



Jesus on the *Koteka* Cross as a Manifestation of God's Solidarity

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Abstract: This article aims to discuss the cross of Jesus wearing a *koteka*, the traditional clothing for men in the mountains of Papua. Jesus' cacophony is an effort that is reflected by the Papuan people in the contextualization of faith in Jesus in culture. Jesus cackled as a form of God who is in solidarity, entering and embracing the culture of the Papuan Highlands. This research was carried out using the library method by examining books and journals that have been documented on the topics discussed. This research finds that Jesus cackling is a God who seems to be present and embraces the culture and people of the Papuan Highlands. Jesus seeks to enter into the deeper aspects of cultures. So that the Jesus that is reflected is not Jesus who is far physically and habitually, but Jesus is present in all the ups and downs of life for the Papuan Highlands.

INTRODUCTION

Theology of inculturation represents a critical and dynamic approach within contemporary theological discourse, seeking to integrate the Christian faith deeply and authentically within diverse cultural contexts. Rooted in the principle of the Incarnation, which holds that God became man in the person of Jesus Christ, the concept of inculturation emphasizes that the Gospel should similarly "take flesh" within every culture it encounters. This theological perspective gained significant prominence during the pontificate of John Paul II, who underscored its importance for the Church's mission in a rapidly globalizing world (Makul et al., 2022).

At its core, the theology of inculturation is founded on the Incarnation, the central Christian belief that God entered human history in the person of Jesus Christ (Jeraman et al., 2023). This foundational event is not merely historical but serves as a paradigm for how the Gospel should engage with and be expressed within various cultural contexts. Just as the Word became flesh and lived among humanity, so too must the Gospel become embedded within the life and traditions of different peoples. This process respects the distinctiveness of each culture while ensuring the integrity of the Gospel message.

Pope John Paul II was a pivotal figure in the development and promotion of the theology of inculturation. He recognized that for the Church to be truly universal, it must not only proclaim the Gospel but also allow it to resonate within different cultural frameworks. John Paul II's vision of inculturation was deeply influenced by the analogy of the Incarnation, viewing it as a means for the Gospel to become incarnate within each unique cultural context. John Paul II stressed that the integrity of the Gospel must be preserved in this process. He warned against syncretism, where the core message of the Gospel could be compromised by

blending it inappropriately with local beliefs and practices. For him, inculturation was not about diluting the faith but about enriching it through genuine dialogue and mutual respect between the Gospel and diverse cultural expressions. His papacy saw numerous initiatives aimed at fostering this dialogue, emphasizing that the Gospel must first be fully understood and then authentically communicated within each cultural milieu.

For John Paul II, the term "inculturation" was preferred because of its theological resonance with "incarnation." This preference was not merely a matter of semantics but reflected a deeper theological insight. Inculturation, as understood by John Paul II, is the embodiment of the Gospel within a specific culture, mirroring the mystery of the Word made flesh. This theological parallel underscores the importance of maintaining the Gospel's integrity as the Word of God, even as it takes root and flourishes in diverse cultural contexts.

John Paul II's theological framework for inculturation is deeply rooted in the principles laid out in the Second Vatican Council's document, *Gaudium et Spes*. The *Gaudium et Spes* laid the groundwork for modern understandings of inculturation, emphasizing the importance of engaging with human culture in the context of evangelization. The Council fathers highlighted the need for the Church to be present in the modern world, understanding and responding to contemporary cultural realities. This engagement is not about imposing a uniform set of practices but about recognizing and celebrating the diverse ways in which the Gospel can be lived out. This document prioritizes the Gospel, followed by human culture, and then the diversity of cultures that emerge from this interaction. This hierarchical structure is essential for understanding John Paul II's vision of inculturation, as it ensures that the Gospel remains the foundation upon which all cultural adaptations are built. The integrity of the Gospel must be preserved, preventing any compromise or dilution of its message as it interacts with different cultures.

