Emperor Mansa Musa I
African king from the late 13th century

Contents

Chapter 1

Musa I of Mali

Musa I (c. 1280 – c. 1337) was the tenth *Mansa*, which translates as "King of Kings" or "Emperor", of the wealthy Mali Empire. At the time of Musa's rise to the throne, the Malian Empire consisted of territory formerly belonging to the Ghana Empire in present-day southern Mauritania and in Melle (Mali) and the immediate surrounding areas. Musa held many titles, including *Emir of Melle*, *Lord of the Mines of Wangara*, *Conqueror of Ghanata*, and at least a dozen others.[1] He is widely regarded as the richest human being in all history.[2][3][4]

1.1   Nomenclature

Musa was referred to (and is most commonly found as) Mansa Musa in Western manuscripts and literature. His name also appears as Kankou Musa, Kankan Musa, and Kanku Musa, which means "Musa, son of Kankou".[note 1] Other alternatives are Mali-koy Kankan Musa, Gonga Musa, and the Lion of Mali.[5][6]

1.2   Lineage and accession to the throne
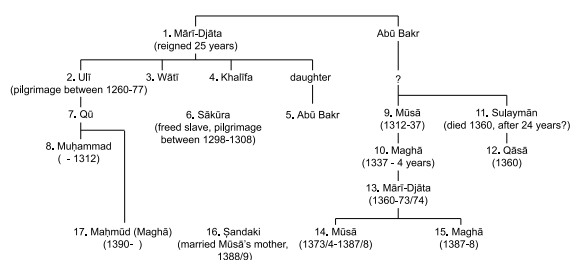
Genealogy of the kings of the Mali Empire based on the chronicle of Ibn Khaldun[7]

What is known about the kings of the Malian Empire is taken from the writings of Arab scholars, including Al-Umari, Abu-sa'id Uthman ad-Dukkali, Ibn Khaldun, and Ibn Battuta. According to Ibn-Khaldun's comprehensive history of the Malian kings, Mansa Musa's grandfather was Abu-Bakr (the Arabic equivalent to Bakari or Bogari, original name unknown – not the sahabiyy Abu Bakr),

a brother of Sundiata Keita, the founder of the Malian Empire as recorded through oral histories. Abu-Bakr did not ascend the throne, and his son, Musa's father, Faga Laye, has no significance in the History of Mali.[8]

Mansa Musa came to the throne through a practice of appointing a deputy when a king goes on his pilgrimage to Mecca or some other endeavor, and later naming the deputy as heir. According to primary sources, Musa was appointed deputy of Abubakari II, the king before him, who had reportedly embarked on an expedition to explore the limits of the Atlantic Ocean, and never returned. The Arab-Egyptian scholar Al-Umari quotes Mansa Musa as follows:

> The ruler who preceded me did not believe that it was impossible to reach the extremity of the ocean that encircles the earth (the Atlantic Ocean). He wanted to reach that (end) and was determined to pursue his plan. So he equipped two hundred boats full of men, and many others full of gold, water and provisions sufficient for several years. He ordered the captain not to return until they had reached the other end of the ocean, or until he had exhausted the provisions and water. So they set out on their journey. They were absent for a long period, and, at last just one boat returned. When questioned the captain replied: 'O Prince, we navigated for a long period, until we saw in the midst of the ocean a great river which was flowing massively.. My boat was the last one; others were ahead of me, and they were drowned in the great whirlpool and never came out again. I sailed back to escape this current.' But the Sultan would not believe him. He ordered two thousand boats to be equipped for him and his men, and one thousand more for water and provisions. Then he conferred the regency on me for the term of his absence, and departed with his men, never to return nor to give a sign of life.[9]

Musa's son and successor, Mansa Magha, was also appointed deputy during Musa's pilgrimage.[10]

1.3   Islam and pilgrimage to Mecca

From the far reaches of the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus River, the faithful approached the city of Mecca. All had the same objective to worship together at the most sacred shrine of Islam, the Kaaba in Mecca. One such traveler was Mansa Musa, Sultan of Mali in Western Africa. Mansa Musa had prepared carefully for the long journey he and his attendants would take. He was determined to travel not only for his own religious fulfillment, but also for recruiting teachers and leaders, so that his realms could learn more of the Prophet's teachings.

Mahmud Kati, *Chronicle of the Seeker*

Musa was a devout Muslim and his pilgrimage to Mecca, a command ordained by Allah according to core teachings of Islam, made him well-known across northern Africa and the Middle East. To Musa, Islam was "an entry into the cultured world of the Eastern Mediterranean".[11] He would spend much time fostering the growth of Islam in his empire.

Musa made his pilgrimage in 1324, his procession reported to include 60,000 men, 12,000 slaves who each carried four pounds of gold bars, heralds dressed in silks who bore gold staffs, organized horses and handled bags. Musa provided all necessities for the procession, feeding the entire company of men and animals.[12] Also in the train were 80 camels, which varying reports claim carried between 50 and 300 pounds of gold dust each. He gave away the gold to the poor he met along his route. Musa not only gave to the cities he passed on the way to Mecca, including Cairo and Medina, but also traded gold for souvenirs. Furthermore, it has been recorded that he built a mosque each and every Friday.

Musa's journey was documented by several eyewitnesses along his route, who were in awe of his wealth and extensive procession, and records exist in a variety of sources, including journals, oral accounts and histories. Musa is known to have visited with the Mamluk sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad of Egypt in July 1324.[13]

Musa's generous actions, however, inadvertently devastated the economy of the region. In the cities of Cairo, Medina and Mecca, the sudden influx of gold devalued the metal for the next decade. Prices on goods and wares greatly inflated. To rectify the gold market, Musa borrowed all the gold he could carry from money-lenders in Cairo, at high interest. This is the only time recorded in history that one man directly controlled the price of gold in the Mediterranean.[14]

1.4   Later reign

Whenever a hero adds to the list of his exploits from conquest, Mansa Musa gives them a pair of wide trousers...The greater the number of a Dogari's exploits, the bigger the size of his trousers.

Al-Dukhari, *observation of the court of Mansa Musa in Timbuktu*[15]

During his long return journey from Mecca in 1325, Musa heard news that his army had recaptured Gao. Sagmandia, one of his generals, led the endeavor. The city of Gao had been within the empire since before Sakura's reign and was an important – though often rebellious – trading center. Musa made a detour and visited the city where he received, as hostages, the two sons of the Gao king, Ali Kolon and Suleiman Nar. He returned to Niani with the two boys and later educated them at his court. When Mansa Musa returned, he brought back many Arabian scholars and architects.

1.4.1   Construction in Mali

Musa embarked on a large building program, raising mosques and madrasas in Timbuktu and Gao. Most famously the ancient center of learning Sankore Madrasah or University of Sankore was constructed during his reign. In Niani, he built the Hall of Audience, a building communicated by an interior door to the royal palace. It was "an admirable Monument" surmounted by a dome, adorned with arabesques of striking colours. The windows of an upper floor were plated with wood and framed in silver foil, those of a lower floor were plated with wood, framed in gold. Like the Great Mosque, a contemporaneous and grandiose structure in Timbuktu, the Hall was built of cut stone.

During this period, there was an advanced level of urban living in the major centers of the Mali. Sergio Domian, an Italian art and architecture scholar, wrote the following about this period: "Thus was laid the foundation of an urban civilization. At the height of its power, Mali had at least 400 cities, and the interior of the Niger Delta was very densely populated."[16]

1.4.2   Influence in Timbuktu

It is recorded that Mansa Musa traveled through the cities of Timbuktu and Gao on his way to Mecca, and made them a part of his empire when he returned around 1325. He brought architects from Andalusia, a region in Spain, and Cairo to build his grand palace in Timbuktu and the great Djinguereber Mosque that still stands today.[17]

Timbuktu soon became a center of trade, culture, and Islam; markets brought in merchants from Hausaland, Egypt, and other African kingdoms, a university was founded in the city (as well as in the Malian cities of Djenné and Ségou), and Islam was spread through the markets and university, making Timbuktu a new area for Islamic scholarship.[18] News of the Malian empire's

city of wealth even traveled across the Mediterranean to southern Europe, where traders from Venice, Granada, and Genoa soon added Timbuktu to their maps to trade manufactured goods for gold.[19]

The University of Sankore in Timbuktu was restaffed under Musa's reign with jurists, astronomers, and mathematicians.[20] The university became a center of learning and culture, drawing Muslim scholars from around Africa and the Middle East to Timbuktu.

In 1330, the kingdom of Mossi invaded and conquered the city of Timbuktu. Gao had already been captured by Musa's general, and Musa quickly regained Timbuktu and built a rampart and stone fort, and placed a standing army to protect the city from future invaders.[21]

While Musa's palace has since vanished, the university and mosque still stand in Timbuktu today.

1.5 Death

The death of Mansa Musa is highly debated among modern historians and the Arab scholars who recorded history of Mali. When compared to the reigns of his successors, son Mansa Maghan (recorded rule from 1332 to 1336) and older brother Mansa Suleyman (recorded rule from 1336 to 1360), and Musa's recorded 25 years of rule, the calculated date of death is 1332.[22] Other records declare Musa planned to abdicate the throne to his son Maghan, but he died soon after he returned from Mecca in 1325.[23] Further, according to an account by Ibn-Khaldun, Mansa Musa was alive when the city of Tlemcen in Algeria was conquered in 1337, as he sent a representative to Algeria to congratulate the conquerors on their victory.[24][25]

1.6 See also

- Mali Empire
- Timbuktu

1.7 Notes

[1] where Kankou is the name of his mother.

1.8 References

[1] Goodwin 1957, p. 109

[2] "Mansa Musa Of Mali Named World's Richest Man Of All Time; Gates And Buffet Also Make List". The Huffington Post. 21 October 2014. Retrieved December 24, 2014.

[3] Olivia Fleming (16 October 2012). "Meet the 14th Century African king who was richest man in the world of all time (adjusted for inflation!)". *Mail Online*. DailyMail. Retrieved December 24, 2014.

[4] John Hall (16 October 2012). "Meet Mansa Musa I of Mali – the richest human being in all history". *The Independent* (London). Retrieved December 24, 2014.

[5] Hunwick 1999, p. 9

[6] Bell 1972, pp. 224–225

[7] Levtzion 1963, p. 353.

[8] Levtzion 1963, pp. 341–347

[9] Abbas Hamdani 1994

[10] Levtzion 1963, p. 347

[11] Goodwin 1957, p. 110

[12] Goodwin 1957, p. 110

[13] Bell 1972, pp. 224

[14] Goodwin 1957, p. 110

[15] Mendoza, Ruben G. "Academia.edu | West African Empires, Dates: 400–1591 C.E. | Ruben G Mendoza". Csumb.academia.edu. Retrieved 17 October 2012.

[16] *Mansa Musa*, African History Restored, 2008, retrieved 2008-09-29

[17] De Villiers, Marq and Hirtle, Sheila, Pp. 70.

[18] De Villiers, Marq and Hirtle, Sheila, pp. 74.

[19] De Villiers, Marq and Hirtle, Sheila, pp. 87–88.

[20] Goodwin 1957, p. 111

[21] De Villiers, Marq and Hirtle, Sheila, pp. 80–81.

[22] Levtzion 1963, pp. 349–350

[23] Bell 1972, p. 224

[24] Levtzion 1963, pp. 349–350

[25] Bell 1972, pp. 224–225

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- Levtzion, Nehemia; Hopkins, John F.P., eds. (2000), *Corpus of Early Arabic Sources for West Africa*, New York, NY: Marcus Weiner Press, ISBN 1-55876-241-8. First published in 1981.

1.10   External links

- History Channel: Mansa Moussa: Pilgrimage of Gold

- African Legends page

- Al-Umari's description of Mansa Musa's 1324 visit to Cairo

- Mansa Musa, from Black History Pages

Chapter 2

Mansa

This article is about the Mandinka word. For other uses, see Mansa (disambiguation).

Mansa is a Mandinka word meaning "king of kings" or
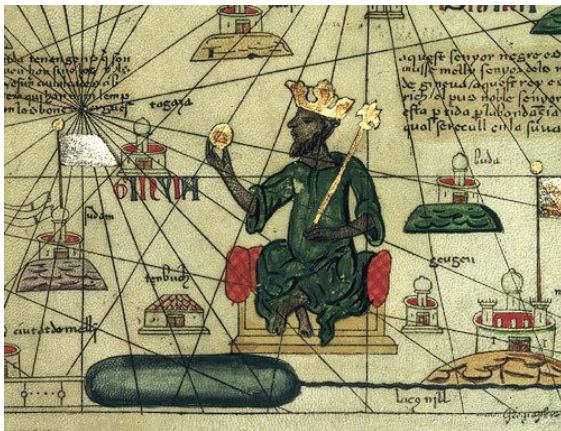
Depiction of Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire in the 14th century, from a 1375 Catalan Atlas of the known world (mapamundi), drawn by Abraham Cresques

"emperor". It is particularly associated with the Keita Dynasty of the Mali Empire, which dominated West Africa from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Powers of the mansa included the right to dispense justice and to monopolize trade, particularly in gold. Mansa Sundiata was the first to assume the title of mansa (emperor), which was passed down through the Keita line with few interruptions well into the 15th century. Other notable mansas include his son Wali Keita and the powerful Mansa Musa (Kankan Musa), whose hajj helped define a new direction for the Empire. The succession of the Mali Empire is primarily known through Tunisian historian ibn Khaldun's *History of the Berbers*.

