

Children of Myanmar Who Behave like Japanese Soldiers: A Possible Third Element in Personality

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Abstract—Among more than 750 cases of persons in Myanmar (formerly Burma) who as children claimed to remember a previous life, 24 said they had been Japanese soldiers killed in Burma during World War II. Unlike most Burmese subjects of such cases none of these children stated any personal names or addresses that might have permitted verification of their statements. However, they showed habits of dress, food preferences, industriousness, insensitivity to pain, and other behaviors unusual in Burma, but typical of Japanese people, especially Japanese soldiers during their occupation of Myanmar (Burma). The oppressive rule in Burma of the Japanese Army during World War II makes it unlikely that any Burmese parent would instigate or encourage a child to behave like a Japanese soldier. Genetic factors cannot account for the children's unusual behavior because all of them were (with two exceptions) born after 1945, when there were no Japanese in the villages of Burma. The behavioral features of these children suggest a third factor (additional to genetic ones and known environmental influences) in personality.

Keywords: Myanmar (Burma)—Japan—previous lives—parental influence

Introduction

Children who claim to remember previous lives can be found easily in Myanmar (until 1989, Burma). Fielding Hall (1898/1922) drew attention to such children more than a century ago. Subsequently, Spiro (1970) mentioned them fleetingly, but did not examine any case in detail. Since 1970 the authors and others have investigated more than 750 such cases in Burma. The authors have published reports of numerous cases of these children (Keil & Tucker, 2000; Stevenson, 1983, 1997, 2001a).

Beginning usually between the ages of 2 and 5, children of this type make statements about a deceased person whose life they claim to have lived. They

