

# Bishop John Philip Saklil's Theological Preference for The Indigenous Papuans: An Attempt to Respond to People's Doubts

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## Abstract

This research explores and answers the question: What is Bishop John Philip Saklil's contribution to developing the Indigenous Papuans of the Timika Diocese Catholic Church? The church's workers will use the answer to the question in making pastoral programs in their parish and responding to the people's doubts about the church's ministry and its preference for indigenous Papuans. This research was also made to increase people's awareness of the problems in Papua and how important it is for us to give priority to Indigenous Papuans. The method used in this study is an analysis of two books related to Bishop Saklil: "The Church and Human Tragedy in Timika Diocese, Collection of Statements of Attitudes and Voices in the Mass Media" and "Mgr. John Philip Saklil, Pr, Founder of the Timika Diocese". Apart from that, the researcher, as a diocesan priest in Timika, directly observed the Bishop's life from 2012-2019. This observation enriches the analysis of the two books mentioned above. Bishop Saklil's contribution to the support of the Papuans in Timika Diocese is Bishop Saklil's preference towards his 'flocks' who are Indigenous Papuans (Ind: Orang Asli Papua). There are two ways in which Bishop Saklil manifests his alignment with the Indigenous Papuans: First, by continuing to speak out against the injustice and incivility experienced by everyone in the land of Papua, particularly the Indigenous Papuans. Second, working in silence and continuing to struggle to tear down the building system creates unjust situations.

Key Words: Key Words: indigenous Papuans, preference, injustice

## Introduction

This research was made to answer the question: what is the theological contribution of Bishop John Philip Saklil towards the Church in Timika Diocese? At the same time, this research tries to respond to the atmosphere of people's doubts about the work of the Church's ministry, which is considered not to be in favor of the Indigenous Papuans who are experiencing inhumane situations in their land. Not only that, but often, the Church or its pastors are reviled by their people. The participation of the researchers in various social media groups in Papua further supports the evidence of these doubts and insults. Bishop Saklil (2018, p. xi) wrote in this regard, "Here we are, the church in the middle of the world who have to fight selflessly until we are hurt and injured, including because of various points of view that sometimes tend to be unfairly raised either by church officials and church members themselves or by society at large generally." This is the voice of Bishop Saklil's heart, concerned about the doubts and insults.

To the researchers' knowledge, at least one article explicitly discusses Bishop John Philip Saklil's contribution to the Church in Papua. Liwu and Refo (2023, pp. 70–95) specifically raised the leadership of Bishop John Philip Saklil as a good shepherd in the light of Anthoni D'Souza's leadership. This research is, therefore, among the first to highlight the figure of Bishop John Philip Saklil and his contribution to the Church. The novelty of this research is that, first, it emphasizes explicitly the theological contribution of Bishop John Philip Saklil. Second, this article expressly raised the problems faced by Indigenous Papuans and was responded to by Bishop John Philip Saklil with a spirit of support and preference for Indigenous Papuans. This article underlines the importance of siding with Indigenous Papuans.

Indigenous Papuans are a small part of local communities or Indigenous People worldwide. Following the explanation from the United Nations (UN) on its website: like other local communities in various parts of the world, indigenous Papuans are inheritors and practitioners of a unique culture and ways of relating to each other and nature. They had lived in the area for so long before the arrival of migrants (who migrated due to economic, political, and religious motivations) from other regions. They are socially, culturally, economically, and politically different from other more dominant communities. Like Indigenous Peoples in various places, they have historical ties to specific geographic locations, strong ties to the lands and natural resources present on them, and different languages and cultures. They are often disadvantaged (Ginting & Espinosa, 2016; Henningfeld, 2009, p. 21). Apart from cultural differences, many of these native Papuans experience problems protecting their rights as differentiated people. Indigenous Peoples seek recognition of their local identity, way of life, and rights to traditionally owned lands and resources; throughout history, these Indigenous Peoples' rights have often been deprived. They are now disadvantaged and vulnerable. The international community recognizes that steps are needed to protect their rights.

In various writings, indigenous people in Papua, distinguished from migrants, are often called indigenous Papuans. They are people who come from a Melanesian racial family who are identical with black skin and curly hair (Ananta et al., 2016, p. 462). Hadiprayitno (2015, pp. 123–141) refers to Papuans living in Merauke and facing modernization as indigenous peoples. Likewise, Anderson (2015, pp. 9–25) discusses Papuans as indigenous peoples who are experiencing colonization and 'cold' genocide. Presumably, it can be mutually agreed that the Indigenous Papuans are similar to Indigenous peoples in the world, who have more or less the same fate.

