

Cases of the Reincarnation Type: An Evaluation of Some Indirect Evidence with Examples of "Silent" Cases

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Abstract — In a published summary of recent studies of cases of the reincarnation type, I suggested that paranormal processes may be involved. The counter hypothesis which requires the most detailed analysis before it can be rejected is the one which states that significant information transfers — apart from occasional deceptions and chance correspondences — are entirely due to unintentional normal processes about which the families involved are not aware. Such a normal information transfer is most likely when the subject and the previous personality are members of the same family (or village) or when the subject's parents expect the subject to be a rebirth case. Some subjects in this category, however, never speak about a previous life. This and other related findings support the suggestion that the counter hypothesis above is not an adequate rejection of a paranormality hypothesis in connection with cases of the reincarnation type.

Introduction

On the basis of 112 cases which I studied mainly in Turkey, but also in Thailand and Burma, during the last eight years there is no doubt that in some communities children can be found who talk about previous lives (PLs). What these children say suggests that they can — usually only for a limited period of time — provide information about particular previous personalities (PPs), *i.e.*, persons who have previously died. In some cases a child, *i.e.*, a subject (S), may have information which could correspond by chance to some aspects of a PP's life. However, if relatively unselected samples of such cases are considered, all the correspondences cannot be explained by chance alone. When for a period of time I was able to investigate all cases that came to my attention, I regarded these cases as parts of a relatively unselected sample (Keil, 1991). More recently when I had more cases than I had time to study, I had to make some selections. In Keil (1991) I also argued that deliberate deceptions occur in such a small number of cases that they should be discarded as a general explanation for significant correspondences.

This paper does not attempt to answer the question whether reincarnation may actually occur. However, an evaluation of the paranormality hypothesis seems a necessary first step before any assumed reality of rebirth could be further considered. In the areas where these investigations were carried out, the statements and processes which are discussed here are understood within a

framework of rebirth expectations. Consequently the terms used in this paper are generally those which we heard from our respondents. These terms are not enclosed in inverted commas but a literal interpretation is not necessarily intended.

Most fieldwork reports suggesting paranormal processes emphasize the best examples of what might be called "white crow" cases (by which I mean, following William James, a case that disproves the generalization that there are no paranormal processes). The main purpose of this paper is to show that a possible explanation indicating how black crows may have changed into white ones by normal means is inadequate.

With one or two exceptions the "silent" or "near silent" cases discussed in this paper do not provide much evidence for paranormal processes. Nevertheless, I need to show that "silent" subjects did not say anything suggesting paranormal connections with previous lives. Consequently, statements which only have a minimal suggestion of such connections need to be considered rather carefully. This may involve statements which would be discarded in a discussion in support of white crow cases. For instance, if a young child who often visits a house nearby in which a previous personality used to live refers to it as "my house," this would not suggest a paranormal connection. Nevertheless, such a statement must be mentioned and evaluated, if it is necessary to show that the child did not talk about a previous life.

Before some indirect evidence in connection with silent and near-silent cases is evaluated, two examples of direct evidence may help to demonstrate that I encountered a number of substantial "white crow" cases, i.e. cases suggesting paranormal processes.

The Engin Sungur case

In 1990 I met Engin Sungur in Dover village, Hatay, Turkey. Engin was then 9 years old. He still remembered substantial details of his PL although his memories had faded during the last three years (Mills, Haraldsson and Keil, 1994). Engin believes that in his PL he was Naif Cicek (the PP).

The two families live in separate villages and had no contact with each other. Engin had started to talk about a PL when he was two years old. When Engin, together with his parents, visited some relatives, they could see PP's village at a distance. Engin told his parents "I can see my village where I used to live." Engin was then less than four years old.

Engin made the following relatively independent statements:

1. I can see my village where I used to live.
2. I am Naif...
3. Cicek.
4. I went to Ankara...
5. before I died.
6. Called Giihan "my daughter."

7. I am your father [said to Gulhan of item 6].
8. My son hid in a kiln used for baking.
9. Called Naif's wife "my wife."
10. Called at least seven other family members by name.
11. This is my land.
12. I made this myself (tin oil lamp).
13. I was hit by my own truck...
14. when Naif's son Fikret accidentally backed into him.
15. Recognized Naif's truck.
16. Identified himself as father of Naif's son Fikret.
17. You are not taking good care of this truck.
18. Recognized taxi (dolmus) drivers Naif knew.
19. I had asked for a loan of money from my sister Nazire...
20. but Nazire refused.
21. I had asked for a loan of money from my sister Kurziye.
22. Kurziye gave him the money.

The first 17 statements were correct. I was not able to find out whether the last 5 statements were correct or not.

In connection with this case I interviewed **Engin**, his parents, his first teacher and Dr. Abdurrahman Karaali as well as Naif's wife and Naif's daughters Ayfer, Gulhan and Fidan. (For further details of this case see Mills, Haraldsson and Keil, 1994.)

