

# International Reincarnation Cases

In some documented cases of the reincarnation type, the individual appears to have been reborn in a country different than the one in which his or her previous life ended.

## Introduction

Contrary to widespread Western belief, in most [reincarnation](#) cases the subject is reborn in the same country,<sup>1</sup> and often less than 25 kilometers from the location of the previous existence.<sup>2</sup> Reincarnation research pioneer [Ian Stevenson](#) has published only four international cases out of the collection of 1,700 cases stored at the University of Virginia Medical School's [Division of Perceptual Studies](#) referred to as solved, meaning the previous incarnation's identity was confirmed, although there may be others that have not been published.

Reincarnation researcher [James Matlock](#) points out that this rarity suggests that souls only travel across borders between lives for specific reasons, and hypothesizes that reincarnating to a different nation requires control over the circumstances of one's rebirth. He writes:

Accidents and murder are more likely to produce a sudden, unexpected death, leaving a person unprepared for what comes next... It is as if the impact on the psyche of a sudden, unexpected death reduces the control it has to determine its fate. These fourteen cases suggest it is not only a desire to go abroad that is important in reincarnating internationally, but that the psyche must retain sufficient mastery to pull it off.'<sup>3</sup>

Matlock's analysis of fourteen solved international cases (an admittedly-small sample) tentatively identified four motives, each of which played a part in more than one case:

- to be with previous family, friend(s) or compatriot(s) (five cases)
- to return to their homeland (four cases)
- to spread the word about Tibetan Buddhism (three cases)
- to leave their homeland (two cases)<sup>4</sup>

The first motive accords well with the observed general tendency for [people to reincarnate with people they know](#).<sup>5</sup> But motives others than these are possible as the cases below will demonstrate.

## International Cases

### Cases Motivated by Interpersonal Bonds

Yvonne Ehrlich's parents were born in the 1920s and emigrated from Austria to Brazil in the 1940s. Her mother became pregnant with Yvonne in late 1952 or early 1953. Around the end of August 1953, her grandmother had a [dream](#) in which she

saw her sister, Martha Demmer, who had been killed by Allied bombing in Vienna in 1944, bending over her son-in-law. This prompted her to predict her daughter's baby would be born a girl, the reincarnation of Martha. At seven, Yvonne made a single statement suggesting past-life memory, telling her grandmother 'You are my sister!'; she also showed behaviours reminiscent of Martha and untypical of her current family. Further, she had two birthmarks on her head which roughly corresponded with the fatal head injuries that had caused Martha's death. In reincarnating, Martha apparently preferred to stay with her family rather than remain in the country in which she had lived and died.[6](#)

Ma Win Myint was born in 1959 in Rangoon, Myanmar. About eight months earlier, her mother had dreamed of a close friend of hers, a British man named Paul Taylor, who had lived most of his life in Myanmar but died in England after unsuccessful cancer treatment. In the dream, her husband lay down with Taylor's corpse, which then rose and said 'I am alive now'. When Ma Win Myint was born, she was observed to have an unusually red complexion and sharp nose for a Burmese person, and even freckles and a patch of white hair, all of which were reminiscent of Taylor. She also was colour-blind, as he had been, and had frequent sore throats, an apparent [carryover](#) of a key symptom he had suffered due to his fatal illness, cancer of the tongue. As a child she played rough and tumble in a boyish way, and grew up to be hardworking, as Taylor had been, and as is typical of [sex-change cases](#). Stevenson writes that the case 'shows that the strong emotional ties that seem to bind families together in successive lives may also exist between friends with the same effect'.[7](#)

The first Western woman to become a Buddhist nun was a California heiress and socialite, related to Russian royalty, named Zina Rachevsky. Rejecting her jet-set life for eastern spirituality, Rachevsky travelled first to India and then to Nepal, where she met Lama Thubten Yeshe and helped him found an international network of centres dedicated to spreading the practice of Tibetan Buddhism. She died at the age of 42 of an undetermined disease while undertaking a retreat in a cave in the Himalayas, where she had learned to meditate for hours at a time.[8](#) About seventeen years later, a boy was born in France, his father a relative to Rachevsky, and was recognized officially among Tibetan monks as her reincarnation. 'Pierre' (not his real name) showed behaviours and knowledge reminiscent of Rachevsky. At least part of her motive, it seems, was to remain in the same family.[9](#)

## **Tibetan Lamas Spreading the Word**

The three cases to which Matlock ascribes the motive of spreading the word about Tibetan Buddhism are all [Tibetan lamas reincarnated as Westerners](#), described in two books devoted to the topic by British writer Vicki Mackenzie. They would seem to fulfill a prophecy made by a Tibetan saint in the eighth century: 'when boats fly and iron horses run on wheels, then the Buddha dharma will be spread around the world'.[10](#)

