, many do not ride their motorbikes on a profit base. They either use it for personal purposes or use the day to clean the engine and change its oil.

There exist syncretism between the Bakossi tradition and Christianity as the riders combine the two faiths in their daily activities. On Sundays, they go to church to pray but also consult sorcerer to protect themselves from evil doers, road accidents and to get courage. According to Mesumbe Princewill (interviewed 13/12/2009), many riders have seen a witchdoctor to get a talisman for protection. Riding is a dangerous activity and one has to protect himself everywhere. But no one dares to say it openly. It’s something personal and secret.

Furthermore, believe in the Bakossi tradition is elucidated by the /ékéh/ libation ceremony performed by an elder over motorbikes before it starts running the streets for commercial purposes. The /ékéh/ libation ceremony is usually performed when someone has to travel on a long distance. An elder chews either alligator pepper or kola nuts and spits it around the neck and in the clothes of the person travelling, while murmuring some words to the ancestor to protect the traveller. This ceremony has also been transposed in the process of borrowing of trait where by a motorbike taxi too receives the same blessing.
2.2.6- Educational background of motorbike taxi riders

The Tombel municipality has several public and private secondary and high schools where most of the youths receive formal education. Education through socialisation is gradually being shifted from the family sphere to the school environment. Most of the riders in Tombel have received basic and secondary education. The older riders just have as diploma, the first school leaving certificate. After primary school, they entered professional life as farmers or businessmen.

The core of the motorbike taxi riders is made up of secondary school drop outs that have left school prematurely to engage themselves in motorbike taxi riding. According to Joseph Kang Pa Joe Kang, a 66 years old retired teacher, (interviewed on 20/12/2010), the activity of motorbike taxi recruits most of its riders in the secondary schools and most especially when the students are in forms three, four and five. They either begin as temporal riders during holidays and when school resumes, they refuse to go back to school and prefer this job which procures them immediate cash. This has encouraged students to drop out of school. Other students who find it hard to cope with their academic studies turn to riding as a solution to move on with life. This is the case with Mbule Charles (25 years old), Anoge Valentine (23 years old) and Enongene Francis (20 years old), former students of the first cycle at the Government Bilingual High School Tombel who have all turned to riding after successive failures at the G.C.E Ordinary level examination.

Nine of the riders are degree holders from the State universities. These have not been able to get jobs after their completion at the University and have drawn back home to make earns meet through riding. They consider it as a propelling activity as it provides their basic needs while waiting for greener pastures in the future. One of our informants, Ntungwen Epie (27 years old), holder of a BA in History at the University of Buea since 2008 affirms that some degree holders have passed through motorbike riding in order to either further their education or obtain funds to register for public examinations.

In the course of our field interviews, we recounted the stories of three degree holders (former riders) and who are today into the public service.

This is the case of Mr Wang Julius, former motorbike taxi rider in Tombel who rode motorbikes for a year before being successful at the entrance examination into the teacher’s training school (Ecole normal Supérieure annex of Bambili). He is today a teacher at the Government Bilingual Secondary School (C.E.S Bilingue) of Banyo. Report says he had
been working and saving money to write public exams and finally succeeded in his endeavour.

The last category of motorbike taxi riders is those who haven’t even any sort of formal education. We were unable to get in contact with any as in our findings, only one of our informants mentioned that there exist a few riders who haven’t received formal education.

2.2.7- Matrimonial status of riders

Marriage or /é-wonge/ is a very important institution among the Bakossi and other ethnic groups who form the horde of motorbike taxi riders. It involves two families coming together in a union through the daughter of one family and the son from another. Before a girl becomes wife to her intendant, a big expenditure is carried out by the intendant’s parents. Firstly, each of the girl’s relative receive a sum of money or gift specified by the girl’s parent in a long consent list or /nkwenten/, given to the husband in advance. This constitutes the bride price. (Ejedepang K: 1986). The girl also receives dowry from her family in the form of gifts and money. The cost of marriage is at a steady increase, because of the costs involved. Mr Kome Leomon, (31 years old civil servant interviewed on 12 January 2010) confirmed haven spent over one million FCFA to marry another Bakossi girl from the Nninong clan. This alone shows how expensive it is to get a wife, considering the low income of the farmers and other inhabitants of this locality. This has scared many youths from getting married. Nevertheless, the situation among the motorbike taxi riders differs from that of the other youths in society. Although youths for most, our research proves many of them married. This is because they can afford to pay the bride price through the income generated from their activity. They are thus respected in society because of their matrimonial status. Others live in concubine, locally known as “come we stay” but consider themselves to be married. Nkewelle Eugene, a 30 years old rider affirms that he lives in concubine with his “wife” because he hasn’t yet raised enough money to pay for her bride price. But the fact that he’s a rider and takes good care of the companion, the girl’s father has consent to their relationship. In return, he has made a firm promise to pay the bride price which will be at an increase because it would not only be levied on the girl, but equally to their child, born out of marriage wedlock.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>N° of informants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional marriage</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concubines</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional and Civil marriage</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional, civil and church marriage</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total : 16 informants</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Matrimonial status of our informants who are motorbike riders

This table is representative of the general tendency as concerns the married status of the riders.

Our analysis of the marital status of our informants and list of birth ceremony celebrations by their “wives”, commonly called /born house list/, reveal that most of the married riders are wedded traditionally. This proves that they can raise enough funds from their activity to pay the bride price which averagely stands at about 500,000 FCFA, depending on the family background of the bride. This is followed by those living in concubine. The number of riders in this status is important because they are still in the process of legitimating their union but decide to consume their union before getting officially married. In the third category, we find those who are married both traditionally and at the civil status register. The three people interviewed in this category are 39 years and above. In the last category, only one of our informants affirms having gotten married in church. This is seen as the last stage of marriage after the traditional and civil wedding. This stage requires the couple to show off their worth financially and socially. That’s why many riders marry traditionally and at the civil status register while keeping the church marriage to a period where they shall be financially fit to do so.

No definition of marriage is broad enough to apply easily to all societies. A commonly quoted definition comes from Notes and Queries in Anthropology: “Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognised as legitimate offspring of both partners (Royal Anthropological Institute 1951, P111) Marriage in Tombel should be understood in an “emic” approach. That is from the vision of the motorbike riders who have a common image of the concept of marriage which is fast progressing. From the analysis of our field interviews, we derive to the conclusion that marriage today according to the latter is the union between a man and a woman, weather the
bride price has been paid or not; or even if a marriage certificate has been issued or not. Sometimes, they use the word married couple to describe a boy who has gotten a child with a girl. They consider them as married because of the child who links both parents. Thus, in the annals of the Tombel rider’s Union, we find a special marriage contribution fund. This is money contributed by every member of the Rider’s Union to be handed over to a rider’s wife who has put to birth. A wife here is a girl who has put to birth a rider’s child, weather they are married, living in concubine or living separately. This money usually serves to organise the traditional birth ceremony or /Etcha/ which the motorbike taxi riders celebrate, bringing in innovations.

2.2.8 - Public character of riders

The public character of riders will permit us have a view of how they interact with the rest of society in their daily duties. This will provide relevant data which will be analysed later on in this research on the perception of the population to this activity and its main actors- the riders.

Motorbike taxi riders in Tombel are courageous and outspoken men. This attitude is observed from the conditions under which they ride on the rough roads and the risks taken on a daily bases. The riders are law brokers for they do not respect neither the highway code, nor even government’s prescriptions slated to exercise the activity of motorbike taxi rider.

Tchamba Festus, (21 years old) comments in the following way:

“We are forced to be bold, courageous and full of challenges when it comes to our job, for no risk no reward. Even if you are a calm, gentle and honest guy, you are forced to change. You need courage to face the task. You need to brave up to meet up with the challenges.” At times you are hired very late at night, at times in the rain. When the payment is handsome, you face the task.”

Competition for passengers among riders is tough so the riders have to hassle be fast and tactful in catching customers. They thus express a mixture of feelings such as outspokenness, flattery and ruthlessness in the exercise of their activity. They are very good at appreciating girls and women when attracting customers and at the same time, very impolite and abusive when they spend the day idle without any passenger. The fact that they spend their time under the sun waiting for passengers makes them get easily irritated at the slightest provocation. The riders are fond of intrigues among themselves most especially to the old riders. There exists a sense of solidarity among the riders. They assist each other in case of trouble against a fierce person in the course of their activity. Also, when a rider has an engine
breakdown, his fellow colleagues are usually the first to assist him on the roadside before the arrival of a motorbike mechanic. This solidarity can be justified by the fact that these riders are for most from the same social background (farmers and children of farmers) and usually face the similar problems. This solidarity is expressed among motorbike taxi riders in other regions of the country. This has made them a force to reckon with. The case of Douala is a good illustration where by the riders fight together for one another and to preserve their common interest.

An article of the Newspaper “Le Messager” of 22/04/2010 brings out a concrete example of this solidarity.

Extract:

This scene has been witnessed yesterday, Wednesday 21 April 2010 at Bonapriso. Policemen had erected barricades to prevent the access of this residential area to benskin riders.

More than two hundred motorbike riders were opposed to policemen in a no pity duel at the middle of a crossroads." It is when policemen refused that motorbikes should cross across Bonapriso that they got angry, says Flaubert Ndédi, a resident of Bonapriso. Benskin riders began to phone one another and in a space of ten minutes, there were more than two hundred motorbikes here. They started pushing the policemen who were not intimidated by this move. Stones and sticks were then used like weapons in a battle between these two parties. A battle which ended with a lot of injuries on both sides”.


But this solidarity doesn’t exclude frictions between the riders. Epie Anuge, a 19 years old rider affirms:

“At times we quarrel, fight passengers and why not bribe others to obtain their passengers. Equally Policemen too are given bribes in order to pass through and carryout our activities, because not all the papers are correct. ”

The motorbike taxi riders have thus created a new social order with its own rules and codes of conduct. According to the data collected from informants, Motorbike taxi riders in Tombel are said to have a proud attitude. Being for most income providers for their families, they always boast in public of their achievements. They are said to be arrogant and sometimes tend to be aggressive. This attitude is explained by the fact that the riders for whom most do not own motorbikes and work on a daily loan of motorbike has an objective to attain on a daily bases. They are under excess pressure from the motorbike owners. They have to fulfill their obligations in producing revenue for the motorbike owner. (3,000 FCFA on average). It’s after he has gotten the day’s revenue that he can begin working for an excess which will now be his profit. This situation is similar to that of the /benskin/ riders in Douala who have the
same attitude towards the public. According to Mme Rose Ekele, interviewed in a television documentary;

“This aggressiveness is explained by the fact that the riders have objectives to attain. Their attitude is tributary to the prevailing atmosphere of poverty. When one has to feed for his family and himself, makes him become aggressive”.


2.3- The process of becoming a motorbike taxi rider

Accessing the profession of motorbike taxi rider commonly known as /okada man/ is an easy process. The first step is to obtain a motorbike which will serve the purpose. This is obtained through one of the above stated ownership patterns. The rider undergoes a short term training which usually lasts between one to three days. This training is carried out by a more experienced rider who masters riding of motorbikes. In Tombel, there are no training schools for vehicles, less again, for motorbikes. The football field of the Government primary school Tombel serves as practice ground for many apprentices. It’s relatively flat nature permits the rider to have a basic knowledge of motorbike riding. The main objective of this training is to permit the apprentice maintain an equilibrium on the motorbike before facing the challenges of the rough roads. More so, if he proves to be courageous enough and has a “strong hand” to maintain the motorbike straight, then his teacher declares him fit to practice the activity.

According to Mesumbe Princiewill, the training is short because the essentials are given to the rider; that is how to sit on a motor bike, how to handle the breaks, a basic knowledge of the important parts and how to remain in a state of equilibrium. He will learn all the rest on the field as he acquires experience in riding.

Among the Bakossi riders, most of the riders (informants) confirm having received blessings from their parents before entering the profession of motorbike taxi riders. This is the same blessings an individual receives when he’s about to travel a long distance. This blessing serves as protection all through the journey to protect the individual from any ills encountered on the road. With the introduction of motorbike taxis, this blessing is being performed when a prospective rider is to enter the profession; According to Pa Joe Kang (66 years, interviewed on 20/12/2010); the blessing requires the use of alligator pepper. The cone of the alligator pepper is open and its seeds are chewed by the elder who performs the blessing. In this process, he murmurs some words in Bakossi to call the assembly into one thought.
In Bakossi

*Nzéh mouth a here wé, a kwel écour. Nanga né si hobé? Nangané é kaké nèh, é ka na nso. Nanga né si hobé? (Assemby answers) ééeh!

In English

*If somebody tries to harm you, he will not succeed. Is that what we’ve all agreed upon? As you’ve started, may you progress in this activity. Is that what we’ve all agreed upon? (The assembly answers) Yes!*

The elder gets the approbation of the assembly constituted of those present and witnessing the blessing. He then spits the chaff of the alligator pepper on the face, around the neck of the rider and inside his clothes. Words of blessings are pronounced once more and the rider is free to go and exercise his activity with no fear and with the hope of succeeding in his business.

Figure 5: Photo of alligator pepper used in the ritual.

*Source: [www.celtnet.org.uk/images/alligator_pepper.gif](http://www.celtnet.org.uk/images/alligator_pepper.gif)*

In the case where a new motorbike is bought, a libation ceremony is carried out over it so that the ancestors would bless the rider and motorbike taxi before he indulges into the activity. This ritual is known as /nzom/. It is used to call the ancestors. In this case, the prospective rider is blessed by the eldest man of the village or family who knows the law of the land. This ritual, an element of the Bakossi culture which was used to seek for blessings from the ancestor has now been transformed and now applied to motorbike taxis and riders. This goes
in line with Krober’s assertion that Diffusion is a matter of what happens to the elements of a culture. (Kroeber: 1948). This ritual is believed to protect a rider and his motorbike taxi from evil spirits and accidents; blessing the rider and to make his activity prosperous.

Pa Joe Kang (66 years old) also describes the course of this important ritual as he has already practised it as an elder.

The libation ceremony of the /nzom/ requires the use of the traditional calabash, kola nuts and the leaf of an elephant grass.

Figure 6: Presentation of the various instruments required for a libation ceremony to be carry out on the behalf of the motorbike taxi rider and on his motorbike. (a) kola nuts (b) Mwe-éssi/ or the traditional calabash. and (c) elephant grass used as cork.