The Tutkhorn Chitpricha case

In 1988 I met Tutkhorn Chitpricha in Bangkok, Thailand; Tutkhorn was then six years old. When he was 18 months old, he started to make some statements about an accident and had nightmares on account of it. Tutkhorn's parents were concerned and did not encourage their son to talk about a PL. Tutkhorn stopped speaking about these events when he was less than three years old. His statements referred to his father's brother who had died about one year before Tutkhorn was born. Although this is a case with a subject and a previous personality who are closely related to each other, there are many aspects and details which suggest that paranormal elements were involved (Keil, 1991).

When Tutkhorn was born his parents lived about 500 kilometers from the town in which Tutkhorn's father had grown up and in which the PP (Tutkhorn's father's brother Dang) stayed until he died. Dang died in a road accident about 90 kilometers from this town. Tutkhorn did not visit this town until he was two years old. He had then already spoken about a PL.

The following statements and events occurred:

1. I will die... [Tutkhorn spoke in the future tense, but with obvious reference to past events.]
2. inanaccident...
3. in a road accident.

4. Tutkhorn recognized the accident site when he was traveling on that road for the first time.
5. Tutkhorn recognized two drivers who had worked for Dang among other drivers who visited Tutkhorn's father.
6. Tutkhorn spoke to the drivers in a dialect not used by his parents and not spoken in Bangkok. (Dang used this dialect with his drivers).
7. Tutkhorn used their nicknames when he spoke to these drivers.

The above statements and events were confirmed and appear to include paranormal elements. Some further statements and events (food preferences, behavioral characteristics etc., in agreement with the PP) also suggest a connection to a PL but may not include any paranormal elements.

In connection with this case I spoke to Tutkhorn, his parents, his grandfather and to one brother and sister of Tutkhorn's father as well as to an abbot who was present when I interviewed Tutkhorn's grandfather. (For further details see Keil, 1991.)

When the question is considered whether paranormal processes have occurred, there is good evidence for some cases that normal information transfers could not have taken place. Neither the S who was born after a previous personality had died nor persons with whom the S had been in contact had any access to information about the PP. Only after the S had provided enough details about the PP was contact established. Cases in this category, where both families claim that no prior contacts existed between them, occur fairly frequently among the reincarnation cases that have been studied. In some communities almost half of the reincarnation cases fall into this category. More extensive investigations sometimes reveal that contacts had occurred after all but were later forgotten or that contacts had occurred about which the S's parents were unaware, *e.g.*, when a more distant relative of the S who knew something about the PP had visited the S's family.

Critics may argue that normal contacts must have existed whenever a S has a significant amount of information about a PP, even though some cases make such an extreme view look somewhat unreasonable, *e.g.*, if the relevant families were decidedly isolated from each other. Nevertheless, it is of considerable interest to get some indication of how far contacts between the relevant families actually influence the verbal behavior of Ss. It is difficult to assess this directly but some indicators can be suggested on the basis of which the importance of such contacts can be evaluated.

1. If the parents of the S had no expectations that the S is a rebirth case until the S started to give information about a PL, the S's siblings can be regarded as a limited control. This is of particular interest if the S's birth did not follow the PP's death for a number of years within which same-sex siblings of the S were born. (Since no sex-change cases have been re-

ported in Turkey where I studied the majority of my cases, the same-sex provision is necessary.) Examples of this kind occurred. Since this category so far has only been described in an almost abstract way, it is also desirable to convey something of the impressions that an investigator experiences in the field. In Turkey most Ss have a relatively large number of siblings. Ten are not uncommon and the average is probably around 5 or 6. It is difficult to discuss a case as being due to unintentional normal communications when the S's siblings who usually grew up under very similar conditions have shown no inclination to talk about a PL. An extensive analysis of the possibility of using siblings as controls would be desirable but goes beyond the scope of this paper.

2. Any study of special subjects ideally should be carried out in conjunction with a similar investigation of other (normal) subjects. Until recently the resources for such an undertaking have not been available. However, starting in May 1996, a longitudinal study of reincarnation cases in Turkey also includes a comparison with the nearest sibling in each family.
3. In Turkey and Thailand where I studied most of my cases the parents of Ss are by no means uniformly pleased or even interested in what Ss say about PLs. Such an attitude does not necessarily discourage parents in this category from talking about PPs, if they know something about them, but they are less likely to express any rebirth expectations. Under such circumstances the tendency of some Ss to refer to "themselves" when they talk about PPs is much more difficult to explain on the basis of conversations which they may have overheard.
4. If on the basis of information provided by an S and/or on the basis of other indicators such as birthmarks and dreams no credible previous personality can be identified, the case is regarded as unsolved. That is, unsolved cases suggest that Ss may provide information about PLs although the relevant PPs cannot be identified. Although the verbal details about PLs which these Ss provide may sometimes contain some elements which can be traced back to persons with whom these Ss are associated, usually the main substance of these details is not related to contacts with other identifiable persons. Irrespective of whether the verbal statements which are made by such Ss are based on fantasies or on paranormal information, these cases suggest that the verbal statements about PLs are not significantly influenced by persons with whom these children are associated.
5. The most interesting category is one in which Ss never talk about PLs even though they were expected to be rebirth cases from the time they were born. These expectations are based on birthmarks, birth defects, and announcing dreams which suggest a connection with a particular PP. Announcing dreams which suggest that an S is a rebirth of a particular PP often occur shortly before or after the S is born. Sometimes such

dreams are also associated with the death of a PP. Predictions and announcements by religious persons, skin color, and various physiological, behavioral and racial characteristics may also play a role. Ss who do talk usually provide information about PLs by the time they are 3 or 4 years old and occasionally somewhat later. There are virtually no Ss who started to talk when they were 12 or older. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that Ss who have not spoken about PLs by the time they are 10 or 12 have no inclination to use normal information (which they may have overheard) as a basis for fantasies which they express as memories of PLs.