The church must side with those who are poor and experience unfavorable situations. Bishop Saklil emphasized that Pope Benedict XVI, on receiving the Indonesian Ambassador to the Holy See in

November 2007 at the Vatican, said, "But in reality, the government has no respect; therefore, not a few people weep over their basic rights. So, sometimes I hear that Indonesia has a lot of terrible problems: cheating, butchering, and raping. I advise Indonesia to repent and change its behavior not only based on the Pancasila but the gospel also ..." (Saklil, 2018, p. xiv). Indonesia's conditions are imperfect, especially in Papua, where Indonesia's most protracted conflict is still unfinished. Such complex problems, related to the consequences of capitalism supported by militarism, greatly color the life situation of indigenous Papuans who struggle to adjust to the changes from traditional to modern times.

Bishop John Philip Saklil became a pastor in the Diocese with the problems mentioned before. Moreover, many believe that one of the centers of Papua's issues is the Timika Diocese, namely PT. Freeport Indonesia. This is the first foreign company and the most heavily guarded by security forces (Harrison & Helan, 2005). Bishop Saklil was the son of a pioneering teacher from the Kei Islands to Papua. He is not an indigenous Papuan but was born in Ararao, Mimika/Papua, in the middle of the indigenous Papuans of Mimika-Wee. He received his education entirely in Papua. When he became a Catholic priest, he lived and served the Dani people in Wamena, the Mee people in Paniai, and those in coastal areas such as Jayapura and Nabire. All are in the land of Papua. After pastoral studies at the East Asian Pastoral Institute (EAPI), Manila, on December 19, 2003, the Vatican announced him as the first Bishop of Timika Diocese, a Jayapura Diocese division. When serving as Chair of the PSE-KWI Commission (Socio-Economic Development Commission in Indonesian Bishop Conference), he launched the 'Gerakan Tungku Api Kehidupan' (GERTAK or The Furnace of Life Movement) program, which focuses on protecting and managing local human resources and local natural or cultural resources on which the indigenous peoples depend in various regions, including Papua. While serving as Administrator Sede Plena of Merauke Archdiocese and Bishop of Timika, on September 3, 2019, he died suddenly due to a silent heart attack (Kira, 2022, pp. 3–4). Bishop Saklil's background, born, raised, and serving in Papua, makes him easily seen as a pastor who favors indigenous Papuans, which we will discuss in more detail.

The researchers use two main source books to analyze the preference of Papuans of Bishop John Philip Saklil. First, 'The Church and Human Tragedy in Timika Diocese' was written by Bishop Saklil and edited by Reverend Dominikus Dulione Hodo. This book was compiled in 2018 while Bishop Saklil was still alive. This book contains a collection of statements and voices in the mass media made by Bishop Saklil to respond to the reality in the land of Papua, which has many terrible problems, things that cannot be denied because they have been heard, read and witnessed by their Bishop and Papuans' own eyes (Saklil, 2018, p. xiv). Not only that, this book was made to challenge the injustice and incivility that the ruling institutions perpetrated against everyone in the land of Papua; it also sued the state and its apparatus for various social inequalities, multiple violations of community rights, various cases of murder, massacre, and omission (Saklil, 2018, p. xvi). Why did Bishop Saklil act like that? Franz Magnis Suseno in "Sekapur Sirih," or the introduction of this book, explains that if Bishop John Philip Saklil raised his voice, then not to add to the 'wound,' but to help so that the treatment that was so hurtful ended and the 'wound' could heal. The Church accuses injustice not of causing hatred but because recognition of injustice is a condition for justice to be won. Winning justice means that the Papuan people are treated as human beings, and their human rights are respected (Saklil, 2018, p. xx).

The second source is the book 'Mgr. The researcher compiled John Philip Saklil, Founder of the Diocese of Timika', to commemorate the 3rd anniversary of Bishop Saklil's death. The services, roles, and inspirations that Bishop Saklil has carried out are again brought up and written down by us and by the testimonies of the Indonesian Cardinal, bishops, provincials, and figures involved in the book's

production in 2022. In such a complex and concerning situation, Bishop Saklil encourages the Church, namely the people, to mature, fight dependence on others, and change for the better. Then, to the "servants of the people" (priests), Bishop Saklil reminded them to be loyal to the people, save the land of Papua and its people, and strive to give for those served to have an abundance of life.

The researcher wrote two other books, which are secondary sources for this research. From these two books: 'Sailing to the East' (Kira, 2014) and 'Striving to be Papuan' (Kira, 2018), Bishop Saklil gave an introduction. Not only that, in his introduction to the books, Bishop Saklil also confirmed and supported what was contained in these two books. First, it is necessary for all the servants of the people who will work in the Land of Papua to understand the complexity of the problems and equip themselves with skills and methods in theology that are useful for serving the people, especially the indigenous people in the Land of Papua. Thus, the servants of the people helped form the Contextual Church in the Land of Papua. Second, the people's servants need to strive and move to become Papuan, which means understanding the history and the early figures who played a role in missions in the land of Papua and understanding the problems and hopes that live in this land. Once again, everything is directed to form a contextual Catholic Church in the Land of Papua. This also aligns with what is becoming a Church movement in Indonesia nowadays: building theology from context (Sudhiarsa, 2020). As emphasized by Wilfred (2021), efforts to build public theology or theology in Asia started from the movement of new forces, including nationalists and supporters of local wisdom, in the period after colonialism.

