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KELMA MANATOUMA

IDENTIFICATION AND THE FORMATION OF THE CHADIAN STATE

Historical Perspectives on Identity Papers

»Ta carte d'identité! Ta carte d'identité! Qu'est-ce que c'est ce que cette histoire de carte d'identité? Regardez-moi bien. Sur cette joue, cette marque que vous voyez, c'est ma carte d'identité. J'ai sur mon corps d'autres marques qui concourent à la même démonstration. S'additionnant pour donner la même preuve. La preuve par le sang de ce que je suis. Ce sont mes ancêtres qui sont les fondateurs de ce royaume, de cette ville. Tout ici constitue ma preuve et ma carte d'identité«¹.

Over time, the question of knowing who is who has progressively led to the development of various identification practices in societies around the world². Each society has developed techniques that define the mechanisms through which its members are identified, whether based on the collective or the individual, in keeping with its social norms. The aim of the present article is to grasp the process by which individuals in Chad are identified. I seek to understand how identity papers were introduced into societies in Chad which had their own methods for recognizing their members' identities before colonization. The introduction of paper as a method of identification led to new ways of thinking and acting that have gradually transformed the organization of these societies.

The article is structured in three parts. In the first part, I analyse the relationship between the colonial conquest of Chad and the introduction of identity papers. I also look at how identity papers worked as a mechanism for the social control of the indigenous population during colonization. In the second part I look at the political change that took place in the late 1940s with the creation of the Union française and the granting of social and political rights to »indigènes« (»natives«), who were made citizens. After the country gained its independence in 1960, the Chadian government created the first national identity card. In the third part, I attempt to analyse the political dynamics around this identity card, and in particular the politicization of mechanisms for the identification of individuals in Chad.

To understand the historicity of policies for identifying individuals in Chad, we must recall the different phases in the administrative and political history of the construction of the Chadian state. To explore the creation of the state, I will draw on the distinction, introduced by Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale and referred to by Jean-François Bayart, between »state building«

1 »Your ID card! Your ID card! What is this ID card business? Take a good look at me. On this cheek, that mark you see, that's my ID card. I have other marks on my body that contribute to the same demonstration. Adding up together to give the same proof. The blood proof [*preuve par le sang*] of what I am. It was my ancestors who were the founders of this kingdom, of this city. Everything here is my proof and my ID card«: Jean Marie ADIAFFI, *La carte d'identité*, Paris 2002, p. 28.

2 Gérard NOIRIEL, *L'identification. Genèse d'un travail d'État*, Paris 2007, p. 4.

(the deliberate creation of an apparatus of political control) and »state formation« (»an involuntary and largely unconscious historical process of conflict led, in the disorder of confrontations and compromises, by the anonymous masses«)³. Berman and Lonsdale's definition of »state formation« will lead me to look back further into the past, beyond the colonial conquest of Chad. I am well aware that the Chadian state was both »formed« and »built«⁴ through a plurality of dynamics. But in this study on the identification of individuals, I choose to focus on its formation, with reference both to the colonial administration and to various social and political structures that existed before the colonial conquests. To »pacify« the conquered space, the colonial administration transformed certain large villages into military posts, established routes connecting them to other regions, and then grouped these villages together to form cantons and districts. Beginning in 1920, the cantons and villages were created by order of the governor-general, on the proposal of district chiefs⁵. This policy allowed the *commandants de cercle* to maintain contact with indigenous populations via local authorities.

The conquest of Chad and the creation of the colonial administration

In 1900, the President of the French Republic, Émile Loubet, signed a decree establishing the Territoire militaire des pays et protectorats du Tchad (Military territory of the countries and protectorates of Chad), as a part of the French Congo. This occurred following a battle with the troops of Rabih Fadl Allah, in the course of which Commander Lamy was killed. On the site of the small Arab village Kotoko, a new administrative post was created and named Fort-Lamy, after Commander Amédée-François Lamy, who had been killed in a battle with Rabih's troops a few days earlier. It later became the capital of Chad, and was renamed again as N'Djamena in 1973. Following the creation of this administrative post, the French army continued to face not only the troops of Rabih Fadl Allah, but also those of the sultan of Wadai and supporters of the Senussi religious movement in the north. The territory of Chad was integrated into the federation of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) on its creation in 1910. From 1916, Chad had the status of a colony, under the direction of an administrator, the lieutenant-governor, assisted by an administrative council (*conseil d'administration*), and a military administration. In Pierre Hugot's words, until the 1960s Chad remained a territory of commanders⁶.