The fact that no verbal references to a PL were made does not necessarily mean that all Ss in this category have no connection with any PLs. However, it does suggest that expectations by parents and others may be less influential as far as verbal communications are concerned than might be assumed in the first place.

Six cases in this last category will be discussed later. For three of these cases the Ss were expected to be rebirth cases because of dreams by the S's or PP's relatives and because the Ss were born within a limited timespan after the PPs had died. Although the majority of rebirth cases in Turkey occur within one year of the PP's death, a two year interval is still in agreement with general expectations. One Turkish and one Thai S were assumed to be reborn PPs because of striking birthmarks. For a further Turkish case PP's relatives expected the S to be a rebirth case mainly because of the statements of a fortune teller, who had based his predictions on a dream.

These kinds of non-verbal, or "silent", cases have not been recorded in large numbers. This may be due to the fact that such cases are less likely to be known in the communities in which they occur and consequently did not come to our attention. During my earlier visits to Turkey I had not been concerned with indirect evidence. Since time was limited I did not investigate a number of cases of Ss who apparently had not spoken about PLs at all or only to a very limited extent. Such cases are really unlikely to provide evidence for paranormal connections unless good birthmarks or other indicators are present. Nevertheless, even if the real percentage of such cases is relatively small, these cases are important because they represent the end of a continuum. There are further similar cases in which the Ss only said a few words which refer to a PL. Three further cases in this borderline category will be considered. These cases would also suggest that the expectations of persons with whom an S has contacts do not seem to encourage the emergence of the kind of verbal statements which occur among Ss who speak at some length about PLs.

Stevenson (in press) listed 21 Ss who had not spoken about PLs, but who were regarded as rebirth cases mainly because of birthmarks or birth defects. Most and perhaps all of these Ss were expected to be rebirth cases from the time they were born, but occasionally birthmarks may only have been associated with particular PPs at a later stage, when relatives of the relevant PPs vis-

ited the Ss. For four of these cases the PPs were not known, *i.e.*, these cases are unsolved. In his book Stevenson also included a list of another seven Ss who made only one or two statements about their presumed PLs. Birthmarks were the main features in six of these cases, and consequently most likely these Ss were also expected to be rebirth cases from the time they were born. One of these cases remains unsolved.

Without verbal statements about PLs, birthmarks are often regarded as the strongest indication that a rebirth case exists. Dreams, predictions by religious persons, and facial and behavioral features may also play a role.

Stevenson selected 225 cases from a larger case collection for special study because of prominent birthmarks and birth defects and because these cases had been investigated to a point where the findings can be regarded with considerable confidence. The 21 silent cases together with the seven near-silent cases discussed above represent about 12 percent of the birthmark and birth defect cases specially selected by Stevenson. We need to remember that some — perhaps many — of the silent or near-silent cases (but without birthmarks or birth defects) probably never come to our attention. In 1995 I only became aware of a silent case when I was investigating a "non-silent" one.

Among the cases that I studied in Turkey and Thailand children with birthmarks and/or defects were most strongly regarded as rebirth cases by those with whom they had frequent contacts. It seems reasonable to assume that on an average this group of children is more likely to be influenced through expectations than children without birthmarks and/or defects. It seems therefore also reasonable to assume that the latter group might even have more silent or near-silent cases. It may be difficult to test this because early expectations based on, *e.g.*, dreams may later be abandoned when some children do not talk about PLs. Such cases — if they are known in a village community at all — may not be mentioned when inquiries about rebirth cases are made.

Among Burmese, Thai, Turkish, and some other communities dreams can also lead to strong expectations that a rebirth has occurred or is going to occur, particularly when the relatives of the Ss or PPs have dreams close to the time when an S is born and when such dreams reveal some connection between the S and the PP. However, if no other indicators emerge over a period of time, dreams are more easily forgotten than striking birthmarks or birth defects.

I do not suggest that the 12% figure from Stevenson's **birthmark/defect** cases indicates a particular percentage of silent or near-silent cases in the general population of rebirth cases, but it seems reasonable to assume that the order of magnitude is above 5%.

These assumptions may not be appropriate for rebirth cases in communities with different cultural traditions, *e.g.*, when dreams are not regarded as an indication that particular children can be expected to be rebirth cases. If — as an extreme example — a community accepts children as rebirth cases only when they start to talk about PLs and if all other possible indicators such as birthmarks, birth defects, dreams etc. are ignored, silent cases cannot occur.