Furthermore, a book exceptionally dedicated to Bishop Saklil is 'The Furnace of Family: An Introduction to Family Life in Several Fields of Life.' This book was compiled by Emanuel Goo, an indigenous Papuan, in 2020. He is a parish preacher in the interior of Papua who is trying to re-translate Bishop Saklil's program regarding the 'The Furnace of Life Movement' ('Gerakan Tungku Api Kehidupan' or GERTAK) into the lives of the people. In it, we are directly brought to the affirmation that GERTAK is indeed a movement that originates from and is directed at the local community, predominantly indigenous Papuans whose life depends on the "fire in the stove," which must always be lit. Without a fire stove, there will be no life. Local wisdom was adopted into the Timika Diocese program and colored all KWI programs in socio-economic development during Bishop Saklil's tenure as Chairman of the PSE-KWI Commission.

Thus, this research further clarifies Bishop John Philip Saklil's position as a shepherd who takes the side of indigenous Papuans. His calls and pastoral actions are directed first to his people, who are indigenous Papuans. In this research, what appears vague and can be generally interpreted in the previous works above is emphasized, raised, and focused on as a priority.

## **Method**

In this study, the researchers apply literature analysis, specifically to the two books that store the words of Bishop John Philip Saklil. Some of his words or calls clearly show a preference for his people who are OAP. Some of his calls must be analyzed by connecting them with his more complete personality, which means that the introduction of his character is a condition for understanding his words. Researchers have known him since 2009. In 2012, the researcher lived with him in Timika. Starting in 2015, after being ordained as a diocesan priest, the researcher identified himself with Bishop Saklil, equating pastoral thoughts and steps.

The researchers interpret Bishop John Philip Saklil through words and experiences of encounters and find the meaning behind the text (Riyanto, 2020a). Or tries to understand the whole of the parts, and the details cannot be separated from the context of the entire (Kira, 2012, p. 11). In addition

to interpreting Bishop Saklil's words to find meaning, the researcher also critically reflected on experiences and encounters with Bishop Saklil, especially during parish visits where events favored indigenous Papuans. These meetings confirmed the unity between Bishop John Philip Saklil's actions and words. In other words, the researchers apply phenomenological hermeneutics to Bishop Saklil's life journey. In conclusion, Bishop Saklil's thoughts regarding his preference for indigenous Papuans are manifested in his actions to take sides.

Together with efforts to interpret and reflect on the encounter, the first researcher was involved in the pastoral programs he called for, for example, GERTAK, which focuses on protecting and managing indigenous Papuans' human resources and natural cultural resources. This program is carried out in the parish where the researcher was assigned and other areas where most indigenous Papuans are located. This means that the researcher does not only stop interpreting the text what he said but also struggles with life and experience (Riyanto, 2020b, p. 11). In short, an interpretation of the person of John Philip Saklil requires an analysis of the literature and participatory observation of his life and program.

This life and experience are oriented towards taking sides with indigenous Papuans, as directed by Bishop Saklil. Thus, the researcher is involved in a hermeneutic project that places human interpreters not only as fact seekers or objectivity but also as human beings who try to realize themselves by always interpreting to achieve virtue (Kira, 2012, pp. 32–54). That virtue is the spirit of siding with indigenous Papuans.

Finally, all of these efforts, through literature analysis and phenomenological hermeneutical efforts on the words and actions of Bishop Saklil's preference in his programs, are directed at raising the researcher's and readers' awareness of the nuances of participating in indigenous Papuans. Furthermore, this spirit of preference needs to be built between pastoral officers and People of God so that the Church's clerical work is more contextual, responding to the needs of the poor and marginalized, in this case, indigenous Papuans. All of these efforts align with what is expected regarding the demands of a new theology in Indonesia. The theologian or researcher tries to enter a complex area, a total of problems, and requires foresight to reflect on it (Riyanto, 2020a). In situations with various complex issues, researchers do not remain silent but are involved in what is encountered. Together with the Church, the researcher takes part in the socio-political matters of the state and nation in general, in this case Papua (Riyanto, 2020b). The involvement of researchers in the Papuan context and the work of Bishop John Philip Saklil is a theological imperative, as alluded to by Bevans (2002, p. 1). From this effort, the researcher hopes to find a unique contribution from the Church in Papua to the Church in Indonesia and the Universal Church.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Before discussing Bishop John Philip Saklil's theological preference for indigenous Papuans, it's good for us to see the community's or Catholics' situation in the Timika Diocese area. Who are Indigenous Papuans? What challenges are they currently facing?