In contrast to theologians like Karl Rahner, who emphasized the universality and transcendence of the Church, John Paul II placed significant emphasis on the Church as the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. This imagery is pivotal in understanding his concept of inculturation. Just as the incarnation of Christ involved the Word becoming flesh without losing its divine nature, the inculturation of the Gospel involves embedding the divine message within a culture without compromising its divine truth. This perspective highlights the Church's intimate and dynamic relationship with Christ and its mission to embody the Gospel in every cultural context.

John Paul II elaborated on his views on evangelization and inculturation by describing a three-phase process: initial evangelization, pastoral care, and re-evangelization. Each phase involves a form of reciprocity, though not in a simplistic bilateral sense. This reciprocity ensures that while the Gospel influences culture, the particularities of the culture also enrich the understanding and expression of the Gospel. Initial Evangelization: This phase involves the first proclamation of the Gospel to a culture. The challenge here is to communicate the core tenets of the faith in a way that resonates with the local people, without imposing foreign cultural elements that might obscure the Gospel's message. Pastoral Care: After the initial

evangelization, pastoral care helps the faith take root and grow within the cultural context. This phase involves nurturing the faithful, guiding them in living out the Gospel in their daily lives, and addressing specific cultural needs and challenges. Re-Evangelization: This phase addresses the need for renewed evangelization in cultures where the faith may have grown stagnant or been overshadowed by secular influences. Re-evangelization seeks to rekindle the initial fervor of faith, adapting the Gospel message to new cultural realities while maintaining its core truth. John Paul II emphasized that in all these phases, the integrity of the Gospel must be preserved. This integrity is crucial, as it ensures that the Gospel's transformative power is not diluted by cultural adaptations. Instead, the Gospel should elevate and purify cultural elements, allowing them to reflect the truth and beauty of God's Word.

In the 1980s, theologians Robert Schreiter and Aylward Shorter expanded the discourse on inculturation by developing theologies that were more attuned to local cultures than John Paul II's approach (Doyle, 2012). Schreiter, in particular, found the term "inculturation" too vague for the technical dialogue required with social scientists on cultural issues. He preferred terms like "contextual" and "local theologies" to emphasize the need for a more precise and localized understanding of the Gospel's interaction with culture.

Schreiter criticized the "translation" model of evangelization, which he saw as too message-centered and insufficiently local-centered. This model, he argued, treated diverse cultures as mere containers for an unchanged message, implying a "kernel and husk" theory that failed to account for the deep integration of the Gospel into the fabric of local cultures. Schreiter also criticized "adaptation" models for being too theoretically driven and not practical for real-life application. Instead, Schreiter advocated for "contextual theologies" that maintained concern for the Gospel's integrity while emphasizing the active and dynamic role of local contributions. This approach recognizes that local cultures have valuable insights and expressions that can enrich the understanding of the Gospel. It also acknowledges that the Gospel must be lived and experienced in concrete cultural settings to have a meaningful impact. Shorter, on the other hand, retained the term "inculturation" but expanded its meaning to include many aspects of Schreiter's "contextual theologies." Both theologians emphasized the importance of evangelizers deeply embedding themselves in a culture to understand the Gospel's message from the local people's perspective (Andrianto et al., 2023). This deep immersion allows evangelizers to hear and interpret the Gospel in ways that resonate with the local context, making it more relevant and transformative.

Schreiter identified two primary types of contextual approaches: ethnographic theology and liberation theology. For the purposes of this discussion, we will use "ethnographic" to describe theologies that emphasize "inculturation." Ethnographic Theologies: These theologies focus on the relationship between the Gospel and local cultures, paying close attention to traditional doctrine and liturgical practices. Ethnographic theologies seek to understand how the Gospel can be authentically expressed within a particular cultural context, preserving its core message while allowing it to take on local forms and expressions. This approach values the richness of diverse cultural traditions and seeks to integrate them into the life of the Church

in meaningful ways. Liberation Theologies: Liberation theologies, on the other hand, emphasize the Gospel's transformative power in addressing social, political, and economic injustices. These theologies often arise in contexts of oppression and marginalization, seeking to empower the poor and marginalized by highlighting the Gospel's call for justice and liberation. While liberation theologies and ethnographic theologies may have different emphases, both seek to make the Gospel relevant and impactful within specific cultural contexts.

