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Dominions at the Slovakia-Moravian Border – Stability and Transition in the Early Modern Period

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Abstract

The territory position of present Slovakia in Central Europe predestined its rich history and role in the various historical periods, as well as at present. This area has always represented some interface between power interests, we can say a buffer zone, in which important historical events took place. The territory of western Slovakia had a particular strategic importance it had legal, as that part of Hungary which bordered with the Moravian area. The pre-eminent importance of the territory of Western Slovakia, especially of Záhorie region, indicate not only the numerous matches to take control of its territory, but also an effort of monarchs and nobility to conquer its fortifications in the form of a system of frontier medieval castles within the Kingdom of Hungary. In the presented study, we focus our attention on the western border of the Hungarian Kingdom, namely Záhorský district which represented an administrative organizational border in the early modern era. In that period this district was also the state border with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Archduchy of Austria and Moravian Margraviate.

Key words: Central Europe, Western Slovakia, Hungarian Kingdom, Moravian Margraviate, Borderline

Słowa klucowe: Europa Środkowa, Słowacja zachodnia, królestwo Węgier, margrabstwo morawskie, granica

The territory position of present Slovakia in Central Europe predestined its rich history and role in the various historical periods, as well as at present. This area has always represented some interface between power interests, we can say

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a buffer zone, in which important historical events took place. In the territory of present Slovakia, the interests of various historical superpowers or power forces met; at the same time, it made Slovakia become a contact and a conflict zone; power and political struggles took place here from the earliest times. The territory of western Slovakia was of particular strategic and legal importance, as that part of Hungary which bordered with the Moravian area. The pre-eminent importance of the territory of Western Slovakia, especially of Záhorie region indicate not only the numerous matches to take control of its territory, but also an effort of monarchs and nobility to conquer its fortifications in the form of a system of frontier medieval castles within the Kingdom of Hungary. The development in early modern era confirms the importance of this area, when today’s Slovakia formed the core of Habsburg territory in Hungary.

In the presented study, we focus our attention on the western border of the Hungarian Kingdom, namely Záhorský district which represented an administrative organizational border in the early modern era. In that period this district was also the state border with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Archduchy of Austria and Moravian Margraviate.

Záhorský district (Processus Transmontanus), extending geographically in what is now southern Záhoria, was at that time part of the Bratislava County\(^1\). In the north it bordered the river Myjava, western border was defined by the River Morava, flowing into the Danube, eastern border was defined by the Little Carpathian Mountains and in the south it was a part of the city district parts forming today’s Bratislava: Lamač, Devín, Devínska Nová Ves, Dúbravka, Záhorská Bystrica and Karlova Ves\(^2\). Morava River, which was a natural border has not always been divisive, quite the contrary. Záhorie to Malé Karpaty belonged in the early Middle Ages to the Moravian principality\(^3\).

\(^1\) From an administrative point of view, Bratislava County was initially divided into four districts. The processus, taken from the Latin word *Processus*, was the name of the lowest-level administrative unit or district in the Kingdom of Hungary, from the 15th century until 1918. The Záhorie region belonged to the first district (Latin: *Processus Primus*). The second processus or district (Latin: *Processus Secundus*) occupied the northeastern part of the Bratislava County. The third and fourth district (Latin: *Processus Tertius* and *Quartus*) were on the Veľký Žitný ostrov (Great Rye Island). Medzivodie (Hungarian: Vízköz) which lies between Čierna Voda and the Little Danube also belonged to the third district in the western area of the Rye Island. In the 18th and early 19th century, this district was also called the Hornoostrovný processus or district (Latin: *Processus superior insulanus*). The fourth was called the Dolnoostrovný processus. (Latin: *Processus inferior insulanus*). J. Žudel, 1984, p. 37.


