

Review Assignment: Mid Term Paper (Essay)

Your Grade

100%

Essay Prompt

MID TERM SUBMISSION PAPER

Research and create a magical culture (with traditions and beliefs) on your selected Asian country from the given list below. Remember to treat it as though it is a real magical culture that exists in that country.

India

Russia

Saudi Arabia

Mongolia

Do your research on the country and its various cultures for your creation as you do not want to look like it doesn't belong in the correct country. Use information about the country to support your report's credibility.

Requirements:

At least 1000-word report, with data, numbers and pictures.

Student Response

Note to grader: I learned some things about Russia during my stay in Moscow from 1975 to 1980 and thereafter. This is a history of Russia modified to include the existence of magic. I didn't include pictures (I don't know how), but I did include links to web sites (see the list of references at the end of the article) that include a map of Russia [1] and pictures, together with the Muggle version of biographies, of several Russian leaders [2-10], three of whom were magical (two wizards and a witch).

THE RISE AND FALL OF MAGIC IN RUSSIA

No magic is practised in Russia anymore, but that wasn't always the case. In ancient times there were between ten and twenty thousand magical people in Russia, and they had no need to conceal their magical powers. Like the magical people in other parts of the world, they were highly respected by the Muggles; they were thought to be agents of the Slavic pagan gods that Russians believed in at that time, in particular Perun, the god of thunder, whom the Russians renamed Grom, the Russian word for thunder. They learned much of the magic they practised from the Greeks, the Chinese and, especially, the Indians. They used the Warming Charm extensively because it was a safer and less polluting way than fire to heat their wooden homes during the cold Russian winters. For several centuries they lived a good life.

But when the Russian Orthodox Church was established in the tenth century, their charmed life came to an abrupt end. The Russian Orthodox Church, like all Christian religions at that time, persecuted magical people and those Muggles who were suspected of being magical. Czar after Czar supported the Church in its persecution of magical people. Seeing that the pagan gods couldn't protect them from their persecutors, many of the magical people turned to agnosticism or atheism. In some other countries the magical people established wizarding villages and schools of magic, which they hid from Muggles. But Russia was close to those parts of Asia where magical people weren't persecuted; so most of the magical people, and some of the Muggles who gave birth to a magical child, fled there instead. Within two or three generations there were only one or two hundred magical people in Russia and they kept their magical powers well hidden; so the practice of magic in Russia gradually diminished until it became practically non-existent. Magic would have disappeared altogether were it not for another group of people who were also persecuted by the Church and the Czars: the Jews. They tended to sympathize with other persecuted people, and they alone among Muggles were prepared to befriend magical people.

But one day a witch was born who was to bring about a revival of magic in Russia. Sophie Friederike Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst-Dornburg was born in Stettin, Pomerania, Prussia on May 2, 1729. When she began to exhibit magical powers, her father, Christian August, a Prussian prince, made it illegal to accuse anyone of witchcraft, and he isolated her from all other children to keep her magical powers hidden. She hated being deprived of the company of other children and she was extremely unhappy until, at the age of 11, she was sent to Bulgaria to study magic at the Durmstrang Institute. She was much happier there, and she became determined to found a school of magic in Prussia to give other magical children a happier childhood than hers had been.

Her happy life came to an abrupt end at the tender age of 16, when she was forced to marry a Russian called Peter, who was in line to become Czar Peter III, as part of a deal between Russia and Prussia. She despised Peter, but she had no choice in the matter. Upon moving to Russia, she was renamed Catherine Alexeyevna. In 1750 she secretly founded the Russian Academy of Magic near Sochi; she chose that location because it had a pleasant subtropical climate and it was in Europe, where the International Statute of Secrecy was in force. Her Academy admitted everyone who exhibited magical powers, whatever their blood status, and it was not divided into Houses. She had learned many magical subjects in the course of her studies at Durmstrang, but she disapproved of the Dark Arts; so the curriculum she established at her Academy was roughly

the same as the one at Hogwarts except that Muggle Studies concentrated on Russian rather than British history.

