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Kensinger, Rabineau, et. al.: The Cashinahua of Eastern Peru

Kenneth M. Kensinger, Phyllis Rabineau, et al. *The Cashinahua of Eastern Peru*. Brown University: The Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology. *Studies in Anthropology and Material Culture*, vol. 1, 1975. 238 pp., illustrations.

Reviewed by Mary W. Helms
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The Cashinahua of Eastern Peru is volume 1 of a series devoted to publication of the archaeological and ethnographic collections of the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology of Brown University. This publication focuses on items of material culture collected by Kenneth Kensinger in 1968 in Cashinahua villages located along the Curanja River in southeastern Peru near the Brazilian border.

The book can be divided into roughly three sections. The first 85 pages, written by Kensinger, discuss various aspects of Cashinahua linguistics and ethnography derived from field experience. In the next 60 pages four papers on specific aspects of Cashinahua material culture, based on Kensinger's field information, are presented, by Phyllis Rabineau, Helen Tanner, Susan Ferguson, and Alice Dawson, respectively. The final 85 pages contain a catalog of the Cashinahua collection with text by Phyllis Rabineau, who again utilizes documentation by Kensinger.

The orientation and quality of the various presentations are determined by several factors, including Kensinger's particular approach to ethnography and to the presentation of ethnographic data, the fact that the emphasis is on material aspects of culture, and the anthropological expertise of the various authors. Readers' reactions to the volume will probably also vary depending on whether the book is regarded as basically a catalog of museum pieces or an ethnographic analysis of particular aspects of Cashinahua culture.

Kensinger's initial goal in the field was to learn an unwritten language and, through it, the culture it expresses. Consequently, both his perception and his presentation of Cashinahua culture is heavily structured by his interest in linguistic analysis. (His field work was conducted under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Peruvian Ministry of Public Education.) His express intent was to acquire the necessary linguistic expertise to deal with pragmatic problems of day-to-day living rather than to systematically collect information on specific problems or topics of anthropological interest. Rather than utilize such commonly found modes of ethnographic presentation as the individual life cycle or the annual round of community activities or the framework of so-

cial relations or ecological adaptations, Kensinger's presentation is linguistic, focusing on specific lexical domains. Not surprisingly, the resultant picture of Cashinahua culture is rather static and formal. Except for a personal, lively, and all-too-brief discussion of the problems encountered when one tries to learn from base zero to communicate cross-culturally, there is little sense of the dynamics of Cashinahua life. Instead emphasis is placed on Cashinahua linguistic classifications (domains, classes, types, and varieties) of specific phenomena, including gardens (4 classes), fishing (4 classes), manioc (2 subdomains, 7 subtypes or classes, 22 varieties), ceramics (an exclusively female craft divisible into 9 classes), and headdresses (a primarily male craft with approximately 7 classes). Each class, type, and variety is discussed in considerable detail, providing ethnographic richness but, in the opinion of a cultural anthropologist who is not a linguist, little sense of either the overall texture of Cashinahua life or the dynamic interplay of social, economic, political, and ideological factors that constitute the basis of Cashinahua culture and experience.

On the other hand, as Jane Dwyer, director of the Haffenreffer Museum, points out in a Foreword, the richness of the ethnographic documentation that Kensinger provides for the ornaments, headdresses, ceramics, tools and weapons, textiles, basketry, matting, and ceremonial objects that constitute the collection is one of the unique aspects of this assemblage. It also results in a museum catalog that is unusually interesting and informative. Ironically, the broader cultural context—regardless of mode of presentation—that Kensinger provides for the pieces he collected whets the reader's appetite for more, and ultimately (though perhaps unfairly) makes an exceptional museum catalog also appear as a disappointing ethnography.

