

Prace chemiczne analityczne Baltazara Hacqueta

The chemical works of Balthasar Hacquet

SUMMARY

Balthazar Hacquet (1740-1815), a distinguished naturalist of the 18th century, was born and educated in Medicine in France. Beginning in 1762, he was the military physician in Austrian army. In the years 1768-1773 Hacquet was a servant in the administrator board of mercuric ore mines in Hydrya (Slovenia). In Hydrya he met J. A. Scopoli (1721-1788), a well known at that time Italian naturalist, and participated in his chemical and mineralogical investigations. In 1773 Hacquet obtained the position of natural history professor at the Lyceum in Lyublyana (Slovenia), and in 1787 – the position of natural history professor at the University in Lwów (at that time – a Polish territory occupied by Austria, nowadays – Ukraine). When the Lwów University was temporarily closed, he worked (1805-1810) as the natural history professor at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. Thus, more than 20 years of his life spent Hacquet among the Polish people.

The scientific activity of Hacquet was connected to analytical chemistry of minerals, geology and mineralogy of Alps and Carpathian Mountains, the ornithology and botany. At the end of 18th century he was probably the best expert in the chemical analysis in the Polish territories. Hacquet performed a lot of analyses of different Carpathian rocks, of iron and other metal ores, salt of Wieliczka, many saline and mineral waters of Galicia, etc. At the university in Lwów he organized the chemical laboratory for students, who participated in his analytical works. Hacquet investigated also the Carpathian petroleum and is known as the adherent of the hypothesis of its animal origin. He measured also (by the barometric method) the altitude of some Carpathian peaks (in Tatra Mountains) and was the first who described the imbecility disease, appearing in Carpathian country, and connected, as we now know, to the iodine deficiency producing the goitre. Hacquet assigned this illness to the presence of some unknown mineral compound in the waters of these territories. The opus magnum of Hacquet, entitled: “Hacquets neueste physikalisch-politische Reisen durch die Dacischen und Sarmatischen oder Nördlichen Karpathen” (4 volumes) contains the description of Carpathian Mountains done from the point of view of natural history of his time.

Analecta – Studia i Materiały z Dziejów Nauki
[Analecta – Studies and Materials on the History of Science]
V, 1996, 2, 95-125