

Chapter 9

Slovak Nation as a Corporate Body: The Process of the Conceptual Transformation of a ‘Nation without History’ into a Constitutional Subject during the Revolutions of 1848/49

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Introduction

The concepts of the ‘Crown’ and of the ‘ethnic nation’ during the years of 1848/49 in East-Central Europe were both in harmony with and in contradiction to each other. The concept of ‘Crown’ meant not only the traditional ‘royal power’, but also a metaphasised representation of the ‘state’ as the embodiment of power. The concept of ‘ethnic nation’ was based on modern ‘principles of the natural right to national existence’. The Slovaks in particular, a typical example of a ‘nation without history’¹

¹ The concept of a ‘nation without history’ was defined in the articles of Friedrich Engels: ‘Das magyarische Kampf’ of 13 January 1849 and ‘Der demokratische Panslawismus’ of 15 February 1849, in the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*. According to Engels, whether the will of the peoples constituting a nation was progressive or not, the ‘nation without history’ was one that did not have the capacity to fit into the historical evolution and progress of human society or to contribute to those matters. That is to say, his concept of a ‘nation without history’ meant a non-historical nation ‘in the future’. Its historical existence in the past was less essential (*Karl Marx Friedrich Engels Werke* 1961: 165–76, 270–86). This concept

in East-Central Europe, had few reasons for identification with the traditional concept of the 'Crown' because they lacked their own nobility, ruling class or state-tradition. However, during 1848/49, they tried to reform the traditional system of the corporate state, i.e. the Kingdom of Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy, in their attempt to 'adapt themselves to' or to 'refute to' the conventional ideas of the 'Holy Crown of Hungary', to justify theoretically the 'Slovaks' as a 'constitutional subject'.

This paper attempts to delineate the conceptual transformation of the Slovaks into a modern nation as a constitutional subject during the years 1848/49. This transformation was influenced not only by the national ideologue Ľudovít Štúr's (1815–56) exploiting the 'modern' principles of the natural right to national existence, but also by his invoking 'traditional medieval corporate' ideas as embodied in the Kingdom of Hungary and in the Habsburg Monarchy. Thus I understand Slovak nation-building to be based on 'corporate traditionalism'. This indicates the limits of Ernest Gellner's 'modernisation theory' that nationalism arises with 'industrialisation', but also of Anthony D. Smith's 'perennialism, ethno-symbolism, after all, primordialism theory' on the 'ethnic origins' of modern nations. This paper starts from the assumption that historical study is needed to respond to the recent findings of social anthropologists and ethnologists to reconstruct the history of 'nation-building' as the first stage of nationalism. The aim of this study is to present a new understanding regarding 'nation-building' from the point of view of historical research. I divide Štúr's political thought in 1848/49 into four parts, reflecting the changing methods employed by Štúr for the

contained a philosophy of history which Engels created *a priori*. However, the concept of a 'nation without history' 'in the past' was presented by some historians of East-Central Europe (an example, Žáček 1969: 134). The existence or non-existence of 'their own' historical-political rights was naturally applied to 'nations' as a modern phenomenon. It was an anachronism that nations reinterpreted their history from the point of view of the present. According to these historians, 'all the nations' that did not 'originally' have historical-political rights meant 'nations without a history'. It was natural that these 'nations without history' should exploit only the principles of the natural right to national existence. However, basing myself on the activities of 1848/49, I reinterpret the concept of a 'nation without history' as 'nation' that did not have a strong basis to identify with the concept 'Crown' as the source of the historical-political rights, since, in reality, only the 'Emperor', the 'King' and the 'corporations' historically and constitutionally had the rights.

justification of the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject.

1. A Historical Premise: A Constitutional Basis

As a premise of this study on Štúr's political thought in 1848/49, I shall examine the concept of the traditional Hungarian state-system, especially the concepts of the 'Crown of the realm' (*corona regni*), the 'Body of the realm' (*corpus regni*), the 'Community of the realm' (*communitas regni*), the 'Holy Crown' (*sacra corona*) and the 'Hungarian nation' (*natio Hungarica*).

The 'Golden Bull' of 1222 transformed the old Magyar tribal privileges to new systematic noble privileges (Bush 1983: 12). On the establishment of the elective monarchy of 1301, the king acknowledged the rights of the nobility, and consequently, 'corporate rights' arose. Their lawful power was strengthened by the legalisation of seigniorial rights in 1351 (Márkus et al. 1899: 166). The political development of the Hungarian nobility as the 'Community of the realm' brought with it the evolution of the Hungarian state-system. Thus, the constitutional gravity began to move away from the power concept of the 'Crown of the realm' towards the organological concept of the 'Body of the realm'. The concept 'Crown of the realm' had made a distinction between the 'state' and the 'king' as the supreme administrator of state; it had also regulated 'royal power'. In contrast, the 'Body of the realm' had emphasised the 'corporate organological character' of the realm. According to the definition of the Law of 1435, the whole body of the Kingdom of Hungary was represented by the prelates, the magnates and the nobles.² At this stage, the 'king' did not yet participate in the 'Body of the realm', but in the diet of 1440, the state-system, just like the 'king in parliament', appeared as the main basis for the legislative system in the elective monarchy through cooperation between the 'king' and 'nobility'. This system was anchored in the *Tripartitum* by Werbőczy in 1514. Thus, it codified the political superiority of the 'parliament, including the king' over the 'king himself' and supported the concept of the 'Community of

² '[D]e eorundem praelatorum, et baronum nostrorum, nec nom nobilium regni nostri, totum corpus ejusdem regni, cum plena facultate absentium representantium, unanimes voto' (Márkus et al. 1899: 252).

the realm', i.e. the corporate society of the state, and raised this society to the status of the legitimated component of the state. As a result, sovereign 'Holy Crown' began to consist of the 'king as the head' and the 'corporations as the limbs', i.e. the prelates, the magnates and the nobles.³ That is to say, 'king in parliament' had acquired his own validity, and with this, the Hungarian Diet became the sovereign institution of the state (Bak 1973: 78). In this process, 'Hungarian nation' (*natio Hungarica*) began to mean the privileged group that had corporate political rights of parliamentary representation, i.e. the prelates, the magnates and the nobles (Karpát 1940–41: 159). The *natio Hungarica* made no ethnic distinctions. This conception was accepted in Szatmar Treaty of 1711 and in the Pragmatic Sanction of 1722; it remained valid until 1848 (Malý 1993: 55–6).

