**Basques**

**Aka Spanish Basques**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** During her period, a woman may do ‘dry work’, i.e. any task inside or outside the house that does not bring the woman into contact with liquids. Hot/cold contrasts, such as cooking near a hot fire and then going outside into cold air, do not affect either menstrual or body blood when a woman does ‘dry work’. During menstruation both the menstrual blood and body blood are thought to be extremely hot. For this reason it is said that a menstruating woman is unable to make mayonnaise. The heat generated by the menses is so intense that it causes the eggs and oil to curdle. In the traditional way of thinking, a menstruating woman should not do any ‘wet work’, i.e. she should not wash anything in cold water. Women now in their fifties and sixties who observed this precaution explained that cold water makes both menstrual blood and body blood stop flowing. Neither the men nor the women seemed to have any strong objection to having intercourse during a menstrual period; but, as I have already mentioned, conception during menstruation should be avoided by practising coitus interruptus so that the menstrual blood and fecund ‘red blood’ will not mix in the womb. In Sainte-Engrâce, neither menstruation nor menstrual blood is thought to be polluting, although there are certain restrictions on a woman's activities during her periods. A menstruating woman does, however, perform most tasks normally allotted to her in the house. She may prepare food, do household chores, and have contact with the livestock.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1981

**Focal Year:** 700 AD – 1970s

**Citation:** Ott, S. (1981). The circle of mountains: a Basque shepherding community. Clarendon Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ex08-003

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Bosnian Muslims**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** The Islamic prohibition against sex between man and wife during her period or until forty days after she has given birth is not understood in terms of the woman being polluting, but rather as a health insurance for women. When menstruating, or until forty days after having given birth, or just after having had sexual intercourse and before ablutions (the latter is also true for men), a woman should not touch the Qur’an, enter the mosque, or enter a saint’s grave lest the saint get angry. Likewise, women’s polluting potential is the reason men give for excluding women from an annual mevlud at an old mosque in the mountains (famous for the myths associated with it).  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1995

**Focal Year:** 1945 – 1993

**Citation:** Bringa, T. (1995). Being Muslim the Bosnian way: identity and community in a central Bosnian village. In Princeton studies in Muslim politics (pp. xxi, 281). Princeton University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ef09-006

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Greeks**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** They were not allowed to enter church during their menstrual periods,  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1986

**Focal Year:** 1969 – 1970

**Citation:** Dubisch, J. (1986). Preface. In gender & power in rural greece (pp. ix–xiii). Princeton University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=eh01-030

**Description:** For Saint Lazarus, psychoùdia, small loaves that the women prepare the day before are distributed among the huts. Those /women/ who are not “clean”—a term that designates equally the women who are menstruating, those who have had sexual relations with their husbands the night before, and also those who have not washed their bodies—may not take part in their preparation. Likewise, the woman, the symbol of universal fertility, is considered impure, hence dangerous, at the time of the menses, for at that time her creative attributes and consequently the forces underlying them appear in full array.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1965

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Kavvadias, G. V., & Schütze, F. (1965). Mediterranean pastoral nomads: the Sarakatsani of Greece. In Collection Sciences humaines appliquées (p. HRAF MS: ii, 498 [original: x, 444 ]). Gauthier-Villars. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=eh01-013

**Description:** Conversely, women, particularly married women involved in sexual intercourse, or girls during their menstrual periods, do not approach the sheep unnecessarily. A woman is careful not to cross directly in front of a flock.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1964

