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**THE " REPUBLICAN POLICEMAN" ACCORDING TO THE OTHER IN ABOMEY-CALAVI (BENIN)**

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**ABSTRACT**

In Benin, the "Republican Police" is defined as a single internal security force, resulting from the merger of the former national police and the former national gendarmerie of Benin in accordance with law N ° 2017-41 of December 29, 2017. Article 2 of Decree No. 2018-314 of July 11, 2018 stipulates that the Republican Police is a paramilitary force established to ensure public security, the maintenance of order and the execution of laws. It has jurisdiction over the entire territory, including paramilitary and military personnel as well as military barracks, air bases and naval force buildings. The police officer is therefore invested with missions that can put him in "situation" with all the components of society, including his own colleagues. This state of affairs generates a host of opinions related to the police in the execution of their sovereign missions.

This research aims to analyze the perceptions of the Republican policeman in the town of Abomey-Calavi. To achieve this, recourse is made to a methodological approach based on documentary research, field investigation and observation. The interviews carried out with 32 respondents composed of citizens, municipal elected officials, road users, prisoners, market women, but also agents of public security and defense forces were approached.

It emerges from the analysis of the data carried out under the prism of the symbolic interactionism of H. Blumer, that the Republican police officer is much more concerned with something other than the security and the free movement of people and their goods. Some people surveyed think that the police officer is often misunderstood and is the object of contempt. For still others, the police officer must be more professional to avoid prejudices that are detrimental to the institution.

**Keywords:** Republican policeman; Perceptions; Municipality of Abomey-Calavi; the other.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Like the great nations, Benin aspires to harmonious and sustainable development as a guarantee of well-being for current and future generations. In reality, no development is possible without peace, stability and a favourable climate for good governance. This assertion is supported by the OECD report (2001) which states that "Security is an essential component of good governance and peace initiatives". This organization thus expresses the need for any State wishing to manage public affairs well to establish above all a climate of tranquility. In the same vein, *development agencies have been forced to revisit, at least partially, their conception of war, peace and development*. These agencies unanimously recognize that, in contrast to *traditional approaches* to peace-related research, development alone is not enough to guarantee peace. "Security must be taken into account and its existence conditions any development" (A. Leboeuf, 2006).

In Benin, it is Law No. 2019-40 of 7 November 2019 revising Law No. 90-32 of 11 December 1990 on the Constitution of the Republic of Benin that regulates the various laws or other texts organizing the functioning of the Public Security Defense Forces and assimilated. It therefore seems obvious that under the control of the State, the Beninese republican police carry out the sovereign missions assigned to it in accordance with the requirements of the law. Thus, it ensures the defense of State institutions and facilities, it ensures compliance with laws and regulations and deals with the protection of people and property. It also performs the functions of the police in the armed forces.

Very often, in the execution of its missions, the police are variously appreciated according to the actors, according to the moments and of course also in relation to the spaces. This situation produces rather rich than diverse discourses, relating to heterogeneous perceptions of the police.

Indeed, Klajnberg, (1993) declaring that "every profession is both found and created by those who practice it, but also by users, customers, an audience, in short a social environment of exercise", already saw through his speech, the perceptions on the profession especially since the exercise of a profession depends as much on existing standards and which supervise the profession only of the one who practices it, but also of the environment of practice of the profession and other factors external to the profession.

For (Brown and Benedict, 2002; Cao, 2014; Chow, 2012; Ren et al., 2005),

In Canada, the police rely on the continued support and collaboration of the Canadian public to carry out their duties effectively. Citizens' willingness to report crimes, cooperate with police during investigations, call them when they need help, and comply with police laws and orders is associated with how they perceive the police.

This close collaboration between the police and Canadian citizens undoubtedly plays a positive role in the effectiveness of the police. However, collaboration is relativized here in the Republic of Benin and more precisely in the commune of Abomey-Calavi where the citizen is sometimes afraid to denounce for fear of reprisals.

Numerous studies have found that "trust in and perceptions of the police are greatly influenced by past experiences with the police, and particularly whether those experiences have been perceived as positive or negative," say ([Brown and Benedict, 2002](#); [Cao, 2014](#); [Chow, 2012](#); [Cotter, 2015](#); [Myhill and Beak, 2008](#)).