2. The Reinterpretation of the Corporate Rights of *natio Hungarica* as Modern Civil Rights of a Hungarian Nation Consisting of Many Nationalities

The first period owes to the Štúr's reinterpretation of the corporate rights of *natio Hungarica* as modern civil rights of a Hungarian nation consisting of many nationalities.

On 31 October 1847, the city council of Zvolen elected Štúr as deputy to the Hungarian Diet of 1847–8. Štúr's main speeches in the Diet referred to the guarantee of basic civil rights and freedom through the strengthening of the political rights of a royal chartered city, the extension of its rights to all the peoples in Hungary, the abolition of the feudal burdens of the 'urbarium' since 1767 by Maria Theresa, and the guarantee of the rights to use Slovak in the public institutions in northern Hungary.

In his first speech on the political rights of a royal chartered city in the Diet on 17 November, Štúr said:

³ 'Et hujusmodi nobiles membra sacrae coronae esse censentur; nulliusque, praeter principis legitime coronati, subsunt potestati' (Márkus et al. 1897: 58). At this stage, 'Holy Crown' was not an inherent part of kingly power (patrimonial right); it ranked above king, who spoke not of his Kingdom but, as the head of the state, reverently of the whole 'body of the realm'. In addition, all corporations in the state were considered to be a component of the 'Crown' (*membra sacrae coronae*). The 'Holy Crown' appeared as a composite body, an aggregate of the king and those responsible for maintaining the inalienable rights of the state. That is, the 'Holy Crown' became a symbol of both polity and sovereignty.

Further, I stand for the political rights of the cities because civil rights and the service of justice are firmly united with political rights. Someone who had formerly has significant civil rights. . . . From this standpoint, I require that political rights be extended and returned to the peoples who had them previously (*Slovenskje národnje novini* 23 Nov. 1847: 950. Hereafter *SNN*).

According to Štúr's definition in his seventh speech in the Diet on 13 March 1848, 'civil rights' included modern political rights in conformity with the principles of the equality of peoples (*SNN* 17 Mar. 1848: 1078). Thus, Štúr reinterpreted the traditional corporate rights of royal chartered city as modern 'civil rights'. For Štúr, 'civil rights' consisted of the whole body of traditional corporate and modern democratic ideas. In his conception, the civil rights' would not have been created without the basis of corporate rights of a royal chartered city.

Štúr also dealt with the relationship between 'political rights' and 'freedom' in his first speech: 'We want freedom; this is our aim and our sacred desire. . . . If the cities were freer and their political rights guaranteed, no one would have been repressed, nor would they have fallen under such a yoke' (*SNN* 23 Nov. 1847: 950). Štúr insisted that the freedom and political rights of royal chartered cities and those of the peoples were inseparable. In connection with this, he demanded in his fifth speech, on 15 February 1848, that the nobles and peoples of royal chartered cities should be politically equal and that the equality of individuals should be legalised not only in royal chartered cities, but also in other smaller towns (*SNN* 22 Feb. 1848: 1049–50).

Finally, Štúr said in his seventh speech on 13 March 1848:

Only the gentry and the rich burgher would be represented, so to speak; the lower strata of the peoples, of whom there are so many, however, would be without any parliamentary representation. This would be bad and also do damage to our mother country' (*SNN* 17 Mar. 1848: 1078).⁴

⁴ The seventh speech originally rejected the articles 248, 249 and 250 of the law on parliamentary vote. In the ending of the seventh speech, Štúr was against the aforementioned law: 'We demand that the political rights should be returned to the smaller royal chartered cities. If a parliamentary right would not be granted to these cities, I would demand that the right in the diet should be granted to all the cities in such a situation, in which the bigger cities have been granted' (*SNN* 17 Mar. 1848: 1078).

Štúr indirectly demanded that all people (including peasants) living in Hungary have their own representatives in the Diet. He indicated the ‘new constitutional subject’ that is all the peoples in Hungary should become the *natio Hungarica*.

Here, we see that Štúr tried to reinterpret the corporate political rights of a royal city as the prototype of modern civil rights and to justify the extension of those rights not only to people living in smaller towns, but also to all the peoples in Hungary. This involved the amendment of the meaning of the traditional class concept *natio Hungarica* and the extension of its frame to all the peoples in Hungary. That is why Štúr insisted on the abolition of the feudal burdens of ‘urbarium’ as a precondition for the establishment of democratic representation in the Diet in his second speech on 22 December 1847 (*SNN* 14 Jan. 1848: 1008) and also in his sixth speech on 6 March 1848 (*SNN* 14 Mar. 1848: 1073). His attempt at the transformation of all the peoples in Hungary into *natio Hungarica* constituted an attempt at the transformation of all the nationalities (*gens*)⁵ in Hungary into *natio Hungarica*. Thus, the extension of its frame to all the nationalities involved the notion that a Hungarian political nation should consist of the Magyars, the Romanians, the Croats, the Serbs, the Ruthenians, the Germans and the Slovaks as nationalities. Štúr initiated the formation of ‘a Hungarian political nation consisting of many nationalities’, which was different from the ‘Hungarian nation formed only by Magyars through magyarisation’. Lajos Kossuth had already identified the historical-political rights of king and corporations in the Kingdom of Hungary with the national rights of the Magyars (*SNN* 4 Jan. 1848: 994; *SNN* 11 Jan. 1848: 1001). In opposition to this view of Kossuth’s, Štúr insisted on the right to use Slovak in the public institution of northern Hungary in his third speech on 15 January 1848 (*SNN* 25 Jan. 1848: 1018). In this speech, he also said that the use of their mother tongue would increase the love for Hungary and new *natio Hungarica* must necessarily be patriotic; the nationalities’ use of their

⁵ In this paper, I employ the term *gens* (Latin) to mean ‘an organic unit bound together by consanguinity and by deeply rooted cultural affinity’ on the basis of the meaning of the term *gens* described in the *Tripartitum* (Márkus et al. 1897: 20–1). Therefore, it means a ‘tribe’ or ‘ethnic group’ (English), ‘Volksstamm’ or ‘Völkerschaft’ (Germany). The Author uses this word *gens* when he balances it with the word *natio*, which already had constitutional legitimacy in the Kingdom, to clarify the process that the *gens* acquired constitutional legitimacy.

mother tongue would further Hungarian patriotism (*SNN* 25 Jan. 1848: 1018).

The theoretical point of his attempt at realisation of the representation of all the nationalities in Hungary in the Diet was that the Slovaks would have indirectly acquired constitutional legitimacy and have been transformed into a 'constitutional subject'. The new concept *natio Hungarica* lost its privileged character.

