


A research history of Laestadianism in Norway

From the 1960s to the present day

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This article provides an overview and discusses the history of research on Laestadianism in Norway over the last 60 years. Research history earlier than 1960 and doctoral theses are discussed in this issue of *Approaching Religion* by Roald E. Kristiansen and Bengt-Ove Andreassen. It gives an impression of the nuances in approach between different academic disciplines and also different insider perspectives on Norwegian Laestadianism. The article shows that there is a need for comparative research on Laestadianism in Norway between different geographic regions and academic disciplines.

THIS ARTICLE PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW and discussion of the research history of Laestadianism in Norway over the last 60 years. Since articles on Norwegian Laestadianism research produced earlier than 1960 and doctoral theses on the subject are presented elsewhere in this issue, this article focuses solely on how Laestadianism in Norway is presented in journals, periodicals, and books on reminiscence or local history after 1960. This means that research from other countries that in various degrees covers Laestadian practice in Norway is not discussed in this article.¹ The aim is to

1 This excludes researchers like Pekka Raittila and Martti Miettinen in Finland, Lis Mari Hjortfors and Eivind Torp in Sweden as well as Warren Hepokoski in the United States, just to mention a few.

compare how Laestadianism is approached in academic disciplines, from perspectives of the insiders, and to see if there are geographical nuances in the research areas of Laestadianism in Norway.

Dagmar Sivertsen's 1955 doctoral thesis, *Læstadianismen i Norge* (Laestadianism in Norway), represents a milestone in the research on Laestadianism in Norway. The object of Sivertsen's work was to collect and present all Laestadian activity in Norway, from when it came into being in the 1840s right through to the 1950s. Prior to this publication, Laestadian history had comprised only geographically limited accounts and ecclesiastical or Laestadian representations.² The works that followed in the wake of Sivertsen's doctoral thesis were still mostly limited in geographical

2 Examples include Hendriks Kvandahl's article series *Den Læstadianske vækkelse* (The Laestadian revival, 1902, 1903); Hjalmar Westeson's *Ödemarksprofetens lärjungar* (The wasteland prophet's pupils, 1922); P. C. Astrup's 'Bidrag til Finnmarkens kirkehistorie V. Læstadianismens særpreg' (Contribution to Finnmark's church history V: the characteristics of Laestadianism, 1927); and Ananias Brune's *Nogen ord om Læstadius og Læstadianismen* (Some words on Laestadius and Laestadianism, 1927).

and thematic terms, but what they all had in common was that she was cited in the list of references. Sivertsen's thesis became a standard work that for a long time was cited without any critical remarks. All researchers of Laestadianism since 1960 have used Sivertsen's doctoral thesis to varying degrees in narrating the first hundred years of Laestadianism in Norway. Any challenges to her findings have tended to be as a result of new sources, and presented even then as an extension of her research, rather than as a critique of her perspectives or sources. The church historian Kåre Svebak is the only researcher that has challenged Sivertsen's thesis in a separate work (1986). Questioning Sivertsen's idea that the Laestadian movement served as an impedence to the establishment of free churches in northern Norway, Svebak detects several weaknesses in Sivertsen's thesis.

Two short histories of Norwegian Laestadianism have been published since Dagmar Sivertsen's doctoral thesis; both written by theologians. These are *Læstadianerne. Fra Nordkalottens kirkehistorie* (The Laestadians: from the church history of North Calotte, 1977) by Olaf Havdal, and a book by Per M. Aadnanes, *Læstadianismen i Nord-Noreg* (Laestadianism in Northern Norway, 1986). Both of them essentially follow Sivertsen's line of research and are, respectively, straightforward accounts of Lars Levi Læstadius and his followers, and popularized works intended for study at an elementary level. Both books provide interesting depictions of Laestadianism of their own time that extend Sivertsen's time-frame and demonstrate Laestadian opposition to ecclesiastical reform and new theological trends during the 1960s and 1970s.