The aforementioned Lama Thubten Yeshe was a highly accomplished lama who fled Tibet in his early 20s when the Chinese invaded. Feeling strongly that he should teach Tibetan spiritual practice in the West, he founded the network of centres with

Rachevsky. About eleven months after his death of heart disease in 1984, a couple who were devotees at one of the centres in Spain had a son, Osel Hita Torres. Lama Yeshe's most senior disciple recognized him as Yeshe's reincarnation, while many other people who had known Yeshe received signs in dreams or by other ways. After being tested in the traditional Tibetan ways of identifying a reborn lama, he was officially recognized by the senior Tibetan lamas in exile, including the Dalai Lama, as Yeshe reborn.[11](#)

Tenzin Sherab was born in 1972 and given the name Elija Ary by his parents, originally a Protestant and a Jew, who had set up a small Tibetan Buddhist centre in Vancouver, Canada. At the age of three, Elija began speaking about a past life in Tibet, and gave many details. At the age of seven, he was recognized on sight by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of Geshe Jatse, a lama who had left a prominent position to meditate in a cave before the Chinese invaded Tibet, and had once said he would be reborn in a place you would need a 'sky boat' to get to. Nothing was heard from him until Elija Ary's emergence. Renamed Tenzin Sherab by the Dalai Lama, he bears a physical resemblance to Geshe Jatse, with deep-set eyes and jutting brow. By his own account, he was reborn in the West in order to understand the culture for teaching purposes.[12](#)

Trinley Tulku was born in France in 1975 to a French father and an American mother, devotees of Tibetan Buddhism. By his own report he always wanted to be a monk, exhibiting a fascination with monks' robes and asking to be taken to a monastery. Cared for by a Tibetan nanny, he could speak Tibetan at eighteen months old. While playing at the centre he was recognized by a visiting prominent lama as the reincarnation of the lama Khashap Rinpoche, who had led a monastery in India, and died fairly young of tuberculosis. Khashap Rinpoche had said he wanted to be reborn in the West, and that he and those around him would all meet again in the West.

## **Druze Remaining Druze**

Reincarnation is one of the tenets of the Druze sect of Islam, whose adherents live in Lebanon and surrounding nations, and further believe that Druze are always reborn as Druze.[13](#) The following two cases demonstrate the fulfillment of that belief.

[Wael Kiwan](#), born to a Druze family in Batir, Lebanon, began saying at the age of four that his name was Rabiha and he had lived in a neighbourhood in Beirut near the sea. He said he had two houses, one of which he had to get to by airplane. When his parents reviewed a list of common Lebanese surnames with him, he recognized 'Assaf', and his father eventually found a family whose son Rabiha Assaf had died in his 20s, early in the same year Wael was born. The boy was able to recognize Rabiha as his own previous incarnation and other relatives correctly in pictures, and also remembered the Assaf house as it had been prior to renovations. Rabiha had travelled to South Pasadena in California to study electrical engineering, planning to return to Beirut; however, he was prevented from doing so by war. He committed suicide by hanging and – whether intentionally or not – returned to Lebanon for rebirth.[14](#)

Another Druze child, Suzanne Ghanem, began talking about a past life at a very young age, giving enough detail for the previous person to be identified. She was Hanan Mansour, a Druze woman from Beirut who suffered from degenerative heart disease and had travelled to the US for risky heart surgery. Hanan died the day after surgery at the age of 36. Suzanne was born ten days later in a southern suburb of Beirut; shortly before her birth, her mother dreamed that she would have a girl, and a woman whom she later said resembled Hanan told her 'I am going to come to you'. At five, Suzanne was able to remember the names of many of Hanan's relatives as well as a phone number perfectly except for the transposition of two numerals. She was attached to Hanan's husband Farouk, and showed sufficient other indications of ties to the family that she was accepted as the incarnation of their mother by all of Hanan's children.[15](#)

### **Slain Soldiers Returning Home**

[James Leininger](#) demonstrated as a boy extensive knowledge of the life of an American fighter pilot, James Huston Jr, who was killed in action near Iwo Jima during World War II. Born 53 years later in San Francisco, James had apparently travelled as a spirit from Japan back to mainland America via Hawaii, as he accurately recalled details about a hotel where his parents stayed for a Hawaiian vacation prior to his birth.[16](#)

The case of Adnan Kelleçi is mentioned briefly in a later work by Stevenson.[17](#) He recalled the life of a Turkish soldier killed in action in Korea during the Korean War, whom Stevenson identified. He was reborn back home in Turkey, in the city of Adana.