Stevenson's list of 21 silent and 7 near-silent cases includes 2 Turkish cases. In 1995 I had an opportunity to reinvestigate one of these cases which will also be discussed in this paper. On a subjective and somewhat intuitive basis I would also expect a figure of above 5% for the silent or near-silent cases in Turkey. On account of time limitations I did not pursue all silent cases that came to my attention. Consequently, no particular percentage figure can really be justified for my Turkish cases. It is, however, very unlikely that the percentage is so small that the arguments presented in this paper can be dismissed as rare exceptions. In Thailand I have investigated only a very small number of cases and it is not possible to make any meaningful assessments about the percentage of silent Thai cases. One silent case from Thailand will be discussed later.

Summary of Silent and Near Silent Cases

- Sergi Beyaz: Silent case. Expectations based on dream. Close relationship between the S and the PP.
- Elif Karacan: Silent case. Expectations based on dreams. Some behavioral and speech similarities.
- Mahmut Beyaz: Silent case. Expectations based on dreams. Ritual to suppress the S's memories.
- Mithat Ceylan: Silent case. Expectations based on dreams and on death/rebirth time proximity. Expectations limited to the S's mother and sister.
- Cengiz Elma: Silent case. Expectations based on birthmarks and dreams. The PP is regarded as a war hero.
- Bussakorn Sumrongthong: Silent case. Expectations based on special (experimental) birthmark. The S's mother had looked after the PP, who died young.
- Rena Sari: Near silent case. Expectations based on dream and on death/rebirth time proximity. Behavioral similarities according to the S's parents.
- Selda Buz: Near silent case. Expectations based on birthmarks and dreams. Same family case.
- Zafer Celik: Near silent case. Expectations based on dreams and birthmarks. Behavioral similarities according to the PP's parents. Some reluctance to accept the case by the S's parents.

The Sergi Beyaz Case

In 1991 I interviewed Sergi's mother, Kerime Beyaz, in Samandag, Hatay, Turkey as well as the PP's daughter, Edibe Beyaz, who lives near the S's family at a distance of 100 meters. The two families are distantly related. The PP, *i.e.*, Atra Beyaz, died about 1981, when she was probably 70. The cause of her

death was not known, but she suffered from diabetes. The PP's husband had died earlier.

Before Sergi was born her grandmother Anime had an announcing dream in which the PP insisted that she wanted to come to Anime's family. Sergi's mother did not hear about this dream until after her child was born. The birth was easy and Sergi had no birthmarks. She was born in 1983 — about 2 years after the PP had died. Sergi was the 6th child. In 1991 she had 7 siblings.

The PP's relatives heard about Anime's dream and visited Sergi one day after she was born. They brought presents for her. When Sergi was one year old she started to walk. When she was one and one half she started to talk. At the time of our visit Sergi attended primary school.

When Sergi was six months old she wanted to stay in the arms of the PP's daughter. As soon as she was able to walk she spent most of her time at the PP's daughter's home. She was very affectionate towards the PP's daughter. When Sergi was 2, she and her sister Nazli were walking around in the PP's home. Nazli asked her, "whose house is this?" Sergi said, "this is my house." She also said, "this is my land" when the PP's land was pointed out to her. Sergi never spoke about a PL and the above remarks are the only ones that could perhaps have something to do with a PL. The PP's relatives liked Sergi very much and accepted her as the PP reborn. Sergi's parents are not sure but accept the possibility that she could be PP reborn. In 1994 and 1995 I interviewed Sergi's mother again. At the time of the last visit Sergi was 11 years old. She had not in any way referred to a PL since my last visit in 1991. When I asked Sergi's mother whether she regarded Sergi's remarks about "my house" and "my land" as statements referring to a PL, she told me that any child could have said something like that at such an age and that the reincarnation assumption was based on the S's grandmother's dream. I had not in any way indicated that I was interested in the absence of verbal statements about a PL.

Comment

This case does not suggest that there is a paranormal connection between the PP and the S although this possibility cannot be ruled out with certainty. It seems likely that the PP's relatives, expecting the S to be the PP reborn, were particularly affectionate towards the S and that the S in turn became very attached to the PP's daughter. The S's remarks at the age of two cannot be regarded as anything extraordinary. A two-year-old child spending a lot of time at a particular place may very well refer to it as "my house." The S's remarks were responses. They had not been made spontaneously. I do not regard them as statements about a PL. The S's parents knew the PP and live close to the PP's relatives. They themselves did not wish the S to be a rebirth case, and they remain uncertain whether the S should be regarded as the PP reborn. However, the PP's relatives had frequent contacts with the S almost from the time the S was born. When the S started to talk she was already visiting the PP's daughter.

In countries like Turkey and Thailand some relatives of the PP are often

much more positively interested in Ss who are regarded as rebirth cases than the parents of these Ss. Parents of the Ss, even if they fully accept reincarnation as part of their traditional beliefs, often express considerable misgivings when their own children are involved. Parents are afraid because these children may become more affectionate towards relatives of PPs. Parents are also concerned because some neighbors who are less inclined to accept reincarnation may become suspicious in various ways and because of various local beliefs, *e.g.*, that such children often die young. More often parents of Ss only show similar signs of interest in rebirth as far as their own children are concerned when the same family is involved, *e.g.*, when a later child is believed to be the rebirth case of a sibling who had died earlier.