Besides these historical depictions, two cadastral surveys have been published

relating to Laestadian preachers by, respectively, Pekka Raittila (1967) and Roald E. Kristiansen (2004b). Both surveys cover Norwegian Laestadianism in a broad sense. Kristiansen's survey provides a short biographical sketch of all the Laestadian preachers active in Norway from the 1850s to the turn of the millennium. The surveys have been compiled with research on Laestadianism in mind and are handy devices that highlight theological differences and the geographical spread of Laestadianism in Norway. Kristiansen includes this schematic depiction of Laestadianism in Norway, providing a concise overview of the fragmentations that have led to the various offshoots of Laestadianism in Norway (see Fig. 1). This figure gives an impression of the numerous varieties of Laestadian groups in Norway.

Another work that highlights the breadth of Norwegian research on Laestadians is the University of Tromsø's publication *Vekkelse og vitenskap. Lars Levi Læstadius 200 år* (Revival and science: Lars Levi Læstadius 200 years), edited by Øyvind Nordarval and Sigmund Nettet in 2000. According to the Finnish researcher into Laestadianism Jouko Talonen its publication is a signal that the Norwegian research community occupies a leading position within Laestadianism research (Mustakallio 2002).³ The anthology consists of thirteen articles with contributors from social anthropology, philosophy, religious

3 In addition to *Vekkelse og vitenskap* (Nordarval and Nettet 2000), four further anthologies have been published which are broadly linked to Laestadianism and Laestadius; see *Prismet* 1993; Mellem and Viinikka-Kallinen 2001; Kristiansen 2002 and *Norsk tidsskrift for misjonsvitenskap*, 2–3, 2016.

Laestadian divisions in Norway

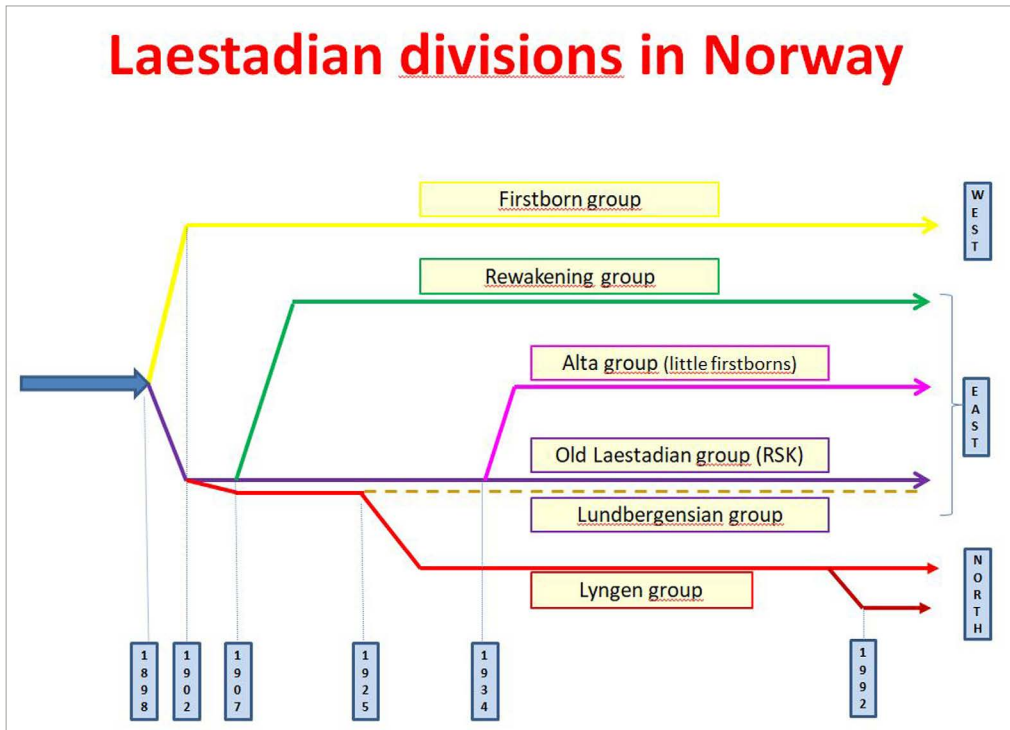


Figure 1. Laestadian movements in Norway. Translation of the figure in Kristiansen 2004b: 4.

