**Akan**

**Aka Ashanti**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Although the Bragoro ceremony is not held as frequently as in the past, menstruation is still viewed by most Bono as an impure state. No Bono woman will have sexual intercourse during her menstrual period. Even today, regardless of her religious affiliation, a menstruating woman would never think of entering a Bono traditional shrine room or an ancestral stool room. Many traditional priests still have their wives spend their menstrual periods in a small hut apart from the main house, especially if the shrine has a menstrual taboo.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1975

**Focal Year:** 1964 – 1974

**Citation:** Warren, D. M. (1975). The Techiman-Bono of Ghana: an ethnography of an Akan society. Kendall/Hunt Pub. Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-054

**Description:** Menstruation itself is considered defiling; Menstruation women in many rural villages are still restricted to a hut in the forest (bra dan) until the period is over. The menstruating woman has several taboos. She cannot cross sacred rivers, sell food, or offer food to a chief. In the olden days if she entered the stool room she would be immediately put to death. It is also taboo for a menstruating woman to sleep with a man. Both partners of a sexual intercourse while the woman was menstruating (baratwε) were executed.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1986

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Warren, D. M. (1986). The Akan of Ghana: an overview of the ethnographic literature. Pointer Ltd. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-029

**Description:** The reason of her apparent destitution and abandonment for a time of her proper dwelling was the occurrence of the menses, during which a Fanti woman is regarded as unclean, and obliged to live apart from her husband.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1897

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Connolly, R. M. (1897). Social life in Fanti-land. Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britian and Ireland, Vol. XXVI, 128–153. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-026

**Description:** Women may not carve stools; in former days they were not allowed to approach carvers at work, during their menstrual period, under pain of death or a heavy fine.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1950

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Manoukian, M. (1950). Akan and Ga-Adangme peoples of the Gold Coast. In Ethnographic Survey of Africa (pp. vii, 9–64, 112). Oxford University Press for the International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-004

**Description:** No menstruating woman must go upon the lake.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1923

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Rattray, R. S. (Robert S. (1923). Ashanti. Clarendon Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-001

**Description:** Menstruating women were forbidden from entering any regular dwelling house and were provided with special buildings for the duration. They were not allowed to swear an oath, to address any servant of the king ( ahenkwaa ) or any priest ( [unavailable]komfo ), or to have sexual intercourse.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1993

**Focal Year:** 1400 – 1980s

**Citation:** Wilks, I. (1993). Forests of gold: essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante. Ohio University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-028

**Description:** A potential bad magic is possessed by all ceremonially unclean (menstruating) women. Such women are not allowed near shrines, near good suman or near any medicinal object.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1970

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Field, M. J. (Margaret J. (1970). Search for security: an ethno-psychiatric study of rural Ghana. In Norton Library (p. 478). W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-027

**Description:** The Ashanti regarded a woman in her menses as unclean. She left the house and lived in a hut outside for six days. On the sixth day, before she returned to the house, she went to the river and washed all her things—clothing, utensils, stools—before she came back home. It was taboo for a woman in her menses to enter a chief's house. Ashantis regard women in their menstrual period as ceremonially unclean. and they could not perform their duties.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1941 – 1942

**Citation:** Busia, K. A. (Kofi A. (1951). The position of the chief in the modern political system of the Ashanti: a study of the influence of contemporary social change on Ashanti political institutions. The Oxford University Press for the International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-006

**Description:** Menstruating women were not supposed to touch or handle tools used to make things or to change one sort of thing into another: if the tools of a potter, weaver or carver were so handled, or a menstruous woman approached a man who was using them, they would break or slip and harm him, and what he was making would be ruined. Menstruating women could not, of course, cook or come near to a senior chief or be present when important cases were being tried. Menstruation was also associated with night, and in ordinary conversation it was referred to in an oblique way only. It was therefore the custom for menstruating women to remove completely from their houses and to occupy either a small unplastered hut a little way from their house, or to move to one of a number of simple menstruation huts ( bradan, brafie ) built at the edge of the village, hard against the bush.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1981

**Focal Year:** 1817 – 1901

**Citation:** McLeod, M. D. (Malcolm D. ). (1981). The Asante. British Museum Publications. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe12-039

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Yes, Menstruation women in many rural villages are still restricted to a hut in the forest (bra dan) until the period is over. Women may not carve stools; in former days they were not allowed to approach carvers at work, during their menstrual period, under pain of death or a heavy fine.

**Amhara**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Menstruation is differentiated in several ways: r[unknown]kk[unknown]s[unknown]c - she has become impure; r[unknown]gg[unknown]m[unknown] - the (monthly) curse is on her; [unknown]d[unknown]f “dirt, a bad spot” - the discharge of menstruation; b[unknown]d[unknown]m nat (she is in blood). Husbands are expected to shun “the dirt” and avoid sex relations during that time.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1985

**Focal Year:** 1950s

**Citation:** Messing, S. D. (Simon D., & Bender, M. L. (Marvin L. (1985). Highland plateau Amhara of Ethiopia. In Ethnography series (p. 3 v. (xvii, 502 leaves)). Human Relations Area Files. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mp05-020

**Description:** Menstruation is viewed as the punishment incurred by womankind as a result of that first great treachery in Eden.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** 1270 – 1961

**Citation:** Levine, D. N. (1965). Wax & gold: tradition and innovation in Ethiopian culture. University of Chicago Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mp05-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Azande**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Sexual aberrations are believed to cause misfortune to those who view them and menstruating women are also possible agents of misfortune.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1953

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Baxter, P. T. W., & Butt, A. (1953). The Azande, and related peoples of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan and Belgian Congo. In ethnographic survey of africa, east central africa (pp. x, 152). International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo07-056

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Bagisu**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** While menstruating, a woman avoided touching her husband's weapons and, if possible, did not cook his food, though she would do so if he had no other wife.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1924

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Roscoe, J. (1924). The Bagesu and other tribes of the Uganda Protectorate: the third part of hte report of the Mackie ethnological expedition to Central Africa. The University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fk13-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Bambara**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No menstruating woman may visit the places inhabited by Faro; none may draw water, wash clothes or cooking utensils, or cleanse herself in any of these spots. In addition, a man whose wife is in such condition must refrain from appearing at religious ceremonies or, if he is a priest, from performing the ritual. Menstrual blood, testimony to Mousso Koroni's impurity and of the momentary sterility of women, is the principal taboo of the supernatural powers that create and protect life.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1931 – 1949

**Citation:** Dieterlen, G., & Wolf, K. (1951). An essay on the religion of the Bambara. In Bibliothèque de sociologie contemporaine (p. HRAF ms: iv, 293 [original: xx, 240 ]). Presses universitaires de France. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa08-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Banyoro**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No woman during her menses would be taken across, for the raft would sink. A woman might not touch her husband's spear, or himself, when she was menstruating; though, among poor people of the agricultural clans, she might cook his food. A woman might not drink milk during her menses except from an old cow which was past bearing. If such a cow were not procurable, she had to live on porridge and vegetable food, such as plantain. On this first day in the new kraal, no woman who was menstruating might come in nor might such a woman drink of the first milking. She had to wait at the house of some friend that day and enter on the next. A woman during her menses was not allowed to drink milk, for if she did so the cow's teats would be blocked, its milk would be discoloured with blood, it would cease to give milk, or it would become barren. If a man were wealthy enough, he would permit his wife and daughters at these times to drink milk from an old cow that was past bearing. A woman at this time was not permitted to eat hot food but had to eat porridge which had been made the day before and left over-night to get cold. She might not touch the weapons of her husband lest they should be contaminated and useless in battle. Husband and wife might sleep on one bed, but they might not have sexual relations.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1923

**Focal Year:** 1861 – 1919

**Citation:** Roscoe, J. (, & Mackie Ethnological Expedition To Central Africa, -. (1923). The Bakitara or Banyoro: the first part of the report of the Mackie Ethnological Expedition to Central Africa. The University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fk11-014

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Bemba**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The menstruating woman is said to be a “hot” medium Akuba na mpepo, and should “avoid fire” Atina mulilo; it would only intensify her heat. Metaphorically she is a “smelting furnace” Mutanda, a womb-like structure, full of fire, which pours out its molten metal like a “child” Mwana .  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1983

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Maxwell, K. B. (Kevin B. (1983). Bemba myth and ritual: the impact of literacy on an oral culture. In American university studies (Vol. 2, pp. xxiii, 197). P. Lang. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq05-011

**Description:** Contact with a dead body makes a fire cold, or contact with a menstruating woman, who is described in polite speech as ‘being in a state of coldness’ ( Akuba na mpepo ) or as ‘fearing fire’ ( atina umulilo ). People who eat food cooked on the fire by such women are liable to illness.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1956

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Richards, A. I. (Audrey I. (1956). CHISUNGU: a girls’ initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Northern Rhodesia. Faber and Faber. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq05-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied.