This idea developed after the abolition of urbarium in the Ninth Law of 1848 in the diet on 18 March 1848. This was just three days after the outbreak of the revolution in Pest. Kossuth's group had already disagreed with Štúr's proposals, specifically the reorganisation of the political rights of royal chartered cities and the use of Slovak (*SNN* 25 Jan. 1848: 1018). The Ninth Law of 1848 also rejected the complete emancipation of peasants which was being demanded by Štúr (*SNN* 24 Mar. 1848: 1085). He did not have any choice. As a result, in spite of the importance of the period for the enactment of the main laws of new Hungary, Štúr left from Pozsony (Bratislava) and never attended the diet again.

3. The Inclusion of the 'Principles of the Natural Right to National Existence' into 'Civil Rights' and the Invocation of the 'Hungarian Crown'

The second period owes to Štúr's inclusion of the 'principles of the natural right to national existence' into 'civil rights' and his invocation of the Hungarian Crown.

On 27 March Štúr had discussions with Slovak intellectuals at the assembly in Liptov. The petition that was accepted consisted of six points. The most important points in it were:

- (1) We demand that the nation and people in this county, according to their own civil rights, take part in the national assembly in this county.
- (2) We demand that people who could provide teaching and education for Slovak citizens in their mother tongue, should urgently be trained and that Slovak national schools be organised, and that at the schools our people should be educated and cultivated in the value of their own civil freedom (*SNN* 4 Apr. 1848: 1100).

In these points, the concept ‘nation’ (*gens*) was in accordance with the concept ‘citizen’, and the demand for the acquisition of national rights for the Slovaks was directly declared. This line of argument continued in Štúr’s speech at the Slav assembly in Vienna on 2 April and in his speech at the establishment of the Slav Linden (*Slovanská lípa*) in Prague on 1 May. In the later speech, Štúr asked for cooperation among the Slavs so that the Slovaks could acquire political freedom (Štúr 1848a: 260–1). In his essay ‘Slovania, bratia!’, which was a contribution to the National Newspaper (*Národní noviny*) of K. Havlíček on 1 May, Štúr again voiced the necessity for cooperation and stressed that weak political cooperation of the Slavs would not have any constitutional legitimacy (Štúr 1848b: 253). Štúr wanted cooperation to acquire firm constitutional legitimacy to help the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject as a nation equal to the Magyars.

On this background the ‘Petition of the Slovak Nation’ was written at the Assembly of the Slovak Nation in Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš on 10 May 1848. In the Petition, the first Slovak national programme was set out. It comprised fourteen articles. For the constitutional justification of the Slovaks, the first and the second articles were the most important. The first article states:

The Slovak Nation in Hungary, as the indigenous population of this country, is awakening to a new life after 900 year dream. The Slovaks are aware that this sacred land, this mother country, which is the origin and cradle of the old glory of their ancestors and the place where their forefathers and heroes shed their blood for the Hungarian Crown, has been until recently their stepmother. Hungary has kept their language and nationality in the shackles of degradation and disrespect. . . . As the autochthonous nation and the former exclusive owner of this sacred land, the Slovak nation under the banner of the age of equality calls all the nations of Hungary to the equality and fraternity. The Slovak nation does not aim at oppressing other nations nor will it ever grant the glorious name Hungarian patriot to anyone who ignores the rights of the other nationalities living under the Hungarian Crown (*Dokumenty k slovenskému národnému hnutiu v rokoch 1848–1914* 1962: 23–4. Hereafter *Dokumenty*).

The idea of the equality of all the nationalities in Hungary would not have been born without the consciousness of the modern ‘Hungarian political nation’, which was identified with the ‘Hungarian citizen’

enjoying civil rights. The justification of this idea lays in the contribution of every nationality in Hungary to the maintenance of the ‘Hungarian Crown’. With this, Štúr emphasised that the inhabitants in northern Hungary had defended the welfare of the Kingdom against the Turks. In connection with this, Štúr presented the concept ‘Hungarian patriot’. Of course, this concept was not identified with only the Magyars, but with all the nationalities in Hungary. That is why Štúr demanded that all the nationalities ‘be seen as the limbs of the Hungarian Crown’ (Štúr 1846a: 236–7). The ‘limbs’ of the Crown were precisely the ‘corporations’ constituting the Crown. We find the establishment of a new state-thought, the ‘nations constituting the Hungarian Crown’. Here, the ‘Crown’ as the symbol of both polity and sovereignty was considered the ‘embodiment’ of the all sovereign subjects, i.e. king as the head and every nationality as the limbs. On this basis of Štúr’s understanding of the ‘Crown’, I use the concept ‘nations constituting the Crown’ as a concept that indicated the nationally composite character of the state, i.e. the concept of the ‘nations as the components (corporations) of the Crown’ that would have sovereign rights in the state.

In this period, the consciousness of the Hungarian political nation (*natio*) under the ‘Crown’ existed in conformity with ‘civil rights’, which naturally coincided with the ‘national rights’ of the Slovaks (*gens*). We see the justification of the theory in the second article of ‘Petition of the Slovak Nation’, which reads:

In the name of the principle of equality, we urge that a legislative assembly of fraternal nations be instituted for all those who are living under the Hungarian Crown. In that assembly, every nation should be represented as such by its own deputies, who would transact business in their own native tongue (*Dokumenty* 1962: 24).

Štúr’s group insisted that the political rights of parliamentary representation as civil rights be shared by every nationality in Hungary. According to Štúr, every nationality in Hungary should have its own political rights (civil rights) as natural, national rights. This meant the inclusion in civil rights of the principles of the natural right to national existence. Thus, the political rights of the Hungarian political nation, which in the first period Štúr considered the highest dimension of civil rights, were reinterpreted as the natural, national and civil rights. The

‘Hungarian Crown’ should grant these rights *a priori* to all the nationalities in Hungary as the new *natio*. The notion of Slovak national autonomy followed this logic. We notice that Štúr’s group sought to affirm the Slovak nation-building without seeking their own nation-state.

However, it was most important that Štúr’s group invoked the concept ‘Crown’ in justifying the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject. Štúr presumed that the traditional *natio* that constituted the ‘Crown’ should be replaced by the ‘nationalities’ as a new constitutional subject, i.e. the ‘Crown’ should consist of the ‘king’ and ‘all the nationalities in Hungary’.

