

[They] were not naturally disposed toward intellectual tasks or moral improvement. But it has become fashionable to follow the example of Bu El Mogdad, the qadi and the indigenous interpreters. Piety, the knowledge of Muslim law, the *hadith*, and the commentaries have, bit by bit, acquired an important place in the world of the Muslim traders, after their professional occupations, and the same concerns have spread among the larger populace.<sup>18</sup>

The traders were important forces for islamization and incorporation into the colonial framework at the turn of the century. I will return to these important themes later in the chapter. At this point I wish to suggest the outlines of the trading networks across a series of family biographies that demonstrate how these men, their wives, and descendants served as mediators of knowledge and actors on the Senegalo-Mauritanian stage.

#### MERCHANT FAMILIES

Constructing the biographies of selected French officials in chapter 3 was relatively easy, thanks in part to personnel files in the colonial and military archives. Sketching the profiles of the “official Muslims” of chapter 4 was not a great deal more difficult, given their prominence in diplomatic missions and the public life of Saint-Louis. The vignettes of the merchants who follow require more diligent research. What I have done below, for a few selected families, is to piece together brief citations in the archives and official publications such as the *Annuaire du Sénégal et Dépendances*, and brief recollections in oral history or memoir, to make a kind of collage. Most of the individuals and families developed their careers in the “river” network, extending from the Upper Senegal down to Rosso, at the edge of Walo, Trarza, and Futa. The reconstructions show patterns of remarkable continuity and development across the generations, a strong Saint-Louisian identity, close relations with the administration and the Saint-Louis elite, and the accumulation of several kinds of capital over time.<sup>19</sup>

The first family under consideration are the Gueye (see fig. 6.1), best known in contemporary Senegal as the maternal ancestors of Lamine Gueye. The founder was Waly Bandia, who set up his operations in Bakel in the upper Senegal. By the mid nineteenth century, he had a large store well located near the main square and principal Bordeaux houses. He was conducting a thriving business in gum, cloth, guns, millet, and other products with the *bidan* of the right bank. His