**Bena**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Again, intercourse with a menstruating woman is most strictly taboo, and yet there are certain doctors famous for the excellent medicine they sell to ward off the dreadful effects of breaking this rule. Some families, prior to sowing seed, dip at least some of it in water which has been tinted red with the bark of Pterocarpus bussei Harms. This is said to protect the crops from being blighted and spoiled if a menstruating woman happens to walk across the field. To the same end, some people put red earth round their tobacco patches, which they appear to regard as specially in need of such protection. These practices are, however, not so widespread now as in the past. The man is admonished never to sleep with his wife when she is menstruating and a maize-cob tinted red is tied round his waist to warn him against this.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1935

**Focal Year:** 1928 – 1933

**Citation:** Culwick, A. T. (Arthur T., Culwick, Mrs., G. M., & Kiwanga, T. (1935). Ubena of the Rivers. G. Allen & Unwin, Ltd. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fn31-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Yes – “These practices are, however, not so widespread now as in the past.”

**Berbers of Morocco**

**Aka Riffians**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** In Andjra the women should be clean when they milk the cows, sheep, or goats; if an animal is milked by a menstruating woman it will become diseased. Among the Ait Waryager, on the other hand, a menstruous woman is allowed to milk an animal, but not a woman who has refrained from washing after she has had connection with her husband. In the same tribe it is held that if an unclean person goes among the sheep they will die, because they are holy animals and in consequence easily hurt by defilement.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1926

**Focal Year:** 1898 – 1926

**Citation:** Westermarck, E. (1926). Ritual and belief in Morocco. Macmillan and Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mx03-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Dogon**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** During her menstrual periods she goes into one of the appropriate huts, but the board on which she sleeps is separated from the boards of the other women. In this case she does not attend dances.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1938

**Focal Year:** 1931 – 1937

**Citation:** Griaule, M., & Winchell, J. H. (1938). Dogon masks. In Travaux et Memoires de l’Institut d’Ethnologie (p. HRAF MS: i, 899 leaves [original: xii, 896 ]). Institut d’Ethnologie. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa16-008

**Description:** During her periods, she goes to the house reserved for women, but, there too, she lives apart and takes cover under a straw roof that is made especially for her.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1941

**Focal Year:** 1936 – 1939

**Citation:** Dieterlen, G., & Granka, S. L. (1942). The souls of the Dogons. In Travaux et Mémoires (p. HRAF MS: i, 307 [original: viii, 314 ]). Institut d’Ethnologie. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa16-011

**Description:** Menstruating women, particularly impure because their condition is proof of the momentary absence of childbirth, are kept strictly away from the family food and water; they do their cooking in the house that is reserved for them, with special utensils which they deposit in a precise spot at the end of their seclusion and which are used only under these circumstances  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1960

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Dieterlen, G., Calame-Griaule, G., & Schütze, F. (1960). Dogon alimentation. Cahiers d’études Africanes, Vol. 1(3), HRAF MS: i. 1-77 [original: 46-89 ]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa16-007

**Description:** During their retreat, menstruating women do not wash their clothes. During the menstrual period, the woman inhabits a special house at the edge of the village. For her cooking she uses pottery that is reserved for this use and deposited in the vicinity.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1938

**Focal Year:** 1931 – 1935

**Citation:** Griaule, M., & Marcus, M. A. (1938). Dogon games. In Travaux et Mémoires (p. HRAF MS: i, 276 leaves [original: viii, 291 , pl). Institut d’Ethnologie. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa16-013

**Description:** The seclusion of the menstruating woman ends on the sixth day; at noon the woman goes to wash her clothes at the neighboring pool and returns to their usual place, under some stones at the foot of a tree or under a large rock reserved for this purpose, the pottery vessels and gourd spoons that she used during the preceding five days. In the evening, she smears her body with karite butter and re-enters the house of her husband at nightfall.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1940

**Focal Year:** 1935

**Citation:** Paulme, D., & Schütze, F. (1940). Social organization of the Dogon (French Sudan). éditions Domat-Montchrestien, F. Loviton et Cie. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fa16-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Fellahin**

**Aka Egyptains**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** If their menses intervene, however, they become unclean, and fasting then becomes sinful.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1878

**Focal Year:** 1863 – 1878

**Citation:** Klunzinger, C. B. (1878). Upper Egypt: its people and its products. Scribner, Armstrong, & Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mr13-009

**Description:** A menstruous woman is always regarded as unclean. On hearing this the sheikh was very angry, for no unclean woman must ever be present on such an occasion. So he ordered all the people, and there were many present, to leave the room, with the exception of a few of the man's male relatives.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1927

**Focal Year:** 1920 – 1927

**Citation:** Blackman, W. S. (Winifred S. (1927). The fellāhīn of Upper Egypt: their social and industrial life today with special reference to survivals from ancient times. George G. Harrap & Company Ltd. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mr13-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Fon**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The question again arises concerning this ignorance among voting women, since all adult women are segregated during the monthly catamenia. For her first three periods a girl remains in her mother's house, but thereafter she goes to the room in the compound that is reserved for the menstruating women of the household. The cloth which a girl wears while in her menstruous condition is washed and retained for use the month following. Any magic charms she wears must be removed before her period comes, nor will anyone with such charms approach too closely the room where these women are sheltered while menstruating. Young children go in and out of this room, but the women do not cook for their husbands (or their sons, if they are approaching puberty) while they are menstruating. Similarly when the four day week assigned to a given wife to cohabit with the common husband comes while she is menstruating, her co-wives arrange their time so that this conflict does not deprive her of her opportunity to be with him.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1967

**Focal Year:** 1845 – 1931

**Citation:** Herskovits, M. J. (Melville J. (1967). Dahomey, an ancient West African kingdom: volume 1. Northwestern University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/fa18/documents/001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Fulani**

**Aka Wodaabe Fulani**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Women are a source of pollution for men, particularly in connection with menstruation. The menstruation blood is considered to deprive traditional medicines of their powers, and thus women are not able to have many medicines for protection, which are an important part of the man's life and powers.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 2008

**Focal Year:** 1996 – 1998

**Citation:** Loftsdóttir, K. (2008). The bush is sweet: identity, power and development among the WoDaaBe Fulani in Niger. Nordiska Afrikainstitutet. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms11-015

**Description:** When a woman is menstruating, her husband comes to her in the usual way and has his food prepared by her; he does not sleep in her bed but on the floor in his wife's shelter.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1964

**Focal Year:** 1804 – 1953

**Citation:** Stenning, D. J. (1964). Savannah Nomads: a study of the Wodaabe pastoral Fulani of Western Bornu Province, Northern Region, Nigeria. Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms11-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Ganda**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The menstrual period was known as peace. The woman in this condition was not allowed to touch anything and to go where she liked. Non-observance of these taboos affected the ability of the woman to bear children. (Roscoe says it is the growth of her garden that is affected.).   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1934

**Focal Year:** 1854 – 1909

**Citation:** Kagwa Sir, A., Kalibala, E. B., Edel, M. (Mandelbaum), & Roscoe, J. (1934). The customs of the Baganda. In Contributions to anthropology (Vol. 22, p. 199). Columbia University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fk07-008

**Description:** No woman might touch a drum when she was menstruating; she had to keep at a safe distance, lest it should kill her, and she should defile the drum. No woman was allowed to visit a well when she was menstruating; if she did so, it was feared that the water would dry up, and that she herself would fall sick and die, unless she confessed her fault and the medicine-man made atonement for her. She was then removed from the temple, because no woman might enter a temple or have anything to do for the gods during her periods of menstruation; consequently the office of temple virgin was restricted to girls of immature years.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1911

**Focal Year:** 1854 – 1909

**Citation:** Roscoe, J. (1911). The Baganda: an account of their native customs and beliefs. Macmillan and Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fk07-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Gikuyu**

**Aka Kikuyu**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The stool on which one sat while menstruating was not kept in the open where anybody could sit on it because it was considered unclean [contaminated]. When it was finished, Cũcũ fetched some water for me from the river and after washing myself and my clothes. I washed the stool and then threw it under the bed where it was kept. Afterwards, I was given oil to apply to my body, and that day I spent at home. The following day, I could go out and visit my friends.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1996

**Focal Year:** 1910 – 1995

**Citation:** Davison, J. (1996). Voices from Mutira: change in the lives of rural Gikuyo women, 1910-1995. Lynne Rienner Publishers. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fl10-010

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Gusii**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** There is no fear of menstrual blood.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1966