Source: field work research

The traditional calabash /mwe-éssi/ is filled with palm wine. This will be used to call the ancestors to plead for their blessings and guidance on the behalf of the future rider. The
bahama grass is inserted and covers the bottle neck of the /mwe-ëssi/ in order to invoke the ancestral spirits. It constitutes the cork of the calabash. The leaf is being tilted up and down and in this process, the names of the rider’s forefathers are called upon to bless and grant his wishes. The names are called in an ascending order following his patrilineal lineage. Below is an example of the chant. In the left hand column, the sentences are in Bakossi and its English translation is on the right hand column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imploring of the ancestors in Bakossi</th>
<th>English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ö mine – piod, piode-</td>
<td>O wine, peace, peace -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asume Ngoe ban be tan</td>
<td>Asume Ngoe, five children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyo n’Etug, Etan ne Sundem</td>
<td>Nyo and Etug, Etan and Sundem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ö mine – piod, piode-</td>
<td>O wine, peace, peace -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We, ngwe Nyame Ngole,</td>
<td>The dead nyame Ngole;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngwe Ajang Akame, Ngwe Ekane nzie</td>
<td>you the dead Ajang Akame, Ekane Nzie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ö mine – piod, piode-</td>
<td>O wine, peace, peace -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benyame bè be de se we besiole</td>
<td>All the ancestors down there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nye bine nye lege din diade, we ngwe</td>
<td>It was you who left us this land, you the dead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ö mine – piod, piode-</td>
<td>O wine, peace, peace -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nye bene nye legtané se</td>
<td>You yourselves told us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban ade tagte se</td>
<td>That anything that worries us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban se hie lange nye</td>
<td>That we should come and tell you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A belum mo a-tulebwog</td>
<td>If he is thrown on tulebwog*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A hoon a-bolebod</td>
<td>Let him fall on é-bolebod*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-bolebod nyenge mo e-anyenge</td>
<td>So he should prosper as é-bolebod grows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nangané a win bad, be kwor</td>
<td>As your children grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E ba beu nguèn nyam</td>
<td>Give them the lion’s heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E none beu nangané be chélé machine</td>
<td>Look at them as they ride their motorbikes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ö mine – piod, piode-</td>
<td>O wine, peace, peace -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: * tulebwog is a herb whose leaf when touched causes irritation on the human body
*é-bolebod is a soft herb that grows profusely all the time.*

At the end of this chant, the elder unlocks the calabash and raises up the cork and says:
“Ahe- e ya” and the whole group answers; “ya”

He repeats “yah” and the chorus answers; “ya”.

When the cork has been thrown aside, the elder puts the first share in a /mwe-éssi/.

Then he breaks a kola nut and says certain things, this time in prose and can be said in any way.

> Oh kola nut, go down; let us eat you. Our ancestors have told us they are hungry. We have come today to feed them according to how they have shown us. Let them go where there are all good things and bring them to us. Look at our town, the youths have no jobs. Let /benyame/ open the door and multiply the fruits of our children’s’ labour. When we eat, we shall give their share as we have come to do today. So go down.

He throws the kola nut. The kola nut has four lobes and either three have to face down and one up or three up and one down. If this result is not obtained, then there is something left unsaid. As soon as this is said, the correct result is got.

The elder leaves the kola nut pieces on the ground and says; “A-he yu” and the crowd answers; “ya”. The motorbike taxi rider is asked to take one lobe of the kola nut that faced up or down. He picks it up with both hands, stands up straight and says; “Nye he me hen” (put me here) and all bless him with a hissing sound “shhh!” . He croches his kola nut and the elder gives him some wine to drink from the /mwe-éssi/ which he drinks. Wine and kola nuts are also given to other people present who are in need of blessings from the ancestors. After this, the remaining wine is pour ed all over his motorbike. He can only wash the motorbike the following day because it’s believed that the ancestors will bless his motorbike as wine has been poured on it. So he has to leave some time for the blessing to be effective.

After this ceremony, the rider is now free to parade the streets with his motorbike. It should also be noted that not all Bakossi riders follow this rule for it’s not an obligation but something based on personal believe. Nevertheless, the majority of our informants (riders) affirm haven carried out traditional rites before they started riding or in the course of the profession for others.
CHAPTER IV

ORGANISATION AND ROLE OF MOTORBIKE TAXIS INTOMBEL.

Social organisation refers to the directional activity, the working out of social relations in everyday life". (Watson-Gegeo:1991) The organisation of the activity of motorbike taxi in
Tombel presents the relationships between the various actors intervening into the activity and their contribution in maintaining the social order. The function of any recurrent activity is the part it plays in the social life as a whole and thereby, the contribution it makes to structural continuity (Radcliffe-Brown:1952). Thus, motorbike taxis contribute in the social development of Tombel.

1- ORGANISATION OF MOTORBIKE TAXI RIDING IN TOMBEL

The riders work all day long from 5am in the morning to 10 pm in the night. This is different from Bafoussam where riders work all day long in shifts. Some during the day and others at night (Temgoua: 2004) and from Douala where riding is round the clock. After 10pm, passengers out of Tombel have to call a relative or friend in Tombel central to hire a motorbike for him. There are also moments of emergencies where a rider is called late in the night to render his services. Most emergencies come up when a patient has to be transported to the hospital or when a corpse is to be transported to a village.

The payment of global tax to the Tombel Rural Council and a monthly contribution of 2000FCFA to the Tombel Rider’s Union Association give the right to ride after purchasing the daily entry ticket sold by the Tombel Rural Council to motorbike taxi riders at 250FCFA. Motorbike mechanics and spare parts are available at relatively cheap prices and maintenance is done at a cheap cost. Tombel central, being the heart of this activity, it’s from here that most of the motorbikes take off to the various neighbouring towns and villages. Motorbike taxis leave Tombel for Kupe (2,1km), Ngab (2,6km) Ebubu (3,9km), Peng (3,9km), Mbouzie (4,3km), Mbong (4,3km) Nsuke (5,2km), Ebul (5,4km) Mbule (5,9km), Ehom (7,2km), Mbane (7,5km), Ebonji (8,4km), Loum (9,1km), Nyassoso (8,6km), and Kumba (36km).

The distances covered depend upon the brands and engine capacities of the motorbikes. The prices of destinations vary according to the season and the state of the road.

Most of the rider’s do not have a driver’s licence. So, they have to bribe on a daily bases to the police and gendarmerie control posts. This is known as “Buy your way”. It costs 1000FCFA per day to buy their way for those riders who use the Tombel Loum road. 500FCFA is paid to the Gendarmerie road control station at Round about Tombel and another 500FCFA at the Loum entrance. For the Tombel - Ebonji road riders, they pay 500FCFA at the gendarmerie control post and an additional 500FCFA at a second police control post for those heading to Kumba. (15 of the riders interviewed confirmed the above figures). In order
to dodge from the Police and Gendarmerie controls, some riders have developed secondary roads to their destinations passing through the CDC rubber plantations around Tombel and the Banana plantations in Loum. The riders transport of all sorts of passengers and goods which can be carried on the motorbike; the principle being that the rider finds a small place to sit on his bike and obtain equilibrium between his left and right position. Apart from passengers, most of the goods transported include bags of cocoyam, cassava, cocoa, coffee, bunches of plantains, beer racks, utensils, and human corpse. In the last case, some riders are specialised in the transport of corpse.

A day’s revenue from the activity oscillates on an average between 5,000 and 10,000FCFA per day. Riders with experience and well known earn much more because they are said to have “strong hands”. The revenue is disposed of according to the ownership pattern. The sole proprietors own all the income they generate while the others have to share according to their primary agreement.

Figure 7: Transport of goods and passengers in Tombel

Source: Lawrence Nkede, field research December 2009.

1.1- Users of motorbike taxis in Tombel
Availability, adaptability to various climatic conditions, rapidity and door to door service are some of the key words emanating from our field interviews concerning the use of motorbike taxis in Tombel. From our conversations and interviews, more than two thirds of our informants confirm that they use motorbike taxis almost on a daily bases. They also affirm that there are destinations which are solely covered by motorbike taxis such that it’s virtually impossible to escape from their use. Even those who possess cars sometimes have to use the services of motorbike taxis because the roads to their villages are practically unusable.

During the weekly days (Monday to Friday), the motorbike taxis are involved in more than 60% of movement of individuals between Tombel central and its attached villages; a percentage that accrues during the weekends due to rise in road traffic. Movement by trekking accounts for over 35%. The remaining 5% can be attributed to other forms of movements such as the use of transport Lorries and bicycles. Some destinations today are only accessible through motorbike taxis (Nsuke, Baseng, Mbule).

Inside Tombel town, movement of individuals from one quarter to another is mostly carried out through trekking which occupies over 55%. Motorbike taxi riders who transport passengers in a door to door occupy a preponderant position as they account for over 40% of movements in town. The remaining 5% is attributed to other forms of movement such as the use of bicycles, spiritual night movement as confirmed by one of our informants. (Sango Akame, over 77 years old, interviewed on 09/01/2010). The distances covered in Tombel town take an average of 5 minutes to get to destination. The prices here oscillates between 100 and 200FCFA depending upon the distance and this price is debated upon between the “Okada man” (Name given to the motorbike taxi rider) and customer. According to Tchamba Festus;

The prices vary according to destinations and according to the bargaining power of the customer. Around town, the prices vary but when it concerns moving from Tombel to the neighbouring villages or towns, the prices are standard. The women constitute the majority of our customers around town. They are also the ones who debate the most on transport prices. They have transposed their bargaining market attitudes into our activity.

The following charts indicate the principal means of movement by the population resident in Tombel town. This is divided into percentages which are the results of a questionnaire administered at random to 800 inhabitants of Tombel central and its attached villages. Data collected from some of our informants has come to confirm these results. The first charts shows movement of people from Tombel central to the neighbouring towns and villages. The second (b) chart shows movement of people within the Tombel central town.
Diagram 2: Movement of people within and around Tombel central town.

The estimates in percentages are derived from the analysis of data collected from our questionnaire. From these charts, we arrive to the conclusion that motorbike taxis are the principal means of movement between Tombel central and its neighbouring villages and towns (60% on chart a). This is followed by the regular transport vehicles (23%) while trekking still remains one of the options as a means of movement (12%). These figures can be explained by the nature of the roads which are slippery and rocky. Motorbike taxis are
adapted to these rural roads thus becoming the preferred means of public transport by the Tombel Population. But within the town itself, trekking remains the principal means of movement (54% on chart b). While motorbike taxis occupy the second preferred means of movement with 30% of the population. Vehicles account for 10% of movements within the town. From these figures, we realise that motorbike taxis are present within movements in the town. A situation which didn’t exist some decades ago where by movements within the town was dominated by trekking and bicycles. They have thus occupied a preponderant space in society impacting on the lifestyle of the people.

Women stand as a majority in the use of motorbike taxis as means of movement. Girls also constitute a greater majority of the number of students who use motorbike taxi as principal means of transport to school.

Considering the age variable, our field studies and observations prove that the youths (24 years on average) prove to be the most mobile and principal users of motorbike taxis within Tombel town. The aged of 70 years and above rarely employ this form of movement. They are of the category of those who use trekking as principal means of movement. According to one of our informants, Sango Awane, over 77 years old, interviewed on 09/01/2010;

“The old people are used to walking on foot. They are sometimes reticent to sudden changes. More so, riding on the bumpy roads is not good for their health. The use of a machine is usually in exceptional cases such as in cases of illness when the patient can’t walk anymore.”

1.2- Reasons of employing motorbike taxis in Tombel.

The reasons for using motorbike taxis vary from one user to the other. These can be regrouped under several spheres. The professional sphere is concerned with civil servants, sole proprietors, farmers and other businessmen who use motorbike taxis for professional reasons. Many students use the motorbike taxis as principal means of transport to school. Businessmen transport their goods and meet up with other engagements. Farmers too use this means of transport to transport farm produces such as cocoa, coffee, cassava, banana, cocoyam, firewood and many more items. The professional reasons account for more than half of the use of motorbike taxis as means of movement.

Sociability is another factor which encourages people to use motorbike taxis in Tombel. People use motorbike taxis to visit friends and family, to meet up for group activities and socialising.
2 - Ownership patterns of motorbike taxis

Motorbike taxi riding involves several actors who interact in a complex flow for the smooth functioning of the activity. To this, the ownership of the motorbikes varies in relation to the rider. The development of a conceptual framework in the ownership patterns of motorbikes in Tombel will permit us better apprehend the phenomenon. We have the vertical ownership pattern defined by human relationships; the horizontal ownership pattern defined by economic relationship and the self centred sole proprietorship pattern.

All these patterns are centred on the motorbike taxi rider. The self centred sole proprietorship pattern is one by which an individual buys a motorbike and owns it. He’s the sole proprietor and rides at will. This is the case with many farmers who after a good cocoa season decide to use part of their revenue to buy and run a motorbike on a profit base.

The vertical ownership pattern defines ownership of motorbike taxi through human relationships. This pattern is sub divided into two types; ownership through biological and social kinship types. The ownership through biological kinship type attributes ownership of a motorbike to a rider through an actual genealogical relationship or blood link. This might be from father to son. This is a situation whereby the motorbike is bought by a parent and given over to his son in order for the latter to generate revenue from it. The revenue is sometimes redistributed into the family to take care of daily needs and if there any surpluses, it belongs to the family member who rides the motorbike taxi. The average revenue of a day’s work is 3,000FCFA. The motorbike belongs to the family as any young male in the family can take over duty when elder rider is not in service or when he retires.

According to Pa Joe Kang (66 years old retired teacher), The Ngome’s family in the catholic mission Tombel is a typical example where ownership of motorbike passed from one brother to another in a descending line. In a space of one decade, three motorbike taxis has passed from Ngome Ewe, (41 years old) to his younger brother Ngome Ndobi ( 34 years old) and now has been passed over to Ngome Ewani, ( 24 years old) the youngest male of the family.