studies, theology, history, linguistics, education and botany, who have collectively supplied a broad picture of Lars Levi Laestadius and Laestadianism in Norway. Contributions in this anthology will be discussed consecutively in their own research fields below.⁴ One characteristic aspect is that the authors to some extent adapt widely differing research models for their analysis. Laestadianism is described here variously as a reaction against what is modern, as being critical of the Church, as an element of unrest in society, as a natural progression of Christianity, fluctuating between a conservative and a dynamic movement, and as an extension of Sami traditional religious practice/shamanism. Thus, the anthology

4 See the list of references in Andreassen and Berglund 2000; Bolle 2000; Norderval and Nettet 2000.

puts forward the idea that the Laestadian movement can be approached and understood in a variety of ways which this article also intends to illustrate.

Laestadianism research after 1960

In addition to the master's and other post-graduate dissertations listed below, several social science and church-history researchers have written about Laestadianism in Norway. Historians Einar-Arne Drivenes and Einar Niemi have observed that the research in Norway has developed into three statement positions (Drivenes and Niemi 2000: 158ff.): Firstly, as a *culture-conserving and culturally-justifying theory*, where Laestadianism is perceived as a political reaction and a response to threatening tendencies in Norwegian society, such as modernization and secularization (Gjessing 1953; Paine 1965; Bjørklund 1985). Secondly, Laestadianism has been

analysed in terms of a *conciliation theory rooted in religion*, where added weight is given to the religious dimension, and expressions such as ‘religious ethnicity’ are included in the explanations (Larssen 1996). Finally, they point to a *psychologizing theory*, where Laestadianism, amongst other things, is interpreted as ‘protection’ of Sami fellowship (J. I. Nergård 1994; J.-E. Nergård 2007; Meistad 1999). In the aftermath of Drivenes and Niemi’s article some scholarly works have presented a fourth statement position, where Laestadianism is presented as a ‘problem’ in the context of, for example, school policy, in local society and at an individual level (Leganger-Krogstad 1995; Helberg Johansen 2000; Steinholt 2000; Norbakken 2012). This is a *religious practice-critical theory*, which also finds a response in the earliest depictions of Laestadianism as a deviation from social norms (see Roald E. Kristiansen’s article elsewhere in this issue). I adhere to these positions in the classification of the research according to academic disciplines to demonstrate aspects of Laestadianism research since 1960. The bulkheads between academic disciplines are by no means watertight, but the overview shows clear distinctions in terms of academic approach. The same is true of the statement positions where Laestadianism is illuminated in the light of several theories.

Master’s and other postgraduate theses, and in-depth studies

The many master’s theses written on Laestadianism in Norway have contributed to new knowledge about the impact of this revival movement in northern Norwegian society. As is evident from the appendix of this article, master’s and other postgraduate theses about Norwegian Laestadianism have been written within various academic disciplines. The majority of these works have been writ-

ten in Tromsø. These works span over the time period from the 1850s to the present day. There are four particular fields within which Laestadianism is measured: ethnicity, ecclesiastical affiliation, societal participation and internal relationships. Many of these dissertations use a line of conflict as the linchpin in the analysis of such matters as the Laestadians in conflict with society as a whole and modernization, the state church, other Laestadians, and non-believers. One significant point in common is that the dissertations are linked to geographically limited areas, which means that it is often local Laestadian congregations which are illustrated. Various periodizations are employed, linked to the research questions of a particular work, but which also indicate geographical variations in Laestadianism’s presence in different communities. Consequently, none of the master’s theses provide a complete picture of Laestadianism in Norway, something of which the authors themselves are well aware. Against this background it is evident that Lyngen Laestadianism, in particular, has been discussed in the majority of these works, in addition to the Firstborn of the Ofoten area (see Figure 1). Very little research has been done on the Alta movement, also called the Little Firstborn. An exception is Heid Leganger-Krogstad’s report from 1995, *Læstadianske oppdragelsesidealer og skolekonflikten i Alta. Foreldrenes ønsker for opplæring og oppdragelse* (Laestadianist upbringing ideals and the school conflict in Alta: the parents’ wishes regarding education), which describes an ongoing conflict from a religious education perspective. Several doctoral theses have also been written about Laestadianism in Norway (these are discussed by Bengt-Ove Andreassen in this issue).

