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*Spirit Women, Church Women, and Passenger Women: Christianity, Gender, and Cultural Change in Melanesia*

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As anthropologists increasingly study Christianity in Melanesia, data has become available which allow us to address comparative questions about its differential impact in various societies of the region. In this article, I look at how conversion to Christianity has transformed women's roles in one society in Papua New Guinea and one in Vanuatu. In particular, I examine what Christian values have meant for the construction of new gender roles. In addition, I compare changes in women's roles in these two Christianized societies to the situation in another rapidly changing Papua New Guinea society where Christianization is not a dominant social trend in order to explore how Christianity might be seen to align women with culturally dominant values in ways other kinds of cultural change do not. In the course of the article, I also consider what my analysis has to say about the value of comparing Christian societies across the Melanesian region for the broader project of theorizing the role of religion in shaping contemporary social transformations in this region and beyond.