Catherine remained Headmistress of the Academy until 1762, when her husband acceded to the throne, at which time she resigned her position at the Academy to move into the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg with her husband. Within six months she had engineered a palace coup, deposing her husband, and became Empress of Russia, later to be known as Catherine the Great [2]. An enlightened despot, she modernized Russia, promoting the arts and sciences and diminishing the power of the Russian Orthodox Church. Like her father, she made it illegal to accuse anyone of witchcraft. Under her reign, the Russian Academy of Magic flourished. The exodus of magical people from Russia was reversed, and their numbers in Russia gradually rose to about two thousand.

Under succeeding Czars the persecution of magical people increased, but, protected by the International Statute of Secrecy, the Academy continued to survive and to admit Muggle-borns. The reign of Nicholas II [3] was a particularly difficult one for magical people in Russia, for he was so inept that the real power behind the throne was assumed by his wife Alexandra, an exceptionally cruel enemy of magic. The magical people began to despise the very idea of Czarism; concealing their magical powers, they joined Muggles in their longing for other systems of government. They joined in the abortive 1905 revolution against Nicholas II, and were subsequently persecuted along with all the other revolutionaries. The survivors joined in the February 1917 revolution that succeeded in dethroning Nicholas II and brought about a democratic government under Alexander Kerensky [4].

Life became easier for the magical people because Kerensky's Provisional Government didn't actively promote the persecution of magical people, but they didn't actively oppose it either. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were bitter enemies of the Church; so the magical people saw them as an ally against a common enemy and they joined the Bolshevik Party in great numbers. At first they continued to conceal their magical powers, for they weren't sure how the Bolsheviks, who didn't believe in magic, would react to them if they revealed themselves. But they were soon to enjoy an unexpected stroke of good fortune. One of the Party's leaders, a wizard by the name of Nikolai Bukharin [5], recognized the new recruits for what they were – other magical people – and realized that their magical powers made them a valuable asset to the Party. He shared his findings with Vladimir Lenin [6], the leader of the Party. Lenin, a pragmatist, saw the wisdom in Bukharin's words, and so, within the Party, the magical people no longer needed to conceal their magical powers from the Muggles.

Bukharin's wisdom was soon vindicated. The magical people he championed joined in the successful October revolution that brought the Bolsheviks to power. When the White Guards tried to stage a counter revolution, aided by the armies of fourteen capitalist countries in the War of Intervention, they used their magical powers not to kill the foreign invaders but to modify their memories. The foreign soldiers whose memories they modified deserted en masse, returned to their countries and joined the chorus of voices denouncing the intervention as an attempt by the capitalists to destroy an example of workers' power which, if successful, would force the capitalists to make concessions to their own workers. They argued that it was against the interests of workers to fight the capitalists' war for them, and their arguments convinced many

workers not to do so. As a result, the capitalist countries were unable to send enough soldiers to fight in Russia; so the counter revolution failed.

There followed a brief but glorious Golden Age of Magic in Russia. The International Statute of Secrecy stopped being enforced throughout Russia, making that country an attractive place for magical people. Thousands of them moved there, bringing their numbers back up to over ten thousand. The ruling Bolsheviks, who renamed their Party the Communist Party, believed in mass education; so they established schools throughout the country and made higher education financially accessible. The lifting of the International Statute of Secrecy made it more pleasant than it would otherwise have been for magical people to attend these schools, because they could mingle with Muggle students without having to conceal their magical powers. As a result, many magical people began studying Muggle science, which was far more advanced than the science they had known, and they applied it to their magic, making it safer, more reliable and more powerful. Their findings made their way to the magical communities in the West, resulting in an improvement of magic there too.

Lenin died of a stroke in 1924, and a power struggle ensued between the other leaders of the Party to replace him as the Party's General Secretary. The magical people, of course, all supported Bukharin, and they especially feared Joseph Stalin [7], who had once trained as a Russian Orthodox priest. Despite their efforts, Stalin emerged triumphant, for the continued hostility of the capitalist countries surrounding Russia, which included a trade boycott, convinced the majority of the members of the Party that the tough measures he advocated would give Russia a better chance of survival than the softer brand of Communism advocated by Bukharin. To eliminate any possible opposition from Bukharin's supporters, Stalin condemned magic as a bourgeois invention and began arresting magical people as well as all other potential opponents; so the magical people retreated back to their Academy, made it invisible to Muggles and resumed enforcing the International Statute of Secrecy.