\(^3\) M. Marek, 2006, p. 32. J. Házi, 2000, p. 92–93. After the arrival of the Magyars and the collapse of the Great Moravian Empire in the early 10th century, the Záhorie region became a no man’s land. All of the emerging countries: the Hungarian
Despite the established borders, even if these were represented by geographical features of the country, such as mountains or rivers, it came often to a mutual dispute between neighbouring countries. These quarrels are manifested mainly in the border disputes between neighbouring castle estates or dominions, towns or villages. Border lines, esp. delimitation were applied in the Middle Ages, but more often and more regularly since the beginning of early modern era. Because of the border dispute, the Border Commissions came to existence, their action, though, would not offer the expected results and border clashes were fairly common. The first boundary commission on the Hungarian-Moravian border is already documented in the 15th century. Of course, throughout modern times all borders of individual parts of the monarchy were guarded. It was particularly necessary a lot of immigrants, vagrants and criminals moved through the countries. Protecting and guarding the borders gained special significance in times of pestilence, when the borders used to be closed and population movements within monarchy were strictly prohibited.

In our study, as we have said, we will outline some aspects of stability and changes on the Hungarian-Moravian border in the 18th century, which were marked, for example, by border disputes. Border disputes were often solved at the state and Crown levels. Enlighted female ruler Maria Theresa (1740–1780), sought to prevent this border dispute by issuing numerous decrees, and she also tried to accurately determine and map the boundaries of the various parts of the monarchy. The female monarch ordered to place mainly marginal signs – milestones on the border areas where there were no disputes or where the Boundary Commission designated the border line based on mutual agreement. Since there were no official documents on the State border (no border contracts) private estate/dominion rights were taken into consideration as the basis of delimitation.

For the proper functioning of the Border Commission, an instruction to the revision of the boundaries between public Hungary kingdom and its Kingdom, the neighboring Kingdom of Bohemia (sometimes referred to as the Czech Kingdom) and the Polish Kingdom lacked the strength to take control of the Záhorie region. Záhorie gradually became part of Hungary. At the beginning of the 12th century, the borders between the Kingdom of Bohemia and Hungary began to stabilise. V. Sedláč, 1994, p. 110.

5 F. Roubík, 1933, p. 179–318.
7 Noble families acquired property in the territory of the two kingdoms, which gave rise to many disputes. Intransigence on both sides, obstruction, delay and disregard for the arbitration committee’s statements caused these disputes to last for long periods.
neighbours was issued in 1754. Instruction had 13 points and guided the essential activities of individual committees. First, both Representatives of Austrian and Moravian Commission should agree where and when to meet and announce their arrival to the Hungarian border and subsequently they welcomed by Hungarian Commissioner. The first visit was to take place at the Hungarian Commissioners, when the initial required work was agreed, as well as the first joint meeting of the Commission was held at the representatives of the Kingdom of Hungary. Later, the session turned on all sides of boundaries. Boundary Commissioners were required to examine all the documents and question witnesses about the disputed border. They, however, should avoid such action in the disputed territory which would further exacerbate the situation between border dominions/estates. Rather, they should maintain a previously established state and the final decision was left to the female monarch. Border geometricians were appointed for the border assessment – land surveyors/geodesists who had to admeasure/mete borders exactly, especially in the disputed areas and then draw maps with border line. Because of this, in 1754 a geometer with his assistant land surveyor were sent from the Bratislava County to the Austro-Hungarian border and a geodesist to the Moravian-Hungarian border. Representatives of Bratislava County were expected to provide appropriate assistance in carrying out their work.

Numerous factual books have been published about border disputes on the Hungarian-Moravian border in modern times. We now focus on border disputes that arose on the border with the Kingdom of Hungary and the Archduchy of Austria and Moravian Margraviate, particularly between Lichtenstein manor, situated in the Austrian and Moravian territory and Hungarian manor Ostrý Kameň. Ostrý Kameň Castle along with other border castles was located on the western border of the Kingdom of Hungary, adjacent to the Moravian-Czech and Austrian zone. The castle was the only key to the barely accessible passage between the villages of Little Carpathians together with Prievaly and the so-called Bukovský Pass. In the Middle Ages the most important con-

