



J. W. Goethe – poet engaged in Earth sciences

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The famous German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749 – 1832) was a man of an outstanding interest for the Earth sciences. In the Czech geological dictionary his own biography remembers his frequent visits to the famous West Bohemian health resorts. In this region he was focusing his attention to the geological history, petrography and mineralogy, genesis of mineral water springs etc. Some of his studies were published. His geological points of view were not always correct (as seen from a recent knowledge) but his efforts to deepen studies of this territory cannot be forgotten. - In his rich correspondence with the count Kaspar Maria Sternberg (1761 - 1838) – founder of the (nowadays) National Museum in Prague – the author of this article has recently discovered in the Prague archives a letter written just one week before the death of the poet. It is a confession of his deep relation especially to the region of West Bohemia where he found lot of enjoyment and new knowledge in the course of numerous visits and stays. - Goethe had the largest private collection of minerals in all of Europe (17800 rock samples). A mineral goethite has been named after him. - The Czech composer Václav Jan Tomášek (1774 – 1850) describing his visit paid to Goethe in Cheb (Eger) in 1822 remembers also mineralogical interest of the poet and his excursions to the region for collecting local minerals. The main reason for personal contact in this case was the art (Tomášek composed songs using Goethe's poems). But Tomášek described also his frequent talks on science with the famous Swedish chemist Jöns Jacob Berzelius (1779 – 1848) in Karlsbad (1822). From other sources a common stay of Berzelius, Goethe and Sternberg in Marienbad (also 1822) is reported.