#### ***Observing the situation of People of God in the Timika Diocese***

##### **Indigenous Papuans in Timika**

From the Timika Diocese website, we can obtain some data. This diocese is in Papua Province. This province has 13 regions with a population of more than 3 million people (data for 2013). A total of

1 million 235 thousand are in the Timika Diocese area. Of these, only 114,770 Catholics (data for 2016). How many indigenous Papuans are there in that number of people? It is impossible to collect exact data because, for the time being, in line with the GERTAK program, the Diocesan Team is processing the data. However, it can be informed and concluded from the researcher's experience that of the 44 parishes in Timika Diocese, both on the north coast and south coast, as well as the interior of the Central Mountains, 34 parishes are indigenous Papuans enclaves. In the remaining ten parishes, because they are on the coast and have become cities, the number of Catholics is divided into two, namely those who are immigrants and indigenous. For example, in the parishes that researcher used to serve, Modio Parish and Epouto Parish, one hundred percent of the people are indigenous Papuans of the Mee Tribe. Of them, only a few are civil servants. Most of the others depend on the land and forests and work as farmers. This is the case with dozens of other parishes in this diocese.

The provinces of Papua and West Papua, in total, have nearly 250 indigenous tribes (Muller, 1996, p. 17). Timika Diocese itself is divided into six Deanery. The Mimika-Agimuga Deanery is the territory of the Mimika Wee/Kamoro Tribe and the Amungme. The Deanery of Migani-Puncak Jaya is inhabited by the Migani, Lani, Damal, and Nduga tribes. The Deanery of Paniai, Tigi, and Kamuu-Mapia are inhabited by the Mee Tribe. The Deanery of Cendrawasih Bay is inhabited by the Biak Tribe, 7 Major Tribes in Nabire, and some of the Mee Tribe. Thus, it can be concluded that Timika Diocese serves Catholics, most of whom are native Papuans who are still attached to nature and work as farmers.

Indigenous Papuans' reliance on nature which is 'Mama' or 'Mother'

Bishop Saklil described the situation of his diocese which is divided into two, namely the northern and southern parts which are lowlands with dense tropical forests and rivers and swamps. These forests, swamps, and river mouths are where the native Papuans depend for their lives. In the highlands of Papua's Central Mountain Range, tribes live in villages and cultivate crops (Saklil, 2018, p. x). In Papua, almost all tribes give the name of this earth or land as 'Mama' or 'Mother'. As a woman conceives, grows life, and gives birth to children, so is this earth; it conceives, grows, and gives birth to various kinds of life. Like a 'Mama' who gives milk to her baby, this earth provides nutrition to all life (Koten et al., 2018, p. 61). Even the identity of Indigenous Papuans cannot be separated from its relationship with customary land, land which for them is 'Mama'. The dependence of indigenous Papuans on land and forests has become stronger at this time due to the development of modernity and migration of migrants which has made them unable to compete in other fields and eventually 'fled' into agriculture and plantations (Romdiati et al., 2019).

Indigenous Papuans are threatened by global capitalism

Globalization is a continuous process of the interconnectedness of individuals and institutions (almost) all over the world (Dunning, 2003, p. 12). This process is driven rapidly by advances in technology and communication (Internet). Global Market refers to the flow of goods, services, and assets across borders; also because it is driven by technological advances. Still according to Dunning, global capitalism today, does not mean one multinational company with large capital, but many multinational companies with large capital have the freedom to invest anywhere for the ease of movement of goods, services, money, and information to various parts of the world. In short, the owners of capital have the freedom to do business anywhere and create markets; Often without rules and regulations or certain moral principles; which often happens in Papua.

In the areas where the Indigenous Papuans are located, in the villages and the newly expanded regencies, capitalists have entered and more or less influenced the nature and culture of the Indigenous Papuans. Buying and clearing land, creating employment opportunities, moving people, and not infrequently conflicts of interest begin to emerge, in particular, between investors and land owners, in this case, Indigenous Papuans.

Indigenous Papuans are threatened by militarism

Based on the experience of researchers in Papua, militarism is a phenomenon that encourages and prioritizes a security approach. Meaning, the problems that occur are resolved by sending armed forces. Compare that with what is said in the book 'Papua Road Map' (Widjoyo, 2009, p. 12) which alludes to the prominent representation of the state which is the military and police apparatus. The state exists in the form of military power. Military force is used as if directed against the enemy; between the colonizers and the colonized. The participation of the military, is required not only when conflicts occur, but also in various other areas of life such as social and economic. The presence of armed forces is necessary and considered important. This often confuses task priorities and causes overlapping interests.