In the ninth article, Štúr demanded the granting of the right of universal suffrage to all the citizens in Hungary,⁶ and in the eleventh article, he criticised the Ninth Law of 1848 and insisted on the extension of the abolishment of ‘urbarium’.⁷ In other words, they tried to create the conditions for the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject without any obligation of feudal burdens. Whether Štúr’s thought was in conformity with the modern constitutional monarchy or not, as far as he respected the traditional concept the ‘Hungarian Crown’, the new *natio* still meant a political group that had the political rights of parliamentary representation. That is why the new *natio* was to be represented by all the nationalities in Hungary ‘through universal suffrage’. Because the Slovaks lacked their own nobility or ruling class, their existence would be recognised by the traditional authority ‘in Hungary’. The invocation of the Hungarian traditional corporate principles of ‘Crown’ granted the legislative status in the state to the components of ‘Crown’. In Štúr’s idea, ‘Crown’ would have granted the legislative status to the nationalities (including the Slovaks) as the components (corporations) of Crown. Therefore, Štúr never refer the immemorial, inefficient tradition of Great Moravia in the ninth century.

The Hungarian Government responded to the ‘Petition of the Slovak Nation’ by issuing a warrant for the arrest of Štúr and his fellow nationalists Jozef Miroslav Hurban and Michal Miroslav Hodža and by

⁶ The ninth article declares: ‘Without distinction of class or estate, all citizens who have reached twenty years of age should be granted the right to vote, and those who have reached twenty-four years should be eligible’ (*Dokumenty* 1962: 25).

⁷ The eleventh article declares: ‘All encumbrances involving real estate and undue charges on business and trade benefiting the landlords as well as all vestiges of urbarium should be abolished. The regalian right should accrue to the municipalities’ (*Dokumenty* 1962: 25).

placing northern Hungary under martial law. This uncomfortable experience influenced Štúr in the third period when his political thought on the ‘state’ changed totally.

4. The Application of the Concept *obec* as the ‘Corporate Subject’ to the Concept ‘Slavs’

4–1 ‘The United Independent Slav Communities under the Austrian Monarchy’ (*Samostatné spojené slovanské obce pod Rakúskou ríšou*)

The third period owes to Štúr’s application of the concept *obec* as the ‘corporate subject’ to the concept ‘Slavs’.

Štúr left Liptov and arrived in Prague at the end of May 1848 to take part in the Slav Congress. The congress was held from 2 to 12 June; it consisted of three sections (the Czechoslav, Polish-Ruthenian and South Slav section) and the general assembly at which the representatives from each section conferred. 349 Habsburg Slav intellectuals and one Russian, Bakunin, took part in the Congress.

On 3 June, the first conference of the Czechoslav section was held. Štúr insisted in his speech that:

The Slav land has still not united, nor is independent. Only the Bohemians, the Moravians and the Poles had once experienced some independence. However, the Hungarian Slavs never. We belong to the Hungarian Diet. What can we expect from it? . . . First of all, we have to change relationships in Hungary to destroy Magyar superiority. This is our main role (*Slovanský sjezd v Praze roku 1848: Sbíрка dokumentů* 1958: 248. Hereafter *SSP*).

This speech emphasised a radical change in the traditional constitutional system in the Habsburg Monarchy. The Slovaks, who had belonged to the state-system of Hungary since medieval times, pressed for the abandonment of the traditional Hungarian system and for the separation from Hungary in the name of the Slavs for the first time in their history. This meant that the consciousness of the Hungarian political nation also faded. However, for this, Štúr had to create a theory to separate from the Kingdom of Hungary and to exceed the concept of the ‘Hungarian Crown’. This theory was the absolute condition for the

abandonment of the traditional constitutional system and for the transformation of the Slovaks into the constitutional subject in this period. Štúr said:

Hitherto we have not had an independent Slav community in Austria. We declare that we want to establish the *United Independent Slav Communities under the Austrian Empire* (*Samostatné spojené slovanské obce pod Rakúskou ríšou*). Do not say that we want to keep Austria, or to form the Austrian Slav Empire. That would take away from us all the sympathy of the European nations for us. Say that we want to establish the United Independent Slav Communities under the government of the Austrian Empire; with this, we lay stress on the Slavs. After that, the Austrian government can exist with us Slavs (*SSP* 1958: 248; emphasis and Slovak added).

In place of the ‘Hungarian Crown’, which was to have granted constitutional legitimacy for the Slovaks in the first and second periods, Štúr invoked the concept *obec* (community) as the corporate subject, to which the ‘Habsburg Crown’ had granted the rights of self-government and constitutional legitimacy. *Obec* as a historical concept referred to the municipal corporations, *universitas*, *teritorium* and also *res publica* itself. It reminds us of the ‘Community of the realm’ (*communitas regni*) in late medieval Hungary. *Obec* generally also referred to the traditional *natio* as the corporation, irrespective of the difference in size and in conformity with traditional constitutional principles. These *obce* (plural form of *obec*) as limbs together with the king as their head constituted the ‘Crown’. They were constrained to protect the ‘Crown’ as something they all had in common. Therefore, the ‘Crown’ as the *res publica* consisted of the various *obce* which enjoyed corporate rights. Accordingly, the ‘state’ was the largest *obec*. The *obec* which Štúr invoked should be under the Habsburg Monarchy so that it would be the largest form of the *obec*, the ‘state’ (Štúr 1846b: 211). His aim is clear. The traditional components of the Monarchy, for example, the Grand Duchy of Austria, the Kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia, the Principalities of Silesia and Transylvania and so forth, as the *obec* should be replaced by the modern national states as the *obec*, i.e. the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’ forming the new Habsburg constitutional monarchy. Politically speaking, the concept the ‘Slavs’ was in a different dimension than the corporate *obec*; however,

he radically applied the concept *obec* to the ‘Slavs’ as a non-political, ethnic nation. This involved a ‘constitutional revolution’.⁸

It is most important that the new theory of the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject, after the non-realisation of his concept ‘nations constituting the Hungarian Crown’ in the second period, was the application of the concept *obec* as the ‘corporate subject’ to the Slavs in the process of the reorganisation of corporate rights during the revolutionary years of 1848/49. In Štúr’s thought, the application of the concept to the Slavs should be guaranteed by the ‘Habsburg Crown’, which was the whole body of the *obec*. At this moment, the concept of the ‘nations as the national *obec* constituting the Habsburg Crown’ was established. Clearly, Štúr had abandoned a part of the traditional state-system, for example, the Hungarian Crown, but he respected the other part of the traditional state-system, for example, *obec*. By means of the ‘image’ of the *obec*, Štúr tried to justify the Slovaks as a constitutional subject. We see that the Slovaks as a ‘nation without history’ consistently needed the guarantee of their existence by a traditional authority.