Several minor theological theses on Laestadianism have been written in the

context of theological education in Oslo.⁵ These theses mostly focus on theological questions. Even if they are minor theses, they do however often discuss Laestadianism in the light of new archive material, which make them relevant for the research. The geographical focus of these works, too, is basically Lyngen and Firstborn/Ofoften-related, although with some exceptions.

Social anthropology and folkloristics

Social anthropological and folkloristic research have had a particular focus on the social dimension of Laestadianism. Robert Paine's social-anthropological study from a Sami coastal settlement in Finnmark was the first scholarly work of its kind in the 1960s (Paine 1965: 61ff.). Here it was maintained that Laestadianism has a function of cultural preservation, in line with earlier researchers such as Johs. Falkenberg, Ian Whitaker and Guttorm Gjessing. Recodifying is particularly emphasized; for example in the ideal of poverty, where material poverty is regarded as spiritual wealth. There is a further focus on the members of the congregation forgiving one another's sins in the church pew (the Office of the Keys). The fellowship in the congregation was consequently especially significant, both socially and from a religious point of view. The theory of recodifying has been raised, amongst other things, in the light of ethnic and religious identity linked to political activity, while the tenet of cultural preservation has been used to show that popular religious belief and Laestadianism have mutually influenced one another (Steinlien 1984; Johnsen 1984: 79, 87). In the local history account *Fjordfolket i Kvænangen* (The Fjord people of Kvænangen), the

function of cultural preservation is emphasized by Ivar Bjørklund (1985). He argues that the Kven and the Sami, through the use of their mother tongue at their assemblies, and with the help of Laestadian doctrine, have organized themselves and established an opposition to the policies of the authorities (pp. 320, 407–8). Serving as an extension to these perspectives, there are theories that claim that Laestadianism not only influenced cultural preservation, but also came to the rescue of the Sami and saved them from utter cultural annihilation. In this line of research, it was argued that the Laestadian 'agitation' may be linked to the shaman's trance in Sami religion (J. I. Nergård 1994; Meistad 1999: 56). The baseline argument is that Laestadianism is an extension of the old religion of the Sami, as was suggested by parish priest P. C. Astrup in Lyngen during the 1920s, with clear Social Darwinistic undertones (Astrup 1928; Boreman 1954: 262).

History

In the field of history, too, there has been a focus on Laestadianism's social functions, especially at the intersection between religion, ethnicity and politics. There is therefore an evident danger in confusing three positions: those of the researcher, the preacher and the ethno-politician (Minde 1997). In 1974, Einar Niemi wrote about Laestadianism and its significance for Finnish immigrants. He shows how Laestadianism seems, over a long period of time, to have contributed to a peaceful assimilation compared with what he later defines as a religion-based conciliatory theory. The historical analyses demonstrate the importance of social, cultural and linguistic communities, in addition to the obvious religious significance (Niemi 1974: 20ff.). One central theme among historians has been the Norwegian authorities'

5 Examples in the list of references are Håkonseth 1982; Braathen 1984; Skjesol 1995 and Jenssen 2011.

fear that Laestadian preachers were acting as a mouthpiece for Finnish nationalism (Ryymin 2004: 295–323; Larsen 2010c). Surveys show that Finnish nationalism did not receive support from Kven followers of Laestadianism, who instead stressed their obedience to the Norwegian authorities. The political and ethnic affiliations of the followers of Laestadianism have been studied and although these have been important, research shows that religious belief was their main point of focus. This is spelled out in *Nordnorsk Kulturhistorie* (A Cultural History of Northern Norway, 1994), which indicates that there was no direct connection between the religious disruption and the political mobilization: rather, the controversy focused on where the distinction was to be made between true Christians, conventional Christians, and unbelievers (Drivenes and Jernsletten 1994: 225). Laestadianism's foundational stance must first and foremost be understood as part of the pietistic spiritual tradition in European religious history, not as a reflection of Sami religion and mentality, nor as a forerunner of liberation theology (Minde 1997: 182–3). The result of this is that Sami-ness in certain research areas has survived in the twentieth century rather despite Laestadianism's existence than because of it. It is precisely this last point that illustrates a practical-critical perspective on Laestadian religious practice, compared to the religious practice-critical explanation model.

