



The *Patók* Jeep: A Descriptive Study

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Introduction

IF THERE WERE a “national mode of transportation” in the Philippines, it would have to be the jeep. A “cultural specimen” or “national art expression” (Ortega 2002, 83), this public utility vehicle is a common sight throughout the country. But the province of Rizal, east of Metro Manila, has given it a rather unique twist; it developed the *patók* jeep.

This study inquires into the origins and features of the *patók* jeep (or simply, *patók*). Why are some jeeps in Rizal province called such? What purpose do they serve? How are they different from regular jeeps? Throughout the discussion, the study will:

- Trace the etymology of the word “*patók*”
- Explore the origins of the *patók* jeep
- Describe the features of the *patók* jeep
- Describe the *patók*-riding experience

Methodology

Although *patóks* are found throughout the province of Rizal, the research focused on the Montalban (officially named as town of Rodriguez, Rizal)-Cubao (Quezon City, Metro Manila) route, since the Montalban terminal is the nearest and most accessible from the researcher’s residence. Also, most of the drivers and operators in this route use *patóks*, unlike those of Montalban-Lamuan (Marikina, Metro Manila) and Montalban-

Philcoa (Quezon City, Metro Manila). Jeeps plying the Montalban-Cubao route also pass through San Mateo, a town next to Montalban, where Morales Motors, manufacturer of the first patóks, can be found. The researcher utilized primary data by riding a patók on the Montalban-Cubao route and by staying at the jeepney terminals. She also interviewed the employees – an artist and a secretary – of Morales Motors.

Etymology

While the word “jeep” comes from the first two letters of GPV, which stands for General Purpose Vehicle (*Philippine Motor Review* 1972, 224), the term “pátok” first appeared in a Spanish-Tagalog dictionary by Pedro Serrano Laktaw. The word, whose stress falls on the first syllable, means “to jump” (Laktaw 1965, 1053).

“Patók,” with the stress on the second syllable, is listed in a 1978 dictionary; it means “sure winner in a horse race” (Santos 1978, 2058). In 1989, the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF or Commission on the Filipino Language) released a dictionary with detailed meanings of the word:

Patók. (Adj.)

1. In gambling, favorite in betting; most likely to win
(*Sa sugal, maraming taya; lyamado*)
2. In movies, blockbuster (*Sa pelikula, maraming nanood*)
3. gorgeous/ fabulous (*magandang-maganda*) (KWF, 1989, 717)

The Filipino dictionary of the University of the Philippines (UP) added the meaning “ax” to the KWF definition of the word (SWE, 2001, 665).

The Patók Jeep: Definitions

As a passenger, the researcher can describe the patók as follows: it is painted with elaborate, bright and colorful designs (*magara*), is equipped

with a booming sound system, runs fast (*humaharurot*), and creates a lot of noise on the road (e.g., scratching tires, screeching brakes, and other engine sounds).

For a driver, a patók is elaborately decorated (*maporma*), generates clear and booming sounds, and moves fast.¹ For an employee of the Morales Motors Corporation, a jeepney manufacturer, it must have a lot of accessories (*maborloloy*), must produce loud sounds, and must be capable of banking.²

From these various descriptions, it is clear that the patók somewhat reflects the dictionary meanings of the word: the sense of being a “blockbuster” and “sure winner in a race.” Synthesizing these descriptions, the study defines a patók according to its (a) appearance, (b) sound, and (c) movement (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Descriptions of Patók

Sources	Categories		
	(A) Appearance	(B) Sound	(C) Movement
Passenger	With bright and colorful designs (<i>magara</i>)	With booming sound system	Runs fast
Driver	Elaborately decorated (<i>maporma</i>)	Generates clear and booming sounds	Moves fast
Manufacturer	Must have a lot of accessories (<i>maborloloy</i>)	Must produce loud sounds	Capable of banking
Dictionary	Gorgeous/ fabulous/ ax	---	