From this step we observe that the positive conception of citizens towards the police finds all its relevance in the sense that it is a fundamental aspect of public safety and it contributes to reducing crime.

But since the advent of the creation of the Republican Police in Benin, B. Glidja and N. Hounonkpè (2019) find the following:

[... ] the increase and complexity of requests from users of police stations and the new face of crime. Thus, there is a great responsibility of the police and the recriminations against the current police methods are all factors that force us to rethink the role of the police in the city. From this point of view, the traditional methods of intervention of the Police must be reviewed; because by

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favouring reaction over prevention, the population misses its noble mission of preserving the security of the population. (B. Glidja and N. Hounonkpè, 2019, p.xx)

Based on the recriminations against the methods of the Beninese police and on the requests of the users of the police stations, these authors affirm that the role and police methods are being rethought and improved in Benin.

There is therefore a plurality of discourses and opinions that are quite diverse than controversial.

This research therefore seeks to understand the reasons behind the difference in perceptions of the actors within the population of Abomey-Calavi.

## **2.EQUIPMENT AND METHODS**

**This section of the work is devoted to the presentation of the environment in which the research initially took place. Then the sampling is presented before finishing with the methods of data processing and analysis.**

### **2.1 Presentation of the research community**

The present research was carried out in the municipality of Abomey-Calavi. Abomey-calavi is actually the result of the francization of Agbomin *kan dô fi* which means in the Fon language, "a portion of Abomey was cut off and settled here". Abomey-Calavi is therefore that portion of the people, history and cultural heritage of Abomey that has made the option of living outside and far from Abomey while preserving this origin in its identity. The commune of Abomey-Calavi is in the Atlantic department of south Benin. According to the General Census of Population and Housing (RGPH4), 2013, the population of Calavi has 27862 households with 117824 inhabitants. The Commune of Abomey-Calavi is bounded to the north by the Commune of Zè, to the South by the Atlantic Ocean, to the East by the communes of Cotonou and Sô-Ava, to the West by the communes of Ouidah and Tori-Bossito. It has one hundred and forty-nine (149) villages and city districts that cover nine (09) districts that are Abomey-Calavi, Akassato, Godomey, Glo-Djigbé, Hêvié, Kpanroun, Ouèdo, Togba, Zinvié. Abomey-Calavi was chosen because it is above all a dormitory city and it houses several institutions of the Republic. It is one of the most populous communes in Benin. It attracts a lot of attention because most of the authorities sleep there, in addition it has several infrastructures on the territory that mobilize hundreds of police officers for reasons of safety of fluidity of road traffic as well as for the free movement of people and their goods. It is therefore a fairly serious field for an investigation relating to perceptions of the police officer.

### **2.2 Sampling**

The methodological approach adopted for the conduct of this research is essentially qualitative. Literature search, maintenance and observation are the techniques used for data collection, with the reading sheet, interview guide and observation grid as tools. The work is carried out on the basis of a sample of reasoned choices involving 32 actors composed of local elected representatives; motorcycle taxi drivers, Tokpa-Topka bus drivers, intercity taxi drivers, former detainees, court staff, magistrates, lawyers, market women and citizens taken according to the technique of reasoned choice.

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### **2.3 Methods of data processing and analysis**

The data collected in the field is transcribed using the computer tool and with the Word software. They then underwent a tri-thematic. The transcribed data are then analyzed according to the content analysis method of L. Badin (1989) and under the prism of E. GOFFMAN'S interactionism and the strategic analysis of Crozier and Friedberg.

### **3.RESULTS**

The field investigation mobilized a variety of rather prolific discourses of perceptions about the Republican policeman. The analysis of the data collected shows that the republican policeman has several identities, which identities are the images and clichés that the population makes of its police officers and which are part of representations formulated from experiences or lived experiences. Recourse to the police is often motivated by either a situation of complainor denunciation. The police may also self-refer for an intervention. The police officer is *at the crossroads of several crossings* within the community which induces various discourses according to the actors.

Among its many missions, the security of people and their property, to establish a climate of peace and security conducive to the business and well-being of the populations. In addition, the municipality of Abomey-Calavi is experiencing more and more an explosion due to increasing urbanization. Better the installation of the administrative city of Togba, the dormitory city of Ouèdo, the construction of the wholesale market in Akassato and the industrial zone of Adjagbo gives the municipality a special status and calls for this step to put a particular emphasis on the security aspect. The republican police find themselves in a context where the challenges according to the people surveyed are all the more major as the discourses produced on the institution and its actors raise several questions.