Study of religion and theology

Laestadianism's religious and dogmatic foundations have been discussed in study of religion and theology. During the 1970s Kåre Svebak commenced his works on Laestadianism's presence in northern Norwegian society, developing a theory about Laestadianism as a *religious ethnicity*

(see the list of references). Here he argues that there is a distinction between the socio-religious and the religious fellowship; that is to say, between Laestadian *practice* as an ethnic brotherhood community and the Laestadian *faith*, which is universal (Svebak 1983: 260). As an extension of this work, the question of how Laestadian theology was developed to suit Sami culture and identity has been studied (Elgvin 1991; Sarre 2003). Faith and religious practice are central themes in which Laestadianism's influence on the contemporary local community is observed. This has been discussed by many researchers since the turn of the millennium. Although the studies are thematically very different, they illustrate Laestadianism in a power-critical perspective compared to the religious practice-critical explanatory stance mentioned above. In church-history terms, Laestadianism has been understood in light of the modern breakthrough by representing a desire for freedom, existing simultaneously with the movement's pre-modern and directly anti-modern aspects (Norderval 2006: 134). The Laestadians' dual relationship with the state church is often evident: on the one hand as faithful followers, and on the other hand as being highly critical of liturgical reforms and Bible translations (Norderval 2000: 53). Laestadianism is described as, amongst other things, a reaction against a priest-led church that over time has itself become an authority-led movement. The philosopher Viggo Rossvær has countered this, showing that there is an emphasis on subjective experiences in Laestadianism that entails an internal critique of the Church's practice of Christianity, based on an understanding 'that the everyday may be experienced as transformed' (Rossvær 2000: 50). This has also been discussed in Torjer Olsen's (f. Berglund) detailed studies of Lyngen Laestadianism and its relationship with the

state church (Berglund 2000, 2002; Olsen 2004, 2010). Here both internal and external factors are illustrated that are linked to the religious identity. The internal framework is first and foremost Laestadian doctrine, while the external factor is the state church as an institution and framework (Berglund 2000: 120).

The researchers in the ongoing research project 'Læstadianisme Bokprosjekt' (Laestadianism book project, LaBo) at the UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Bengt-Ove Andreassen, Roald E. Kristiansen and Rolf Inge Larsen, have written several articles about Laestadianism in Norway. Bengt-Ove Andreassen explains in his postgraduate dissertation how Lyngen Laestadians created their own identity in relation to other Laestadian groups. Andreassen has written more recently about Laestadianism in which he discusses the present-day situation among Laestadians in matters such as schooling, youth work and self-understanding (see the list of references). His research largely falls within the religion-based conciliation theory, whilst in the question of schooling he also analyses Laestadianism from a religion practice-critical perspective. Andreassen has also written two articles jointly with Torjer A. Olsen about Laestadianism of the Lyngen community's problematic relationship with the state church (Andreassen and Berglund 2000; Andreassen and Olsen 2004). The authors show that the division does not lie in dogmatic disagreement linked to doctrine, rather that it lies in the way that the Christian life is to be lived (Andreassen and Berglund 2000: 118). Roald E. Kristiansen is far-reaching in the thematic impact of his articles (see the list of references). Kristiansen writes in the foreword to his survey about Laestadianism's significant influence on large parts of northern Norway both historically and in

the present day (Kristiansen 2004c: 1). It is precisely the illustration of this influence that seems to be at the heart of Kristiansen's Laestadianism research, primarily linking his research to the *culture-justifying* and the *religion-conciliation* explanation model. Rolf Inge Larsen also associates himself with these explanation models in making a comparative juxtaposition in which Laestadian theology and the view of the Church are discussed with regard to two other revival groups (Larsen 2005). Since then, Larsen has written about Laestadianism and the Norwegianization policy, the use of minority languages, history and memory, Lutheran dogmatics and the movement's various geographical impacts in the North (see the list of references).