The second vertical ownership pattern is the social kinship type. In this situation, a motorbike is owned by a rider who gives it out temporary to his in laws, friends and mates. These occasional riders are mostly students who benefit from the motorbikes of friends to make some money during the weekends and in their free hours. The owner of the motorbike is usually a temporal rider and gives his motorbike out to friends for few hours. The on-loan rider also has an obligation to provide the owner with revenue accruing to 2000FCFA.
The Horizontal ownership pattern defines ownership through economic links. In this wise, we can distinguish two sub categories; the ownership through a daily loan system and ownership through ride and pay system.

In the sub category of ownership through a daily load system, the motorbike is owned by a businessman who is not a rider. He invests into the business by buying motorbikes and putting them on rents on a daily bases. The rider who doesn’t own a motorbike takes this option and works in an employer-employee relationship with the owner. He is expected to deposit 3000FCFA per day as revenue accrued from the day’s work. This figure varies according to the state of the motorbike. The more it has the tendency of having technical faults, the less the revenue to be deposited. Any surplus which arises belongs to the rider and constitutes his pay.

In the second sub category; ownership through the ride and pay system, a motorbike is given out to a rider on condition. A financial objective is to be attained before he owns the motorbike. He can be asked to deposit revenue on a daily bases to it reaches about 500,000FCFA. At this amount, he owns the motorbike taxi.

The relationship linking the owner to the rider is purely commercial. An agreement document is signed between the proprietor of the motor bike and the prospective rider. This paper simply states the terms of the agreement. The two parties sign it and it’s handed over to a third party who keeps the document. In case of any misunderstanding, it’s the third party who’s habilitated to solve the matter with impartiality. Sometimes, this agreement document is signed at the police station but this concerns mostly the non Bakossi riders or proprietors.
Diagram 3: Chart displaying the Vertical (Biological and social kinship), horizontal (Daily loan system or ride and pay system) and self centred sole proprietorship ownership patterns.

Source: Lawrence Nkede, field research (January 2010)
3 - Riding positions

From the observations made from our field research, we realise that riders transport both passengers or goods or both at the same time. The number of passengers varies from one to four, the rider inclusive. The more the passengers, the more the rider sits nearer his head gear and on top of the engine to give some space behind. Men and women sit behind the rider while in cases where children are also transported; they are put at the front and are advised to hold tight the head gear. In cases where two passengers of opposite sex are to be taken for a ride, it’s always the lady who sits first behind the rider before the man follows. All our informants affirm haven’t ever seen a case where a man climbs first before a woman. From experience, in case of any accidents, it’s the man seated at the rear who suffers the most. Thus, the men are seated at the rear because they are gentle and have to protect the women. This is the explanation gotten from Epie Anuge (26 years old), a motorbike taxi rider (interviewed in December 2009). The sitting position is classical for all; the buttocks are on the seat with one leg on the left and the other on the right. This differs with sitting positions in other regions where some women decide to sit on one side of the motorbike. This is seen in the Eastern and Northern regions of Cameroon. According to one of our key informants, Ebong Jude (29 years old), an experienced rider (who has been a rider in Ngoundéré before becoming one in Tombel); this difference in sitting position is accounted for by the type of dressing. In Ngoundéré for example, most of the Fulbe women dress in loins. Some feel uncomfortable to open their legs and spread it around a motorbike with one on the left and the other on the right. That’s why they prefer sitting on the side of the motorbike. Whereas, among the Bakossi and other women of Tombel, who dress mostly in /kaba ngond/ and other western attires, they sit with their buttocks on the back seat and with each leg open to the sides of the motorbike. They are instead afraid to sit on the sides because the bumpy nature of the road might make them fall from their seat.
4- The Tombel Rider’s Union Association

The activity of motorbike taxi riding is organised around the Tombel Rider’s Union Association which is the main body that governs all the riders. It was created in the year 2000 to organise the activity in Tombel and raise a solidarity fund for its members. The riders use this fund to contribute for their well-being and that of their siblings. In cases of death of any member, it’s the association which takes care of purchasing a coffin for the deceased. In cases of joy when a rider’s wife puts to birth, the riders escort her in a convoy from the hospital to her home and contribute in the celebration of the “Born house” or birth celebration ceremony. The rider’s Association also defends the interest of any rider in front of the public administration. This association is headed today by Nkale Eugene, a 36 year old former rider born and breath in Tombel.

The riders today form a social entity in the Tombel environment. On general cleaning days or community labour day which takes place every 1st Wednesday of each month, the riders have
their own portion in the cleaning of the town, especially the clearing of grass on the sides of streets with cutlasses. A task they execute with ease. The riders also participate in social activities such as the Inter-neighbourhood football tournament. The 2009 edition of this football tournament which takes place every year in the month of August saw the creation of the Rider’s football club. They are part of the match past of 11th February, 1st April and 20th May celebrations.

The riders are thus organised not only in riding around towns and villages but also in participating in social activities.

Figure 9: The Tombel motorbike taxi park. It’s from here that most of the motorbikes take off to the various neighbouring towns and villages

Source: Lawrence Nkede, field research December 2009.
II - THE ROLE OF MOTORBIKE Taxis IN TOMBEL

The objective of this section is to explore the role played by motorbike taxis in Tombel. After analysing its origin and organisation, we move on to bringing out its function as a unit of the society. The function or role of motorbike taxis in Tombel will pave the way in bringing out the perception of the activity and its impact in the rural milieu of Tombel.

Considering the fundamental metaphor of the living organism, its several parts and organs, grouped and organized into a system, the function of the various parts and organs being to sustain the organism, to keep its essential processes going and enable it to reproduce. Similarly, the motorbike taxis can be thought of as cells, its association constituting an organ, whose function is to sustain the life of the collective entity. We are going to examine the social significance of motorbike taxis; that is, the purpose it serves a particular society in maintaining the whole (Jarvie:1973).

Malinowski's theorising included understanding a particular item by identifying its function in the current contemporary operation of that culture (Firth 1957:55); to this, the principal function of a motorbike is to transport passengers and goods. Passengers are of all types (young, old, male, female, natives and foreigners and even the deceased) Goods transported also vary but reflects the economic practices of the people of Tombel. Nevertheless, in Tombel, the use of motorbike taxis as a new means of movement and public transportation has given it a place of choice in the society as it now serves several purposes as disclosed below:

Society is structured into a working unity in which the parts accommodate one another in a way that maintains the whole. (Radcliffe-Brown: 1952) Motorbike taxis in Tombel constitute a part in a working unity to maintain the society into a whole. They constitute the principal means of public transport in Tombel and transport individuals (between one to four in number) from one place to another. During the academic year, the volume of transport increases due to the many students of the various primary and secondary schools who are transported to school by motorbike taxis.

Motorbike taxis also play the role of an ambulance in Tombel as they transport patients in and out of the hospital. In cases of emergency, they are usually called upon for their flexibility and easy access through rough roads, bumpy paths and other foot paths. Pregnant women, sick, injured are for most transported to the Tombel district hospital as Mrs Eze Caroline, (24 years old) nurse confirms:
In big towns, the ambulances are available to transport people to the hospitals but here in Tombel, the fastest means of getting to the hospital is to take an Okada. Even those who suffer road accidents due to motorbikes are transported by other motorbikes to the hospital. They even return home, riding on the same motorbikes which made them to be injured.

One of its uses as an ambulance is the transportation of corpse to nearby villages. The fact that no mortuary existed in Tombel before July 2010, all who passed away and who not embalmed traditionally had to be transported through the renting of a vehicle for the Njombe or Nkongsamba mortuaries found in the Littoral region of Cameroon. This is a costly enterprise for an average inhabitant of Tombel. Thus, after the dead of a sibling or parent in the Tombel central town, the corpse is immediately transported to the village of the deceased. Motorbike taxis had proven to be the fastest and cheapest means of transport in this wise, serving as ambulances. Transportation of corpse by motorbike taxis is usually carried out in the night. Mesumbe Princewill, a specialist in the domain explains how this enterprise is performed.

When someone dies and the family doesn’t want to take the corpse to the mortuary but prefers to carry out a traditional embalmment in the village of the deceased, we are called up to take care of the transportation of the corpse to the destined village. This form of transport is carried out by two individuals; the rider and his/motor boy/. (This name is derived from the combination of the words motor and boy which designs the assistant of a driver in the case of a motor vehicle and today assimilated to the assistant of a motorbike rider). A psychological preparation is needed before we go in to transport the corpse. We usually take about three to five bottles of alcohol before carrying the corpse. The body of the deceased is wrapped up in a cloth. It is placed just after the rider of the motorbike such that it’s seated between the rider and his assistant. A solid rope is used to tie the body of the dead to the rider’s waist who sits closer to his head gear. At the back of the motorbike is the assistant who supports the corpse with his hands so that it should remain straight and not fall. When all these adjustments are made, we can now travel to the desired destination as from 8pm.

The Motorbike taxis play an important role in the transport of goods. Tombel being essentially an agricultural zone, most of the goods transported are either cash crops (bags of cocoa and coffee) or food crops such as cocoyam, cassava, yam, banana, kola nuts, vegetables and firewood. In villages such as Mbappe, Nsuke, Kupe and many others found in the Tombel municipality, access to some manufactured commodities is solely delivered by motorbike taxis. This is the case with alcoholic drinks such as beers which occupy a preponderant place in socialising. Motorbike taxis are today in charge of the delivery of mails, parcels and beer all around town. This delivery services are also used by civil administrators to send official letters to their various departments in and out of the Kupe Muanenguba division.
Motorbike taxis in Tombel also play the role of relay transport means especially in the rainy season. The heavy down pour in the rainy season destroys most of its rural roads.
rendering some impracticable by vehicles on certain distances. Thus, motorbike taxis serve as relay transport. The 36 km road linking Tombel to Kumba is seasonally being destroyed by the rains such that the two towns are cut away from one another. Motorbike taxis today serve as relay transport between the two towns. They carry passengers from Tombel and drop them at mid-way to Kumba in the village of Ebonji; this passing through foot paths created in the rubber plantations found at the outskirts of Tombel. They drop passengers at Ebonji where they take a public transport car to Kumba.

The motorbike taxis in Tombel do not only fulfill functions in relation to their job or working tool which is their motor bike. Just as a cell in an organism, they also play a social role in the functioning of Tombel. To this, the Tombel Rider’s Union Association participates in the inter-neighbourhood football tournament which regroups the various quarters of Tombel. They are considered as a social group and thus are given room to also exercise their know-how in other domains of life.

In the town cleaning campaigns, the ride’s union has its own share of the work in terms of public cleaning. Once a month, (on Wednesdays), the Tombel Rural council recommends all shops to be close in the morning for a general cleaning exercise. They usually clean up the town’s central part and cut grass along the streets so that the town looks clean.

In the socio-cultural sphere, the rider’s play the function of escort riders whenever a major event arises which requires their presence. When people come together for marriage, political gatherings, birth and death ceremonies, the town’s motorbike taxis are used as escort riders to give a greater importance to the event. During the /étchia, when the wife of a motorbike taxi rider leaves the maternity, she’s accompanied by a convoy of motorbike taxi riders who horn to the hearing of all that a new born baby is in our mists. They are placed on both sides of the road and with their horns portraying an image of greatness. These riders are eventually paid for the services rendered.

Motorbike taxis are also transmitter agents of cultural traits. They carry habits and material cultures from one place and deposit them in another. The motorbike taxi being a new element itself, its presence in some enclave villages is already an element of change or of modernity. Motorbike taxis easily transport commodities in substantial quantities and at a regular base from Tombel town to the neighbouring villages attached to it. It thus plays the role of facilitator of development. It’s an agent of change which easily brings the material culture of the town into the villages and vice versa. Farm produces sometime get rot in the farms
because of lack of transport means. But with the use of motorbike taxis, more goods can leave the farms to the market.

Motorbike taxis also play a political role in the distribution of power in the society. Political manifestations are usually crowned with a parade from motorbike taxi riders. Economically, they participate in the economy of Tombel as they pay taxes to the council and earn income whose destination is diverse. All this revenue goes a long way in maintaining the society.

In the Prime Minister’s decree N°2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008, the government of Cameroon officially recognised that the activity fulfils an economic function and answers to a social demand. (ATD: 2009)
The perception of the activity of motorbike taxi rider differs according to time and space. It’s important in our present research to bring out the point of view of the society over this social phenomenon. An *emic* approach will be used to collect data on the perception of the activity from the exploiters (proprietors and motorbike taxi riders) and users. The viewpoint of the administration will also be analysed in order to render this chapter complete.

According to Kenneth Pike (1954), the *emic* approach focuses on cultural distinctions meaningful to the members of a given society. Just as only the native members of a culture...
can judge the validity of an *emic* description, only the motorbike taxi rider and users can give an inner perception of the activity.

1) **Perception of the activity from the exploiters**

a) **The proprietors**

Among the exploiters of this activity are the proprietors of motorbike taxis who lend out their motor bikes on a daily bases and the riders themselves. These proprietors are for most civil servants and other business operators who have invested in this public transport domain. Their perception of the activity is first of all commercial. It’s an additional source of income for many who already have a primary income generating activity and use this business to make extra cash.

According to Epienzitone Anugue,(40 years old) motorbike taxi proprietor;

*I work as a teacher at the government primary school, group 4. With the little I earn, it’s difficult to make ends meet and I’m always in need of extra money. That’s what pushed me into the business. I give my okada out on rent and make 3000FCFA on a daily bases. This greatly helps me solve my problems on a daily bases. The Okada business is a source of income which contributes in my livelihood on a daily bases. It has really brought a change in the way I manage my life.*

After signing an agreement with the rider, this agreement is given to a third party to keep as prove of the contract signed between the proprietor and rider. From henceforth, the proprietor expects cash on his table on a daily bases. He’s generally not interested in any subsequent problems which may arise. The motorbike taxi rider takes care of the motor bike and restores it to the proprietor every evening. The proprietors have very little engagement as concerns running the motor bikes. They thus perceive the activity as very lucrative for they earn money for less work done and in due time.

Epie Mathias (47 years old), another proprietor who exercises as a cocoa farmer affirms that;

*I work as a teacher at the government primary school, group 4. With the little I earn, it’s difficult to make ends meet and I’m always in need of extra money. That’s what pushed me into the business. I give my okada out on rent and make 3000FCFA on a daily bases. This greatly helps me solve my problems on a daily bases. The Okada business is a source of income which contributes in my livelihood on a daily bases. It has really brought a change in the way I manage my life.*

Every evening, I wait for the day’s revenue which stands at 3000FCFA.