4–2 The Conflicts between the Historical Rights of the ‘Crown’ and the National Rights of *obec*

Štúr’s demands, the abandonment of the Hungarian Crown and the separation from the Kingdom of Hungary, through the establishment of the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’, were the most radical at the

⁸ As far as I have been able to ascertain, the first historian who considered Štúr’s thought a constitutional revolution was a Czech, the Czechoslovakist historian Albert Pražák. He identified the thought of the Slovak intelligentsia with that of the Czech liberals, who wanted to extend the territory of the ‘Bohemian Crown’ to ‘Moravia’, ‘Silesia’ and ‘north Hungary’, that is, today’s ‘Slovakia’. He understood the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’ in Štúr’s thought in this meaning (Pražák 1928: 145–59). However, Štúr considered the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’ to be an extended territory covering also the South Slavs living in south Hungary. That is, the extension cannot be justified by the historical-political rights of the Bohemian Crown (Klimko 1980: 64). M. Podrimavský claims that Štúr’s political thought respected the need of a political and constitutional guarantee of national rights related with the new constellation of power politics in Hungary and the Habsburg Monarchy (Podrimavský 1995: 146–7). It meant that Štúr, in conformity with the traditional constitutional system, wished to create a new constitutional system in which the nationalities should be the constitutional subject in the monarchy. The application of the concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slavs’ as *gens* was based on this idea.

Czechoslav section. Another Slovak delegate, Hodža and a Prague Slovak, Pavol Jozef Šafárik who respected the legitimacy of the traditional state-system and its authority, powerfully criticised Štúr's thoughts. Because of this, the radicals and conservatives of the Czechoslav section were disunited. Hodža insisted that:

It will bring other problems for us. . . . Our suggestions can be rejected at the individual diets. So, consider again whether we have the power to execute what we will decide. . . . From this standpoint, I do not know any other means except that we should turn to the Bohemian, Croatian and the Galician Diets (*SSP* 1958: 249–50).

Šafárik added that:

We do not want to establish such a state. Because the state and its sovereignty are one body, and we do not have such sovereignty. We want to establish the unity for the acquisition of the firm political rights in the Austrian state (*SSP* 1958: 252).⁹

They criticised Štúr in conformity with traditional principles and stated that the 'United Independent Slav Communities' would not have any real constitutional legitimacy in the monarchy. In connection with it, the Czech J. Šmíd said that: 'Mr. Štúr announced his own opinion. Here we have to consider the nations with historical rights, the Czechs, the Croats and the Poles, later you, the nations without rights, the Slovaks, the Hungarian Serbs and the Ruthenians' (*SSP* 1958: 253). He identified the rights of the king and nobles in the Kingdom of Bohemia with the national rights of the Czechs. The Czechs' case was very similar to the Magyars'. Šmíd's opinion involved the 'usurpation' of the traditional rights by the Bohemian intellectuals in name of the Czech nation. Only the king and traditional corporations had rights, but no modern ethnic

⁹ In Šafárik's case, the concept *obec* still meant traditional state, for example, the Kingdom of Bohemia, the Kingdom of Hungary and so on (*SSP* 1958: 250). Therefore, Šafárik did not identify *obec* with the national *obec* that Štúr had in mind. His aim was an establishment of the union of the traditional *obec*. In contrast with Štúr and Šafárik, the Czech František Palacký insisted on the establishment of the federation of the Habsburg Monarchy consisting of the all the nationalities. Palacký's idea had nothing to do with *obec* (*SSP* 1958: 287). Thus, Austro-Slavism had three trends at the Congress. Finally, Palacký's idea was anchored in the 'Manifesto for the European Nations' of 12 June 1848.

nations essentially had their own historical-political rights in the constitution. In contrast with the Czech case, Štúr invoked the ‘non-existent’ traditional principle, i.e. the ‘modern national *obec*’, which Štúr considered as ‘tradition’. This was the main characteristic of Slovak nation-building based on ‘traditionalism’ without their own nobility and ruling class. The Czechs did not need to invoke seriously the ‘Slav’ and ‘non-existent traditional’ principles like the Slovaks. Their invocation of the ‘existing’ traditional principles was more realistic for the formation of the modern Czech nation than the invocation of ‘non-existent traditional’ principles. In the case of both Slovaks and Czechs, we see that nation-building in East-Central Europe was developed on the traditional state-system, irrespective of whether the invoked tradition had actually existed or not.

Štúr applied the concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slavs’, but he was never completely convinced about this radical thought. Eventually, he abandoned his plan and agreed with the Petition of the Hungarian Slovaks and Ruthenians, which was written by Hurban on 7 June. This petition said that the Slovaks as a nation of Hungary should live in the future (*SSP* 1958: 317).¹⁰ The contents of petition were the same as those of the ‘Petition of the Slovak Nation’ of 10 May. However, the Serb Jovan Subotić from South Slav section criticised this Slovak’s moderation:

Till now, the Slovaks have not had their own ministries nor their own administrative institutions. Therefore, now they must want everything. . . . The Slovaks want to remain in union with the Magyars. We have already separated from them. So the Slovaks must separate from us (*SSP* 1958: 287).

After Subotić’s speech, Štúr again changed his opinion. He stated: ‘Let us declare separation from Hungary!’ (*SSP* 1958: 318). Finally, Štúr supported the Manifesto for European Nations of 12 June, in which a national federation under the Habsburg Monarchy was demanded.

¹⁰ The first article of the petition said: ‘We request that the Slovaks and the Ruthenians in Hungary should be recognised as a nation by the Magyars and have equal rights with them’ (*SSP* 1958: 317). We see that it was difficult for the Slovaks to abandon the ‘Hungarian Crown’ and the ‘consciousness of the Hungarian political nation’. In the second article, a demand for the establishment of the national diet in Hungary was declared (*SSP* 1958: 317).

Besides the Manifesto for European Nations, the Petition of the Austrian Nations for the Austrian Emperor of 12 June, which Štúr helped draft, was important for the Slovaks. In the petition, Slav intellectuals demanded ‘freedom’ for the nations and also ‘equality’ as the ‘holy act of justice’ by the Emperor (*SSP* 1958: 371), and they referred to the Emperor as the ‘merciful father’ and to the Slavs as ‘his children’ (*SSP* 1958: 370–1). The Slav intellectuals thought that if the nations in the monarchy were the children of the holy Emperor, they could justify themselves as a constitutional subject. Thus the petition manifested respect for the concept of the ‘Habsburg Crown’.¹¹

The Slav Congress was brought to a premature end by the outbreak of the uprising in Prague on 14 June. After that, Štúr departed for Zagreb to meet the representatives of the South Slav intellectuals, the Croat Ban Joseph Jelačić and the Serb Prince Miloš Obrenović to discuss insurrection against the Magyars. On 19 September, the campaign of the Slovak and young liberal Czech volunteers actually began. After their defeat, the Emperor issued the Manifesto of 20 October, which was a suitable opportunity for Štúr to declare his idea of an ‘independent Slovakia’.