The practical application of inculturation involves several key principles and steps (ITC, 1989). The first step is deep cultural immersion. Evangelizers must immerse themselves in the local culture, learning its language, customs, values, and worldview. This deep immersion allows for a more accurate and empathetic understanding of how the Gospel can be communicated and lived within that context.

The second step is respect for cultural identity (Yuliano et al., 2022). Inculturation requires a profound respect for the cultural identity of the people being evangelized. It acknowledges that every culture has unique gifts and insights that can enrich the understanding and expression of the Gospel. This respect helps to avoid the imposition of foreign cultural elements that might obscure the Gospel's message.

The third step is dialogue and reciprocity. Inculturation involves a dialogue between the Gospel and the local culture, characterized by reciprocity. This dialogue is not a simple bilateral exchange but a dynamic interaction where both the Gospel and the culture contribute to a deeper understanding of truth. The Gospel transforms cultural elements, elevating and purifying them, while the culture provides new ways of understanding and expressing the Gospel.

The fourth step is preservation of Gospel integrity. Throughout the process of inculturation, the integrity of the Gospel must be preserved. This means that the core message of the Gospel—the Good News of Jesus Christ—remains unchanged, even as it takes on different cultural forms. The transformative power of the Gospel lies in its divine truth, which must not be compromised or diluted.

The fifth step is pastoral sensitivity. Effective inculturation requires pastoral sensitivity to the specific needs and challenges of the local community. Evangelizers must be attentive to the struggles, hopes, and aspirations of the people, offering pastoral care that is relevant and responsive to their context. This sensitivity helps to ensure that the Gospel is not only understood but also lived in practical and meaningful ways (Kurniawan et al., 2022).

The process of inculturation is not without its challenges and criticisms (ITC, 1989). A key issue is risk of syncretism in the process of inculturation. Syncretism, in the context of religious and cultural interaction, refers to the blending of different religious beliefs, practices, and traditions into a new, hybrid system. While this merging can lead to rich cultural expressions, it also poses significant risks, particularly for the integrity of the Gospel. When the Gospel is combined with local beliefs and practices in a way that alters its core message, it compromises the purity and truth of Christian teachings. The process of inculturation aims to

embed the Gospel within diverse cultures in a manner that respects and uplifts local customs and values. However, this endeavor must be carefully balanced to avoid syncretism. Cultural sensitivity is crucial, but it should not lead to the dilution of essential Christian doctrines. The challenge lies in discerning which elements of local culture can be harmoniously integrated into the practice of faith without compromising the Gospel's core message. History provides numerous examples where the blending of Christianity with local beliefs has led to syncretistic practices. For instance, in some regions of Latin America, indigenous religious elements were combined with Catholic rituals, resulting in a hybrid faith that often strayed from orthodox Christianity. These instances highlight the potential dangers when inculturation is not carefully managed.

One of the most significant theological risks of syncretism is the distortion of the Gospel message. Christianity is founded on specific doctrinal truths, such as the divinity of Christ, the Trinitarian nature of God, and the salvific work of Jesus. If these core tenets are altered or overshadowed by local beliefs, the essence of the Christian faith is compromised. Syncretism can lead to a version of Christianity that is unrecognizable from its biblical roots, thereby undermining the faith's universality and doctrinal consistency. The Gospel's power lies in its universal applicability, transcending cultural and ethnic boundaries. Syncretism risks localizing the faith to such an extent that it loses its universal appeal and authority. When the Gospel is too heavily modified to fit local contexts, it can become so particularized that it no longer speaks to people outside that context. This loss of universality can fragment the global Christian community and weaken the Church's mission to be a universal sacrament of salvation.

To mitigate the risk of syncretism, the Church must provide clear and consistent guidance. Church authorities, including bishops, theologians, and pastoral leaders, play a crucial role in discerning which elements of local cultures can be integrated into Christian practice. This discernment requires a deep understanding of both the local culture and the core teachings of Christianity. Effective catechesis and theological education are essential tools in combating syncretism. By providing a solid grounding in Christian doctrine, the Church can equip local communities with the knowledge needed to distinguish between culturally enriching practices and those that compromise the faith. Catechesis should emphasize the central truths of the Gospel while also appreciating the cultural contexts in which these truths are lived out. Open dialogue and collaboration between local communities and Church authorities are vital. Inculturation should be a participatory process, where local insights are valued, and cultural expressions are respected. However, this dialogue must be guided by a commitment to preserving the integrity of the Gospel. Collaborative efforts can help identify areas where cultural integration is beneficial and where it might lead to syncretism.