I bought my Okada at 350,000FCFA and intend making profit and sell at okada after 6 months of use. According to my business forecasts, I’ll make total revenue of 540,000FCFA in six months and clear my profits which will stand at 190,000FCFA. With less efforts put in, I believe this business is a lucrative one when one is lucky.

The proprietors do not have much consideration for the riders with whom they are only related on business issues. Epie Mathias confirms this assertion when he declares; *“I do not care if the rider has made an extra profit or not. He has to deposit the day’s revenue. An able
rider is one who’s capable of making at least 5000FCFA on a daily bases such that he also has something to feed his family.”

But the proprietors who entail a social or biological kinship relationship with their riders perceive the activity differently. The activity is not only a money making business but also a means to provide employment for their kinsmen. It’s equally an opportunity to introduce their kinsmen to the world of business and social responsibility. Some proprietors use the activity as a means to occupy their kinsmen while awaiting better days.

Ngome Ewe (41 years old) former rider and today proprietor affirms;

“After being a rider, I passed the motor bike to my junior brother who had completed his law studies at the University of Buea but hasn’t gotten any job as of now. While waiting that he registers for the exams launched by the public service, I’ve given him my motor bike so that he can occupy himself and not remain idle. More so, to write the public examinations require money for stamps and other administrative procedures. My junior brother will have to work for the money himself through riding and this will make him be more conscious and matured on registering the exam.”

Other proprietors buy motor bikes for their children so that they can exercise the business, earn money and become socially responsible. That is they will be able to take a wife and have children. This goes in line with Réné Dandurand’s (1981) assertion: “The production process of humans in the family is carried out according to a sexual division of labour. Men have the responsibility to contribute by their salary to the subsistence of the family. They are the main income generators.”

In the course of our field interviews, we have been recounted the life history of some riders who were known to be notorious vandals in Tombel town and now have become more responsible since they entered the business as motorbike taxi riders.

Thus, the perception of this activity by motorbike taxi owners from the vertical (social and biological) ownership pattern differs from those of the horizontal ownership pattern. They are all out for business and to make profit but the proprietors with family ties see the activity much more as a stage in the socialisation of their kinsmen. This is a change from the known socialisation of the Bakossi which is carried out through the family and through the practice of agriculture in the cultivation of cocoa and coffee. Today, the activity of motorbike taxi is seen as a process of initiating young men to maturity and social responsibility.

b) The motorbike taxi riders

The motorbike taxi riders are at the centre of this activity and the main actors. Their perception of the activity varies from one individual to another and from one place to the
other. In Tombel, the motorbike taxi riders view their activity as a source of income and social progress on a general scope.

The ongoing morose economic situation gives room for very few job opportunities. Many are the diploma holders who face difficulties in getting a job related to their field of study. The employment crises have pushed many into motorbike taxi riding. The youths have seized this employment opportunity which feeds them. From a secondary activity to farming, motor bike taxi riding has become the primary activity of most riders in Tombel who live from this activity. The farming of cash crops has been relegated to a second position due to its instability of prices. Riding is the main source of income for many youths who use the activity as a base in the construction of their future lives. Even part time riders (students and farmers) use the income generated from this activity to sustain their livelihood.

According to Nkewelle Eugene, a 30 years old rider:

> My family and I live from my motorbike taxi. The day I come home with a good sum of money, we are all happy but there are also days I come back home with little or nothing. Our family life is linked to this activity which provides food on the table, medication in cases of sickness, school fees and other academic demands for my daughter and it’s a great contributor to raise funds in order to pay my girl friend’s bride price.

Other riders have acceded to social responsibilities thanks to the income generated from this activity.

Ngassa Martin (29 years old) confirms;

> When I was unemployed, no one in my family cared about me and my point of view was not taken into consideration. It has been a year now that I ride my own motorbike taxi and I’ve become the one responsible for paying the school fees of my junior brother and sisters. A task I fulfil with the income gotten from riding my motorbike taxi. Today, I have my say in family matters because I’m considered a socially responsible individual. I’m a source of income for my family and other friends who are sometimes in financial difficulties.

To obtain the day’s revenue is herculean task for the riders run the streets, paths and roads under the rain and sun; in mud and in dust depending upon the season. To get passengers, the riders have to compete with one another. This gives rise to aggressive attitudes and behaviours which sometimes contribute in portraying a negative image of them.

Wang Ferdinand, a motorbike taxi rider comments;

> “The pressure at work sometimes pushes some of us to behave wrongly. Some riders in search of passengers just run and grab the passenger by the hand, pulling him or her to his motor bike. When a passenger prefers riding with one /Okada man/ instead of another, it can create jealousy and it’s common to find a rider insulting a passenger who has preference for another rider than him. These negative attitudes can be justified by the
fact that by the end of the day, we have to present the day’s revenue to the proprietor who doesn’t want to know how you make the money. So when the day’s business is not going on well, you find the pressure mounting on your head and can be tempted to become impolite just because you need to make the money.”

For the majority of these temporal riders, the income generated from this activity is targeted. Before riding, they usually have an idea of what they want to do with the income to be generated. These are punctual riders who use the activity to solve punctual problems. Student riders use their income basically to solve academic problems as Epoge Charles, 17 years old (Form 4 student at the Government Bilingual High School Tombel) affirms; “I ride a motorbike taxi during the weekends and on Wednesday afternoons. The income I get from it serves me in school. I study literature and have many books to buy so the money I raise serves to buy my books and cover other academic spending.”

In the social sphere, the motorbike taxi riders perceive this activity as an instrument of social progress. Taking into consideration the economic role they play in the society, the respect given to them has made them climb in the social ladder. They now see themselves as a strategic set of people the society can’t do without. Sone Clifford, (27 years old) motorbike taxi rider affirms;

*We are important people in the society for we serve the population by giving them a ride. No one apart from us will carry a passenger to the enclave villages where roads are practically inexistent. Even if we sometimes have accidents, this doesn’t discourage people from riding on motorbike taxis. After all, they have no choice.*

This informant goes further to recount the story of a young man who fell from a motorbike taxi and was transported to the hospital. After receiving first aid treatment, the patient called for a motorbike taxi to transport him home. This shows that motorbike taxis have become a necessary evil in Tombel.

Also, the riders perceive their activity as a famous job; this is because many motorbike taxi riders are known to the general public by their names or nicknames.

Mesumbe Princewill, affirms that:

*“I’m well known in Tombel town for people call me by my nickname or name. Even in the small villages where we drop passengers, people know us by our names and the little children great us with cheers in the villages as we pass-by. We respond to them by sounding the engines of our motorbike taxis which makes a loud noise in these places reputed for their calmness. Thus, we cannot pass unaware and the children are always there to wave at us.”*

This popularity is what attracts politicians and other actors to use them for propaganda. The riders are aware of these manoeuvres and consequently aware of their political power.
Nkale Eugene, president of the Tombel Riders Union Association and president of the Tombel Youth wing of the C.P.D.M comments: “We know that we have a role to play in the society. We use our popularity not only to pass political messages but also social messages too like in health campaigns. We are strategic partners to the Tombel Rural council with whom we work hand in hand to solve common problems. Motorbike taxi riders in Tombel are politically powerful.”

From the “emic” approach applied above which discloses the point of view of the motorbike taxi riders, we conclude that their perception of this activity is in two folds; a source of income and a tool to climb the social ladder, positioning themselves as one of the main actors of the society.

This vision differs from that of other motorbike taxi riders in other regions of the country. The riders from the cities have a different vision of the activity. In Douala, some describe themselves as “outlaw” citizens and see the activity as a sign of social failure. An article by Armand.T.Demanou on motorbike taxis published on the online newspaper Camer.be (09/01/2009) denotes;

Certain motorbike taxi riders like to define themselves as outlaw citizens. This perception they have on the activity comes from the fact that the motorbike taxi seems to be a sign of social and professional failure. In fact, this profession is the refuge of all those who haven’t found a better job elsewhere. When a youth is idle in the village, he is brought to town to become a motorbike taxi rider. When a diploma holder from the secondary or higher education can’t find a job, he manages with riding while waiting for greener pastures. When a man loses his job, he first buys a motor bike and begins “attacking” while waiting to see how the future would look like.

This shows that the activity in cities is seen as a sign of frustration which differs from the sentiment of social progress experienced by those of the rural areas such as Tombel.

2) Perception of the activity by the Tombel population

Motorbike taxis exist essentially because of the end users who use this form of public transport as means of movement from one place to another. In Tombel, the majority of movements from the central part of the town to the neighbouring villages and towns are carried out by this mode of public transport. It’s then important to have the perception of the population (users and non users of motorbike taxis). This data is the first step in the analysis of our impact study on motorbike taxis in rural communities.

From the analysis of our field observations and interviews, the perception of the Inhabitants to the activity of motorbike taxi is quite diverse but with a number of common points outlined as follows.
The activity of motorbike taxi is seen as an instrument of change. This is because, from its introduction in Tombel, the society has changed in a number of aspects. Transport fares have dropped and the time factor has become something to be taken in consideration. There is greater mobility and the motorbike taxis as opposed to the other forms of public transport, drop their passengers to their houses.

According to Helen Ntube (39 years old, farmer):

*The okada has come to change our style of living. For people those who have farms in the black bush at Nswené had to get up as early as 5am and begin trekking to the farm in order to get there by 7am. Today, with an okada, people get up late at 6:30am and by 7am, they are already in their farms. The Okada is a rapid means of movement and has come to simplify our ways of life.*

This mobility and flexibility of motorbike taxis is a great advantage expressed by most of our informants. Many also perceive the activity as a sign of development. Public transport has always been assured by land rovers and mini buses which didn’t cover all destinations. Some villages such as Ngusi, Ndise, Ekeb and Bangone remained enclave because of bad or no roads and access to these villages was only carried out by foot.

According to Sango Nsabe Mathias (47 years old businessman):

*Since I was a child, I usually travelled on foot from Tombel to my village Mahele. It took me a day’s walk. Even if I decided to use a vehicle as mode of transport, it could only drop me at Ebonji and I had to do the rest of the journey by trekking. But today, I hire an okada which is flexible in use as it takes me directly to the village and back the same day. People from the villages can now enjoy commodities from the city at a constant rate. The introduction of okada has really brought development in my village.*

In the same vein, the introduction of motor bike taxis is being perceived by the inhabitants of Tombel as something which has revived the town which was stagnant in several domains of life. Socialising only got to its peak at the end of the year with the cultural festivals and Christmas feasts. Today, with the presence of the motorbike taxi riders, socialising through drinking and other social activities is being carried out on a daily bases.

According to Bwese Paul, (26 years old snail farmer):

*The presence of motorbike taxis has rekindled a town which was formerly hit by human migration in the form of rural exodus. With the absence of a high school before the year 2000, most youths after completing their secondary education left the town to further their education elsewhere. Thus, the town was gradually left in the hands of the aged and remained stagnant socially. The creation of a government high school didn’t help much in*
Animating the town. With the coming of the motorbike taxis, the town is booming all year round.

These positive perceptions of the activity of motorbike taxi in Tombel are not shared by all. Some inhabitants perceive the activity as a change but in the wrong direction. The description of the rider’s attitudes show that the activity is not accepted as a whole. The riders are said to be aggressive in their language, rough in riding, arrogant towards the other members of the community because they now form a new social class which has and economic and political influence in the Tombel society.

According to Mary Lombe, (24 years old), a callbox operator;

*The Okada boys are a social ill to the society. They are the cause of reckless riding which results in accidents. They are equally the greatest dunkers in town. They are very pompous arrogant and at logger heads with male students over girls. They are the cause of most unwanted pregnancies in town.*

Other informants perceive the activity as dangerous. The fact that most of the riders haven’t been to a driving school is a big problem. They do not respect the highway code and overload passengers. 90% of our informants pointed out this aspect of road safety. Motorbike taxi riders are involved in more than 95% of road accidents today on the Tombel roads.

Thus, notwithstanding the positive point brought out, the activity still find people who perceive it as dysfunctional. Its primary function is to transport goods and passengers but today has developed into a complex social hazard.

The histogram below designs the public perception of motorbike taxis in Tombel with the common key words resulting from the interviews of our informants.
According to the above histogramme, 90% of the inhabitants perceive the motorbike taxi as fast and rapid. Its affordable and also flexible in use. But almost all our informants are disfavourable to its safety measures viewing it as a potential danger and health hazard. (10%). Although used for the transport of goods (30%) its main use remains the transport of passengers.

This perception is equal to the perception given to this activity in other parts of the country. With a varying degree of opinion, the same positive and negative perceptions arise and common to the general public.

In a research on motorbike taxis in Douala, Sahabana M. (2006) brings out the perception of the Douala population over this activity.

Extract: page 3

“In an agglomeration whose varied network is limited and greatly damaged, the motor bike - taxi can get to places inaccessible to the other modes of public transport. This streets vendor explains to us that she uses "the bendskin to go to the market: her access road to the market is impracticable by motor vehicles but one always finds a bendskin ready to take us to destination ". This quality of the motorbike taxi is strongly felt by the great majority of users: three quarters among them think that the point of loading is close to their homes and close to 90% think that, it goes everywhere. Sometimes qualified as "degree zero of collective transport " because it doesn't permit to embark more than one passenger, the motor bike - taxi avoids the frequent stops and other inconveniences of embarking and disembarking of other passengers; this is translated in the form of time gain by the user. Besides, it is less dependent of the fluidity of traffic than the four wheels
and for more than 90% of the informants say it is fast. No other known mode of public transport harvests such a favourable majority opinion over its speed. Finally, the motorbike taxi seems more available (all the time and less waiting) that the other mode of public transportation in Douala. It’s well known for its door to door service. A shopkeeper of the Douala central market who lives in the periphery summarises the advantages of the motor bike – taxi. According to him, “when I return from the market, I take the bendskin (...) because it is (...) faster and especially because it leaves me directly at home ”. Inversely, not every one prefers the use of motorbike taxis. Some city-dwellers affirm prefer "to walk that to take the bendskin because bendskin riders are not reliable (...) they involve in robbery and are causes of regular accidents (according to a carpenter living in Bonabéri).

From the above assertions, the population of Tombel perceives the activity of motorbike taxis as an instrument of change which has brought in development in the town but equally brought in a number of correlated social ills.

