

# **The Struggles of Indigenous Peoples and the Discourse of Empire and power in the Council of Niceae**

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## ***Abstrak***

This paper will examine the Struggle of Indigenous Peoples in the struggle for their living space due to power and the discourse of power in the Council of Nicaea. The paper will begin by showing how indigenous peoples experience injustice due to empire and power. This paper shows how the discourse of power is always present in the era even though in different forms. It is undeniable that the Nicene Creed is part of the most important ecumenical discovery but it does not mean without notes, so that everyone feels part of the Body of Christ. Understanding the relationship between the Council of Nicaea, indigenous injustice, and decolonialism can help us recognize Recurring Patterns. By understanding how power, religion, and cultural identity have interacted throughout history, we can better recognize recurring patterns in contemporary conflicts. We can also understand the historical roots of injustice, which can help us build more just and inclusive societies. By understanding the process of decolonialism, we can more effectively support indigenous peoples in their struggles for their rights. By using qualitative methods, this paper will be presented.

*Keyword : Indigenous People, Niceae Council, Empire, Power.*

## **Introduction**

Since March 2024 until now in the last month of President Jokowi's second term, there have been repeated waves of demonstrations from Indigenous Peoples throughout Indonesia in various places.<sup>1</sup> These demonstrations have occurred periodically until now in various places in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup> The demonstrations demanded that the Indigenous Peoples bill be passed. The Indigenous Peoples have been waiting for approximately 15 years since 2009 when they were included in the queue to be passed in the legislative direction. The Indigenous Peoples have to swallow a bitter pill again, because their wait has not been fulfilled. Two Presidents with two repeated terms have made the Indigenous Peoples restless. In fact, President Jokowi is one of the presidents expected by the Indigenous Peoples because of his background as a non-bureaucrat or military person, so that almost 12 million Indigenous Peoples' votes were committed to President

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.mongabay.co.id/2024/03/14/ruu-masyarakat-adat-tak-ada-kejelasan-aman-gugat-presiden-dan-dpr/> and <https://mediaindonesia.com/humaniora/691961/20-tahun-tak-kunjung-rampung-ruu-masyarakat-hukum-adat-mendesak-disahkan>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.aman.or.id/news/read/1929>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

Jokowi.<sup>3</sup> But until August 18, 2024, President Jokowi's last state speech on Indonesia's Birthday, not a single phrase was found about Indigenous Peoples.<sup>4</sup> The speech contained figures claiming success during Jokowi's leadership period, which were figures obtained through oppression of indigenous communities.<sup>5</sup>

Indigenous peoples in Indonesia are social groups that have inhabited a certain area for a long time, have unique social, economic, and cultural systems, and have a special relationship with the natural environment in which they live. They are the guardians of traditions, local knowledge, and invaluable biodiversity. The Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago explains that Indigenous Peoples are groups of people who have a history of origin and have occupied customary areas for generations. Indigenous Peoples have sovereignty over land and natural resources, socio-cultural life regulated by customary law, and customary institutions that maintain the sustainability of the life of Indigenous Peoples as indigenous communities.<sup>6</sup> The draft law on Indigenous Peoples explains that Indigenous Peoples are a group of people who have lived for generations in a certain geographical area, have ancestral origins and/or common residence, cultural identity, customary law, a strong relationship with land and the environment, and a value system that determines economic, political, social, cultural, and legal institutions.<sup>7</sup> The draft law has complete recognition of Indigenous Peoples and can be a reference for upholding the struggle for justice for indigenous peoples throughout Indonesia. However, this has not been realized until now due to economic, political and power interests that have made indigenous peoples victims.

Economy, Politics, and Power are three complex factors that are interrelated with each other, and sometimes become the background of various major events in various parts of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c4nk4k0q70ro>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

<sup>4</sup> See <https://betahita.id/news/detail/10538/frasa-masyarakat-adat-absen-di-pidato-kenegaraan-jokowi.html?v=1723937372>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://setkab.go.id/pidato-kenegaraan-pada-sidang-tahunan-mpr-ri-dan-sidang-bersama-dpr-dan-dpd-ri-dalam-rangka-hut-ke-79-proklamasi-kemerdekaan-ri-di-gedung-nusantara-i-kompleks-perkantoran-mpr-dpr-dpd-ri-senayan-pro/>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://aman.or.id/news/read/1267>, accessed on 25 September 2024.

<sup>7</sup> See Rancangan Undang-Undang Masyarakat from <https://berkas.dpr.go.id/akd/dokumen/RJ2-20171106-094054-7086.pdf>, accessed on 26 September 2024.