**Focal Year:** 1954 – 1955

**Citation:** Campbell, J. K. (1964). Honour, family and patronage: a study of institutions and moral values in a Greek mountain community. Clarendon Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=eh01-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Highland Scots**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** Menstrual periods, if mentioned at all, are referred to indirectly, as they are in the United States--“I've got my grannies”; “Visitors have arrived”; “Have the doo-dahs come?”; “Has the ship docked?” Many older women are unaware that pregnancy can occur only during certain times in their monthly cycle and are too embarrassed to inquire about or use contraceptives. Even the younger ones feel awkward about using contraceptives. “I had three kids and was really worn out. My doctor gave me the pill. But it made me feel sick, so I threw them all down the toilet and never mentioned it to my doctor. That's why I was glad when my husband was away so often.” Some women are referred to as “very strong”: it is believed that they can get pregnant even when they're old or using contraceptives.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1990

**Focal Year:** 1970 – 1988

**Citation:** Parman, S. (1990). Scottish crofters: an historical ethnography of a Celtic village. In Case studies in cultural anthropology (pp. xii, 175). Holt, Rinehart and Winston. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=es10-025

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Imperial Romans**

**Aka Ancient Romans**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** Porcha was especially likely at times of vulnerability, for example after childbirth, during lovemaking, and during menstruation. Russian ideas of “impurity” were linked to these times of vulnerability, and it is noteworthy that the “impure” steam bath (a place of cleansing and shedding impurities) was where licit and illicit lovemaking often took place.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1969

**Focal Year:** 45 – 77 AD

**Citation:** Pliny, the E., & Jones, W. H. S. (William H. S. (1969). Natural history in ten volumes: Volume VI. Libri XX-XXIII. In Latin authors (pp. i–xxvi, 1–157, 212–223, 293–532). Harvard University Press ; William Heinemann. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ei09-015

**Description:** Care, however, must be taken that a woman is admitted as little as possible to the place where the cucumbers and gourds are planted; for usually the growth of green-stuff is checked by contact with a woman; indeed if she is also in the period of menstruation, she will kill the young produce merely by looking at it.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1968

**Focal Year:** 4 BC – 65 AD

**Citation:** Columella, L. J. M., Forster, E. S. (Edward S., & Heffner, E. H. (1968). On agriculture and trees: in three volumes : III, Res Tustica X-XII, De Arboribus. In Latin authors (pp. 8, 435). Harvard University Press ; William Heinemann. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ei09-008

**Change in Menstrual Taboos**: None Referenced

**Rural Irish**

**Aka Irish**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** Menstruation and the menopause arouse profound misgivings among women of the island, because few of them comprehend their physiological significance.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1969

**Focal Year:** 1955 – 1966

**Citation:** Messenger, J. C. (John C., Spindler, G. D., & Spindler, L. S. (1969). Inis Beag: isle of Ireland. In Case studies in cultural anthropology (pp. 8, 136). Holt, Rinehart and Winston. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=er06-016

**Description:** Menstruation led to confusion and embarrassment amongst young girls. Kit outlines how the onset of menstruation was a time of prohibition and confusion for young Kilbrack girls who suffered mental agonies as they were unable to understand many aspects of female biology.

**Date of Ethnography:** 2010

**Focal Year:** 1930 – 1999

**Citation:** Humphreys, M. (Marguerita T. ). (2010). Gender relationships, matching, and marriage customs in an Irish rural community. Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies, Vol. 48(1), 13–34. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=er06-025

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Russians**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** Porcha was especially likely at times of vulnerability, for example after childbirth, during lovemaking, and during menstruation. Russian ideas of “impurity” were linked to these times of vulnerability, and it is noteworthy that the “impure” steam bath (a place of cleansing and shedding impurities) was where licit and illicit lovemaking often took place.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1992

**Focal Year:** 1850 – 1930

**Citation:** Listova, T. A. (1992). Russian rituals, customs, and beliefs associated with the midwife (1850-1930). In russian traditional culture: religion, gender, and customary law (pp. 122–145). M. E. Sharpe. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=rf10-102

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Saami**

**Aka Sami**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** Despite the existence at that time of certain menses tabus that affected the equal participation of a woman in typically male work.   
**Date of Ethnography:** 1957