5. The Limited Application of the Concept *obec* to the Concept ‘Slovak Nation’

5–1 The Emergence of the Territorial Concept ‘Slovakia’

The fourth period owes to Štúr’s limited application of the concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slovak nation’.

The core of the imperial Manifesto of 20 October was the preservation of constitutionalism and the guarantee of the equality of all nations in the monarchy (*Vyhlásenie*: sign. 42). Štúr displayed their agreement with the manifesto in the statement of the Slovak National Council *For the Slovak Nation* on 20 November, which asked the Slovaks to fight against the Magyars for national equality in the coming campaign.

¹¹ For example: ‘Daher schaaren sich um den Thron Eurer kais. Majestät die slawischen Völker Österreichs, der Gewährung der Mittel, durch welche allein ihre Freiheit gekräftigt, der Kaiserstaat gerettet und namenlos Unglück abgewendet werden kann, mit vollem, kindlichen Vertrauen von der vaterlichen Huld Eurer kais. Majestät hoffend’ (*SSP* 1958: 371).

The third article of his statement declares: ‘To fight! For our King and his royal family. Our King also with his royal family declared that they do not want tyranny over others, our King is the first who declared the equality of all the nationalities’ (*Dokumenty* 1962: 50). Thus, only the Crown’s authority, which was vested in the Emperor, could have guaranteed the equality of the nations in the Monarchy and justified the Slovaks as a constitutional subject in Štúr’s idea in this period.

However, it is most important that in such an official document the territorial concept ‘Slovakia’ was used for northern Hungary (today’s Slovakia) for the first time in their history in such official documents.¹² In public documents before 1848, it was mentioned as a *terra Matthaei*, *partes regni superiores*, *Pannonia superior* or *Hungaria superior*. The orientation of the Austrian government, which discussed the abolition of the Kingdom of Hungary and the establishment of the ‘Slovak crown county’ at the beginning of November, had an influence on the use of the territorial concept ‘Slovakia’ among Štúr’s group (Škvarna 1996: 10–11). On the day after the crossing of the border in Čadca by the Emperor’s army and Slovak volunteers, on 4 December, the temporary Crown Administrative Council was established in Čadca. It consisted of non-nobles in conformity with democratic principles. The council language was mostly Slovak (Hučko 1984: 190). This clearly demonstrated to Štúr that even the Slovaks could establish an independent administrative ‘Slovakia’. Thus, his justification for the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject had to be changed. Now, his task was to justify politically and legally the non-traditional ‘Slovakia’ as an independent administrative body.

5–2 ‘The Grand Principality of Slovakia’

(*Veľkokniežatstvo Slovenska*)

At the Slovak National Assembly in Turčiansky Svätý Martin on 10 March 1849, the ‘Programme of the Slovak Nation’, which was to be submitted to Francis Joseph I, was drafted by Štúr’s group. They based it

¹² It read: ‘Now, we do not have a more important necessity of Kossuth supporters than to join with our old faithfulness for our King and the continuation of what we began in September in Slovakia.’ What they began in September meant the September campaign by the Slovak volunteers. However, here, Štúr’s group did not clearly define ‘Slovakia’. (*Dokumenty* 1962: 48)

on the Manifesto of 20 October 1848 and on the Fifth Article¹³ of the First Chapter and Seventy-seventh Article¹⁴ of the Fourth Chapter of the Constitution of the Austrian Monarchy of 4 March 1849. This programme consisted of six articles and stressed the preservation of all the nations in the Monarchy by the Emperor.

The territorial concept ‘Slovakia’ was clearly defined in the first article. It read:

The Slovak nation acquired its own country and fatherland. We understand this land to be the land where the Slovaks have been living as its first inhabitants since ancient times, where their own language is autochthonous and is the only one in use in everyday life, the land which was the cradle of their entrance into history, which however, since ancient times, though it has been politically united with other states, no one has ceased calling *the Slovak land, Slovakia* (*Dokumenty* 1962: 60; emphasis added).

The concept ‘Slovakia’ meant the political-national entity of the Slovaks was in conformity with the ethno-linguistic idea. The most important is the second article, which reads:

This land should separate politically from the today’s Hungary and be immediately incorporated into the Austrian Monarchy. This land as a whole body should be joined with the Austrian imperial union, and from this point of view, the Slovaks’ demand is that: this land separated from today’s Hungary should acquire its own political title, *The Grand Principality of Slovakia (Veľkokniežatstvo Slovenska)*, which title was attached to them from the time of their earlier appearance in history, which is also now familiar to our peoples. This new title should accord with the title of Your Majesty (*Dokumenty* 1962: 61; emphasis and Slovak added).

Štúr’s group postulated the establishment of the ‘Grand Principality of Slovakia’, which as the whole body should be united with the Habsburg Monarchy. The concept ‘Grand Principality’ was to be a more historical and state-like *obec* than the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’.

¹³ The Fifth Article said: ‘Equal justice will be given to all the nationalities, and each nationality has the inviolable right of preserving and maintaining its own nationality and language’ (Ústavná listina: sign. 101).

¹⁴ The Seventy-seventh Article said: ‘All the other Crown countries acquire their own countries’ constitution. Estate constitutions are not valid’ (Ústavná listina: sign. 101).

‘Slovakia’ should be the title of the ‘Grand Principality’, that is to say, an *obec* given a name of so-called nation without history. By this, Štúr tried to legitimate the Slovaks as a constitutional subject. In the third period, Štúr applied the concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slavs’ and tried to legitimate the Slavs as one of the ‘nations constituting the Habsburg Monarchy’. In this fourth period, however, Štúr applied the concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slovaks’ in a more limited way. It was not to be the territory of the Slavs but the territory of the Slovaks. The Slovaks themselves were considered the constitutional subject, which should constitute a part of the Habsburg Monarchy. Such an *obec* meant that the *communitas* as *res publica* were at a higher stage of constitution than the *obec* in the ‘United Independent Slav Communities’.