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1957

**Citation:** LeVine, R. A., & Lloyd, B. B. (Barbara B. (1966). Nyansongo: a Gusii community in Kenya. In Six cultures series: Vol. v. 2 (pp. xxxv, 204). Wiley. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fl08-005

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Hadza**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A Hadza woman will wash on the last day of her period, and then the couple has sex. Sex is generally avoided during menstruation. The Hadza have no menstrual huts where women are expected to go when menstruating. I have never seen a woman bleeding, so they are able to conceal the blood with whatever material (nowadays, mostly the pieces of cloth I give them).  
**Date of Ethnography:** 2010

**Focal Year:** 1995 – 2005

**Citation:** Marlowe, F. (2010). The Hadza: hunter-gatherers of Tanzania. In Origins of human behavior and culture (Issue No. 3, pp. x, 325). University of California Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fn11-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Igbo**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** For example, a titled man ate his meals in isolation since no one was allowed to see his mouth. Moreover, no menstruating woman was allowed to enter his kitchen or prepare his meals. To ensure that these restrictions were strictly observed, a titled man's wife was required to change her clothing often, for the garments might have been worn at one time or other during menstruation. To be on the safe side, the titled man may demand that a woman borrow a man's clothes before preparing his meal.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1994

**Focal Year:** 900 – 1900s

**Citation:** Ohadike, D. C. (1994). Anioma: a social history of the Western Igbo people. Ohio University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff26-049

**Description:** A woman is never free to refuse her husband intercourse unless she is menstruating. A menstruating woman must remain in a “place of isolation” ( uzo abani ), either in her own room or in a special room near the gate to the compound. While there, she sleeps on a mat which is not used for any other occasion. From this room she may supervise household activities and she will be attended to by her children or co-wives. While a married woman is considered in a “forbidden” state ( nso ) during menstruation, an unmarried girl is not so dangerous and may remain in her usual sleeping place and even do her household tasks, including helping with cooking. Menstrual blood is believed to be a source of danger, and intercourse during this period is an abomination.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1970

**Focal Year:** 1850 – 1900

**Citation:** Henderson, H. K. (1980). Ritual roles of women in Onitsha Ibo society. University Microfilms. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff26-028

**Description:** In addition to taboos about menstruating women cooking for men or eating with them there is the fear that such a woman may go near her husband's “medicines” and so injure both them and herself. Women who were menstruating were not rubbed with the medicine. But at one point my girl assistant, S., heard the other women demanding that they should show their blood, to prove that they could justly claim exemption.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1964

**Focal Year:** 1930s

**Citation:** Green, M. M. (Margaret M. (1964). Ibo village affairs. Praeger. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff26-003

**Description:** Purification must always be performed after menstruation. This is little more than ceremonial washing. The woman must first wash herself outside the compound walls after dark, using a water-pot reserved solely for the purpose. It is a round pot with a wide mouth called “oku aru”, meaning the one vessel used for cleansing after menstruation. Next day, she may proceed to the stream, but is forbidden to enter the water straightway. She stands on the bank apart from other people present. Another woman brings a pot of water to her and she washes her body thoroughly. This completed, she may enter the water as a cleansed woman; and (if married) resume cooking for her husband and others in the compound. On the western (Asaba) side of the Niger, the “Ife-ji- o ku” is rather a subject of fear. Neither a menstruating nor a pregnant woman may enter the farm. She must invoke the aid of a friend to dig her yams for her. A mother must wait until three months have elapsed after the birth of her child. During her time of menstruation, a woman must abide by custom as closely as circumstances permit. She withdraws to a hut in a secluded corner of the enclosure. When again free, she purifies herself by washings and a sacrifice of eggs. She thereupon resumes her place in the community. There are corresponding laws in respect of the menstruation of women (Lev. xv. 19 seq. ). During the time of her period, the Ibo woman must dwell apart; she is forbidden to enter her husband's house until after her ceremonial cleansing. The woman moves to a neighbour's compound and abides in a corner near the entrance.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1966

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1937

**Citation:** Basden, G. T., & Willis, J. R. (1966). Niger Ibos: a description of the primitive life, customs and animistic beliefs, etc., of the Ibo people of Nigeria. Cass. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff26-007

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** There appears to be the influence of Christian beliefs on the Indigenous religion at one point or another which is especially seen in the last ethnography where they talk about Leviticus laws.

**Ila**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No menstruating women may come near the camp, nor any one wearing a dark cloth, for dark or black is unlucky.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1920

**Focal Year:** 1902 – 1914

**Citation:** Smith, E. W. & Dale, Andrew Murray, d. 1919. (1920). The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia: vol. 1. MacMillan and Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq06-001

**Description:** Here we may describe some of the taboos imposed upon the woman during the time of the menses. To menstruate is kusea and the woman is called Namusea. She is spoken of euphemistically as being kumbadi (“in retreat”), and uina matashi (“having no hands”). She is a dangerous woman, and must be separated as far as possible from contact with her fellows. Should she venture to sleep on her husband's bed, she would incur his righteous indignation and be made to pay damages: it would be reckoned buditazhi by some. She may not sit near people, lest there should be mutual injury. She must have nothing to do with the common fire, but must light one for her own use. She must not handle other people's pots, nor eat out of their basins, nor drink out of their cups, nor smoke their pipes. She may not cook food for anybody, nor draw water for another. If she sleeps in her hut, it must be on the floor. She may not enter a village other than her own. She may not wear nice clothes. For five days is she tonda ; then she washes and may rejoin her fellows. That she is dangerous is shown also in the procedure with regard to a person called an Imbala. He is a man that is wasting away. Nothing seems to stop the emaciation. Then they say there is a musangushi (“ghost”) taking away his flesh. They put him into a hut and young girls enter and kindle a new fire for him. No menstruating woman must enter, for she is particularly dangerous to him.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1920

**Focal Year:** 1902 – 1914

**Citation:** Smith, E. W. & Dale, Andrew Murray, d. 1919. (1920). The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia: vol. 2. MacMillan and Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq06-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Katab**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Women are not allowed to cook during their menses. Food cooked by a woman in this condition is said to affect the eyesight of the person who eats it.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1931

**Focal Year:** 1925 – 1930

**Citation:** Meek, C. K. (Charles K. (1931). Tribal studies in northern Nigeria. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff38-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Khoi**

**Aka Nama**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Those who are menstruating are not allowed in the kraal, let alone to do the milking.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1907

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1907

**Citation:** Schultze, L. S., Knight, E. C., & Ziolkowski, T. (1907). In Namaland and the Kalahari. Gustav Fischer. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx13-001

**Description:** This separation of the sexes at meals he attributes to the fear that one of the women might be menstruating, and would thus contaminate any men associating with her or coming near her. r. This separation of the sexes at meals he attributes to the fear that one of the women might be menstruating, and would thus contaminate any men associating with her or coming near her. The only exceptions to this rule are that no menstruating woman may eat of the meat, “lest the girl's period never stop,” nor any pregnant woman, “lest the girl's period stop never to return.”. During her subsequent periods, however, she is again !nau, and although there is apparently no feasting or special seclusion, she must observe the same injunctions as when she first menstruates. Thus she may not enter the cattle-fold, let alone milk; it is believed that if she does milk a cow, its milk will turn to blood. Similarly, if she cooks a meal, those who eat it, especially men, will be very ill. Above all she must avoid cold water, for, as Mrs. Hoernlé points out, there is this great difference between most things a menstruating woman is forbidden to do, and the touching of cold water—cold water she can never harm, it will always harm her, if she uses it when she should not, whereas it is she who pollutes other things that she touches and makes them !nau.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1930

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1930

**Citation:** Schapera, I. (1930). Culture of the Hottentots. In The Khoisan peoples of South Africa; Bushmen and Hottentots, by I. Schapera (pp. 221–418). G. Routledge. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx13-015

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Lakeshore Tonga**

**Aka Plateau Tonga**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A disease called sira was contracted through certain forms of ceremonial uncleanliness, for example, contact with a menstruating woman, or promiscuous intercourse  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1950

**Focal Year:** 1855 – 1945

**Citation:** Douglas, M. T. (1950). North-west Nyasa-Lundazi region: Tumbuka and Lake Shore Tonga. In Peoples of the Lake Nyasa region (pp. 51–70, 118–131). Published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fr07-006