**Focal Year:** 1952 – 1953

**Citation:** Paine, R. (1957). Coast Lapp society, I: a study of neighbourhood in Revsbotn Fjord. In Troms\_ Museums Skrifter (Vol. 4, pp. xviii, 341). [Troms\_ Museum]. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ep04-008

**Description:** During her menses a woman sleeps on the other side of the hut and eats different food, and no one is allowed to eat her leavings. She is also considered unfit to make food for the men. During this period a Kolt-Lapp woman may not walk behind a man, but should walk in front.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1948

**Focal Year:** 1913 – 1947

**Citation:** Itkonen, T. I., Guemati, O., & Perez-Roman, E. (1948). The Lapps in Finland up to 1945. Vol. 2. Werner Söderström Osakeyhtiö. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ep04-017

**Description:** When a woman had her period she was not allowed to step over the foot of a man when he was sitting on the ground with his legs outstretched. Similarly, she must not step over a gun which was lying on the ground, nor go upon the roof of the dwelling where the family lived, nor go so far towards the shore that she reached the place where the fishes were lying which had been thrown from the boat after fishing. Nor might she milk a cow. When the menstruation had passed the woman washed her head in a kettle, which she then scoured with flour and baked a cake in it which only the women were allowed to eat. . If in her unclean state she came in contact with sacred places or objects, these were desecrated and the whole ceremony failed of its effects. Besides this, she might herself be exposed to supernatural dangers by breaking the tabu. As soon as the monthly courses of a woman were ended, she washed her head in water from a kettle, which she scoured afterwards with flour, and baked a cake of the flour which only the women were allowed to eat.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1955

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Karsten, R. (1955). The religion of the Samke: ancient beliefs and cults of the Scandinavian and Finnish Lapps. E.J. Brill. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ep04-005

**Description:** The Reasons why they will not allow their Women to be present at their Worship, seems to be, that they look upon the Female Sex as Impure, especially during their Monthly Times.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1704

**Focal Year:** 1660

**Citation:** Scheffer, J. (1704). The history of Lapland: containing a geographical description, and a natural history of that country; with an account of the inhabitants, their original, religion, customs, habits, marriages, conjurations, employments, etc. Printed for Tho. newborough, at the Golden-Ball in St. Paul’s-Church-Yard and R. Parker under the Royal-Exchange. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ep04-011

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced

**Serbs**

**Continent:** Europe

**Description:** A consequence of this danger is a long list of taboos placed upon menstruating girls and women. (As a wife and a mother of daughters in the village part of my own education has included learning, carrying out and transmitting these restrictions.) There are prohibitions on kneading dough, serving food and other forms of pollution transmittable to men, and to harvesting, gathering and similar activities which might render a garden, or nut-bearing or fruit tree barren. Today someone fetches a loaf of nondescript white bread from town or from the village store. But the prohibition persists: the carrier may not be a ritually unclean female, and it is still essential to check on a female’s state before she is entrusted to a task considered contaminating.  
**Date of Ethnography:** 1986

**Focal Year:** 1953 – 1986

**Citation:** Halpern, B. (1986). The complementarity of women’s ritual roles in a patriarchal society. In Papers on a Serbian village : 1986, by Joel M. Halpern, Barbara Kerewsky-Halpern (Issue 14, pp. 42–62). International Area Studies Programs, University of Massachusetts at Amherst. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ef06-030

**Description:** For this reason a girl or woman cannot engage in conjuring unless the village community perceives her an nonpolluting. This means that bajalice by definition are older women, postmenopausal.

**Date of Ethnography:** 1989

**Focal Year:** Not Specified

**Citation:** Halpern, B. (1989). Healing with mother metaphors: Serbian conjurers’ word magic. In women as healers : cross-cultural perspectives (pp. 115–133). Rutgers University Press. https://ehrafworldcultures-yale-edu.uleth.idm.oclc.org/document?id=ef06-023

**Change in Menstrual Taboos:** None Referenced