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CULTURAL PATTERNS IN CASES SUGGESTIVE
OF REINCARNATION AMONG THE TLINGIT
INDIANS OF SOUTHEASTERN ALASKA

BY

IAN STEVENSON, M.D.

Cultural Patterns in Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation among the Tlingit Indians of Southeastern Alaska

IAN STEVENSON, M.D.¹

INTRODUCTION

Persons familiar with the world-wide survey and analysis of cases suggestive of reincarnation which I am conducting sometimes comment that cases of this kind only occur in cultures favorable to the idea of reincarnation. This is incorrect since I have studied numerous cases of this type which have occurred in cultures generally or severely hostile to the idea of reincarnation, e.g., Europe and North America. Moreover, at least some of these latter cases have occurred in families quite ignorant of reincarnation or, if somewhat knowledgeable about it, quite opposed to the belief.

But if we ask whether a culture influences the incidence of reported cases, the answer becomes clearly affirmative. Note that I say *reported* cases, because we have no reliable data yet on the *actual* incidence of cases which almost certainly exceeds the incidence of reported cases, perhaps by a large number. Among areas where the incidence of reported cases seems particularly high we must certainly include northern India (especially the state of Uttar Pradesh and other districts along the Ganges valley), Ceylon, Burma, and Thailand. Almost half of the cases in my files, now numbering almost six hundred in all, come from these areas. Even when we take into account the dense population of these areas, the incidence of reported cases there still exceeds that of most other parts of the world.

Probably the highest incidence of reported cases in the world occurs in Alaska among the Tlingit Indians of the southeastern part of that state. I have visited this area four times to investigate the cases there and in a rather short time collected some informa-

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tion on no less than forty-three cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingits. Hints and fragments, and secondary accounts of other cases which I did not have time to investigate, make me confident that the real incidence of cases greatly exceeds the number I actually studied. But taking only these latter examples yields a very high incidence of cases among the Tlingit Indians. We happen to have rather accurate recent census figures and reasonable earlier estimates of the population of the Tlingits in the late nineteenth century. On the basis of these counts and estimates I have calculated that between 1851 and 1965 (the period covered by the forty-three cases), 40,000 Tlingits lived, including the living generation. This gives an incidence of reported cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingits of roughly one case in a thousand.² I believe this high incidence considerably exceeds that even of southeastern Asia.

The Tlingits (and also their near neighbors, the Eskimos, Aleuts, Athabaskans, Haidas, and Tsimshians) believe in reincarnation. Among younger Tlingits the belief has much less strength, but persists more strongly in the middle-aged and elderly. I have reviewed elsewhere the evidence which suggests (although not compellingly) that the ancestors of the Tlingits imported all or some of their ideas on reincarnation from Asia (5). But whatever the origin of the Tlingits' belief in reincarnation, they hold (or did hold) the belief far more strongly than most other Indian tribes of North America. We can find the belief among other American Indian tribes to be sure, but in a much less developed form than we find it among the northwest Indians, especially the Tlingits.

It would seem then that a connection may exist between the high incidence of reported cases in southeast Asia and southeast Alaska and the strong beliefs the peoples of these lands have in reincarnation. I do not think we have yet anything like enough data for a full analysis of the relationship between culture and cases, especially with regard to the important and vexing question of how far cultural acceptance of reincarnation may promote the formation of cases of the reincarnation type. The similarity of patterns of

² Mr. Robert Pace agrees that the actual incidence of cases is almost certainly "several times" the incidence of reported cases given by my survey and calculations.

Further evidence of the large gap between the real incidence of cases and the incidence of reported cases comes from the fact that in nine of the forty-three cases so far studied the present personality was either born in Kake or lived there. Kake is a village of about five hundred inhabitants and these nine cases were all (with one exception) of the present generation, i.e., the present personalities were under thirty years of age. I spent five days altogether in Kake on two separate occasions and was able to survey the village rather well, but by no means thoroughly. I think the real incidence of cases in Kake and similar villages is probably even higher than the figure that might be derived from my work in Kake to date, which would give a figure of one case in about every sixty-five persons.

cases suggestive of reincarnation in widely separated cultures suggests to me (as do other features of the cases) some human experience transcending cultural influences. This large topic of the permissive or promoting influence of cultures on the occurrence of these cases must await a fuller treatment elsewhere.

In the present article I wish to draw attention to observations which suggest that the patterns of cases of the reincarnation type differ somewhat in different cultures which may all be favorable to the general idea of reincarnation. I shall illustrate this by showing correlations between the patterns of cases among the Tlingit Indians of Alaska and certain other prominent features of Tlingit culture. In this I shall chiefly focus attention on three features of the cases of the reincarnation type which, although occurring in cases from other cultures, occur much more frequently in the Tlingit cases.

