Problems Facing Women in an Inculcuated (Igbo) Nigerian Church
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Introduction

From chapter nine of *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe presents an interesting encounter between the traditional African religionists and the White missionaries who had come to evangelize the people of Africa, precisely Nigeria and particularly the South Eastern part of the country. In the discussion (which ensued in one the sections, exactly the dialogue in chapter sixteen) between Okonkwo and the missionaries, we see the difficulties the missionaries had in explaining the “new religion” to the African. The encounter highlights how difficult it was for the missionaries to convince Africans to believe in the Christian God. It was not an easy task for the missionaries because of the culture and tradition of the people they had come to preach to. Achebe writes:

*The arrival of the missionaries had caused considerable stir in the village of Mbanta. There were six of them and one was a white man. Every man and woman came out to see the white man.... When they had all gathered, the white man began to speak to them. He spoke through an interpreter who was an Ibo man, though his dialect was different and harsh to the ears of Mbanta. Many people laughed at his dialect and the way he used words strangely. Instead of saying “myself” he always said “my buttocks.” He said he was one of them, as they could see from his color and language.... The white man was also their brother because they were all sons of God.*
In the views presented by Achebe we see how the missionaries tried to explain the Christian faith to the people, using what the people already knew. For example, they explained hell as “a fire that burned like palm oil” (Things Fall Apart, p. 145). It was a simple attempt at “inculturation” without knowing it. We also note that there was a gender issue involved: In Okonkwo's eyes the adherents were effeminate.

The “conversion” of Igbo to Christianity does not mean that they have accepted the Christian faith whole and entire. Some aspects of Igbo culture and tradition are still in conflict with the “new” religion and that is why Christianity has not taken root in the culture and in Nigeria. On account of this we talk of inculturation, which is, making the received faith have roots in our soil.

In this paper we want to explain some aspects of Igbo culture and the necessity of inculturating the Gospel message. Bearing this in mind, we shall point out some of the problems women might be facing in an inculturated Igbo Church. Some solutions to the problem will be proffered as a way forward before we end with a conclusion.