Abstract — The first part of this paper deals with various interpretations (Mickiewicz, Nugent, Kollar, Beckmann, Büsching, etc.) of the etymology of name for Zerbst, a town in the district of Anhalt-Bitterfeld, Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. In the past, as it was part of the border region together with the neighboring Saxon region around Magdeburg in the west, Zerbst was incorporated into the Gau Ciervisti of the Saxon Eastern March (Marca Geronis). The etymology of the name Zerbst is linked to its Slavic origins. The second part of the paper consists of an analysis of how the Danish Secretary of State, Christian Friedrich Temler (1717-1780) approached the subject. Temler was originally from Zerbst and in his notebook, but even more importantly in his “Illyrian dictionary” (both manuscripts are conserved in the Royal Library in Copenhagen) he offers a set of etymologies related to the toponyms of the Zerbst/Anhalt district, including the very city of Zerbst itself. In so doing, Temler demonstrates the connection between the toponyms of northern and eastern Germany, Poland and the Pomeranian region with the Slavic language spoken in Dalmatia, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic sea.

Keywords: Ch.F. Temler, etymology, Illirian dictionary, Zerbst