3) **Perception of the activity by administrative authorities.**

The public administration recognises the activity of motorbike taxis as they play an economic and social role in the social structure of Tombel. The Social structure is the principles on which the forms of social relations depend. (Watson-Gegeo 1991:198). Thus, the principles on which rests the relationship between the public authority represented by the Tombel rural Council and the motor bike taxis is much more based on mutual understanding than on the texts regulating this activity. (Prime Minister’s decree N°2008/3447/PM/ of 31st December 2008 fixing the conditions and modalities regulating the activity of commercial motorbikes)

It’s from this relationship that we are going to derive the perception of the public authorities on the activity of motorbike taxis in Tombel.

The 2008 Prime Minister’s decree fixing the conditions and modalities regulating the activity of commercial motorbikes in Cameroon stipulated among others the use of two helmets, a category “A” driving licence, payment of global tax and the use of a colourful jacket defined by the council. These are just a few measures which are not respected by the motorbike taxis in Tombel. The payment of a global tax and daily entry tickets at 100FCFA at the Tombel rural Council suffice to run a motorbike taxi on the Tombel roads. All the others measures slated by the Prime Minister’s decree are being ignored by most of the riders.

The lukewarm attitude of the administration can be explained by the fact that this activity is one of the principal sources of income for the Tombel rural Council in a town where there are no enterprises. The motorbike taxis provide the council annually with over 22,500,000 FCFA derive from taxes. (Tombel Rural Council statistics: 2009) This is a huge sum of money the
council can’t do without. As a consequence, the council sees the activity of motorbike taxi as principally a source of income for its coffers. With the creation of the Tombel Rider’s Union Association, the council finds here representatives of the riders with whom they dialogue to solve problems which might arise between them. The public authorities also see this activity as a source of employment for the many rural youths.

According to Menang Thaddeus (48 years old), council official:

The youths have found a job in riding. Before then, they were idling around, vandalising around town or looking for ways to move to the cities. The council then faced difficulties in creating job opportunities for these youths who were less interested in farming. With the coming of motorbike taxis, many have gotten suitable jobs either as riders, mechanics or fuel retailers and they earn a living from these activities. More so, the council too benefits greatly from the riders who regularly pay taxes to the council’s coffers. Our duty now is to canalise their efforts in order for them to respect the road code and gradually comply to the laws governing this activity.

The economic and social weight of this activity in the society has pushed the council to develop fraternal relationships with the riders. As key persons in political propaganda, the council holds them in high esteem in times of elections. This can explain their lukewarm attitude over the implementation of the 2008 Prime Minister’s decree. The riders in Tombel do not put on helmets, nor have driving licences just to name a few of the requirements to exercise this activity. But they run the streets of Tombel on a daily bases.

Nevertheless, this lukewarm attitude is sometimes moved by local laws which come to reinforce public authority over the riders. The Sub divisional officer of Tombel published in December 2008 an order forbidding the use of slippers for riding. This order was enforced by the State Council and the police force. The use of slippers by riders was the cause of some severe accident. For it was realised that the consequences of accidents with riders wearing slippers were much more grave than others wearing shoes. Any rider caught riding with slippers had to pay a fine of 30,000FCFA.

In other towns and cities of Cameroon, the administrative authorities do not perceive the motorbike taxi riders with a good eye. They are mostly regarded as outlaw citizens who have to be brought to order by force. This is a source of conflict and friction between the riders and the administration which usually results in conflict creating social unrest. Several newspaper articles confirm this assertion. One of these, “The Cameroon Herald Newspaper” published an article by Ntaryike Divine in 2009 over the civil disobedience of motorbike taxi riders in Douala. Extract:
In Douala however, the usually restive riders instantly voiced opposition to the regulations coming a dozen years after a similar attempt by then PM Simon Achidi Achu was extensively snubbed. Many said they considered the announcement a “declaration of war” and pledged wholesale resistance should the government attempt to force them to comply.

And so at two months to expiration of the PM’s deadline, response by the riders here has remained remarkably timid; inspiring local authorities to issue a wake up call. And so Wouri SDO, Bernard Okalia Bilai Tuesday, 7 April reminded the riders via several umbrella associations regrouping them of their need to begin respecting the set modalities before repression begins.

Attendee association leaders seized the occasion to heap blame on the local administration for feet-dragging in enforcing respect for the regulations. The SDO admitted the administration had opted for a hassle-free approach to safeguard social peace. He nonetheless warned that the grace period was over. Okalia Bilai announced an imminent crackdown to target not only benskins operating outside the fringes of the law, but also the hundreds of the usually and rickety intra-city clandestine transport buses which he described as being unfit for the city’s increasingly rehabilitated roads.

Meantime, Douala Government Delegate, Fritz Ntone Ntone proposed the creation of a commission to henceforth enact a headcount of all motorbike taxi riders operating in the city. The commission will be set up at another session between the authorities and the riders’ association leaders billed for next 16 April.

Source: The herald Cameroon (13/03/2009) article entitled: “Motorbike trade: Douala riders adamant to Inoni’s instructions, by Ntaryike Divine

In a research on motorbike taxis in Douala, Maïdadi Sahabana (2006) brings out the perception of government authorities over this activity.

Seen as an undesirable activity motor bike - taxis became dangerous to the eyes of the public authorities. They also frighten other road users as a taxi driver puts it : " at the least altercation with one of them, you are invaded and surrounded as bees who are out to lynch someone", By their number, the motorbike taxi riders constitute a political strength, regrouping youths disappointed by the present decision-makers. The mistrust and precautions that surround the public interventions of administrative authorities is seen as part of her inability to organise the sector. A local daily newspaper reveals warnings from a Divisional officer who warns the riders at the approach of a presidential election: «Merely do your job and don't mingle into political business that could lead you into useless problems ". Had the speech of this administrative authority been followed? Nevertheless, it is evident from our field analysis that there exists certain distrust on the behalf of the central public authorities over these unverifiable youngsters.

The authorities look upon this activity as a major social problem that can create social unrest. They express a lukewarm attitude in regulating this activity for it constitutes a source of employment to many youths who are unable to get suitable jobs in the job market, but at the same time, the activity constitutes a risk as its social consequences are truly affecting the population in the forms of increase in death rate due to accidents caused by motorbike taxis in
Douala; increase in banditry involving motorbike taxis and constant frictions between the public authorities and the motorbike taxi riders. The public authority has more and more difficulties in containing their expansion.

There is clear contrast between the perceptions of the activity in the rural areas by the local authorities and the central authorities of the great cities. This difference in perception can be analysed through the use of economic and political power. The central administrations do not derive their power from the riders and do not depend on them economically. Whereas the local administration led by Mayors and municipal councillors view the activity as a ready source of income through the taxes they pay. The activity is also seen as a tool that can be used in political strives by local elected leaders for the motorbike taxis are more popular and can be easily contained in rural areas than in the urban cities where their numbers are great (100,000 engines in Douala according to the NGO- COSA - Conduire Sans Accident)
This chapter deals with the impact of the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel as a new means of transport. By impacts, we mean the effects, the consequences, or
repercussions of something on another thing, object, individual or community. Thus, at this juncture, our study seeks to find out what are the effects or consequences of motorbike riding in the Tombel. Motorised transport is extremely low on rural roads (Starkey: 2007) and the introduction of motorbike taxis has come to increase movements between the rural and urban centres and within the rural settings. With the case study of Tombel, we shall analyse the impact of this activity in the socio-cultural domain. This will include not only the social and cultural domains but equally the economic, political and environmental domains which are part of the socio-culture of a society.

1) SOCIAL IMPACT OF MOTORBIKE TAXIS IN TOMBEL

Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements; namely norms, customs, traditions and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole. The introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel is a new “organ” that has come to play a role in maintaining the society to equilibrium. But this has impacted socially on the other parts (or organs) of the society as analysed below.

1.1) Impact on population mobility

The life style of the Tombel population has greatly changed with a clear modification in the means of movement. Before the coming of motorbike taxis, movements within Tombel was dominated by trekking while from Tombel to other towns and villages was limited to the use of Toyota corolla vehicles and mini-buses from the Tombel to Kumba, Tombel to Loum in the dry season and the use of four wheeled vehicles such as Land Rovers and Toyota Hilux in the rainy seasons. Bicycles and other Lorries were also used but at a reduced rate. The coming of motorbike taxis has transformed the public transport system and movements in and out of Tombel. These two wheeled engines move faster on the rural roads than the motor vehicles. 90% of our informants are favourable to this form of public transport for its rapidity. Movements of individuals and goods between the villages and Tombel have increased. Movements from homes to far away farmlands have increased. People have become much more mobile; this has increased exchanges between the centre and the peripheries. The transport of goods has also witnessed innovations with the introduction of motorbike taxis. Bags of dried cocoa, coffee, cassava, banana and many other crops produced in Tombel
are being rapidly transported by motorbike taxis from the hinterlands to the centre of the town, these in quantities heavier than the capacity of the motorbike taxis. These motorbike taxis are also used in transporting uncommon items such as coffins and human corpses. This mutation has also led to the abandonment of certain destinations to this mode of transport which the others find difficult to compete with. The Tombel-Loum road, Tombel-Nyassoso, Tombel-Mbabbe, Tombel-Nsuke road networks have been deserted by the other forms of public transport and left in the hands of the motorbike taxis who have become the new masters of the road and the principal means of transport of the Tombel population.

![Figure 12: Crates of beer in Tombel town to be transported to the village of Peng.](image)

The pushing away of other modes of public transport by motorbike taxis is common in other regions of the country. In the city peripheries such as in Mimboman- Yaoundé, the motorbike taxis have completely wiped away the second hand clandestine vehicles commonly known as /clandos/ which assured transport from the periphery to the centre of Yaoundé. (Anguissa S.B : 2000)
1.1.2) Flexibility in use

The nature and structure of motorbikes used in rural transport is well adapted to rural life. Its easy mechanism has seduced many inhabitants of Tombel who use it not only for commercial aspirations but also to satisfy personal transport movements. The motorbike taxi is very flexible and has changed the public transport atmosphere in its “door to door” capacity as it leaves its customers directly at their homes. This flexibility in use has contributed in its use. The population of Tombel no longer travels at intermediary distances as it used to be with the other public transport systems which couldn’t access all the neighbouring villages and hamlets. The motorbike taxi rides through road paths, bad roads and even creates its own roads through the CDC rubber plantations to get to destination and leave the passenger at his door. Munge Patience (64 years old) farmer expresses his delight for this form of public transport.

“With the Okada nowadays, we no longer wait for specific days or hours to go to certain villages as it was the case with the Land Rovers. Before the coming of Okadas, one had to reserve a place for a trip to Bangem a day before and the next day by 11 am, the vehicle left. For destinations such as Kumba, we could wait more than five hours for the car to get full. But with the okada today, there is no time to wait. With 1 or two passengers, the motorbike takes off. As a consequence, we greatly gain in time.”

This increase in mobility has affected the time factor. People have become much more in a haste than before where people took their time to trek from one area to the other. Trekking is today becoming abnormal in the vision of many youths who have unanimously adopted this form of public transport.

1.2) Impact on the rhythm of life

Tombel is essentially an agricultural producing economy. The life style of its inhabitants was centred on the “high” and “low” seasons of cash crop production in the likes of cocoa and coffee. From January to June, the cocoa plants are being treated for them to bear good fruits. During this period, economic activities are slow and the rhythm of life slows down. Activities and movements are limited to generally basic day to day duties. Harvest intervenes as from June to October. During this period, farmers make money from the sales of cocoa and the rhythm of life changes becoming hotter. This is the period where people spend much more money in leisure and other socio-cultural activities. Traditional marriages are usually scheduled for this period of abundance. The months of November and December give way to the harvest of coffee seeds. This is also the period where most traditional ceremonies are
programmed. The /Ndìèh/ feast of feeding the ancestors for example is celebrated at the end of the year, either in November or December. This feast has many connotations as concerns the welfare of the Bakossi people in Tombel. People become thus more active at the end of the year and almost dormant at the beginning of the year. This attitude equally affected the petit traders and bar holders who all depend on the revenue of the farmers gotten from cocoa to make business run.

With the introduction of motorbike taxis, the rhythm of life has changed to an all year round movement and animation of the town. The motorbike taxi riders spend their revenue at random in town. By earning about 4,000FCFA to 7,000FCFA, the riders provide the town with daily revenue which is reinvested in the town. This has given Tombel a new atmosphere as some celebrations and ceremonies no longer wait the end of the year to be celebrated; thus changing the rhythm of life of this rural town.

1.3) **Impact on the social organisation of the society**

Social organisation refers to the directional activity, to the working out of social relations in everyday life". (Watson-Gegeo : 1991). The Bakossi society in Tombel is organised in clans and lineages governed by elders. Their livelihood depends on primary activities such as farming in the cultivation of cash and food crops; the production of these products constituting references of wealth and prestige. In 1920, Chief Ntoko Epie of Nyassoso encouraged his fellow kinsmen to plant cocoa in the Tombel-Ebonji-Peng plain. This chief was very influential and was considered wealthy because he was the first owner of cocoa plantations in Tombel. (Ejedepang-Koge: 1986) The production of cocoa has then been seen as a measuring rod for one’s wealth. The coming of motorbike taxi riders has changed this perception of material wealth. Being able to accumulate income on a daily bases, the riders and motorbike taxi proprietors are a new group to reckon with. This activity is a ready source of income and a new sign of wealth and prestige amongst the people of Tombel. Their economic power has pushed them up the social ladder and they today constitute a new social group that play an important part in the functioning of the society.

In the past, the juju societies had been a very important social component in the life of the Bakossi. They were the marks of social status and even had some economic bearing on the life of the active and prospective member. With the development of the town and the advent of motorbike taxis, many are the youths who are more attracted to gain social recognition
through motorbike taxi riding in which they enjoy fame and gist among their age mates than to gain social recognition from the elders through initiation into a jujju society.

Just as other social groups, the motorbike taxis riders participate in the organisation of the town. On every 1st Wednesday of each month, the Tombel council undertakes the general cleaning of the town. Work is divided according to social groups. The motorbike taxi riders are also given their share of the burden. In moments of public manifestations and feasts, motorbike taxi riders also have their tasks to perform. They match and perform artistic displays on the occasion of national feast days (11th February 1st and 20th May). They are equally implicated in the Bakossi end of year festivals such as the /Ndièh/ festival. They are thus recognised as a new social group which plays its function in maintaining the equilibrium of the society agreeing with Malinowsky that all the elements of a society are functional in the sense that they serve to satisfy certain needs of that society. This can be classified under instrumental needs in Malinowski’s sub division of needs.