2.1 See also

- Keita Dynasty

- Mali Empire

- Mansa Musa

- Sundiata Keita

# Chapter 3

Mali Empire

The **Mali Empire** (Manding: *Nyeni*;[4] English: Niani), also historically referred to as the **Manden Kurufaba**,[1] was a Mandinka empire in West Africa from c. 1230 to c. 1600. The empire was founded by Sundiata Keita and became renowned for the wealth of its rulers, especially Mansa Musa. The Mali Empire profoundly influenced the culture of West Africa through the spread of its language, laws and customs along the lands along the Niger River and extending over a large area that consisted of numerous vassal kingdoms and provinces.
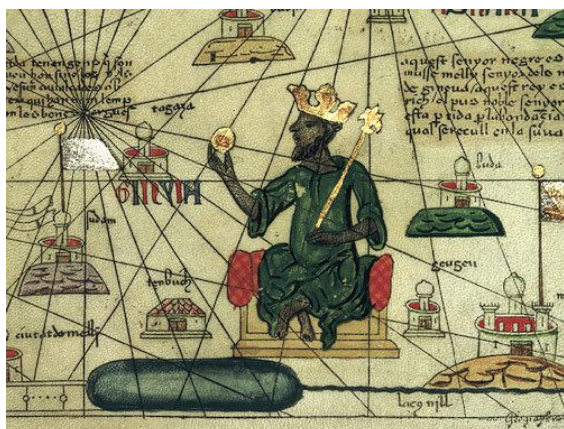
Mansa Musa depicted holding a gold nugget, from the 1375 Catalan Atlas.

3.1 The Mali Empire

The name *Mālī* (مالي) was recorded as the name of the empire by Ibn Battuta (d. 1368/9). According to Battuta's contemporary Chihab al-Umari (d. 1384), the name of the empire was *Nyeni* (*Niani*), after its capital. Alternative variants of the name Mali included Mallel, Mel, and Melit.

The native name *Manden* for the territory was eponymous of the name of the ethnic group, the *Manden'ka*, with the *ka* suffix meaning "people of".[5] From the evidence of the Epic of Sundiata, a semi-historical account of the empire's foundation in the early 13th century,[6] the territory with this name comprised most of present-day northern Guinea and southern Mali. The empire originated as a federation of Mandinka tribes called the *Manden Kurufaba*[1] (Manden being the country, *kuru* meaning "assembly" and *faba* meaning "great entirety"). The rulers of Mali came to be called mansa, meaning "emperor" or "master." Mansa Musa was Mali's most renowned king, ruling from 1312 to 1337 CE. He was the grandson of Sundiata's half brother, and ruled Mali at a time of great prosperity, during which trade tripled. During his rule, he doubled the land area of Mali; it became a larger kingdom than any in Europe at the time. The cities of Mali became important trading centers for all of West Africa as well as famous centers of wealth, culture, and learning. Timbuktu, an important city in Mali, became one of the major cultural centers not only of Africa but of the entire world. Vast libraries and Islamic universities were built. These became meeting places of the finest poets, scholars, and artists of Africa and the Middle East. Mansa Musa, who was Muslim, was perhaps best known outside of Mali for his pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324 C.E. According to some accounts, 60,000 people accompanied him, along with 200 camels laden with gold, silver, food, clothing, and other goods. This pilgrimage displayed Mansa Musa's enormous wealth and generosity.

3.2 Pre-Imperial Mali

Main article: Pre-Imperial Mali

There are a few references to Mali in written literature of roughly contemporary age. Among these are references to "Daw" and "Malal" in the work of al-Bakri in 1068,[7] the story of the conversion of an early ruler, known to Ibn Khaldun (by 1397) as Barmandana,[8] and a few geographical details in the work of al-Idrisi.[9]

There has also been archaeological work done especially at Niani, reputed to be the capital of Mali, by Polish and Guinean archaeologists in the 1960s which revealed the remains of a substantial town dating back as far as the 6th century.

Modern oral traditions also related that the Mandinka kingdoms of Mali or Manden had already existed several centuries before Sundiata's unification as a small state

just to the south of the Soninké empire of Wagadou, better known as the Ghana Empire.[10] This area was composed of mountains, savannah and forest providing ideal protection and resources for the population of hunters.[11] Those not living in the mountains formed small city-states such as Toron, Ka-Ba and Niani. The Keita dynasty from which nearly every Mali emperor came traces its lineage back to Bilal,[12] the faithful muezzin of Islam's prophet Muhammad. It was common practice during the Middle Ages for both Christian and Muslim rulers to tie their bloodline back to a pivotal figure in their faith's history. So while the lineage of the Keita dynasty may be dubious at best, oral chroniclers have preserved a list of each Keita ruler from Lawalo (supposedly one of Bilal's seven sons who settled in Mali) to Maghan Kon Fatta (father of Sundiata Keita).

3.2.1 The Kangaba Province
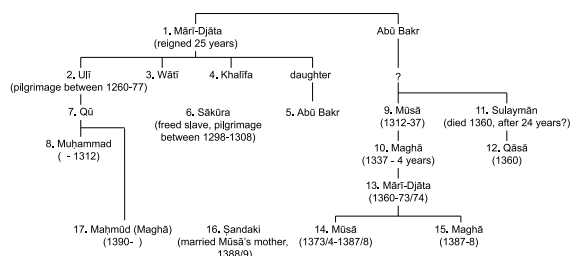
Genealogy of the kings of the Mali Empire based on the chronicle of Ibn Khaldun[13]

During the height of Sundiata's power, the land of Manden became one of its provinces.[14] The Manden city-state of Ka-ba (present-day Kangaba) served as the capital and name of this province. From at least the beginning of the 11th century, Mandinka kings known as faamas ruled Manden from Ka-ba in the name of the Ghanas.[15]

3.2.2 The Two Kingdoms

Wagadou's control over Manden came to a halt after internal instability lead to its decline.[16] The **Kangaba province**, free of Soninké influence, splintered into twelve kingdoms with their own maghan (meaning prince) or faama.[17] Manden was split in half with the Dodougou territory to the northeast and the *Kri territory* to the southwest.[18] The tiny kingdom of Niani was one of several in the Kri area of Manden.

3.2.3 The Kaniaga Rulers

In approximately 1140 the Sosso kingdom of Kaniaga, a former vassal of Wagadou, began conquering the lands of its old masters. By 1180 it had even subjugated Wagadou forcing the Soninké to pay tribute. In 1203, the Sosso

king Soumaoro of the Kanté clan came to power and reportedly terrorized much of Manden stealing women and goods from both Dodougou and Kri.[19]

3.2.4 The Hungering Lion

Mali Terracotta horseman figure from 13th to 15th centuries

According to Niane's version of the epic, during the rise of Kaniaga, Sundiata of the Keita clan was born in the early 13th century. He was the son of Niani's faama, Nare Fa (also known as Maghan Kon Fatta meaning the handsome prince). Sundiata's mother was Maghan Kon Fatta's second wife, Sogolon Kédjou.[12] She was a hunchback from the land of Do, south of Mali. The child of this marriage received the first name of his mother (Sogolon) and the surname of his father (Djata). Combined in the rapidly spoken language of the Mandinka, the names formed Sondjata, Sundjata or Sundiata Keita.[12] The anglicized version of this name, Sundiata, is also popular. In Ibn Khaldun's account, Sundjata is recorded as Mari Djata with "Mari" meaning "Amir" or "Prince". He also states that Djata or "Jatah" means "lion".[20]

Prince Sundjata was prophesized to become a great conqueror. To his parent's dread, the prince did not have a promising start. Sundiata, according to the oral traditions, did not walk until he was seven years old.[17] However, once Sundiata did gain use of his legs he grew strong and very respected. Sadly for Sundjata, this did not occur before his father died. Despite the faama of Niani's wishes to respect the prophecy and put Sundiata on the throne, the son from his first wife Sassouma Bérété was

crowned instead. As soon as Sassouma's son Dankaran Touman took the throne, he and his mother forced the increasingly popular Sundjata into exile along with his mother and two sisters. Before Dankaran Touman and his mother could enjoy their unimpeded power, King Soumaoro set his sights on Niani forcing Dankaran to flee to Kissidougou.[12]

After many years in exile, first at the court of Wagadou and then at Mema, Sundiata was sought out by a Niani delegation and begged to combat the Sosso and free the kingdoms of Manden forever.

Battle of Kirina

Returning with the combined armies of Mema, Wagadou and all the rebellious Mandinka city-states, Maghan Sundiata or Sumanguru led a revolt against the Kaniaga Kingdom around 1234. The combined forces of northern and southern Manden defeated the Sosso army at the Battle of Kirina (then known as *Krina*) in approximately 1235.[21] This victory resulted in the fall of the Kaniaga kingdom and the rise of the Mali Empire. After the victory, King Soumaoro disappeared, and the Mandinka stormed the last of the Sosso cities. Maghan Sundiata was declared "faama of faamas" and received the title "mansa", which translates roughly to emperor. At the age of 18, he gained authority over all the twelve kingdoms in an alliance known as the Manden Kurufaba. He was crowned under the throne name Mari Djata becoming the first Mandinka emperor.[17]

3.2.5   Organization

The Manden Kurufaba founded by Mari Djata I was composed of the "three freely allied states" of Mali, Mema and Wagadou plus the Twelve Doors of Mali.[12] It is important to remember that Mali, in this sense, strictly refers to the city-state of Niani.

The Twelve Doors of Mali were a coalition of conquered or allied territories, mostly within Manden, with sworn allegiance to Sundiata and his descendants. Upon stabbing their spears into the ground before Sundiata's throne, each of the twelve kings relinquished their kingdom to the Keita dynasty.[12] In return for their submission, they became "farbas" a combination of the Mandinka words "farin" and "ba" (great farin).[22] Farin was a general term for northern commander at the time. These farbas would rule their old kingdoms in the name of the mansa with most of the authority they held prior to joining the Manden Kurufaba.

The Great Assembly

The Gbara or Great Assembly would serve as the Mandinka deliberative body until the collapse of the

Manden Kurufa in 1645. Its first meeting, at the famous Kouroukan Fouga (Division of the World), had 29 clan delegates presided over by a belen-tigui (master of ceremony). The final incarnation of the Gbara, according to the surviving traditions of northern Guinea, held 32 positions occupied by 28 clans.[23]

Social, economic, and government reformation

The Kouroukan Fouga also put in place social and economic reforms including prohibitions on the maltreatment of prisoners and slaves, installing documents between clans which clearly stated who could say what about whom. Also, Sundiata divided the lands amongst the people assuring everyone had a place in the empire and fixed exchange rates for common products.

Mari Djata I

Mansa Mari Djata's saw the conquest and or annexation of several key locals in the Mali Empire. He never took the field again after Kirina, but his generals continued to expand the frontier, especially in the west where they reached the Gambia River and the marches of Tekrur. This enabled him to rule over a realm larger than even the Ghana Empire in its apex.[21] When the campaigning was done, his empire extended 1,000 miles (1,600 km) east to west with those borders being the bends of the Senegal and Niger Rivers respectively.[24] After unifying Manden, he added the Wangara goldfields making them the southern border. The northern commercial towns of Oualata and Audaghost were also conquered and became part of the new state's northern border. Wagadou and Mema became junior partners in the realm and part of the imperial nucleus. The lands of Bambougou, Jalo (Fouta Djallonke), and Kaabu or Gabu means North in Mandinka Gabunke means Northner were added into Mali by Fakoli Koroma (Nkurumah in Ghana, Kurumah in Gambia, Colley in Casamance, Senegal),[17] Fran Kamara (Camara), and Tiramakhan Traore (Tarawelley Gambia),[25] respectively. Among the many different ethnic groups surrounding Manden were Pulaar speaking groups in Macina, Tekrur and Fouta Djallon.The Mandinka of Manden became the Malinke of Mali.

3.3   Imperial Mali

Imperial Mali is best known to us through three primary sources: The first is the account of Shihab al-Din ibn Fadl Allah al-'Umari, written about 1340 by a geographer-administrator in Egypt. His information about the empire came from visiting Malians taking the hajj, or pilgrim's voyage to Mecca. He had first hand information from several, and at second hand, he learned of the visit

of Mansa Musa. The second account is that of the traveler Shams al-Din Abu Abd'Allah ibn Battua, who visited Mali in 1352. This is the first account of a West African kingdom made directly by an eyewitness, the others are usually at second hand. The third great account is that of Abu Zayd Abd-al-Rahman ibn Khaldun, who wrote in the early 15th century. While the accounts are of limited length, they provide us with a fairly good picture of the empire at its height.

3.4 The Emperors of Mali

Mosque of Djenné.

There were 21 known mansas of the Mali Empire after Mari Djata I and probably about two or three more yet to be revealed. The names of these rulers come down through history via the djelis and modern descendants of the Keita dynasty residing in Kangaba. What separates these rulers from the founder, other than the latter's historic role in establishing the state, is their transformation of the Manden Kurufaba into a Manden Empire. Not content to rule fellow Manding subjects unified by the victory of Mari Djata I, these mansas would conquer and annex Fula,[26] Wolof, Bamana, Songhai, Tuareg, and countless other peoples into an immense empire.