With one major exception the other authors who contributed to the volume do little to brighten this picture. The brief papers by Tanner on weaving, Ferguson on craftsmanship and design in ceramics, and Dawson on graphic art are formal presentations focusing mainly on technical fine points. Their discussions do sharpen our appreciation of the techniques and expertise exhibited in Cashinahua art. However, other comments, heavy with cultural and symbolic implications, are never followed through. For example, Tanner and others note in passing that Cashinahua aesthetics requires a degree of asymmetry in design and color. Ferguson mentions without further discussion that pottery manufacture and weaving reflect a woman's personal worth just as successful hunting provides esteem for men. Dawson also states that in both the creation of an object and hunting, skills and attention to details are the major measure of beauty and of the individual's capability, but she does not

pursue the subject. Dawson mentions, too, that a person cannot use an undecorated club to kill an enemy, but does not explain why. Similarly, we learn, again in passing, that white, black, brown, red, or orange colors are used in painted designs, and color plates show combinations of red, blue, white, and yellow on headdress feathers. It is also mentioned that designs used by a given individual must be chosen according to moiety and generation status.

Although comments such as these cry out for further elaboration, virtually none is provided. Yet the anthropological literature on tropical America contains much relevant information on such topics as color symbolism, the association between decorative arts and socio-ideological concepts and identities, and the use of design styles and color to identify the cultural realm and the world of nature; and the symbolic significance accorded to various animals and birds whose pelts or feathers are used in decorative arts and the symbolic significance associated with evidencing skill and control in creating such designs. Even if Kensinger's notes do not contain specifics on such matters as they relate to Cashinahua culture, more analysis could have been done by Dawson, Tanner, and Ferguson utilizing cross-cultural comparisons.

The paper by Phyllis Rabineau provides the major exception to this complaint. In fact, Rabineau's contributions to the volume are by far the most intellectually exciting and satisfying precisely because Rabineau links material objects with social processes and provides considerable symbolic and cultural contexts for the material she examines. In her paper, "Artists and Leaders," Rabineau draws on cross-cultural materials and her own appreciation of cultural dynamics to deftly examine the relationships between the aesthetics and technology of headdress styles and manufacture and the social and ideological roles of shaman and village headman. We learn, for example, that among the Cashinahua the wearing of ornaments represents true humanness; that feathers are symbolic of authority; that successful leaders who are skilled in the arts of compromise and ostensibly put community concern above self-interest also use a praiseworthy (in Cashinahua eyes) restraint in headdress decoration, while men who have been unsuccessful in establishing leadership positions tend to create extravagant headdresses, which are also regarded as failures in terms of Cashinahua ideas regarding proper use of feathers and color; that headmen whose power derives mainly from acceptance by human society create more orderly headdresses, while shamans, who are in contact with the vicissitudes of the spirit world, produce more individualistic and diversified feather-pieces.

In the final third of the volume, the Catalog of the Cashinahua Collection, Rabineau again relates material culture to the dynamics of social and ceremonial life with descriptive and analytical commentary. In sum, while the volume is uneven in quality, the emphasis accorded to ethnographic background and the recognition of the interplay between social process and material culture, particularly the decorative arts, is highly commendable. It is to be hoped that these directions will be pursued in later volumes of the series, which, all things considered, is off to a good start.

Mary Ritchie Key, ed. *The Relationship of Verbal and Nonverbal Communication*, The Hague: Mouton., 1980.

Reviewed by Stuart J. Sigman
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I laid down Mary Ritchie Key's recently edited volume and found myself feeling strangely uncomfortable and unsatisfied. Although the papers are of uniformly high quality, they differ significantly in the manner and degree to which they address the book's ostensible theme: verbal and nonverbal behavioral relationships. A second disappointment is that the three papers which comprise what might have been the most important section, "Theoretical Approaches to Human Interaction," were not written by scholars principally concerned with or trained in face-to-face interaction, do not make mention of unresolved theoretical issues broached by the other authors, and do not integrate their remarks into the larger interactional literature. This is not to suggest that the book is without its merits, which I am happy to describe below, but the fact that the whole is simply not up to the sum of its parts I found somewhat disappointing.

The book is divided into five sections. Key's contribution to the book comprises the first section, "Language and Nonverbal Behavior as Organizers of Social Systems." In addition to this and the final one on theoretical approaches, there are sections on "The Suprasegmentals of Interaction," "Organization of Language and Nonverbal Behavior," and "Acquisition of Communicative Behavior." Key's section sets the tone by summarizing and commenting on the remaining contributions, and by relating these to previous and ongoing research. The article demonstrates Key's already well-established command of a diverse bibliography and is a good introduction to some of the debates surrounding interaction studies: the universality of gestures, language and meaning, intentionality and awareness, and so on. Perhaps Key's most significant