

Ladislaus Bartholomaeides, the Historiographer of Gömör County and his Works

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ABSTRACT

Ladislaus Bartholomaeides (1754–1825) was a Lutheran pastor, deacon of Gömör and a prominent scholar and historiographer of his native land, County of Gömör. He was educated at the University of Wittenberg in the Josephine era. After returning home, he began publishing some smaller historical treatises about his native land and its inhabitants. His main work was a description of County of Gömör (*Notitia historico-geographico-statistica*, 1806–1808.) The adjective '*statistica*' in the title of his book indicates that all factors are discussed, relevant for the state and economy policy (society, churches, population, mineral sources etc.) which contemporary German scholarship called *Staatsmerkwürdigkeiten*. Also his paternal ancestors were pastors of Hungarian noble origin, and his mother's family was belonged to the wealthy landowners in Upper Hungary, Ladislaus Bartholomaeides was a native Slovak speaker, and he only learnt Hungarian in his youth, when he was employed as a cantor, i.e. as a Hungarian schoolmaster in the southern part of his county where the Hungarian language was mostly spoken, before his academic peregrination to abroad. He is not known to have written any significant work in Hungarian, as he wrote all his textbooks, scholarly works or religious writings in Latin, German and Slovakized Czech. This kind of identity is called *Hungarus* identity which united the inhabitants of the multi-ethnic *Hungaria* before the national awakening of the 19th century. In my paper I focus the connections of the emerging premodern national ideologies and the multi-cultural local society in Bartholomaeides' life and works.

KEY WORDS : geography and historiography, Upper Hungary, Gömör County, 18th century, 19th century, *Hungarus* intellectual, neo-Latin literature

“The universal language of the Calvinists is Hungarian, that of the Papists is kitchen Latin, and that of the Lutherans is Slovak and German,” wrote Ferenc Kazinczy in 1789 in his much-quoted letter, in which he attempted to link together the concepts of nationality, religious identity, and language in order to argue that the main preserver of the Hungarian nation in both an ethnic and a cultural sense is the Calvinist denomination.¹ The second and third parts of this statement are relevant for my own argument presented in this paper: the parts in which Kazinczy links the Catholic use of literary language to “kitchen Latin,” while claiming that the Lutheran denomination uses Slovak (“tót”) and German. This is to say that, in this enumeration, Kazinczy almost entirely overlooked the erudite literature cultivated, during the “long 18th century,” by the multilingual intelligentsia of the ethnically mixed regions of Lower and Upper Hungary, pursuing the ideals of classical Latin, and certainly not on a “kitchen” or “*culinaris*” level. As István György Tóth has convincingly proved, Latin was still used as a mediatory language in daily life in the multiethnic region of Upper Hungary around the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries.² Johann Georg Kohl, a traveller from Bremen who visited Hungary in 1841, was astonished to find that “the Hungarian magnates all speak [Latin], but the Slovaks are considered better and more fluent Latinists than the Magyars.”³ Although Kohl did not reach Upper Hungary (Felvidék), he met two boys, about twelve or thirteen years old, at a riverside bath in Pest. *“The older one spoke Latin, Slovak, and Hungarian just as fluently as German,”* Kohl noted in his six-volume travelogue, of which there is only a German version. *“He said he started learning Latin at the age of seven, and nobody here finds it surprising that by the age of thirteen, he speaks it fluently. I must admit, I could not compete with him. He learnt Slovak from the Slovaks, where his father had sent him to school when he was ten.”*⁴ They too belonged to those multilingual, presumably Lutheran intellectuals of Upper Hungary like Mátyás Bél (1684–1749), the pioneer of Hungarian regional and cultural studies at the beginning of the 18th centuries, or Ladislaus Bartholomaeides (1754–1825) at the turn of the following century.

The Last Hungarus-Intellectual?

