

## The Stability of Assessments of Paranormal Connections in Reincarnation-Type Cases

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**Abstract**—The phrase “case of the reincarnation type” refers to any child who has information and/or other characteristics that suggest a paranormal connection between himself and a particular person who has died before he was born. By a “paranormal connection,” we mean the communication of information without the recognized sensory channels. Initially unintentionally, several cases previously studied by one of us (I.S.) were investigated by the other (J.K.) about 20 years after I.S.’s first investigation. Additional cases were then intentionally reinvestigated to test the stability of the paranormality assessments of 15 cases. All but one of the cases investigated 20 years later received the same or a lower paranormality rating. These results support the view that such case studies, even if carried out 2 decades after the relevant events occurred, do not generate inflated paranormality assessments.

*Keywords:* paranormal phenomena — reincarnation — memories

### Introduction

For the last 40 years, investigators have been examining cases in which a child is said to remember a previous life. For most of the cases that were investigated by one of the authors (I.S.) (Stevenson, 1974) and later by Mills (1989), Pasricha (1990), Haraldsson (1991), and the other author (J.K.) (Keil, 1991), interviews were conducted several years after the most important events had taken place. The “most important events” are nearly always ones that suggest the transmission of information without the usual sensory channels, i.e., paranormal processes. Some cases that seem important examples suggesting paranormal processes did not come to the attention of the above investigators until more than a decade had passed. The question must be asked whether in spite of such long intervals, relevant information remains sufficiently stable, or whether these case studies become significantly distorted, and in particular, whether informants, with the passage of time, tend to emphasize more heavily aspects of a case suggesting paranormal processes.

In an attempt to answer this question, 4 cases in Thailand, 10 in Turkey, and 1 case in Myanmar were investigated after (on average) more than 20 years. The study developed initially from the accidental reinvestigation of some cases by J.K. that had already been studied by I.S. about 2 decades earlier. J.K. only became aware of this after he had more or less completed his investigations. He found that the informants did not seem to be influenced by the earlier investigations, and some of them mentioned only toward the end of the interviews that an American professor had conducted a similar study years earlier. We then decided to reinvestigate some further cases to compare the results of 15 cases.

It could be argued that we should be primarily concerned in this paper with the study of memory over time. However, many aspects of memory, although relevant to the comparison of paranormality assessments, cannot be readily evaluated. A full appraisal of the memories of informants for these cases would require a larger series of cases than we report here. Nevertheless, we will cite, in a later section of this paper, some of the relevant literature on long-term memory.

For cases of the reincarnation type, the paranormality components in the connection between a person who has previously died (the previous personality) and a child (the subject) is the most important aspect. Although for most case studies, the strength of these components is not directly assessed; it is almost always assumed that such components may be present. Otherwise, the case report would not really be relevant to the reincarnation hypothesis.

As will be outlined in the Discussion section, an objective rating scale for paranormality in these cases should be developed, but we have not done this yet. The rating scores reported here are based on our more subjective evaluations. By presenting in some detail half of the cases that were compared, we hope that readers can make their own assessments.

### **Memory Aspects**

Although the main feature of this study is the stability of judgments about paranormal components of a case, we cannot isolate this question from the aspects of memory that are inevitably involved when informants report events that happened many years earlier.

It must be acknowledged that memories generally diminish over time. Bartlett (1932) also showed that informants may add new material without being aware of these changes. On the other hand, Prince (1918, 1919) reported two instances in which accounts of experiences written 15 and 20 years apart differed in only one detail. Similarly, Parsons (1962) found that a description of a building written 6 years after it was seen was correct in 18 out of 21 details.

Two studies of reports of experiences near death are directly pertinent to the question of the embellishment of reports with the passage of time. Greyson (1983) developed a scale for such experiences that indicates by increasing

scores the complexity—i.e., the amount of detail—in a report. He found no significant correlation between the score on the scale, indicating the complexity of the report, and the elapsed time between the experience and its report. Using data from a different series of near-death experiences, Alvarado and Zingrone (1997/98) also found no significant correlation between complexity of the report of an experience and the elapsed time between the experience and its report.

Vehicular accidents are often regarded as examples that show that the memories of several witnesses may differ substantially. However, vehicular accidents contain sequences of events that happen quickly and then end. Although our case studies may also include some dramatic sequences, such as when someone died in an accident or was killed intentionally, the events that were reported to us were already relatively settled and fixed in the minds of our informants before the first investigations were carried out. The memory aspects of our case studies are similar to what are termed “autobiographical memories.” Baddeley (1998) reviewed the evidence for the accuracy of autobiographical memories and concluded that normal people can recall earlier events in their lives reasonably accurately over a long interval. Distortions and omissions can occur due to emotional factors and the perceived unpleasantness of the events. Disagreements about the recollections of accidents—apart from distortions due to personal involvement—are probably often due to the relatively large number of relevant details, which are perceived during a short period.