3.4.1 The Djata Lineage 1250–1275

The first three successors to Mari Djata all claimed it by blood right or something close to it. This twenty-five year period saw amazing gains for the mansa and the beginning fierce internal rivalries that nearly ended the burgeoning empire.

Ouali I

After Mari Djata's death in 1255, custom dictated that his son ascend the throne assuming he was of age. However, Yérélinkon was a minor following his father's death.[23]

Manding Bory, Mari Djata's half-brother and kankoro-sigui (vizier), should have been crowned according to the Kouroukan Fouga. Instead, Mari Djata's son seized the throne and was crowned Mansa Ouali (also spelt "Wali" or "Ali").[27]

Mansa Ouali proved to be a good emperor adding more lands to the empire including the Gambian provinces of Bati and Casa. He also conquered the gold producing provinces of Bambuk and Bondou. The central province of Konkodougou was established. The Songhai kingdom of Gao also seems to have been subjugated for the first of many times around this period.[28]

Aside from military conquest, Ouali is also credited with agricultural reforms throughout the empire putting many soldiers to work as farmers in the newly acquired Gambian provinces. Just prior to his death in 1270, Ouali went on the hajj to Mecca during the reign of Sultan Baibars, according to Ibn Khaldun.[27] This helped in strengthening ties with North Africa and Muslim merchants.[28]

The Generals' Sons

As a policy of controlling and rewarding his generals, Mari Djata adopted their sons.[17] These children were raised at the mansa's court and became Keitas upon reaching maturity. Seeing the throne as their right, two adopted sons of Mari Djata waged a devastating war against one another that threatened to destroy what the first two mansas had built. The first son to gain the throne was Mansa Ouati (also spelt "Wati") in 1270.[29] He reigned for four years spending lavishly and ruling cruelly according to the djelis. Upon his death in 1274, the other adopted son seized the throne.[29] Mansa Khalifa is remembered as even worse than Ouati. He governed just as badly, was insane and fired arrows from the roof of his palace at passersby. Ibn Khaldun recounts that the people rushed upon him and killed him during a popular revolt.[27] The Gbara replaced him with Manding Bory in 1275.[30]

3.4.2 The Court Mansas 1275–1300

After the chaos of Ouati and Khalifa's reigns, a number of court officials with close ties to Mari Djata ruled. They began the empire's return to grace setting it up for a golden age of rulers.

Abubakari I

Manding Bory was crowned under the throne name Mansa Abubakari (a Manding corruption of the Muslim name Abu Bakr).[17] Mansa Abubakari's mother was Namandjé,[17] the third wife of Maghan Kon Fatta. Prior to becoming mansa, Abubakari had been one of his brother's generals and later his kankoro-sigui. Little else

is known about the reign of Abubakari I, but it seems he was successful in stopping the hemorrhaging of wealth in the empire.

Sakoura

In 1285, a court slave freed by Mari Djata, and who had also served as a general, usurped the throne of Mali.[28] The reign of Mansa Sakoura (also spelt Sakura) appears to have been beneficial despite the political shake-up. He added the first conquests to Mali since the reign of Ouali including the former Wagadou provinces of Tekrour and Diara. His conquests did not stop at the boundaries of Wagadou, however. He campaigned into Senegal and conquered the Wolof province of Dyolof then took the army east to subjugate the copper producing area of Takedda. He also conquered Macina and raided into Gao to suppress its first rebellion against Mali.[28] More than just a mere warrior, Mansa Sakoura went on the hajj during the reign of Al-Nasir Muhammad.[27] Mansa Sakura also opened direct trade negotiations with Tripoli and Morocco.[28]

Mansa Sakoura was murdered on his return trip from Mecca in or near present-day Djibouti by a Danakil warrior attempting to rob him.[31] The emperor's attendants rushed his body home through the Ouaddai region and into Kanem where one of that empire's messengers was sent to Mali with news of Sakoura's death. When the body arrived in Niani, it was given a regal burial despite the usurper's slave roots.[31]

3.4.3   The Kolonkan Lineage 1300–1312

The Gbara selected Ko Mamadi as the next mansa in 1300. He was the first of a new line of rulers directly descending from Mari Djata's sister, Kolonkan.[17] But seeing as how these rulers all shared the blood of Maghan Kon Fatta, they are considered legitimate Keitas. Even Sakoura, with his history of being a slave in the Djata family, was considered a Keita; so the line of Bilal had yet to be broken.

It is during the Kolonkan lineage that the defining characteristics of golden age Mali begin to appear. By maintaining the developments of Sakoura and Abubakari I, the Kolonkan mansas steer Mali safely into its apex.

Economy

The Mali Empire flourished because of trade above all else. It contained three immense gold mines within its borders unlike the Ghana Empire, which was only a transit point for gold. The empire taxed every ounce of gold or salt that entered its borders. By the beginning of the 14th century, Mali was the source of almost half the Old World's gold exported from mines in Bambuk, Boure and

Galam.[28] There was no standard currency throughout the realm, but several forms were prominent by region. The Sahelian and Saharan towns of the Mali Empire were organized as both staging posts in the long-distance caravan trade and trading centers for the various West African products. At Taghaza, for example, salt was exchanged; at Takedda, copper. Ibn Battuta observed the employment of slave labor in both towns. During most of his journey, Ibn Battuta traveled with a retinue that included slaves, most of whom carried goods for trade but would also be traded as slaves. On the return from Takedda to Morocco, his caravan transported 600 female slaves, suggesting that slavery was a substantial part of the commercial activity of the empire.[32]

Gold   Gold nuggets were the exclusive property of the *mansa*, and were illegal to trade within his borders. All gold was immediately handed over to the imperial treasury in return for an equal value of gold dust. Gold dust had been weighed and bagged for use at least since the reign of the Ghana Empire. Mali borrowed the practice to stem inflation of the substance, since it was so prominent in the region. The most common measure for gold within the realm was the ambiguous *mithqal* (4.5 grams of gold).[17] This term was used interchangeably with *dinar*, though it is unclear if coined currency was used in the empire. Gold dust was used all over the empire, but was not valued equally in all regions.

Tuaregs were and still are an integral part of the salt trade across the Sahara

Salt The next great unit of exchange in the Mali Empire was salt. Salt was as valuable, if not more valuable than gold in Sub-Saharan Africa. It was cut into pieces and spent on goods with close to equal buying power throughout the empire.[33] While it was as good as gold in the north, it was even better in the south. The people of the south needed salt for their diet, but it was extremely rare. The northern region on the other hand had no shortage of salt. Every year merchants entered Mali via Oualata with camel loads of salt to sell in Niani. According to Ibn Battuta who visited Mali in the mid-14th century, one camel load of salt sold at Walata for 8–10 mithkals of gold, but in Mali proper it realized 20–30 ducats and sometimes even 40.[33]

Copper Copper was also a valued commodity in imperial Mali. Copper, traded in bars, was mined from Takedda in the north and traded in the south for gold. Contemporary sources claim 60 copper bars traded for 100 dinars of gold.[17]

Military

Main article: Military history of the Mali Empire

The number and frequency of conquests in the late 13th century and throughout the 14th century indicate the Kolonkan mansas inherited and or developed a capable military. Sundjata is credited with at least the initial organization of the Manding war machine. However, it went through radical changes before reaching the legendary proportions proclaimed by its subjects. Thanks to steady tax revenue and stable government beginning in the last quarter of the 13th century, the Mali Empire was able to project its power throughout its own extensive domain and beyond.

Strength The Mali Empire maintained a semi-professional, full-time army in order to defend its borders. The entire nation was mobilized with each clan obligated to provide a quota of fighting age men.[17] These men had to be of the horon (freemen) caste and appear with their own arms. Historians who lived during the height and decline of the Mali Empire consistently record its army at 100,000 with 10,000 of that number being made up of cavalry.[17] With the help of the river clans, this army could be deployed throughout the realm on short notice.[34]

Order of Battle The army of the Mali Empire during the 14th century was divided into northern and southern commands led by the Farim-Soura and Sankar-Zouma, respectively.[17] Both of these men were part of Mali's warrior elite known as the *ton-ta-jon-ta-ni-woro* ("sixteen slave carriers of quiver"). Each representative or *ton-tigi*

Terracotta Archer figure from Mali (13th to 15th century).

("quiver-master") provided council to the mansa at the Gbara, but only these two ton-tigi held such wide ranging power.

The ton-tigi belonged to an elite force of cavalry commanders called the *farari* ("brave men"). Each individual farariya ("brave") had a number of infantry officers beneath them called kèlè-koun or dùùkùnàsi. A kèlè-koun led free troops into battle alongside a farima ("brave man") during campaign. A dùùkùnàsi performed the same function except with slave troops called sofa ("guardian of the horse") and under the command of a farimba ("great brave man"). The farimba operated from a garrison with an almost entirely slave force, while a farima functioned on the field with virtually all freemen.

Equipment The army of the Mali Empire used of a wide variety of weapons depending largely on where the troops originated. Only sofa were equipped by the state, using bows and poisoned arrows. Free warriors from the

north (Mandekalu or otherwise), were usually equipped with large reed or animal hide shields and a stabbing spear that was called a tamba. Free warriors from the south came armed with bows and poisonous arrows. The bow figured prominently in Mandinka warfare and was a symbol of military force throughout the culture. Bowmen formed a large portion of the field army as well as the garrison. Three bowmen supporting one spearman was the ratio in Kaabu and the Gambia by the mid-16th century. Equipped with two quivers and a knife fastened to the back of their arm, Mandinka bowmen used barbed, iron-tipped arrows that were usually poisoned. They also used flaming arrows for siege warfare. While spears and bows were the mainstay of the infantry, swords and lances of local or foreign manufacture were the choice weapons of the cavalry. Ibn Battuta comments on festival demonstrations of swordplay before the mansa by his retainers including the royal interpreter.[35] Another common weapon of Mandekalu warriors was the poison javelin used in skirmishes. Imperial Mali's horsemen also used chain mail armor for defense and shields similar to those of the infantry.

The Gao Mansas

Ko Mamadi was crowned Mansa Gao and ruled over a successful empire without any recorded crisis. His son, Mansa Mohammed ibn Gao, ascended the throne five years later and continued the stability of the Kolonkan line.[17]

Abubakari II

The last Kolonkan ruler, Bata Manding Bory, was crowned Mansa Abubakari II in 1310.[17] He continued the non-militant style of rule that characterized Gao and Mohammed ibn Gao, but was interested in the empire's western sea. According to an account given by Mansa Musa I, who during the reign of Abubakari II served as the mansa's kankoro-sigui, Mali sent two expeditions into the Atlantic. Mansa Abubakari II left Musa as regent of the empire, demonstrating the stability of this period in Mali, and departed with the second expedition commanding some 4,000 pirogues equipped with both oars and sails in 1311.[36] Neither the emperor nor any of the ships returned to Mali. Modern historians and scientists are skeptical about the success of either voyage, but the account of these happenings is preserved in both written North African records and the oral records of Mali's djelis.

3.4.4   The Laye Lineage 1312–1389

Abubakari II's 1312 abdication, the only recorded one in the empire's history, marked the beginning of a new lineage descended from Faga Laye.[17] Faga Laye was the son of Abubakari I. Unlike his father, Faga Laye never took the throne of Mali. However, his line would produce seven mansa who reigned during the height of Mali's power and toward the beginning of its decline.

Administration

The Mali Empire covered a larger area for a longer period of time than any other West African state before or since. What made this possible was the decentralized nature of administration throughout the state. According to Joseph Ki-Zerbo, the farther a person traveled from Niani, the more decentralized the mansa's power became.[37] Nevertheless, the mansa managed to keep tax money and nominal control over the area without agitating his subjects into revolt. At the local level (village, town, city), kun-tiguis elected a dougou-tigui (village-master) from a bloodline descended from that locality's semi-mythical founder.[38] The county level administrators called kafo-tigui (county-master) were appointed by the governor of the province from within his own circle.[28] Only when we get to the state or province level is there any palpable interference from the central authority in Niani. Provinces picked their own governors via their own custom (election, inheritance, etc.). Regardless of their title in the province, they were recognized as dyamani-tigui (province master) by the mansa.[28] Dyamani-tiguis had to be approved by the mansa and were subject to his oversight. If the mansa didn't believe the dyamani-tigui was capable or trustworthy, a farba might be installed to oversee the province or administer it outright.

- A manuscript page from Timbuktu

- Manuscript of Nasir al-Din Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn al-Hajj al-Amin al-Tawathi al-Ghalawi's *Kashf al-Ghummah fi Nafa al-Ummah*. From the Mamma Haidara Commemorative Library, Timbuktu.

- A manuscript page from Timbuktu showing a table of astronomical information

Farins and Farbas

Territories in Mali came into the empire via conquest or annexation. In the event of conquest, farins took control of the area until a suitable native ruler could be found. After the loyalty or at least the capitulation of an area was assured, it was allowed to select its own dyamani-tigui. This process was essential to keep non-Manding subjects loyal to the Manding elites that ruled them.