For a while the Academy was left alone, but in 1937 Bukharin got wind of Stalin's plan to arrest all the staff and students of the Academy, and he sent his Patronus – a bear – to the Academy to warn them. The magical people realized that they would have to vacate their Academy for, although Stalin's political police couldn't see the Academy, they knew where it was and they could simply follow the incoming students inside. The staff decided that it was no longer safe to have Muggle-borns in their Academy because the Muggle parents might blurt out the new location of their Academy; so they advised the Muggles and their magical children to leave any way they could, while the staff members used side-along Apparition to take the other students to Novosibirsk, in Siberia, where they secretly set up their Academy. When the political police found that their quarry had escaped, they arrested and tortured hundreds of people to discover who had been responsible. To save those innocent prisoners from any further suffering on his behalf, Bukharin confessed and was arrested. The following year he suffered the fate of so many victims of Stalin's purges: he was subjected to a public show trial, forced by threats to his family to confess to crimes he hadn't committed, and executed.

By rigorously enforcing the International Statute of Secrecy, the magical people managed to keep the Academy undetected throughout Stalin's reign of terror. Life became easier for them when Nikita Khrushchev [8] acceded to power, for he relaxed all of Stalin's draconian measures

including his attempts to eliminate magic. People who were known to have dissident views or magical powers were no longer punished as long as they didn't engage in public demonstrations; so the International Statute of Secrecy was relaxed so that it forbade only public demonstrations of magic, Muggle-borns were once again admitted to the Academy and some magical people joined the reformed Communist Party in the hope of promoting further reforms. He also set up a new city called Akademgorodok close to Novosibirsk, devoted to the study of science. A few magical people decided to study science there and the new science they learned further improved their magic.

In 1964 Leonid Brezhnev [9] and his cronies ousted Khrushchev and partially reversed his reforms. They increased the amount of repression against dissidents, stifling what little political freedom he had allowed. After the six day war between Israel and the Arabs in 1967 they made it nearly impossible for Jews to gain access to universities or to any jobs requiring a university education. They invaded first Czechoslovakia, where the new Communist government had introduced democratic reforms, and then Afghanistan, where the new Communist government was trying to put down a Muslim insurrection. The magical people remembered having been persecuted, first by the Church and then by Stalin's political police, and, like the Jews, they disapproved of anyone being persecuted, be they Jews, dissidents or people in the countries Russia was invading. They didn't expect Brezhnev to share their humanistic feelings; so they tried to show him that these actions of his were harming the country's reputation and its economy, but he was too stupid to understand their reasoning.

Nothing much changed during the brief reign of Chernenko or of Andropov, but the accession to power of the wizard Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 brought about some positive developments. He was the most enlightened of Communist Russia's leaders with the possible exception of Bukharin. He introduced needed reforms, including glasnost (transparency) and perestroika (restructuring of the stagnant economy), he reduced the degree of repression, he removed the restrictions on Jews and he withdrew from the disastrous war in Afghanistan. Take a look at his picture [10]. Do you notice the birthmark on his forehead? Do you know of any other wizard who has a mark on the same part of his body? A few people have suggested that it is a Horcrux inadvertently put there by an evil wizard who tried to kill him, but this theory is not widely believed, because, although he did make enemies, in particular when he tried to combat the alcoholism that was endemic in his country, none of his enemies was magical.

One of the reforms he introduced ushered in a second Golden Age of Magic. Like Bukharin before him, he revealed his magical powers and invited the other magical people to join the Muggles in modernizing Russia. Once again the International Statute of Secrecy stopped being enforced, many magical people joined the reformed Communist Party and many more of them than before studied Muggle science now that they could freely demonstrate their magical powers to the Muggle students and teachers. As a result, Russia once again produced the best magic in the world, which was copied in Western countries. But this Golden Age, like its predecessor, was to be as brief as it was glorious. To explain the cause of its demise, I will have to insert a brief discussion of an event, seemingly unrelated to magic, that took place outside of Russia.

