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CHRISTIAN AND ISLAMIC
GENDER MODELS
in Formative Traditions

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existed as an alternative to revenge in pre-Christian times – and to refrain from exacting revenge, it was primarily aimed to change men's behaviour. While the Church in the long run succeeded in doing away with this aggressive male revenge role, the relationship between men's and women's roles in conflict-solving radically changed, to the benefit of men. In a feud, men and women each had their function: the women incited, the men carried out the revenge. When compensation was introduced instead, this was settled by the legal apparatus, i.e. by men alone, without the involvement of women. While the male role was changed, men retained the power and women lost another important stronghold, perhaps the most important basis for power that they had in Old Norse society.

Conclusion

Christianisation and the Church brought about changes in certain areas of society which had positive consequences for women and for female roles. Nevertheless, the criminalisation of female roles, the recasting of the female sex as sinful, and the changing of norms and the introduction of new ideas which undermined the foundations of female power are striking consequences which, in the course of some hundred years after Christianisation, altered the relationship between the sexes to the disadvantage of women.

(Translated by Edel Porter)

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