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Libyan Bedouin**

**Aka Saadi**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Menstruation compromises women’s virtue by undermining their piety. As a natural force over which they have no control, it also represents inescapable weakness, and lack of selfcontrol or independence. Piety is an aspect of morality that women cannot easily attain because of their “natural” pollution through menstruation. One version of the Fall from Grace relates how Eve had not menstruated in the Garden of Eden but only began to bleed when she hit the ground in her fall. Women’s monthly menstruation commemorates the fall into earthly sin, or at least to that which is not godly. Although there are five pillars of Islamic faith and practice (declaration of faith in the unity of God and Muhammad’s prophecy, prayer, alms, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and the Ramadan fast), prayer is the duty that defines piety most vividly on a daily basis. Women are handicapped because menstruation is considered polluting. A menstruating woman cannot pray. . Islamic convention stipulates that a menstruating woman may not enter a mosque or touch holy objects, the Koran in particular. Furthermore, her fasts do not count, which means that she must make up at some other time during the year the days of the Ramadan fast that she misses. Bedouin women exaggerate the uncleanliness of menstruation by abstaining from bathing or even hair combing while menstruating. The bath that marks the end of the flow is also a ritual ablution; after this bath, a woman may resume prayers, not to mention sexual intercourse.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1986

**Focal Year:** 1978 – 1980

**Citation:** Abu-Lughod, L. (1986). Veiled sentiments: honor and poetry in a Bedouin society. University of California Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mt09-010

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Lozi**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The taboos which surrounded menstruating women dramatised the dangers inherent in the procreative powers of Nature, 25 It was believed that any form of contact with a menstruating woman, even with utensils used by her, resulted in chest pains. This remains a common diagnosis of tuberculosis.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1980

**Focal Year:** 1876 – 1896

**Citation:** Prins, G. (1980). The hidden hippopotamus: reappraisal in African history. In African studies series (pp. xvi, 319). Cambridge University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq09-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Luguru**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** In Mgeta, the most important and most closely followed taboo is that a menstruating woman must never give a chair to her mjomba when he comes to visit, as, once again, this will cause him serious injury. There is a long list of additional restrictions. A menstruating woman must avoid entering the fields of certain food crops or else these crops are said to “rot” ( kuoza ). 7 7 Menstruating women must not enter the areas where the following food crops (all subject to decay by rotting) are growing: pumpkin, beans (according to some), cassava, and cocoyam. She mustn't enter the grain store. She may cook for a group but cannot salt the food in the pot and must ask someone else for help, usually a sister or daughter. She is allowed to salt her own food, separately in her bowl. There are some interesting aspects of these taboos in respect to husbands, for example, a menstruating women is not allowed to circle the house, a space that is closely linked to conjugal relations. She must also face toward her husband when sleeping, and not turn her back to him.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 2002

**Focal Year:** 1947 – 1999

**Citation:** Gemignani, R. (2002). Gender, reason and agriculture: a hundred years of negotiated development in the Uluguru Mountains, Tanzania. ProQuest Invormation and Learning Company. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fn32-013

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Luo**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** They were instructed not to visit their boyfriends during menstruation, dhi boke.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1989

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1989

**Citation:** Cohen, D. W., & Atiendo Odhiambo, E. S. (1989). Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape. Heinemann Kenya. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fl11-035

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Maasai**

**Aka Maasi**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Menstruation is not looked upon as causing uncleanness, and there are no special rules and regulations attached to this condition, but, on the other hand, during the actual menstrual period a girl should refuse all invitations to sleep with men or boys. There is no restriction of work during the menstrual period as there is among some Bantu tribes, but a girl or woman must wash her hands before milking if she is menstruating.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1930

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1929

**Citation:** Leakey, L. S. B. (Louis S. B. (1930). Some notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony. Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britian and Ireland, Vol. 60, 185–209. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fl12-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Masa**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No menstrual taboos  
**Date of Ethnography:** Not specified

**Focal Year:** 1910

**Citation:** von Hagen, G. (1912). Die Bana. Baessler-Archiv, 2, 77–116.

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Mbuti**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A menstruating woman and her husband are forbidden to take part in the hunt, according to some village customs.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Turnbull, C. M. (1965). The Mbuti Pygmies: an ethnographic survey. In Anthropological papers (Issue 50, pp. 139-282 , plates). American Museum of Natural History. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo04-001

**Description:** According to various legends, menstrual blood is also possessed of magical force.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Turnbull, C. M. (1965). Wayward servants: the two worlds of the African Pygmies. The Natural History Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo04-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced or Implied

**Mende**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Thus, women who are pregnant or menstruating are ‘dangerous’ in the sense that to make contact with them is harmful to all the parties concerned.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1890 – 1950

**Citation:** Little, K. L. (1951). The Mende of Sierra Leone. In International library of sociology and social reconstruction (p. 307). Routledge and Kegan Paul. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fc07-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Mongo**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** As long as they live in the confinement room, all menstruating women, especially her own mother, have to observe the intercource taboo.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1991

**Focal Year:** 1979 – 1980

**Citation:** Pagezy, H. (1991). Fatness and culture among the southern Mongo (Zaire): the case of the primparous nursing woman. African Study Monographs, Vol. 12(3), 149–160. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo32-011

**Description:** Finally, that sexual relations are strictly forbidden to them during menstruation ( -k□na or □na nsóngé, literally “to be ill from” or “to see the moon,” and other similar expressions). The reason given is that a woman in that difficult condition should be spared all additional annoyance.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1938

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1938

**Citation:** Hulstaert, G. E., & Vizedom, M. B. (1938). Marriage among the Nkundu. In MéIn-8° (Vol. 8, pp. iv, 520). Librairie Falk fils, Georges Van Campenhout, Successeur. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo32-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Nuba**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A menstruating woman does not cook or make bread, and never touches anything belonging to her husband or to any other man. Her food is cooked for her by her relations, and she eats it alone with a spoon and drinks from a special gourd. In spite of these restrictions she does not leave her husband's hut, but sleeps on a special mat made of millet stalks, which is readily thrown away when rotten and when not in use is kept on a rock somewhere near the house. After five days she takes a gourd of water brought to her by a relative, and seeks some sequestered place where she washes herself. She breaks the gourd and throws away the pieces. During the periods one of her own or husband's relatives does her work about the house.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** 1909 – 1922

**Citation:** Seligman, C. G. (Charles G., & Seligman, B. Z. (1965). The Nuba. In Pagan tribes of the Nilotic Sudan (pp. 366–412). Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fj21-002

**Description:** The menstruation avoidances in Moro fit into the larger picture of that tribe's magic beliefs, which include a deep superstitious fear of uncleanness.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1947

**Focal Year:** 1938 – 1941

**Citation:** Nadel, S. F. (Siegfried F. (1947). The Nuba: an anthropological study of the hill tribes in Kordofan. Oxford University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fj21-001

**Description:** There are also extensive menstrual restrictions constituting females as women, and a woman during menstruation must avoid touching any productive tools, or engage in any productive actvity. Dependents must eat elsewhere. It is to be remembered, however, that menstruation is not common amongst Southeast Nuba women (see Appendix B below) and that blood from any source is polluting.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1989

**Focal Year:** 1966 – 1980

**Citation:** Faris, J. C. (1989). Southeast Nuba social relations. In Monographica (p. 390). Alano, Edition Herodot. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fj21-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Nubians**

**Aka Midobi**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Washing of the body of a dead woman is accompanied by the incantation: “I purify you from birth, menstruation, and intercourse.”  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1967

**Focal Year:** 1933 – 1965

**Citation:** Kennedy, J. G. (1967). Mushahara: a Nubian concept of supernatural danger and the theory of taboo. American Anthropologist, Vol. 69(6), 685–702. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mr08-008

**Description:** During a condolence period for a previous death, pregnancy, a menstrual period, or the forty-day confinement following the birth of a baby, a woman of the village was not allowed to take part in funeral ceremonies and was exempted from most of her obligations toward the family of the deceased.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1978

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1964

**Citation:** Kennedy, J. G. (1978). Circumcision and excision ceremonies. In nubian ceremonial life : studies in islamic syncretism and cultural change (pp. 151–170). Berkeley. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/mr08/documents/014

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Nuer**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A menstruating woman was prohibited from drinking a cow's milk lest the cow become barren ( bε bot )—though she could continue to milk cows for others as well as consume goats' milk herself. The mere act of stepping over ( baal ) a cow's tethering cord during menstruation was thought to endanger the cow's health (dee nuer). 9 9. For similar reasons, women, whether menstruating or not, were extremely careful to avoid stepping over a reclining man. Similarly, a woman was expected to refrain from sexual intercourse during the height of her menstrual flow for fear that some of her blood might penetrate her mate's penis and thereby increase his susceptibility to illness, misfortune, and death—particularly death in battle.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1996

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1992

**Citation:** Hutchinson, S. E. (1996). Nuer dilemmas: coping with money, war, and the state. Univ of California Press.

**Description:** A young woman is believed dangerous during her menses: she must abstain from drinking cow's milk lest she harm the cattle (1956:255); she is forbidden sexual intercourse for fear she injure her mate. One expression for ‘menses’, lac, also means ‘to defaecate’ (Huffman 1929:27). During their menses, women may continue to drink the milk of goats (Beidelman 1968:125), as these animals are not used in marriage exchanges. The procreative and nurturing powers of goats are in no way equated or opposed to those of women.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1980

