

LUKANKA

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(Miskito for “Thoughts”)

Pre-emptive wars, climate change, bacterial and viral pandemics, and the unstable global economy all find their roots in the rush of development and the capital-centered, commodity-centered economy of the modern state system. Socialism and capitalism are the modern systems of economy directly connected to the various threats that now dominate regional and global affairs. These economic theories buttress the modern system of states that was established by the Roman Catholic Church negotiated Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 that is now tested as it has never been tested before. Teetering on the brink of breakdown, the many of the world’s states are either bankrupt, ruled by narco-criminal regimes, or have simply collapsed all-together.

The most observable aspect of the state-system breakdown is recognized as environmental breakdown—pollution, commodification of plant, animal and other forms of life and the disruption of cultural societies in the Fourth World.

Contributors to this issue of the Fourth World Journal touch on some of the central controversies involved in environmental breakdown. Enactment of international property rights agreements that states’ governments fail to enforce contribute to threats to the global commons by systematically undermining Fourth World cultures. Corporations overwhelm or buy-out states’ governments to gain access to Fourth World lands and resources. Wars are preemptively launched in violation of the United Nations Charter resulting in substantial environmental damage as well as cultural dislocation of Fourth World nations.

Social Justice attorney and former CWIS Fellow **Valeria A. Gheorghiu** argues in a groundbreaking legal analysis “Sailing the Seas of Treaties,” a thorough expose of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture that bears considerable importance to Fourth World nations as metropolitan populations. Working in India during the summer of 2005 Ms. Gheorghiu was called upon to encourage the Indian government to comply with the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture it had signed with other states. Fourth World nations in India would be beneficiaries of India’s lawful compliance with this agreement. Her analysis is a product of that important work.

Dr. Richard S. Mbatu, a CWIS Associate Scholar, draws on his personal knowledge and scholarship to discuss the affects of resource commodification on the Ogoni peoples of the Delta region of Nigeria and the Bakola-Bagyeli Pygmy of Cameroon. Oil is the commodity sought by trans-state corporations and his analysis demonstrates the adverse consequences of commercial exploitation in Fourth World territories. He points to strong efforts by these nations to pursue environmental justice, economic stability and social welfare.

Weihua Tan, of the Research Institute of anthropology and ethnology, University of Jishou City, Hunan Province, China beautifully illustrates and comments on the “Miao Drum Culture and its Social Function,” she points to the significance of Miao culture as a mediating force for environmental and social balance. Her piece strongly supports the often argued point that Fourth World cultures are essential to climate and environmental balance supporting life in the commons.

Long-time contributor **Joseph Fallon** sounds an alarm about the collapse of United States government foreign policy. Drawing on his personal knowledge of the Middle East Fallon critiques globalization and economically motivated preemptive wars launched by the United States; and directs our attention to political and economic blowback that is demonstrably a product of destabilized Fourth World nations.

Finally, I offer up my review of **Charles C. Mann’s 1491**, a popular but surprisingly dense discussion of pre-Columbian western hemispheric history. Mann’s pre-Columbian history is an unusual subject that has great relevance for the present-day debates about the environment, social justice, and war. I like this book and consider it a valuable

contribution to our understanding of the future of Fourth World nations in the western hemisphere as we come to understand their past.