In the aim of maintaining control over the local population, which was sometimes hostile to the presence of the colonial administration and its taxes, the French state created a system of personal identification and population censuses to monitor and control the movements of the »natives«⁷. It was in this context that the exit declarations and temporary travel certificates

3 Jean-François BAYART, Avant-propos, in: ID. (ed.), *La greffe de l'État*, Paris 1996, p. 5–9, p. 6; Bruce BERMAN, John LONSDALE, *Unhappy Valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, vol. 2. *Violence and Ethnicity*, Athens, OH 1992, p. 27.

4 Marielle DEBOS, *Le métier des armes au Tchad. Le gouvernement de l'entre-guerres*, Paris 2013, p. 219.

5 Valerio COLOSIO, (Re)-Naming the Cantons, Re-Exerting Authority. Ambiguities of Law and Nature of Power in Rural Chad (unpublished article); cf. ID., »The children of the people«. Integration and descent in a former slave reservoir in Chad, University, of Sussex, Ph. D. thesis, *Social Anthropology*, 2018, URL: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/79652/1/Colosio,%20Valerio.pdf> (accessed 20 October 2020), p. 163–186.

6 Pierre HUGOT, *Le Tchad*, Paris 1965, cited in Jean CABOT, Christian BOUQUET, *Le Tchad, Que sais-je?*, Paris 1973, p. 82; Gali NGOTHÉ, *Tchad. Guerre civile et désagrégation de l'État*, Paris 1985.

7 Bernard LANNE, *Histoire politique du Tchad de 1945 à 1958. Administration, partis, élections*, Paris 1998, p. 231.

were created. These documents had to be obtained in the districts or from the canton chiefs. In my view, the introduction of these documents marks the beginning of the bureaucratization of identities in Chad. For my study I had to choose among the various identity documents, and the policies and practices built around these artefacts, to use Beatrice Fraenkel's favoured terminology. Exploring the issue of identification is important in this context⁸.

In the areas that would become AEF, the first vital records system for French citizens living in the colonized territories was only created in 1894⁹. An identification system was created for Chad – as the *Territoire militaire et protectorats des pays du Tchad* – by an order of the governor-general in 1903. After the creation of Fort-Lamy, the colonial administration issued an *arrêté* establishing a vital records centre, where colonial administrators and their employees could register vital events. The vital records administration functioned on the basis of this *arrêté* throughout Chadian territory¹⁰. The establishment of vital records was under the responsibility of the military command in Fort-Lamy. To obtain a certificate of birth, recognition, marriage, or death, an individual had to belong to a socio-professional category such as worker (*ouvrier*), member of the armed forces, or colonial administrator.

The vital records for the years 1915–1917 that I consulted in the municipal offices of N'Djamena reflect this differentiation. A decade or so later, the declaration of vital events was extended to a category of the indigenous population labelled as »évolué« (evolved/advanced). Ethnicity was entered into vital records in terms of »race« or »custom« (»coutume«). Birth certificates issued in the municipality of Fort-Lamy in 1915 found in vital records specify the »race« of individuals as »Goulaye, Kabalaye, Sara, or Mousseye«. It is important to note that this distinction was the result of the *indigénat* regime to which the local population was subjected. According to authors such as Jacques Le Cornec and Bernard Lanne, this regime was organized in very broad terms by a decree of 17 March 1903. The creation of identity papers was a part of this regime of colonial domination, an element of what Georges Balandier, in an article published in 1951, called the »colonial situation«¹¹.