**Focal Year:** 1930

**Citation:** Hutchinson, S. E. (1980). Relations between the sexes among the Nuer: 1930. Africa, Vol. 50(4), 371–387. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fj22-024

**Description:** Women refuse to drink milk during their menstrual periods. A woman must never drink milk during her menstrual period. Nor at this time may she eat food which has been cooked in a kettle in which milk has been boiled. Why? Because to do so would harm the cattle.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1931

**Focal Year:** 1927 – 1929

**Citation:** Huffman, R., & Westermann, D. (1931). Nuer customs and folklore. International Institute of African Language and Culture. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fj22-014

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Nyakyusa and Ngonde**

**Aka Nyakyusa**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** 'It starts when a woman is menstruating; then she begins to give a child her cunning ( ubugalagala ). It is said that when a woman is menstruating she should avoid certain things ( ukutila ), particularly she should not pass behind people. For when a woman is menstruating a child has begun in her belly. People know that a certain woman is cunning when they see that she does not avoid people at certain times. Then they say: “Friends, this woman is spoiling the child. Why does she not observe the avoidances? Look, we have seen that she is fruitful (meaning that she is menstruating).” For it is that dirt which creates witchcraft. When a woman does not avoid, then she gives the child in her belly witchcraft. It is from this that witchcraft really comes. When a woman is not cunning, then she always observes the avoidance taboos; she does not go about anyhow. From of old it has been thought important that a menstruating woman should observe certain avoidances. A woman avoids certain things because she fears to spoil the child in her belly. When a woman does not avoid these things, the dirt, that is to say the menstrual blood, goes to where the child is. That is how she spoils the child. On this account women fear to go about anyhow, to pass behind people; they fear those medicines with which we men smear our bodies, all those for good fortune and others. Especially they fear a fierce medicine, that of fire. For there is a medicine with which some people smear themselves which causes a person to faint if the user strikes him once with the flat of his hand. It is this medicine which spoils the child in the belly of a menstruating woman if she passes behind a man. This is the lineage of witchcraft. It comes especially from this, from that dirty little thing (i.e. woman) who does not observe the avoidance rules. Hence, we say she has given her child witchcraft. An association is also made between witchcraft on the one hand and menstruation and pregnancy on the other. A woman who is a witch is said to pass on her witchcraft to her child by neglecting the menstruation taboos before the child is yet conceived. ‘It starts when a woman is menstruating, then she begins to give the child her cunning ( ubugalagala ).’ Some of the menstrual blood is believed to remain in a woman and, if she has neglected the taboos, this blood ‘rots’ the child later conceived (cf. Document, p. 219). This connection is insisted upon, though witchcraft inherited from the father is spoken of as being carried directly in his blood, which is thought to be transferred to his wife during intercourse.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1951

**Focal Year:** 1890 – 1951

**Citation:** Wilson, M. H. (1951). Good company: a study of Nyakyusa age-villages. Oxford University Press for the International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fn17-001

**Description:** Contact with menstrual blood or a menstruating woman is held to be dangerous to a man, more particularly to a warrior, hence there is an absolute taboo on intercourse during menstruation (for five to eight days) and restrictions on cooking for a man. A menstruating woman does not blow up the fire on which her husband's food is cooking, or squeeze the food to test whether it is ready, or scrape ash off bananas or sweet potatoes she has roasted, or serve food, for ‘her breath comes from her belly and it is dirty; her belly is dirty on account of the menstrual blood. All her body is dirty. She does not wash. When she washes, you, the husband, think that the flow has dried up and catch hold of her!’ So a woman who is menstruating fans the fire instead of blowing it, and calls a co-wife or a child to serve the food she has cooked. She does not even crouch over the fire to warm herself, lest she contaminate it; and she neither uses the common calabash cup for drinking nor scoops water from the household water jar with her hand, but fashions a cup for herself from a leaf, or has her own little water-pot. She avoids passing behind or shaking hands with a man; she avoids a new-born infant; she keeps well away from cattle, neither passing behind them when they are in the homestead nor clearing out dung from the byre; she avoids touching medicines or entering the house of a doctor; and she avoids eating pumpkin or pumpkin leaves, or picking them. These taboos are enforced lest she injure men or infants or cattle or medicines, for ‘she is dirty’ and her ‘dirt’ is thought to cause purging and to rot medicines, and she, for her part, fears lest the medicines with which men protect themselves and their cattle may injure her, causing her menstrual flow to ‘last a whole month’. She avoids pumpkins lest she suffer from a small growth in the vagina called a ‘pumpkin’ and bear sickly children. ‘It is said that this disease is due to women picking or eating pumpkins when they are menstruating … the menstrual blood resembles the pumpkin and they fight together.’. If a wife fails to warn her husband that she is menstruating and permits him to have intercourse with her, he will be furiously angry and may even divorce her saying: ‘You are soiling me, get out!’. Any contact with a menstruating woman is believed to cause him suffering. ‘His legs become swollen and painful and he is very tired.’ ‘Strength leaves the man.’ ‘He sits back weakly; he has no speed in running.’ Kasitile explained: The danger of menstrual blood is that it is filthy; it is an illness. Formerly, if a foolhardy man took his wife when she was menstruating, when he went to war, he fell. We others said: ‘Why were you vanquished? Did you enter when your wife was unwell? Do you not know that it is a very serious illness?’. Formerly, the fear was greater than it is to-day. If a man made love to a menstruating woman they said he would fall ill of imbela, an illness for which there was no remedy. His belly ached and his body grew red; he just lay down. His face swelled and his legs ached. Now pagans are not so much afraid of menstruation; they have listened to the Christians. Asked why sleeping with a menstruating woman should make a man weary, informants linked the danger from menstrual blood with the danger that besets a husband when his wife commits adultery, and the ‘blood’ of two men mixes in the woman's womb. Menstrual blood is not so dangerous to a husband as the ‘blood’ of another man, but yet it is ‘filthy’. One of Mwakionde's wives said: My husband gets tired if he sleeps with me when I am menstruating because he has given us our menstrual blood; it is that which has entered into me; there are two bloods, his and mine. If she scrapes bananas when she is menstruating, or conceals that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, then my legs are tired, but I do not have diarrhœa, because it is my blood; she is my relative ( nkamu gwangu ), she is my wife, her blood and mine are one. if she has concealed that she is menstruating and we have intercourse, I am overstepped. To overstep is to insult—but since the blood is mine I do not get rid of it. That menstrual blood is very dirty! If I have always been all right and strong, and I find that I get tired walking and hoeing, I think: ‘What is it? See, always I was all right, and now I am very tired.’ My friends say: ‘It is women, you have lain with one who was menstruating.’.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1957

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1957

**Citation:** Wilson, M. H. (1957). Rituals of kinship among the Nyakyusa. Oxford University Press for the International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fn17-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Yes, Formerly, the fear was greater than it is to-day. If a man made love to a menstruating woman they said he would fall ill of imbela, an illness for which there was no remedy. His belly ached and his body grew red; he just lay down. His face swelled and his legs ached. Now pagans are not so much afraid of menstruation; they have listened to the Christians.

**Ovambo**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** During menstruation, a woman is not isolated, but it is not customary for her to sleep with a man at that time.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1962

**Focal Year:** 1811 – 1948

**Citation:** Loeb, E. M. (Edwin M. (1962). In feudal Africa. In Publication ... of the Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics ; International journal of American linguistics,: Vol. v. 28 (Issue 3, pp. xxi, 383). [s. n.]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx08-005

**Description:** A menstruating woman does not go to work in the mine. Signs will appear in the molten metal if somebody has broken the rules.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1993

**Focal Year:** 1870 – 1932

**Citation:** Hiltunen, M. (1993). Good magic in Ovambo. In Transactions of the Finnish Anthropological Society ; Suomen Antropologisen Seuran toimituksia (Issue No. 33, p. 234). Suomen Antropologinen Seura. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx08-014

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Ovimbundu**

**Aka Mbundu**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Especial care is taken of the divining basket when not in use. Some diviners build a special etambo or spirit-hut for the basket; others keep it hidden in their own house, where it may be seen only by the wife of the diviner, and only when she is not menstruating. Tucker  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1952

**Focal Year:** 1560 – 1950

**Citation:** McCulloch, M. (1952). The Ovimbundu of Angola. In Ethnographic survey of Africa: West Central Africa (p. 50). International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fp13-002