1.3.1) Sexuality and motorbike taxis

The introduction of motorbike taxis has greatly transformed mores as concerns sexual habits in the Tombel society. Sexuality was a taboo discussed in the private sphere. With modernity and development of the town, new manners of acting, feeling and thinking arose. This is the case with the dressing of the young girl. Through this process of systematic cultural transformation of individuals in a society due to the presence on an alien, politically dominant society (Winthrop 1991:83), the Bakossi girl is gradually letting away the popular /kaba ngondo/ attire in favour of the Euro-american way of dressing copied through television. This has led to the putting on of short skirts and jeans with a low or no waist band popularly known in French as “taille basse”. The attire is accompanied by the putting on of “strings” as underwear. The motorbike taxis have become a tool of exposition and show off of these attires. Thanks to the motor bike, what was seen in private is now not only exposed to the public. From our field observations, we observed many girls seated on a motorbike taxi with their buttocks exposed. People can see the different parts of their rear.

According to Emilia Nzume (34 years old) businesswoman;

*We easily see girls today on motorbike taxis with their buttocks exposed, showing everything out. In the past decades, such things didn’t exist. More so, when women climb on a motorbike taxi, their sitting position shows off their shape from behind as their two buttocks are aligned on the saddle. This sometime arouses the sexual appetite of men.*
Motorbike taxi riders are also perceived as a social ill by many inhabitants of Tombel because of their sexual habits targeted towards the young girls of Tombel.

According to Anna Munge (29 years old seamstress);

_With the creation of the Government Secondary School Tombel in 1992, there was a preference of young girls to mate with students who were seen as intellectuals with a bright future and farmers who owned large properties of cocoa farms. The tendency has today changed with the arrival of motorbike taxi riders who differ from the other two categories because students are no more looked upon as people with a bright future. The second category of preferred individuals was the farmers because they made good money out of cocoa production. But today with the instable prices and periodic nature of their income, priority has been given to motorbike taxi riders who earn money on a daily bases and can easily provide for a young girl whose parents are unable to meet her basic needs._

The above assertion can explain the drive for girls in Tombel towards motorbike taxi riders. This doesn’t go without any friction with individuals of the other categories of life.

A series of fights over girls reported to the quarter head of Ebamou quarters in Tombel reveal the constant friction between the /okada men/ and other youths in town.

Almost all the pregnant teenagers from the present government Bilingual High School Tombel have been impregnated by motorbike taxi riders. This assertion by Ndille Enang, English language teacher at this institution is confirmed by Mrs Eze Carole, nurse at the Tombel District hospital who has registered an important number of birth from teenage mothers who were still enrolled in school.

The annals of the Tombel district hospital have never classified the registered births in terms of profession of the genitor. The affirmations of Mrs Eze Carole are derived from her personal experience as nurse at this hospital for over four years now.

Evelene Ahone, (33 years old teacher) former president of the Tombel Aunties Association militates for the counseling and guidance of teenage mothers in the town of Tombel. She sees the motor bike taxi riders as a social problem because they are the cause of many teenage pregnancies in and around Tombel. They are found to be among the category of people who carry out unprotected sex leading to the spread of sexual transmittable diseases in the society.

From the analysis of our interviews and field observations, the motorbike taxi riders have a high sexual activity in the society. They have contributed in the increase of birth rate and the cause of several teenage pregnancies which has a negative consequence on the academic
progress of the teenage youths who are enrolled in school. The rate of prostitution too has increase as the motorbike taxi riders are potential customers to this set of women who sell sex. Ngassa Apollinaire (20 years old motorbike taxi rider), affirms that because of their mobility and the fact that their activity takes most of their time, some riders pay for sex to save time.

Another impact of motorbike taxi riders and sex in Tombel is the development of a phenomenon known as “boby-touch”. This expression is the composition of two words, /boby/ which is a pidgin word derived from the English world /breast/ and /touch/ which can be described as making a physical contact with something. This is practiced by the motorbike taxi riders when they carry a female passenger. It consists of running with a girl or woman at a relatively high speed and suddenly breaks such that this sudden stop will push the girl to hit her breast on the back of the rider. This procures to the rider an agreeable sensation. More than half of our informants who are motorbike taxi riders confirm practising the “boby-touch”.

This relationship of riders to sexual activities can be observed in other cultural universes. In a research published in the scientific review titled “Sexual transmittable diseases”, Paris Mark et al (2001) evaluated the prevalence of factors associated with sexually transmitted disease risk and of Neisseria gonorrhoeae and Chlamydia trachomatis infections among motorbike taxi riders working in Iquitos- Peru. The results indicated the prevalence of gonococcal or chlamydial infection at a 3.5% rate. The research concluded that motorbike taxi riders are a major means of public transportation in Iquitos, Peru, have high personal risks for sexually transmitted disease, and interface often with at-risk persons.

1.4) **Impact on health and on the environment**

The Population of Tombel combines traditional and western medicine in curing itself. The activity of motorbike taxi involves health risk from the riders who are at the centre of this activity. By transporting passengers on a daily bases on the rough and bumpy roads, they constantly expose their bodies to the frequent vibrations derived from the bad nature of the roads. This accounts for the early age to which they leave the profession for above 35 years old, it becomes very difficult to ride a motorbike taxi. More so, the fact that the motorbike
taxis do not have any external shield exposes the bodies of the riders to high and low temperatures which are accompanied by rainfall in the rainy season and the sun rays and dust in the dry season. The thick jackets they put on are not sufficient enough to preserve their health. In the absence of helmets, the eyes of the riders are exposed to dust particles. Several consultations for the eye have been brought up by the motorbike taxi riders.

Helmets are not used by motorbike taxi riders in Tombel. Over all the field observation of our research, we found just one motorbike taxi rider with a helmet. The riders interviewed justify this situation by the fact that the helmets are expensive. Additionally to this, they add that the passengers (especially the girls) have a negative connotation of those wearing helmets. According to them, it is meant for those who are afraid to fall from their motor bikes. Thus, this vision of the helmet has pushed many to ride without helmets in order to prove their trust-worthiness and courage.

In the course of their activity, the motorbike taxis are also faced with road accidents. Statistics on the number of road accidents are inexistent but from the data gotten at the Tombel district hospital and from our informants, an annually average of over 160 people receive first aid treatment at the Tombel district hospital as a result of accidents caused by or involving a motorbike taxi. The two main registered complains received are minor fractures from falls from motorbike taxis and burns from the exhaust pipes of the motorbike taxis. So far, since the activity was introduced in Tombel, only two deaths have been registered in 2006 whereby a motorbike taxi rider and passenger were crushed by a lorry on the Loum- Tombel road. This low rate of deaths involving motorbike taxis in Tombel can be justified by the fact that the density of movements is less important than that on urban roads which are denser in traffic and vehicles also move faster because of the tarred nature of the roads. The health of passengers is not assured as they too suffer the same effects as the riders in case of accidents.

There is an absence of protective measures such as the wearing of protective helmets. Very few motorbike taxis use helmets. The passengers usually suffer burns from the exhaust pipes of the motorbike taxis when their body skin comes in contact with it when climbing on or descending from the motorbike taxi. After running a long distance the exhaust pipe of motorbike taxis gets hot and any contact with the human body is fatal. Fractures too arise when the motorbike taxi falls with the rider and/or passenger.

Accidents on village roads such as Ngusi and Ndibedjock have involved domestic animals such as dogs, sheep, goats and pigs. Some of these village roads have not known the passage of motor vehicles till the arrival of motorbike taxis. Thus, the time for adaptation has a cost.
Motorbike taxis have hit these animals a series of times causing problems between the riders and the proprietors of these animals.

According to Mrs Anna Munge (47 years old farmer); “The Okada boys have knocked down my fowl as it roamed the streets. It saddens me a lot because the rider ran away after the mischief.”

This lady equally admits that some of her neighbours have lost either a goat or pig due to accidents caused by the reckless riding of motorbike taxi riders.

The town of Tombel since independence has registered very few accidents involving motor vehicles. The introduction of motorbike taxis has come to change this situation. Although riding on rural roads which a less dense, the riders are still involve in accidents which is becoming a serious call for concern.

Road accidents are the main negative impact that arises in the study of motorbike taxis in other parts of Cameroon and elsewhere on the globe. In Douala for example, the situation is becoming alarming with daily reports on deadly accidents involving motorbike taxis.

Through a field report realised by Christophe Bobiokono et Pascal E. Dang, the Douala based newspaper Mutation in its edition of 07/10/2003 brings out the risky nature of this activity as it titled: “Benskin: the new masters of Douala”.

Extract:

“A few years ago, an entire pavilions of the Laquintinie hospital of Douala had been given the name of "BenSkin". The rhythm of accidents implying motor bike - taxis and the gravity of shocks was such that the victims had conquered the entire space. Rare were the days the hospital passed without recording a deadly accident of this type. It is a lorry transporting lumber that crushed a "benskin rider" and his/her passenger in the same process; a cargo that worked over another benskin rider elsewhere; a child who was knocked-down by one of these benskins or a passenger who landed into mud, falling from a benskin. The reports didn’t change, even though with time it became less striking. For example, the single day of Tuesday 19 August 2003, one recorded up to three motorbike taxi riders killed in accidents in Douala. The first at the entrance of the Wouri bridge, the second at the junction known as Carrefour quatre étage, and the third at Bassa. The activity is therefore very dangerous for motorbike taxi riders and their customers. The reason being that most benskin riders "are unaware of the basic rules of the road code.

Furthermore, A documentary entitled “Benskin” produced by Aristide Yentagwe in July 2007 and broadcast on the cameroonian Television station - STV1 (Spectrum Television) on the 29th of June 2010, shows how the Laquintinie Hospital in Douala registers at least ten cases of accidents in their emergency unit everyday due to road accidents caused by motorbike taxi riders.
DJIEPMO NDJOUKYA (2008) in a research raises concern on the stakes of road security in urban milieus of Cameroon with a case study on motorbike taxis in Yaounde.

Extract: “The large number of deaths and traumatisms owed to road accidents by motorbike taxis are also caused by the non respect bodily protective measure as the use of helmets and anti-shock bars that don't exist on motorbike taxis exercising in Yaoundé.”

According to a 60-page report from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, titled "Rehabilitation Costs and Long-Term Consequences of Motor Vehicle Injury"; Motor bike accidents in the United States cause more deaths-usually from head injuries than any other kind of vehicular crash. Among survivors, painful injuries to legs, hips, arms and lower back are common. Serious accidents may cause brain damage or paraplegia, paralysis from the waist down. In some cases, a crushed leg may require amputation. Along with physical pain, survivors may experience forms of psychological distress. The psychological consequences of motorbike accidents may require additional medical attention, including medication.

In another research, a survey of the World Health Organisation and World Bank realised in 2004 showed that, in relation to a person travelling by car, a person using a two-wheel motor-driven engine is 20 times more exposed to risks to be killed per kilometre covered. This is insofar as the human face of a two-wheeled vehicle doesn't protect the rider. The latter is exposed directly in case of shock. The only protection resides therefore in his/her clothing (anti - burns combination, boots, gloves, helmets, glasses, hide nose...).

From the analysis of the above assertions, accidents by motorbike taxis are frequent worldwide. But its frequency is accentuated in Cameroon and consequently in Tombel due to the lack of knowledge in the road code and firm measures by the State to regulate this activity.

Another side effect of this activity on the population of Tombel is the creation of noise pollution. The enclave villages have usually been places of a calm atmosphere because mobility was formally assured solely by foot. The few bicycles which crossed these villages (Bangone, Ekeb, Melongo…) did so producing almost no noise. The introduction of motorbike taxis in these zones has created a riotous environment not only from the noise created by the engines of the motorbike taxis (some of which produce heavy sounds because the riders have burst their exhaust pipes) but equally from the noise produced by the riders who are known to be notorious noise makers. This has affected the mode of life of the people.
Environmental pollution has been accentuated with the introduction of this form of public transport. During the dry seasons, the motorbike taxis in Tombel become the principal agents of dust distribution along the roadsides. Their speedy nature on these non tarred rural roads raises dust particles that go a long way in affecting the lives of the people living in the vicinities of these roads. The smoke produced by the exhaust pipes of the motor bikes is a contributor to the degradation of the environment composed essentially of tropical forest and found in the protected WWF zone of the Bakossi forest reserve. According to the United States Environmental protection agency (2007), a motorbike can in some cases emit 10–20 times the quantity of nitrogen oxides (NOx) when compared to the NOx emissions of a car. This is because many motorbikes lack a catalytic converter to reduce NOx emissions, and whilst catalytic converters have been used in cars long enough that they are now commonplace, they are a relatively new technology in motorbikes. This shows that motorbikes also have an impact on the environment in which they exercise.

1.5) Motorbike taxis and public security
The principal function of motorbike taxis in Tombel is the transport of goods and persons from one place to another. In the exercise of this function, the motorbike taxis interact with other “cells” of the society. To this, public security is one of the domains to which a relationship can be traced with the activity of motorbike taxis affecting the life style of the Tombel population.

Motorbike taxi riders are today being used as informants by the forces of law and order. This is because they are popular in town and are aware of most of the happenings in town. They have become an essential tool in assuring public peace and security. Moreso, the fact that many riders were known as formal town bullies of which some are ex-convicts is prove that this activity has come to bring greater security in Tombel. One of our informants Mesumbe Etoumbe (27 years old rider) reveals that in April 2008, several arm robbery took place on the Loum-Tombel road. It’s thanks to the contribution of motorbike taxi riders that the robbers were neutralised by the Loum Gendarmerie force. Nevertheless, they are sometimes at logger heads with the local council which levies taxes on them. But on a general perspective, we find a better collaboration between them. They thus fulfil a function which is intended and have a positive effect on the society. Dysfunctions are unintended and have a negative effect on society. They are consequences of structural elements that produce changes in their environing social system. The concept of “dysfunction” analyses the situation of motorbike
taxis in relation to public security in other regions of Cameroon whereby motorbike taxis deviate from their primary function of transporting goods and passengers to being associated in theft and riots. These accusations of robbery and banditry operations have given them a negative connotation. In his research, (Sadou A: 2005) brings out the link between the introduction of motorbike taxis in Ngaoundéré and the rise in public insecurity.