Cases of the reincarnation type are not always regarded by the families involved as definite manifestations of rebirths of previous personalities. In this sense, they differ from the happenings associated with such definite events as marriages and funerals. Nevertheless, events associated with the assumed rebirth of a child are, in many cases, discussed by family members, friends, and more distant relatives quite frequently. An investigation of events that took place, say, 15 years ago does not usually involve obtaining information from people who have not talked about these events since they happened. Discussions of the events among family members will tend to enhance retention and accessibility of the informants’ memories for them.

### **Method**

For the first cases to be compared, J.K. had not seen I.S.’s notes before he conducted his own investigation. In the second phase of the project, I.S. furnished J.K. with the names and addresses of subjects whose cases he had investigated many years earlier. J.K. then went to the informants for these cases and, conducting new interviews, made records of what the informants then remembered about the cases. J.K. did not read I.S.’s notes before he made his investigations. He had perhaps read reports of some of I.S.’s cases that had been published, but he had retained in his conscious memory no details of these that influenced his investigations. When J.K. had completed his inquiries, we

compared the two accounts for the following differences: loss of essential details (in the J.K. reports compared to the I.S. ones), distorted accounts to J.K. of what were obviously the same events described earlier to I.S., and mention to J.K. of important details not told to I.S. We also noted reports of events to J.K. that differed in no essential detail from reports of the same events to I.S.

Because we were primarily interested in the stability of information relevant to the assessment of paranormal processes, J.K. concentrated on interviews. He did not extend his inquiries, as I.S. often did, to the study of relevant documents, such as hospital records and postmortem reports. As J.K. had learned in connection with other cases in Turkey, such records are nearly always discarded within a decade. In Thailand, termites frequently produce the same outcome.

Because of the relatively small number of cases and relatively large number of uncontrolled variables, we did not attempt to compare specific memory aspects. We tried to keep them in mind, however, when for each investigation we rated the strength of the paranormality component on a scale of 1 to 10. For these ratings, we assigned the descriptive values listed below to coordinate I.S.'s and J.K.'s assessments and to provide the reader with an illustration of how we judged the strength of each case. (However, comparisons between the earlier and later investigations could also be carried out with a different set of descriptive values.)

A rating of 1 means no suggestion of paranormal processes.

A rating of 2 to 3 means there are indications that a paranormal component may be involved, but the probability is equally high that the apparently paranormal features could be due to chance or other normal processes.

A rating of 4 to 7 indicates that paranormal processes increasingly outweigh alternative explanations without reaching the equivalent of the .05 significance level.

A rating of 8 means the presence of a paranormal component is suggested as being equivalent to the .05 significance level.

A rating of 9 is similar to a rating of 8, but at the .01 significance level.

A rating of 10 is similar to 9, but at the .001 significance level.

In mentioning figures of probability, we do not mean to minimize the subjectivity of our judgments about the element of paranormality in the cases. Moreover, it is not possible to list, in a kind of hierarchical order, conditions that would help to exclude normal communications. Nevertheless, the following conditions (taken from Keil, 1991) are likely to strengthen a claim for the presence of paranormal aspects. In this list and elsewhere, the letter *S* stands for the subject, *PP* for the previous personality, and *PL* for the (claimed) previous life.

1. The *S* and the *S*'s family do not know and have no contact with the *PP*'s family until the *S* has made definite and potentially verifiable verbal statements.

2. The S makes numerous unambiguous statements, which are relatively independent of each other, about a PP and a PL that can be verified.
3. The S provides information about something not known to anybody—except, in the past, to the PP—that can be verified, such as some item hidden by the PP and recovered by the S.
4. Statements made by the S—preferably before the PP's family is involved—are noted by more than one member of the S's family and preferably by other people not belonging to the family.
5. Without any opportunity to learn or imitate, the S is able to do something that corresponds to some activity the PP was able to perform. For example, the S is able to speak a language or dialect that is not spoken by people with whom the S had contact.
6. Similar to (5), but the S has some opportunity to learn and imitate. Nevertheless, the S seems far more proficient than would normally be expected.
7. The S has birthmarks and/or malformations that correspond to injuries or other peculiarities of the PP. (Several birthmarks on the S that correspond to specific injuries sustained by the PP are more impressive than a single birthmark that corresponds imprecisely to a large injury on the PP.)
8. Unusual behavior, such as phobias or preferences of the S manifested at an early age, that do not make sense in terms of the S's experiences in his or her life, but that correspond to some important event in the PP's life or feature of the PP's character.
9. Although more difficult to evaluate, the intensity and spontaneity with which statements are made and emotions are expressed also have a bearing on the assessment.

This list could be extended. We can also integrate its items, to some extent, if we remember that there are two main criteria in operation on the basis of which we can assess paranormality. First, we need to appraise the number and the complexity of relatively independent statements and other characteristics that correspond to verifiable statements, features, and facts associated with the PP; a small number of statements based on fantasies could, by chance, agree with some aspects of the PP's life. In addition, we need to evaluate the barriers—geographical and social—that may have made it impossible or at least unlikely that seemingly paranormal connections between the PP and the S occurred by normal means.