### **Holocaust Victims Leaving Germany**

If the claim of Swedish writer [Barbro Karlen](#) to have been the legendary Holocaust diarist Anne Frank is genuine, hers would qualify as an international case, as Anne died in the Bergen-Belsen death camp and Karlen was born in Gothenburg, Sweden.[18](#)

Yael Shahar describes having been a Jewish Greek youth kept as a slave, tortured and then killed in the Auschwitz death camp in her past and current-life autobiography. She has not yet been able to find him in historic records, however, possibly because the record linking the number tattooed on his arm and his name was lost. Born in Texas, Shahar was tormented by guilt for having aided the Nazis in massacring her own people and survivor-guilt, and wrote the book as part of a healing journey.[19](#)

Matlock notes that Karlen and Shahar both decided to be reborn far from Germany,[20](#) and points out that many Holocaust memories have been reported by people in parts of Europe away from the sites of Nazi atrocities, as well as in the US, suggesting a motivation to flee the scenes of their suffering.[21](#)

### **European-Brazilian Cases**

[Brazilian reincarnation research](#) literature is rich in international cases including Yvonne Ehrlich and several unsolved cases in which the previous incarnation had lived in Europe. Matlock notes that this exemplifies the tendency of movement between lives to align with human migration patterns within the same life.<sup>22</sup>

Andrade also investigated the intriguing case of Patrícia, who not only described memories, displayed [behaviours](#) and carried [birthmarks](#) relating to her previous life, but experienced a [crisis impression](#) about her previous hometown. Born in Araraquara in 1939, she showed a strong preference for French foods, learned the French language unusually easily, and was averse to all things German. She said that she had been killed by a German soldier who entered her house in the city of Vichy and shot her through the heart, a memory which corresponded with the birthmarks on the left side of her chest and on her back, which resembled scars from entry and exit wounds respectively, possibly during World War I. Her intermission memories included being conveyed in a white aircraft to Araraquara, where she was told to disembark for rebirth. Her description of the interior house she entered precisely matched how it had looked prior to a remodelling shortly after her birth. Just shy of her third birthday, Patrícia woke up crying that her 'real' city of Vichy had been invaded, which was confirmed by a radio announcement several hours later, reporting that the Nazis now occupied the city.<sup>23</sup>

For more Brazilian international cases see here.

### **Miscellaneous Motivations**

[Bajrang Bahadur Saxena](#), born in (approximately) 1918 in the town of Bareilly in northern India, had fair skin, hazel eyes, and blond hair which he felt compelled to dye black so as to fit in. He reported having been shot dead as a British soldier in World War I, and had birthmarks on head and neck that resembled entrance and exit wounds. His preferences in clothing, food, eating method, climate and buildings were all reminiscent of an Englishman, and he liked to play soldiers, giving command words in English, a language he learned unusually easily. Interestingly, his younger brother Brij Bahadur Saxena was also blond and had some English-style preferences, and Bajrang claimed that they had been brothers in their previous lives. Stevenson speculates that Bajrang's previous incarnation might have been stationed in Bareilly and lived there for a time with his wife, then been deployed to France (where units of Indians led by British officers actually fought in 1914–15), then returned to Bareilly after being killed in action to be reborn into an Indian family.<sup>24</sup>

[Jenny Cockell](#) is an Englishwoman who has documented her reincarnation journey as well as her current life story in six books.<sup>25</sup> After identifying her second most recent past self as an Irishwoman, Mary Sutton, she sought out Mary's still-living and now elderly children, contacted them and, through demonstrating that she knew facts about their family known only to their mother, gained their acceptance as her reincarnation. Cockell remembered another life as a British boy, Charles Savage, who was killed in a truck accident, indicating a change of country, as well as a Japanese life and several other lives whose identities she has not ascertained with certainty. She has tended to live near seacoasts and to keep circling back to England or nearby.

Reincarnation researcher Ohkado Masayuki has published two international cases in which the previous identity has not been found. Tomo, born in January 2000 in Japan, began speaking of a past life in Edinburgh, Scotland, at the age of three. Even younger – age two – he taught himself Roman letters rather than Japanese, printed his name, and was able to sing along to a song in English, ‘Top of the World’.[26](#)

Ohkado’s second international case is of a Japanese girl who recalls having lived as a woman in India. She had a birthmark in the middle of her forehead, the location of the traditional *bindi* mark that Hindu women wear, and in fact said, ‘This corresponds to what I wore in India [*bindi*]. The goddess I met in heaven stamped it on me so that I would not forget about my life in India.’ Her drawings featured female figures wearing the *bindi*. She made plain her motivation for being reborn in Japan: ‘It was a mistake to be born as a woman in India, where women are treated badly. So I decided to be born in a place where women are treated nicely. [This is certainly true in Japan.] I heard a voice calling for a girl and I decided to be born to my mother’. Her mother had been praying for a girl.[27](#)