From the criminal to the messiah to the corrupt, followed by several other perceptions, the republican policeman will have borne all the names, *from the noblest to the lowest*.

#### **3.1 The Republican policeman as a criminal**

The criminal is understood as one who transgresses the law, a criminal, more specifically the one who commits a premeditated murder or who commits a homicide. In legal language, a criminal is an individual who has been finally convicted of committing a criminally sanctioned act.

As part of this research, the police officer is treated as a criminal in reference to certain acts, facts and behaviors. With this in mind, a person surveyed declares:

[The police are in principle there to protect us from crimes and misdemeanours and to ensure our safety and that of our property. But we see that more and more police officers are guilty of blunders and this is becoming recurrent. I will give you some examples, the case of Théophile DJAHO young student shot dead on March 24, 2020 by the police; the case of a soldier killed in Mènontin who was only a bodyguard of an authority. He was targeted (burglar) and without any presumption of innocence, the police kill him. (Beninese citizen, resident in Abomey-Calavi, freight forwarder, 45 years old).

This citizen denounces the blunders and maintains that the police are not intended to kill, but to protect. The police are increasingly exposed to criticism that goes in all directions. Any situation that sometimes discredits the work done by police officers.

Another respondent in the same vein hammers:

[It's true that they do their job, but I have strong reason to believe that they sometimes do too much zeal and innocent people are killed. When they go for operations and systematically all the thugs are killed I tell myself that there is a problem. I think it is more appropriate to neutralize and that the suspects give their version. Also the conditions of assassination of his alleged thieves or thugs are not sufficiently elucidated. So whoever kills a person even suspected of crime is also a criminal] (student in mylaw, 26 years old)

This student argues that the police operations that systematically lead to the killing of all thugs are not likely to honor the institution. For the latter, not all those who are killed are necessarily criminals and even if they were, they should not be at last resort after everything has been tried in vain.

A former detainee believes that police investigations are not being conducted well and that several innocent people are in prison because of the police.

[I've spent a good part of my life in prison for something I haven't done. They based themselves on suspicion without ever providing the evidence. They focused on appearance and I was overwhelmed and thrown in jail. I lost my job my wife and my family. Since my release I wear the after-effects and a label of former prisoner with a well-tainted criminal record. I believe that some police officers are criminals. (Former detainee, 47 years old, Abomey-Calavi)

The focus here is on police investigations which, according to this former detainee, are not always conducted with dexterity and sometimes innocent people are killed or unjustly thrown in prison. At the same time, he suggests that more professionalism be invited in the conduct of investigations. And that he has counter-expertise to avoid unfortunate situations.

For some of the people surveyed, police officers often confuse themselves with bandits.

Indeed, according to an approached magistrate:

in the police history of our country, several times police officers have made a pact with thugs to operate, either they hand over their weapons and after the crimes the loot is shared, or they do the operations together with the mobsters. All in all they are perfect criminals. In case they do not participate in the material acts of the crime or are not complicit, you still see them flirting with criminals. They can only be considered as such. ] (Retired magistrate, 68 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

For another respondent, the precariousness in which the police live is the cause of this predisposition to crime and deviance of all kinds.

He admits:

[That a few years ago, I knew a policeman in Abomey-Calavi who flew from impounded motorcycles and spent a number of years in the unit and sold them to sellers of *spoiled iron* or the receiver of stolen objects. He did so for several years. There are some of them

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who received a monthly envelope from well-targeted cybercriminals and who are not worried then. [...] Similarly, their cars are maintained by cybercriminals, they are together in nightclubs, in *VIP BARS* participate in wedding ceremonies, baptisms of death and other festive reunions. All this is happening under the stunned gaze of the community who wonders about this ambiguous relationship. (Male, 42 years old, former collaborator of police intelligence officer).

It is obvious that this plethora of speeches, produced from lived experiences or observed facts not without gloves but still having a basement and whose object is the policeman has influenced this label of the policeman. Besides a criminal others perceive him as a corrupt and therefore a threat although his presence deters any deviance.