The emergence of this militarism is related to Papua's rich natural resources and their management by capitalists. Capitalists obtain permits from the government, often without the permission or informed consent of landowners or local communities. Researchers compare it to what the Amungme people experienced when Freeport came and controlled their land. The Amungme people did not understand what Freeport was making and asking of them (Muller & Omabak, 2014, pp. 195–212). Conflicts that occur between capital owners and land owners, or local communities are resolved by the presence of armed forces. Even worse, the presence of the armed forces is not only aimed at securing the assets or interests of the capitalists, but also the interests of the armed forces themselves who have benefited from the capitalists and Papua's natural wealth. In short, as long as there is conflict, the apparatus and its system will continue to exist – and benefit from the provision of 'rewards' and all kinds of facilities. Thus, to continue to benefit, conflict must therefore exist or be held.

In his research, Anderson (2015) explicitly mentions the land of Papua as a colonized area: the land is controlled and exploited by the state and capital owners with military support. Indigenous Papuans are considered a barrier to (economic) progress and development. This military presence has started since 1962 until now. Political problems mixed with the economy reinforce the importance of military presence to deal with Indigenous Papuans who hinder state programs (Elmsie & Webb-Gannon, 2013). Hernawan (2020) clarifies the complexity of the Papuan problem which has nuances of state domination, collusion with market forces, the monopoly of those in power over natural resources; and all of this cannot be separated from the support and presence of the military, which are significant in number.

Some examples of global capitalism and militarism in the Timika Diocese

In 2018, the Franciscan SKPKC published the book "Abandoned 'Paradise' Papua: Human Rights Report of SKP ('Sekretariat Keadilan dan Perdamaian' or Justice and Peace Secretariate) throughout Papua, 2015-2017" (Koten et al., 2018). One of the highlights of this report is the conflicts that occur between capitalists and Indigenous Papuans who are land owners. First, the conflict over the 'Nabire Baru' palm oil plantation with the Yerisiam Tribe. Violations such as clearing primary forests, clearing peatlands, and forcibly taking over customary lands with the help of regional police and military units are sources of problems. Second, land clearing in the upper reaches of the Kamoro River for palm

oil plantations disrupted the ecosystem and caused flash floods to hit the Kamoro villages. Both the governor and the company were protested by both Bishop Saklil and the Amungme/Kamoro tribal groups. This action also coincided with a demonstration protesting the extension of the contract of work Freeport Company.

Thing that are never finished talking about

Freeport's existence is the initial and biggest source of the emergence of so many problems in the Land of Papua which involve security forces and lead to human rights violations. Freeport's presence for decades has created prolonged conflicts in the Timika, Mimika, and Papua areas to the exclusion and extermination of the Amungme, Kamoro, and other related tribes from life on their land (Haluk, 2014). It would take a long time if we described all incidents of violence and human rights violations starting from the beginning of Freeport's history in the land of Papua. 'Mama' (Mother) Yosepha Alomang, a leader of the Amungme indigenous people, human rights fighter, and recipient of the 2001 Goldman Award, in Haluk's (2014) book said, "We know Freeport is the Indonesian military." The military relationship with Freeport is described in an investigative report by New York Times journalists Perlez et al. (2005). It is also written how much funds Freeport spends to 'pay' the leaders of the apparatus and provide all kinds of facilities for the members.

There are several more examples of how capitalism supported by militarism tries to exploit Papua's natural wealth, and this ends in conflict with indigenous Papuans as the first land manager. Gold Mining in Degeuwo, Logging in Mimika (Kum, 2015), and the latest and still being discussed among the government and NGO's is the issue of the Wabu Block in Intan Jaya Regency. Elias Japugau (2005, pp. 1–2) in his book 'Close Eyes in Bilogai, Wash Hands in Timika' tells this story:

At that time, I set approximately 360 traps. I did this activity for three days overnight in the forest. I follow the rules I described above. Before PT. Freeport carried out exploration activities in that area, and the results from the traps were sufficient to satisfy my needs, but after PT. FI carried out activities in my hunting forest and carried out exploration activities on all the traps that were damaged by PT. FI COW "B".

Until now, three large companies are ready to carry out gold mining activities in the Wabu Block, whose area includes the center of Intan Jaya Regency, community settlements, and the mission area of the Catholic Church. This means that if the local government and the community are forced to permit the company, then all local government activities and missions will have to move. This means uprooting all local people's lives from their land and nature.