Extract:

“To understand the role of motorbike taxis to the phenomenon of insecurity in the city of Ngaoundéré, it would be import to consider the magnitude of road accidents but also of the numerous acts of banditry and delinquency that are prevailing within this locality since the introduction of this mode of transport.”

He goes further to explain the different forms of banditry used by the “supposed motorbike taxi riders” with statistics on the number of registered aggressions implicating motorbike taxi riders. (1249 out of 2269 aggressions from 1995 to 2003.)

This difference in the use of motorbike taxis in public security can be explained by the fact that Tombel is a relatively homogenous society of small size (10,000 inhabitants) where socio-cultural links are still relatively tight as compared to big cities such as Ngoundéré and Douala whose populations are much more heterogeneous and of great sizes. It’s under such an amalgamation that many profit of this situation to create a dysfunction in the use of motorbike taxis as a means of public transport.

2) CULTURAL IMPACT OF MOTORBIKE TAXIS IN TOMBEL

When alien culture traits diffuse into a society on a massive scale, acculturation frequently is the result. The culture of the receiving society is significantly changed. However, acculturation does not necessarily result in a new, alien culture trait completely replacing old local ones. There often is a syncretism or an amalgamation of traditional and introduced traits. The new traits may be blended with or worked into the indigenous cultural patterns to make them more acceptable. This is the case with the introduction of a new culture trait; the motorbike taxis as new means of movement that has come to affect the mode of life of the Bakossi in Tombel. The impact of this activity on culture can be analysed in several domains.

2.1) Impact on socialisation
Socialisation in the Bakossi society requires the boy child to be educated by his father and other males of the extended family while the mother takes care of the girl child. In the course of the socialisation of the male child, he is thought to become a “man” through his initiation into the /muankum/ society. Entering the /muankum/ is a stage to acquire courage, manhood and to be respected in society. The development of Tombel and introduction of motorbike taxis has pushed the /muankum/ out of town. Some parents today offer motorbike taxis to their sons in order for them to acquire courage, manhood and become socially responsible. The motorbike taxi is thus seen an instrument that has come to replace the aged known process of acquiring manhood through initiation into the /muankum/ society.

Another aspect of socialisation in the Bakossi society is hierarchy. It’s the father who is at the head of the family and he’s respected by all. The eldest son is entitled to the father’s property when the latter is deceased. Thus, the kinship relationship defines power and hierarchy through birth rites. The activity of motorbike taxis has brought changes in this conception. This is due to a greater financial impact from the motorbike taxi riders who do no more respect hierarchy. Their insolent nature has made them to develop disrespect for their elders. This activity is being used by many as a tool to climb the social ladder.

2.1.2) Impact on formal education
The contact of the Bakossi with Europeans brought in a number of changes in their lifestyle of the Bakossi (Ejedepang-Koge:1986) affecting their mode of socialisation with the introduction of formal education through the Christian missionaries. Today, Tombel central and its attached villages have over fifteen government and private institutions of learning. Consequently, socialisation is not only limited to the private domain (family) but also in the public (school). Students and pupils enrolled in these institutions depend greatly on their families for their education and evolution in society. The coming of motorbike taxis has come to create a problem of school drop-outs. Many students abandon school to undertake motorbike taxi riding for the boys. According to Ndille Enang (teacher at the GBHS Tombel), we today find many students from his institutions who have become riders after dropping out from school. Whenever a student fails the GCE and feels discouraged, he immediately enters into motorbike taxi riding as an income generating activity to enjoy all the advantages which goes with it. This situation attracts friends who are still in school and are tempted to follow suite. Mr Ndille Enang equally cites the cases of some student riders who practiced this activity to make ends meet academically but whom finally left school to become full time
riders. Statistics of the number of male students who leave school are unknown but an estimate of 13 cases reported by our informants can be noted.

On the part of the female students, school drop outs have been registered due to pregnancies attributed to motorbike taxi riders. With a low income per capita among the young girl students, they are tempted to comply to the sexual demands of the motorbike taxi riders who have the financial resources to offer them. Mme Atabe Suzanne (49 years old housewife) affirms that the teenage poor girl students are vulnerable and constitute the essential of the victims. Motorbike taxi riders usually propose then a ride to and from school. This is a privilege many do not have so the temptation is great. She further points out that many teenage girls have been frustrated and drop out of school because they have been pregnant for motorbike taxi riders. This assertion goes in line with that of Evelyne Ahone, former president of the Tombel Aunties Association who adds that over 80% of the pregnancies of teenage girls in school are caused by the riders.

Motorbike taxi riders are thus a threat to formal education for they have contributed greatly in the number of school drop outs, jeopardising the education of many youths.

2.2) Impact on religion

Whether acculturation takes place often depends on the relationship between the culture that is receiving the new traits and the original culture. The introduction of motorbike taxis as a new means of movement has been adopted by the Bakossi. Nevertheless, this adoption has undergone some mutations in the host culture. This is in the form of religious syncretism. Just as in all other religions, there exist rites and rituals in the Bakossi society of Tombel. Some of these practices have been affected by the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel. This is the case of the blessing of travellers by elders before they undertake a trip. These blessings are today also directed to prospective motorbike taxi riders. The libation ritual used in end of year ceremonies to plead with the ancestors and demand for favour is today also used in protecting the riders. From the information gotten from our informants, many of the riders consult sorcerers for protection in their activity. The adoption of motorbike taxis as a means of movement has as a consequence undergone many changes. In other spheres such as in the big cities, the process of becoming a motorbike taxi rider differs enormously from that of Tombel as the people have adapted the activity to their vision of life through adaptations in their religious practices.

2.2.1) Impact on mores
The motorbike taxis have changed the habits of travellers across the villages. One of the main points of Bakossi mores in the movement of travellers was the salutation ritual. The Bakossi usually travelled by foot from one village to the other before the apparition of motorable vehicles. The coming of cars didn’t change this habit for there existed many villages which were still enclaved. On crossing a home, one was obliged to stop and greet the people sitting in a compound. This ritual was simple as the traveller hailed the following words:
- /ni nda tèh/ meaning /are you in the house?/. The inhabitants answer /ééh/ meaning /yes/. Sometimes, additional words can be exchanged. With the common use of Pidgin English, if a traveller passes by a farmland and meets a farmer working, he greeted with the word /ashia/ and the farmer would respond in any form. The coming of motorbike taxis which penetrates all villages has brought changes in the salutation ritual of travellers. There is no more time to stop and exchange greetings as the motorbike taxi rider moves fast across the houses of these villages. The rapidity in use is of course an advantage in time consumption but it is contributing in distancing the people who were formally more close together and today are being separated from one another through the use of the motorbike taxis.

Motorbike taxis have also contributed to the introduction of greater material culture in the villages. Some manufactured products such as canned foods formerly known to be scarce products arrive in the villages at a constant rate due to their introduction by the use of motorbike taxis. The price of beer in some villages has witnessed a significant decrease from 1000FCFA to about 700FCFA. The case of bread has affected the perception of many people. One of the types of baked bread commonly known as “Kumba bread” was a symbol of friendship as many travellers bought a piece of this bread when returning home to his village or for a visit. The popularity of this bread was well known and considered as “special” for it was scarce to find it in the village stores. The motorbike taxis, riding through villages and towns transport goods to and from these areas. The “Kumba bread” is today delivered in the villages at a constant rate and this has contributed in diminishing its value as it’s no longer looked upon as “the traveller’s bread”.

Motorbike taxi riders as a consequence can be regarded as vectors of socio-cultural change as they transport culture traits from one area to the other.

3) **ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MOTOR BIKE TAXIS IN TOMBEL**
The socio-cultural impact analysed above cannot be complete without the inclusion of the economic and political impact. These elements are inseparable to the analysis of our impact study. The economy of Tombel has witnessed a great change with the introduction and proliferation of motorbike taxis. The economy of the town no longer moves according to the cocoa and coffee seasons as it has widened itself to this tertiary activity.

3.1) Impact on Income

Motorbike taxis pay taxes to the Tombel rural council. This is a ready source of income for the council which relies on such contributions to realise its objectives. Moreso, Tombel has no enterprise on which the city’s council can rely on. On a daily bases, the riders pay 100FCFA as entry ticket. The over 200 riders provide the council with a daily revenue of 20,000FCFA and an annual revenue evaluated at about 7,300,000FCFA. This money goes a long way to solve the council’s problems.

The income generated by the riders has offered them a place of choice in the economy of the town. Daily revenue from this activity oscillates between 4,000 to 7,000FCFA. On market days, some riders can make it to 10,000 FCFA. Special trips permit them to also earn much more; this is the case of hiring riders to transport corpse for example earns the rider over 30,000FCFA. With an average of 7000 FCFA as daily revenue for new motorbike taxis, the repartition of this revenue is usually in 3 folds represented on the following chart:

Diagram 5 : Repartition of daily revenue derived from the activity of motorbike taxi in Tombel

- The proprietor of the motor bike receives 43% (3,000FCFA)
The section fraction, 14% is spent on feeding (1000FCFA)

The third fraction 43%, represents the rider’s profit margin. (3,000FCFA)

Deductions can be made for the other categories of people intervening into the business such as the sole proprietors to who are able to make 6,000FCFA on a daily bases and proprietors who are non riders earn 3000FCFA daily for a monthly revenue of 90,000FCFA, equal to that of his employee, the rider.

The above chart proves that this is a lucrative activity. A motorbike taxi rider through this activity can generate a monthly wage of 90,000FCFA. This revenue is spent on the up keep of his family and other personal projects. Through this analysis, we can rightly affirm that this activity has gotten a great financial impact on the society at large for the rider becomes socially responsible and spends his money not only for leisure but also in satisfying the needs of other members of his family and entourage.

3.2) Impact on local economy

The local economy has been impacted by the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel. The economy of the town today is in a continuous booming all year round. The economy no longer depends on cocoa harvest which comes out twice a year. Some petit trades functioned periodically but with the presence of motorbike taxis have installed on a permanent bases. The council’s budget has witnessed an increment with daily revenue collected from the sales of entry tickets. This activity has created secondary ones such as shops specialised in motor bike appliances.

The introduction of this activity has also forced development into certain enclaved villages through an increase in the trade flow between Tombel town and its vicinities. Goods are easily transported from the villages to the town and vice versa thanks to the use of motorbike taxis which are flexible and adapted for the rural roads.

The maintenance of these roads has witnessed a greater attention from the part of the TRC which works in collaboration with the riders to render their movements more fluid. Thus, the council is today working on the roads, rendering communication easier.

3.3) Impact on transport fares.

Transport fares have dropped with the proliferation of motorbike taxis. The competition between the two wheeled-engines and regular transport vehicles has resulted in favour of the former which taxes less prices for a rapid and efficient trip than the land rovers and four wheeled cars who are limited to certain destinations. For example, a trip from Tombel to
Nyassoso today costs 1000FCFA. This distance with the regular cars costs 1500FCFA before the arrival of motorbike taxis and according to Mesumbe Princewill, the destination is today covered solely by motorbike taxi riders. The motorbike taxis have another advantage of leaving its customer to his door. The regular cars could only leave them at junctions where they had to trek to get to their houses or villages for those who live in the inner parts of the Tombel municipality. More so, the passengers had to pay the price to the final destination even if they had to stop before. This is the case with the Tombel-Bangem road where all passengers had to pay 3000FCFA regardless of whether a passenger is dropping kilometres before. The motorbike taxis have come to curb this problem as payment is done in proportion of the distance covered. More so, their prices are more flexible as it’s debated in a man to man deal.

3.4) Impact on employment
The activity of motorbike taxi in Tombel was propelled by a farmer. It’s in this wise that many cocoa farmers have left the farms either on a temporal base or on a permanent base to become “Okada riders”. The activity has offered employment to over 200 men in a town which has no major enterprise to absorb the growing number of unemployed youths of which many had decided not to become farmers like their parents. It’s in this wise that this activity has come to offer employment to many who today earn their daily bread thanks to the riding of motorbike taxis. Diploma holders unable to find a job in the big cities return back home in an urban-rural migration process in order to exercise as motorbike taxi riders.
The activity has also created auxiliary jobs such as motorbike-taxi mechanics that are specialised in the repairs of motor bikes. Over six repair spots are already present employing youths who also earn a living by their technical knowledge. Fuel vendors are another category of those who have found an employment in connexion to this activity. There exist no filling stations in Tombel. These fuel vendors have to go to the town of Loum in the Littoral Region to buy fuel in gallons and retail them back in Tombel. It’s true that there exist vehicles that also use this fuel but from our observations, two thirds of their customers are the motorbike taxi riders. This has contributed in increasing the number of fuel vendors in Tombel.
The last category of employment which aroused from this activity is the accessory shop owners. These shops sell from motorbikes to all the accessories used by the riders such as spare motorbike parts.
4) **POLITICAL IMPACT OF MOTO-BIKE-TAXIS IN TOMBEL**

The rise of this activity was as a result of political unrest and ghost town operations in cities like Douala and Yaounde where public transport vehicles were on strike. The motorbike taxis succeeded in imposing themselves first as alternative means of transport then as a major means of transport. The central position they occupied in the life of the society made them gain political grounds.

By their number, the riders constitute a political force, regrouping many youths disappointed by the present decision-makers. The administrative authorities look upon them with mistrust. This accounts for her inefficiency to organise this sector. So much precaution surrounds public intervention in this domain. The attitude of local elected personalities towards this activity is different. Mayors of local councils voted from universal suffrage instead try to capture this political force. Some even find themselves at the media forefront to defend the interests of motorbike taxi riders explaining that these young men are just trying to earn a living. Moreso, many municipal councils depend on the global taxes collected from the motorbike taxis to fill the coffers of their council. They all thus have an interest in this activity. (Sahabana: 2006)

There exist a clear relationship between the political organisation of Tombel and the activity of motorbike taxi. The motorbike taxi riders constitute a political lobby in Tombel. Motorbike taxi riders entail a “blind” solidarity among themselves. It’s very common to find them sustaining one another in times of trouble opposing one of them to either the forces of law and order or to other public authority. They can adopt a violent behaviour to make their point even when they are wrong. This lobby has created a new category of persons who act in the distribution of power in the Tombel society. Nkale Eugene, the president of the Tombel Riders Association Union is at the same time the CPDM youth sub section president. According to him, his accession to this political position is linked to his position as the president of motorbike taxi riders in Tombel. They are also involved in political propaganda.