These administrative measures allowed the colonizers to keep watch over the movements of local populations. To understand the history of the institution of identity papers, it is crucial to grasp the logic of the colonial administration as expressed in the categories constructed by this bureaucratic apparatus: »indigènes«, »évolués«, citizens, etc. To reconstruct the history of identity papers in Chad we must look at the differentiated system of the *indigénat*. In the colonial situation, many measures concerning public freedoms or rights were taken by decree by the Ministry of the Colonies, and were thus endowed with real power. Administrators were often merely ratifying de facto situations: the division of the population between colonizers and colonized, between French citizens and subjects. All freedoms were subject to, and thus limited by, the Code de l'indigénat¹². Recall that this Code was an enforceable legal regime applicable in all territories under French colonial rule. It was introduced in 1881 in Algeria, and then in sub-Saharan Africa. It constituted a system of specific punishments inflicted by the administration, with or without the involvement of judicial authorities, linked to the notions of »subject«

8 Béatrice FRAENKEL, *Preuves et épreuves de l'identification*, in: Claudia MOATTI, Wolfgang KAISER (eds.), *Gens de passage en Méditerranée de l'antiquité à l'époque moderne. Procédures de contrôle et identification*, Paris 2007, p. 174.

9 Ministère du Plan et de la Coopération internationale, *Rapport sur la gestion de l'état civil dans une collectivité locale*, N'Djamena, November 2015.

10 LANNE, *Histoire politique du Tchad* (as in n. 7).

11 Georges BALANDIER, *La situation coloniale. Approche théorique*, in: *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie* 11 (1951), p. 44–79, p. 45.

12 Archives d'Afrique Équatoriale française, electronic version, GG 174: Conseil d'administration de l'AEF, <https://archivescolonialesbrazzaville.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/gg-63-235.pdf>, consulted on 19 October 2020.

and »indigenous« (»native«), and to the legal status of all those in the colonial empire who were not French citizens.

In each district, justice was administered by a specific »indigène« court chaired by the chief, assisted by two assessors, a colonial official, and two »natives« both appointed by the lieutenant-governor. After the »humanist« reforms of 1941, inspired by the governor-general of AEF, Felix Éboué, a decree of 13 May 1943 instituted customary jurisdictions entirely composed of *indigènes* – but they were never effectively put in place. On 26 July 1944, another decree created customary courts, composed exclusively of chiefs and indigenous notables, and presided over by one of the chiefs. The only area of civil law in which the colonial administration played a direct role – albeit a central one – was vital events, and thus matters of civil status¹³. Bernard Lanne indicates that »in 1940, in Melfi, central Chad, the administrator Hersé rendered 100 declaratory marriage judgments during the recruitment of *tirailleurs*, thus allowing their wives to receive war indemnities. Later, civil servants had the births of their children recognized through supplementary judgments [*jugements supplétifs* – issued for late-registered births] in order to receive family allowances«¹⁴. It was at this point that some administrations began to register births and deaths at clinics and prisons in other areas, in order to be able to issue such judgments to combatants.

Vital records offices existed well before this period in the urban centres – Fort-Lamy, Fort Archambault, Moundou, and Abéché – but they were not available to local populations, with the exception of those working with the colonial administration, such as interpreters, cooks, and *tirailleurs*, who could seek to declare the birth of their children.

Before the establishment of this vital records system, on 26 February 1937, the governor-general issued an order instituting a declaration of exit for »indigènes«. For any change of location lasting more than ten days, members of the colonized population were required to hold a pass issued by the head of the territorial subdivision. For a permanent change of residence, a declaration or certificate issued by a village or district chief was required. This pass afforded colonial administrators' knowledge of individuals' identities based on their movements. But the pass was not widely used, and the governor-general sought to expand the system by creating a new document, known as an »optional identity card« (*carte d'identité facultative*)¹⁵. This card was available free of charge and could be used in lieu of the pass. It included the bearer's photograph, family name, first name, »coutume«, and tax information. However, because it could only be produced where there was an identification centre, it was no more successful than the pass. On 27 April 1940, however, the colonial authorities made the card compulsory.