8 The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, Bratislava zhupa (county) I., Congregation documents, 1727, f. 5, No. 26; 1754, f. 4, No. 26; 1777, f. 1, No. 31; 1767, f. 6, No. 12; 1767, f. 2, No. 13; 1754, f. 3, No. 28 a No. 29; 1754, f. 2, No. 3; 1754, f. 4, No. 9 a No. 10; 1754, f. 5, No. 14; AC, 1754, f. 7, No. 38; 1777, f. 1, No. 31; 1766, f. 8, No. 60; 1766, f. 2, No. 43; 1768, f. 4, No. 17; 1768, f. 7, No. 29; 1755, f. 8, No. 4; 1756, f. 2, No. 43; 1780, f. 3, No. 19; 1764, f. 2, No. 43; 1784, f. 5, No. 103; 1767, f. 6, No. 12; 1767, f. 7, No. 29; 1768, f. 7, No. 49 a No. 64; 1772, f. 4, No. 59; 1782, f. 4, No. 93; 1772, f. 8, No. 8 a No. 9; 1780, f. 5, No. 86. M. Zacharová, 2012.

9 Numerous factual books about border disputes on the Hungarian-Moravian border have been published in modern times, for example J. Šátek, 2009, p. 7–17; V. Petrovič, 1995; 1996.
necting line passed through this place, connecting the Czech and Hungarian Kingdom, called the “Czech route”. The road went through Brno to Holíč, from there to Šaštín and Senica along the river Myjava to Jablonica, where it passed the so-called. “Earth Gate”. This road was used since the times of the oldest settlements in the region. The Castle Ostrý Kameň was predestined for control and guard functions, due to both proximity to the road, but also a good view of the pass and a large part of Borská nížina in Záhorie. Therefore, the Slovak name Ostriež, which was used to refer to this castle since early modern times, seems to be very concise. The castle, also called Eléskő, Scharfenstein, was a link in the chain of guard fortifications on the Hungarian-Moravian border, in the natural defense zone Malé Karpaty: Červený Kameň, Borinka, Ostrý Kameň, Korlátko, Smolenice, Dobrá Voda, severnejšie Čachtice and Branc. Financial circumstances of Ostrý Kameň estate have been quite difficult in modern times. Early 16th century Martin and Imrich Czobor got donation and because of that, they became one of the most important families in Hungary, and owned large estates (eg. Holíč and Šaštín dominions which were in the vicinity of the estate Ostrý Kameň dominion). The Czobors managed to maintain its dominance for two and a half centuries, though not always to the same extent. The Czobors reign of the estate was not a peaceful one, the constant property disputes undermined it, as a result of which the integrity of the estate Ostrý Kameň was almost disrupted. The definitive collapse of Czobors assets came in the mid-18th century, before the family line ended (1771). Breakdown of Czobors assets led to a decline of Ostrý Kameň. Joseph Czobor sold Ostrý Kameň estate to the Hungarian count, Ádám Batthyány in 1765. According to Urbársky inventory of 1785 the new owners have ownership interests in these serf villages: Moravský Svätý Ján, Sekule, Borský Svätý Jur, Závod, Buková, Lakšárska Nová Ves, Borský Mikuláš, Borský Peter and Humence. Data

11 The Czobor family was at one time a significant noble family with a respected position in the Royal Court. The family resided in castles in Ostrý Kameň in the Trnava region, Šaštín-Stráže, a town in the Senica district of the Trnava region, and Holíč, a town in western Slovakia. In P. Jedličska, 1891, p. 5–8; T. Neumann, 2007, p. 163.
12 In the year 1505, the family acquired property in the following municipalities: Bíňovce, Borský Svätý Jur, Borský Mikuláš, Borský Peter, Buková, Kuklov, Moravský Svätý Ján, Siladice, a part of the village of Bohdanovce nad Trnavou and a farm of Podhajčany belonged to the castle. In the early 17th century, Lakšárska Nová Ves (before it became part of the Červený Kameň Castle) and the village of Závod were also added to the estate, but Siladice village and Podhajčany were not. A. Lančarič, 2016, p. 7–10.
13 The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, The Ostrý Kameň castle fund, No. 12, Urbarial Conspiration pro Anno 1785 bei der hoch Batthyánischen Herrchaft St. Johann.
on property transactions of Ostrý Kameň estate from the 18th century are unclear. Land disputes were not only among the aristocratic owners of the estate, but also between serf villages\textsuperscript{14}.