Ladislaus Bartholomaeides – I will keep on using the Latin version of his name which is common in Hungarian scholarship, since he had never written down his first name in Hungarian – was born on 16 November 1754 in Kishont County and died on 18 April 1825 in Ochtina/Mártonháza, Gömör County. For centuries, his family gave Lutheran pastors and

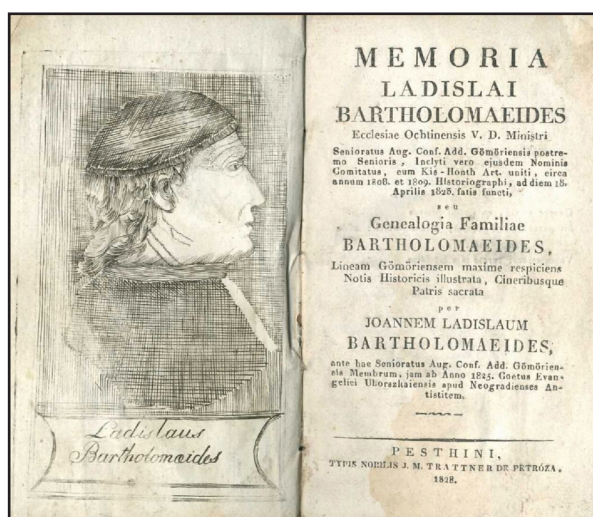
1 Ferenc Kazinczy’s letter to György Aranka, Kassa/Kosice, 10 July 1789. In Aranka 2024, 70.

2 Tóth 2000, 136–137.

3 Kohl 1843, 192.

4 Vizkelety 2015, 273.

schoolmasters to the church; the family memories gave an account of a certain Bartholomaeus Eördegh, a Hungarian nobleman, who lived in the 16th century, and whose descendants started using the humanist surname Bartholomaeides from his first name – and continued to use it to that day. Ladislaus Bartholomaeides's grandfather and his brothers János and Samuel were colleagues of Mátyás Bél, and it was at Bél's request that they prepared the description of the district of Kishont: “*there is proof of this at home*”, Ladislaus Bartholomaeides wrote in the preface to his main work, *The description of Gömör county*.⁵ His son, János László Bartholomaeides (1787–1862), who, in contrast to his father, can be seen as Hungarian, as opposed to *Hungarus*, also had a vast literary activity. Apart from his religious writings, he also wrote his father's biography in Latin,⁶ and continued collecting his source editions in cultural history,⁷ while also writing a German-language auto-biography.⁸



Ladislaus Bartholomaeides's portrait in his biography authored by his son

It is this work that has given us the biography of Ladislaus Bartholomaeides, whose father, Daniel, served in one of the poorest parishes of Kishont, Karasko, until his death. However, his mother, Erzsébet, was of noble birth, a member of the extensive Kubínyi family, sister of *iudex nobilium* (szolgabíró, sheriff) István Kubínyi, his patron, through whom Bartholomaeides got in close relations with the landowning gentry of the county, supporters of the Lutheran schools and churches. However, evidence of the Bartholomaeides' noble lineage was

5 „...domestica habeo indicia.” Bartholomaeides 1806–1808. *Lecturis salutem*, II.

6 Bartholomaeides 1828.

7 The family also played an important role in the research of the education of Hungarians abroad, as Bartholomaeides the Younger published from his father's legacy the list of Hungarian students attending the University of Wittenberg and the University of Krakow: Bartholomaeides 1817; Bartholomaeides 1821.

8 Bartholomaeides 1847.

destroyed in the course of time, so – according to the *Memoria* – the noble assembly of Gömör County submitted a petition to King Francis I in 1817, in which Ladislaus Bartholomaeides pleaded for confirmation of his old nobility, or, “*should they find that the documentary evidence produced for this purpose does not sufficiently support his nobility, we shall submit this matter to the Royal Throne by way of a petition for clemency (rem hanc suam in via Gratiae), and recommend to the highest authority the confirmation of his perhaps uncertain nobility.*”⁹ However, the biography does not offer any information on the outcome of the matter.