KINSHIP RELATIONS BETWEEN PREVIOUS AND PRESENT PERSONALITIES

The Tlingits have a matrilineal (although not matriarchal) society (1, 3). Rank and status in the community descend from the mother and her brothers (a child's uncles) rather than from the father. The Tlingits are divided into two main divisions or moieties (Wolves and Ravens) and a number of subsidiary sibs or clans. Marriage only takes place outside the basic moiety into the other one.³ The Tlingits attach much importance to matters of descent, or to put this another way, much of their prestige depends upon belonging to the "right" family. Under these circumstances, if one thinks one's position in life satisfactory, it becomes important to return again, upon rebirth, to the same family, that is, within the same female line. Veniaminov, the earliest and one of the greatest observers of the Tlingits, stated that the Tlingits "believe that dead persons return to this world, but *only* [italics mine] among their relatives"(8). I do not know whether the Tlingits' belief in this matter now has that degree of firmness, but the cases I have observed certainly indicate that the previous and present personalities nearly always have had some blood relationship, if not always. If we examine the forty-three cases available with regard to the relationship between previous and present personalities we find an extremely high incidence of a kinship relationship on the mother's side. This

³ On my last visit to Alaska (1965) I learned that some members of the younger generation of Tlingits are now marrying a partner of the same moiety. Older Tlingits consider this scandalous departure from tribal rules as a further sign of the decay of their people. The anthropologist or parapsychologist might use it to predict that reincarnation cases among the Tlingits of the twenty-first century will *not* show a high frequency of maternal relationships between previous and present personalities.

is illustrated in Table 1. I have included for comparison data on fifteen Eskimo cases. Eskimos do not have a matrilineal culture.

Table 1

	Tlingit Cases	Eskimo Cases
Personalities related on the mother's side	30 (70%)	4 (27%)
Personalities related on the father's side ⁴	5	2
Personalities related as brothers or sisters	3	1
Clan relationship only	2	0
No relationship	1	8
Details of relationship not known or not learned	2	0
	<hr/> 43	<hr/> 15

The very high incidence of occurrence of the two personalities in the same family makes difficult an assessment of the possible paranormal factors in the claims of remembering a previous life. I have given elsewhere (5) my reasons for thinking that we cannot account for *all* the apparently paranormal features of the cases on the basis of normal transmission of information to the present personality from persons who knew the previous personality. I am not, however, concerned here with the defense of this point, but only with drawing attention to the very high incidence of the occurrence of a maternal kinship between the two personalities. The kinship

⁴ Mr. Robert Pace believes that the matrilineal structure of Tlingit society is so strong that one may doubt the authenticity of these exceptions in which the two personalities are reported to be related through the father's line. Mr. Pace has suggested that such apparent anomalies of relationship might have arisen in either of two ways. First, the persons concerned might have been "borderline" Tlingits with marginal involvement in the cultural patterns. (Footnote 3 above refers to the breakdown of the cultural taboo against marriage within the same moiety.) Secondly, I might have misunderstood the use of the word "father" (in English) by some informants. Some Tlingits use this word loosely (in English) in referring to a child's uncle, who is in fact his social "father" but not his biological father. I do not think, however, that this explanation could have applied in four of the five exceptional cases I have noted, for in these cases the informants spoke English well enough so that I am sure there was no misunderstanding about the relationship being on the paternal side of the present personality. In the fifth case, the informants did not speak English so well and I could have misunderstood what they said, although I think I did not.

Still another explanation for these exceptional cases is that bonds of affection may outweigh the force of cultural patterns. (These would not be the first examples!) This explanation could apply to either important hypothesis, i.e., the reincarnation hypothesis and the hypothesis of personation by the present personality of the previous one. This latter hypothesis explains the cases by a combination of social and familial pressures and permissions toward identification with the previous personality together with (when necessary) some powers of extrasensory perception. I have discussed it at length elsewhere (5).

pattern between the two personalities differs quite markedly from that found in cases of the reincarnation type in, for example, the Ganges valley of India. There, a claim of rebirth within the same family occurs extremely rarely. Indeed, I can only remember two instances of this kind among eighty-five cases in India. This rarity of family relationships between the two personalities in cases of northern India harmonizes with cultural attitudes toward marriage since Hindus of northern India commonly marry someone from another village. Rebirth in another family in another village seems entirely acceptable to them.