The Church should establish clear criteria for evaluating cultural practices in the context of inculturation. These criteria could include compatibility with core Christian doctrines, the ability to enhance the understanding of the Gospel, and the potential to enrich liturgical and pastoral life without altering fundamental beliefs. By applying these criteria, the Church can navigate the complex terrain of cultural integration with greater confidence and clarity.

Highlighting successful examples of inculturation can serve as a guide for future efforts. Instances where the Gospel has been effectively embedded in local cultures without compromising its integrity can provide valuable lessons. For example, the integration of African music and dance into liturgical celebrations has enriched worship without altering core Christian beliefs. Such examples demonstrate that it is possible to celebrate cultural diversity while maintaining doctrinal purity. Inculturation is an ongoing process that requires continuous monitoring and evaluation. The Church should regularly assess how local adaptations are impacting the faith community. This assessment can help identify emerging risks of syncretism and provide opportunities for corrective action. Feedback from local communities, clergy, and theologians can inform these evaluations and ensure that inculturation efforts remain faithful to the Gospel.

METHOD

The methodology used in this research is a qualitative research method with a literature review approach. The research involves examining books related to the discussed topic. Data on the topic is obtained through books, journals, and documents related to the subject matter. The research involves collecting, organizing, and analyzing all data obtained to support this study. The study aims to analyze and find that the cross of Jesus wearing a *koteka* represents a form of God in solidarity with the Highland Papuans.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The cross is the identity of Christians. It represents the victory shared with Jesus Christ for all believers in the world (Sari, 2018). The cross is very important in the church. Through the cross, humanity is saved by God through the actions of His Son, Jesus Christ. God's salvation for the people of Israel in the Old Testament continues and is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This act of salvation is realized in Jesus Christ through the cross. The cross is a symbol of salvation for all people, not an insult. It is only through the path of the cross from Pilate's house to Golgotha that Jesus demonstrates salvation for all people suffering from Roman political repression, hunger, and diseases in society. Jesus' death on the cross does not end there but continues with His resurrection on the third day.

The event of Jesus' crucifixion is very important for all believers. The image of Jesus on the cross is part of the faith experience of people at that time who were under pressure and suffering. Jesus sought to enter into the human experience of suffering and pressure. He shows that the way of the cross is the happy path to meeting with happiness or resurrection (Gea, 2019).

The commonly accepted and experienced cross in the church depicts Jesus wearing a loincloth to cover His genitals, with His hands outstretched on the cross of humiliation. Jesus hangs stiffly with a crown of thorns and His body covered in blood. The cross is styled according to the Middle Eastern civilization of the time. Jesus, present in Jewish and Middle Eastern culture, wears a loincloth and the cross.

The depiction of Jesus wearing a *koteka* on the cross has been questioned by many people from various church denominations, including members of the Catholic Church itself, with various reasons. The depiction of Jesus wearing a *koteka* is a new public presentation, although it has been reflected upon personally by many. The *koteka*-wearing Jesus cross was initiated by Catholic Church figures from the Timika Diocese, including Dekenat Kamu Mapia (KAMAPI), Dekenat Tigi, Dekenat Paniai, and Dekenat Moni-Puncak. This cross was created for the Pre-Indonesian Youth Day (Pra-IYD) 2023 procession in four deaneries of the Timika Diocese. The *koteka* and other ornaments, such as taro leaves, follow the culture of these four deaneries.

The *koteka*-wearing Jesus cross is a contextual reflection of church leaders and figures. This reflection certainly arises from the pastoral struggles of the people in the Timika Diocese of the Highlands. This article aims to examine the *koteka*-wearing Jesus cross as part of contextual proclamation and a representation of a God who is in solidarity with the Highland Papuans, in alignment with the vision and mission of the Timika Diocese.