Although birthmark or birth defect cases may generally generate stronger expectations than cases with expectations based on dreams, the frequent close contacts from an early age between the S and the PP's relatives place the Sergi Beyaz case also into a strong expectation category.

If Ss are inclined to talk about PLs at all, based on normal information which they have overheard, then Sergi Beyaz had an early childhood which might be expected to induce such fantasies. Yet it did not happen.

The Elif Karacan Case

Elif's maternal grandmother had a heart problem. Apparently she died when injections were administered which her body did not accept. Elif's grandmother, *i.e.*, the PP, was about 75 when she died in 1978. The S was born in 1980.

In 1994 I interviewed Elif Karacan, *i.e.*, the S, her mother Nesrin and her father Sefik in Tarsus, Turkey.

Shortly before Elif was born a neighbor had a dream in which the rebirth of Elif's grandmother was announced. Elif's father also had a dream in which his late mother-in-law (PP) told him that she would stay in his house. Elif has no conscious memories of a PL. Elif's parents told us that she talks in a similar way to the PP. Elif also tends to hide things which was characteristic of the PP. Elif's parents are convinced that Elif is the PP reborn but they also told us that she has never said anything about a PL.

Comment

This case does not support the view that there are paranormal connections between the PP and the S. Nevertheless, this possibility cannot be ruled out completely. If there are speech similarities and other behavior patterns which cannot be easily attributed to chance — and this is difficult to assess — normal factors could readily account for such similarities since the S is closely related to the PP. Although Elif's parents remained convinced that Elif (who was 13 in 1994) is the PP reborn, she had never spoken about a PL.

The Mahmut Beyaz case

The PP, *i.e.*, Alaadin Atahan, died in Saudi Arabia. The PP was buried 20 days later and 12 days afterwards Mahmut was born. Before his birth a fortune teller had told the PP's relatives that this child would be the PP reborn. This prediction was based on a dream which the fortune teller had. Later he told the PP's sister Kerime that Mahmut was her brother reborn and that he would talk about a PL. In 1991 Kerime agreed that Mahmut was her brother. He was then 7 or 8 years old.

In 1991 I interviewed the PP's sister Kerime in Samandag, Hatay, Turkey. The S's relatives are neighbors. The two families are related.

According to Kerime, Mahmut's mother was worried that he might die if he remembered a PL and fed him with someone else's spoon (which in some communities is regarded as a ritual that stops children from remembering their PLs). This happened before Mahmut was 6 months old. Kerime was angry about this because she had asked Mahmut's mother to wait until he could speak.

According to Kerime, Mahmut apparently said "mother" and "open the door" when he was less than one month old, but he never said anything which referred to a PL. Mahmut was in close contact with the PP's relatives until he was 6 years old when the two families started to quarrel. The disagreements between the two families had nothing to do with the assumptions about his re-birth.

In 1994 I interviewed Mahmut's mother. Mahmut is the youngest child among 7 siblings. In 1994 he was 11 years old. He was not at home when I talked to his mother. In 1995 I visited Mahmut's parents once more. I also had an opportunity to talk to Mahmut for a short while. He was then 12 years old. Mahmut's mother remembers the PP quite well. She did not think that Mahmut is similar in appearance. Mahmut's parents told us that Mahmut had never said anything about a PL. Mahmut confirmed this as far as he can remember. Mahmut's mother told us that she had no strong views about the reincarnation assumptions.

Comment

This case does not suggest a paranormal connection between the S and the PP. Nevertheless, the PP's relatives still regarded Mahmut as the PP reborn when he was 6 years old even though he had not said anything about a PL. Mahmut had close contacts with the PP's relatives until he was 6. The PP's sister was angry that Mahmut's mother used a ritual that might stop him from remembering a PL. On account of this ritual Mahmut's relatives did not expect him to talk about a PL but the PP's relatives still hoped that this would happen. Stevenson and Chadha (1990) found that when in India attempts were made to suppress children from talking about PLs, the statements made by these chil-

dren did not cease significantly sooner than the statements that were made by other Ss who were not suppressed.

Some children continue to talk about PLs in spite of these rituals. It is not clear how much these expectations were reduced among persons with whom Mahmut had contacts. In general the expectations (that the S would talk about a PL) were probably not particularly high. Nevertheless, compared with non-silent cases, which include many without obvious expectations or with much weaker expectations, the Mahmut Beyaz case would suggest a higher than average expectation rating.

The Mithat Ceylan Case

In 1995 I met Mithat Ceylan's mother, Nesime, in Harbiye, Turkey. Mithat had died in 1986.

Nesime told us that two days before Mithat was born she had a dream that Ali Duman would come to her. According to Nesime, Ali had died because of an injection on the same day in 1966 on which Mithat was born.

Mithat had no birthmarks. Mithat started to talk before he was 1. In this respect he was different from his siblings. Otherwise his childhood was normal and uneventful. Nesime expected Mithat to be Ali reborn and had mentioned it to her sister but otherwise had not spoken about it among her relatives. Mithat never spoke about a previous life.