Barring any other difficulties, the dyamani-tigui would run the province by himself collecting taxes and procuring armies from the tribes under his command. However, territories that were crucial to trade or subject to revolt would receive a farba.[39] Farbas were picked by the mansa from the conquering farin or family members.

The only real requirement was that the mansa knew he could trust this individual to safeguard imperial interests.

Duties of the farba included reporting on the activities of the territory, collecting taxes and ensuring the native administration didn't contradict orders from Niani. The farba could also take power away from the native administration if required and raise an army in the area for defense or putting down rebellions.[39]

The post of a farba was very prestigious, and his descendants could inherit it with the mansa's approval. The mansa could also replace a farba if he got out of control as in the case of Diafunu.

Territory
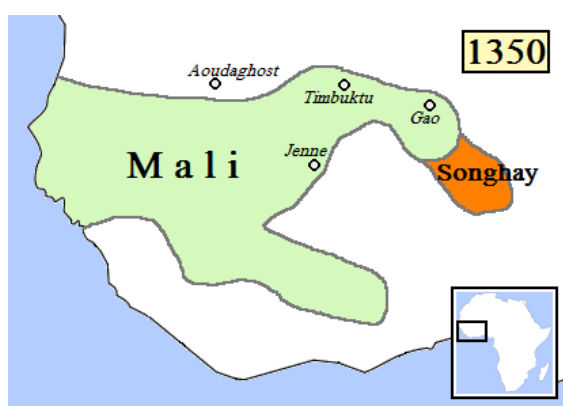
Approximate extent of the Mali Empire, c. 1350.

The Mali Empire reached its largest size under the Laye mansas. Al-Umari, who wrote down a description of Mali based on information given to him by Abu Sa'id 'Otman ed Dukkali (who had lived 35 years in Niani), reported the realm as being square and an eight month journey from its coast at Tura (the mouth of the Senegal River) to Muli (also known as Tuhfat). Umari also describes the empire as being south of Marrakesh and almost entirely inhabited except for few places. Mali's domain also extended into the desert. He describes it as being north of Mali but under its domination implying some sort of vassalage for the Antasar, Yantar'ras, Medussa and Lemtuna Berber tribes.[40] The empire's total area included nearly all the land between the Sahara Desert and coastal forests. It spanned the modern-day countries of Senegal, southern Mauritania, Mali, northern Burkina Faso, western Niger, the Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea, the Ivory Coast and northern Ghana. By 1350, the empire covered approximately 439,400 square miles (1,138,000 km^2). The empire also reached its highest population during the Laye period ruling over 400 cities,[41] towns and villages of various religions and elasticities. During this period only the Mongol Empire was larger.

The dramatic increase in the empire's size demanded a shift from the Manden Kurufaba's organization of three states with twelve dependencies. This model was scrapped by the time of Mansa Musa's hajj to Egypt. According to al'Umari, who interviewed a Berber that had lived in Niani for 35 years, there were fourteen provinces (really tributary kingdoms). In al-'Umari's record, he only records the following thirteen provinces.[42]

- Gana (this refers to the remnants of the Ghana Empire)

- Zagun or Zafun (this is another name for Diafunu)[43]

- Tirakka or Turanka (Between Gana and Tadmekka)[42]

- Tekrur (On 3rd cataract of the Senegal River, north of Dyolof)

- Sanagana (named for a tribe living in an area north of the Senegal river)

- Bambuck or Bambughu (gold mining region)

- Zargatabana

- Darmura or Babitra Darmura

- Zaga (on the Niger, downriver of Kabora)

- Kabora or Kabura (also on the Niger)

- Baraquri or Baraghuri

- Gao or Kawkaw (province inhabited by the Songhai)

- Mali or Manden (capital province for which the realm gets its name)

Musa I

Sankore Mosque

The first ruler from the Laye lineage was Kankan Musa (or, Moussa), also known as Kango Musa. After an entire year without word from Abubakari II, he was crowned

Mansa Musa. Mansa Musa was one of the first truly devout Muslims to lead the Mali Empire. He attempted to make Islam the faith of the nobility,[28] but kept to the imperial tradition of not forcing it on the populace. He also made Eid celebrations at the end of Ramadan a national ceremony. He could read and write Arabic and took an interest in the scholarly city of Timbuktu, which he peaceably annexed in 1324. Via one of the royal ladies of his court, Musa transformed Sankore from an informal madrasah into an Islamic university. Islamic studies flourished thereafter. That same year a Mandinka general known as Sagmandir put down yet another rebellion in Gao.[28]

Mansa Musa's crowning achievement was his famous pilgrimage to Mecca, which started in 1324 and concluded with his return in 1326. Accounts of how many people and how much gold he spent vary. All of them agree it was a very large group (the mansa kept a personal guard of some 500 men),[44] and he gave out so many alms and bought so many things that the value of gold in Egypt and Arabia depreciated for twelve years.[45] When he passed through Cairo, historian al-Maqurizi noted "the members of his entourage proceeded to buy Turkish and Ethiopian slave girls, singing girls and garments, so that the rate of the gold *dinar* fell by six *dirhams*."

Musa spent so much that he ran out of money and had to take out a loan to be able to afford the journey home. An alternative explanation is that he borrowed gold from Cairo's money-lenders at high interest to attempt to correct the depreciation of gold in the area due to his spending.[46] Musa's *hajj*, and especially his gold, caught the attention of both the Islamic and Christian worlds. Consequently, the name of Mali and Timbuktu appeared on 14th century world maps.

While on the hajj, he met the Andalusian poet and architect Es-Saheli. Mansa Musa brought the architect back to Mali to beautify some of the cities. But more reasoned analysis suggests that his role, if any, was quite limited. the architectural crafts in Granada had reached their zenith by the fourteenth century, and its extremely unlikely that a cultured and wealthy poet would have had anything more than a dilettante's knowledge of the intricacies of contemporary architectural practice.[47] Mosques were built in Gao and Timbuktu along with impressive palaces also built in Timbuktu. By the time of his death in 1337, Mali had control over Taghazza, a salt producing area in the north, which further strengthened its treasury.

Mansa Musa was succeeded by his son, Maghan I.[28] Mansa Maghan I spent wastefully and was the first lackluster emperor since Khalifa. But the Mali Empire built by his predecessors was too strong for even his misrule and passed intact to Musa's brother, Souleyman in 1341.

Souleyman

Mansa Souleyman took steep measures to put Mali back into financial shape developing a reputation for miserliness.[28] However, he proved to be a good and strong ruler despite numerous challenges. It is during his reign that Fula raids on Takrur began. There was also a palace conspiracy to overthrow him hatched by the Qasa (Manding term meaning Queen) and several army commanders.[28] Mansa Souleyman's generals successfully fought off the military incursions, and the senior wife behind the plot was imprisoned.

The mansa also made a successful hajj, kept up correspondence with Morocco and Egypt and built an earthen platform at Kangaba called the Camanbolon where he held court with provincial governors and deposited the holy books he brought back from Hedjaz.

The only major setback to his reign was the loss of Mali's Dyolof province in Senegal. The Wolof populations of the area united into their own state known as the Jolof Empire in the 1350s. Still, when Ibn Battuta arrived at Mali in July 1352, he found a thriving civilization on par with virtually anything in the Muslim or Christian world. Mansa Souleyman died in 1360 and was succeeded by his son, Camba.

The North African traveler and scholar Ibn Battuta visited the area in 1352 AD and, according to a 1929 English translation, said this about its inhabitants:

> "The negroes possess some admirable qualities. They are seldom unjust, and have a greater abhorrence of injustice
> than any other people. There is complete security in their country. Neither traveler nor inhabitant in it has anything to fear from robbers or men of violence."[48]

Mari Djata II

After a mere nine months of rule, Mansa Camba was deposed by one of Maghan I's three sons. Konkodougou Kamissa, named for the province he once governed,[17] was crowned as Mansa Mari Djata II in 1360. He ruled oppressively and nearly bankrupted Mali with his lavish spending. He did however, maintain contacts with Morocco, sending a giraffe to King Abu Hassan of the Maghreb. Mansa Mari Djata II became seriously ill in 1372,[28] and power moved into the hands of his ministers until his death in 1374.

Musa II

The ruinous reign of Mari Djata II left the empire in bad financial shape, but the empire itself passed intact to the dead emperor's brother. Mansa Fadima Musa, or Mansa Musa II, began the process of reversing his brother's

excesses.[28] He did not, however, hold the power of previous *mansas* because of the influence of his *kankoro-sigui.*

Kankoro-Sigui Mari Djata, who had no relation to the Keita clan, essentially ran the empire in Musa II's stead. He put down a Tuareg rebellion in Takedda and campaigned in Gao. While he met success in Takedda, he never managed a decisive victory in Gao. The Songhai settlement effectively shook off Mali's authority in 1375. Still, by the time of Mansa Musa II's death in 1387, Mali was financially solvent and in control of all of its previous conquests short of Gao and Dyolof. Forty years after the reign of Mansa Musa I, the Mali Empire still controlled some 1.1 million square kilometres of land throughout Western Africa.

Maghan II

The last son of Maghan I, Tenin Maghan (also known as Kita Tenin Maghan for the province he once governed) was crowned Mansa Maghan II in 1387.[17] Little is known of him except that he only reigned two years. He was deposed in 1389, marking the end of the Faga Laye mansas.

3.4.5   The Obscure Lineages 1389–1545

From 1389 onward Mali will gain a host of mansas of obscure origins. This is the least known period in Mali's imperial history. What is evident is that there is no steady lineage governing the empire. The other characteristic of this era is the gradual loss of its northern and eastern possession to the rising Songhai Empire and the movement of the Mali's economic focus from the trans-Saharan trade routes to the burgeoning commerce along the coast.

Sandaki

Mansa Sandaki, a descendant of Kankoro-Sigui Mari Djata, deposed Maghan II becoming the first person without any Keita dynastic relation to officially rule Mali.[28] Sandaki should not however be taken to be this person's name but a title. Sandaki likely means High Counselor or Supreme Counselor, from "san" or "sanon" (meaning "high") and "adegue" (meaning counselor).[49] He would only reign a year before a descendant of Mansa Gao removed him.[50]

Maghan III

Mahmud, possibly a grandchild or great-grandchild of Mansa Gao, was crowned Mansa Maghan III in 1390. During his reign, the Mossi emperor Bonga of Yatenga raids into Mali and plunders Macina.[28] Emperor Bonga

does not appear to hold the area, and it stays within the Mali Empire after Maghan III's death in 1400

Musa III

In the early 15th century, Mali was still powerful enough to conquer and settle new areas. One of these was Dioma, an area south of Niani populated by Fula Wassoulounké.[17] Two noble brothers from Niani, of unknown lineage, went to Dioma with an army and drove out the Fula Wassoulounké. The oldest brother, Sérébandjougou, was crowned Mansa Foamed or Mansa Musa III. His reign saw the first in a string of many great losses to Mali. In 1430, the Tuareg seized Timbuktu.[51] Three years later, Oualata also fell into their hands.[28]

Ouali II

Following Musa III's death, his brother Gbèré became emperor in the mid-15th century.[17] Gbèré was crowned Mansa Ouali II and ruled during the period of Mali's contact with Portugal. In the 1450s, Portugal began sending raiding parties along the Gambian coast.[52] The Gambia was still firmly in Mali's control, and these raiding expeditions met with disastrous fates before Portugal's Diogo Gomes began formal relations with Mali via its remaining Wolof subjects.[53] Alvise Cadamosto, a Venetian explorer, recorded that the Mali Empire was the most powerful entity on the coast in 1454.[53]

Despite their power in the west, Mali was losing the battle for supremacy in the north and northeast. The new Songhai Empire conquered Mema,[28] one of Mali's oldest possessions, in 1465. It then seized Timbuktu from the Tuareg in 1468 under Sunni Ali Ber.[28]

In 1477, the Yatenga emperor Nasséré made yet another Mossi raid into Macina this time conquering it and the old province of BaGhana (Wagadou).[54]
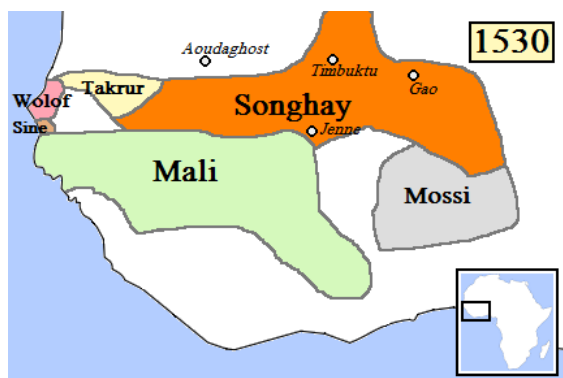
Mansa Mahmud II

Mansa Mahmud II came to the throne in 1481 during Mali's downward spiral. It is unknown from whom he descended; however, another emperor, Mansa Maghan III, is sometimes cited as Mansa Mahmud I. Still, throne names don't usually indicate blood relations. Mansa Mahmud II's rule was characterized by more losses to Mali's old possessions and increased contact between Mali and Portuguese explorers along the coast. In 1481, Fula raids against Mali's Tekrur provinces begin.