### **3.2 The policeman as a corrupt**

The Robert defines corruption as the act by which a person invested with a particular function, public or private, solicits or accepts a gift, an offer or a promise with a view to performing, delaying or omitting to perform an act entering, directly or indirectly, in the course of his duties. The one accused of corruption is a corrupt.

In the performance of his duties, the police officer may be confronted with actions that the persons surveyed accuse of corruption.

In this regard, an informant attests to the following:

[I have a mixed perception of police officers. On the one hand, I see the people who ensure the safety of citizens with zeal and with certain efficiency.

They get up early according to the areas in which they are and workhard to impose their authority. This makes most people call them chefs a common name that they take with joy as if it is the title that does the job, and especially despite the fight against corruption in the country, pockets of resistance at their level are observed. They always eat away at the poor passengers. On the other hand I see people instead of intervening promptly when there is a theft situation, they first wait for the criminals to leave the scene before intervening I do not know if it is for lack of means or not. It must also be emphasized that our police officers are too free but also miserable hence the acts of robberies orchestrated by the latter to cover the month]. (Student, 25 years old Abomey-Calavi, UAC).

And another informant to support,

[It's a relationship based on interests. A strained relationship is like dogs and cats. These police officers are tiring us on the road. You can't park in peace. It is as if it is because of us and the zemidjan that they are on the way. They are rotting our lives]." (Taxi driver bus, 42 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

The relations between motorcycle taxi drivers and *Tokpa-Tokpa* bus drivers, often have very tense exchanges, some feel that they are always hunted by others.

Thus is pronounced a driver from *Zémidjan*:

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[They watch us in the corners of the alleys where they ambush us and appear by surprise. They snatch the bikes from us and waste our time. The most important thing for them is not to make a fine or repress. They make us sing and as soon as you "slip" a 1000 f or 2000f note they leave you hoping that you will resume. It's desperate! ](Motorcycle taxi driver, 30 years old Abomey-Calavi).

As if to add to it, a minibus driver protests in these terms:

[From time to time we don't even know what we are accused of, the policeman blocks a car in front of you and comes to ask for the parts or one enters the bus and we take you to the police station. There you pay the pound but usually on the way we negotiate. Otherwise at the police station it is more expensive to pay. They are everywhere and prevent us from parking or charging. Most of the time they only attack us. Especially at the end of the year we do not have peace with them, they really reproach us everything, we are never up to date with them .... but.... when we settle the smile between us and them]. (Bus driver *Tokpa-Tokpa*, 27 years old, Abomey-Calavi)

These different remarks present the table of relations between users and police officers. Yet with this climate of malaise between the two categories of actors, it is the police that users have recourse to in case of difficulties or problems of litigation, insecurity, or for any claim of justice.

Under these conditions an operator declares the following,

[I was filed a complaint in a police station following a scam. I acknowledge that the police have put all the means to ensure that the respondent comes forward. And that he starts by paying after many months. But curiously, the police officer in charge of recovering the money, after applying *the 10% rule*, had a hard time giving me back my money. He went so far as to admit that he borrowed from it to solve a problem. But even before my creditor paid I had money extracted several times.] Economic operator, 45 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

In the light of the accounts of those approached such misunderstandings are legion in police units. For this operator, the policeman is certainly not a saint but, a minimum of ethics must be reflected in his way of serving both to deserve the trust of his leaders and for the users.

However, users argue that it would be difficult to trust the police because, sometimes, the behaviors displayed contrast with the hope placed in the actors of the police institution.

[I was unpleasantly surprised by a scene I observed in my neighborhood. While two young cybercriminals were reported to the police because of the behavioral insolence they display in full view of the entire neighborhood, police officers came on motorcycles to invest their homes. They then left with the cybercriminals as well as their luxury car. But against all odds, the two cybercriminals returned to their homes about an hour later triumphantly under the embarrassed gaze of the neighborhood residents. And since then the police regularly come to see them]. (No one is resourcing, 54 years old Abomey-Calavi).

It is suggestive according to informants that behaviours are changing in the police institution. According to those surveyed, this change carries with it the seeds of a new police force with a

golden coat of arms where police officers can put themselves more at the service of communities and where the police officer will be the pride and the one to whom one carries his problems for the purpose of solutions.

