The Hidden Treasures of Timbuktu
Historic City of Islamic Africa

With 193 colour illustrations
Before the era of European colonization, political correspondence between the Islamic rulers of the Middle Niger region and beyond was typically conducted in Arabic. This letter written in the mid-16th century was from the emir of Timbuktu, Abd al-Qadir b. Muhammad al-Sanusi al-Timukti, to the “emir of the believers”, Ahmadu Ahmadu, ruler of the Islamic state of Hamdallahi in Masina, southeast of Timbuktu. From the Mammoh Haldara Library.

A Koura calligrapher in Timbuktu inscribes the opening verse of the Koran on a wooden writing board.

Following pages: Abdoul Wahid Haldara, Director of the Mohamed Tahir Library in Timbuktu, opens up a trunkful of manuscripts recently inherited from his father. There are doubtless many more such private collections still to come to light across the region.

Edited in collaboration with Abdelaziz Asid, Clover Jebeen, Afrika, Gunnar Berge, Albrecht Hoffmeier, Mohammed Maghrawi, Bernard Salviac, Charles Stewart, Knut Vågø and Amanda Vinicombe

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