The growing trade in Mali's western provinces with Portugal witnesses the exchange of envoys between the two nations. Mansa Mahmud II receives the Portuguese envoys Pêro d'Évora and Gonçalo Enes in 1487.[17] The mansa loses control of Jalo during this period.[55] Meanwhile, Songhai seizes the salt mines of Taghazza in 1493.

That same year, Mahmud II sends another envoy to the Portuguese proposing alliance against the Fula. The Portuguese decide to stay out of the conflict and the talks conclude by 1495 without an alliance.[55]

Mansa Mahmud III

Mali Empire and surrounding states, c. 1530.

The last mansa to rule from Niani is Mansa Mahmud III also known as Mansa Mamadou II. He came to power around 1496 and has the dubious honor of being the mansa under which Mali suffered the most losses to its territory.

Songhai forces under the command of Askia Muhammad I defeat the Mali general Fati Quali in 1502 and seize the province of Diafunu.[28] In 1514, the Denanke dynasty is established in Tekrour. It isn't long before the new kingdom of Great Fulo is warring against Mali's remaining provinces. To add insult to injury, the Songhai Empire seizes the copper mines of Takedda.

In 1534, Mahmud III received another Portuguese envoy to the Mali court by the name of Pero Fernandes.[56] This envoy from the Portuguese coastal port of Elmina arrives in response to the growing trade along the coast and Mali's now urgent request for military assistance against Songhai.[57] Still, no help is forthcoming and Mali must watch its possessions fall one by one.

Mansa Mahmud III's reign also sees the military outpost and province of Kaabu become independent in 1537.[55] The Kaabu Empire appears every bit as ambitions as Mali was in its early years and swallows up Mali's remaining Gambian provinces of Cassa and Bati.[58]

The most defining moment in Mahmud III's reign is the final conflict between Mali and Songhai in 1545. Songhai forces under Askia Ishaq's brother, Daoud, sack Niani and occupy the palace.[59] Mansa Mahmud III is forced to flee Niani for the mountains. Within a week, he regroups with his forces and launches a successful counterattack forcing the Songhai out of Manden proper for good.[60] The Songhai Empire does keep Mali's ambitions in check, but never fully conquers their old masters.

After liberating the capital, Mahmud III abandons it for

a new residence further north.[60] Still, there is no end to Mali's troubles. In 1559, the kingdom of Fouta Tooro succeeds in taking Takrur.[55] This defeat reduces Mali to Manden proper with control extending only as far as Kita in the west, Kangaba in the north, the Niger River bend in the east and Kouroussa in the south.

3.5   Late Imperial Mali

Mansa Mahmud III's reign ended around 1559. There seems to have been either a vacancy or unknown ruler between 1559 and the start of the last mansa's reign. A vacancy or rule by a court official seems the most likely since the next ruler takes the name of Mahmud IV. By 1560, the once powerful empire was really only the core of the Manden Kurufaba. The next notable mansa, Mahmud IV, doesn't appear in any records until the end of the 16th century. However, he seems to have the distinction of being the last ruler of a unified Manden. His descendants are blamed for the break-up of the Manden Kurufaba into north, central and southern realms.

3.5.1   Mansa Mahmud IV

Mansa Mahmud IV (also known as Mansa Mamadou III, Mali Mansa Mamadou and Niani Mansa Mamadou) was the last emperor of Manden according to the Tarikh al-Sudan. It states that he launched an attack on the city of Djenné in 1599 with Fulani allies hoping to take advantage of Songhai's defeat.[61] Moroccan fusiliers, deployed from Timbuktu, met them in battle exposing Mali to the same technology (firearms) that had destroyed Songhai. Despite heavy losses, the mansa's army was not deterred and nearly carried the day.[61] However, the army inside Djenné intervened forcing Mansa Mahmud IV and his army to retreat to Kangaba.[57]

3.6   Collapse
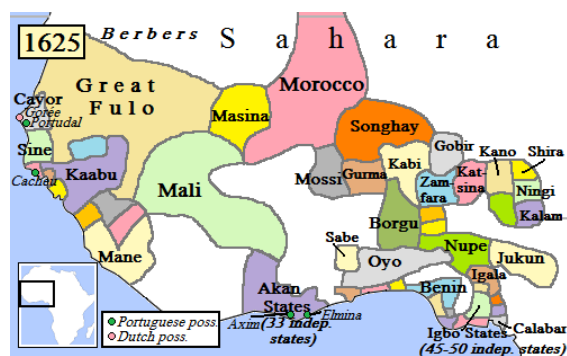
Mali Empire and surrounding states, c. 1625.

The mansa's defeat actually won Sundiata the respect of Morocco and may have saved it from Songhai's fate. It

would be the Mandinka themselves that would cause the final destruction of the empire. Around 1610, Mahmud IV died. Oral tradition states that he had three sons who fought over Manden's remains. No single person ever ruled Manden after Mahmud IV's death, resulting in the end of the Mali Empire.[62]

3.6.1 Manden Divided

The old core of the empire was divided into three spheres of influence. Kangaba, the de facto capital of Manden since the time of the last emperor, became the capital of the northern sphere. The Joma area, governed from Siguiri, controlled the central region, which encompassed Niani. Hamana (or Amana), southwest of Joma, became the southern sphere with its capital at Kouroussa in modern Guinea.[62] Each ruler used the title of mansa, but their authority only extended as far as their own sphere of influence. Despite this disunity in the realm, the realm remained under Mandinka control into the mid-17th century. The three states warred on each other as much if not more than they did against outsiders, but rivalries generally stopped when faced with invasion. This trend would continue into colonial times against Tukulor enemies from the west.[63]

3.6.2 The Bamana Jihad

Then, in 1630, the Bamana of Djenné declared their version of holy war on all Muslim powers in present day Mali.[64] They targeted Moroccan Pashas still in Timbuktu and the mansas of Manden. In 1645, the Bamana attacked Manden seizing both banks of the Niger right up to Niani.[64] This campaign gutted Manden and destroyed any hope of the three mansas cooperating to free their land. The only Mandinka power spared from the campaign was Kangaba.

Sack of Niani

Mama Maghan, mansa of Kangaba, campaigned against the Bamana in 1667 and laid siege to Segou-Koro for a reported three years.[65] Segou, defended by Biton Coulibaly, successfully defended itself and Mama Maghan was forced to withdraw.[65] Either as a counter-attack or simply the progression of pre-planned assaults against the remnants of Mali, the Bamana sacked and burned Niani in 1670.[64] Their forces marched as far north as Kangaba where the mansa was obliged to make a peace with them, promising not to attack downstream of Mali. The Bamana, likewise, vowed not to advance farther upstream than Niamina.[66] Following this disastrous set of events, Mansa Mama Maghan abandoned the capital of Niani.

3.7 See also

- African empires
- Gbara
- Keita Dynasty
- Kouroukan Fouga
- Military history of the Mali Empire
- Segou Empire
- Songhai Empire
- List of Sunni Muslim dynasties

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Chapter 4

Timbuktu

For other uses, see Timbuktu (disambiguation).

Timbuktu (/ˌtɪmbʌkˈtuː/; French: *Tombouctou* [tɔ̃buktu]; Koyra Chiini: *Tumbutu*), formerly also spelled **Timbuctoo** and **Timbuktoo**, is a city in the West African nation of Mali situated 20 km (12 mi) north of the River Niger on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert. The town is the capital of the Timbuktu Region, one of the eight administrative regions of Mali. It had a population of 54,453 in the 2009 census.

Starting out as a seasonal settlement, Timbuktu became a permanent settlement early in the 12th century. After a shift in trading routes, Timbuktu flourished from the trade in salt, gold, ivory and slaves. It became part of the Mali Empire early in the 14th century. In the first half of the 15th century the Tuareg tribes took control of the city for a short period until the expanding Songhai Empire absorbed the city in 1468. A Moroccan army defeated the Songhai in 1591, and made Timbuktu, rather than Gao, their capital.

The invaders established a new ruling class, the arma, who after 1612 became virtually independent of Morocco. However, the golden age of the city was over and it entered a long period of decline. Different tribes governed until the French took over in 1893, a situation that lasted until it became part of the current Republic of Mali in 1960. Presently, Timbuktu is impoverished and suffers from desertification.

In its Golden Age, the town's numerous Islamic scholars and extensive trading network made possible an important book trade: together with the campuses of the Sankore Madrasah, an Islamic university, this established Timbuktu as a scholarly centre in Africa. Several notable historic writers, such as Shabeni and Leo Africanus, have described Timbuktu. These stories fueled speculation in Europe, where the city's reputation shifted from being extremely rich to being mysterious. This reputation overshadows the town itself in modern times, to the point where it is best known in Western culture as an expression for a distant or outlandish place.

On 1 April 2012, one day after the capture of Gao, Timbuktu was captured from the Malian military by the Tuareg rebels of the MNLA and Ansar Dine.[2] Five days

later, the MNLA declared the region independent of Mali as the nation of Azawad.[3] The declared political entity was not recognized by any local nations or the international community and it collapsed three months later on 12 July.[4]

On 28 January 2013, French and Malian government troops began retaking Timbuktu from the Islamist rebels.[5] The force of 1,000 French troops with 200 Malian soldiers retook Timbuktu without a fight. The Islamist groups had already fled north a few days earlier, having set fire to the Ahmed Baba Institute, which housed many important manuscripts. The building housing the Ahmed Baba Institute was funded by South Africa, and held 30,000 manuscripts. BBC World Service radio news reported on 29 January 2013 that approximately 28,000 of the manuscripts in the Institute had been removed to safety from the premises before the attack by the Islamist groups, and that the whereabouts of about 2,000 manuscripts remained unknown.[6] It was intended to be a resource for Islamic research.[7]

On 30 March, jihadist rebels infiltrated into Timbuktu just nine days prior to a suicide bombing on a Malian army checkpoint at the international airport killing a soldier. Fighting lasted until 1 April, when French warplanes helped Malian ground forces chase the remaining rebels out of the city center.

4.1 Toponymy

Over the centuries, the spelling of Timbuktu has varied a great deal: from *Tenbuch* on the Catalan Atlas (1375), to traveller Antonio Malfante's *Thambet*, used in a letter he wrote in 1447 and also adopted by Alvise Cadamosto in his *Voyages of Cadamosto*, to Heinrich Barth's *Timbúktu* and *Timbu'ktu*. French spelling often appears in international reference as "Tombouctou." As well as its spelling, Timbuktu's toponymy is still open to discussion.[8] At least four possible origins of the name of Timbuktu have been described:

- Songhay origin: both Leo Africanus and Heinrich Barth believed the name was derived from two Songhay words:[8] Leo Africanus writes the King-

Timbuktu looking west, René Caillié (1830)
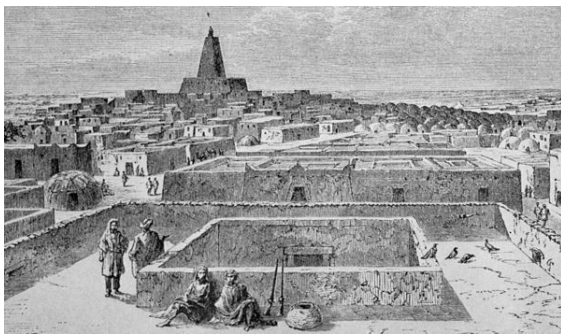
View of Timbuktu, Heinrich Barth (1858)

dom of Tombuto was named after a town of the same name, founded in 1213 or 1214 by *mansa* Suleyman.[9] The word itself consisted of two parts: *tin* (wall) and *butu* (Wall of Butu). Africanus did not explain the meaning of this *Butu*.[8] Heinrich Barth wrote: "The town was probably so called, because it was built originally in a hollow or cavity in the sandhills. Tùmbutu means hole or womb in the Songhay language: if it were a Temáshight [Tamashek] word, it would be written Tinbuktu. The name is generally interpreted by Europeans as *well* of Buktu, but *tin* has nothing to do with well."[10]

- Berber origin: Malian historian Sekene Cissoko proposes a different etymology: the Tuareg founders of the city gave it a Berber name, a word composed of two parts: *tim*, the feminine form of *In* (place of) and "*bouctou*", a small dune. Hence, Timbuktu would mean "place covered by small dunes".[11]

- Abd al-Sadi offers a third explanation in his 17th-century *Tarikh al-Sudan*: "The Tuareg made it a depot for their belongings and provisions, and it grew into a crossroads for travellers coming and going. Looking after their belongings was a slave woman of theirs called Tinbuktu, which in their language means [the one having a] 'lump'. The blessed spot where she encamped was named after her."[12]

- The French Orientalist René Basset forwarded another theory: the name derives from the Zenaga root *b-k-t*, meaning "to be distant" or "hidden", and the feminine possessive particle *tin*. The meaning "hidden" could point to the city's location in a slight hollow.[13]

The validity of these theories depends on the identity of the original founders of the city: as recently as 2000, archaeological research has not found remains dating from the 11th/12th century within the limits of the modern city given the difficulty of excavating through meters of sand that have buried the remains over the past centuries.[14][15] Without consensus, the etymology of Timbuktu remains unclear.