Štúr also reinterpreted this traditional concept *obec* as a modern democratic notion. In the fourth article of this programme, he indirectly insisted on the establishment of the diet of the ‘Grand Principality of Slovakia’ by means of universal suffrage for men.¹⁵ Now we see that the character of the *obec* that Štúr applied to ‘Slovaks’ and ‘Slovakia’ meant that only the framework of the *obec* was observed and that the content of the traditional *obec*, that is, its aristocratic attributes, was lost. In other words, he reinterpreted the concept *obec* as a modern ‘national’ and ‘civil’ concept¹⁶ and redefined the ‘body and community of the realm’ as that of the nation.¹⁷

The reorganisation of the corporate system in East-Central Europe during the years 1848/49 meant the application of the reinterpreted

¹⁵ The fourth article said: ‘The Slovaks beg a country’s special diet, where the representatives, according to the number of the inhabitants in Slovakia in bigger rate, should have advantages’ (*Dokumenty* 1962: 61). Also in the fourth article of *For the Slovak Nation* on 20 November 1848, the necessity of the abolition of urbarium and estate system had already been declared (*Dokumenty* 1962: 50). According to Štúr, who applied the concept *obec* to the ‘Slovaks’, no privileged group should exist in the ‘national’ *obec*.

¹⁶ The Czech radical liberal K. Havlíček Borovský wrote the essay ‘Co jest obec?’ [What is the Community?], which he contributed to *Pražské noviny* [Prague Newspaper] in 1846. Like Štúr, Havlíček also reinterpreted the traditional concept *obec* as a modern concept and considered it a ‘civil’ and ‘national’ society (Havlíček 1846: 79–88). The Czech historian O. Urban has not argued that Štúr reinterpreted the concept *obec*, however, he considered the revolution of 1848 in Slovakia as the first establishment of a civil society in Slovakia (Urban 1991: 153–9).

¹⁷ Robert B. Pynsent indicated the existence of the transformation of the traditional *obec* as the community of the nobility into the modern *obec* as the community of the ethnic nation in Czech society (Pynsent 1999: 206–10).

concept *obec* to the concept ‘Slovaks’ by Štúr in the third and fourth periods. Even if the character of the *obec* was modern, in view of the respect for the traditional system and framework of the *obec*, the application of the modern *obec* to the concept ‘Slovaks’ should be legitimated by the Habsburg Crown as the whole body of the various *obce*. In this fourth period, the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject was to be justified by invoking the concept *obec* as the ‘framework’, and the establishment of the national and civil society should have been justified by reinterpreting the concept *obec*. In this process, the concept ‘Slovak nation’ as an ethno-linguistic group theoretically acquired the attributes of a constitutional subject, which was qualified to exist as a political entity. Even if the nation actually had meant *gens*, it theoretically could have been justified as *natio*. The nation as *natio* was not to be the political group that had the political rights as ‘privileges’. The acquisition by the Slovaks of constitutional attributes was to be the process of the transformation of the Slovaks into a constitutional subject, that is to say, the modern Slovak nation.

Štúr’s group made a final draft of this programme¹⁸ and handed it over to Francis Joseph I on 19 March 1849. The Emperor promised the realisation of this programme (Novotný 1969: 162–3). However, Štúr anticipated that his national movement would come to an end.¹⁹ As Štúr guessed, this programme was actually rejected in the end of 1849, and the Slovaks had to wait until the twentieth century.

Conclusion

The concepts of the ‘Crown of the realm’, the ‘Community of the realm’, the ‘Body of the realm’ and the ‘Holy Crown’ were the corporate tradition, which were established during the period of elective monarchy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. These principles were invoked for

¹⁸ In this new programme for the Emperor, the Slovak intellectuals used only the name ‘Slovakia’ in replace of the ‘Grand Principality of Slovakia’: ‘This land was united with the other lands in the political whole body, but nobody stopped to call it *the Slovak land, Slovakia*’ (*Dokumenty* 1962: 63). They thought that the title of the Slovak state should be decided by the Emperor.

¹⁹ Štúr wrote a letter to the Czech J. V. Staněk on 22 March 1849: ‘We would like to delegate to the palace concerning the nation, but it would not be possible’ (*Listy Ludovíta Štúra* 1956: 198).

justifying the Slovaks as a constitutional subject in 1848/49. It was relatively easy to reinterpret these concepts to modern civil principles. In addition, these were a powerful tradition which had historical constitutional legitimacy. It is most important that the ‘Holy Crown’ granted the legislative status to the components (corporations) of ‘Crown’. This traditional state-structure was useful for the ‘nation without history’s nation-building’. That is, in Štúr’s thought, ‘Crown’ would have granted the legislative status to the Slovaks as a component (corporation) of ‘Crown’. The Slovak nation as a corporate body would have included everyone who spoke and would speak Slovak as one legal person. It should continue permanently as a corporation of ‘Crown’, even if the members were replaced by the new members. Here, we see the existence of the theory of the ‘national corporate body’.

On the other hand, as for the traditions of hereditary monarchy and of the elections which elected hereditary kings, these were not be invoked for the Slovak nation-building in 1848/49. The concepts of hereditary, patrimonial monarchy, i.e. the ‘Crown of the king’ (*corona regis*) or ‘My Crown’ (*corona nostra*) did not powerfully legitimate the existence of corporations or diet because of the theory of the divine right of kings.

Contemporary theories of nationalism have followed four trends:

- (1) ‘Nationalism is essentially modern, but deplorable’ (Kedourie 1998; Hobsbawm 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1991).
- (2) ‘Nationalism is modern, but inevitable and with some mitigating circumstances’ (Kohn 1945; Seton-Watson 1977; Gellner 1983).
- (3) ‘Nationalism is modern and a good thing, with some catastrophes thrown in’ (Nairn 1977; Anderson 1983).
- (4) ‘Nationalism is pre-modern / non-modern / human nature, even if remade by modernity’ (Armstrong 1982; Smith 1986).

In justifying the Slovaks as a modern nation, Štúr considered that the ‘invocation’ of the Hungarian and Habsburg corporate tradition was more effective for the nation-building than the ‘rediscovery’ of the Great Moravian tradition in the ninth century. It is fair that Smith insists on the need for a type of analysis that will bring out the differences and similarities between modern national units and pre-modern units. However, he owes the Slovak *ethnie* only to the Great Moravian tradition (Smith 1986: 136, 142). For Štúr, this rediscovery did not have any

constitutional legitimacy nor was it useful for the justification of the Slovaks as a constitutional subject. That is why Štúr never invoked the principles of the Great Moravia in his petitions and programmes. The framework of the modern Slovak nation was not vested in (supposedly) their own ‘ethnic’ tradition but in the ‘corporate’ tradition in the Kingdom of Hungary and in the Habsburg Monarchy.