For the relatively subjective evaluation of the reports, we had to take account of the following difficulties:

1. For several cases, J.K. could not interview the same informants who had provided information to I.S. Some of I.S.'s informants had died, some had moved and could not be contacted, and some could no longer remember anything related to the relevant events.

2. Additional information recorded by J.K. (compared with statements recorded by I.S.) may be due to (a) embellishments; (b) differences in the time available for an interview (the informants had the information but did not refer to it); (c) different informants; and (d) I.S. investigated the case when some children were still quite young. A child may have made additional statements after I.S.'s visit, and these may have included paranormal information.

A comparison of the two versions of the normal factual aspects of a case may provide some reassurance when similar sets of data were obtained. However, minor discrepancies and/or omissions among these data are generally relatively unimportant unless they have a bearing on the paranormality assessment. For instance, if during J.K.'s interview, the informants could not remember the names of some relatives that were recorded by I.S., we did not regard this as a serious sign of instability unless the names were relevant to statements or events that suggested some paranormal process.

For most cases, we agreed on the paranormality ratings; if we disagreed—usually by 1 point on the scale—we discussed the reports until we reached agreement.

### **Principal Features of 15 Cases Selected for This Comparison**

Of the 15 cases we compared, 10 were from Turkey, 4 from Thailand, and 1 from Myanmar (formerly Burma). Five of the subjects were female and 10 were male. There were no cases of the sex-change type in the group, i.e., cases in which the subject claimed to remember the life of a person of the opposite sex.

The I.S. cases were first investigated between 1966 and 1984 (median: 1971). The J.K. cases were first investigated between 1990 and 1996 (median: 1995). In both groups, the "first investigation" was typically followed by further interviews in later years when we wished to interview additional informants or talk again with an earlier informant. The mean interval between the first investigations of I.S. and J.K. was 22 years, and the median interval was 23 years.

Particularly with I.S. and sometimes with J.K., the investigations continued for several years or even longer after the initial inquiries began an investigation. For example, I.S. began investigating the case of Bongkuch Promsin in 1966, but he had further interviews in the 1960s and 1970s, and he last met Bongkuch and his family in 1980. J.K. began his investigation of this case in 1995, only 15 years after I.S.'s last contact with the family. There was thus a much shorter interval for many cases between I.S.'s *last* contact with the case and J.K.'s first one. It remains true, however, that in most cases, I.S. obtained the substantial information about the case when he first met the families concerned.

TABLE  
Paranormality Scale Ratings

	Rating of I.S. investigation	Rating of J.K. investigation
Nürsel Karaali (Turkey)	8.0	7.0
Cengiz Elma (Turkey)	3.0	3.0
Zeynep Emel Celik (Turkey)	5.0	4.5
Dellâl Beyaz (Turkey)	8.0	7.0
Semihe Atasoy (Turkey)	5.0	5.0
Necati Çaylak (Turkey)	7.5	5.0
Nasî Toksöz (Turkey)	5.0	4.0
Cemal Kurt (Turkey)	5.0	5.0
Faris Yuyucuer (Turkey)	8.0	5.0
Cemil Fahrîci (Turkey)	7.0	6.0
Ratana Wongsombat (Thailand)	8.0	7.0
Bongkuch Promsin (Thailand)	8.0	7.5
Anurak Sithipan (Thailand)	5.0	5.5
Chanai Choomalaiwong (Thailand)	8.0	6.0
Myint Myint Zaw (Myanmar)	5.0	3.0
Mean:	6.5	5.5

Note: I.S. = Ian Stevenson; J.K. = Jürgen Keil.

## Results

### Summary

The Table lists the 15 cases we compared and gives the ratings on the paranormality scale for the data of the two investigations. The mean ratings (rounded) on the scale were 6.5 for the data of the I.S. investigation and 5.5 for those of the J.K. investigation.

In only one case did we assign a higher paranormality rating for the data of the J.K. investigation than for those of the I.S. investigation. This was the case of Anurak Sithipan. The informants mentioned to J.K. an incident in which Anurak showed paranormal knowledge of an object that had belonged to the PP in the case, his older deceased brother. They had not mentioned this item to I.S.

### *Eight Case Reports*<sup>1</sup>

*The Nürsel Karaali Case (Turkey).* The subject, Nürsel, was regarded as the rebirth of the previous personality, Vesile Görür. In 1970, I.S. obtained some preliminary information about this case from the PP's younger brother Cemil

<sup>1</sup> Ian Stevenson has published detailed reports of his investigations of most of the cases reviewed here. For the benefit of readers wishing details of what he learned about these cases, we have given the references to his reports.

