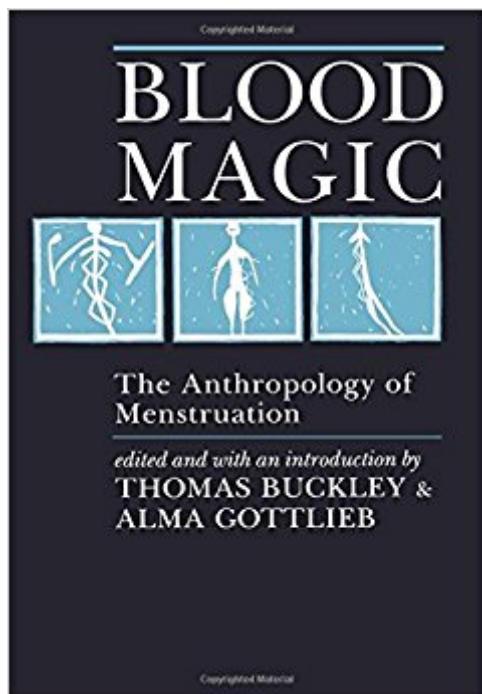


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Blood Magic: The Anthropology Of Menstruation



Synopsis

Examining cultures as diverse as long-house dwellers in North Borneo, African farmers, Welsh housewives, and postindustrial American workers, this volume dramatically redefines the anthropological study of menstrual customs. It challenges the widespread image of a universal "menstrual taboo" as well as the common assumption of universal female subordination which underlies it. Contributing important new material and perspectives to our understanding of comparative gender politics and symbolism, it is of particular importance to those interested in anthropology, women's studies, religion, and comparative health systems.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The first book on the anthropology of menstruation to be published by a major university press. (Becky Vorpagel Journal of American Folklore)" A major innovation is the deliberate and consistent focus on women's views and their participation in social responses to bodily processes." (Terence Hays Journal of the History of Sexuality) "Reclaiming the female body, retrieving it piece by piece from the grip of patriarchal culture and medical practice, has been a central feminist goal for each of the last two decades. Menstruation . . . is now front and center on the feminist agenda as a topic that needs to be rethought . . . Blood Magic . . . [is] among a larger set of books that are seeking simultaneously to dismantle the traditional formulations and to replace them with a woman-centered set of understandings . . . [the book]. . . not only clear[s] and point[s] the way for a new woman-centered scholarship on menstruation but demonstrate[s] its significance

to the feminist agenda. (Anna Meigs Signs) "The first major collection on anthropological interpretations of menstruation. . . The editors contribute a lengthy, useful introduction to this biological phenomenon and the interpretations given to it by different peoples; moreover, they provide discussions for each section . . . A well-edited and useful contribution to the continually growing literature on the cultural constructions of gender. (L. Beck Choice, "Outstanding Title!")" "Menstrual taboos have long been a favorite subject of ethnographic inquiry, but in the past their study has suffered from both an ethnocentric and male-centered bias. Burdened by their own set of menstrual taboos, ethnographers have too often assumed they knew what those of another culture meant. Blood Magic, a collection of essays by nine fieldworkers in anthropology and related disciplines, marks a welcome departure from earlier studies in a number of ways. It derives its perspective from women's studies in recognizing the need to focus on women's experiences as well as those of men, and in recognizing the importance of female fieldworkers to do this. This is the first book-length collection of essays to grow out of recent cultural anthropological research on menstruation. Never before has the study of menstruation been so well informed by a combination of fieldwork and theoretical approaches to the study of gender and the symbolism of the body. This is the first book-length collection of essays to grow out of recent cultural anthropological research on menstruation. Never before has the study of menstruation been so well informed by a combination of fieldwork and theoretical approaches to the study of gender and the symbolism of the body . . . This is a well-constructed and well-researched collection, grounded in received anthropological theory, yet looking far beyond it. (Jennifer Livesay Folklore Forum)

"Sets the stage for an ethnography of menstruation beliefs and will, I predict, be viewed as the opening work of a whole ethnographic tradition . . . will be widely cited." (Anna Meigs, Macalester College) "Provides a concise and complete critique of the literature and thinking on menstrual practices and introduces new analyses and concepts with regard to previously unknown material." (Ann L. Wright, University of Arizona)

I first read this book 15 years ago, in the midst of writing a book about women roles in California Indian society. It brought so many things into sharper focus about other ways of seeing the world and our place in it. Everyone should be taught its lessons, that menstruation is not something to be ashamed of but to value, as an opportunity to give life, and to bond with nature and family. Imagine if women everywhere had Moontime retreats, that is, monthly meetings (not just furtive water-cooler

chats) about our physical and emotional changes. And imagine having a positive body-image, as a girl, teenager, young adult, mother, daughter, and grandmother, not just able to cope, but ready to lead? Break the taboo, read it, talk about it; I dare you!

This is a very useful reference work for specialists and individuals with more than a passing interest in the cultural meanings and uses of menstrual blood. The collection of articles contain references to many cultures and are written from a variety of theoretical vantages and can lead the motivated reader more deeply into the subject. It demonstrates the increasingly sophisticated approaches used by anthropologists to draw back the curtain of ignorance and misunderstanding that have warped our understanding of this fundamental part of human life.

Interesting read, not quite related to interest area, but still arrived safely and promptly, in excellent condition. Recommend it to anyone interested in cross-cultural comparisons of how menstruation has been perceived.

Very important book. Bought used copy and quality was as described or better.

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