Before discussing further, let us briefly understand the *koteka*. The *koteka* is a traditional garment of the Highland Papuans worn by men (Ramandey, 2020). It is worn throughout the Highland Papua region, from Meepago (one of the seven customary regions in Papua including Dogiyai, Paniai, Deiyai, Mimika, Intan Jaya, and Puncak Jaya) to Laapago (a customary region in eastern Papua, bordering Papua New Guinea, including Jayawijaya, Puncak Papua, Tolikara, Lanny Jaya, Pegunungan Bintang, and Yalimo), which borders Papua New Guinea. The *koteka* is made from the horns of the *taong-taong* bird's snout (*riambo*) and pumpkin skin (Kawer, 2017). This pumpkin plant (*lagenaria siceraria*) is relatively easy to cultivate and is grown in various parts of the world, from tropical to subtropical regions (Ramandey, 2020). Unfortunately, the pumpkin plant is becoming scarce. My grandfather (the author) was a cultivator of pumpkin plants and made *kotekas* from them. After my grandfather passed away, pumpkin plants were no longer found around his home.

The *koteka* functions to cover the male genitals (Elas, 2018). In addition to the *koteka*, men also wear other ornaments such as *waiya* on the head, *beba* on the upper arm, *amapa* on the chest, and *dinai* as body paint. A man must have a bow and arrow (*uka-mapegaa*) used for hunting wild pigs, birds, and possums. A "true" Highland Papuan man is someone who wears a *koteka* along with all the decorations, while holding a bow and arrow.

The *koteka* is a traditional garment worn by men in the Highland Papua region, similar to how shirts and pants are worn elsewhere. It is not part of a primitive concept as many people may think. Instead, the *koteka* is a normal piece of clothing for the local people. The notion of "third parties" or outsiders often perceives it as a sign of backwardness (Kayame, 2023). The "Mutiarra" Kindergarten in Tawangrejo Village, Turi District, Lamongan Regency, introduces students to the *koteka* as "*koteka* clothes" (Kayame, 2023). Although the *koteka* is not a shirt, students at this school are encouraged to view it as a form of clothing.

The state, through the military, once conducted an operation called the *koteka* operation. This operation took place from 1971 to 1973. The goal was to influence the Papuans to abandon

cultural aspects and advance in building Indonesia in all aspects. National leaders viewed the *koteka* as a symbol of backwardness and ignorance (Sugandi, 2008).

Since the 1950s, missionaries have campaigned for the use of shorts as a replacement for the *koteka*. The Dani tribe in the Baliem Valley occasionally wore pants but still maintained the *koteka*. The Indonesian government also attempted to reduce the use of the *koteka* since the 1960s. From 1964, under Governor Frans Kaisiepo, an anti-*koteka* campaign was launched. However, due to a lack of soap, the garments were rarely washed and led to skin diseases.

In the cultures of almost all tribes worldwide, traditional clothing is crucial. The *koteka* is very important for a Highland Papuan man. It is not primitive or outdated, as viewed by the Indonesian government in 1971. The *koteka* is a traditional garment for Papuan men, just as traditional clothing is for Javanese, Dayak, Madurese, and all other tribes around the world.

Why is the *koteka* a symbol of dignity for Highland Papuan men? Firstly, according to Koentjaraningrat, the term "culture" itself originates from the Sanskrit word *buddhayah*, which means 'wisdom or intellect.' Culture is a manifestation of human intellect and wisdom. Additionally, culture is understood as a complex development of intellect and power. This means there is a force from the intellect that constitutes human reasoning (Koentjaraningrat, 2002). Culture encompasses a broad meaning and includes the complex feelings of a nation, including knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, habits, and other traits acquired by members of society (Taylor, 1871). Thus, the *koteka* represents the intellectual response of the Highland Papuans to global civilization. The *koteka* possesses power or strength as a garment that expresses the true essence of a man.

Secondly, historically, the ancestors of the Papuans have passed down the *koteka*. According to mythological stories, the *koteka* was not introduced from outside but has existed since the early Papuan civilization (Hastanto, 2005). Therefore, the *koteka* must be valued and respected as a heritage from ancestors to current generations.