The young Bartholomaeides started his studies at Klenóc/Klenovec and continued them at the school of Dobsina/Dobšiná. Then, from 1772, in Késmárk/Kežmarok Lutheran College, his teacher was the later famous jurist, József Benczúr, whom he could not follow to Pozsony/Bratislava, so he was employed by the Lutheran school of Osgyán/Ožďany as a cantor and Hungarian schoolmaster. From there, he started out onto his academic peregrination in Germany, with recommendations and financial support from his former patron in Gömör County, György Fejes.¹⁰

He arrived at the University of Wittenberg on 23 September 1781, and stayed there for just three semesters, not being able to spend more time there due to high living expenses. He returned home in the spring of 1783, and eight months later he was ordained as a priest and became pastor of Martonháza/Ochtiná. From this time on, he had lived the life of Lutheran pastors of the county, and died as a dean. Of all his professors in Wittenberg, the one who had the greatest influence on his academic career was Johann Matthias Schröckh (1733–1808), the son of Mátyás Bél’s daughter Eufrozina, a scholar of both world history and church history. He began publishing his *Christliche Kirchengeschichte* in 1768, which was expanded to thirty-five volumes by 1803, then his *Christliche Kirchengeschichte seit der Reformation*, the ten volumes of which were published between 1804 and 1812.¹¹ Bartholomaeides’ biography summarises this as follows: “*Among the teachers in Wittenberg, he thought highly of Christoph Carol Tittman, the head of the academic house, whose lessons in dogmatics, morals and exegesis he had attended. In addition to him, he had listened to Johann Matthias Schröckh’s lectures in particular, in secular and church history.*”¹²

Bartholomaeides had already written his dissertation in Wittenberg on a historical subject (*Czechs in Kishont, then and now*).¹³ He showed that the dialect and dress of the Slovaks in Kishont differed from that of the other Slovaks and was most closely related to that of the Czechs, and he also linked the older Lutheran churches in the region to the Hussite settlers. However, his small work published in 1804, entitled *Historical-philological treatise on the name of Gömör*, deals with a more sensitive subject: he reveals the etymology of place

9 Bartholomaeides 1828, 85.

10 Bartholomaeides 1828, 56–63.

11 Frank 1891.

12 Bartholomaeides 1828, 66–67.

13 Bartholomaeides 1783. (Second, enlarged edition was printed in Pozsony/Bratislava, in 1796.)

names in the *Gesta Hungarorum* of King Béla's anonymous notary (Gömör – the settlement that gave the name of the county –, Sajó river, Tapolca, Hangony, Balog river, Bolhád hill, etc.), and states that they are of Slavic origin.¹⁴ The names were given by the indigenous inhabitants of the area, the Iazyges, considered Slavic in the scholarship of the time, who mixed with the Teutons. By discussing this issue, Bartholomaeides joined the debate on prehistory, which, according to Gergely Tóth, is one of the typical topics of Hungarus-historiography.¹⁵ He introduces his historical-philological treatise on the place name Gömör by saying: “*The Hungarian author, who is called the anonymous notary of King Béla, describes the endeavour of the old Hungarians (conatus Magyarorum veterum) to conquer the territory we now call Upper Hungary, does not not only mention the castle of Gömör and its surroundings, but also the rest of the county*” – and here he lists some of the place names of Slavic origin.¹⁶ The decisive element in Bartholomaeides' conception of language and identity was that he used both terms to describe the inhabitants of Hungary: the term *Hungarus* was used to refer to all the inhabitants of the country, regardless of their ethnic origin and native language, in accordance with the traditional use of the estate system, while the term *Magyarus* was used only to refer to those whose native language was Hungarian. Dániel Cornides, of Zipser German origin, formulated this same idea in 1778 as follows: “*I distinguish the Hungarus and the Magyarus in such a way that I consider every Magyarus (Hungarian) to be a Hungarus, but not every Hungarus to be Hungarian (Magyar). The Hungarus makes a nation, while the Magyarus (Hungarians) makes a race [ethnicity].*”¹⁷

