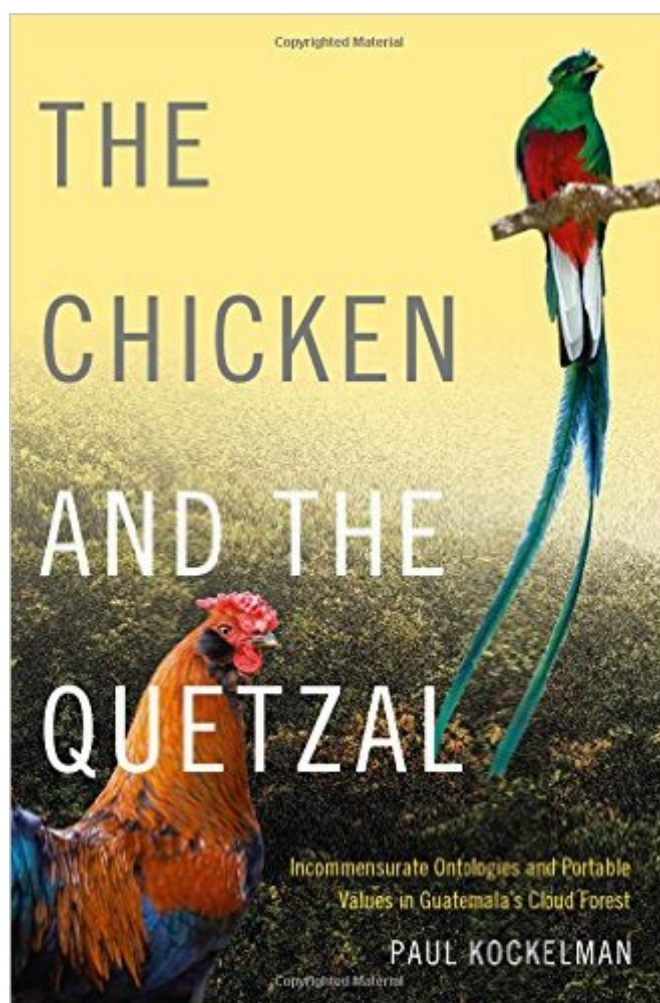


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The Chicken And The Quetzal: Incommensurate Ontologies And Portable Values In Guatemala's Cloud Forest



Synopsis

In *The Chicken and the Quetzal* Paul Kockelman theorizes the creation, measurement, and capture of value by recounting the cultural history of a village in Guatemala's highland cloud forests and its relation to conservation movements and ecotourism. In 1990 a group of German ecologists founded an NGO to help preserve the habitat of the resplendent quetzal—the strikingly beautiful national bird of Guatemala—near the village of Chicacnab. The ecotourism project they established in Chicacnab was meant to provide new sources of income for its residents so they would abandon farming methods that destroyed quetzal habitat. The pressure on villagers to change their practices created new values and forced negotiations between indigenous worldviews and the conservationists' goals. Kockelman uses this story to offer a sweeping theoretical framework for understanding the entanglement of values as they are interpreted and travel across different and often incommensurate ontological worlds. His theorizations apply widely to studies of the production of value, the changing ways people make value portable, and value's relationship to ontology, affect, and selfhood.

Book Information

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Scholarly and Creative Book and Journal Reviews: Pennsylvania Literary Journal: Spring 2016: freely available excerpt: [...]Paul Kockelman. *The Chicken and the Quetzal: Incommensurate Ontologies and Portable Values in Guatemala's Cloud Forest*. Paper \$23.95: ISBN: 978-0-8223-6072-8; Library Cloth: \$84.95: ISBN: 978-0-8223-6056-8. January 2016. Duke University Press. **I must've read the summary for this book too quickly before requesting it. I

assumed that as the cover promised it would detail the birds of Guatemala from the chicken to the quetzalâ | So, I was a bit hard-hit by the academic â œIntroductionâ • that reads like the first part of a dissertation because it laboriously summarizes the concepts, terms, and all major research in the field of eco-tourism and at-length summarizes what will be discussed in each of the coming chapters, despite the relative brevity of the book as a whole. As a thesis would, the first chapter then summarizes the history of eco-tourism in the central region of Guatemala. The usual academic pattern is broken in a section called â œPriming the Ecotourism Experience,â • where questions such as: â œWhat are the tour and the accommodations like [at the Proyecto Ecologico Quetzal]?â • and â œHow do we get there?â • are answered. â œIn the ecotourism program you will travel to see and experience the cloud forest and learn about the life and culture of the Qâ™eqchiâ™ people living near the forest. Your accommodations in a typical Qâ™eqchiâ™ home are rustic. Their homes are constructed with wood walls and dirt floor, and there is an open fire inside the home over which your food will be cookedâ • (28). Note, that his food was cooked for himâ | I doubt some that can cook will not be allowed to volunteer to help these extremely impoverished Guatemalans.

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