Thirdly, the *koteka* embodies positive values such as togetherness, leadership, pride, greatness, and heroism. It serves as a symbol that should be passed on to the younger generation to face foreign cultures that do not align with the national identity (Hastanto, 2005). These values are inherent in someone who wears the *koteka*. Heroism is seen in a man's bravery in tribal wars that were common in the past. A leader who stands boldly and confidently in front of people. A respected leader within the tribal group or an authoritative leader (*tonowi*).

Fourthly, the *koteka* represents a form of local wisdom. Local wisdom refers to the wise, valuable, and culturally embedded ideas and practices followed by members of a community.

The concept of Jesus wearing a *koteka* on the cross seems improbable. This idea emerges from reflections on pastoral experiences. The *koteka*, being traditional attire for men, represents honor and greatness (*tonowi*). It is not uncommon to see depictions of Jesus on the cross wearing traditional Papuan coastal attire such as fringes or leaves. Similar practices are observed in other cultures according to their traditions. The motivation behind such depictions

is often to contextualize the cross so that people can understand and relate to Jesus in their own cultural context, making Jesus feel closer to local experiences.

Jesus wearing a *koteka* symbolizes God's solidarity with the culture of the Highland Papuans. God is not only for the Israelites or any particular group but seeks to enter and engage with humanity across all cultural dimensions. Here are some reasons for depicting Jesus in a *koteka*:

Firstly, Jesus in the context of world reflection. Historically, Jesus lived in Jewish culture 2000 years ago. He wore a robe, which was common attire for Jews of that time. When traveling from city to city, Jesus always wore a robe. The robe was everyday clothing for people from the Middle East, including Jews. Not only did Jesus wear a robe, but it was also typical for everyone of that era. Jesus' actions also reflect his Jewish identity.

In today's world, we often see images or films of Jesus wearing a robe. The association of Jesus with a robe is a widely accepted and recognized image. Thus, a depiction of Jesus not wearing a robe is often considered incorrect and contrary to established church traditions. This understanding has become accepted knowledge that is difficult to challenge or mix with other cultural representations.

Globally, there are challenges in contextualizing Jesus within different cultures. For example, Black theology developed in America by Protestant churches portrays Jesus as a Black man with curly hair. James Hal Cone, in his book *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), states that God has identified with the struggles of Black people. Thus, Jesus can be described as the Black Messiah.

On the other hand, feminist theology is reflected as a response against a church dominated by men. God is depicted as a father (a man), and Jesus (a man). In many aspects of the Church, women seem to be disregarded. Feminist theology emerged to offer a new understanding in a somewhat patriarchal church. Additionally, liberation theology in Latin America emerged to address human values undermined by colonialism, highlighted by figures like Bishop Romero who courageously presented new ideas about a church that aims to liberate people from colonial oppression.

In India, Dalit Theology emerged as a branch of Christian theology discussing the theme of liberation from the caste system in India. Dalit Theology appeared around the 1980s as a response to the poverty and marginalization experienced by lower castes in India. This theology was proposed by M. Azariah, a bishop in Madras. He opposed the existence of castes in communal life that tend to demean the dignity of others. Jesus is reflected as a figure who elevates marginalized people, similar to how Jesus associated with those devalued by the Romans. Jesus healed the sick, fed them, and provided new hopes for their lives.

Jesus wearing a *koteka* is an attempt to ground Jesus in the everyday life context of Highland Papuans. It also reflects Jesus as the savior of humanity within the context of the Papuan people, just as Jesus is reflected as a liberator, whether Black or otherwise.

Secondly, God in solidarity. God's solidarity begins with Himself and is shown through His initiative to create the world and everything in it (Gen 1). God initiated creation and placed

all His creations in their proper places. However, God did not leave His creations to fend for themselves; He worked to nurture and protect them. God aimed to guide and educate humanity to live well in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3). In the Old Testament stories, God is present in the struggles of the Israelites. He sought to communicate with the Israelites through the signs of the prophets, such as Moses, Elijah, Jonah, Nathan, and others whom God trusted to save the nation of Israel. God appears to be present in every aspect of the Israelites' lives, during their time in Egypt, the Babylonian Exile, and their journey to the Promised Land. God guided the Israelites to experience a better life in the land of Canaan, the land promised by God.