During the time I was in Antakya in 1995, I was unable to contact relatives of the Ali Duman family. Cevdet Rende, who lives in Antakya, helped me in 1995 when I investigated cases. He was later able to confirm that a person by the name of Ali Duman died at about the time when Mithat was born. Ali Duman lived in the same small town where Mithat was born. The death register for the area only has entries starting in 1980 and dates and records about previous deaths could not be obtained.

Comment

There is virtually no indication that any paranormal connection exists between Mithat Ceylan and Ali Duman. This case is not necessarily a particularly strong one as far as indirect evidence is concerned either. Mithat's mother's expectations were only based on a dream, and she did not share her expectations with many relatives.

Nevertheless, Mithat in his early life had most contact with his mother. She still remembered her dream after almost 30 years. This contact obviously did not induce Mithat to talk about a previous life.

However, this case is important primarily for a different reason. This case only came to my attention because Mithat is believed to be reborn as Oser Cobon. It was only in connection with the investigation of the Oser Cobon case that the silent Mithat case was mentioned. This supports my suggestion that silent cases are less likely to come to our attention and that the percentage

of these cases is probably somewhat higher than the actual number that we investigated.

The Cengiz Elma Case

This case had initially been investigated by Resat Bayer (RB) in 1972 and by Ian Stevenson together with RB in 1973. In May 1995 I interviewed Cengiz's mother at her home near Adana, Turkey. Within the time available I was not able to meet Cengiz who was at work.

Cengiz was born August 10, 1964. Prior to his birth Cengiz's mother had a dream in which at a funeral she saw the body of a young man which was thrown into her house. In the dream a voice told her that his name was Cengiz Topal. On account of this dream she called her son, who was born on the following day, Cengiz .

Cengiz Topal was an Air Force officer who, during an attack on Cyprus in 1964 (either on August 8 or 9), was tortured and killed after he had parachuted into an area under the control of Greek soldiers. Apparently his plane was damaged. He was forced to jump and his death was regarded by the Turkish community as murder. His death was reported by Turkish newspapers, but I have not been able to obtain a copy of these papers.

At that time a military conflict about the sovereignty of Cyprus had developed between Turkey and Greece. This conflict had a considerable significance for both countries and caused a strong emotional involvement among many Turks and Greeks.

Apparently Cengiz was born after Cengiz Topal had died, but perhaps before his mother had heard anything about Cengiz Topal's death.

Cengiz Elma had various birthmarks and defects, some of which are still visible. At birth his body looked as if it had been burnt. His eyes were bleeding and he did not open them for several days. Cengiz never spoke about a PL even though his parents expected him to be a rebirth case. The expectation was based on the S's mother's dream and the S's birthmarks which seem to be in agreement with the injuries said to have been suffered by Cengiz Topal.

Comment

This case may suggest a more substantial paranormal connection between Cengiz Elma and Cengiz Topal. It is difficult in 1995 to judge whether Cengiz's mother's dream in 1964 occurred before she had any normal news about Cengiz Topal. The strongest connection may be based on birthmarks and birth defects if it could be established that they agree with Cengiz Topal's injuries.

Cengiz Topal was (and to some extent still is) remembered and regarded as an heroic Air Force officer. If it is assumed that normal external influences are entirely responsible for the apparently paranormal memories that some children have, Cengiz Elma should have been a good candidate to develop fantasies about a previous life; yet he remained silent.

The Bussakorn Sumrongthong Case

This case is a particularly interesting one because Bussakorn has a very striking "experimental" birthmark which is in good agreement with a mark that was made (after the death of the PP) on the arm of the PP (who was less than one year old at death) by Bussakorn's mother. After the PP had died, Bussakorn's mother had marked the arm of the PP in the hope that a child would be born with a similar mark, indicating that this child was the PP reborn. This is a traditional custom seldom practiced in Thailand now.

A separate report about this case will be prepared for publication at a future date. The paranormality question in connection with the birthmark will then be discussed in some detail. At present this case is only included because it is also a silent case.

Bussakorn's mother died a few years ago before I became aware of this case. When in 1992 I interviewed Bussakorn (who was 29 then) and her father in Bangkok, Thailand, they agreed that they had heard from Bussakorn's mother that she had marked the PP's arms with ash in order to recognize a rebirth of the PP. At that time, before Bussakorn's mother was married, she had looked after the PP and was very fond of her. Bussakorn's mother had expressed her wish that the PP would later be reborn as her own child.

The PP's mother as well as the S's father's sister, Samorn, also confirmed that Bussakorn's mother had marked the PP's arm. The PP's mother knew about it when it happened and Samorn had heard about it before Bussakorn was born. During visits in 1994 and 1995 we received further confirmations that Bussakorn's mother had spoken about the "experimental" mark on the PP before her child was born.

Bussakorn was born about 10 years after the PP had died. She was the second child. She had one older brother. She had no contact with relatives of the PP until she was 10 years old. At that time when Bussakorn visited the PP's relatives for the first time, she had a feeling of familiarity in the PP's house. She did not recognize any relatives of the PP and she has never spoken about a PL. Bussakorn told me she has no memories which connect her to a PL. The PP had died as a young child before she was one year old.