In 1944, the colonial authorities introduced two other key policy measures on the identification of individuals on Chadian territory. On 27 May 1944, the governor-general of AEF issued an order officially making the establishment of a *livret d'identité* (identity booklet) obligatory, to be issued by the *chef de subdivision* at a cost of 1 Franc. The booklet provided information on various aspects of the bearer's identity as well as their tax, legal, and health situation. Anyone without this document was to be subject to severe punishment. The effective formalization of this practice of identification was only possible through the cooperation of the local authorities¹⁶, the chieftaincies (*chefferies*)¹⁷, which the colonial administration created in the various villages, cantons, and districts. The chiefs were not only local authorities, but intelligence

13 LANNE, Histoire politique du Tchad (as in n. 7), p. 40.

14 Ibid., p. 37.

15 Ibid., p. 65.

16 Jean-Paul ROTHOT, Une chefferie précoloniale au Niger face aux représentants coloniaux. Naissance et essor d'une dynastie, in: Cahier d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique 2001, no. 85, DOI: 10.4000/chrhc.1747, p. 67–83.

17 Mahaman TIDJANI ALOU, La chefferie et ses transformations. De la chefferie coloniale à la chefferie postcoloniale, Études et Travaux du LASDEL, no. 76, Niamey, Parakou, 2009, URL:

agents who gathered information on their own people. To travel from one village to another, travellers were required to inform the chief of the destination and the reason for the trip. These local representatives allowed the colonial administration to obtain information on persons who were perceived as dangerous.

Tickets d'impôts (tax receipts) were used as identity cards, because they featured the individual's first and family names and the size of their family¹⁸. Commanders most often used them for tax collection¹⁹. The chiefs were legally entitled to a percentage of tax upon collection. The administration created this system in order to encourage the chiefs to collect more taxes from the inhabitants of the territory under their authority. As Gonidec points out, the chiefs were thus made into civil servants («fonctionnarisés»)²⁰. The canton chiefs and the districts were in constant contact, because it was also at the local and regional levels that everything converged: orders and directives from above, and relations with those subject to administrative power from below.

The Union française and the concession of social rights in AEF (1946–1958)

The political reforms undertaken by the French government after the Second World War led to a transformation in the political life and civic status of the populations of AEF, and of Chad in particular. In this section I examine the connections between the French Constitution of 1946 and changes in social and political rights in Chad. The 1946 Constitution established the Union française, uniting all of France's colonial territories with the metropolis. The spirit of the Union française emerged during the Brazzaville Conference. Beginning on 30 January 1944, governors of the French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as representatives of the provisional consultative assembly of Algeria and North Africa, gathered in Brazzaville, the capital of AEF, in the presence of General de Gaulle.

With the French Fourth Republic and the Union française, the new constitution changed the political and administrative fate of the populations of French West Africa. A crucial development, especially in the present context, was the change made by the law of 7 May 1946, known as the »Lamine Guèye law«, which, in theory, extended citizenship to the entire populations of the colonial territories: »From 1 June 1946, all natives [*ressortissants*] of the overseas territories (including Algeria) have the status of citizen, on the same basis as French nationals of the metropolis and of the overseas territories«²¹. The Lamine Guèye law gave a new orientation to the French government in the political and administrative management of the colonies. The populations of Chad, who, like those of other colonies in AEF, were submitted to the *indigénat* system, would now enjoy civic and political rights. This law, along with the 1946 Constitution,

http://www.lasdel.net/images/etudes_et_travaux/La_chefferie_au_Niger_et_ses_transformations.pdf (consulted on 18 October 2020).

18 Pierre-François GONIDEC, *La République du Tchad*, Paris 1971, p. 58.

19 Raymond GERVAIS, *La plus riche des colonies pauvres. La Politique monétaire et fiscale de la France au Tchad 1900–1920*, in: *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines*, 16 (1982), no. 1, pp. 93–112.