### **3.3 Policeman like a messiah**

According to Robert's dictionary, a messiah refers to a key figure in Judeo-Christian religions. In the Judaic tradition, it is the liberator of Israel who will come to establish the kingdom of God. For Christians, he is incarnated by Jesus Christ. In the popular imagination a messiah is a savior.

For many informants, the police officer is characterized by his willingness to put himself at the service of others. He is characterized by his discipline, dedication and self-giving. It is the one who is awake and walks around at night and watches over us, our homes, our possessions. He receives blows, insults and all kinds of recriminations and is not allowed to give any. He has no time for his family and friends, he has no leisure time but his job and is forced to restrictions because of his institution.

Commenting on the work of the police officer, a user states:

[In terms of security, they are doing their best; the robberies have decreased completely. I take my hat off to them. Thanks to them we circulate freely even at night. If not before the zems are robbed at any time by the customers themselves. What they are doing in terms of security is too much for the population]. (zem, 32 years old, Calavi).

For this motorcycle taxi driver, the fear of driving left a feeling of assurance and security. They can go about their business without fear of having their motorcycle ripped off as was the case in the past. This feeling is also shared by a local elected official who explains:

[In Benin right now, there is security. For once, the police are doing a good job. The insecurity has completely disappeared. They are on their voices every night doing patrols. All this has made that there is security. They are seen on crossroads, in strategic places in the evenings. The work they do is enormous in terms of safety. Flights have stopped. There is no more motorcycle theft by if and there. Also, what they started with the gaymans participated in that. We are at total peace]. (Chief district, 56 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

The policier as demonstrated by this local elected official testifies to an unfailing commitment to offer oneself for the good of the community and the general interest in accordance with the security objectives of the institution. With few means, the policeman and the police accomplish extraordinary things to the point of supreme sacrifice.

[The policeman is the one who takes all the risks in the face of thugs. I can cite the example of 09 September 2021 when a policeman was killed in the Guinkomey district of Cotonou. He is the man of the field, day and night they are present. They are in the rain, they are under the sun. They are present on Sundays in the streets at crossroads, markets, in open countryside and in urban centers. They come to us to help and assist us in case of accidents. They watch while we sleep. They are our protective angels]. (University teachers 52 years old, Abomey-Calavi) .



A police officer is never sure to go home in the evening when he goes on a mission. Indeed the worst can happen at any time. To try to observe a little the institutions of the republic or simply all the civil servants, one of the riskiest jobs is of course that of the policeman. The number of police officers who fall under the bullets each year in the line of duty is quite impressive. It is a high-risk job and police officers die by the dozen to offer us safety and well-being.

One informant pointed out:

[Since the jihadists took over our country. Take stock of police or military killed compared to the civilian population. This means that these police officers are our bulwark. The police form a shield around us in the face of insecurity, around our property in the face of any threat. The policeman goes out in the morning and does not know if he should return in the evening. The families and children of police officers are abandoned by the police officer in favor of the community in which he serves, they are our saviors. (Lawyer, 32 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

Accused of being a murderer, a killer and by the same perception, despised by all he also pretends to be a corrupt to whom all the names have been given. We gradually realize when we observe closely that these were actually shots produced according to people, moments and spaces.

### **3.4 Other Perceptions of the Police Officer**

The diversity of the discourse provided is enough to think about and deserves that the different actors can work on it to improve the quality of service.

[Between the police and us, it's a good relationship. For the good of the people. The police are in contact with the delegates to obtain information about this or that person. It is an intelligence relationship that exists between us. If the police need more information, they come to us; the delegates are supposed to know everything in their environment, their area of influence. We also help them in investigations and security as well]. (Chef quartier, 51 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

In the same dynamic, a local elected official sells the merit of the relations that the police maintain with local elected officials and the mutual assistance between the different actors. In the sense that one of these elected officials thinks that:

[The Republican police have a good relationship with us. Without us, they cannot control their area of competence. We are of vital support to the police. In general, the police are doing a good job. You see that the robberies have decreased. Only that there are among them who are also bandits and who are in cahoots with the bandits, the thieves]. (Local elected official, Chrétien, 49 years old).

The relationship between the police and elected officials is not without its problems. It turns out that some police officers come to compromise this good atmosphere of work and conviviality.

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However, this does not prevent the continuation of work and active solidarity for the benefit of the safety of the different communities residing in Abomey-Calavi.