**Description:** She will not need to be told that during those times a girl or woman must not even touch anything belonging to a man and especially she must have nothing to do with preparing his food. This period is known as ‘sitting on the ground’ ( oku tumãlã posi ) since that is what a woman is supposed to do at that time. Modern usage has also taken that phrase to mean ‘unemployment’.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1949

**Focal Year:** 1920 – 1940

**Citation:** Childs, G. M. (1949). Umbundu kinship & character: being a description of social structure and individual development of the Ovimbundu of Angola, with observations concerning the bearing on the enterprise of Christian missions of certain phases of the life and culture described. Published for the International African Institute by the Oxford University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fp13-001

**Description:** Among the Ovimbundu women must sit on the ground during their monthly periods, but they sit on chairs at other times. Hence, for a woman to “sit on chairs” is for her to feel well, be at ease.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1962

**Focal Year:** 1904 – 1944

**Citation:** Ennis, M. W., & Lord, A. B. (1962). Umbundu: folk tales from Angola. Beacon Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fp13-008

**Description:** Husband and wife do not sleep in the same bed during the wife's menstrual period; the wife sleeps on a mat at the side of her husband's bed. A woman who is menstruating never cooks food, but women give mutual aid in this matter. A man with more than one wife sleeps either four nights or seven nights with each; the four-night cycle is more usual than the seven-night cycle among the Ovimbundu. Each wife has a separate hut and kitchen. There is no wife lending, but a visitor may be provided with a widow or even with an unmarried girl. Then the man would have to pay the woman.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1934

**Focal Year:** 1929

**Citation:** Hambly, W. D. (1934). The Ovimbundu of Angola: Frederick H. Rawson-Field Museum ethnological expedition to West Africa, 1929-30. ; 84 plates in photogravure and 1 map. In Anthropological series (Vol. 21, Issue 2, pp. 89-362 , plates). [s. n.]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fp13-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Rwandans**

**Aka Banyaruanda**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A woman in her menses may not enter a hut where there is a newborn child, lest she cause the baby to contract scabies. Menstrual blood ( irungu ), which inspires in them an intense fear and an acute aversion, is popularly believed to cause slow poisoning when administered to an enemy. It is mixed in with his food secretly.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1933

**Focal Year:** 1912 – 1933

**Citation:** Pagés, G., & Scholl, B. (1933). A Hamitic kingdom in the center of Africa: in Ruanda on the shores of Lake Kivu (Belgian Congo). In Mémoires: Vol. Vol. 1 (p. HRAF ms: v, 293 [original: iv, 704 , 29 plates]). Libraire Falk fils, Georges van Campenhout, Successeur. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fo57-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**San**

**Aka !Kung**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Although women, especially when menstruating, should not touch hunting weapons, lest the hunter's powers be weakened, they may own arrows that are given to them.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1976

**Focal Year:** 1950 – 1961

**Citation:** Marshall, L. (1976). The !Kung of Nyae Nyae. Harvard University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-017

**Description:** The water and food collected by menstruating women are consumed only by the women themselves and old people; the younger ones “it makes weak.”

**Date of Ethnography:** 1910

**Focal Year:** 1908

**Citation:** Kaufmann, H., & Neuse, R. (1910). The ?Auin: a contribution to the study of the Bushmen. Mitteilungen Aus Den Deutschen Schutzgebieten, Vol. 23, HRAF ms: 1-75 [Original: 135-160 ]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-002

**Description:** they abstain from sexual intercourse during menstruation in an effort to avoid pregnancy, and also because it may ‘make a man sick’.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1972

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Konner, M. (1972). Aspects of the developmental ecology of a foraging people. In ethological studies of child behaviour (pp. 285–304). At the University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-033

**Description:** The girl is also instructed that when she menstruates she must not move about any more than is absolutely necessary and that the tampons of soft grass she uses must not be thrown away just anywhere after use, but must be fixed firmly, high up in a tree, away from people and out of reach.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** 1958 – 1964

**Citation:** Silberbauer, G. B. (1965). Report to the Government of Bechuanaland on the Bushman Survey. Bechuanaland Government. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-036

**Description:** The women do not seclude themselves during the flow or avoid gathering veldkos or dipping water from the water hole. They continue only to practice certain avoidances that in general have to do with men's hunting. The menstruating woman must not touch hunting gear; it would be very bad, for the arrows would be useless. She must not have sexual intercourse with her husband; it would make him tired and thin. Men in the years of their hunting prime should not talk or listen to talk about menstruation, for to do so might make them lazy in hunting.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** 1951 – 1961

**Citation:** Marshall, L. (1965). The !Kung Bushmen of the Kalahari Desert. In peoples of africa (pp. 243–278). Holt, Rinehart and Winston. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-015

**Description:** The !Kung have a belief that intercourse during menstruation is harmful to men, so that husbands come to expect their wives to avoid intercourse during a certain phase of the moon.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1979

**Focal Year:** 1963 – 1973

**Citation:** Howell, N. (1979). Demography of the Dobe !Kung. In Population and social structure (pp. 22, 389). Academic Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-019

**Description:** Menstruation (particularly menarche), birth, and death are commonly regarded as polluting events.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1981

**Focal Year:** 1958 – 1966

**Citation:** Silberbauer, G. B. (1981). Hunter and habitat in the central Kalahari desert. Cambridge University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-030

**Description:** Human blood does not hurt us, unless it is a woman's blood of menstruation. This blood makes a man thin. A man does not have this blood. This woman's blood is also harmful to weapons because it takes the strength, not only from the arrow poison, but also from a bullet: an animal will run from such a bullet even though it has been badly wounded. The blood of a woman during childbirth is the same as that during menstruation and just as harmful.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1978

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Heinz, H.-J. (1978). The Bushmen’s store of scientific knowledge. In The bushmen : san hunters and herders of southern africa (pp. 148–161). Human & Rousseau. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-062

**Description:** Menstruation is given minimal attention by the !Kung. Women are not set apart and couples do not cease to lie beside each other at night. Sexual activity is expected to come to a halt, but since conception is thought to result from the joining of semen with the last of the menstrual blood, the taboo may give way, especially during the last day or two, if conception is desired. Although there are certain prohibitions against women's touching men's arrows, especially while menstruating, and to engaging in sex during the height of the menstrual flow, these prohibitions do not extend to sleeping beside each other during the same time.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1981

**Focal Year:** 1921 – 1971

**Citation:** Shostak, M. (1981). Nisa, the life and words of a !Kung woman. Harvard University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx10-026

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Shona**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A drop of menstrual blood falling in the cattle-kraal would endanger the whole herd.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1950

**Focal Year:** 1901 – 1949

Citation: Bullock, C. (1950). The Mashona and the Matabele. Juta & Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-007

**Description:** As the nganga gave him no treatment he consulted another and was informed that he was ill because he had had intercourse with his wife during one of her menstrual periods. Treatment was prescribed but as it did not cure him, he decided to consult the hospital doctors.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1967

**Focal Year:** 1899 – 1966

**Citation:** Gelfand, M., & Hannan, M. (1967). The African witch: with particular reference to witchcraft beliefs and practices among the Shona of Rhodesia. E. & S. Livingstone. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-012

**Description:** No intercourse takes place during menstruation ( kushamba ) lest the husband get maswina, stomach or back disease.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1969

**Focal Year:** 1945 – 1950

**Citation:** Holleman, J. F. (1969). Shona customary law: with reference to kinship, marriage, the family and the estate. Manchester University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-022

**Description:** Husband and wife sleep under the same blanket except during her menstrual cycle when she sleeps on the same mat but in her own blanket, separate from him. Amongst the VaBudya a woman does not sleep outside the hut when she is menstruating as is said to happen amongst some peoples. After intercourse a wife must wash her husband and then rub oil ( mafuta ) from her special calabash on him.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1979

**Focal Year:** 1976 – 1977

**Citation:** Gelfand, M. (1979). Growing up in Shona society: from birth to marriage. Mambo Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-023

**Description:** Indeed when she is menstruating she is considered to be in a dangerous or harmful state and those who come into close contact with her, like strange children, may be adversely affected.