National history

Laestadianism in Norway is sparsely and sometimes misleadingly presented in works of national history and church history, and then often where Laestadians become foreign elements in terms both of the nation and the state church, based on their religious practices. This is evident in Torjer A. Olsen's study of scholarly portrayals of Haugianism and Laestadianism. He shows how researchers have influenced the view of these two revival groups through their categorization, where Haugianism has been viewed as a nation-building people's revival group, whereas Laestadianism has often been portrayed as an ethnic counter-culture (Olsen 2010: 150). Another example may be seen in *Norsk historie 1814–1860* (Norwegian history 1814–60), where historian Tore Pryser (1999) refers to Laestadianism as a sect. It is incorrect to define Laestadianism in Norway as a sect, since it has not broken away from the official state church, does not use a different confessional literature, and does not have any form of membership involving

special affiliations.⁶ According to Pryser, Laestadianism has particularly attracted common people opposed to the state church and the government. Pryser presents a depiction of mutual enmity between Laestadian Kven and Sami on the one hand, and the authorities on the other hand (Pryser 1999: 48, 52, 71). Pryser also presents this depiction in *Gesellar, rebellar og svermarar. Om "farleg folk" rundt 1850* (Journeyman, rebels and fanatics: on 'dangerous people' c.1850), where he devotes a whole chapter to what he calls religious underclass movements such as Laestadianism and the Mormons (Pryser 1982). One example of the sparse interest in national church-history terms may be the fact of Lyngen Laestadianism – a large and significant grouping in a northern Norwegian society context – not being discussed in several central works on Norwegian church history (see Wisløff 1971; Astås 1984; Oftestad *et al.* 2005). This is in spite of the group being the only specifically Norwegian variant of Laestadianism and the voluminous congregations being among the very largest revival groups in Norway.

Lay history and depictions of Laestadianism after 1960

Some non-scientific texts have also had a strong influence on the depiction of Norwegian Laestadianism in the public domain, and at times on research as well. In this regard, Dagmar Sivertsen's thesis (1955) would warrant strong criticism for her analysis being based in several places on testimony from priests' biographies, internal Laestadian writings and conversations with preachers; as for example, in her references to what she writes on the begin-

ning of Laestadianism in Lyngen. Here she refers to Hjalmar Westeson's biographical reminiscence book *Ödemarksprofetens lärjungar* (The wasteland prophet's pupils, 1922) and a bibliographical notice in the periodical *Samenes Venn* (The friend of the Sami) written by Adolf Steen (Sivertsen 1955: 228, 477). Steen's piece, based on Westeson is written on the basis of practising Laestadians' reminiscences (Steen 1945). None of these factors is discussed in her presentation. The Danish historian Bernard Eric Jensen (2014: 7) distinguishes between the categories of scholarly history and lay history, where the former is 'the one that is normalized among scholars, whereas lay people use the latter in everyday life' (p. 11). Lay history on the topic of Laestadianism in Norway is primarily based on various reminiscence accounts which, with their internal and external perspectives and fictional contributions, provide an understanding of Laestadianist practice from an inside perspective where, for example, God for obvious reasons is a part-taking actor in history.

In the category of reminiscence accounts there are two very different contributions which present a depiction of Laestadianism as a whole. One is teacher Reidun Mellem's volume, intended for secondary school use, a short introduction to 'the most important movements' linked to the author's own experiences (Mellem 1978). The other contribution is written by the Laestadian preacher Andreas Esbensen, who in two small volumes (2000, 2001) provides a good insight into the Lyngen movement's own understanding of history, and provides religious-based explanations from one who 'has followed Christianity' for seventy years (Esbensen 2001: 37). In the category of Laestadianist reminiscence accounts we also find Kurt Tore Andersen's (2007) book *Laestadianism in Tysfjord*

6 This is different from, for example, some groups within Laestadianism in Finland.

before the Second World War, and a reprint of a text about the congregational leader Anton Sommersteth, written for a family gathering in Skibotn (Sommersteth 1988). The latter text provides a detailed and lively depiction of the congregational leader and Laestadian congregations in Lyngen in the early twentieth century. The text combines reminiscence with religious beliefs.

