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Amazonian Indigenous Tradition in Conflict with the Oil Economy

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Abstract

The Sápara people, a 600 person community indigenous to the Sur Oriente region of the Amazon Basin, is currently in conflict with the oil industry that dominates the Ecuadorian economy. The UNESCO recognized tribe bases their livelihoods and religion on the habitat of their ancestral land, which has been classified by ecologists as *diversity maxima*—the most biodiverse ecosystem in the world. They utilize the natural flora of their forest to insight visions considered to be religious experiences, and they believe that their souls are reincarnated as the plants and animals around them, many of which are only found in their specific rainforest valley.

Nonetheless, their culture and beliefs are now challenged by President Rafael Correa and the Ecuadorian Government's approval for Andes Petroleum Oil Company, a subsidiary of the China National Petroleum Corporation, the second largest oil company in the world, to drill within their sacred territory. The government has disregarded the laws protecting their land, and in an act of environmental racism, threaten deforestation, pollution, and the removal of the rights to their land under emanate domain.. The Sápara people believe the death of their rainforest will be the death of their religion, their culture, their souls, and the souls of their ancestors. If the oil economy defeats them, their physical and spiritual world will cease to exist.

Screening Requirements: A projector, screen, and computer with Powerpoint.