### **An International Series of Lives**

Reincarnation researcher KM Wehrstein reports on the case of the American man ‘Will’ (not his real name) and his past life as non-commissioned Nazi officer assigned to help supervise the mass executions at the Auschwitz death camp in a 2019 paper.[28](#) Will recalls an American life between his Nazi life and his current life. He says he left Germany between lives because he felt it had betrayed him, as he had wanted to be a soldier rather than a killer of innocents, suggesting that some perpetrators of the Holocaust fled Germany for their subsequent lives, similar to victims, if they perceived themselves as victims as well as perpetrators. In another German life previous to his Nazi German life, he recalls being killed as a World War I soldier in Belgium or France, and that he was reborn in Germany because ‘I just wanted to go home’,[29](#) placing him in Matlock’s ‘return to homeland’ category.

Will claims to remember some thirty lives lived in different nations and cultures, with several runs of two or three lives in the same culture and returns now and then to ones previously lived in. His inventory of lives, including three in which the past-life identity is well-confirmed and two in which it is tentatively confirmed, points at a strong tendency is to live military lives in militaristic cultures. This suggests another possible motivation for moving from one country to another between lives: seeking out settings conducive to a particular interest or occupation.

### **An International Case Thwarted**

The case of Ma Par of Myanmar, investigated by Stevenson, would be an international case if the subject had had her choice between lives. Ma Par was born with blond hair, blue-grey eyes and fair skin, and recalled having been a British airman killed when his plane crashed near her birthplace in Myanmar during World War II. Ma Par recalled that in the time between his death and her own birth, she thought of his family in England and returned to them. However, the ‘King of Death’ forbade her to stay there and she returned to Myanmar, she said. She tried a



second time to go to England but was again pulled back to Myanmar and ‘ordered to be reborn’. She could not remember being told why.[30](#)

KM Wehrstein

## Literature

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## Endnotes

### Footnotes

- [1](#). See Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 229. Matlock notes that a person can reincarnate a long distance away from the place of death without crossing borders if located in a large nation, giving two examples of successive incarnations 1,500 and 2,000 miles apart in the USA and India respectively.
- [2](#). Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 232-3.
- [3](#). Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 234-35.
- [4](#). Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 233.
- [5](#). See Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 223, Table 26-3.



- [6.](#) Stevenson's full case report: Stevenson (1997a), 263-69. For more details see Andrade (1988), and Playfair (2011), who uses the pseudonym 'Karen' for Yvonne.
- [7.](#) Stevenson (1997b), 1756. Full case report: 1752-57.
- [8.](#) Mackenzie (1989), 44-5.
- [9.](#) Mackenzie (1996), 116-38.
- [10.](#) Mackenzie (1989), 47.
- [11.](#) Mackenzie (1989).
- [12.](#) Mackenzie (1996), 11-40.
- [13.](#) Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 62.
- [14.](#) Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 58-62.
- [15.](#) Shroder (1999), 80-83. The case was investigated but never published by Stevenson.
- [16.](#) Leininger & Leininger (2009). See also Tucker (2016), 200-207.
- [17.](#) Stevenson (2001), 242.
- [18.](#) Karlen (2000).
- [19.](#) ben Malka & Shahar (2014).
- [20.](#) Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 232.
- [21.](#) Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 233. See also Gershom (1992, 1996).
- [22.](#) Matlock (2021), [Overview of Brazilian Reincarnation Cases.](#)]

The case of the Brazilian boy Celso, born in 1943, was investigated by the prominent Brazilian reincarnation researcher Hernani Guimarães Andrade. At the age of three, having wandered away from home, Celso was asked where he had been, which in Portuguese is worded the same as 'where are you from', and answered 'Norge', meaning Norway as Norwegians, not Brazilians, pronounce it. He described memories of having been 'Father Herculano', a priest in a Norwegian monastery near Lake Femunden who had been killed when the monastery was bombed, possibly during the Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940. Celso had blond hair, fair skin and Nordic-type features, unlike anyone else in his family. He disliked the heat of Brazil. Unfortunately a proper investigation in Norway was never done. Andrade (2002), 137-49; summarized in Playfair (2006), 68-70.

- [23.](#) Andrade (1988), 170-203, under the name Patrícia; summarized in Playfair (2011), 163-64, as Tina.
- [24.](#) Stevenson (1997b), 1764-82.
- [25.](#) Cockell (1994, 1998, 2008, 2017, 2019, 2021).
- [26.](#) Ohkado (2013).
- [27.](#) Ohkado (2012). Bracketed comments by Ohkado.
- [28.](#) Wehrstein (2019).
- [29.](#) Personal communications. The full case history and the tentative identification of his WWI life is given in Wehrstein (i2021).
- [30.](#) Stevenson (1997b) 1808-16.