Power is used to influence political and economic policies to protect the interests of certain groups. Behind the curtain that is revealed, we can see how economic, political, and power interests play their role in producing a decision that benefits and protects the ruler. The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD on the initiative of Emperor Constantine the Great, is an important milestone in the history of Christianity. This large meeting of bishops not only discussed theological doctrine, but also implied the complex dynamics of power between church and state under the auspices of the Roman Empire. The main purpose of the council was to unite the Church and provide a clear definition of Christian doctrine. However, the decisions resulting from this council had broad implications for the history of missions and evangelism, which were then utilized in the context of colonialism. *This paper will try to explain the relationship between the struggles of Indigenous people, Missions and the Council of Nicaea in the framework of the discourse of power.*

## **Method**

This paper uses a qualitative research method, with the literature used in the form of literature from the fields of Theology and Culture to explain the three things that have been mentioned above in the introduction. Literature from the field of Theology is used to explain the Council of Nicaea and the Mission, and literature from culture to explain indigenous peoples. Several libraries are also used to explain how power factors link these events, as well as provide confirmation in an effort to answer the objectives of the paper.

## **Discussion**

The current condition of indigenous peoples in Indonesia is very diverse and complex. On the one hand, we see efforts to recognize and protect the rights of indigenous peoples through various government policies and civil society movements. However, on the other hand, indigenous peoples still face various challenges. The confiscation of land and customary territories is the most urgent problem faced by indigenous peoples in various parts of the world, including in Indonesia. Indigenous peoples are also often victims of human rights violations, such as criminalization, intimidation, and violence. This happens because they are often considered as obstacles to the economic and political interests of certain groups. These things make their cultural identity and traditional knowledge disappear.

In a publication conducted by the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago as a year-end note, it was revealed that 2,578,073 Ha of indigenous territories throughout Indonesia were seized by the state and corporations in the name of investment. According to the data presented, cases of seizure of indigenous territories were mostly accompanied by violence and criminalization.<sup>8</sup> In analyzing these cases, the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago even explained that, if in the previous year the seizure of indigenous territories was used for industrial interests such as mining and forestry, in 2023 the seizure of indigenous territories was used for broader interests.<sup>9</sup> And even these interests use the words green economy or renewable energy. This is the same as a form of green colonialism.

The roots of green colonialism date back to the colonial era, when European powers used environmental arguments to justify the exploitation of natural resources and the subjugation of indigenous peoples. Green colonialism is closely tied to the Green Revolution. Although the Green Revolution was intended to increase agricultural productivity, it had negative consequences for many developing countries. It led to a reliance on Western technology and ideas, which changed local food systems and contributed to environmental degradation.<sup>10</sup> These activities were legitimized by governments using the discourse of sustainable development. The discourse of sustainable development, while often presented as a progressive and equitable approach, can also be used to perpetuate existing power imbalances. It can be used to justify the imposition of Western environmental standards on developing countries, while ignoring their own cultural and ecological knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Green colonialism is a phenomenon in which environmental conservation and sustainable development practices are used as a tool to control natural resources in developing countries, often at the expense of the rights and interests of indigenous peoples. The relationship between green colonialism and indigenous peoples is complex and has significant impacts. In fact, indigenous peoples in Indonesia have a very important role in maintaining biodiversity, preserving culture, and maintaining environmental balance.

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<sup>8</sup> See Catatan Akhir Aliansi Masyarakat Adat Nusantara. Masyarakat Adat di Tahun Politik : Di Tengah Hukum Represif dan Cengkraman Oligarki. See <https://aman.or.id/files/publication-documentation/39048CATAHU%20AMAN%202023%20-%20LYTD.pdf>. Page 5 – 6, accessed on 26 September 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.,

<sup>10</sup> Guillaume Blanc, *The Invention of Green Colonialism*, 2022 (Polity : Cambridge), P. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Pete, Paul Robbins, and Michael Watts, *Global Nature*, in *Global Politic Ecology*. 2011 (Routledge : USA & Canada), p. 5 – 7.