Comment

Parents and relatives of an S who is regarded as a rebirth of a PP (who on account of early death never learnt to speak) may not have strong expectations that the S will speak about a PL. Nevertheless, they themselves will probably talk about the PP just as much as families with speaking PPs do. If Ss do primarily obtain their information about PLs from their families by normal means, then an S (apparently connected to a PP who died very young) should also incorporate the normal information (available through family members of the S) into fantasies about a PL.

The expectation by Bussakorn's mother that her child was the PP reborn

was particularly high. She had marked the dead body of the PP in order to recognize the rebirth of the PP and she had expressed the wish that the PP might be reborn as her own child. On account of the distinct birthmark (in agreement with the mark which Bussakorn's mother had made on the PP's arm) she was convinced that her child was the PP reborn. However, since the PP was less than one year old when she died, it is not clear to what extent Bussakorn's mother expected her child to speak about a PL. Apparently Bussakorn's behavior — with one exception — did not indicate any connection with a PL. The one exception, her feeling of familiarity with the PP's home, is difficult to evaluate and not particularly persuasive. The Bussakorn Sumronthong case also suggests that the high expectations of a close relative did not exert an influence on her which resulted in verbal or other behavior related to a PL.

The Rena Sari Case

In 1992 I interviewed Rena Sari and her father, Ali Sari, in Samankaya, Hatay, Turkey. The PP's relatives, who now live in Antakya, Turkey, were not at home during the time of my visit that year to Turkey.

When Rena (S) was born in 1965 her family and the PP's family lived only 100 meters apart. At the time of our visit the details about Mufide Sayar (PP) provided by Rena were based on normal communications between the two families. Mufide died at home in 1965 when she was five years old. Miifide had a painful eye problem as well as an illness that affected her bones. She was unable to walk. Rena was not sure whether some additional illness caused Miifide's death. When the PP's relatives returned from Miifide's funeral, Rena was born.

Rena's mother was in pain for three days before Rena was born. Apparently Miifide suffered for three days before she died. Prior to Rena's birth Rena's parents had four daughters but no sons. Before the S was born her mother dreamt that it would take more time before she would have a son. Rena has no birthmarks. When she was 15 months old she started to walk. Rena has difficulties when she stands up for any length of time but does not know whether this is caused by any problems related to her bones. Rena is afraid of blood. She used to run away when health workers gave injections. Rena graduated from elementary school and now does housework and needlework.

Rena does not remember anything about a PL. She was told that as a young child she had said "I'll go to my house" and was later found in front of the PP's house. Rena used to go there until she was 5 or 6 years old. Rena's father told us that Rena had said "I have two mothers" shortly after she had started to talk. Apparently Rena made no other verbal statements which could be linked to a PL. Rena can no longer remember that she made these statements. The S's parents became convinced that Rena is Miifide reborn because as a young child Rena followed Mufide's father with her eyes. When this happened Rena was in the arms of her mother and Rena's grandmother drew attention to this. Mufide's father was a close friend of Rena's father and Rena's relatives.

This behavior influenced Rena's parents more strongly than her few words which might refer to a PL. The S's father said that they became convinced on account of it. Rena indicated that the PP's relatives also believe that she is the PP reborn but Rena has considerable doubts whether this belief is justified.

Comment

This case does not suggest that there is a paranormal connection between the PP and the S although this possibility cannot be ruled out. It seems marginally stronger compared to the Sergi Beyaz case. A future interview with the PP's relatives is desirable but it would probably only minimally modify the above assessment. The relevant events occurred more than 20 years ago.

It appears that Rena's statement about two mothers was made spontaneously and this makes it more likely that she tried to refer to a PL. The statement about the PP's house is less impressive but nevertheless carries some weight because it was apparently made repeatedly and associated with behavior which suggests that these statements referred to a PL. I would therefore regard this case as one in which a small number of statements occurred which were probably meant to refer to a PL.

At this stage I have only Rena's and her father's comments that she was accepted as the PP by the PP's relatives. However, compared to the Sergi Beyaz case, Rena's parents were much more positive in their acceptance of Rena as a rebirth case. They expressed conviction when Rena was still very young, *i.e.*, when she followed the PP's father with her eyes.

Irrespective of whether Rena's statements and behavioral activities included some paranormal elements or not — and the arguments in favor of paranormality are very limited — from a very early age, *i.e.*, before Rena started to talk, she was raised by parents and was frequently visited by the PP's relatives who all expected her to be a rebirth case. Yet Rena did not — with the possible exception of two statements — talk about a PL.

The Selda Buz Case

In 1996 I met Selda Buz and her mother in Antakya, Turkey. Selda was born in 1990. Her parents are Siileyman and Samma Buz. Selda was expected to be the rebirth of Samma's sister Vahide Pehlivan. Vahide had died in a car accident about one week before Selda was born.

Selda was expected to be a rebirth case because of dreams by Selda's mother, Süleyman's brother, and Vahide's brother. Selda has various birthmarks but we were unable to find out whether there was any significant agreement between these birthmarks and any marks which Vahide had prior to or on account of the accident.