Indigenous Papuans threatened with marginalization as a result of 'Pemekaran' or regency and province division

The Indonesian part of Papua is divided into two provinces: Papua and West Papua. Not long ago, on 11/11/2022 the Government inaugurated three New Autonomous Regions (DOB) and appointed the Acting Governors of the New Autonomous Region: Central Papua, Central Highlands Papua, and South Papua (Wiryo & Setuningsih, 2023). It is alleged that this division will add to the suffering of indigenous Papuans. There will be more customary land cleared for government or apparatus infrastructure and migration of people from outside Papua to find work. If indigenous Papuans are not prepared and there is no protection from the Church and Government, there will be more conflicts, gaps, and even human rights violations, as has happened before. In particular, challenges that lead to violence and suffering must ultimately be answered with dignity by indigenous Papuans themselves. They must



rise up and lead themselves against power and violence, struggle to face suffering and be independent and sovereign on their own feet (Suryawan, 2022, p. 26).

### ***Bishop Saklil's Attitude as The Main Leader of The Timika Diocese***

Bishop Saklil in the foreword to the book 'Church and Human Tragedy in Timika Diocese' acknowledged 1,001 pastoral issues related to Catholics served and social issues that are complex and very difficult to deal with comprehensively. With limping, Timika Diocese is moving in its work as a particular church within a universal framework. A clear struggle requires relying on God in the work of the Holy Spirit. This social reality also requires the Church to distinguish (determine exactly) what things God will make. It's not easy, and sometimes the Timika Diocese has failed. Bishop Saklil realized that the Church lives and develops in and with government institutions. Sometimes the Church feels that it is not free to express attitudes and voices regarding social realities which are of concern. Sometimes the Church is pressured, dictated to, controlled, and not given much space to take part in efforts to change the system in this country. In this country, the Church is a minority and has no dominating power. However, in the end, Bishop Saklil emphasized that it is not enough for us to just talk and criticize, we need to reflect on the stories of past works to take the right steps toward the future. We must speak out against the reality and human tragedies and injustice and even incivility in this land. The church must be persistent and courageous in suing the ruling institution for various social inequalities, violations of people's rights, and various cases of murder, massacres, and neglect. When necessary, Bishop Saklil will work in silence without needing anyone's judgment of success.

The Church must be persistent, courageous, and involved

Bishop Saklil's persistence and courage were rooted in a certain theological and religious appreciation. He believes in the theology of Divine Providence where every success in evangelism or mission is accomplished through hardship and suffering (Saklil, 2018, pp. xii–xiii). For Bishop Saklil, the mission of the Universal Church and the Particular Church thrives on being faithful and steadfast in God's actions that will turn the calamities and hardships of life into an opportunity to evangelize. He compared it to the misfortune that Paul and Silas experienced which turned out to give way to the preaching of the Gospel and repentance to the warden (Acts 16:20-34). Bishop Saklil believed that Christ, who was not protected in a certain sense from suffering, but in His weakness and helplessness, God kept Him for the growth of the Gospel in the hearts of many people.

This tenacity and courage were transmitted to SKP's (Justice and Peace Sekretariate) throughout Papua, including the SKP of the Timika Diocese. In its report, SKP encouraged the Church to attend and save. This means being present and being hurt, being dirty because it intersects with the lives of weak communities (cf. EG No 49). This contact with weak communities is also colored by the advice of the Second Vatican Council to share in the joy, and hope, and be involved in the sorrows and anxieties of today's people, especially the poor and anyone who suffers (cf. GS, Article 1). Not only is dirty and present, but the Church also needs to act. The Pontifical Commission "Justitia et Pax" which was founded by Paul VI (*Populorum Progressio*) and emphasized by John Paul II in *Pastor Bonus* triggered the emergence of Justice and Peace Commissions such as SKP-SKP in five dioceses in Papua; and there are more Church Social Teachings listed in *Rerum Novarum*, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and *Redemptor Hominis*. These three became the context for the Church's struggle in the Land of Papua.

The call and voice of Bishop John Philip Saklil

Associated with the presence of palm oil plantations PAL Company in Timika threatens the lives of coastal communities (Mimika Wee/Kamoro Tribe), Bishop Saklil urged the local government to take immediate action to save the lives of coastal residents whose forests, trees, and rivers that support their lives have been destroyed and polluted. He also alluded to Freeport Company and migrants who not only fight over projects and take advantage of Papua but also develop Papua, its cultural and human nature. Social inequality that occurs is the root problem of existing conflicts (Saklil, 2018, pp. 2–3).

He also criticized liquor producers and dealers who have become a source of trouble in this land. A few people benefit from the destruction and death of people, in particular, native Papuans who still have to struggle to adapt to everything new (Saklil, 2018, pp. 8–10). On another occasion, Bishop Saklil criticized the killers who easily used state tools to kill Kelly Kwalik, who was considered a fighter and savior of humanity from extinction due to the endless conflict between the Unitary Republic of Indonesia and the Freedom Fighters (Saklil, 2018, p. 13). He criticized the Indonesian's Army personnel (TNI) who shot civilians (the Kamoro tribe) in 2015 (Saklil, 2018, p. 29). In general, he criticized the TNI POLRI which seemed to allow people to destroy the integrity of creation and forests, causing violence, killings, and selling liquor (Saklil, 2018, p. 43). He asked: is it because they are also actors and people who 'play' for profit?