The Hungary-Moravian boundary within Bratislava constituted a tiny part of the western boundary of South Záhorie in the region of the village Sekule, from the confluence of the Morava and Dyje up to the mouth of the river Myjava flowing in Moravia. The Myjava river separated the Bratislava County from Nitra. The boundaries of the Kingdom of Hungary and the Archduchy of Austria and Moravian margraviate met at the confluence of the Morava and Thaya river. In 1754, Count Pavol Balaša was the head of the Hungarian border commission and he was responsible for determining the boundaries of the Hungarian-Moravian region. Other members were Bishop Karol Zbiško, Count Jozef Nári, Joseph Majlis and the deputy city mayor of Nitra County, Imrich Boštáni. About 150 people of different ages came together in early October 1754, along with the Moravian boundary commissioners, administrators of the Ostrý Kameň estate and part of the Keglevič estate, mayor and councilors of Moravský Svätý Ján and the serf villages of Sekule, Závod and Borský Svätý Jur. Their aim was to check the new boundary line between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Moravian margraviate. The event was kept under surveillance and was accompanied by military protection of, 16 soldiers from Archduke Leopold. They looked at the boundary pillars from the border point between Moravia and Austria on the Hungarian side\textsuperscript{15}. For the territory of the municipality Sekule, which was on the border with Austria, Moravia and also the Nitra County, Count Paul, as the President of the Boundary Commission, recommended the production of 19 border pillars. However, in the end only a total of 12 columns were placed. Administration officials of Bratislava County named village estates in Sekule and gave their precise distances from the Morava River. The wooden pillars were to be replaced with stone, for greater durability, but their replacement took place slowly and gradually\textsuperscript{16}.

\textsuperscript{14} Josephi Czobor was probably the main cause of such disputes. In trying to get out of financial difficulties by selling land to other owners, he changed the borders of the village estates. Batthyány “inherited” the estate in this condition and despite many complaints from the villagers, this issue was not resolved. It was only in the second half of the 1770s that disputes relating to land and property ownership faded into the background. Z. Lopatková, 2015, p. 310–345; A. Lančarič, 2016, p. 5–15.

\textsuperscript{15} The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, Bratislava zhupa (county) I., Congregation documents, 1754, f. 3, No. 28 a No. 29; 1754, f. 2, No. 3; 1754, f. 4, No. 9 a No. 10.

\textsuperscript{16} The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, Bratislava zhupa (county) I., Congregation documents. Court documents, Civil & Judges’ documents, No. 3821, No. 46.
The confluence of the Morava and Thaya rivers was carefully monitored by the state ruling body, while some revisions of the Hungary-Moravian border were preserved. Rivers in the past were not regulated, their river beds were changed, new islands were created and they were expanded, often at the expense of one of the banks resulting in relatively frequent floodings. Pushing the boundaries defined by rivers was relatively common; their stability was, therefore, relying on the maintenance of border stones, but these were naturally threatened by the ferocity of water and ice. Over several years, regular surveys of the status, location and number of border stones between the Moravian Margraviate and the kingdom of Hungary were made. These surveys occurred in 1766, 1776, 1780. The surveys were carried out in the form of border rounds (reambulatio metarum) with the participation of representatives of the Moravian administration, the border dominion of Břeclav and the Lanžhot inhabitants. The results of the inspection were to be a memorandum issued in duplicate. This was regarding the revision of the boundary stones on the Hungarian side. The inspection took place with the participation of Commissioners from the Moravian side and vice versa. The memorandum was signed by representatives of both parties. With such a visit, for example, in 1780 the survey report confirmed that the boundary stones on the opposite side of the river Morava were placed parallel to the boundary stones of the Moravian Margraviate. Overall, there were 13 stones on either side. To prevent border stones from shifting away from the Morava River, they were transferred to safer locations, and later on, wicker spurs and stakes were built that prevented flooding of the Morava. A similar approach was used to safely underpin the trees along the border. These consisted of willow and ash trees and were close to the boundary stone marked with a cross. This ensured that even in the case of destruction or loss of the stone, the border line would be maintained. The boundary stones in the immediate vicinity of the former confluence of the Morava and Thaya rivers were exposed to particularly severe water currents.