Görür. In 1973, one of I.S.'s collaborators interviewed the PP's father, Cabir Görür, and in 1975, the S's father, Süleyman Karaali. In 1975, I.S. interviewed a musician, Hasan Eyup Demirel, as well as the S's mother, Vesile Karaali, and Nürsel herself. In 1977, I.S. interviewed the PP's father, Cabir Görür. The PP's mother was also present during this interview and volunteered some information.

The PP died at the age of 16 in 1962. The S was born in a different village in 1963. The two villages were 18 kilometers apart. The two families were not related and the parents of the S and the PP had no contacts. The S's grandfather, however, did know the PP's father from their military service.

When the S became able to speak, she told her father that he was not her father and that her father was in another village, which she named. She stated some names of other members of this family and threatened to run away if she were not taken to them.

In 1990, J.K. interviewed the S, her husband, and her mother, as well as two siblings of the PP.

I.S. and his Turkish collaborator obtained more details than J.K., but major events were presented in a very similar way in the 1970s and in 1990. Once contact was established between the families from the information the S provided, she continued to visit the PP's relatives. In 1990, she remembered that as a young child, she knew the names of the PP's relatives. (This had been included in I.S.'s notes.) In the meantime, the S had seen the PP's relatives so often that she knew their names because of these contacts.

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that at birth, the S's fingers were colored in agreement with the henna color that was applied to the PP's hands after the PP had died. I.S. was told that in about 1967 (at the age of  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ), the S recognized (in her village) some musicians who had played at the PP's funeral. This was not mentioned during the later study of J.K. In 1973 as well as 1990, I.S. and J.K. learned that the S had recognized the PP's old house. In 1977, I.S. was told that the S could correctly sort out the PP's clothes when mixed with other clothes. J.K. learned of this without substantial change in 1990. In 1990, J.K. was told that the S distinguished six of the PP's clothes from 40 other clothes not belonging to the PP but mixed with those that did. I.S. in 1977 had not been given figures such as these but was told only that the "S could distinguish perfectly the clothes of the PP from those of the other members of the family." Was the addition of numbers to the report an embellishment? We cannot say, but the addition, if such it is, does not alter the rating on the paranormality scale.

Nürsel's correct statements as a young child before contact was established with the PP's relatives cannot be easily explained as normal information and fairly strongly suggest a paranormal connection between her and the PP. The assessments in this respect are similar for the earlier and later investigations. The earlier investigations managed to find more people and details that confirmed the suggested paranormal connections. In 1990, some details were



added; these may include some embellishments but may also be factual additions. One detail—the S's recognitions of the musicians from the PP's village—was lost. Generally, these differences did not have a bearing on the assessment of the paranormality component. We rated I.S.'s report as 8 and J.K.'s report as 7.

*The Dellâl Beyaz Case (Turkey).* The subject, Dellâl, was regarded as the rebirth of the previous personality, Zehide Köse (Stevenson, 1997). The S was born in 1970, within 1 month of the PP's death. She had a birthmark on the top of her head. When the S was born, there was a suggestion, based on a dream, that she might be a rebirth case, but there were no specific indications of this.

The S's mother told a collaborator of I.S. in 1975 that she had a dream connecting the S with the PP's village. However, during a second interview later in the same year, the S's mother denied that this dream referred to the PP's village. There was no other information in the dream that could link the S to the PP.

In 1975, I.S. interviewed the S, the S's mother, the S's grandmother, as well as the PP's husband, the PP's oldest daughter and her husband, and a nephew of the PP's husband. In 1983, a collaborator of I.S. returned once more to the S with some questions prepared by I.S.

In 1991 and 1992, J.K. interviewed the S and the S's mother. The PP's brother Mithat was also present in 1991. During a further visit in 1994, J.K. interviewed the PP's daughter Nuriye Sen. Most of the information was collected in 1975 by I.S. and in 1991, by J.K.

I.S. did not receive any information that the S's relatives had any connections with the PP's relatives. J.K. heard later that the S's relatives had not met the PP, but they did know some of the PP's relatives. There was no contact between the two immediate families when the S was born.

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that the S had a birthmark on her head. They also both learned that the S had told her parents how she (the PP) died by falling through an opening from a flat roof while hanging out some washing. (The PP had died of "head injury," a fact relevant to the S's birthmark.) Similarly, informants told both of them that the S had correctly mentioned the name of the PP and the names of two or three of the PP's relatives and the name of the PP's village. The S's father probably knew the PP's village, but the S's mother claimed that she did not know the name of this village, which is probably correct.

The S conveyed most of the information related to the PP when she was less than 2 years old. She had started to talk about a previous life as soon as she had learned to talk.

The S's statements referring to the PP were correct, and a nephew of the PP, who was visiting a neighbor of the S's family, heard about her statements. This nephew, I.S. was told, arranged the first meeting between the two families when the S was about 2 years old. J.K. did not hear these details, but he was

told that the PP's relatives heard that the S was talking about a previous life in a way that suggested that she was referring to the PP.

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that the S recognized various people and objects when she visited the PP's home for the first time. The details vary slightly, but J.K. could not interview the same relatives of the PP who had met I.S. There were no signs of embellishment in the more recent accounts of this case.

