

**Karl A. PETER, *The Dynamics of Hutterite Society: An Analytical Approach* (The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1987, 232 pp. ISBN 0-88864-108-7 [cloth], 0-88864-109-5 [paper])**

**Henry J. Regehr**

Volume 12, numéro 2, 1990

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081679ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081679ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

---

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)

1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

---

Citer ce compte rendu

Regehr, H. J. (1990). Compte rendu de [Karl A. PETER, *The Dynamics of Hutterite Society: An Analytical Approach* (The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1987, 232 pp. ISBN 0-88864-108-7 [cloth], 0-88864-109-5 [paper])]. *Ethnologies*, 12(2), 150–151. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081679ar>

their linguistic sophistication that he so often finds himself praising the interpretations of Edward Sapir and Father Berard Haile.

Faris presents himself as having a political agenda on behalf of the Navajo, protesting the appropriation of their culture's ceremonials for a Euro-American curiosity and reification (though acknowledging that many of the records we have would not exist without the anthropologists). In the language of the postmodernist critics of anthropology, emphasizing "local knowledges", Faris sets forth the context of particular recordings, albeit with the unfortunate implication that anthropologists will disapprove of his efforts and that an East Coast academic career is somehow incompatible with serving the interests of the Navajo (e.g., pp. 13-14).

In sum, the volume is a gold mine of different kinds of information about a single Navajo ceremonial. It may serve as a model of the kinds of things a folklorist might want to know—and is rarely told in such detail—about such a cultural form and its practice. It may further serve as a model for meticulous scholarship and consistent respect for individuals and communities studied.

*Regna DARNELL*  
*University of Western Ontario*  
*London, Ontario*

---

**Karl A. PETER, *The Dynamics of Hutterite Society: An Analytical Approach* (The University of Alberta Press, Edmonton, 1987, 232 pp. ISBN 0-88864-108-7 [cloth], 0-88864-109-5 [paper])**

This book provides a social history and a sociological analysis of current dynamics of an enduring cultural-religious sect, the Hutterites. Peter traces the origins of this sect in central Europe during the sixteenth century Reformation. Due to religious persecution and frequent relocation of residence, they developed a strong communal lifestyle and the supportive theology for the same. This communal lifestyle has been transplanted and firmly maintained by the Hutterites in both the Canadian and American Prairies.

The thrust of the book is to analyze the dynamics of that communal life style, its constituent elements, the tensions it generates,

and the coping strategies by which the Hutterites have so far been able to resist assimilation into the dominant culture of North American society. Major institutional arrangements of authority structures, the family, socialization/education, and particularly the high birth rate in Hutterite society are examined. In all of these institutional patterns, gradual but perceptible changes are taking place in response to internal pressures and contact with the outside world.

Two features of the book stand out. First, it provides a holistic overview of the sect from its inception to the present. The reader does not have to be well informed on Reformation and/or Anabaptist history to make sense of the broad explanations developed in the book. Second, and more importantly from a sociological vantage point, the book takes an analytical approach. Various elements of the Hutterite culture are examined by reference to the historical, institutional, religious, and economic context in which they occur.

At first glance, this analysis is largely descriptive, but the phenomena under discussion are linked to various other elements of the internal and external cultures. No one major variable or cause is portrayed as explaining Hutterite culture. Each element, however, is discussed in its own right without subjecting the explanation to a comprehensive theory. As Peter himself suggests, "The reader who searches for a single theoretical model in this monograph will be disappointed" (p. xvi). The empirical phenomenon determines the agenda for the analysis, not any one theoretical model.

After reading the book one has a feel for the social dynamics of the Hutterite way of life, and probably appreciates and respects it more than before.

*Henry J. REGEHR*  
*Conrad Grebel College*  
*University of Waterloo*  
*Waterloo, Ontario*

---

GOUVERNEMENT DU QUÉBEC, *L'ethnologie au Québec*  
(Ministère des Affaires culturelles, Québec, 1987,  
64 pp. ISBN 2-550-178-21-1)

Sous le titre de *L'ethnologie au Québec*, le ministère des Affaires culturelles s'associe à la Société québécoise des ethnologues et au Centre d'études sur la langue, les arts et les traditions populaires de