### **a. Indigenous Peoples' Living Space: More than just a place to live.**

For Indigenous Peoples, the territory that they have inhabited and managed for generations is the heart of their identity, knowledge, and life practices. Indigenous peoples have a very close relationship with nature. They understand the cycles of nature, utilize natural resources sustainably, and have in-depth knowledge of the plants, animals, and ecosystems around them. Indigenous peoples have a unique local knowledge system, which is passed down from generation to generation. This knowledge includes how to farm, hunt, process food, traditional medicine, and various other aspects of life. The living space of indigenous peoples is also a container for their social and cultural systems. Here, they carry out rituals, traditional ceremonies, and various other social activities that strengthen the identity and values of the community. Aholiab in Cermin Eksisi Masyarakat Kepulauan dalam Pembangunan Bangsa, explains that the Maluku people as an island society see land and sea as an inseparable whole. This wholeness is patterned in the system of reason, belief system, and belief system that is clearly depicted in the cosmology and local knowledge of the Maluku people.<sup>12</sup> So that the living space of indigenous peoples is not just a certain area with certain boundaries, but a complete and complex system that is interrelated between humans, nature and culture.

Indigenous territories are an integral part of the living space of indigenous peoples. These are areas traditionally owned and managed by indigenous peoples, and often have clear boundaries that are respected by the surrounding communities. This is why indigenous peoples' living spaces are so important. Indigenous peoples are often the guardians of forests, wetlands, and other ecosystems rich in biodiversity. Indigenous peoples' local knowledge is invaluable in addressing global challenges, such as climate change and environmental degradation. Indigenous peoples' living spaces are where they feel safe, rooted, and in control of their lives. Indigenous peoples' living spaces are the foundation of their cultural identity. One of the biggest threats is the grabbing of indigenous lands and territories for development, plantations, and mining. Climate change, over-exploitation of natural resources, and pollution threaten the sustainability of indigenous peoples' living environments. Modernization and globalization often bring rapid and fundamental

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<sup>12</sup> Aholiab Watloly. Cerminan Eksistensi Masyarakat Kepulauan dalam Pembangunan bangsa: Perspektif Indigenous orang Maluku. (PT.Intimedia Ciptanusantara: Jakarta) 2013, page 46 – 47.

changes to the lives of indigenous peoples, threatening their traditional values and practices. Indigenous peoples' living spaces are a valuable asset for Indonesia and the world. Through a deeper understanding of indigenous peoples' living spaces, we can appreciate Indonesia's cultural and natural diversity, and contribute to sustainable development.

**b. Injustice to the Living Space of Indigenous Peoples: The Story of the Seti Indigenous People, Central Maluku.**

Land and indigenous peoples have a very close and inseparable relationship. For many indigenous peoples around the world, land is not just a natural resource or economic asset, but the heart of their identity, culture, and spirituality. Land is the place of origin, ancestors, and the long history of an indigenous community. Through land, they bind themselves to the past and build their collective identity and self-identity. Land is even related to the beliefs of Indigenous Peoples to sacred spiritual power. Indigenous rituals are often carried out in certain places that are considered to have high spiritual value. Land provides natural resources needed for the survival of indigenous peoples, such as food, medicine, and building materials.<sup>13</sup>

Indigenous peoples have traditional knowledge about sustainable environmental management. They understand that the balance between humans and nature is essential for collective survival. Unfortunately, indigenous lands are often the target of conflict and exploitation. Large-scale infrastructure, mining, and plantation developments often displace indigenous peoples from their lands. The growth of cities and the expansion of urban areas also threaten the existence of indigenous lands. Climate change is causing more frequent natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, and landslides, which have an impact on the lives of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples, as groups that have interacted closely with nature for centuries, are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Climate change is not only changing their physical environment, but also disrupting the social, cultural, and economic order that has been established for generations.<sup>14</sup>

The story of the Seti Community is real evidence of how injustice towards the space of Indigenous communities continues to occur. Seti is one of the indigenous community groups with the Tewa/Seti language group. Seti is located in the North East Seram Seti sub-district, part of the

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., Watloly., page. 48 - 49

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., page.50

North East Seram island including the Central Maluku district - Maluku Province, East Indonesia. The Seti community knows their land as Setwa, which means peace, but some also interpret it as originating from animals in the forest. Mount Luba is their original place of residence. The traditional way of life that is still held by the Seti community is seen in everyday life. Customs play a large role in the daily life of the Seti community, the community still lives in the role of clans. Their government structure in traditional villages or called negeri is a form of customary government with a traditional structure. Several clans from the Seti community still live in the mountains which they consider to be their "Old Village" (Ambon-Malay: First Village) and several clan groups are still very traditional by living a nomadic lifestyle.<sup>15</sup>

