



# **Eat Not This Flesh, 2nd Edition: Food Avoidances from Prehistory to the Present**

*Frederick J. Simoons*

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Hailed as a classic when initially published in 1961, *Eat Not This Flesh* was the first book that explored, from a historical and cultural perspective, taboos against eating certain kinds of flesh. Frederick J. Simoons's research remains original and invaluable, the only attempt of its kind to reconstruct the origin and spread of food avoidances while challenging current Western explanations. In this expanded and updated edition, Simoons integrates new research as he examines the use and avoidance of flesh foods—including beef, pork, chicken, and eggs, camel, dog, horse, and fish—from antiquity to the present day.

Simoons suggests that Westerners are too ready, even in the absence of supporting evidence, to cite contemporary thinking about disease and environmental factors to explain why certain cultures avoid particular kinds of meat. He demonstrates how historical and archaeological evidence fails to support such explanations. He examines the origin of pork rejection in the Near East, explores the concept of the sacred cow in India and the ensuing ban on beef, and reveals how some African women abstain from chicken and eggs, fearing infertility.

While no single explanation exists for food taboos, Simoons finds that the powerful, recurrent theme of maintaining ritual purity, good health, and well-being underlies diet habits. He emphasizes that only a full range of factors can explain eating patterns, and he stresses the interplay of religious, moral, hygienic, ecological, and economic factors in the context of human culture. Maps, drawings, and photos highlighting food avoidance patterns in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Pacific provide additional information throughout the book.

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