

THE SKJERVØY KING

Christen Michelsen Heggelund was Skjervøy's first trader.

Originally from Denmark, he developed Skjervøy into a powerful trading place, more than a century before Tromsø and Hammerfest were founded. Heggelund became a so-called citizen of Bergen, which entitled him to trade with Northern Norway. He settled in Skjervøy in 1662, where he conducted trade and traditional cargo transport. By the time he died in 1694, he had become an extremely rich man. Myths about his wealth and power survived for centuries.

He was called the "Skjervøy King" and had a reputation of being very stingy. When Heggelund settled

in Skjervøy, only the local pastor lived there. The pastor soon became indebted to Heggelund, which led to conflict. Rumour has it that the Skjervøy King stood behind the altar on Sundays and took the offerings given to the pastor by the congregation. In his famous poem Nordlands Trompet, Petter Dass referred to his indignation of treating a man of God in this way.

According to legend, the Skjervøy King threw several buckets of silver into a gap in the mountain Stussnesfjellet before his death to prevent descendants inheriting his wealth. Over the centuries, many a Skjervøy boy has unsuccessfully dreamt of finding the Skjervøy King's treasure. Stussnesfjellet is on the far right of the picture below.



Tekst Jan R. Olsen / foto Knud Knudsen Universitetsbiblioteket Bergen