Bartholomaeides was a native Slovak, and he only learnt Hungarian in his youth, when he was employed as a cantor, i.e. as a Hungarian schoolmaster at the school of Osgyán before his academic peregrination to Wittenberg in 1779.¹⁸ He is not known to have written any independent work in Hungarian, as he wrote all his textbooks, scholarly works or religious writings in Latin, German and Slovakized Czech. In his works, he described the Hungarian-Slovak co-existence in the past as almost idyllic and unproblematic: “[...] *the Slavic descendants of the Iazyges and Sarmatians continued to cultivate the land in the mountains and helped the Hungarians to cultivate their small plots. If I'm not mistaken, this is where the Slovaks got the habit of coming down to the lower-lying regions every year to harvest and reap the crops of the Hungarians.*”¹⁹ He also described the custom that the inhabitants of the northern part of Gömör county, due to the scarcity of resources, “*send their sons, with the purpose to learn Hungarian, as servants to the lower parts of the county.*”²⁰ However, he was also familiar with the phenomenon of nationalism, which he defined as “*an adverse aspiration of a nation, which is linked to hatred*

14 Bartolomaeides 1804.

15 Tóth 2015, 166–167.

16 Bartolomaeides 1804.

17 Quoted by: Soós 2007, 33; see further Csáky 1982a, 223–237; Csáky 1982b, 71–84.

18 “The main difficulty seemed to be that he did not speak Hungarian, yet he was forced to perform his duties both in church and at school in that language.” Bartholomaeides 1828, 61.

19 Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, 355.

20 Ujváry 2002, 858.

of another nation”.²¹ For example, when the Germans of Dobsina “show hatred towards their related Slovaks, and call them Bindische Kirpl with contempt.”²² The same Slovaks are also disturbed by Hungarians in many ways. Such is the case when a Hungarian calls a Slovak a Tót, believing that he has just mocked him. When it happens that freighting Hungarians and Slovaks walk towards each other, it is mostly the latter who has to give way moving to the side and let the former go first.”²³

Following the death of Joseph II, in 1790, Bartholomaeides published a work written in biblical Czech,²⁴ which, linked to the contemporary Hungarian and Latin political tradition in terms of genre, “[Bartholomaeides’ dialogue] deals with the question of language in an offensive and provocative manner [...]. At the beginning of a conversation, when the former rulers of the Kingdom of Hungary (St Stephen, Louis the Great of Angevine, Matthias Hunyadi, Wladislas II Jagiellon and Joseph II) seek a common language for their conversation, Matthias himself suggests to Joseph, who would prefer to speak German, that they should all speak Slovak (‘Slowensky’) instead”²⁵ which was a provocative statement on the part of the pastor during the Josephine times when the Emperor’s protesters referred not only to Latin, but also to the Hungarian language’s sophistication and their right to its use.²⁶

Later, in his pamphlet on the river Sajó, Bartholomaeides also wrote: “Both the Slavs – who lived on both banks of the river from its source to its mouth before the arrival of the Hungarians (ante Magyarorum adventum) – and the Hungarians (Magyari) named the river after the word »sal« (»salt«).”²⁷ The question of which nationality should be considered the first in the Carpathian Basin had already been a matter of concern for the learned public since the 17th–18th centuries.²⁸ However, at the next turn of centuries, the claim of the Slavs’ ancientness in the context of the nascent Hungarian and Slovak nationalism had the power to challenge the noble rights derived from the *Honfoglalás* (the Hungarian conquest) and question the existing political system. Similarly, Bartholomaeides continued “the Slavophilic tone of the controversy that gained momentum in the 18th century” in his political dialogue in Czech.²⁹ In his later Latin-language works, however, he was more cautious, presenting himself as an intellectual who strove to improve the country, and especially his narrowest home, his own county, and who displayed the values of his native land to his countrymen and to foreigners, and can therefore be described as one of the last *Hungarus*.