Laestadian faith is the basis for Roald Bolle's text on Laestadianism in modern society in *Vekkelse og vitenskap* (Bolle 2000). The text provides an insight into how a follower of Laestadianism thinks and how he views the development of society. One significant observation on Bolle's part is that Laestadianism is first and foremost Christianity. By contrast, in the same anthology, Bishop Ola Steinholt (2000: 128–9) describes Laestadianism as a noisy element in some local communities. Here the bishop points to increased depression and stress in areas where Laestadian divisions affect residents who are on different sides of the religious conflict. The bishop's text contains no references, while Bolle refers mostly to religious literature and to Dagmar Sivertsen. In addition, journalist Reidar Hirsti's (2000) work has attracted the attention of Laestadianism researchers and has contributed to setting an agenda for Laestadianism as social uprising, primarily based on the author's own recollections and convictions.

Since 1960, there have been many literary contributions which have described Laestadianism in practice and events that have been linked to the movement.⁷ Unlike

in Sweden (Heith 2018) and Finland (Wallenius-Korkalo 2018) there has been no comparative research on Laestadianism represented in literature and popular culture in Norway.

Discussion

Research subsequent to Dagmar Sivertsen's doctoral thesis has mostly concerned itself with the Laestadian movement's place in society, in the present day as well as historically. Another set of circumstances illustrated in research literature since 1960 is Laestadianism's inner life, particularly that which is linked to ethnic identity. Laestadianism in the light of Norwegian minority policy in the north is illustrated, amongst other things, by the use of religious dogma as a strategy and counter-strategy in a northern Norwegian context. Not until after the turn of the millennium have there been works that have had a greater focus on the actor perspective, linked to religious practice and the gender dimension. In several of these depictions from research history the authors operate with their own periodization.

The periodizations are linked to local congregations (see Fig. 2), and beyond this to ethnic and minority political research issues, providing variations to the understanding of Norwegian Laestadianism. It is nonetheless regrettable that the research has mostly been directed towards Lyngen Laestadianism and the Firstborn in Ofoten, which means that attention has not been paid to large geographical areas of impact including, amongst others, the

politics, and have to some degree had an impact on the narrative about Laestadianism in Norway, without focusing on the fact that the inhabitants from the neighbouring village who crushed the uprising in pending of the Norwegian authorities also were Sami and Laestadians.

7 For example, Idar Kristiansen's *Korstog mot Kautokeino* (The crusade against Kautokeino) and Olav Nordrås's *Rød høst* (Red autumn) both from 1970. Both novels, and Nils Gaup's film *Kautokeinoopprøret* (Kautokeino uprising, 2007), depicted the events of 1852 in the light of minority

