United and Divided: Comparative Notes on Christianity and Tradition in Two Papua New Guinea Societies

The Motu and the Hula, two south-coast Papua New Guinea societies, are linguistically related, have similar social organization and were economically linked before European colonization. They were both introduced to Christianity by the London Missionary Society in the late 19th century, and each appeared to incorporate the new religion into their social life and thought quickly and unproblematically. But while Christianity has now arguably become part of putative tradition among the Motu, some Hula are experiencing conflict between Christianity and their sense of tradition. Based on research in Pari village (Motu) and Irupara village (Hula), this paper compares contemporary perceptions of religion, tradition and identity in both societies.

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