On another occasion, he called out to question the morals of this country and politicians and state officials who gave the impression that they were always noisy about Papua's natural wealth, but when one Papuan was shot dead, all remained silent (Saklil, 2018). He pointed to the shooting of four children in Paniai in 2014, which until now has not been resolved by the state (Koten et al., 2018, pp. 83–94). There are many more incidents and violent conflicts that end in victims. This may have escaped Bishop Saklil's call, however, it was anticipated by the calls from his priests, SKP, Papua Peace Network (JDP: Jaringan Damai Papua), LIPI, Kontras, and other organizations. Those who live in Papua can easily conclude how much the life of indigenous peoples in their land has suffered, with so many changes, both intentional and unintentional.

Bishop Saklil's voice can be directed into three groups. First, to capitalists/investors, owners of capital, or anyone who wishes to do business in the Land of Papua. He said PT. Freeport Indonesia, PT. PAL- Palm Oil Plantations, Liquor Businesses, and Distributors, as well as immigrants who want to do small or big business. Problems such as natural destruction, death, conflict, and social inequality will continue to occur if investors and business people do not come to advance the life of Indigenous Papuans in the Land of Papua, including humans and their cultural environment. Everything obtained on this land should not only be taken out of Papua. But it is also used for the welfare of Indigenous Papuans. "Everyone goes to Papua to fight over projects and the wealth of Papuan land. The funds they receive are not used to advance Papua but are taken out. This is what keeps Papua from moving forward because the funds don't flow and move in the land of Papua, but are taken out." (Saklil, 2018, p. 5).

Second, the central, regional, and state agencies, immediately protect local communities, so that they are not crushed by inhumane changes. The government must regulate the system so that it does not cheat for the sake of gaining profits from the suffering of Papuans. "Don't let this problem drag on, the government must take action, this is to save the lives of the residents," Bishop Saklil urged (Saklil, 2018, p. 3).

Finally, it is up to the security forces, state instruments, and the TNI POLRI, to change their approach to security and armed forces and start building an image as protectors of citizens, including indigenous Papuans. Participation in various business interests in the land of Papua will prevent state instruments from carrying out their duties in a professional and dignified manner. Bishop John in his

letter to the Regional Police Chief regarding the shooting in Paniai said, “We made this conclusion after decades of observing and experiencing it directly in church life with the people. From their struggle, we know what they experienced as a result of the bad behavior of the security forces who had little education and depraved morality. Almost every day we witness childish acts carried out by TNI and police officers whose human qualities are low. They did not hesitate to terrorize, accuse, arrest, detain, and even kill civilians without clear and convincing reasons. They also rarely process people they suspect, accuse and arrest through the legal mechanisms that apply in this country.” (Saklil, 2018, p. 57)

#### Bishop Saklil acts in silence

Apart from the appeals in the mass media as described above, Bishop Saklil as the leader of the Diocese also silently and invisibly directly carries out the Diocesan programs. He supports various activities at the deanery and parochial levels throughout his diocese. The areas of education, health, faith development, and in particular justice and peace receive special attention. Living the faith of the people cannot develop in a situation where education is neglected, disease and death are spreading, and an atmosphere of injustice and violence. Even just on 12/11/2022, as an example, Dogiyai District was paralyzed and gripping due to acts of arson and murder as a result of a hit-and-run incident of a migrant driver which resulted in the death of a young Papuan child. All stored problems, triggered by small events become 'burnt' and escalating. The situation in Papua is like a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.

The researchers want to focus on Bishop Saklil's program 'The Furnace of Life Movement' (GERTAK) which has been running since 2017. Led by Bishop Saklil, all parishes are moving to implement this program. The focus of this Movement is protection and management efforts. What is protected and managed? Natural resources (forest, land, water, sacred places, villages, etc.), human resources, and culture. How to protect and manage it? Currently, the Diocese is entering the second step: mapping the area, which will eventually take the form of a map that the government can validate as areas that need attention and protection. The first step is the data collection of the people that have been completed.

There is another model of protection and management that is also supported by Bishop Saklil, namely with what was made in the parish where the first researcher served: the development of historical and pilgrimage areas. An area will be spared from inhuman changes, if it is marked by a striking history and spiritual tourism has been awakened. Together with this, the development of an economy based on the natural and cultural products of Indigenous Papuans, namely coffee, *noken* or traditional bag (made from bark and orchids), onions, and peanuts will place them as protectors of natural wealth and potential, as well as independent actors/agents of change in their land.