Since 1983, transmigration began on Seram Island, especially in the northern part of Seram Island. Since then, the influx of immigrant communities from outside Maluku (islands outside Maluku Province) has continued to arrive. Transmigration (from Dutch: transmigratie) is a program created by the Indonesian government to move residents from a densely populated area (city) to another area (village) in Indonesia. People who participate in the transmigration program are called transmigrants. The official goal of the program is to reduce poverty and population density on Java and provide opportunities for people who want to work, as well as meet the need for labor to process resources on other islands.<sup>16</sup>

The transmigration program has received a lot of criticism from local communities whose areas are targeted by the transmigration program, because there are still many other agendas besides population distribution, namely natural resource exploration. The latest data from government data regarding the population in the Seti area is 14,293 people and the indigenous population of Seti is only 2,445 people or 15% of the total population in the North East Seram Seti sub-district (Central Maluku in Figures: 2023). This greatly affects the democratic process and policy making in regional development. The Seti Indigenous Community only makes up 15% of the figure, in fulfilling the program's needs. A complementary figure among the majority of existing figures. They become foreigners in their own customary land.<sup>17</sup>

Since 1983, when the transmigration program was carried out, the Seti indigenous people were forced to move and leave all their ways of life, even their land was taken over by the

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<sup>15</sup> Jenne J. R Pieter, "Dirskriminasi Ruang Hidup Perempuan Adat Seti" in Narasi Teolog Perempuan dari Maluku.( BPK.Gunung Mulia: Jakarta) 2024, page.102.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., page.103.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,

government and distributed according to the government program for the entire transmigrant community. The Seti people were forced to change their traditional lifestyle and cultivation patterns which had an impact on the traditional food security patterns of the Seti people. This is because the transmigrants brought a government program, namely rice fields for planting rice. Changes in planting patterns changed the eating habits of the Seti people, which were originally Sago (Metroxylon Sago), Bananas and Cassava, changing to rice from rice plants in the rice fields. Along with changes in cultivation patterns and changes in eating patterns, there were changes in their lifestyles which had an impact on many things. For example, because rice fields are a program that brings together transmigrants, the local people have to plant rice which is not their original expertise compared to the newcomers who are familiar with rice as their local crop. The failure of the Seti people by the local government is considered due to ignorance, low human resources and their laziness, even though the government does not understand the traditional planting patterns of the Seti people well. The transmigration program resulted in several unfair treatments for the Seti indigenous people, including:

1. Land Acquisition by the government on the basis of the government's transmigration program. And as good Indonesian citizens, the Seti community is obliged to give. The Seti Indigenous Community is under duress which makes them lose their rights to their land.
2. Changes in cropping patterns and changes in food security patterns, from Sago to Rice, have resulted in poverty in the Seti community. Changed identities due to changes in farming/gardening patterns and environmental changes. Changes in farming/gardening patterns that used to be in the forest and produced sago, changed to rice field cultivation resulting in environmental changes that result in soil fertility, flooding in the rainy season and drought in the dry season, and can cause forest fires. For the needs of rice fields, the government changes forests into rice fields. Rice fields require a lot of water so the government changes river courses into dams so that flooding occurs. Changed agricultural patterns force the Seti community to adapt. This change also has an impact on the processing of food for the Seti community's families.
3. Loss of customary forests due to plantations, rice fields, and mining. The loss of the Sago Tree area along the Kobi River due to the opening of rice fields which is the main program to make the government's transmigration program a success. The change in the staple crops of indigenous people is only for the reason of increasing input income to the

economy of the district, province, and country. Because rice is considered the staple food of the majority of the population in Indonesia, and is one of the main ingredients for export to other countries. The stomachs of the majority group are considered more important than the stomachs of the minority group.

4. The naming of the transmigrant village uses the name of the area of origin of the transmigrant village above the name of the land of the Seti indigenous people. This changes the sovereignty of the land of the Seti indigenous people over their land. This has an impact on the total understanding of the Seti indigenous people, especially Seti indigenous women, of the land which is their mother and also the body of women.

5. The path of settlements and garden land in the forest is cut off by the location of transmigrant settlements and rice fields. This forces the Seti Indigenous people to travel further than usual to survive the changes that exist, in this compulsion they are forced to survive. Some of them try to adapt by becoming farm laborers in the rice fields of the transmigrant community but in the end many give up, they return to the forest, their land which for them provides many things, even though they have to walk very far.<sup>18</sup>

In the tension, many Seti indigenous people withdrew. They tried to adapt, but there were too many changes that they had to face, making them unable to adapt. Injustice against the Seti indigenous people is one of the thousands of cases that exist, at least in Indonesia, even many other indigenous peoples have a history of struggle with a history of conflict with the government that unilaterally seized their customary forests.<sup>19</sup> Data presented by several independent institutions throughout 2023 showed that there were 241 conflicts that seized 638,188 hectares of agricultural land, customary areas, fishing areas, and settlements from 135,608 families. As many as 110 conflict eruptions have sacrificed 608 land rights fighters, as a result of the repressive approach in the agrarian conflict area.<sup>20</sup> This record makes Indonesia the top of the countries in Asia with the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., Jenne J. R. Pieter, page.105.