[The police ensure the security of people and property, but we do ensure the defence of the integrity of the territory. The police do their job and we do their job too. She does her job well, by the way. We must recognize that we are colleagues and that between us we try to do what we can for the security of the country, it is the police who ensure our security. It is his responsibility to ensure the safety of people and property]. (Officer, land army, 48 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

[Every citizen must help them in their mission, which is also a noble mission. It is true that sometimes there are some among those who do not control themselves and who exaggerate in the accomplishment of their task. It is a safety report. The police officer provides security. The police protect the population]. (Student, 25 years old Abomey-Calavi, UAC).

Several people investigated, have spoken about the relations they have with the police and we have been entitled, like the previous ones, to an avalanche of speeches, including

[In terms of safety, it's okay because they do a good job but road safety requires a lot of effort. Police officers really in relation to security, there is enough evolution. You can go out at night now and stay fearless. Even before the middle of the day you are robbed The police are there for the good of all. What they do is good. We *Zémidjan* as soon as this is what the police refuse that we do. There are others who do too much among the police. The relationship is not too good]. (*Zémidjan*, 32, Calavi).

[It's an asymmetrical relationship that doesn't say its name] . (Student in Master, 27 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

[The police are our friends, on is all brothers in arms. There is a good relationship between the police and us in the military. We do the same work if there is a small difference. We get along well. We work in synergy in the best interest of the Nation. We therefore agree for the good of the country. And there is no conflictual relationship between the institutions. One deals with the internal security of the country and the other defends it against any external aggression]. (Non-commissioned officer, land army, 25 years old Abomey-Calavi).

[As neighborhood chiefs we have very good impressions of the police that we are helping to do their job. If she needs information, she often gets closer to the CQs. We are in constant communication with the police. We help them in the context of safe co-production We have very good collaboration reports]. (Head of the district, 49 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

Encouraging the police in the exercise of their functions, while congratulating the good collaboration between the police and elected officials as well as with the communities, a local elected official proposes:

[This is where the government needs to do more. Our security and defense forces do not have good equipment. It reminds me of the Theft of the Diamond Bank from the Dantokpa Market in the meantime. The thieves had come with heavy equipment, the war equipment, at this moment our police had nothing as sophisticated equipment to deal with the thieves. You have seen what the results have been. The two times the robbers came, they left as if nothing had happened. Really, they need materials for more efficiency in their work. What they have as materials, the majority is outdated. It is no longer effective. This does not make it easy for them. But you have to deal with what they have now. I think we need to review the work equipment of the Beninese Armed Forces and the police. Small attacks occur and because of equipment, the police cannot do anything. First the rolling means. More fuel is needed at their disposal; then what is also important is armament. At this level, we are still far from reality].  
(Head of the district, 56 years old, Abomey-Calavi).

For this elected official, even if changes are observed, much remains to be done. He suggests that governments ensure that police officers have modern means of working. It highlights the obsolescence of the existing equipment, referring to the spectacular events that sadly marked Benin and at the same time its security system during the Robberies of Diamond Bank at the *Dantokpa* international market in Cotonou. He believes that strengthening the operational capacity of the security forces would significantly reduce the risk of insecurity.

[With the courts, the police have a good relationship. She does her job without taking sides. It is neutral and cannot influence any trial or relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. The police are in contact with the lawyers. It is a relationship of work and good cohabitation. Without it, justice can do nothing. It must establish the link, investigate and find the culprit before we judge or lawyer or lawyer we intervene. If the police need more information, they come to us too]."  
(Judge Calavi Court, 51 years old).

This court praises the good cooperation between the police and the judicial system in this case, magistrates, lawyers, judges etc. the police according to him do a good job and without them there could be no effective justice. It is up to the police that the judicial system manages to get its hands on the delinquency and say the droit. The exchanges are good and they are also much advised by the magistrates in the proceedings.

[Between the police and us, it's a good relationship. We work hand in hand. We are here to serve the population, to say the law. We process the files that we send to whomever is entitled to it. It should be noted that among the police, there are some who are on the other side as well. Often when this is the case, the tracks are a bit confused. Either way, it's a good

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relationship between us and the police. (Lawyer, at the court of the tribuneal of Calavi, 53 years old, Muslim).