TABLE 2. Comparison between Regular Jeeps and Patók

	Typical Jeep (Sarao)	Patók
APPEARANCE		
Design	Depends on the designer of the jeep (Logarta 1978) Depicts countryside sceneries (Ocampo 2000)	Personalized, choice of the owner
Drawing (procedure)	Follows the curves of the jeep's body (Torres 1979)	Disregards the curves of the jeep's body
Lettering	Different font styles (Subido 1993)	Tribal lettering
Materials	Predominantly stickers	Predominantly airbrush paint
SOUND		
Music	Songs played in radio stations (Bigkislahi 1992)	Recorded remix
Song Selection	Driver's choice	Both driver's and passengers' choice
MOVEMENT		
Style		Banking

Origins of the Patók

It is said that the jeep emerged in the Philippines after World War II (Antonio 1982, 13), when Filipinos adopted and modified abandoned American jeeps. Some of these American vehicles were sold, prompting the emergence of “a ready market for spare parts” of the jeep (Nofuente 1983, 40).



The Patók

Before the 1980s, Francisco, Sarao, and Atendido were the prominent names in the jeepney industry. Anastacio Francisco of Las Piñas, the owner of the Francisco Motors Corporation, set up a painting shop that later expanded into jeep-building and repair in 1951. Leonardo Sarao, the owner of the Sarao Group of Companies, also in Las Piñas, incorporated and popularized the Sarao trademark: the horse. The hood of a Sarao jeep features three to fourteen stallions, whose tails and reins are painted on the sides (Bondoc 1982, 12), along with images depicting rural life (Ocampo 2000, 30). Ignacio Atendido designed and patented the Bagong Lipunan Jeepney, which featured a side entrance. His trademark was not the horse but the Concorde Supersonic Transport (Bondoc 1982, 12-13). Later on, new brands and challengers emerged: Legaspi, Gonzaga, Melford, Tabing, Arquiza, Pabling, Valenzuela, Amante, Narding, Belando, Davis, Marquez, Medina and De Nova (Bondoc 1982, 11). The patók would come from one of these brands, Melford Motors.

Melford Motors was finding business tough. Aware of the situation, Rufino Morales, a native of Taytay, Rizal and an employee of Melford Motors, decided to move to San Mateo in Rizal and start his own motor shop, Morales Motors, in 1978. Twelve years later, in 1990, he conceptualized the patók jeep, whose design has evolved and changed

much since then.³ Other manufacturers come up with new designs every year; even Mr. Morales is still expected to generate innovative and better patóks.

The patók jeep was built to cater to passengers' preferences and help increase drivers' and operators' earnings. Passengers on the Montalban-Cubao route were refusing to ride an "ugly" jeep,⁴ which could be defined as having a "box-like" frame, "narrow and crowded," and "almost drags on the ground when full of passengers" (Nofuente 1983, 40). An ugly jeep also doesn't have designs, cushions, and music. It travels slowly, and could always use a wash. The patók sought to address these flaws, as it were.

Patók Appearance: Design and Features

Earlier, it was said that a patók boasts of bright colorful designs, and its five unique features attest to that: (a) airbrush drawings, (b) tribal lettering, (c) boomerang, (d) top-down, and (e) trumpets.

Airbrush Drawing

Colorful stickers typically decorate a jeep's body. But a patók uses acrylic and enamel paints, sprayed with airbrushes. According to a patók designer/painter, using custom-made stickers is more expensive and time-consuming.⁵ Thus, new patók owners prefer airbrush-painted designs, so that they can complete rush orders and save production costs. Though cheaper, these designs are not necessarily inferior because the outcome still depends on the creativity of the designer.

Tribal Lettering

Different typefaces are usually inscribed on a typical jeep (Subido 1993, 17). But a patók jeep commonly uses "tribal" lettering, as a designer calls it.⁶ The tribal font features jagged edges and is laced with a lot of color. Sometimes, the design of a patók incorporates both letters and objects to construct words. The technique is similar to that of Jose Honorato

Lozano's *Letras y Figuras*, a style of writing in which letters form images of humans, plants, and animals. *Letras y figuras* also features landscapes and real-life scenarios that sometimes spell the words themselves (Subido 1993, 17). As for medium, *patók* lettering sometimes uses both stickers and paints.⁷

Boomerang

The boomerang, as drivers call it, helps passengers identify an incoming *patók*.⁸ It is placed prominently on the roof towards the front. Made of stainless steel, the boomerang is positioned like the letter V and resembles the horn of the Philippine national animal, the water buffalo (carabao).

