

# Hans Egede and the Philosophers' Stone: Alchemical practice in the Colony of Hope

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Hans Egede (1686–1758) is famous for his pioneering work as a missionary and natural historian in Greenland. That he also maintained a strong interest in alchemy for several decades with the goal of producing the Philosophers' Stone, is less widely known. Only one description of an alchemical experiment performed by him exists – an experiment carried out in the Colony of Hope in Greenland in 1727. The physical setting as well as the material and social circumstances in the Colony of Hope make the story of Hans Egede the alchemist quite unique.

This paper explores the conditions of Egede's alchemical practice in Greenland. As a starting point I will briefly discuss how Egede should be placed in the history of alchemy in Denmark-Norway, and to which alchemical school he belonged. Following this, a central question is to what extent necessary chemical substances, equipment, fuel and laboratory facilities were available to him in the colony. I will also consider which skills Egede needed to possess to be able to perform his alchemical experiments, and how his alchemical work was hindered or supported by his position as head of the colony.

Keywords: Hans Egede, alchemy, Greenland, the Colony of Hope, the Philosophers' Stone.

Required audiovisual equipment: projector.

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