20 GONIDEC, *La République du Tchad* (as in n. 18), p. 53.

21 »A partir du 1er juin 1946, tous les ressortissants des territoires d'outre-mer (Algérie comprise) ont la qualité de citoyen, au même titre que les nationaux français de la métropole et des territoires d'outre-mer«: Law no. 46-940 of 7 May 1946, proclaiming all natives of the overseas territories to be citizens, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 8 May 1946, p. 3888, URL: <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000000315563/>, consulted on 18 October 2020.

ended the colonial policy on the categorization of individuals²² which had ultimately crystallized a system of distinctions and oppositions between subjects and citizens, and between the Civil code and the Code de l'indigénat. The Constitution also did away with the division of the court system into two categories, the customary court for *indigènes* and the civil court for European nationals. The bureaucracy of identities which, from the creation of the various administrative posts in the occupied territories, was aimed at policing and exercising legal control over colonial populations, thus took a new turn.

In direct connection with these changes in 1946, the colonial administration made the identity card compulsory, unlike the 1944 identity booklet. The last of the major measures taken by the colonial administration was freedom of movement within AEF. Following this decision, in 1949, High Commissioner Cornut-Gentille, appointed the previous year, issued a new order repealing the orders of 1937, 1940, and 1944, and instituting a single identity card for AEF as a whole, which would be compulsory beginning at age 16. The authorities reproduced the format of the 1940 identity card, introducing the categories of »coutume«, as well as tax and health information. After the abolition of the *indigénat* regime, all Chadian citizens were required to obtain this card, which also bore their fingerprints. The abolition of the *indigénat* system involved the end of *sanctions de police administrative* (punishment of members of colonized populations determined extrajudicially by colonial administrators) in two stages. The first was the elimination of so-called *sanctions ordinaires de l'indigénat*²³, (less severe »disciplinary« punishments such as relatively short periods of imprisonment and individual fines²⁴), followed some months later by the more severe penalties of the *indigénat* system²⁵ (longer periods of imprisonment, house arrest, and collective fines), which had applied since the decree of 15 November 1924²⁶.

Identity papers in the postcolonial period

The question of identification has been central to the political action of each of the various successive regimes in Chad. Immediately following independence, the Chadian political authorities adopted the culture of »paperization of identity«²⁷. In 1961, they issued an ordinance regulating vital records, followed by another in 1962²⁸ concerning the Chadian nationality code. Another decree passed in 1961 established a national identity card on the model of the colonial identity card – only the references to the tax system and *coutume* were eliminated. The first ar-

- 22 Emmanuelle SAADA, Citoyens et sujets français. Usages du droit en situation coloniale, in: *Genèses* 2003/4, no. 53, p. 4–24.
- 23 Decree no. 45-0137 of 22 December 1945, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 26 December 1945, p. 8583, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9695356q/f3.item>, consulted on 2 February 2021.
- 24 Bénédicte BRUNET-LA RUCHE and Laurent MANIÈRE, De l'»exception« et du »droit commun« en situation coloniale: l'impossible transition du code de l'indigénat vers la justice indigène en AOF, in: Bérangère PIRET, Charlotte BRAILLON, Laurence MONTEL, Pierre-Luc PLASMAN (eds.), *Droit et justice en Afrique coloniale. Traditions, productions et réformes*, Brussels 2014, p. 117, URL: <https://books.openedition.org/pusl/3929>.
- 25 Decree no. 46-277 of 20 February 1946, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 22 February 1946, p. 1581, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9613308t/f17.item>, consulted on 2 February 2021.
- 26 Decree of 15 November 1924, *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, 17 November 1924, p. 10159–10161, URL: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6479327k/f11.item>, consulted on 2 February 2021.
- 27 Craig ROBERTSON, Paper, Information, and Identity in 1920s America, in: *Information & Culture*, 50 (2013), no. 3, p. 394, URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43737494>.
- 28 Code la nationalité au Tchad, *Revue juridique du CEFOD*, N°Djamena, 2005.

title of the decree stipulates the following: »A new national identity card is [hereby] instituted, whose issuance can be requested by any Chadian of the age of at least 15 years, provided that he is able to prove his identity and nationality«²⁹. The same decree, with reference to the nationality code, set the terms and conditions for acquiring this identity document. Neither these ordinances nor their application have gone through any major transformations since until the twenty-first century.