CASES WITH BIRTHMARKS

Among cases suggestive of reincarnation, I attach special importance to those in which the present personality has a birthmark (or congenital deformity) which he relates to some wound or illness of the previous personality. The birthmark supposedly represents a residue from some injury or disease (with external manifestations) of the previous life. The marks in question resemble, for example, scars of wounds from knives, spears, and bullets, or (less often) surgical operations. Some such birthmarks include pigmentary changes only, but others have three-dimensional features and so closely resemble scars of wounds acquired in this life that I would not have distinguished these three-dimensional marks from acquired scars. The informants, however, insisted that the marks were congenital and not acquired. Naturally the question arises as to whether the subjects might nevertheless have acquired these alleged birthmarks after birth and only later related them to a supposed previous life. On this point, however, I have the firm testimony of the parents of some of the subjects that they noted the marks at the birth of the child. The importance of these cases lies in the impossibility, as I see it, of accounting for these cases with birthmarks, if authentic, on the basis of extrasensory perception which some people offer as an explanation (or contributory factor) for the apparent memories of previous lives claimed by the subjects. But again I am not concerned here with this point which I have argued elsewhere and with supporting detail. In the present context I wish to draw attention only to the relationship between the relatively frequent occurrence of birthmark cases among the Tlingits and other features of the Tlingit culture.

Cases with birthmarks occur very much more frequently among the Tlingits than among other people contributing cases to my collection. In this entire collection I have sixty-eight cases with a birthmark or marks, or congenital deformity. More than a third of

these cases have occurred among the Tlingit Indians. Yet the Tlingit cases account for less than eight per cent of the total number of all the cases. And birthmarks occur in more than half the Tlingit cases. It is obvious, therefore, that birthmarks occur relatively more frequently among reported Tlingit cases than among cases from other parts of the world. The incidence of birthmarks is almost as high among the Eskimo cases of this type, because I found seven birthmark cases in a total of fifteen Eskimo cases (6). Table 2 shows these proportions in detail.

Table 2

	Number of cases	Per cent of all cases	Number of cases with birthmarks	Per cent of all cases with birth- marks	Per cent of cases of this culture with birthmarks
Tlingit culture	43	7.6%	24	35.3%	55.8%
Eskimo culture	15	2.6%	7	10.3%	46.6%
All other cultures combined	509	89.8%	37	54.4%	7.3%
(Total)	(567)		(68)		

How can we relate this higher incidence of birthmark cases to the other features of the Tlingit culture? Perhaps in two ways. First, in the heyday of their culture, the Tlingits welcomed death in battle or during some act of boldness or endurance. Such acts and terminations to one terrestrial existence conferred on them more prestige and also the expectation of returning to a new life quickly. On this point Veniaminov wrote as follows:

The poor tribesmen who notice the better conditions of the rich ones and also the difference between the children of the rich and their own often say: "When I die, I shall surely come back in the family of such and such," naming the families of their choice. Others, however, say: "Oh, how wonderful it would be to be killed soon. Then I would come back here again and much more quickly." From all this, we may conclude that according to their beliefs, it is much more preferable to be killed than to die a natural death and also that for those who are killed, the life beyond is much better and the return here quicker than for other people (8, p. 59).

Wounds thus acquired a special significance for the Tlingits. If non-fatal, they indicated courage and gained prestige; if fatal, they

presaged a happy life in the discarnate world and a rapid return to a more fortunate terrestrial existence.

The high incidence among the Tlingit birthmark cases of alleged wounds of violent death accords with the importance attached to such wounds in the culture. Table 3 summarizes the different categories of apparent origin for these birthmarks or deformities, i.e., the nature of the lesion in the previous personality. Fourteen of the twenty-four lesions of the previous personalities were acquired during some violent engagement.

Table 3

Apparent origin	Number of cases
Wounds from spears, knives, axes, or bullets	12
Burns acquired during a fight	1
Wounds of bite acquired during a fight	1
Wounds of surgical operations	2
Wounds of disease or accidental injury	4
Deformities related to drowning	1
Tattoo marks	1
Naevi (possibly inherited)	2
	<hr/> 24

Secondly, as already mentioned, the Tlingits attach much importance to re-entering the right family and also to being properly recognized and being given the name one had in the previous life. The earlier ethnologists who studied the Tlingits noted that they made identifications of a newborn baby with a previous deceased personality either from announcing dreams (4), which I shall discuss next, from birthmarks resembling wounds or scars on the body of the previous person (7), or from both dreams and birthmarks (3, 8). My Tlingit informants also reported the same clues of dreams and birthmarks leading them to the identification of one personality with a previous one. A scar thus acquires the additional significance of being a person's unique sign by which he and he alone can be identified. For the Tlingits, the specificity of the mark became extremely important. In the old days, newborn babies were carefully examined for birthmarks and if any were found, observers would match the appearance of these against their remembrances of the wounds or scars on deceased persons of the same lineage.