To date Selda has only made two statements which can perhaps be associated with a previous life. When she was less than two years old, she said, "take me home" and that she wanted to go to Hawa. The "take me home" remark was

regarded by Selda's relatives as an indication that she has some memories of a previous life. Selda's relatives did not know anybody by the name of Hawa and thought that Selda may have wanted to say **Hedi**, the name of Vahide's mother. However, we found out that Vahide had a close friend who was called Hawa. This suggests that Selda perhaps had some limited information about Vahide that can be regarded as paranormal.

At the age of six (in 1996) Selda is still within the age range in which some children add further details to their statements about PLs. However, Selda has not referred to a PL since she was two years old. Under the circumstances it seems justified to include her as a recent example of a near silent case.

Comment

It is probably unjustified to attach too much importance to Selda's statement about Hawa. Nevertheless, because Selda's family apparently did not know this name, it is possible that this statement indicates a paranormal connection to a PL. It cannot be ruled out that Selda may have heard this name from more distant family members. It is interesting though that this name could not have come up in discussions among family members who have most contact with Selda.

In spite of expectations by Selda's family and in spite of two early remarks which seemed to confirm these expectations, Selda has not said anything else that suggests a connection to a PL.

The Zafer Celik Case

In 1991 as well as in 1992 we met Zafer Celik and his father Nesib in Samandag, **Hatay**, Turkey. Zafer was expected to be the rebirth of Nevhel Fahliogullari, who died after a motorcycle accident in 1982. Zafer was born in the same year. His father was a friend of Nevhel, who also was a neighbor. Not long before Nevhel died both had gone to Cevlik for a kind of reunion celebration. This happened after Nesib had returned from Saudi Arabia, where he had worked for long periods.

Some days after Nevhel died, Nesib had a dream in which Nevhel wanted to come to his home. After the accident Nevhel's mother had two dreams in which Nevhel indicated that he would go to a neighbor (first dream) and that he would go to the Celik family (second dream). The PP's mother visited this family about one week after Zafer was born. However, Zafer's parents discouraged her and the PP's mother stopped her visits when Zafer was a few months old. Zafer's parents believe that Zafer said "mother" when he was less than one month old. This happened when the PP's mother visited him. There is a local belief that when children talk at such an early age they will soon die. For this reason Zafer's parents discouraged the PP's mother. When Zafer was two years old and started to talk, the PP's mother renewed her visits. At about this time Zafer's father asked Zafer "who is this lady?" He replied (referring to the

PP's mother) "this is my old mother." From then on Zafer had frequent contact with the PP's relatives. When Zafer was three years old he started to visit the PP's home.

Zafer has some birthmarks, which, according to the PP's mother, agree with some operation scars on the PP's body. Apparently when Zafer visited the PP's home for the first time he called several members of the PP's family by name. It is possible that Zafer had become aware of these names by normal means. Zafer's behavior during his first visit suggested to the PP's relatives that he was familiar with their home. Zafer continued to visit the PP's relatives and felt very much at home there.

Comment

Although there was an expectation by Zafer's parents that Zafer was the rebirth of Nevhel, it seems that they did not encourage any expressions of such expectations. Nevertheless, Zafer was visited by the PP's mother almost from the time he was born until he was a few months old. Zafer had further frequent contacts with the PP's family from the time he was two years old. Particularly the PP's mother, but also other members of the PP's family, believe that Zafer is the rebirth of Nevhel. They regard Zafer's behavior as an indication that he is Nevhel reborn. Yet with the exception of calling the PP's mother "my old mother" and perhaps "remembering" some names from Nevhel's family, Zafer never said anything that may have referred to a PL.

Conclusions

Compared with the nine cases discussed above, Stevenson's 21 Ss who did not talk about PLs may not have grown up under strictly comparable conditions and four of his cases remain unsolved. Nevertheless, expectations among relatives of the Ss and of the PPs may have been even higher because birthmarks and birth defects were the main feature for most of these cases.

Young children are influenced in various ways — including in what they say — by persons with whom they have frequent contacts. It is therefore possible to argue that Ss who never spoke about PLs even though they were expected to do so, belong to a distinct group with particular personality characteristics and/or circumstantial peculiarities. Consequently, all other Ss who do speak about PLs may do so because they make use of normally available information in their fantasies about PLs. Considering that to date the number of silent cases which I could investigate is rather small and varied, it is difficult to make systematic and relatively objective comparisons. Nevertheless, based on my own observations and in agreement with interpreters who assisted me, I cannot suggest any criteria which could differentiate between "silent" and "non-silent" Ss.

This presentation of indirect evidence is largely based on the partly subjective evaluations of nine cases. If future silent cases are more often pursued, a

better basis for the arguments presented here may emerge. As I have indicated before (Keil, 1991) the most promising approach appears to be a longitudinal study of very young children who are regarded as rebirth cases from the time they are born. Recently in Turkey such a study has been commenced.

The indirect evidence discussed in this paper does not suggest that Ss who speak about PLs are not influenced by persons they have contact with, but it does suggest that most of what is said about PLs and the way it is said, as well as their personal identification with the lives of PPs, cannot be easily rejected by assuming that expectations and normal influences are solely responsible.

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