Ernest Gellner’s modernisation theory asserted that the origin of the creation of nation and nationalism was to be seen in ‘urbanisation’ or ‘industrialisation’. That is, the nation-building started in ‘high culture’ (Gellner’s term) after ‘industrialisation’. However, the Slovaks provide a case where nation-building in ‘low agrarian culture’ was undertaken by invoking the principles in other, supposedly ‘high’ corporate culture of ‘Crown’. Here, we can redefine Gellner’s notions of ‘modernisation’ as ‘reinterpreting and invoking traditional pre-modern principles as modern democratic principles’. ‘Modernisation’ contains the ‘modernisation of tradition’, i.e. the modern reinterpretation of the *obec*.

With this, it is possible to present a new understanding regarding ‘nation-building’. Štúr did not diachronically invoke (supposedly) ‘their own’ Great Moravian tradition nor did he synchronically invoke modern Western democratic principles. That is to say, ‘time and space gap’ exists between the ‘diachronised’ invocation of their own ethnic tradition and the ‘synchronicised’ invocation of modern Western principles (see Fig. 1). Existing modernism nor primordialism (including perennialism, ethno-symbolism)’ theories cannot explain the Slovak nation-building by Štúr, which existed in the ‘gap’. In order to explain the gap, I presented an understanding of the ‘diagonal invocation’ of the ‘corporate tradition of Crown’ in the Kingdom of Hungary and Habsburg Monarchy in the nation without history’s nation-building (see Fig. 2).

We can find the ‘conflation’ between the medieval ideas and modern ideas in the event of the ‘nation without history’ in 1848/49. That is, medieval principles contributed to the initiation of modern movements. ‘Total rupture’ in history does not exist. ‘Revolution’ as ‘rupture’ sometimes needed ‘continuity’ as a condition for the legitimisation of the revolution itself. Only in this meaning can we understand ‘revolution as rupture’ as a positive component constituting the ‘continuity of history’. Therefore, the concept of the ‘Slovak nation’ and ‘nationalism’ as an ‘image’ of traditional ideas continues to have an influence in contemporary Slovakia. The Slovak events in 1848/49 were an example of

the recognition of the essence of East-Central European history as the ‘continuity of history’.

Figure 1

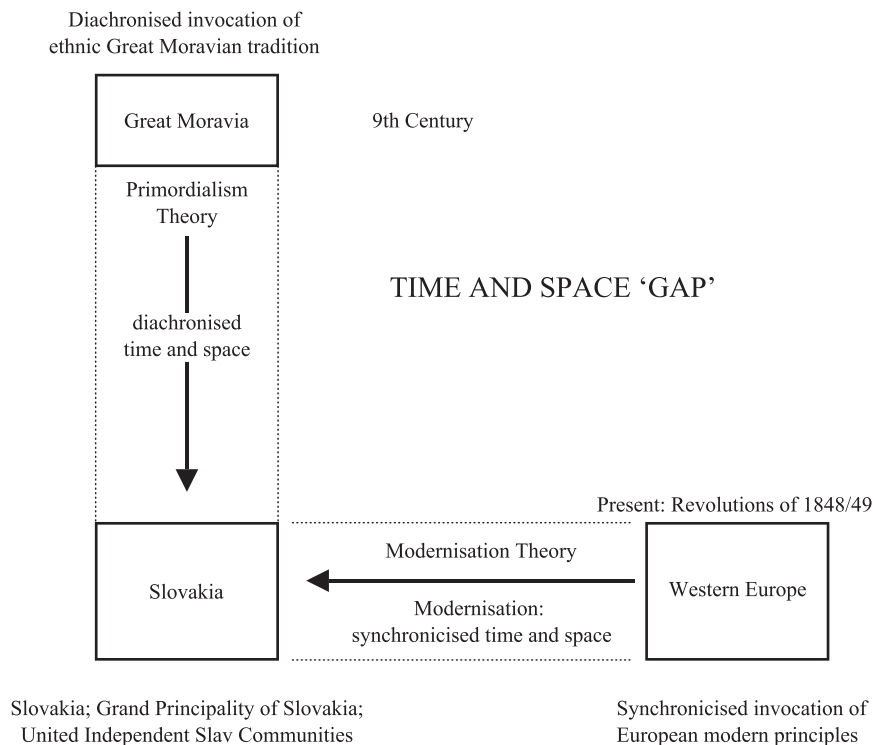
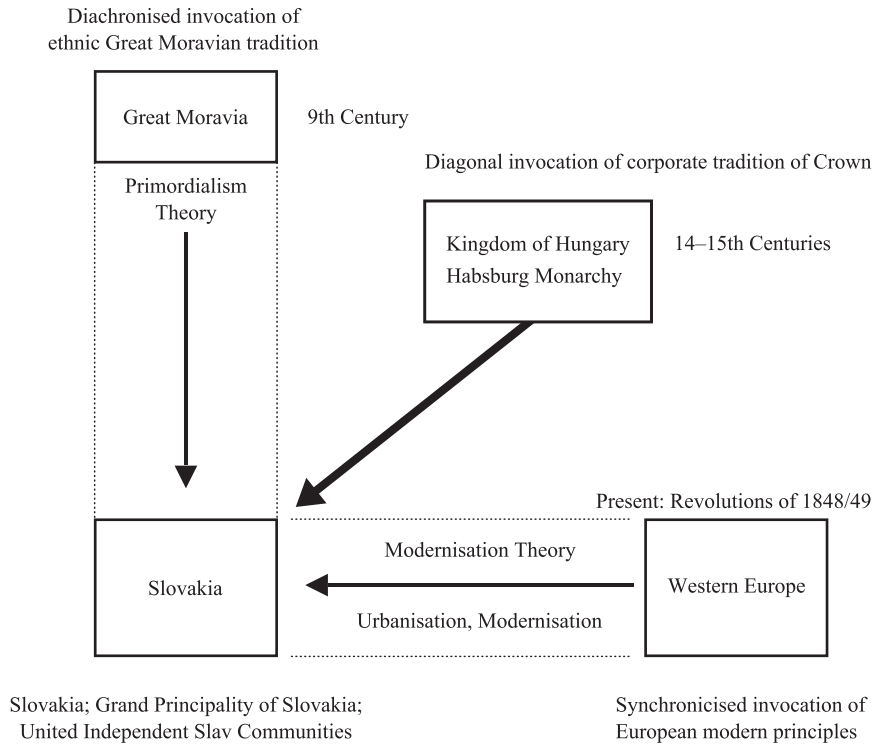


Figure 2



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