21 „...studium illud Nationis praeposterum cum odio Gentis alterius conjunctum, quod Nationalismus dicimus.” Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, 441.

22 Bartholomaeides describes in another place that the Germans call the Slovaks this way in their dialect. This *Bindische Kirpl* notion refers to their poor footwear, which they use instead of shoes (*item per convitium, a perone, quo Slavi loco calceamenti utuntur*). Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, 103.

23 Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, 441.

24 Bartholomaeides 1789. (presumaly wrong place and date of publication).

25 Papp 2024, 706; see further Papp 2021, 126–133.

26 Kalmár 2005, 317–318.

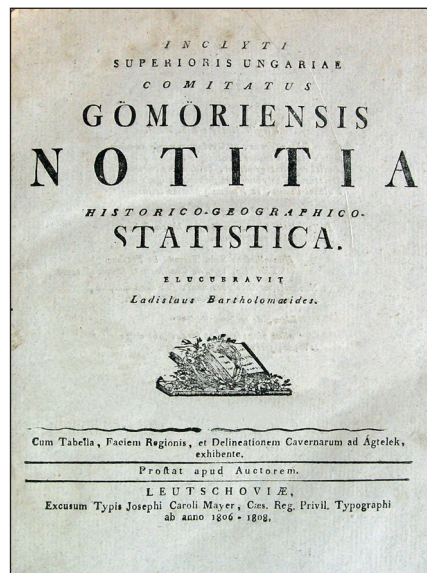
27 A modern bilingual edition: Bartholomaeides 2013, 25.

28 Tóth 2020, 93–107.

29 Papp 2024, 708.

Country and County Description and Statistica

Bartholomaeides mentioned in his main work that his example for county descriptions was Mátyás Bél, but he did not have access to the manuscript of Bél's *Description of Gömör County*.³⁰ The title and title page of Bartholomaeides' *Description of Gömör County*, as well as the typography and layout of the finished work, are similar to those of the published works of Mátyás Bél. However, while, according to the title page, Bél only gives a *historical-geographical* description of the counties, Bartholomaeides adds the adjective *statistical* to the title, showing thus a more modern approach to state history than the *Landeskunde* (Land Studies) approach followed by Bél.³¹



The title page of Ladislaus Bartholomaeides' main work

Bartholomaeides' bulky description of the estate of Csetnek/Štítník, published in 1799, is also meant to hand down state knowledge, indicated by the fact that the Latin term *Memorabilia* used in the title is the translation of the German *Merkwürdigkeiten* (*Notable things of the Estate of Csetnek*).³² In this book, the author discusses topics similar to his later mono-

30 „I have moved every stone to get my hands on the immortal Bél's work, which has still not been printed in the *Notitia*. I wanted to use it as the basis for my present work. But the treasure chest did not open on any request.” Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, II.

31 For the ambivalence of the two notions of *country knowledge* and *state science*, see: Horváth 2002, 9–32; Bodnár-Király 2022, 95–130.

32 Bartholomaeides 1799.

graph on the county, and the treatise is accompanied by extensive source publication, which he had intended to attach to the *Notitia* as well, but presumably because of the length and high costs, it did not happen.

