

The Czar's Title—Where It Came From

"Among the prisoners taken in the battle of Narva, there was one who was a striking example of the revolutions of fortune. This was the eldest son and heir of the king of Georgia; he was termed the 'czarika,' a word signifying prince, or son of a czar, among the Tartars, as in Muscovy, for the word czar signified king among the ancient Scythians from whom these people are descended, and was not derived from the 'Caesars,' so long unknown to these barbarians."

The resemblance of the word czar to the word Caesar (Kaiser in Greek) has led some to think the Russian princes assumed this title as the sovereigns of Germany did that of 'Kaiser,' as the equivalent of the title of Emperor. It is even related that at the commencement of the twelfth century, Alexis Comnenus, who was then reigning in Constantinople, wishing to gain the favor of Vladimir Monomach, sent to him an ambassador with presents, and caused the imperial crown to be placed on his head, proclaiming him 'Caesar' or 'Czar' of Russia.

Voltaire may have been right in asserting that the oriental nations had known and used the word czar or czar from a very remote period. The doubt only increases when one reads the formula which precedes all royal proclamations in Russia: "We, by the grace of God, emperor and autocrat of all the Russias, of Moscow, Kiev, Vladimir, Novgorod, etc., Tsar of the Kasan, Tsar of Astrakhan, Tsar of Poland and of Siberia, etc., Lord of Pskov and Grand Prince of Smolensk, of Lithuania, of Volhynia, of Podolia and of Ploian, Prince of Epirus, of Livonia, of Courland, of Karelia and various other countries, Prince of the territory of Nijni-Novgorod, Tchernigof, etc., etc."

Some writers pretend to trace in certain names of the Assyrian kings incontestable traces of this ancient designation; Nabonassar, Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, etc., are to be considered, according to them, as compound names, the termination "sar" or "sar" signifying prince or general, and thus giving origin to the title "czar." In this way, Nerigalzar would signify "Prince of Nerquel" or prince favored by Nerquel. (Nerquel was an Assyrian deity.)

Mickiewicz, sharing this opinion, presents the Assyrians as forming part of the great Slavonic family. He signs at the idea of seeing his unhappy race supporting the yoke of sovereigns daring enough to take a little which reminds one of Nebuchadnezzar, name in which he thinks to recognize that pride of which the Bible speaks, and which led the "sarr" to wish to be adorned as a god. He remarks upon the striking analogy existing between different varieties of the name of this race and the designation of slavery. Serb or servus, from which comes the Latin servus; slave, slavon, esclavon, from which comes the French esclave. There is a great distance between this hypothesis and the origin which the Slavics themselves attribute to their name, viz., slava, glory!—Boston Transcript.

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