<sup>19</sup> See <https://www.mongabay.co.id/2024/09/04/konflik-berkepanjangan-masyarakat-tuntut-pengakuan-wilayah-adat-di-sinjai/> and <https://www.bbc.com/indonesia/articles/c9901z9lp0go> accessed on 27 September 2024.

<sup>20</sup> See <https://www.kpa.or.id/2024/02/27/konflik-agraria-di-indonesia-tertinggi-dari-enam-negara-asia/> and <https://www.detik.com/sulsel/berita/d-6867939/perampasan-tanah-adat-masih-marak-301-kasus-mayoritas-di-sulawesi-kalimantan> accessed on 27 September 2024.

highest agrarian conflicts. From the description above, it is clear that the state as the one that has the power acts only for certain interests and orientations.

### **c. Discourse on Power, Politics and Empire in the Council of Nicaea.**

The Council of Nicaea, a monumental event in the history of Christianity, was not only an arena for theological debate, but also a reflection of the complexity of the interaction between religion, politics and power at that time. The presence of Emperor Constantine the Great as the organizer and active participant in this council further underlines the inseparable political dimension of the event. The Council of Nicaea was held at a time when the Roman Empire was successfully reunited under the rule of Constantine. This emperor saw the importance of religious unity to strengthen the political unity of the empire. The emergence of the Arianism movement that questioned the equality between God the Father and Jesus Christ was a threat to the unity of the Church. Constantine realized that theological divisions could trigger political divisions. The Church at that time had a very large influence on society. By controlling the Church, a ruler could consolidate his power.<sup>21</sup>

The significant role of the Emperor in organizing the Council of Nicaea. Constantine not only organized the council, but also participated in the theological debate. This shows how great his influence was in determining the outcome of the council. Constantine's main motivation was to create unity within the Church to strengthen the empire. He hoped that by reaching a theological agreement, internal divisions that could threaten political stability could be avoided. Constantine did not hesitate to use his influence and power to encourage the bishops to reach an agreement. He even put pressure on those who disagreed with the majority view. This strengthened the Emperor's power. The Council of Nicaea strengthened the Emperor's position as the supreme leader, both in state and religious affairs. The decisions of the council that were in line with the Emperor's political interests further strengthened his authority. This made the Church a propaganda tool for imperial power. The teachings agreed upon in the council were used as a basis for justifying the Emperor's power and uniting the people under one leadership. Thus the Council of Nicaea marked the beginning of a symbiotic relationship between the Church and the State that would last for

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<sup>21</sup> Robert F. Rea and Steven D. Cone. A Global Church History, The Great Tradition through Cultures, Continents, and Centuries. (USA : T&T Clark), 2019, page. 44 – 45.

centuries. The Church received protection from the state, while the state received legitimacy from the Church.<sup>22</sup>

The Council of Nicaea had a very significant impact on Christian mission and evangelism. The decisions produced by this council provided a strong theological foundation, formed a more organized church structure, and motivated missionaries to spread the gospel. The Council of Nicaea was not only a theological event, but also a political event that had a very significant impact on the history of Christianity and the Western world. The interaction between religion, politics, and power that occurred in this council provides valuable lessons about the complexity of the relationship between the three elements. The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD, was an important milestone in the history of Christianity.<sup>23</sup> This council succeeded in uniting various understandings of the Trinity and establishing the foundations of Christian doctrine that are still recognized today. Although it had a noble purpose, it has been misused by some parties for colonial purposes. It is important for us to understand the historical context and separate pure Christian doctrine from false and exploitative interpretations. In the current context, we need to build a more inclusive understanding and respect for cultural diversity in religion.