With his policy of »cultural revolution« in the early 1970s, François Tombalbaye, the first president of Chad, regarded the systems of *encartement* (card-based identification) of Chadian citizens as a means of control. The question of identification was fundamental to the cultural policy of returning to African or Chadian authenticity. This was characterized mainly by changing Western-sounding first names. Imitating his Zairian counterpart, Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, Tombalbaye decided in 1973 to institute a policy of what he called »African authenticity« through his new political body, the Mouvement national de la révolution culturelle et sociale (National movement for cultural and social revolution, or MNRCS). Its goal, he said, was to return to the country's roots, to the values of the past. The chosen starting point for this policy was the *yondo*³⁰, an initiation rite of the Sara, President Tombalbaye's own ethnic community in southern Chad. In the context of Tombalbaye's cultural revolution, the configuration of the *yondo* changed. His main target with this policy was the populations of the south of the country, from senior officials to young peasants. All the streets and avenues named after people of foreign origin were renamed, with the exception of the Avenue Charles de Gaulle, because, according to Arnaud Dingammadj³¹, Tombalbaye had great respect for the President of the French Republic. Fort-Lamy, the capital, was renamed N'Djamena. The president set the example himself, taking the name N'Garta in lieu of François, from the Sara »N'gar«, meaning chief. The first name François was thus removed from his vital records: he would thenceforth be called only N'Garta Tombalbaye.

This policy of a return to »Chadian authenticity« completely transformed the systems for the identification of individuals. Consider the example of the N'Djamena municipal vital records department, where the head of a new name change department was appointed by presidential decree. This department's sole task was to record and promote name changes. In 1973–1974, the municipal administration in N'Djamena issued more than a million revised birth certificates with changed names³², mostly in the large urban centres of Moundou, Sarh, Abéché, and N'Djamena. The return to »Chadian authenticity« was also accompanied by an authoritarian policy requiring compliance from pastors and priests. This stirred discontent among Catholics and evangelical Christians in the prefectures of Logone and Tandjilé. Two years later, in 1975, N'Garta Tombalbaye was overthrown in a coup, ending his movement for cultural and social revolution.

The end of the Tombalbaye regime marked the beginning of a new political era in Chad, with other crises rippling through the country's political, social and administrative life until 1982. Although the identification system technically continued to function during this period of unrest, it was of little importance in practice, as administrative services were so disorganized that obtaining an identity card was difficult. With the civil war of 1979, the country was almost split in two, the north with N'Djamena as its capital and the south with Moundou as its capital.

29 Décret no. 174/INT-SUR-IDT du 5 octobre 1961 créant la carte nationale d'identité, Recueil des textes juridiques du CEFOD-Tchad.

30 On the initiation practices known as »yondo«, see Robert JAULIN, *La mort Sara. L'ordre de la vie ou la pensée de la mort au Tchad*, Paris 2011.

31 Arnaud DINGAMMADJI, *Ngarta Tombalbaye. Parcours et rôle dans la vie politique du Tchad, 1959–1975*, Paris 2007, p. 164.

32 Archives of the vital records department of the municipality of N'Djamena, consulted on 19 December 2015.

Moreover, identity papers were subject to intensified controls between neighbourhoods in the city and along the country's main arteries³³.

On his accession to power in 1982, President Hisssein Habré introduced Arabic as an official language on identity papers alongside French. This change fulfilled one of the demands of the Front de libération nationale du Tchad (FROLINAT), an armed group created in 1965 in central Chad. The group had for some years been demanding the recognition of Arabic as a second administrative language, in order to combat discrimination against the Muslim populations of the North. The introduction of Arabic was certainly a new cultural policy, but it also transformed administrative practices, particularly in identity card and vital records departments.