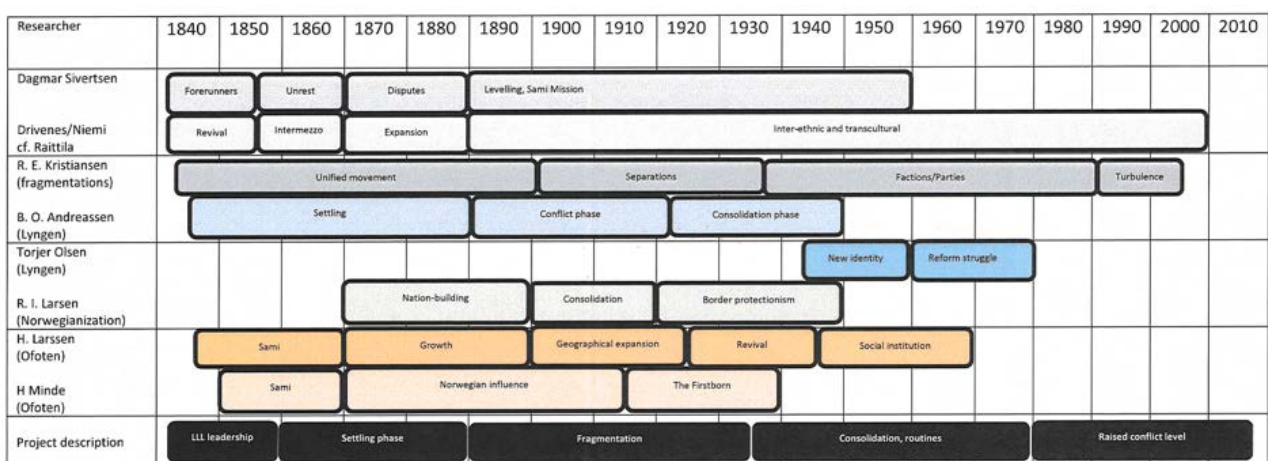


Figure 2. Periodizations of Laestadianism

Alta movement and Laestadianism in eastern Finnmark (see Figure 1). Figure 2 also illustrates some similarities, particularly during the first period of Laestadianism in Norway.

Another striking time-related feature of the research which is not visible in Figure 2 is linked to what might be termed ‘preacher generations.’ This is a significant feature within Laestadianism with regard to the preacher’s role in the congregation as interpreter and mediator of the religious doctrine. These generations, which become apparent in the various research texts, more or less coalesce throughout the whole of Norway. Roughly speaking, there have been four generations of preachers since the death of Laestadius in 1861. The first generation comprised the preachers who were appointed by Lars Levi Laestadius himself, or by his closest associates. These preachers died around 1900. The second generation of preachers consisted of those who were active up until the Second World War. In the post-war period, there have been two further generations of preachers, with a generation shift at the end of the 1980s. These generational shifts have been extremely significant, and discussed by many authors, but to date no-one

has written an overall presentation of the implications they represent.

Conclusions

This research overview since 1960 makes it clear that Laestadianism has been illustrated and discussed within numerous research fields. There have been few critical discussions between the different academic disciplines on the research on Laestadianism in Norway; the closest is the discussion between the historian Henry Minde and folklorist Jens Ivar Nergård on the ethnic (Sami) influence in Laestadianism (see above). As mentioned, Dagmar Sivertsen has presented an overall depiction of the rise of Laestadianism in all regions in northern Norway up until the 1950s. Since then, her research has been used as a source for Laestadianism researchers, but without challenging the source material that she herself used. There has been little in the way of review texts to discuss Laestadian practices comparatively in Norway, something which also means that the Laestadianism that is presented in more recent research tends to refer to specific locations or regional expressions, and not to the greater dynamic depiction of Laestadian practice in Norway, of which it

is also part. There is a need for comparative research on Laestadian practice in Norway, and one could also add a need for comparative transnational research on Laestadianism and Laestadians in Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Finally, this research overview shows that a new explanatory position has been adopted with regard to Laestadian practice, especially since the year 2000, when religious practice was seen as a problem, rather than as a culturally-preserving, religion-conciliating or ethnic continuation. The religious practice-critical position may be historically linked to earlier representations when Laestadianism was described and analysed as socially deviant, and also to some lay history representations. ■

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Appendix 1.

Postgraduate and master's theses with Laestadianism in Norway as an analytical theme are listed as follows (in chronological order)

Steinlien, Øystein: 'Kulturell endring og etnisk kontinuitet. Læstadianisme som politisk samlingsverdi i en samisk kystbygd' [Cultural change and ethnic continuity: Laestadianism as a political assembly value in a Sami coastal village] (Sami studies, University of Tromsø, 1984)

Johnsen, Marit Anne Hauan: 'Læstadianer og runer – en nordnorsk folkemedisiner i dag' [Laestadians and a wizard: a northern Norwegian folk medicine healer today] (Folkloristics, University of Bergen, 1984)

Elgvin, Lilly-Anne Østtveit: 'Plante på hjemlig jord. En studie av L. L. Læstadius' liv og virke blant samene, med vekt på utformingen av hans forkynnelse' [Plant on home soil: a study of the life and work of L. L. Laestadius among the Sami, with an emphasis on the design of his preaching] (Christianity Studies, University of Bergen, 1991)

Johansen, Tove: 'Forholdet mellom politikk og religion i et sjøsamisk område fra 1920–1970' [The relationship between politics and religion in a Sea Sami area from 1920 to 1970] (History, University of Tromsø, 1991)

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