4.2 Prehistory

Like other important Medieval West African towns such as Djenné (Jenné-Jeno), Gao, and Dia, Iron Age settlements have been discovered near Timbuktu that predate the traditional foundation date of the town. Although the accumulation of thick layers of sand has thwarted archaeological excavations in the town itself,[16][15] some of the surrounding landscape is deflating and exposing pottery shards on the surface. A survey of the area by Susan and Roderick McIntosh in 1984 identified several Iron Age sites along the el-Ahmar, an ancient wadi system that passes a few kilometers to the east of the modern town.[17]

An Iron Age tell complex located 9 kilometres (6 miles) southeast of the Timbuktu near the Wadi el-Ahmar was excavated between 2008 and 2010 by archaeologists from Yale University and the Mission Culturelle de Tombouctou. The results suggest that the site was first occupied during the 5th century BC, thrived throughout the second half of the 1st millennium AD and eventually collapsed sometime during the late 10th or early 11th century AD.[18][19]

4.3 History

Chronology of Timbuktu
view • discuss •
1100 —
–
1200 —
–
1300 —
–
1400 —
–
1500 —
–
1600 —
–

1700 —

–

1800 —

–

1900 —

–

2000 —

Autonomous settlement

Mali Empire

Tuareg

Songhay Empire

Moroccan Pashalik

Arma pashalik

Maasina Empire

Tuareg

French colony

Republic of Mali

←

Visit by Ibn Battuta

←

Visit by Leo Africanus

←

Tarikh al-Sudan completed

←

Tuareg temporarily occupy town

←

Visit by René Caillié

←

Toucouleur Empire

←

Battle of Tondibi

←

Mali Federation

←

Azawad

4.3.1   Sources

Unlike Gao, Timbuktu is not mentioned by the early Arab geographers such as al-Bakri and al-Idrisi.[20] The first mention is by the Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta who visited both Timbuktu and Kabara in 1353 when returning from a stay in the capital of the Mali Empire.[21] Timbuktu was still relatively unimportant and Battuta quickly moved on to Gao. At the time both Timbuktu and Gao formed part of the Mali Empire. A century and a half later, in around 1510, Leo Africanus visited Timbuktu. He gave a description of the town in his *Descrittione dell'Africa* which was published in 1550.[22] The original Italian was translated into a number of other languages and the book became widely known in Europe.[23]

The earliest surviving local documents are the 17th century chronicles, al-Sadi's *Tarikh al-Sudan* and Ibn al-Mukhtar's *Tarikh al-fattash*. These provide information on the town at the time of the Songhay Empire and the invasion by Moroccan forces in 1591. The authors do

not, in general, acknowledge their sources[24] but the accounts are likely to be based on oral tradition and on earlier written records that have not survived. Al-Sadi and Ibn al-Mukhtar were members of the scholarly class and their chronicles reflect the interests of this group.[25] The chronicles provide biographies of the imams and judges but contain relatively little information on the social and economic history of the town.[26]

The *Tarikh al-fattash* ends in around 1600 while the *Tarikh al-Sudan* continues to 1655. Information after this date is provided by the *Tadhkirat al-Nisyan* (A Reminder to the Obvious),[27][28] an anonymous biographical dictionary of the Moroccan rulers of Timbuktu written in around 1750. It does not contain the detail provided by the earlier *Tarikh al-Sudan*. A short chronicle written by Mawlay al-Qasim gives details of the pashalik in the second half of the 18th century.[29] For the 19th century there are numerous local sources but the information is very fragmented.[30]

4.3.2   Origins

When Abd al-Sadi wrote his chronicle *Tarikh al-Sudan*, based on oral tradition, in the 17th century, he dates the foundation at 'the end of the fifth century of the *hijra'* or around 1100 AD.[12] Al-Sadi saw Maghsharan Tuareg as the founders, as their summer encampment grew from temporary settlement to depot to travellers' meeting place. However, modern research cites insufficient available evidence to pinpoint the exact time of origin and founders of Timbuktu, although it is clear that the city originated from a local trade between Saharan pastoralists and boat trade within the Niger River Delta.[31] The importance of the river prompted descriptions of the city as 'a gift of the Niger', in analogy to Herodotus' description of Egypt as 'gift of the Nile'.[32]

4.3.3   Rise of the Mali Empire

During the twelfth century, the remnants of the Ghana Empire were invaded by the Sosso Empire king Soumaoro Kanté.[33] Muslim scholars from Walata (beginning to replace Aoudaghost as trade route terminus) fled to Timbuktu and solidified the position of Islam,[34] a religion that had gradually spread throughout West Africa, mainly through commercial contacts.[35] Islam at the time in the area was not uniform, its nature changing from city to city, and Timbuktu's bond with the religion was reinforced through its openness to strangers that attracted religious scholars.[36]

Timbuktu was peacefully annexed by King Musa I when returning from his pilgrimage in 1324 to Mecca. The city became part of the Mali Empire and Musa I ordered the construction of a royal palace.[37] Both the *Tarikh al-Sudan* and the *Tarikh al-fattash* attribute the building of the Djinguereber Mosque to Musa I.[38][39][40] Two cen-

turies later in 1570 Qadi al-Aqib had the mosque pulled down and rebuilt on a larger scale.[41]

In 1375, Timbuktu appeared in the Catalan Atlas, showing that it was, by then, a commercial centre linked to the North-African cities and had caught Europe's attention.[42]

4.3.4 Tuareg rule and the Songhaian Empire

With the power of the Mali Empire waning in the first half of the 15th century, Timbuktu became relatively autonomous, although Maghsharan Tuareg had a dominating position.[43] Thirty years later however, the rising Songhai Empire expanded, absorbing Timbuktu in 1468 or 1469. The city was led, consecutively, by Sunni Ali Ber (1468–1492), Sunni Baru (1492–1493) and Askia Mohammad I (1493–1528). Although Sunni Ali Ber was in severe conflict with Timbuktu after its conquest, Askia Mohammad I created a golden age for both the Songhai Empire and Timbuktu through an efficient central and regional administration and allowed sufficient leeway for the city's commercial centers to flourish.[43][44]

With Gao the capital of the empire, Timbuktu enjoyed a relatively autonomous position. Merchants from Ghadames, Awjilah, and numerous other cities of North Africa gathered there to buy gold and slaves in exchange for the Saharan salt of Taghaza and for North African cloth and horses.[45] Leadership of the Empire stayed in the Askia dynasty until 1591, when internal fights weakened the dynasty's grip and led to a decline of prosperity in the city.[46]

4.3.5 Moroccan conquest

File:Timbuktu map 1855.jpg

An 1855 map of Timbuktu, published in *Petermann's Geographische Mitteilungen*, shows the different parts of the mid-nineteenth century city. The cartography was based on Heinrich Barth's September 1853 visit to Timbuktu.[47]

Following the Battle of Tondibi, the city was captured on 30 May 1591 by an expedition of mercenaries and slaves, dubbed the Arma. They were sent by the Saadi ruler of Morocco, Ahmad I al-Mansur, and were led by Judar Pasha in search of gold mines. The Arma brought the end of an era of relative autonomy.[48][49] (see: Pashalik of Timbuktu) The following period brought economic and intellectual decline.[50]

In 1593, Ahmad I al-Mansur cited 'disloyalty' as the reason for arresting, and subsequently killing or exiling, many of Timbuktu's scholars, including Ahmad Baba.[51] Perhaps the city's greatest scholar, he was forced to move to Marrakesh because of his intellectual opposition to the *Pasha*, where he continued to attract the attention of the scholarly world.[52] Ahmad Baba later returned to Timbuktu, where he died in 1608.[53]

The city's decline continued, with the increasing transatlantic trade routes – transporting African slaves, including leaders and scholars of Timbuktu – marginalising Timbuktu's role as a trade and scholarly center.[8] While initially controlling the Morocco – Timbuktu trade routes, Morocco soon cut its ties with the Arma and the grip of the numerous subsequent *pashas* on the city began losing its strength: Tuareg temporarily took over control in 1737 and the remainder of the 18th century saw var-

ious Tuareg tribes, Bambara and Kounta briefly occupy or besiege the city.[54] During this period, the influence of the *Pashas*, who by then had mixed with the Songhay through intermarriage, never completely disappeared.[55]

This changed in 1826, when the Massina Empire took over control of the city until 1865, when they were driven away by the Toucouleur Empire. Sources conflict on who was in control when the French arrived: Elias N. Saad in 1983 suggests the Soninke Wangara,[54] a 1924 article in the *Journal of the Royal African Society* mentions the Tuareg,[56] while Africanist John Hunwick does not determine one ruler, but notes several states competing for power 'in a shadowy way' until 1893.[57]

4.3.6   Intercontinental communication

Historic descriptions of the city had been around since Leo Africanus's account in the first half of the 16th century, and they prompted several European individuals and organizations to make great efforts to discover Timbuktu and its fabled riches. In 1788 a group of titled Englishmen formed the African Association with the goal of finding the city and charting the course of the Niger River. The earliest of their sponsored explorers was a young Scottish adventurer named Mungo Park, who made two trips in search of the Niger River and Timbuktu (departing first in 1795 and then in 1805). It is believed that Park was the first Westerner to have reached the city, but he died in modern day Nigeria without having the chance to report his findings.[58]

Heinrich Barth approaching Timbuktu on September 7th 1853

In 1824, the Paris-based Société de Géographie offered a 10,000 franc prize to the first non-Muslim to reach the town and return with information about it.[59] The Scotsman Gordon Laing arrived in August 1826 but was killed the following month by local Muslims who were fearful of European intervention.[60] The Frenchman René Caillié arrived in 1828 travelling alone, disguised as a Muslim; he was able to safely return and claim the prize.[61]

The American sailor Robert Adams claimed to have visited Timbuktu in 1812, while he was enslaved for several years in Northern Africa. After being freed by the British consul in Tangier and going to Europe, he gave an ac-

Disguised as a Muslim, René Caillié was one of the first non-Muslims to enter the city of Timbuktu.

count of his experience, potentially making him the first Westerner for hundreds of years to have reached the city and returned to tell about it. However, his story quickly became controversial. While some historians have defended Adams' account,[62] more recent scholarship concludes that while Adams was almost certainly in Northern Africa, the discrepancies in his depiction of Timbuktu make it unlikely he ever visited the city.[63] Three other Europeans reached the city before 1890: Heinrich Barth in 1853 and the German Oskar Lenz with the Spaniard Cristobal Benítez in 1880.[64]

4.3.7   French colonial rule

After the scramble for Africa had been formalized in the Berlin Conference, land between the 14th meridian and Miltou, South-West Chad, became French territory, bounded in the south by a line running from Say, Niger to Baroua. Although the Timbuktu region was now French in name, the principle of effective occupation required France to actually hold power in those areas assigned, e.g. by signing agreements with local chiefs, setting up a government and making use of the area economically, before the claim would be definitive. On 15 December 1893, the city, by then long past its prime, was annexed by a small group of French soldiers, led by Lieutenant Gaston Boiteux.[65]

Timbuktu became part of French Sudan (Soudan

Français), a colony of France. The colony was reorganised and the name changed several times during the French colonial period. In 1899 the French Sudan was subdivided and Timbuktu became part of Upper Senegal and Middle Niger (Haut-Sénégal et Moyen Niger). In 1902 the name became Senegambia and Niger (Sénégambie et Niger) and in 1904 this was changed again to Upper Senegal and Niger (Haut-Sénégal et Niger). This name was used until 1920 when it became French Sudan again.[66]

4.3.8 World War II

Peter de Neumann, alias The Man from Timbuctoo, *pictured as Commander of HMRC* Vigilant, *approximately 1950*

During World War II, several legions were recruited in French Soudan, with some coming from Timbuktu, to help general Charles de Gaulle fight Nazi-occupied France and southern Vichy France.[58]

About 60 British merchant seamen from the *SS Allende* (Cardiff), sunk on 17 March 1942 off the South coast of West Africa, were held prisoner in the city during the Second World War. Two months later, after having been transported from Freetown to Timbuktu, two of them, AB John Turnbull Graham (2 May 1942, age 23) and Chief Engineer William Soutter (28 May 1942, age 60) died there in May 1942. Both men were buried in the European cemetery – possibly the most remote British war graves tended by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.[67]

They were not the only war captives in Timbuktu: Peter de Neumann was one of 52 men imprisoned in Timbuktu in 1942 when their ship, the *SS Criton*, was intercepted by two Vichy French warships. Although several men, including de Neumann, escaped, they were all recaptured and stayed a total of ten months in the city, guarded by natives. Upon his return to England, he became known as "The Man from Timbuctoo".[68]

4.3.9 Independence and onwards

Main articles: Republic of Mali and Mali Federation

After World War II, the French government under Charles de Gaulle granted the colony more and more freedom. After a period as part of the short-lived Mali Federation, the Republic of Mali was proclaimed on September 22, 1960. After 19 November 1968, a new constitution was created in 1974, making Mali a single-party state.[69]

By then, the canal linking the city with the Niger River had already been filled with sand from the encroaching desert. Severe droughts hit the Sahel region in 1973 and 1985, decimating the Tuareg population around Timbuktu who relied on goat herding. The Niger's water level dropped, postponing the arrival of food transport and trading vessels. The crisis drove many of the inhabitants of Tombouctou Region to Algeria and Libya. Those who stayed relied on humanitarian organizations such as UNICEF for food and water.[70]