I.S. obtained medical records, which confirmed the death of the PP that informants had indicated to us, but the informants did not clearly link the S's birthmark with the PP's fatal fall. There was, however, agreement that the PP died from head injuries.

Although some connections existed prior to the S's birth, it seems unlikely that the information conveyed by the S prior to the first meeting of the two families could have come about by normal means. The various recognitions at a later stage carry some weight but are more doubtful indicators of paranormal processes.

We rated the paranormality component as 8 for I.S.'s accounts and 7 for J.K.'s.

*The Semihe Atasoy Case (Turkey).* The subject, Semihe, who was born in 1963, was regarded as the rebirth of the PP, Nesime Doğruel, who died in 1960 at the age of 35 (Stevenson, 1997). The two families are not related, but they were acquainted. They did not meet on a regular basis but occasionally exchanged visits.

The PP's husband had shot and killed her. I.S. was told that the S's parents did not know this, and that they only became aware of the circumstances of the PP's death when the S started to talk at the age of 2. This means that for a period of approximately 5 years, the S's parents apparently were not aware that the PP had been killed by the PP's husband. Even if the S's parents met some other members of the PP's family only once or twice a year, it is surprising that they were not aware of the circumstances of the PP's death.

Both I.S. and J.K. heard that the S had two birthmarks, which agree with gunshot wounds of entry and exit on the PP. In fact, the PP was shot four times and a further birthmark on the S's elbow (only mentioned to I.S.) may correspond to the wound caused by a bullet.

With the help of an autopsy report (only available in 1977), I.S. carefully reconstructed the entry and exit marks on the PP's body. The entry position of two bullets and the exit position of one bullet seem to be in fairly good agreement with the S's birthmarks, but because the PP was hit by four bullets, the agreement may be due to chance. If one shot fired at the PP is regarded as a link that accounts for the S's birthmarks, the question must also be asked why only one bullet and not four resulted in corresponding birthmarks. Based on similar inconsistencies in connection with other cases, I.S. (1997) suggested that events prior to death, such as loss of consciousness by the PP after the first wounding, could explain why only some of the PP's wounds correspond to birthmarks on the S. Nevertheless, the limitations in the correspondence be-

tween the PP's wounds and the S's birthmarks must be regarded as a negative feature when the overall probability of a paranormal component for this case is estimated.

I.S. visited this case for the first time in 1977. He interviewed the S and the S's parents. He also interviewed the PP's brother Salih.

In 1994, J.K. interviewed the S and her father. In 1996, he interviewed the S's mother, who was not present in 1994. The PP's brother Salih had died in 1993. The S still had contact with one of the PP's daughters, but this relationship then seemed fairly independent of the S's connection with a previous life. Nevertheless, the S told J.K. that she still had direct memories of being the PP. J.K. could not find any relatives or friends of the PP who might have been able to provide relevant information about the PP's life.

Both I.S. and J.K. heard that the PP was shot when the PP's husband returned home drunk. Only J.K. was told that the PP questioned the PP's husband about his late arrival home. I.S. was told that the PP was shot twice. Only one shot was mentioned to J.K.

Both I.S. and J.K. heard that the S had two birthmarks in agreement with the way the PP was shot. When I.S. visited the S in 1977, the birthmarks were still faintly visible. They were not visible in 1994. However, there was no doubt in 1994 (in the minds of the informants) that the S had had two birthmarks (corresponding to the entry and exit wounds of a bullet) when the S was young.

I.S. heard of another birthmark on the S's arm, which was not mentioned to J.K.

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that the S did not visit any of the PP's relatives until after the S had started to talk about a previous life. I.S. was told that when the S was 10 she met the PP's relatives for the first time. The account given to J.K. in 1994 was less definite and indirectly suggested that the S might have met the PP's relatives at a younger age. In 1996, the S's mother also said that the S was 10 when this first meeting took place. (J.K. simply asked whether she could remember how old the S was when the S met the PP's relatives for the first time. Ten as a possible age was never mentioned by J.K.)

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that the two families are unrelated, that they met only occasionally, and that the connection between the PP and the S was only discovered when the S started to talk about the PP.

The reports, mainly obtained 17 years apart, are in good agreement. For this case, it is difficult to estimate a paranormality rating on our scale. The birthmarks do not exactly correspond to only one bullet entry and exit. Although the S's parents did not regard the S as a rebirth case until the S started to talk about a previous life, the two families had had some contacts. The news of the PP's murder may have reached the S even if the S's parents were not aware of it. On the other hand, the S had referred to these events at a very young age. We estimate that a rating of 5 is appropriate for both reports.

*The Necati Çaylak Case (Turkey).* The subject, Necati, was regarded as the rebirth of the PP, Abdülkerim Hadduroğlu (Stevenson, 1980). The two fami-

lies, who lived 8 kilometers apart in different villages, are not related and did not know each other until the S started to talk about a previous life.