Top-down and Trumpet

The “top-down” is a section of the roof that can be pushed up and opened for additional ventilation. In jest, drivers call it “aircon” (air conditioner) or “cooler.”⁹ This is unique to the *patók* separating it from jeeps with real airconditioning, which are made by Tolentino Motors Corporation and ply the routes in the Makati Business District (Ocampo 2000, 30).

Trumpets are additional stainless steel ornaments atop the hood. The number of trumpets on a *patók* can vary, depending on the size and the owner's preferences.¹⁰ It can be assumed that trumpets signify the loud, attention-seeking nature of the *patók*.

Patók Sound

If *patók* jeeps have particular designs and features, they are also known for loud music. Jeepney drivers see this as part of good service and great entertainment. Loud music adds life to the ride (*Philippine Hotel* 1971, 19), but unlike the typical jeeps, the *patók* plays remixes. And since no radio station plays such type of music all day, many drivers bring their

own compact disks (CDs). The compilations vary according to the driver's preferences. Some CDs feature the driver's favorite songs, while others are ready-made collections bought at the jeep terminal in Montalban. Most patók drivers use CD drives because they are cheaper than stereos and are shockproof, making them ideal for rough and bumpy rides. They are also small, light and can be easily hidden in case of inspections, where law-enforcement personnel can confiscate them.¹¹

The driver and the passengers may agree on the playlist, although the driver makes the final decision. According to one driver, he plays a particular genre depending on the situation. For example, in the evening when passengers are usually tired from work, he plays ballad love songs to help them relax. The driver also considers his passengers' preferences and does not just play his favorites. Some passengers bring their own CDs and ask the driver to play them. If several have to be played, the driver allows only a few tracks from each disk to accommodate everyone.¹²

Lamberto Antonio describes the jeep's sound system as so loud that "even if you're asking the driver to stop, you can never be heard" (Antonio 1982, 13). This is particularly true for patók jeeps. Thus, they have a device that signals the driver to stop. A string at the ceiling of the jeep produces a beep and lights up a red bulb when pulled, alerting the driver that a passenger wants to alight.

The patók jeep also calls attention through a siren, which is produced when the driver pulls a string. There are around fifty other sound effects,¹³ including a talking parrot that says "I love you." Jeep manufacturers, and some electronic shops in Rizal, develop these sound-producing devices.

The Patók Movement: The Riding Experience

It is said that the drama does not end when a vehicle steps onto the road; on the contrary, it is only about to begin (Marquez 1989, 16). This is true particularly with the patók. The mountainous terrain of most parts of Rizal demands a unique, roller-coaster kind of driving. Jeeps have to

make a number of turns, and climb uphill and down. They also have to do sudden stops, hit the gas, or even spin (depending on the quality of the engine and tires), which may lead to the “banking” movement, the *patók*’s signature move. The term matches the dictionary meaning of the verb “bank”—that is, “to rise in or to form a bank ... to incline laterally ... to follow a curve or incline.” Banking is popular enough that some are even willing to pay an extra amount for every turn.¹⁴

Notes

- 1 Rod and Toto (driver and collector, respectively, of a *patók*, TWR 899, Montalban–Cubao route), interview by the author, May 15, 2008.
- 2 Rose Lacay (secretary, Morales Motors Corporation), interview by the author, May 21, 2008.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.
- 5 Jhun Relon (jeep designer, Morales Motors Corporation), interview by the author, May 21, 2008.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.
- 10 Jhun Relon, interview by the author
- 11 Rod and Toto, interview by the author
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Jhun Relon, interview by the author.
- 14 Rod and Toto, interview by the author.

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