Above Timbuktu’s Sankore Mosque, built in the 14th century with funding from a woman of the Aghlan, a religious Tuareg tribe. The Sankore quarter in the northeast of the city became a dwelling place for scholars and teachers. It was in the homes of these scholars that the city’s libraries were first created.

Opposite The Djingereber ('Great Mosque') of Timbuktu was constructed in 1335 under the supervision of the Andalusi poet-architect Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Sahili, who accompanied the Malian Emperor Mansa Musa on his return from Mecca.
Previous page: The Great Mosque of Djenne is said to be the largest adobe structure in the world. It was built in 1907 during the period of French colonial rule, after the original mosque on the site was destroyed in 1814 on the orders of Ahmadu Lobbo. Djenne and Timbuktu are sister cities, rivalling each other as centres of commerce and Islamic learning for a thousand years.

Opposite: Baobab trees, typical of the area around Segu, which lies southwest of Timbuktu, upstream on the River Niger. Segu was the capital of the kingdom of the Bambara, one of the various peoples who have levied tribute upon Timbuktu through its history.

Above: A Timbuktu street at sunset. The town's population today is around 30,000, though this fluctuates annually and seasonally according to events: the arrival of the caravan, a religious festival, the tourist season, conflict or drought.