The police are doing their job. They are paid to keep us safe, to protect us from thieves. These words of yet another investigator partly summarizes the content of the republican mission of the policeman. But invites at the same time to nuance and discuss the different positions of the people surveyed who have legitimately pronounced on what they think of the Republican policeman.

#### **4.DISCUSSION**

This research has examined the perceptions of the population of Abomey-Calavi about the police officer in the Republic of Benin. The results show that several images are attributed to the policeman in the Commune of Abomey-Calavi. While some actors see in the policeman an image of criminal and corrupt, others on the other hand see him as a messiah and sell the merit of this actor of public security. In this sense, L. Lebanc (2017) has achieved similar results when he states:

Although the police have the legal authority to use coercive force in their law enforcement mission, this use of force, whether justified or not, is controversial. Regular cases of police misconduct in the media can affect public perceptions and attitudes towards the police. (I. Lebanc, 2017).

Even if the police hold the legitimacy of the use of armed force, the internal security forces, in the exercise of their function and dressed in their uniform or external or apparent insignia of their quality are allowed to use armed force (C. Tzutzuiano, 2017).

It is obvious that the law authorizes the police to use armed force and the conditions for its use are well defined by law. This does not, however, entitle the police to dispose of it and then be called criminal. It is therefore the unspoken that surround the use of armies that induces the manydiscourses proposed. It should also be noted that the differentcourses depend on the actors, on the experience lived.

As such,numerous studies have found that "trust in and perceptions of the police are greatly influenced by past experiences with the police, and in particular whether these experiences have been perceived as positive or negative" (Brown and Benedict, 2002; Cao, 2014; Chow, 2012; Cotter, 2015; Myhill and Beak, 2008).<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00014-fra.htm - r33>

Thus, the analyses do not take into account serious scientifically verifiable criteria but rather superficial considerations devoid of any objectivity. From this step we agree with Cao (2014); Chow (2012); Gannon (2005); Payne and Gainey (2007), including

"Researchshows that a number of factors can affect public perception of and trust in the police. These factors include demographic characteristics such as age and race and socio-economic characteristics such as income and education, as well as perceptions about neighbourhood status and experiences of victimization."

We realize through the attitudes of the actors involved that perceptions are driven by the acceptance or not of the police officer, in other words it depends more on the feeling, antipathy or repugnance or not that people have towards the police. These attitudes play much more in favor of perceptions. It goes without saying that the policeman, whether a criminal, a corrupt, a messiah or otherwise, is the victim of only approximate analyses whose foundations mobilize arguments of feelings and prejudices.

For Richard and Pacaud (2010), "The more favourable attitudes students have related to police work (...), the more they have a correct perception of the different dimensions of community policing." similarly, in R. Lévy (1911, p.140), *the complexity of the police/population relationship is directly evoked through sentences such as*: "The eternal malaise of the police expresses this equivocal situation, convinced that they are playing an indispensable social role as a bulwark against evil for the benefit of people who despise them while assigning them the dirty work". And "The police are systematically and always accused of everything and its opposite." we realize that the *cohabitation of police and citizens* is not easy enough, and that it stems from the degree of credit that the population gives to its police. And this is also a function of the professionalism of the police and their influence on their population.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

Following the statements of the respondents, it appears that since the advent of President Talon, the Municipality of Abomey-Calavi knows a better condition in terms of security. This was not enough to influence the police officer's perception positively. Indeed the network of the territory of the municipality is more or less realized and that the populations go relatively quietly to their daily activities. But the perception of the policeman has not changed too much. So some people think that the police are a little too zealous and that sometimes pushes them to commit crimes. The recurrence of its criminal acts contributes to professional mistakes and is detrimental to the image of the institution.

Also, acts of corruption, in the opinion of the people surveyed, are cultural on the one hand but also because the police officer is poorly paid and works in conditions that do not allow him a deserved fulfillment. Some explain the poor results by the fact of the obsolescence of the work equipment that is not adapted to contemporary threats. They also fear jihadist threats and wonder if our forces can be up to the task.

Most finally acknowledge that the police are still at the forefront of threats. For them, the profession of arms is a sacrifice, a priesthood. You leave your house, but you're not sure if you're going in. You can die at any time They encourage them to continue to show patriotism and dedication. They express their pride in this police force which, despite the limited means, is able to do an effective job. It is suggestive that it be more professional. There is still a lot to review both at the level of police officers, the State and the populations.

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