The PP died in 1963 in a car accident. The S was born about 1 month later according to the information that I.S. obtained. In 1995, J.K. was told that the S was born in 1965. In 1995, when J.K. studied the case, the S was away, working in Saudi Arabia. His relatives (J.K.'s informants) probably only estimated his year of birth. In Turkey, many families do not attach much importance to birthdays and the age of a person is not regarded as important information. I.S. met the S for the first time in 1967, and this meeting confirmed that the S was born around 1963, and not in 1965.

I.S. visited relevant informants in 1967, 1971, and twice in 1973. He interviewed the S, the S's parents, and two of the S's older brothers, as well as the PP's wife, the PP's father, the PP's stepmother, two of the PP's sons, five friends and neighbors of the PP (some of them distantly related to the PP), and the driver of the car in which the PP died.

In 1995, J.K. interviewed the S's mother and two brothers of the S, Ekrem and Mehmet. Ekrem, who provided most of the information, had also been interviewed by I.S. As mentioned, the S himself was working in Saudi Arabia. In addition, J.K. interviewed the PP's youngest son (also an informant during I.S.'s visits), and the PP's sister Kadife.

Both I.S. and J.K. were told that the PP was killed in a car accident at a bridge and that the S talked about this accident, giving correct details, when he was less than 3 years old. Both heard that the S was afraid of the bridge and refused to go near it. When the S came to this bridge for the first time, he also mentioned a number of names including the PP's first name. I.S. heard more details than J.K., which generally strengthened the paranormality hypothesis of this case. However, I.S. also became aware of several inconsistencies that could only be partly resolved through further investigations. Apparently, the S mentioned a wrong family name for the PP. The wrong name may have had some relevance but could not directly be associated with the PP. J.K. was only told that the S mentioned the names of the PP's father, mother, and wife.

The two accounts agree with each other, but I.S. obtained many more details supporting a paranormality component. The 1995 report contained no embellishments. The informants failed to mention to J.K. that the S had got the family name of the PP wrong, but most Turks would be satisfied with the S's correct statement of the names of members of the PP's family.

In 1995, J.K. recorded a different name for the driver of the car in which the PP died. It is not clear whether J.K.'s informants referred to an alternative name (a distinct possibility in Turkey), whether the same person was remembered as the driver but referred to by a wrong name, or whether in 1995, a different person was regarded as the driver. This difference between the two reports has no bearing on the assessment of the paranormality component.

The evidence for this component is fairly strong in I.S.'s report because of the many details and because the two families did not know each other. It is

likely, though, that some of the details related to the accident were generally known in both villages. Nevertheless, a paranormality rating of 7.5 for I.S.'s report and 5 for J.K.'s report seems appropriate.

*The Cemil Fahrıcı Case (Turkey).* The subject, Cemil Fahrıcı, was regarded as the rebirth of the PP, Cemil Hayik (Stevenson, 1997). He was a well-known outlaw in the Samandağ, Hatay, region of Turkey. The PP died in 1935. The S was born about 2 or 3 days after the PP's death.

The S's verbal account of the PP's life and death is interesting and may contain paranormal elements, but because these events were publicly known, the S may have heard about the PP's life by normal means. The late investigation of this case makes a more detailed assessment of verbal statements with respect to the paranormality hypothesis virtually impossible. When in 1966 I.S. saw the S for the first time, the S was already more than 30 years old. J.K. saw the S 26 years later, in 1994.

Nevertheless, the case has some noteworthy features that suggest some degree of paranormality. The S has two birthmarks on his head that correspond to an entry and exit wound of a bullet. These marks appear to be in agreement with what is known about the death of the PP. (The PP shot himself by firing a bullet through his head when he could not escape from the police.)

As a child, the S rejected his own name and indicated that he wanted to be called Cemil. The S's parents eventually agreed. The S was afraid of soldiers and policemen and was hostile toward them. As a young child, he pretended to shoot them with a stick. This behavior could also have been encouraged because of some general resentment toward soldiers and policemen, which was not uncommon at that time in the Hatay region of Turkey.

Of the 10 informants interviewed by I.S., J.K. could only contact three. Most and perhaps all other informants had died in the meantime. One of these three, the S's sister, had recently lost her son and was too disturbed by this to answer questions.

J.K. was able to interview the S and the PP's younger sister. (I.S. had also met this sister of the PP.) She mentioned a few details to J.K. that I.S. had not recorded. Generally, J.K. did not hear as many details as I.S., but J.K. had only two informants. None of the additional details recorded by I.S. or J.K. had any bearing on the paranormality hypothesis.

The S's birthmarks, the S's desire as a very young child to be called "Cemil," and the S's reaction to policemen and soldiers were still remembered when J.K. visited the S and the PP's sister in 1994. It seems fair to conclude that the basis for the paranormality assessment did not change after 17 years.