The *Notitia* is based on a natural, geographic and hydrographic description of the area. Bartholomaeides applied already at that time the results and methods of the natural sciences of the time; for example, he gave the geographical coordinates of the settlements, or measured air pressure and temperature (measuring 25 degrees Réaumur internal temperature of the Aggtelek cave, regardless of external conditions, during his visit there in July 1801), and provided a map to accompany the description of the cave. The statistical approach (*statistica*) was meant to cover the factors relevant for the state and economic policy (the term itself derives from the modern Latin word *status* 'state'), such as the territory of settlements, the number of inhabitants, their estate, nationality and religion. An important piece of information concerning agriculture and livestock farming was to know which agricultural branches were promoted by enlightened absolutism (e.g. potatoes, flax, mulberry trees, tobacco, or clover as fodder).³³ Charcoal burning traditionally played an important role in forest-rich areas, while it was precisely at the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries that the coal deposits (*anthrax*, *carbo fossilis*) that helped to establish the modern iron industry were first discovered. Bartholomaeides also reported on an attempt to use the coal mined near Bánréve in the Csetnek ironworks, but "*fortune did not smile on them*".³⁴ He mentioned several settlements with iron mills, or *massa*, in which the crude iron was smelted, and even listed the jobs of the craftsmen who worked in these mills, together with their weekly wages.³⁵ Craftsmen lived in both the villages and market towns; in Dobsina there were sawmillers, bootmakers, tinkers, tailors, blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers in large numbers, and in Jolsva he mentioned watchmakers and cobblers. A special detail concerned the Gypsy locksmiths who made "*chains, axes and wedges*".³⁶ Bartholomaeides' work did not fail to mention the intellectual life of the region either (cultural institutions, schools, educated people, county officials).

There was not any free royal towns in Gömör county; the most important settlement was the county-market town of Rozsnyó/Rožňava, which became an episcopal see in 1776, and which Bartholomaeides described in some 17 pages, in accordance with its importance. In addition to market towns, the description of the villages and *pusztas* is also informative: they contain a wealth of specific data that can be appreciated primarily by geographical, demographic and ethnographic research. Although, there is not any Hungarian translations of Bartholomaeides's major or minor works exist,³⁷ there is a slowly, but steadily growing number of scholarly works on his activity.

33 Restás 2024, 167–168.

34 Bartholomaeides 1806–1808, 491.

35 Ibid. 351–352.

36 Ibid. 354.

37 The only exception is his treatise on the Sajó, which is available in a bilingual edition in: Bartholomaeides 2013; twenty former settlements of Gömör County are now situated in present-day

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KIVONAT

Bartholomaeides László, Gömör vármegye történetírója és munkássága

Ladislaus Bartholomaeides (1754–1825) evangélikus lelkész, gömöri esperes, valamint kiemelkedő tudós és szülőföldje, Gömör vármegye történetírója volt. II. József uralkodásának idején a wittenbergi egyetemen tanult. Hazatérése után kisebb történelmi értekezéseket kezdett publikálni szülőföldjéről és annak lakóiról. Fő műve Gömör vármegye leírása volt (*Notitia historico-geographico-statistica*, 1806–1808). Könyvének címében a „*statistica*” jelző arra utal, hogy minden olyan, az állam és a gazdaságpolitika szempontjából releváns tényezőt tárgyal (társadalom, egyházak, népesség, ásványkincsek stb.), amit a korabeli német tudományosság *Staatsmerkwürdigkeiten*nek nevezett. Annak ellenére, hogy apai ősei lelkészek voltak, akik magyar nemesi származást tulajdonítottak maguknak, édesanyja családja pedig a Felvidék gazdag földbirtokosaihoz tartozott, Bartholomaeides szlovák anyanyelvű volt, és csak fiatalkorában tanult meg magyarul, amikor kántorként, azaz magyar iskolamesterként dolgozott megyéje magyar többségű déli részén, mielőtt külföldi tanulmányútra indult. Jelentős magyar nyelvű műve nem jelent meg, mivel minden tankönyvét, tudományos munkáját vagy vallásos írását latinul, németül és szlovákizált cseh nyelven írta. Ezt a fajta identitást nevezik *Hungarus*-identitásnak, amely a soknemzetiségű *Hungaria* lakóit egyesítette a 19. századi nemzeti ébredés előtt. Tanulmányomban a kibontakozó premodern nemzeti ideológiák és a multikulturális helyi társadalom kapcsolatára összpontosítok Bartholomaeides életében és munkásságában.

KULCSSZAVAK: földrajz és történetírás, Felső-Magyarország, Gömör vármegye, 18. század, 19. század, *Hungarus*-értelmiség, neolatin irodalom