The Direction de la documentation et de la sécurité (DDS), a repressive branch of the state, was created with a surveillance mission. It was to monitor the population in its every gesture and attitude, in the aim of flushing out and definitively neutralizing the so-called enemies of the nation³⁴. Intelligence files were established on the basis of identity papers, identity cards, passports, birth certificates, professional cards, student cards, etc. The decree of 26 January 1983 assigned the DDS the task of identifying and collecting intelligence both from inside and outside the country. The DDS was an administrative institution whose jurisdiction extended throughout the entire national territory. Its agents were dispatched into prefectures, cantons, and even villages across the country. In its daily activities, the DDS was supported by the Renseignements généraux, an intelligence-gathering service that was part of the Direction de la sûreté nationale (Directorate for national security). The other body involved in identification was the ruling party, the Union nationale pour l'indépendance et la révolution (UNIR), which all Chadians were expected to join. Those who refused to do so, or who showed reluctance, were identified and classified as enemies of the regime. There were local party committees throughout the country: in prefectures, municipalities, neighbourhoods, cantons, and villages. To avoid trouble with the DDS, the majority of Chadians took out a party membership card³⁵.

At the end of the Habré regime, in 1989, the Ministry of the Interior and National Security was preparing a decree reforming the identity card system. But due to the coup d'état led by Idriss Deby, it was never published. In 1991, another decree regulating identity card services was passed. On the basis of these two decrees, it can now be hypothesized that the identity card is indeed used for what Pierre Piazza calls »the tightening of allegiances to the political community«³⁶, in the struggle against insecurity, and, most often, in the service of authoritarian powers. Identification was and remains a political issue, not only for public administrations, but also for security services under the command of political regimes.

Identity cards and vital records were areas of little interest to the Chadian government during the early years of the Deby regime. The »Journaux Officiels« for these years feature only one law concerning vital events, one ordinance for the nationality code, and two decrees on the national identity card. Only in the 2000s did the Chadian authorities once again attach great importance to identity documents in general and to the identity card in particular. This new attention is explained by the fact that the introduction of biometrics made the national identity card not only a national issue but also an international one, and particularly a major financial investment. According to Mahamat, retired commissioner in the Service d'identification judiciaire (judicial identification service), the former name of the civil identity service: »Les autorités politiques n'avaient aucune volonté de développer le service d'encartement des individus. C'est

33 Interview with Mahamat, retired commissioner (September 2016).

34 Mahamed Tetémadi BANGOURA, *Violence politique et conflits en Afrique. Le cas du Tchad*, Paris 2006, p. 17.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 57.

36 Pierre PIAZZA, Laurent LANIEL, *L'encartement, réponse au terrorisme (France/Grande Bretagne)?*, in: Xavier CRETTEZ (ed.), *Du papier à la biométrie: identifier les individus*, Paris 2006, p. 10.

la police et la justice qui s'en servaient pour des enquêtes judiciaires»³⁷. Since 2002, the authorities of the Ministry of Public Security have conducted regular awareness campaigns to stimulate public interest in this identity document. They consider the computerized identity card an effective means of combating the fraudulent use of identity documents. Today the state gives priority to this technique which, in practice, interacts with other existing modes of identification.

Conclusion

As Claudine Dardy emphasizes in her book on »paper identities«, »there are now many situations in our daily lives whose only reality is on paper«³⁸. The national identity card is a product of the colonial history of Chad, which inherited the bureaucratic culture of written documentation introduced during the colonial period. Before the introduction of identity papers, language and signs were the means by which a member of one community identified members of another social group. Today this technique of the »oralization« of identities is gradually giving way to bureaucratic paperwork, or the »government of paper«, to borrow the title of Matthew Hull's book on the subject³⁹. To know a person's name and age, a material item is needed: an identity card, vital record, *livret de famille*, passport, etc. Although in some settings, such as in rural Chad, the role of this paperized identity remains limited, the change it has wrought in daily life is beyond doubt. After independence, Chadian governments implemented systems for the identification of citizens. However, their interest in such systems was soon diminished by a succession of crises in the country, which hindered the administration of identities. The country's various political regimes have attempted, through authoritarian policies, to exploit the identification of individuals using the administrative apparatus of the security services or political parties.

37 »The political authorities had no desire to develop the department that produces cards for individuals. It was the police and the judiciary who used it for legal investigations«: excerpt from an interview with Sougui, former head of the Centre d'identification judiciaire, N'Djamena, August 2017.

38 Claudine DARDY, *Identités de papiers*, Paris 1991, p. 23.

39 Matthew S. HULL, *Government of Paper. The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Berkeley, CA, London 2012.