As mentioned above, the Ostrý Kameň estate was located in the Moravian-Hungarian border and thus bordered the Moravian lands. Therefore, its closest neighbor was the Rabensburg estate, which belonged to Joseph Wenceslas Lichtenstein in the 18th century. The Lichtensteins were one of the most important and wealthiest aristocratic families, and formed part of the history.
of the Czech lands, Moravia and Lower Austria for over 700 years. The 17th and 18th centuries were the most crucial of their ancestral history. As leading members of the Moravian nobility, they participated in the most significant periods of Moravian political and professional history, which is demonstrated by their vast property holdings, mainly located on the Moravian-Austrian-Hungarian borderland.

In the territory of Břeclavsko, the Lichtensteins owned the estates of Valtice, Lednice and Břeclav. Also, they owned a small part of the Ždánické estate, which included the Velké Hostěrádky. Together, these formed a significant dominion, occupying almost the entire lowlands, stretching south from Hustopečí to a large estate in Lower Austria. In the west, their territory bordered the Dietrichstein, Mikulov and Ždílochovice dominions. Furthermore, the estates of the imperial Habsburg family were located east of the Lichtenstein estates. Hrušky, Břeclav, Kostice, Ladná, Moravská Nová Ves, Podivín, Stará Břeclav, Tvrdovice, Týnec, Mikulčice, Velké Bílovice and Moravský Žižkov all belonged to the Břeclav dominion. The Lanžhot property, located directly adjacent to the Hungarian Kingdom was managed by the Rabensburgs and was connected to Břeclav until the mid-18th century. The land border between Bohemia, Moravia and Lower Austria played no significant role in the management of the assets and estates of the Lichtensteins in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Tolls levied at the Morava river and some minor border issues were causes of dispute between Prince Joseph Wenceslas Lichtenstein and Count Ádám Batthyány. One of the disputes concerned the river island, Sancel, which was created at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries when the flow of Morava river was changed. This island belonged to the Ostrý Kameň estate. Around 1740, the riverbed of the Thaya was also changed, separating the Sancel island from land, and it was named Ostrovec (in the attachment). Residents of the village

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18 The history of this ancient, native Austrian family goes far back into the 11th century. According to documents belonging to František Palacký, they entered the Moravian land in 1249. Ottokar II, the Moravian Margrave at this time, granted Henry of Liechtenstein a fief in the form of a village, Mikulov. According to the landowner’s records from 1414 they owned the Břeclav estate as well as Mikulov, Lednica and Drnholec in Moravia and Valtice, Falkenstein, Rabensburg, Mistelbach, Hagenberg and Gnadenwörth in Austria. More O. Horák, 2007, p. 117–118. J. Hrubant, 1945; E. Oberhammer, 1990; T. Winkelbauer, 1999; J. Bistřicky, 1991; F. Palacký, 1908, p. 471.


22 P. Jedlicska, 1891, p. 40.
of the Ostrý Kmeň estate and of Sekule, used the island freely and chopped wood here without any hindrance. Subjects of the Austrian village Hohenau started to make a claim to this newly created river island and enter the territory. This village belonged to the Rabensburg estate. The first dispute was over the river island and another border area along the Morava river, when the flow of both rivers changed in 1744.

In 1767, Rabensburg county representatives complained that the residents of the Ostrý Kameň estate, which was, at that time, the property of Count Ádám Batthyány, were causing damage to forests located beyond the Hungarian border. The destruction of these border forests cost the Rabensburg county approximately 2,100 guilders or gold coins. This estimate was made following an on-site inspection conducted by representatives of Bratislava County and the two neighboring estates. Following this, the river islands were awarded to the Rabensburg county. In 1768, representatives of the Ostrý Kameň estate announced that there would be penalties for entering the river island territories – imprisonment in the village of Šamorín. In practice, however, the villagers did not heed this threat. The situation deteriorated again in February 1776, when the Ostrý Kameň estate magnate, Count Ádám Batthyány, ordered that subjects of Sekule should be sent to Ostrovec. But the Rabensburg guardhouse expelled Sekule villagers and their cattle from the Rabensburg estate.

