

# A Study on the Transformation of “*denmsèni ton*”, Children’s Associations in Rural Mali

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## Background and objectives of this research

This research aims to elucidate the process of increase and stratification of “*denmsèni ton*” Children’s Associations in Rural Mali, which have increased rapidly since 1990s, in connection with the dissolution of age set system.

In Mali, the traditional association “*ton*” has been an important social institution for integrating people, who are known to have been stratified by kinship or caste. Despite most of traditional social institutions in relation to children (e.g., caste, age class, and circumcision) have declined as a result of modernization and Islamization, *ton* has increased and multi-functionalized since 1970s. In this process *denmsèni ton* has appeared and increased up to the present. *Denmsèni ton*’s activities cover many aspects of children’s social life, including cooperative work, discussion in a meeting, football, and evening party in Tabaski.

This research focuses on the boundaries of *denmsèni ton*. I thus analyze the organizing process of the associations, the relationships among various associations, and the mobility of individuals between associations. The research will demonstrate the stratification of associations including *denmsèni ton* and *ton*. This does not mean that *denmsèni ton* is integrated into the previous structure like age set system or school, but it forms a post factum structure through its organizing process.



*Denmsèni ton*’s members weeding corn field.



*Denmsèni ton's* members shelling peanuts.



*Denmsèni ton's* members wearing uniforms for a football game.