In 1984 the Reagan administration in the United States ordered a massive military build-up including the production of defensive missiles. These missiles wouldn't have been capable of

actually defending the United States, but that wasn't what they were meant to do. They were meant to scare the Russians into increasing their own military expenditures, thus undermining their economy. The Russians were indeed fooled into increasing their military spending to maintain a credible deterrent to a non-existent threat, and the country's economy took a nose-dive. The liberalization promoted by Gorbachev did nothing to placate the American administration: their aim wasn't to liberalize Russian Communism but to destroy it. After all, if it had ever become truly democratic, it might have given some people the idea that they could enjoy BOTH the economic security offered by Communism AND the personal and political freedom offered by democracy, and neither the Russian hard-liners (who had staged the invasion of Czechoslovakia) nor the American ones (who had promoted the fascist coup against a democratically elected Socialist government in Chile) were about to let THAT happen!

The restructuring of the Russian economy and the withdrawal from Afghanistan slowed the economic decline but weren't enough to halt it altogether. The lower the Gross National Product sank, the more numerous Gorbachev's enemies became. Some of them – hard-line Communists – blamed his reforms for the economic decline; they tried to oust him but they failed. Others, led by Boris Yeltsin, blamed his refusal to cave in to American pressure, and in 1991 they succeeded in ousting him. Under Yeltsin's leadership Russia restored the capitalist system. Some Russians grew obscenely rich and others obscenely poor, but the American administration was appeased and the arms race halted, and with it, the decline in Russia's GNP.

Yeltsin was a Westernizer; so he did not promote the Russian Orthodox Church. But he was also a drunkard; so he was succeeded in 1999 by Vladimir Putin, a Russian nationalist. Putin re-established the power of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the persecution of magical people was renewed. Once again the magical people enforced the International Statute of Secrecy, or rather, they tried to enforce it but, thanks to the internet, information about magic spread too fast to be stopped by Memory Charms; so the International Statue of Secrecy had by now become unenforceable. In most Western countries it had also become unnecessary because the religious extremists who had once turned Muggles against magic no longer had much influence; so a growing number of magical people there began to campaign for its revocation. But in Russia the magical people were once again being persecuted and now they could no longer hide from their persecutors. After several failed attempts to keep the Academy a secret by relocating it, they finally closed it.

In desperation to save themselves, they turned to members of the opposition and begged for refuge. But the Communists under Zuzanov blamed Gorbachev and his supporters for the fall of Communism; so they joined forces with their old enemy, the Church, in persecuting magical people. The non-Communist opposition never forgave the magical people for their role in defeating the War of Intervention; in their opinion the magical people richly deserved everything they ever suffered. The Jews, who had once befriended magical people, were particularly hostile because of the discrimination they had suffered at Brezhnev's hands. Even the attempts of the magical people to show him the error of his ways didn't redeem them, because they hadn't succeeded in making life any easier for the Jews.

With the entire country united against them, the magical people had no option but to flee. Some of them went to Asia where they could practise magic freely among Muggles, but the magical

schools there didn't admit Muggle-borns and were too rigid to please the Russian students they did admit. Some went to Bulgaria, where the people liked Russians, but the Durmstrang Institute was too keen on the Dark Arts for their tastes. Some went to France or Great Britain, where the magical schools had more agreeable curricula and admission policies, but neither the French nor the British wanted to make friends with foreigners. Some went to the United States, that melting pot where foreigners could be accepted if they made themselves indistinguishable from the locals, but the Russians were unwilling to do so and they feared the emerging religious right. Some went to Canada; the English Canadians accommodated foreigners but the only school of magic in Canada was in Eastern Quebec, where the locals saw foreigners as a threat to the purity of the French language. None of the refugees was happy, and none of them wielded enough influence to make any further improvement to the practice of magic.

And so the story of magic in Russia came to a tragic end, which is all the sadder for its contrast with the two Golden Ages of Magic with their promise of what might have been.

REFERENCES

If clicking on a link doesn't work, copy it and paste it in your browser.

[1] <http://geology.com/world/russia-map.gif>

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catherine_the_Great

[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_II_of_Russia

[4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Kerensky

[5] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikolai_Bukharin

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin

[7] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin

[8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nikita_Khrushchev

[9] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonid_Brezhnev

[10] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mikhail_Gorbachev

Your professor left no additional notes for this assignment.