**Date of Ethnography**: 1973

**Focal Year:** 1967 – 1972

**Citation:** Gelfand, M. (1973). The genuine Shona: survival values of an African culture. Mambo Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-005

**Description:** A common fear existing amongst Africans is that if a baby is touched by a woman who is menstruating, aborting or even pregnant, it will fall ill.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1956

**Focal Year:** 1940 – 1955

**Citation:** Gelfand, M., & Tredgold Sir, R. C. (Robert C. (1956). Medicine and magic of the Mashona. Juta and Co. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-008

**Description:** During menstruation, the woman's blood flows, and any kind of contact is forbidden to the man — he would endanger his fertility. The wife let her husband know when she starts to menstruate. This she does by not taking water for washing to him in the morning — then he knows. During the days of her period, they both must observe different taboos. She, the woman, must avoid any physical contact with her husband. She may prepare his food but must not take it to him, she can only put it down some distance away from him. The couple must sleep on separate mats. The wife is allowed contact with her children despite the fact that their blood is different from hers. Thus, it is really only a question of avoiding contacts which might lead to sexual intercourse — for then different blood would meet.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1982

**Focal Year:** 1965 – 1971

**Citation:** Aschwanden, H., & Cooper, U. (1982). Symbols of life: an analysis of the consciousness of the Karanga. In Shona heritage series (Issue No. 3, pp. xviii, 332 , plates). Mambo Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fs05-020

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Somali**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** in the vicinity of Bugda Acable where I was told that the women customarily put on the red futa [Like a type of sash belt piece of clothing] during their menstrual period.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1936

**Focal Year:** 1924

**Citation:** Puccioni, N., & Looney, K. A. (1936). Anthropology and ethnography of the peoples of Somalia. In Etnografia e paletnologia (Vol. 3, p. HRAF Ms: 1-205 [original: vii, 140 ], plates). Nicola Zanichelli. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/mo04/documents/017

**Description:** by Islamic law the Migiurtini are not premitted to go into women while they are polluted by menstruation.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1959

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Cerulli, E., & Biancani, P. (1959). The consuetudinary law of northern Somalia (Mijirtein). In somalia, scritti vari editi ed inediti: Vol. Vol. 2 (p. HRAF Ms: 121 [original: 1-74, 382-384 ]). A Cura dell’Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia ; Instituto poligrafico dello Stato P.V. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/mo04/documents/021

**Description:** In trans-Juba rich women wear red garments as a sign of pregnancy, and in other regions similar garments are worn by women in their menses.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1955

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Lewis, I. M. (1955). Peoples of the Horn of Africa: Somali, Afar, and Saho. In Ethnographic survey of Africa : Northeastern Africa (pp. ix, 200). International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mo04-001

**Description:** There are also widespread beliefs concerning breast-feeding women, women in menstruation, pregnant women and small children. In general, the less these categories are exposed to contact with death or the dead, the better.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1988

**Focal Year:** 1983 – 1985

**Citation:** Helander, B. (1988). The slaughtered camel: coping with fictitious descent among the Hubeer of southern Somalia. University of Uppsala, Department of Anthropology. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=mo04-032

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Yes potentially – at least 2 of the ethnographies reference women wearing a different garment during the time of menstruation but the other 2 reference other beliefs and do not talk about the different garment wearing.

**Songhai**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Sexual relations are forbidden during menstruation (dyibi “dirtiness”).   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1954

**Focal Year:** 1941 – 1951

**Citation:** Rouch, J. (1954). Les Songhay. In Monographies ethnologiques africaines (pp. vii, 100). Presses universitaires de France. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms20-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Tallensi**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No menstrual taboos and evidence for menstrual segregation is absent   
**Date of Ethnography:** Not Specified

**Focal Year:** 1934

**Citation:** Fortes, M. (1949). The web of kinship among the Tallensi: the second part of an analysis of the social structure of a Trans-Volta tribe. Oxford University Press for the International African Institute. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fe11-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Tanala**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Menstruating women are not considered unclean and can take part in all sacrifices, etc. I could not discover that they were subject to any taboos. During menstruation women insert a plug of bark cloth or leaves into the vagina, removing it from time to time and washing out the blood. There is no interruption in their regular duties.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1933

**Focal Year:** 1800 – 1927

**Citation:** Linton, R. (1933). The Tanala, a hill tribe of Madagascar. In Publication 317. Anthropological series (Vol. xxii, p. 334). [s.n.]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fy08-001

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced or Implied

**Teda**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Once their period is over, they clean and wash the skin and the old garment they have been wearing during those few days.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1957

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1937

**Citation:** Chapelle, J., & Schütze, F. (1957). Black nomads of the Sahara. Librairie Plon. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms22-008

**Description:** Women may also use such amulets, but must take them off during the days of their menstruation. Menstruating women paint a mark on their foreheads.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1958

**Focal Year:** 1850 – 1958

**Citation:** Kronenberg, A., & Schütze, F. (1958). The Teda of Tibesti. In Wiener Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte und Linguistik (p. HRAF ms: 1, 6, 144, 28 l. [Original: 14, 160 , 17 end plates]). Verlag Ferdinand Berger. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms22-002

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Tiv**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** it is a serious thing for a man to sleep with a menstrous woman and that by so doing he ‘offends against blood’.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1933

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Abraham, R. C. (1933). The Tiv people. The Government Printer. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/ff57/documents/003

**Description:** Menstrual blood is said, by Tiv, to be just like any other blood and not a special substance containing blood. If you beget a child on a woman while she is menstruating, the child will have a bad temperament ( do shima ga ). If you have intercourse with a woman during her menstrual period, the mnyande will come out with the blood, and then later the akombo megh megh will catch both of you. Tiv women do not use any sort of tampons or sanitary pads. They try to remain inactive during the periods of greatest menstrual flow, but both of us have heard both men and women say the equivalent of “You’re dripping,” and the woman merely brush dust over the dripped blood, with her feet. There is no “taboo” of any sort on menstruation, except that some medicines should be kept away from menstrual blood. To have sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman is considered mildly dangerous by Tiv, but it is not as serious as an ordinary akombo , as this text shows: If someone falls ill of a disease which cannot be made to stop, they go to the divining apparatus ( ishol ), and the thing which it gives them is that the sick man has had sexual intercourse with a menstrous woman, and hence it has become tsula [a word otherwise unknown to us], but he fixes a medicine which will reach it.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1969

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Bohannan, P., & Bohannan, L. (1969). A source book on Tiv religion. In HRAFlex books. Ethnography series (p. 5 v. (xv, 802 leaves)). Human Relations Area Files. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/cultures/ff57/documents/030

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Tonga**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The Tonga do not fear contact with a menstruating woman, nor are her activities seriously restricted during her periods. She goes about her ordinary work, associates with other people, and eats as always with other women. She is permitted to work in the fields and can plant all crops save ground peas ( inyemu ) which are said not to grow well if planted by a woman in her periods. She continues to cook for her family and visitors, but when she takes food to her husband she places the dishes a short distance from him and does not hand them directly to him. She is free to handle any of her husband's possessions, with the exception of his gun. Husband and wife may continue to sleep on the same bed, though some husbands will send a menstruating wife to sleep on the floor. The Tonga say that this is a matter of individual preference. A menstruating or pregnant woman is considered dangerous to a newborn child. If a menstruating woman should by any chance enter a hut where a newborn child is secluded, she should take a pinch of ashes and rub this on the child's forehead to prevent her blood from harming the child.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1958

**Focal Year:** 1945 – 1951

**Citation:** Colson, E., & for Social Research, U. of Zambia. I. (1958). Marriage & the family among Plateau Tonga of Northern Rhodesia. Manchester University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fq12-015

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced or implied

**Tsonga**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** The Tsonga do not fear contact with a menstruating woman, nor are her activities seriously restricted during her periods. She goes about her ordinary work, associates with other people, and eats as always with other women. She is permitted to work in the fields and can plant all crops save ground peas ( inyemu ) which are said not to grow well if planted by a woman in her periods. She continues to cook for her family and visitors, but when she takes food to her husband she places the dishes a short distance from him and does not hand them directly to him. She is free to handle any of her husband's possessions, with the exception of his gun. Husband and wife may continue to sleep on the same bed, though some husbands will send a menstruating wife to sleep on the floor. The Tonga say that this is a matter of individual preference. A menstruating or pregnant woman is considered dangerous to a newborn child. If a menstruating woman should by any chance enter a hut where a newborn child is secluded, she should take a pinch of ashes and rub this on the child's forehead to prevent her blood from harming the child.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1958

**Focal Year:** 1945 – 1951

**Citation:** Beuchat, Phyllis Doris [Cole]. 1958. Notes on some folklore forms in Tsonga and Ronga. African studies 17(4). 185-191.

