M.-C. Cormier-Salem—Between Land and Sea: Seafishing and the Evolution of the Systems of Production in Casamance.

Up to the 19th century, the marine resources of Casamance, the southern region of Senegal, were neglected; the fishermen were migrants from other Senegalese coastal regions. The local populations of Casamance, especially the Diola communities whose farming system is mainly based on rice-culture, have taken up seafishing only two decades ago. This paper focuses on the ecological, political, social and economic factors leading to this conversion founding its argument on the differentiation between the relations to fishing and the relations to the sea according to the coastal societies. This article also shows that the traditional use, by rural communities, of inland aquatic spaces in lower Casamance created true “aquatic territories”. This traditional management is now threatened by the environmental changes (the Sahel drought) but mostly by rural migrations to the cities. These changes will affect the relationship between fishing and agriculture and, in this context, a new way of running aquatic spaces will take place including the splitting of former “territories”.

P. C. W. Gutkind — Les piroguiers de la Côte de l’Or (Ghana) : enquête et recherche d’histoire du travail en Afrique précoloniale.

Les piroguiers de la Côte de l’Or, dont les activités débutèrent vers la fin du XVe siècle avec l’arrivée des Portugais et avant que ne soient construits des ports, chargeaient et déchargeaient les navires ancrés en rade. Outre le transport de la cargaison et des passagers, les piroguiers participaient activement à la traite des esclaves. Ils représentaient une force de travail indispensable dont l’utilité fut reconnue par les Portugais, les Hollandais, les Anglais, les Danois, les Français et les Brandebourgeois. L’article décrit la naissance de cette main-d’œuvre qui, bien que limitée, jouait un rôle capital dans le commerce d’importation de tissus, de fer, d’objets métalliques, de nourriture, et d’une masse de fournitures (matériaux de construction entre autres) que nécessitaient les installations européennes. De surcroît, les piroguiers étaient souvent le seul lien existant entre les différents établissements européens. L’article est essentiellement consacré à l’étude de la conscience de classe de ces travailleurs dont la plupart étaient également des pêcheurs, et a pour dessein de montrer que l’histoire du travail en Afrique précoloniale est un domaine nouveau et prometteur pour la recherche.

A. Sinou—Saint-Louis of Senegal at the Beginning of the 19th Century: From Trading Post to City.

The layout of several sub-Saharan African cities can be referred to models imported from Europe. Long before colonization however, urbanization had taken form around trading post (comptoirs) along the coast. For more than a century, original types of spatial organizations and practices developed there. Though neither well-known nor formalized, these did not vanish with colonization but strongly affected the forms of production of towns, as this history of the development of Saint-Louis in the early 19th century shows.

J. Devisse—Africans, the Sea and Historians.

Most historians have written that Africans turned away from the sea out of fear. Very few sources can help us draw up a serious long-term history of Africans and the sea. For several millennia, coastal activities involved actively gathering shell-fish and then fishing itself; but we cannot conclude that maritime activities were highly developed, since the inhabitants continued finding their resources on the continent. We can clearly observe maritime activities during the past two millennia, first in eastern and then in western Africa. In the western part of the Indian Ocean, Africans were much involved in exchanges and navigation between Madagascar and Aden; and in West Africa, recent research has shown that they had begun venturing out on the high sea before the arrival of the Portuguese. A new methodology has to be drawn up if research on this topic is to advance.

C. Fioupo—Power on Stage: Political and Religious Contortions in Soyinka’s Dramas.

The major themes, identified herein, of Wole Soyinka’s theatrical works take the form of allegories of good and evil, and of cruelty. As Soyinka’s whole work centers around the political and religious contortions of African leaders, it turns out to be an extremely fierce satire of the powers that be. Though dealing exclusively with Africa, Soyinka uses Western theatrical schemata, borrowed in particular from Genet and Brecht. Beyond the purely literary aspects of his theater, a clear statement is made about politics in sub-Saharan Africa.