Fast becoming an essential element in the movements of populations in Tombel, political aspirants use them as tool for propaganda as they are well known for their popularity and amount of awareness they can raise through the noise they produce. According to Edimo Lucas, (48 years old CPDM militant); in the 2005 presidential elections of Cameroon, the ruling CPDM party mobilised all the motorbike taxis of Tombel to their cause, distributing to them T-shirts, caps, whistles and other gadgets of the party. They were
used to parade the town and villages. In return, they received money for their fuel spent and a token.

In our numerous discussions with our informants and other inhabitants of Tombel, the popularity of a major political personality in town is also judged by his capacity to rally the motorbike taxis to his course. Motorbike taxis are used not only in political campaign rallies but also when the authorities want to pass over messages to the population over a subject such as vaccination campaigns or HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns. According to Eze Caroline, (24 years old nurse); in July 2008, the riders were given the necessary gadgets in the fight against aids such as condoms, posters, t-shirts caps and whistles. They paraded the streets horning and distributing condoms.

The motorbike-taxis are an essential component to the political image of many politicians and other personalities who use them as escort riders on special events such as on marriages or leading a funeral convoy. Their organisation in the front of such convoys gives it a presidential look and brings more fame to the person who hired them.

Through this political impact, the motorbike taxis have carved out a space for themselves in the political organisation not only of Tombel, but equally in the entire nation. Friction between motorbike taxi riders and forces of law and order are common. Their indefectible solidarity in a town like Douala has pushed them to impose themselves in the streets of the city while defying present laws regulating their profession.
CONCLUSION
Our research study over the introduction of motorbike taxis in rural communities of Cameroon is centred on the socio-cultural impact of this social phenomenon within the rural setting with the town of Tombel in the South west region as our case study. This is a contemporary research theme which is designed to bring out the socio-cultural impact of this social phenomenon in society. This research is enveloped in the domain of anthropology of development and comes in the context of economic recession in Cameroon which led to the closing of government’s corporations and its disengagement in certain sectors of the economy such as the public transport system in the 1980s and 1990s. The opening of the public transport system to private individuals coupled with globalisation led to the massive import of cheap motorbikes of low frame commonly known as motorbikes from Asia which flooded the streets of Cameroon’s towns and villages.

To guide our research, a number of research questions were developed with the principal question being addressed as follows; what is the impact of the introduction of motorbike taxis as a new means of public transport in Tombel? This research question was comforted by secondary research questions which were stated as follows: what is the profile of a motorbike taxi rider? What role does he plays in society? The perceptions towards this activity and in what has this activity modified the lifestyle of the Bakossi society in Tombel?

Temporal answers were given to these questions. These answers are our research hypothesis: The principal stating that the introduction of motorbike taxis have brought changes in the lifestyle of the Bakossi living in Tombel. This hypothesis is sub divided into four secondary hypotheses as follows; The motorbike taxi rider is a courageous young man who earns a living from the activity of motorbike taxi riding; Motorbike taxis have become the principal means of public transport in Tombel; The motorbike taxi is seen as an instrument of change and has brought changes in the socio-economic and political organisation, affecting cultural patterns among the Bakossi of Tombel.

From these hypotheses, we developed our research objectives. Our primary objective was to show that the introduction of motorbike taxi has modified the lifestyle of the Tombel population. Secondary to this, our research study has as objective to bring out the profile of the motorbike taxi rider and his role in society. More so, our research has as objective to show that the perception of end users on the activity is seen as an instrument of change. Finally, this research had the objective to show through life history, field observations and other methods that the introduction of motorbike taxis has brought a profound change in the lifestyle of the Bakossi in Tombel.
To realise our research, data was collected on the field using both quantitative and qualitative research tools were used. Although being an essentially qualitative research, we used a questionnaire to collect data in order to derive the principal means of public transport in Tombel. Qualitative research method such as direct and participant observation, life history, in-depth interviews, documentary research and the internet were also used to collect data from various sources.

From our field research and data collected, we came out with a number of findings to affirm or refute our set hypothesis.

There exist over 200 motorbike taxis in Tombel. The motorbike taxi riders are mostly made up of youths with a majority between the ages of 23 to 30 years old. Just like its originator, Mr Mbappe, most of the motorbike taxi riders are farmers who have entered into this activity and made it their principal job. People have come from other works of life to become motorbike taxi riders. Students constitute the majority of temporal riders. The Bakossi stand as majority in the number of riders and this has an implication in the cultural implications involving motorbike taxis. They have borrowed some cultural elements to impute on this activity such as in the process of becoming a rider. A motorbike taxi rider passes through blessings from an elder of the village or quarter to protect him and his motorbike taxi. This implies that the perception of protective measures to ride a motorbike taxi as prescribed by the Prime Minister’s 2008 decree such as the use of helmets differs from the protective measures in Tombel whereby some riders believe strongly in protection through libations to the ancestors and thus feel invulnerable to situations such as accidents.

Education wise, the large contingent of motorbike taxi riders is made up of holders of a basic education diploma. Student drop outs too come to join this number. Nevertheless, we also find University undergraduates and graduates who use this activity as a “propeller” to their future carrier and ambitions. There are cases of some civil servants who were former riders and used riding to raise money in order to enrol for public examinations integrating into the public service. Many of these riders are married and use the revenue generated from this activity to sustain the livelihood of their families and entourage.

In terms of public character, the riders do not differ much from those of other cities such as Douala. They are always outspoken who are sometimes aggressive towards people of other works of life. We analysed that this behaviour can be justified by the social pressure bended upon them. They have accounts to render on a daily bases either to their homes or to their employers who are generally not interested in their problems but in the day’s revenue.
It’s this pressure of immediate results that push them sometimes to adopt this attitude (Ekele R. : 2010)

Motorbike taxis have today become the principal means of public transport in Tombel used in majority by the youths. The old people prefer walking on foot because of the rough nature of the roads and riders which doesn’t adapt to their health. Moreso, they are never in a hurry. Concerning the sex variable, women are a majority in the use of this mode of public transport. From our observations, riders carry between one to three passengers and sometimes mix passengers and their load on the same motorbike taxi. Its uses vary a lot from the transport of passengers to that of goods of various nature. The transport of corpse is an exception which takes place on rare occasion. This example is to show that the motorbike taxis are flexible and are used to carry varied goods and passengers. It plays the function of means of movement in society. It has become the main relay tool between villages and Tombel central town, bringing people closer together but also separating people for some greeting rituals are no more respected as people travel fast across villages. There is no more time to stop by and exchange words of greetings.

The perception of this activity also varies according to the targeted population. According to the businessmen who own and rent out motorbike taxis, its seen as a source of income on a short term bases. The riders themselves see this activity not only as a source of income but also as a tool to climb into the social ladder. Given that the motorbike taxi riders have a good image towards a majority of the population. For the end users and other inhabitants of Tombel, the activity is seen as an instrument of change in a town where people didn’t have a variety of choice in public transport for certain destinations. It has facilitated movement of individuals between the town and villages and within the town itself. Nevertheless, it is also seen as a social evil for the social ills caused by the riders such as sexual promiscuity and the drop out of many students from school, not forgetting the road accidents emanating from this activity.

In the last chapter, we analysed the impact of the introduction of motorbike taxis in Tombel with a focus on the socio-cultural domain. Our analysis have revealed that motorbike taxis have become more present in the life of the people. The pace of life has changed as everything tends to be moving faster with the motorbike taxis. Its flexibility in use in a door to door service (Sahabana: 2006), adaptability on rural roads, relatively affordable prices to the other means of transport has increased the rhythm of life of the people.
Another aspect of this impact is the close relationship established between sex and motorbike taxis. The way girls dress and sit on the motorbike taxi rouses the sexual appetite of men. Also, most of the cases of teenage pregnancies in Tombel is attributed to motorbike taxi riders. They are promoters of sexual promiscuity.

The environment has also been affected by this mode public transport which pollutes the air and also produces noise changing the atmosphere of some enclaved villages which were used to calm and less noise.

In terms of public security, the riders are a good source of information for the police and gendarmerie forces. This is because they are always aware of all happenings around town as they go everywhere with their motorbike taxis. They nevertheless constitute a nuisance to public peace with their regular frictions within themselves for customers and with other inhabitants of Tombel.

Culturally, motorbike taxis have impacted on the Bakossi culture. The influence of this activity has brought changes in the socialisation of some youths who today acquire social responsibility through the entering into this activity. This is different from the past whereby a youth was given a farmland to till and produce crops in order to become socially responsible. Moreso, several aspects of the Bakossi culture have been borrowed into this activity. This is the case with libation and blessing ceremonies.

Economically, the introduction of motorbike taxis has created job for the jobless in town who had refused to undertake agriculture. It has also rekindled the local economy and even the council derives money from this activity to realise its projects. This has created accessory jobs such as motorbike taxi repairers, motorbike and part retailers and fuel retailers. The revenue accrued from these activities go a long way to sustain the livelihood of many families.

The introduction of motorbike taxis in the immediate environment of Cameroonian should be analysed henceforth in terms of utility and fairly of movement. But the informal character of this activity has made it difficult to apprehend because of its numerous ramifications and interactions which has rendered it complex. It should be noted that the State is taken up between offering jobs and regulating the activity which will have to put a good number of these riders out of action for some time. Thus, the government authorities tackle this activity with a lot of caution. This differs from the local authorities of the councils who depend upon this activity to fill their coffers. Nowadays, the authorities are facing a dilemma because it seems difficult to forbid an activity which has grown deep into the social tissues of
the population. However, to close-up the gap between social utility and security of citizens, it would be necessary to reorganise this sector of activity.

Rural transport doesn’t have a high priority in the public transport system, let alone rural transport safety. Among the five predominant means of public transport in Tombel (The pick-up, mini-truck or land rovers, the mini-buses, regular small size vehicles such as the Toyota KE70 and the motorbike taxi.) each represents its own safety hazards with the motorbike taxi being the most dangerous as seen from the number of accidents involving this form of transport. Nevertheless, the Tombel population has become dependent on mainly this two wheeled motorised transport for its movement in and out of Tombel. It’s true that trekking still occupies a preponderant position in movements around town but the motorbike taxi is increasingly occupying this space and bringing a profound change in the movement habits of the population.

The flexibility in use and adaptability to the rural setting is one of the main determinants for the preference of this mode of public transport as compared to the others. This is particularly true in the rainy seasons where some road networks are practically inaccessible for the other modes of public transport but for the motorbike taxi which parades the mud and uses short cuts in the forest to get to destination. This has greatly contributed in opening road-locked villages. More so, the prices they offer are far more suitable for the peasants than the monopoly enjoyed by the other means of transport which dictated the prices to the passengers. Today, a wider variety of choice is available and general prices have dropped thanks to the introduction of motorbike taxis. Further more, some destinations are becoming the monopoly of the motorbike taxis. This is the case of the Tombel-Nyassosso road.

Motorbike taxis are thus an instrument of development which sprang up in an environment where the inadequacy between population growth and demand for public transport is fast increasing. With the government’s inability to provide public transport for all, individuals have come over to fill this gap as “a response from below” in order to satisfy needs of movement.
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LIST OF INFORMANTS
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**GLOSSARY**

/clandos/ clandestine transport vehicles
/motos conchos/ motorbike taxis in Peru
/Akassa/ Transport by road
/kèkè kannan/ Bicycle
/boda-boda/ Kenya; appellation of motorbike taxis
/piki-piki/ Swahili term for motorbike
/Okada/ /achaba/ or /Inuga/: Appellation of /commercial motorbikes in Nigeria
/Olévia/ term for motorbike taxi in Benin
/esel/ yam
/nyakè/ Banana
/mékwambé/ Cassava
/kən/ beans
/ngun/ maize
/mbangé/ cocoyam
/ésubag/ fufu
/nzab ngène/ soupe
/kákè/ cocoa
/kofí/ coffee
/melam/ traps
/kôr/ snails
/moo/ basket traps
/ngwe/ traditional rulers
/Kəng/ traditional king
/nlah/ /nki/ name assigned to the members of a deceased woman’s family.
/é-wonge/ marriage
/Dubengun/ God-Almighty
/Be-nyamé/ the dead ones
/Ndíeh/ Annual feast
/njanguí/ A group where people meet to make financial contributions for personal and solidarity purposes.
/máchine/ motor engine
/okadaman/ motorbike taxi rider
/benskin/ traditional dance from the western region of Cameroon; Appellation of the activity of motorbike taxi in Cameroon.
Interview guide for the motorbike taxi rider

General Socio-demographic data

Name:
Age:
Sex:
Level of education:
Naming of motorbike taxi
Origin of motorbike taxis
Defining a motorbike taxi rider
The process of becoming a rider
Organisation of the activity
Role of motorbike taxis in Tombel
Perception of the activity
Changes resulting from this activity

**Interview Guide for the population**

**General Socio- demographic data**
Name:
Age:
Sex:
Level of education:
Naming of motorbike taxi
Origin of motorbike taxis
Defining a motorbike taxi rider
Organisation of the activity
Role of motorbike taxis in Tombel
Perception of the activity
Changes resulting from this activity

**OBSERVATION GUIDE**

- Observation of motorbike taxis at the motorbike taxi park, in the quarters and on the Tombel Loum and Tombel Kumba and Tombel Bangem roads.
- Observation of the different routes used
- Observation of the ridding patterns, passengers and way and type of loading goods
- Observation of the activities of the population centred around the use of motorbike taxis

**QUESTIONNAIRE**
THE PREFERRED MEANS OF MOVEMENT WITHIN AND OUT OF TOMBEL TOWN

Demographic data:

Age:

Sex:

1) What is your principal means of movement within Tombel town?

   a) Trekking (b) motorbike taxi (c) bicycle (d) car (e) lorry (f) other

   If other, give details

2) What is your preferred means of movement between Tombel central and its neighbouring towns and villages?

   a) Trekking (b) motorbike taxi (c) bicycle (d) car (e) lorry (f) other

   If other, give details

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