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Tuareg**

**Aka Tuareg Ahaggar**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** During menstruation, there are ritual restrictions against praying, touching Islamic amulets, handling animal hides, and dressing hair. These measures are believed to protect al baraka in living things, and by extension, the yet-to-be born child (Rasmussen, 1991).   
**Date of Ethnography:** 2004

**Focal Year:** 1970 – 1990

**Citation:** Rasmussen, S. J. (2004). Tuareg: Tuareg discourse on class and ethnicity. In encyclopedia of medical anthropology : health and illness in the world’s cultures (pp. 1001–1009). Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms25-012

**Description**: While they are indisposed they make to intimate toile(■) and often take no precautions to absorb the flow, which spots their clothing. They also abstain from making prayers as if they were in a state of impurity.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1944

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1940

**Citation:** Lhote, H., & Sipfle, M.-A. (1944). The Hoggar Tuareg. In Bibliothèque scientifique (p. HRAF ms: viii, 190 [Original: 415 , 8 plates]). Payot. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms25-001

**Description:** Women are considered unclean during their periods of menstruation and cannot, therefore, then pray to God. They are also forbidden to drink the milk of domestic animals which have very young kids, lambs, or calves, and they must not drink water which has been conserved in newly-made skin-bags. These taboos are maintained in order not to hurt the benediction given the animals by bringing it into contact with impurity. For cereals contain this mystic power, which can be spoiled by unclean women. It is considered harmful to the elbaraka blessing if cereals are handled by menstruating women. Menstruating women, as mentioned above, are dangerous to vegetable food, and this is also true of the fire, for which reason one should never throw date kernels into the flames The farmers also fear that their crops may suffer damage from the attack of the Kel Asuf spirits, and particularly from the attack of the malignant force attached to the “evil eye” or the “evil mouth”.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1963

**Focal Year:** 1800 – 1963

**Citation:** Nicolaisen, J. (1963). Ecology and culture of the pastoral Tuareg: with particular reference to the Tuareg of Ahaggar and Ayr. In Etnografisk Raekke (pp. xvi, 540). The National Museum of Copenhagen. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms25-007

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Turkana**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** A small exit is left in the alar behind each hut for the use of women during their periods and during confinement, the Turkana name for the exit being “ akatukweakal .”. It would appear that the Turkana attach less importance to this than most tribes do, as a woman is not prevented from associating with men or women during the period, nor yet is she bound to leave her ordinary duties. Only one skin is worn during the period, and this is slung from the right shoulder. When the period is over, the entire body is smeared with ghee. A man may not take his bride to his father's village during any of his wives' periods, but must wait till she is clear.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1927

**Focal Year:** 1926

**Citation**: Emley, E. D. (1927). The Turkana of Kolosia District. Journal of Great Britain and Ireland, Vol. 57, 157–201. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fl17-023

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Wolof**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Repudiation (divorce) is absolutely forbidden while the woman is menstruating. During this time the husband must not have sexual relations with his wife, although he still provides for her. This delay makes it possible to establish that the wife is not pregnant; it also gives the husband a chance to go back on his decision.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1939

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Fayet, M. J. C., & Cone, M. N. (1939). Customs of the Moslem Ouolof (Circle of Baol). Publications de Comité d’études Historiques et Scientifiques de l’Afrique Occidentale Française, 8, HRAF MS: 38 [Original: 147-193 ]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms30-004

**Description:** Restrictions on personal activities not social. The woman endangers her social group.

**Date of Ethnography:** Not Specified

**Focal Year:** 1949

**Citation:** Gamble, D. P. (1949). Contributions to a socio-economic survey of the Gambia. Research Department, Colonial Office. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ms30-014

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None stated or implied

**Yoruba**

**Aka Oyo**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** Women during the menstruation period are forbidden to enter any place where juju is installed or touch any compound medicine. This it is said spoils the medicine, rendering it ineffective. It is believed that women are unclean during menstruation and that anything they touch must be unclean and dead.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1924

**Focal Year:** 1900 – 1924

**Citation:** Ajisafe, A. K. (1924). The laws and customs of the Yoruba people. George Routledge & Sons, Ltd. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ff62-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None referenced/implied

**Zulu**

**Continent:** Africa

**Description:** No menstruating woman may milk, or even drink milk, for this might cause the beast to become thin and even die.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1966

**Focal Year:** 1800 – 1951

**Citation:** Reader, D. H. (1966). Zulu tribe in transition: by D.H. Reader. Manchester University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-006

**Description:** Girls and women abstain from amasi for seven days during the menstrual period. A menstruating girl is not to go through a garden of ground nuts lest all the nuts go rotten.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** 1836 – 1936

**Citation:** Krige, E. J. (1965). The social system of the Zulus. Shuter & Shooter. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-001

**Description:** Prohibits the eating of curdled milk ( amasi ) by a menstruating female, who, as amongst most primitive folk, is considered a peculiar source of danger (of a magical nature). Every month she will thus have to abstain from eating sour milk, as long as her menstrual period lasts.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1933

**Focal Year:** 1925 – 1933

**Citation:** Kohler, M., & Van Warmelo, N. J. (Nicolaas J. (1933). Marriage customs in southern Natal. In Ethnological Publications (pp. ii, 103). Government Printer. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-031

**Description:** Compared to ordinary blood, menstrual blood is regarded as filth, and accordingly a woman emitting such is considered unclean and unfit to mix with people. (In former times during her menstrual period a woman remained indoors for eight days during which time she did not handle the food of men.)

**Date of Ethnography:** 1985

**Focal Year:** 1979 – 1982

**Citation:** Brindley, M. (1985). Old women in Zulu culture. South African Journal of Ethnology, Vol. 8, 98–108. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-053

**Description:** A menstruating woman also has a contagious pollution which, however, is not considered as dangerous as that of a newly delivered mother ( umdlezane ). This is evidenced by the fact that she may mix with men. She becomes a danger to their virility only if she has sexual intercourse with them. She also avoids cattle and crops. If she must go through an izindlubu field, she spits on a sod of soil and throws it into the field before going into it herself. This is said to protect the plants from her pollution. A menstruating woman will avoid cattle and the cattle byre and will not eat milk food. A menstruating woman abstains from eating milk food. She keeps away from the cattle byre. After eight days she cleans the floor of the hut she lives in by smearing it with cow dung. Although she may go to gatherings, she must avoid mixing with men. She also keeps away from the sick and their medicines because in her condition of disorder or lack of balance (“standing badly”) she may be a danger to the sick and their medicine.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1977

**Focal Year:** 1963 – 1971

**Citation:** Ngubane, H. (1977). Body and mind in Zulu medicine: an ethnography of health and disease in Nyuswa-Zulu thought and practice. In Studies in anthropology (pp. xvi, 184). Academic Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-002

**Description:** Menstruating, pregnant or suckling women should not brew the beer.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1976

**Focal Year:** 1959 – 1970

**Citation:** Berglund, A.-I. (1976). Zulu thought-patterns and symbolism. In Studia missionalia Upsaliensia (p. 402). Swedish Institute of Missionary Research. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-008

**Description:** A woman in confinement does not cook for her H, just as a menstruating woman does not (Za). A menstruating woman is considered Ngcolile (unclean). The taboo pattern she has to observe results in isolation from her H. A menstruating woman may not enter her H's residential hut, nor the cattle pen. She may not walk through a herd of cattle, or a flock of sheep and goats. This rule is especially strict with regard to the H's herd and flocks: their milk yield would be reduced or dry up altogether. A menstruating woman should not walk between men. She must not have sexual intercourse with her H. He is liable to contract a disease (iQakelo the rag disease), or iPhamba, a pertinacious cough or he suffers misfortune, becomes unpopular, subject to accidents, and will be killed in war. No restrictions on the speech and expressive behaviour of a menstruating woman were recorded. She observes the following food restrictions:she may not eat sour milk for seven days, nor even drink sweet milk. The cattle would be adversely affected. She must not cook food for her H, lest he become unpopular in council or is wounded in war. Nor may she touch or serve food for others. On the last day of her menses the woman smears her hut with cowdung, after having swept and cleansed it for the first time in a week. This day is called ‘white or bright’ day, she ‘comes out’ (ukwEmula) and may eat SM again. Her H has to observe companionship taboos. He keeps strictly to his side of the hut and is especially warned against stepping on his Wi's mat. He may not have intercourse with his Wi, and should not speak much with her. A menstruating woman is ‘not clean’ (Ngcolile); she does not handle any SM, and formerly a menstruating girl could not enter a man's residence! A menstruating woman must not pass through the ripening fields for fear of making the crops rot. Because a menstruating woman is dirty ‘nobody’ likes her, it is said. By ‘nobody’ is meant her H, for women do not take much notice of it. . Nobody wants menstrual blood (and to a lesser extent an emission of semen) to appear on such occasions, and it is for that reason that it is called Ngcolile (unclean, dirty). In short, menstrual blood places women outside the agnatic unit.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1973

**Focal Year:** 1800 – 1957

**Citation:** Raum, O. F. (1973). The social functions of avoidances and taboos among the Zulu. In Monographien zur Völkerkunde (pp. xiv, 576). de Gruyter. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=fx20-015

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** Yes, In former times during her menstrual period a woman remained indoors for eight days during which time she did not handle the food of men. Formerly a menstruating girl could not enter a man's residence!