4.3.10 Timbuktu today

Despite its illustrious history, modern-day Timbuktu is an impoverished town, poor even by Third World standards.[71][72] The population has grown an average 5.7% per year from 29,732 in 1998 to 54,453 in 2009.[1] As capital of the seventh Malian region, Tombouctou Region, Timbuktu is the seat of the current governor, Colonel Mamadou Mangara, who took over from Colonel Mamadou Togola in 2008. Mangara answers, as does each of the regional governors, to the Ministry of Territorial Administration & Local Communities.[73]

Current issues include dealing with both droughts and floods, the latter caused by an insufficient drainage system that fails to transport direct rainwater from the city centre. One such event damaged World Heritage property, killing two and injuring one in 2002.[74] Shifting of rain patterns due to climatic change and increased use of water for irrigation in the surrounding areas has led to water scarcity for agriculture and personal use.[75]

4.3.11 Malian civil war

Following increasing frustration within the armed forces over the Malian government's ineffective strategies to

suppress a Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali, a military coup on 21 March 2012 overthrew President Amadou Toumani Touré and overturned the 1992 constitution.[76] The Tuareg rebels of the MNLA and Ancar Dine took advantage of the confusion to make swift gains, and on 1 April 2012, Timbuktu was captured from the Malian military.[77]

On 3 April 2012, the BBC News reported that the Islamist rebel group Ansar Dine had started implementing its version of *sharia* in Timbuktu.[78] That day, ag Ghaly gave a radio interview in Timbuktu announcing that Sharia law would be enforced in the city, including the veiling of women, the stoning of adulterers, and the punitive mutilation of thieves. According to Timbuktu's mayor, the announcement caused nearly all of Timbuktu's Christian population to flee the city.[79]

The MNLA declared the independence of Azawad, containing Timbuktu, from Mali on 6 April 2012,[3] but was rapidly pushed aside by Islamist movements Ansar Dine and AQMI who installed sharia in the city and destroyed some of the burial chambers. In early June, a group of residents stated they had formed an armed militia to fight against the rebel occupation of the city. One member, a former army officer, stated that the proclaimer 'Patriots' Resistance Movement for the Liberation of Timbuktu' opposed the secession of northern Mali.[80] On 28 January 2013, French and Malian soldiers reclaimed Timbuktu with little or no resistance and reinstalled Malian governmental authorities.[81] Five days later, French President François Hollande accompanied by his Malian counterpart Dioncounda Traoré visited the city before heading to Bamako and were welcomed by an ecstatic population.[82]

The city has been attacked multiple times on several different occasions, once on 21 March 2013 when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives killing a Malian soldier, creating a fierce shoot-out at the international airport killing ten rebels. On 31 March, a group of 20 rebels infiltrated into Timbuktu as civilians and attacked the Malian army base in the city killing three Malian soldiers and injuring dozens more.

4.4   Geography

Timbuktu is located on the southern edge of the Sahara Desert 15 km (9 mi) north of the main channel of the River Niger. The town is surrounded by sand dunes and the streets are covered in sand. The port of Kabara is 8 km (5 mi) to the south of the town and is connected to an arm of the river by a 3 km (2 mi) canal. The canal had become heavily silted but in 2007 it was dredged as part of a Libyan financed project.[83]

The annual flood of the Niger River is a result of the heavy rainfall in the headwaters of the Niger and Bani rivers in Guinea and northern Côte d'Ivoire. The rainfall in these areas peaks in August but the flood water takes time to pass down the river system and through the Inner Niger Delta. At Koulikoro, 60 km (37 mi) downstream from Bamako, the flood peaks in September,[84] while in Timbuktu the flood lasts longer and usually reaches a maximum at the end of December.[85]

In the past, the area flooded by the river was more extensive and in years with high rainfall, floodwater would reach the western outskirts of Timbuktu itself.[86] A small navigable creek to the west of the town is shown on the maps published by Heinrich Barth in 1857[87] and Félix Dubois in 1896.[88] Between 1917 and 1921, during the colonial period, the French used forced labour to dig a narrow canal linking Timbuktu with Kabara.[89] Over the following decades this became silted and filled with sand, but in 2007 as part of the dredging project, the canal was re-excavated so that now when the River Niger floods, Timbuktu is again connected to Kabala.[83][90] The Malian government has promised to address problems with the design of the canal as it currently lacks footbridges and the steep unstable banks make access to the water difficult.[91]

Kabara can only function as a port in December to January when the river is in full flood. When the water levels are lower, boats dock at Korioumé which is linked to Timbuktu by 18 km (11 mi) of paved road.

4.5   Climate

The weather is hot and dry throughout much of the year. Average daily maximum temperatures in the hottest months of the year – April, May and June – exceed 40 °C (104 °F). Lowest temperatures occur during the Northern hemisphere winter – December, January and February. However, average maximum temperatures do not drop below 30 °C (86 °F). These "winter" months are characterized by a dry, dusty trade wind blowing from the Saharan Tibesti Region southward to the Gulf of Guinea: picking up dust particles on their way, these winds limit visibility in what has been dubbed the 'Harmattan Haze'.[92] Additionally, when the dust settles in the city, sand builds up and desertification looms.[75] Timbuktu's climate is classified as BWhw according to the Köppen Climate Classification: arid, with no month averaging below 0 °C (32 °F) and a dry season during winter.

4.6   Economy

4.6.1   Salt trade

The wealth and very existence of Timbuktu depended on its position as the southern terminus of an important trans-Saharan trade route; nowadays, the only goods that are routinely transported across the desert are slabs of

Azalai salt caravan

rock salt brought from the Taoudenni mining centre in the central Sahara 664 km (413 mi) north of Timbuktu. Until the second half of the 20th century most of the slabs were transported by large salt caravans or azalai, one leaving Timbuktu in early November and the other in late March.[95]

The caravans of several thousand camels took three weeks each way, transporting food to the miners and returning with each camel loaded with four or five 30 kg (66 lb) slabs of salt. The salt transport was largely controlled by the desert nomads of the Arabic-speaking Berabich (or Barabish) tribe.[96] Although there are no roads, the slabs of salt are now usually transported from Taoudenni by truck.[97] From Timbuktu the salt is transported by boat to other towns in Mali.

4.6.2 Agriculture

There is insufficient rainfall in the Timbuktu region for purely rain-fed agriculture and crops are therefore irrigated using water from the River Niger. The main agricultural crop is rice. African floating rice (*Oryza glaberrima*) has traditionally been grown in regions near the river that are inundated during the annual flood. Seed is sown at the beginning of the rainy season (June–July) so that when the flood water arrives plants are already 30 to 40 cm (12 to 16 in) in height.[98]

The plants grow up to three metres in height as the water level rises. The rice is harvested by canoe in December. The procedure is very precarious and the yields are low but the method has the advantage that little capital investment is required. A successful crop depends critically on the amount and timing of the rain in the wet season and the height of the flood. To a limited extent the arrival of the flood water can be controlled by the construction of small mud dikes that become submerged as the water rises.

Although floating rice is still cultivated in the Timbuktu Cercle, most of the rice is now grown in three relatively large irrigated areas that lie to the south of the town: Daye (392 ha), Koriomé (550 ha) and Hamadja (623 ha).[99] Water is pumped from the river using ten large Archimedes' screws which were first installed in the 1990s. The irrigated areas are run as cooperatives with approximately 2,100 families cultivating small plots.[100] Nearly all the rice produced is consumed by the families themselves. The yields are still relatively low and the farmers are being encouraged to change their agricultural practices.[101]

4.6.3 Tourism

Most tourists visit Timbuktu between November and February when the air temperature is lower. In the 1980s, accommodation for the small number of tourists was provided by two small hotels: Hotel Bouctou and Hotel Azalaï.[102] Over the following decades the tourist numbers increased so that by 2006 there were seven small hotels and guest houses.[99] The town benefited by the revenue from the CFA 5000 tourist tax,[99] by the sale of handicrafts and by the employment for the guides.

Attacks

Starting in 2008 the Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb began kidnapping groups of tourists in the Sahel region.[103] In January 2009, four tourists were kidnapped near the Mali-Niger border after attending a cultural festival at Anderamboukané.[104] One of these tourists was subsequently murdered.[105] As a result of this and various other incidents a number of states including France,[106] Britain[107] and the US,[108] began advising their citizens to avoid travelling far from Bamako. The number of tourists visiting Timbuktu dropped precipitously to around 6000 in 2009 and to only 492 in the first four months of 2011.[102]

Because of the security concerns, the Malian government moved the 2010 Festival in the Desert from Essakane to the outskirts of Timbuktu.[109][110] The festival was attended by 800 tourists in 2011.[111] In November 2011 gunmen attacked tourists staying at a hotel in Timbuktu, killing one of them and kidnapping three others.[112][113] This was the first terrorist incident in Timbuktu itself.

4.7 Legendary tales

Tales of Timbuktu's fabulous wealth helped prompt European exploration of the west coast of Africa. Among the most famous descriptions of Timbuktu are those of Leo Africanus and Shabeni.

4.7.1 Leo Africanus

The rich king of Tombuto hath many plates and sceptres of gold, some whereof weigh 1300 pounds. ... He hath always 3000 horsemen ... (and) a great store of doctors, judges, priests, and other learned men, that are bountifully maintained at the king's cost and charges.

Leo Africanus, *Descrittione dell' Africa*[9]

The inhabitants are very rich, especially the strangers who have settled in the country [..] But salt is in very short supply because it is carried here from Tegaza, some 500 miles (805 km) from Timbuktu. I happened to be in this city at a time when a load of salt sold for eighty ducats. The king has a rich treasure of coins and gold ingots.

Leo Africanus, *Descrittione dell' Africa* in Paul Brians' *Reading About the World*, Volume 2[114]

Perhaps most famous among the accounts written about Timbuktu is that by Leo Africanus. Born El Hasan ben Muhammed el- Wazzan-ez-Zayyati in Granada in 1485, his family was among the thousands of Muslims expelled by King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella after their reconquest of Spain in 1492. They settled in Morocco, where he studied in Fes and accompanied his uncle on diplomatic missions throughout North Africa. During these travels, he visited Timbuktu. As a young man he was captured by pirates and presented as an exceptionally learned slave to Pope Leo X, who freed him, baptized him under the name "Johannis Leo de Medici", and commissioned him to write, in Italian, a detailed survey of Africa. His accounts provided most of what Europeans knew about the continent for the next several centuries.[115] Describing Timbuktu when the Songhai empire was at its height, the English edition of his book includes the description:

According to Leo Africanus, there were abundant supplies of locally produced corn, cattle, milk and butter, though there were neither gardens nor orchards surrounding the city.[114] In another passage dedicated to describing the wealth of both the environment and the king, Africanus touches upon the rarity of some of Timbuktu's trade commodities: salt. These descriptions and passages alike caught the attention of European explorers. Africanus, though, also described the more mundane aspects of the city, such as the "cottages built of chalk, and covered with thatch" – although these went largely unheeded.[15]

4.7.2   Shabeni

The natives of the town of Timbuctoo may be computed at 40,000, exclusive of slaves and foreigners [..] The natives are all blacks: almost every stranger marries a female of the town, who are so beautiful that travellers often fall in love with them at first sight.

– Shabeni in James Grey Jackson's *An Account of Timbuctoo and Hausa*, 1820[116]

Roughly 250 years after Leo Africanus' visit to Timbuktu, the city had seen many rulers. The end of the 18th century saw the grip of the Moroccan rulers on the city wane,

resulting in a period of unstable government by quickly changing tribes. During the rule of one of those tribes, the Hausa, a 14-year old child from Tetouan accompanied his father on a visit to Timbuktu. Growing up a merchant, he was captured and eventually brought to England.[117]

Shabeni, or Asseed El Hage Abd Salam Shabeeny stayed in Timbuktu for three years before moving to Housa. Two years later, he returned to Timbuktu to live there for another seven years – one of a population that was even centuries after its peak and excluding slaves, double the size of the 21st-century town.

By the time Shabeni was 27, he was an established merchant in his hometown. Returning from a trademission to Hamburgh, his English ship was captured and brought to Ostende by a ship under Russian colours in December 1789. He was subsequently set free by the British consulate, but his ship set him ashore in Dover for fear of being captured again. Here, his story was recorded. Shabeeni gave an indication of the size of the city in the second half of the 18th century. In an earlier passage, he described an environment that was characterized by forest, as opposed to nowadays' arid surroundings.

4.8   In popular culture

In the imagination of Europeans and North Americans, Timbuktu is a place that bears with it a sense of mystery: a 2006 survey of 150 young Britons found 34% did not believe the town existed, while the other 66% considered it "a mythical place".[118] This sense has been acknowledged in literature describing African history and African-European relations.[8][119][120]

The origin of this mystification lies in the excitement brought to Europe by the legendary tales, especially those by Leo Africanus: Arabic sources focused mainly on more affluent cities in the Timbuktu region, such as Gao and Walata.[15] In West Africa the city holds an image that has been compared to Europe's view on Athens.[119] As such, the picture of the city as the epitome of distance and mystery is a European one.[8]

Down-to-earth-aspects in Africanus' descriptions were largely ignored and stories of great riches served as a catalyst for travellers to visit the inaccessible city – with prominent French explorer René Caillié characterising Timbuktu as "a mass of ill-looking houses built of earth".[121] Now opened up, many travellers acknowledged the unfitting description of an "African El Dorado".[75] This development shifted the city's reputation – from being fabled because of its gold to fabled because of its location and mystery:

Being used in this sense since at least 1863, English dictionaries now cite Timbuktu as a metaphor for any faraway place.[122] Long part of colloquial language, Timbuktu also found its way into literature: in Tom Robbins' novel *Half Asleep in Frog Pajamas*, Timbuktu provides

a central theme. One lead character, Larry Diamond, is vocally fascinated with the city.