The S's birthmarks had faded to some extent—which frequently happens—and were less clearly visible when J.K. investigated the case. For this reason, it could be argued that J.K.'s rating should be marginally lower. We agree that if any change is contemplated, it should be in the direction of a slightly lower rating for the more recent report.

On the paranormality scale, we rated this case—mainly on the basis of the S's birthmarks—as 7 for the records of I.S. and 6 for those of J.K..

*The Ratana Wongsombat Case (Thailand)*. The subject, Ratana, was regarded as the reincarnation of the PP, Kim Lan (Stevenson, 1983).

Kim Lan died in September 1962, at the age of 68. The S was born in May 1964. She started to talk at a very early age, and her apparently accurate memories about some aspects of the PP's life were reported in a Bangkok newspaper in 1967 when the S was 3 years old.

I.S. mainly studied this case in 1969, but he visited Ratana again during six further visits to Thailand, the last one occurring in 1980. J.K. studied this case in 1995.

The S was raised (from soon after her birth) by her grandmother and step-grandfather. The latter was particularly interested in Ratana's statements about a previous life. The S's family did not know the PP at all, but the S's step-grandfather knew a few people who previously had some contact with the PP when the PP visited a particular Wat (Buddhist temple) in Bangkok. However, the S's step-grandfather initially was not aware of this connection.

I.S. interviewed 13 people including the S, the PP's daughter, Anan, and a nun from the Wat in Bangkok. J.K. also met another nun and a monk who had some limited contact with the PP but who had not been interviewed by I.S.

The S's grandmother and the S's step-grandfather had died by 1995. It is likely that some of the other informants interviewed by I.S. had also died by then. Except for the S, J.K.'s other four informants were between 76 and 84 years old.

The information provided by the S—when she was a young child—supports the paranormality hypothesis mainly because her family did not know the PP or the PP's relatives, and because the S gave many correct details, including the PP's name when the S was only 2 years old.

In 1995, the S herself had no direct memories of the life of the PP, but remembered various details she had later heard from others, including some details that she had mentioned at a very young age. This is not at all unusual in these cases.

There are no significant disagreements between the data collected by I.S. and J.K., but between one third and one half of the details was lost when J.K. studied this case. J.K.'s notes do not suggest any additional details that could be regarded as embellishments.

Although a reduction of the reported details might be expected because of the advanced age of four of J.K.'s five informants, the paranormality assessment based on the more recent interviews must be rated somewhat lower. On the scale, we rated I.S.'s account as 8 and J.K.'s account as 7.

*The Anurak Sithipan Case (Thailand)*. In some areas of Thailand, as well as in Myanmar and parts of India, bodies are sometimes marked, usually shortly after death, but occasionally also before a person is pronounced dead, in order to enable the relatives to recognize a child with a similar birthmark as being

the deceased reborn. Although this custom is generally known in areas where bodies are sometimes marked, it is not practiced often, and it is unlikely that such "experimental birthmarks" (Stevenson, 1997) agree by chance with the original marks. The present case provides an example of this practice.

The subject, Anurak, was regarded as the reincarnation of his older brother Chachewan, who had drowned about 3 years before Anurak was born (Stevenson, 1997). Chachewan's body had been marked on the right elbow with charcoal. One informant said the mark was made with ink.

There is good agreement between the notes obtained by I.S. in 1977 and those obtained by J.K. in 1994. The two reports agree that the PP's arm was marked near his elbow and that the S was born with a birthmark on the same elbow close to the site where the PP had been marked. On both occasions, the S's relatives claimed that other members of the S's family had no birthmarks like that of the S. According to I.S.'s examination, this is not quite correct, and we therefore have an example of increased emphasis on the birthmarks of the S and a tendency to ignore smaller birthmarks on other siblings. However, these errors were similar on both occasions. The informants for I.S. spontaneously mentioned that the S's birthmark was not exactly in the same position as the mark made on the PP. J.K. was not told of this discrepancy and this could be seen as an unconscious tendency to support the interpretation of reincarnation. On the other hand, after 17 years, the S's parents may have forgotten the small difference in location or may have thought that it was of no further importance.

The two reports agree that the S spontaneously searched for the PP's Boy Scout uniform. The more recent statement about this detail provides a somewhat more elaborate framework but does not really add any information that would increase the strength of the paranormality component.

There is also agreement about the S's familiarity with the PP's friend who came for a date with the S's sister. The earlier report included more details that could easily have been forgotten after 17 years.

The more recent report includes one more incident reported by the S's parents: The S found a special spoon, which the PP had kept on a high shelf in a generally inaccessible place. This incident supports the paranormality component, and it could be argued that in some way, this incident was later invented to provide more support for the reincarnation hypothesis. However, if this incident is considered, together with other statements made by our informants, it seems more likely that the S really behaved in the way his parents reported, and that for some reason, this incident was forgotten or not mentioned when I.S. visited 17 years earlier.

Although there are some differences in the records with respect to those events that have a bearing on the paranormality component, we do not regard them as significant. The strength of the paranormality component is broadly similar for the 1977 and 1994 investigations.