In the New Testament, God's initiative to be in solidarity with humanity is evident in the presence of Jesus in the world. He is present in the struggles of human life and the challenges that come with it. Thus, Jesus reveals Himself as the savior of humanity from all sin through the event of the cross and addresses the hopes of the people. The manifestation of God's solidarity is seen in Jesus healing the sick, such as in Gennesaret (Matt 14), healing the blind (Mark 10:46-52), the paralyzed (Mark 2:1-11), and other miracles performed by Jesus.

Jesus entered into the realities of Jewish life and the struggles of ordinary people. Jesus wearing a *koteka* represents the presence of God within the culture of the Highland Papuans. Jesus wearing a *koteka* symbolizes God's desire to experience the suffering and hardships of the Highland Papuans. Jesus in a *koteka* serves as a positive model, offering hope to human life.

Thirdly, the *Tungku Api* (Furnace) movement of life. Jesus wearing a *koteka* is seen as part of the *Tungku Api* movement within the Timika Diocese, reflecting the vision of the Diocese of Timika. The *Tungku Api* movement is an effort to root the Gospel in local cultures and address the issues of the people (Kira, 2022). Jesus wearing a *koteka* represents a process to develop a local movement for faith and revival within the Highland Papuan culture.

The *Tungku Api* movement is a contextual movement aimed at uplifting the values of Papuan life (Kayame, 2023). This movement seeks to restore the face of the local church, a church that serves the people, striving to embody the values of the Gospel by contextualizing these values and encouraging the community to be more faithful consistently and responsibly.

CONCLUSION

Inculturation is a delicate balancing act that requires careful discernment and guidance. The risk of syncretism is real and significant, posing a threat to the integrity of the Gospel and the universality of the Christian faith. However, with thoughtful and intentional efforts, the Church can navigate this challenge and achieve a harmonious integration of the Gospel with diverse cultures. The Church's commitment to truth and diversity is not mutually exclusive. By upholding the core tenets of the faith while embracing the richness of local cultures, the Church can fulfill its mission of evangelization in a way that is both faithful and relevant. This commitment requires vigilance, dialogue, and a deep respect for both the Gospel and the cultural contexts in which it is proclaimed. Moving forward, the Church must continue to engage in the process of inculturation with a clear focus on preserving the integrity of the Gospel. Through education, dialogue, and discernment, the Church can ensure that the

transformative power of the Gospel is fully realized in every cultural context, enriching the global Christian community and advancing the mission of evangelization.

Another challenge is the potential for cultural relativism, where the truth of the Gospel is seen as relative to each culture. While inculturation respects cultural diversity, it also affirms the universal truth of the Gospel, which transcends cultural differences. Balancing respect for cultural identity with the affirmation of universal truth is a delicate and ongoing task. Inculturation can also face resistance from both the local culture and the Church. Some cultural elements may resist the transformative influence of the Gospel, while some Church authorities may be wary of cultural adaptations that seem to depart from traditional practices. Navigating these tensions requires patience, dialogue, and a deep commitment to the Gospel's transformative mission. The practical implementation of inculturation can be complex and demanding. It requires skilled and culturally sensitive evangelizers who are willing to invest the time and effort needed for deep cultural immersion and dialogue. Training and support for these evangelizers are essential to ensure effective and faithful inculturation.

Jesus wearing a *koteka* represents a new breakthrough in the contextualization of the Gospel into local cultures. This effort aims to present God in the understanding and cultural depiction of the Highland Papuans. Just as theologians reflect on their theology within real-life contexts, such as Black theology, liberation theology, feminist theology, and others, Jesus in a *koteka* shows that God is in solidarity with and close to the people. This closeness is hoped to bring seeds of goodness and love into communal life. Furthermore, it helps the people to reflect on Jesus more clearly according to their cultural context and the vision of the Timika Diocese, which is the *Tungku Api* movement—a movement to root the Gospel within the culture.

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