In the stage play *Oliver!*, a 1960 musical, when the title character sings to Bet, "I'd do anything for you, dear", one of her responses is "Go to Timbuktu?" "And back again", Oliver responds.

In the Dr. Seuss book *Hop on Pop*, he says "My brothers read a little bit. Little words like If and it. My father can read big words, too. Like CONSTANTINOPLE and TIMBUKTU".

Similar uses of the city are found in movies, where it is used to indicate a place a person or good cannot be traced – in a Dutch Donald Duck comic subseries situated in Timbuktu, Donald Duck uses the city as a safe haven,[123] and in the 1970 Disney animated feature *The Aristocats*, cats are threatened with being sent to Timbuktu. It is mistakenly noted to be in French Equatorial Africa, instead of French West Africa.[124] Timbuktu has provided the main setting for at least one movie: the 1959 film *Timbuktu* was set in the city in 1940, although it was filmed in Kanab, Utah.

Ali Farka Touré inverted the stereotype: "For some people, when you say 'Timbuktu' it is like the end of the world, but that is not true. I am from Timbuktu, and I can tell you that we are right at the heart of the world."[125]

Timbuktu! was a 1978 Broadway musical based on the 1953 *Kismet*, which re-imagined the original, transposing it from an "Arabian Nights" setting to eleventh-century Mali.

4.9 Arts and culture

4.9.1 Cultural events

The most well-known cultural event is the Festival au Désert.[126] When the Tuareg rebellion ended in 1996 under the Konaré administration, 3,000 weapons were burned in a ceremony dubbed the Flame of Peace on 29 March 2007 – to commemorate the ceremony, a monument was built.[127] The Festival au Désert, to celebrate the peace treaty, is held near the city in January.[126]

4.9.2 World Heritage Site

During its twelfth session, in December 1988, the World Heritage Committee (WHC) selected parts of Timbuktu's historic centre for inscription on its World Heritage list.[128] The selection was based on three criteria:[129]

- Criterion II: Timbuktu's holy places were vital to early Islamization in Africa.

- Criterion IV: Timbuktu's mosques show a cultural

and scholarly Golden Age during the Songhay Empire.

- Criterion V: The construction of the mosques, still mostly original, shows the use of traditional building techniques.

An earlier nomination in 1979 failed the following year as it lacked proper demarcation:[129] the Malian government included the town of Timbuktu as a whole in the wish for inclusion.[130] Close to a decade later, three mosques and 16 mausoleums or cemeteries were selected from the Old Town for World Heritage status: with this conclusion came the call for protection of the buildings' conditions, an exclusion of new construction works near the sites and measures against the encroaching sand.

Shortly afterwards, the monuments were placed on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the Malian government, as suggested by the selection committee at the time of nomination.[128] The first period on the Danger List lasted from 1990 until 2005, when a range of measures including restoration work and the compilation of an inventory warranted "its removal from the Danger List".[131] In 2008 the WHC placed the protected area under increased scrutiny dubbed "reinforced monitoring", a measure made possible in 2007, as the impact of planned construction work was unclear. Special attention was given to the build of a cultural centre.[132]

During a session in June 2009, UNESCO decided to cease its increased monitoring program as it felt sufficient progress had been made to address the initial concerns.[133] Following the takeover of Timbuktu by MNLA and the Islamist group Ansar Dine, it was returned to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2012.[134]

4.9.3 Islamist attacks

Further information: Islamist destruction of Timbuktu heritage sites

In May 2012, Ansar Dine destroyed a shrine in the city[135] and in June 2012, in the aftermath of the Battle of Gao and Timbuktu, other shrines, including the mausoleum of Sidi Mahmoud, were destroyed when attacked with shovels and pickaxes by members of the same group.[134] An Ansar Dine spokesman said that *all* shrines in the city, including the 13 remaining World Heritage sites, would be destroyed because they consider them to be examples of idolatry, a sin in Islam.[134][136] These acts have been described as crimes against humanity and war crimes.[137] After the destruction of the tombs, UNESCO created a special fund to safeguard Mali's World Heritage Sites, vowing to carry out reconstruction and rehabilitation projects once the security situation allows.[138]

4.10   Education

"*If the University of Sankore [...] had survived the ravages of foreign invasions, the academic and cultural history of Africa might have been different from what it is today.*"

– Kwame Nkrumah at the University of Ghana inauguration, 1961[127]

4.10.1   Centre of learning
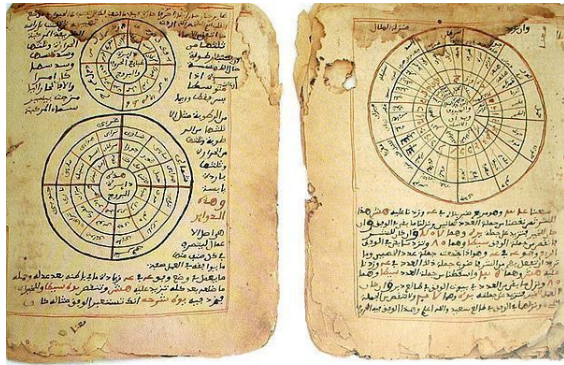
The Timbuktu Manuscripts showing both mathematics and a heritage of astronomy in medieval Islam.

Timbuktu was a world centre of Islamic learning from the 13th to the 17th century, especially under the Mali Empire and Askia Mohammad I's rule. The Malian government and NGOs have been working to catalog and restore the remnants of this scholarly legacy: Timbuktu's manuscripts.[139]

Timbuktu's rapid economic growth in the 13th and 14th centuries drew many scholars from nearby Walata (today in Mauretania,[140] leading up to the city's golden age in the 15th and 16th centuries that proved fertile ground for scholarship of religions, arts and sciences. An active trade in books between Timbuktu and other parts of the Islamic world and emperor Askia Mohammed's strong support led to the writing of thousands of manuscripts.[141]

Knowledge was gathered in a manner similar to the early, informal European Medieval university model.[140] Lecturing was presented through a range of informal institutions called madrasahs.[142] Nowadays known as the University of Timbuktu, three *madrasahs* facilitated 25,000 students: Djinguereber, Sidi Yahya and Sankore.[143]

These institutions were explicitly religious, as opposed to the more secular curricula of modern European universities and more similar to the medieval Europe model. However, where universities in the European sense started as associations of students and teachers, West-African education was patronized by families or lineages, with the Aqit and Bunu al-Qadi al-Hajj families being two of the most prominent in Timbuktu – these fam-

ilies also facilitated students is set-aside rooms in their housings.[144] Although the basis of Islamic law and its teaching were brought to Timbuktu from North Africa with the spread of Islam, Western African scholarship developed: Ahmad Baba al Massufi is regarded as the city's greatest scholar.[52] Over time however, the share of patrons that originated from or identified themselves as West-Africans decreased.

Timbuktu served in this process as a distribution centre of scholars and scholarship. Its reliance on trade meant intensive movement of scholars between the city and its extensive network of trade partners. In 1468–1469 though, many scholars left for Walata when Sunni Ali's Songhay Empire absorbed Timbuktu and again in 1591 with the Moroccan occupation.[140]

This system of education survived until the late 19th century, while the 18th century saw the institution of itinerant Quranic school as a form of universal education, where scholars would travel throughout the region with their students, begging for food part of the day.[139] Islamic education came under pressure after the French occupation, droughts in the 70s and 80s and by Mali's civil war in the early 90s.[139]

4.10.2   Manuscripts and libraries

Moorish marabout of the Kuntua tribe, an ethnic Kounta clan, from which the Al Kounti manuscript collection derives its name. Dated 1898.

Main article: Timbuktu Manuscripts

Hundreds of thousands of manuscripts were collected in

Timbuktu over the course of centuries: some were written in the town itself, others – including exclusive copies of the Qur'an for wealthy families – imported through the lively booktrade.

Hidden in cellars or buried, hid between the mosque's mud walls and safeguarded by their patrons, many of these manuscripts survived the city's decline. They now form the collection of several libraries in Timbuktu, holding up to 700,000 manuscripts:[145] In late January 2013 it was reported that rebel forces destroyed many of the manuscripts before leaving the city.[146][147] However there was no malicious destruction of any library or collection as most of the manuscripts were safely hidden away.[148][149][150][151]

- Ahmed Baba Institute
- Mamma Haidara Library
- Fondo Kati
- Al-Wangari Library
- Mohamed Tahar Library
- Maigala Library
- Boularaf Collection
- Al Kounti Collections

These libraries are the largest among up to 60 private or public libraries that are estimated to exist in Timbuktu today, although some comprise little more than a row of books on a shelf or a bookchest.[152] Under these circumstances, the manuscripts are vulnerable to damage and theft, as well as long term climate damage, despite Timbuktu's arid climate. Two Timbuktu Manuscripts Projects funded by independent universities have aimed to preserve them.

4.11   Language

Although French is Mali's official language, today the large majority of Timbuktu's inhabitants speaks Koyra Chiini, a Songhay language that also functions as the lingua franca. Before the 1990–1994 Tuareg rebellion, both Hassaniya Arabic and Tamashek were represented by 10% each to an 80% dominance of the Koyra Chiini language. With Tamashek spoken by both Ikelan and ethnic Tuaregs, its use declined with the expulsion of many Tuaregs following the rebellion, increasing the dominance of Koyra Chiini.[153]

Arabic, introduced together with Islam during the 11th century, has mainly been the language of scholars and religion, comparable to Latin in Christianity.[154] Although Bambara is spoken by the most numerous ethnic group in Mali, the Bambara people, it is mainly confined to the

south of the country. With an improving infrastructure granting Timbuktu access to larger cities in Mali's South, use of Bambara was increasing in the city at least until Azawad independence.[153]

4.12   Infrastructure

With no railroads in Mali except for the Dakar-Niger Railway up to Koulikoro, access to Timbuktu is by road, boat or, since 1961, plane.[155] With high water levels in the Niger from August to December, Compagnie Malienne de Navigation (COMANAV) passenger ferries operate a leg between Koulikoro and downstream Gao on a roughly weekly basis. Also requiring high water are *pinasses* (large motorized pirogues), either chartered or public, that travel up and down the river.[156]

Both ferries and *pinasses* arrive at Korioumé, Timbuktu's port, which is linked to the city centre by an 18 km (11 mi) paved road running through Kabara. In 2007, access to Timbuktu's traditional port, Kabara, was restored by a Libyan funded project that dredged the 3 km (2 mi) silted canal connecting Kabara to an arm of the Niger River. COMANAV ferries and *pinassses* are now able to reach the port when the river is in full flood.[83][157]

Timbuktu is poorly connected to the Malian road network with only dirt roads to the neighbouring towns. Although the Niger River can be crossed by ferry at Korioumé, the roads south of the river are no better. However, a new paved road of is under construction between Niono and Timbuktu running to the north of the Inland Niger Delta. The 565 km (351 mi) road will pass through Nampala, Léré, Niafunké, Tonka, Diré and Goundam.[158][159] The completed 81 km (50 mi) section between Niono and the small village of Goma Coura was financed by the Millennium Challenge Corporation.[160] This new section will service the Alatona irrigation system development of the Office du Niger.[161] The 484 km (301 mi) section between Goma Coura and Timbuktu is being financed by the European Development Fund.[158]

Timbuktu Airport is served by both Air Mali and Mali Air Express, hosting flights to and from Bamako, Gao and Mopti.[156] Its 6,923 ft (2,110 m) runway in a 07/25 runway orientation is both lighted and paved.[162]

4.13   Sister cities

Timbuktu is a sister city to the following cities:[163]

- 🇩🇪 Chemnitz, Germany
- 🏴󠁧󠁢󠁷󠁬󠁳󠁿 Hay-on-Wye, Wales, United Kingdom
- 🇹🇳 Kairuan, Tunisia
- 🇲🇦 Marrakech, Morocco

- 🟦🟥 Saintes, France

4.14   See also

- List of cities in Mali

4.15   Notes

[1] *Resultats Provisoires RGPH 2009 (Région de Tombouctou)*, République de Mali: Institut National de la Statistique

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- Saharan Archaeological Research Association – *contains information on the archaeological projects targeting the Iron Age occupation of Timbuktu*

- Ancient West Africa's Megacities – *contains video footage of Timbuktu's Iron Age occupation*

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- Timbuktu on Global Heritage Network – *early warning and threat monitoring system for endangered cultural heritage sites*

- Presentation showing images of Timbuktu

- ArchNet.org.   "Timbuctu".   Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA: MIT School of Architecture and Planning.

4.19 Text and image sources, contributors, and licenses

4.19.1 Text

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