We agreed that for this case, the paranormality rating for the more recent re-

port should be at least as high as that for the earlier one and possibly higher. We agreed on a rating of 5 for I.S.'s report and a rating of 5.5 for J.K.'s report.

*The Bongkuch Promsin Case (Thailand).* Bongkuch, the subject, was regarded as the rebirth of the PP, Chamrat, who died in 1954, at the age of 18 (Stevenson, 1983). The PP had been attacked from the back, stabbed, and killed. The two families were not related and did not know each other. The PP's relatives had never visited the S's village. The S's father had traveled to the small town where the PP lived. He knew some people there, but not the PP or the PP's relatives, and after the PP was killed, the S's father did not hear anything about the murder. Contact between the two families was established only after the S had started to talk and had made a number of statements about the PP. The PP's relatives then learned about these statements.

I.S. carried out a very detailed investigation (mainly in 1966) and interviewed 17 people including the S, the S's parents, 2 sisters of the S, the PP's father, the PP's sister, the PP's stepbrother, the PP's girlfriend, as well as 3 police officers associated with the investigation of the PP's murder.

When J.K. investigated this case in 1995, the PP's parents and the S's father had died. J.K. interviewed the PP's half-brother Muan, the younger brother of the PP's mother, the S, the S's mother, and the S's sister Chorthip. I.S. had obtained a much more detailed record of the events, but both he and J.K. found that the first contact phase between the two families suggested a paranormal component. The S had made a number of statements. He mentioned the PP's name, possessions of the PP, such as a bicycle and a gold chain, and how PP had been killed. The PP's relatives confirmed these statements during their first meeting with S. They conducted a "test" by presenting the S with—according to I.S.'s notes—two bicycles or—according to J.K.'s notes—three bicycles, from which the S selected the PP's bicycle correctly. The increase from 2 bicycles to 3 most likely is an embellishment and not a simple error.

Both I.S. and J.K. heard that the S used Laotian words not used in the S's family and preferred sticky rice (a distinctly different rice preparation) in agreement with the PP's background, which was Laotian and not Thai. I.S. recorded additional details relevant to the paranormality assessment of this case. For example, his informants told him that the S remembered the names of eight people from the previous life and that he had referred to the PP's watch, gold ring, and knife, and to the way the PP was dressed when he was killed. There was some disagreement among the three police officers about whether the S's statement that the PP wore shorts was correct. There is also less certainty about whether such statements as the names of eight people were made before the S could have heard some of them. Nevertheless, some of the information obtained only by I.S. strengthens the paranormality assessment.

J.K. was told that the S had a birthmark on his neck apparently in agreement with the way the PP was stabbed. It is unlikely that this is a later invention without any factual basis. On the other hand, I.S. had inquired about birthmarks and had not received any information that the S had any birthmarks. It



is possible that the S's birthmark had faded—assuming that the S indeed had a birthmark—and that this was conveyed to I.S. in such a way that I.S. assumed that the S never had one. Nevertheless, the later statement about the birthmark strengthens the paranormality assessment of J.K.'s report. However, based on the larger number of details recorded by I.S. that support the paranormality component, we rated the I.S. report as 8 and the J.K. report as 7.5.

### Discussion

The results show no evidence that information obtained about these cases produce higher paranormality assessments over time. Some new details were added, but generally, more details were lost.

Embellishments may be recognized if the paranormal components of a particular event are more strongly emphasized in later versions. Only sporadic additions or possible embellishments occurred, and most of these additions were probably of actual events that had not been mentioned during the earlier investigations or occurred afterward.

The Anurak Sithipan case, with a slightly higher rating for the J.K. report, is probably such an example. Both parents of Anurak mentioned to J.K., but not to I.S., that as a young child, Anurak found a special spoon that the PP had placed on a high shelf and that Anurak apparently found without prior information or access to the place in which it was kept. It seems unlikely that this incident was invented. On the other hand, it apparently occurred before I.S. investigated the case.

We must also acknowledge that the lower ratings for the J.K. reports may be partly due to J.K.'s more limited investigations. For instance, in one case, a birthmark, which had already faded when I.S. investigated this case, was not even mentioned to J.K. J.K.'s informants might still have remembered the details about this birthmark if J.K. had asked specific questions.

Nevertheless, the results present a practical reassurance that if relevant informants can be found, events in connection with reincarnation-type cases are remembered with reasonable accuracy after many years and the paranormality assessments are only rarely inflated over time. We think this conclusion warranted for cases in Turkey. Our series contains too few cases from Thailand and Myanmar to justify any generalization about cases in those countries.

If investigators of these cases in the future wish to adopt something like a "paranormality rating scale," we recommend that they aim at greater objectivity in making the ratings than we were able to achieve in the present comparison. We think it is possible to provide a scale with specific points awarded for some of the features we described in the Method section of this paper (Keil, 1991).

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