

Women of kievan rus

Society



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Women of Kievan Rus The women of Kievan Rus were in a much different setting and social structure than their western counterparts. With the arrival of Christianity in Kievan Rus came new changes to family relations and positions of women in society and the household. The church divided women into two groups, the “good” and the “evil” women. The determination of who fell into what group was determined on how they compared to the norms of behavior of saints. With women divided into two groups the church focused more on the conduct of “evil” women. The church handed down instructions on the conduct of women. The core of these instructions was based on the submissiveness of women to god and their husbands. They urged women to stay silent and be socially dependent. But women’s lives were not totally controlled and they were not treated sub-humanly. As seen in the treaty between Novgorod and Gotland slave women had rights and were defended against harm. The example it gives is the denial to rape or harm slave women. Their social roles were protected and offenders would have to stand trial and pay a heavy fine. Their counterparts, free women were also protected and held interesting privileges. Women were well protected from anything stemming from simple insults to rape. They also had a choice in their marriage partner and if they were forced into a marriage then the parents would have to pay a hefty fine. There were documents unearthed, which showed that Novgorod women lent money and owned land. Women in Novgorod and Kievan Rus were a unique sect of society with both freedoms and restrictions.