In March 1776 the Ostrovec situation was investigated and reviewed at the request of both the Batthyánys of Hungary and the Lichtensteins of Moravia and Austria. The representatives of the estate of Ostrý Kameň summoned eight witnesses from Sekule and Moravský Svätý Ján, who confirmed the claims of Batthyány to this territory. In periods of drought, when the water level was lower, residents of Austria and Moravia entered Ostrovec. If they were caught there by Sekule residents or by hunters of Moravský Svätý Ján or fishermen, they fled and left their belongings. According to witnesses, as early as 1765, there were references made by the citizens of Austria and Moravia communities referring to the use of Ostrovec land.

During plague outbreaks, the border between Hungary and its neighbors was guarded by a military cordon to enforce the prohibition of crossing the border and to prevent the spread of infection. However, subjects of the Ostrý Kameň estate continued to chop wood in Ostrovec despite the ban. Similarly, at the time of the investigation there was a military guard on the banks of the River Morava and this guard let the subjects of Sekule enter the Ostrovec to chop wood. Finally, in June 1782, the county of Rabensburg was granted the rights to Ostrovec by the Royal Regency Council based in Bratislava, which
definitely prohibited subjects of the Ostrý Kameň estate from entering the river island, Ostrovec\textsuperscript{23}.

Despite all these steps there was constant crossing of these borders and territorial border disputes continued, mainly relating to forest areas. Yet in 1768, residents of the town of Moravský Svätý Ján and the village of Borský Svätý Jur were summoned for questioning regarding the cutting down and removal of wood from the forest, belonging to Prince Lichtenstein. A hunter, Joseph Scherer, caught them in the act. Some said that they did not know that the forest was located outside the Kingdom of Hungary, and claimed that they thought they were cutting down domestic forests. Theft of timber from the territory of the Rabensburg estate continued. Subjects also hunted game on the Austrian and Moravian side. For example, poachers Anton Suček of Sekule and Johanek wounded the Rabensburg estate forester Ján Malbosana whilst trying to escape capture. This issue was addressed at the General Congregation and along with Empress Maria Theresa they came to a decision on the matter. According to the Decree of 1772 poachers should be duly punished\textsuperscript{34}.

To conclude, borders between countries in the past were not fixed, but changeable, for many reasons. Most often it was the geographical environment and its impact on the determination and marking of boundaries on the ground, especially the changing natural conditions. This was seen particularly in the case of waterways. Interactions of man and nature can be seen most clearly in the examples we have discussed. In addition to geographical conditions, various conflicts and disputes, a perpetually inescapable part of life in human society, had an impact on the stability and the transformation of these boundaries.

Despite the efforts and measures implemented by the state rulers, in the form of both the Coronation administration, and the sovereigns of the Kingdom of Hungary, mutual disputes between neighbouring countries still occurred in various forms again and again. Written historical sources, capturing property disputes between owners of neighbouring property, and also beyond the regional dimension are a valuable source of information for understanding

\textsuperscript{23} The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, The Ostrý Kameň castle fund, No. 12, inv. No. 114. Christopher Erdődi filed an application at Bratislava County to have a share of the toll revenue in the village of Buková. The Royal Regency Council then investigated these toll rights in Buková.

\textsuperscript{24} The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the State Archives in Bratislava, Bratislava zhupa (county) I., Congregation documents, 1768, f. 4, No. 17; 1768, f. 7, 1772, f. 4, No. 59; 1782, f. 4, No. 93; 1772, f. 8, No. 8 a No. 9; 1780, f. 5, No. 86.
not only the history of the regions concerned, but also Slovak history at a national level.\(^\text{25}\)

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9 a No. 10; 1754, f. 5, No. 14; AC, 1754, f. 7, No. 38; 1777, f. 1, No. 31; 1766, f. 8, No. 60; 1766, f. 2, No. 43; 1768, f. 4, No. 17; 1768, f. 7, No. 29; 1755, f. 8, No. 4; 1756, f. 2, No. 43; 1780, f. 3, No. 19; 1764, f. 2, No. 43; 1784, f. 5, No. 103; 1767, f. 6, No. 12; 1767, f. 7, No. 29; 1768, f. 7, No. 49 a No. 64; 1772, f. 4, No. 59; 1782, f. 4, No. 93; 1772, f. 8, No. 8 a No. 9; 1780, f. 5, No. 86.

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