

Čuorvvot

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The roots of the Laestadian movement have been sought by theological scholars principally in Lars Levi Laestadius' own experiences and in those religious movements that influenced and continue to influence people in the area of his ministry. Among such movements mention may be made of Readers, the Wiklund movement and Herrnhutism. The Saami aspect has entirely, or almost entirely, been neglected. Nevertheless, it would be natural to include this aspect in studying Laestadianism when examining the phenomena occurring within a certain people's region. To my way of thinking, it is even less defensible to overlook Laestadius' background with his Saami family connections, who for many generations worked as clergyman among the Saamis as religious officials, and his linguistic background and publications in the Lappish languages, one of which was his own creation, Kotalappish. Neither is it justified to neglect his penetrating studies of Saami traditions; his work *Fragmenter i Lappska Mythologien* (Laestadius 1959) is only a sample but also, far exceeding what is contained there, is the information found in his sermons. In the above work he notes that information about earthly spirits, fairies or whatever name is used of them were not unreliable: "Another event related to the same subject has been told me by reliable persons [...]" (Laestadius 1959, 63). Laestadius cannot be separated from his Saami background without the path to one aspect of his sermons, namely the Saami aspect, becoming obscured or entirely impossible to follow. Of his sermons 58, loosely speaking, contain some Saami tradition and of these the main part of six are based almost directly on Saami tradition.

Despite the fact that Lars Levi Laestadius was so familiar with Saami traditions, it seems clear that, in his revivalist movement, he was much more a receiver than a giver. A large part of the movement's arsenal was already known among followers of the movement or its successors who traded with the Saami peoples (Haetta & Baer 1958, 11), which was known and influenced the life of the nomadic Lapps of Karesuando and Kautokeino. Laestadius provided the movement with an ingenious combination of old and new and pierced the racial barrier that separated the Kota Saamis from those who were firmly settled and from new settlers. Were it not for the fact that the fell dwellers had their own revivalist movement, it would

be impossible to explain the phenomenon of how the Laestadian movement spread like wildfire first among the mountain Saamis and then among the new settlers, who were either Lapp-speaking or at least in part originally by occupation Saamis.

It can be agreed, however, that no revivalist movement can spread rapidly without earlier groundwork even if, as in this case, it is borne in mind the route of the nomadic trails from the Arctic Ocean to Finland and Sweden. Between Karesuando in Norway, Karesuando in Sweden and Enontekiö in Russia there existed very lively links based on history, religion, language and joint nomadic wandering (Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909, 54, 55, 64, 65). In addition to living together in the iron areas, nomadism continued jointly up to the borders of the iron areas (Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909, 90, 93). In addition to this, many of the Kautokeino Saamis passed the winter months in the south on both Russian and Swedish territory before the closing of the border (Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909, 519, 94).

Reference was made above to the roots of the Laestadian movement in an earlier local movement. Information about this movement is limited but reliable and even quite detailed. Lars Jakob Haetta (1834–1897), one of the leaders of the Kautokeino religious rising in 1852, wrote while in prison from 1856–1863 an important volume of memoirs, *Mui'talusat* (Haetta & Baer 1958). In it he tells about a religious movement that had flourished in the Kautokeino region quite a long time before, in about 1765, called the Čuorvvot, the shouting callers (Haetta & Baer 1958, 11 ff.). Even after the movement had passed its peak, its influence among the people was considerable and both the Čuorvvot themselves and those who had turned to a better life through their influence continued to make an impact on religious life about the turn of the century. Although Lars J. Haetta says that, from then on, “The darkness of sin began once more to rise [. . .]” and “drunkenness [. . .] rose to a peak” (Haetta & Baer 1958, 13), nevertheless it is clear that the temperance ideal maintained its position. A sign of this is the fact that in 1842 the elders of the parish proposed a ban on the transport of drink in their area and—admittedly after a demonstration—succeeded in putting it into practice in the spring of 1851 (Smith 1938, 212). What the origins and early stages of the Čuorvvot movement were we do not know nor does it fall within the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the Swedish clergy worked for a long time in the Kautokeino congregation and they were well acquainted with the Lapp language (Grape 1853, 89 f.).

Of interest in this connection is the fact that there are many similarities between the Čuorvvot and Laestadian movements both in external forms and also in focuses of attention in their published sermons. Mention has

already been made of temperance. The Čuorvvot were, like the Laestadians, externally vociferous preachers in all places (Haetta & Baer 1958, 11). Fits of swooning and visits to the other world (Haetta & Baer 1958, 10) also bear witness to, in the first case, links with the Laestadian movement and, in the latter, influences from the period of Lappish witchcraft. Both movements were critical of unconverted clergymen (Laestadius 1843; Haetta & Baer 1958, 11). But the most striking similarity was the absolute, public sermon of the law and repentance, criticism. It was present in Laestadius' sermons even before his conversion (Thulin 1949, 74) and had obviously reached the ears of those who set store by Čuorvvot ideals even from Kautokeino some tens of years for "it was their custom to spend each winter at Enontekiö in Swedish Lapland and attend divine service at Karesuando church throughout the winter" (Quigstad & Wiklund 1909, 91). For those who had been to Kautokeino Pajala church offered an alternative possibility (Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909, 58). The Karesuando Saamis, on the other hand, all spent the winter to the north of Pajala church (Qvigstad & Wiklund 1909, 159). Among the Saami populations of Kautokeino-Karesuando the Čuorvvot religious revivalist movement must obviously have had a strong impact several decades before Laestadius began his preaching. In the movement's external features and customs and ideals there were many similarities with corresponding characteristics of the early Laestadian movement. In looking for the roots of Laestadianism it is not possible to ignore the Čuorvvot and the groundwork it did when studying the reasons for the rapid spread of the Laestadian sermon and the Laestadian movement. The Čuorvvot, the shouting callers, the most Christian of the Saamis obviously smoothed the way for Laestadianism and made it possible for its wildfire spread.

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