In a package with the development of this historical and pilgrimage area, Bishop Saklil in 2016 appointed a Papuan as a church representative, namely Auki Tekege. He directly raised the dignity of indigenous people as actors of change and figures worthy of being exemplary by the Church. Auki's role as a seeker, discoverer, and carrier of early missionaries to the Central Highlands of Papua has earned him the title of 'light bearer' for the *koteka* people or mountainous people. The story of Auki can be read in the book 'Auki, Light Bearer for the Koteka Society'. In 2017, Bishop Saklil in the same place inaugurated the parish entrance gate which was built by the parishioners. This gate marks a 'Stop Selling Land' movement. Inside the gate, people are prohibited from selling land, and those who will enter the gate are required to adapt to the cultural and human nature of Papua. Only with that attitude, inhuman changes can be anticipated. In 2018, Bishop Saklil inaugurated and proclaimed a historical and

pilgrimage area in the same parish. All these efforts reverberate throughout the parish and serve as a model for protection and management elsewhere. At length regarding Bishop Saklil's efforts in the Modio Parish are discussed in the book 'Striving to be Papuan'.

The Church should not hesitate to side with Indigenous Papuans

At the time this research was made, the 4th Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Session at the UN Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland on Wednesday 9 November 2022 had just finished. Recommendations were given to Indonesia regarding two matters: human rights issues in Papua and the death penalty which is still being applied. Related to the problems in Papua, one human rights organization: 'KontraS' on Twitter summarizes the recommendations. Recommendations can also be viewed directly on Youtube: USA recommends that Indonesia immediately investigate extra-judicial killings in Papua, guarantee the safety of the people, and express concern for the people of Papua. Vanuatu recommends Indonesia accept the arrival of the UN Special Rapporteur to Papua to investigate cases of violence in Papua and provide security for associations in Papua. Australia recommends an investigation mechanism into the violence experienced by Papuans. Canada recommends ensuring the protection of freedom of opinion and expression and association in Papua and investigating the human rights situation in Papua. The Netherlands recommends investigating human rights violations in Papua and ensuring justice and protection for human rights defenders. New Zealand: recommends freedom of opinion and expression and assembly in Papua. Slovenia recommends an investigation into impunity and violence against people in Papua.

Even though he is not an Indigenous Papuan, Bishop John Philip Saklil was born, raised, and served in Papua among Indigenous Papuans. He understands their sufferings, especially those who are his People of God. Driven by the spirit of the Bible, the Church's Social Teachings, and the movement of the Universal Church and the United Nations, Bishop Saklil built an attitude of preference towards the Indigenous Papuans. Alignment is built because the Indigenous Papuans are threatened by global capitalism-militarism which is not controlled by moral principles. Bishop Saklil persistently and courageously acted in the context of the problems facing his Diocese. He voiced and shouted in public spaces. Not only that, but he also acted silently, through the Diocese's programs, specifically the 'Furnace of Life Movement' or 'Gerakan Tungku Api Kehidupan'. Through this research, we are convinced that there is no need to doubt Bishop Saklil's preference and partiality towards the Indigenous Papuans. This attitude of preference needs to be continued by the Diocese to build a Church that departs from the context and reality in the land of Papua.

## Conclusion

Bishop Saklil's theological contribution to the Timika Diocese Church is an ceaselessly effort to join Jesus in saving His people. This effort is directed with a clear focus, namely on those who are poor and marginalized. Bishop Saklil explicitly sees the Indigenous Papuans, who make up the largest number among his People of God - because of the situation they are experiencing, to be poor and marginalized people who need to be saved. Interestingly, in this saving effort, Bishop Saklil also raised local wisdom, namely the 'Furnace of Life Movement', which is the center of life for Indigenous Papuans, as a program that needs to be implemented in his diocese. This therefore further emphasizes that Bishop Saklil's efforts are also efforts of Indigenous Papuans to save themselves from inhumane changes that impede the growth of faith and the Church. They do not fight alone. In many places, indigenous people respond to the process of globalization and the new world order and new forms of

new imperialism by adhering to local wisdom and the desire to adapt to new knowledge (Makere, 2005, p. xii).

Bishop Saklil has applied theology in a new way, departing from local realities, which raises the calls and efforts of Indigenous Papuans in responding to world changes that make them victims. What was made by Bishop Saklil for Indigenous Papuans can be used as an example of theology in other places where local people or indigenous people are still facing enormous challenges that will threaten aspects of their lives that are very dependent on nature and culture. The Church in the Land of Papua and various other parts of the world can take Bishop Saklil's 'Furnace of Life Movement' as a model for the movement to save people who are local people. The Church in Timika Diocese, in addition to the ongoing 'Furnace of Life Movement' program, needs to draw inspiration from Bishop Saklil regarding preference and partiality for Indigenous Papuans and make more concrete efforts towards people who are Indigenous Papuans.

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