#### **D. Learning from the Past, as a Conjunction between Indigenous Peoples, the Council of Nicaea, and Decolonial Mission.**

Connecting a very distant historical event, namely the Council of Nicaea which took place in the 4th century with the contemporary issue of injustice towards indigenous peoples in the context of decolonization. At first glance, these two things seem very different. However, if we dig deeper, there is a common thread that connects the three elements, especially in the context of how power, religion, and cultural identity interact with each other. The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 AD, was a significant milestone in the history of Christianity. This meeting not only discussed theological doctrine, but also implied the complex power dynamics between church and state under the auspices of the Roman Empire. The decisions made at this council had long-lasting impacts, including in shaping religious and political identities in Europe. Injustice towards indigenous peoples is a global problem that has been going on for centuries. Colonization, colonialism, and

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Robert F. Rea and Steven D. Cone, page. 46 – 47.

<sup>23</sup> G. R. Evans. “The Church in the Early Christian Centurie: Ecclesiological Consolidation”, in *The Routledge Companion to Chrictian Church*. Gerard Mannion & Lewis S. Mudge (Ed). (Routledge : New York), 2008, page. 29 – 30.

unsustainable economic development have led to the loss of land, the neglect of cultural rights, and discrimination against indigenous peoples around the world.<sup>24</sup>

The Council of Nicaea shows how political power can influence religion. Likewise, in the context of colonialism, religion is often used as a tool to justify colonization and cultural subordination. Both the Council of Nicaea and the struggles of indigenous peoples were closely related to cultural identity. The Council of Nicaea sought to establish a unified Christian identity, while indigenous peoples struggled to maintain their unique cultural identities. In both the context of the Council of Nicaea and the struggles of indigenous peoples, there were elements of injustice and resistance. Bishops who disagreed with the decisions of the council resisted, as did indigenous peoples who continued to fight for recognition and justice.<sup>25</sup>

Just as the Council of Nicaea legitimized the rule of Emperor Constantine, colonialism often used religion to legitimize colonization and the exploitation of natural resources. The Council of Nicaea sought to impose one form of Christianity on all peoples, while colonialism often sought to destroy local cultures and replace them with the culture of the colonizer. In both the councils and in the struggles of indigenous peoples, there was resistance to the dominant power. This resistance was often fuelled by attempts to maintain cultural identity and autonomy.

The colonial approach to interacting with indigenous peoples is characterized by a number of characteristics that reflect inequality, domination, and often the imposition of colonial values and belief systems. Colonialism often adopts a paternalistic attitude, considering indigenous peoples as "children" who need to be "guided" and "educated". Colonial culture is often considered to be of a higher standard and more advanced than indigenous culture. Racist views that place indigenous peoples as racially inferior are also often the basis of the colonial approach. Colonial missions and evangelism can inevitably occur through forced conversion, converting indigenous peoples to the colonial religion is often done in a way that is coercive and does not respect their original beliefs. Indigenous customs are often changed or adapted to suit the teachings of the colonial religion, creating an inauthentic contextualization. Colonialism often involves the seizure of indigenous peoples' land and natural resources for the benefit of the colonial economy. Indigenous peoples are often forced to work in forced labor on plantations or projects, separating

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<sup>24</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*. Vol. III. Nicene and Post-Nicene Christianity. A.D. 311 – 600. page. 80 – 81. Accessed from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/hcc3.html>, accessed at 29 September 2024.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, page. 56 – 57.

indigenous peoples from their land, destroying social structures, and disrupting traditional governance systems. Indigenous languages and cultures were often suppressed and seen as obstacles to the colonization process. This colonial approach had a very damaging impact on indigenous peoples.

Understanding the relationship between the Council of Nicaea, indigenous injustice, and decolonialism can help us recognize Recurring Patterns. By understanding how power, religion, and cultural identity have interacted throughout history, we can better recognize recurring patterns in contemporary conflicts. We can also understand the historical roots of injustice, which can help us build more just and inclusive societies. By understanding the process of decolonialism, we can more effectively support indigenous peoples in their struggles for their rights.

## **Conclusion**

Despite significant differences, indigenous peoples and the Nicene Creed have important common ground in respect for creation, the human relationship to the transcendent, and ethics. By understanding and appreciating differences and seeking common ground, we can build stronger bridges of dialogue and contribute to the development of more just and sustainable societies. Indigenous peoples, with their deep cultural and spiritual roots, have unique cosmological views. They often see nature as sacred, as having a spirit, and as having a close reciprocal relationship with humans. These beliefs shape the way they live, interact with their environment, and understand their place in the world.

The Nicene Creed is not just a collection of words; it is a living and dynamic statement of faith. It continues to be relevant throughout the ages because it touches on the deepest dimension of human existence: our relationship to God, to each other, and to the world.

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