The following episode illustrates the double importance which the Tlingits—or at least the older ones, for the culture has become weaker lately—attach to scars. On my third visit to Alaska an

elderly Tlingit predicted to me that he would return after his death and said he could be recognized by a mark near his knee. He then pulled up his trousers and exposed a rather large and ugly scar of a bullet wound which lay on his leg just a little above the right knee on its external aspect. The informant then narrated the story of how he had acquired this scar. It happened under circumstances in which he exhibited extraordinary bravery. Another Tlingit who felt (unjustifiably so, in the opinion of my informant) that my informant had done him some injury, threatened to kill him with a gun and held a gun on him for some time. As my informant did not run or flinch, his enemy contented himself with shooting him only in the leg, whereupon the authorities arrested the criminal and sent him to prison. The man who withstood this extraordinary attack still entertained strong resentment at his assailant, and felt that the latter had received too little punishment for his crime. He also exhibited pride with regard to his own unquestionable bravery. Thus there existed in his mind strong emotional attachments to the scar on his leg. This last feature, incidentally, I have found in a great many of the cases with birthmarks, but a full exposition of this topic must await a longer article (now in preparation) on all the birthmark cases.

ANNOUNCING DREAMS DURING PREGNANCY

As already mentioned, the earlier anthropologists noted the reliance of the Tlingits upon dreams in ascertaining who had returned to terrestrial life. In such dreams, the pregnant woman (or another woman, or, very rarely, a man) seems to learn the identity of the returning person. Sometimes the dream occurs before the woman knows of her pregnancy and gives the first indication of this event. Rarely the dream occurs after delivery, but usually it occurs during the later months of pregnancy. Announcing dreams of this kind occur sporadically throughout the world in connection with cases suggestive of reincarnation. The case of Alexandrina Samona (2), for example, includes a rather typical announcing dream and others have occurred in cases in India and Europe. The Tlingits, however, seem to specialize, so to speak, in such dreams. In the forty-three cases considered here, announcing dreams occurred in no less than twenty or almost half the cases.⁵ In eight cases, the pregnant woman had the dream; in thirteen cases, another woman, either a friend or relative of the mother, had the dream. (In one instance,

⁵ Announcing dreams occurred in only six of the fifteen Eskimo cases I have studied, a lower proportion than among the Tlingit cases. Such dreams occur even less often in the cases of other cultures.

both the mother and another person had a relevant dream announcing the personality to be born.)

The occurrence of these announcing dreams, together with the birthmarks and (usually) the naming of the child after the apparently identified deceased personality, may provide permissions and even pressures on the child to act as if he were, in fact, the deceased personality reborn. As I have mentioned, I do not think this kind of influence tells the whole story. And certainly it cannot account for the apparently high accuracy of the dreams in foretelling at least the sex of the child to be born.

Before presenting the data suggesting such accuracy of sex prediction in these announcing dreams, I must mention that all the dreams were told to me *after* the births of the babies. There is therefore regrettable room for *post hoc* falsification of memory with regard to the content of the dream. The reports of the dreams are nevertheless suggestive of a capacity for extrasensory perception as the following figures will indicate.

In addition to the twenty announcing dreams in cases with other apparently paranormal features, I have collected testimony on another eight cases in which announcing dreams were the sole apparently paranormal features of the cases. This gives a total of twenty-eight cases in which a dream ostensibly foretold the arrival of the "incoming" personality. We should omit two cases in which the dream occurred a few days after the birth of the child, when the mother knew its sex. But we may add three other instances in which more than one person reported dreaming about the same baby. This gives a total of twenty-nine dreams occurring before delivery. Of these, according to my informants, the dreamer correctly stated the sex of the baby in twenty-six cases. This "score" of correct hits is far above the chance expectation of fourteen for the series and strongly suggests some paranormal capacity in these women for predicting the sex of unborn babies.

The announcing dreams of pregnancy among the Tlingits have a somewhat stereotyped symbolic form. They frequently present to the pregnant woman visual images of arrival scenes. I shall illustrate this from notes I made of some dreams told to me by some of the informants. I shall not put these in quotation marks because my notes, although detailed, may not have captured the exact words of the informant in every place.

1. The grandmother of a pregnant woman had two dreams during the course of which one of her dear deceased friends appeared to her. In the first dream the deceased woman, Mrs. Bigelow,⁶ was sitting at the

⁶ I have used pseudonyms for the names of informants and other persons concerned in the cases.

edge of the pier next to the dreamer's house in a fishing village. Mrs. Bigelow was alone and silent. In the second dream, Mrs. Bigelow was going through the dreamer's house looking at all the beds which seemed to be full or already assigned. Then in the dream she said: "I think Alice has room." Alice was the pregnant granddaughter of the dreamer. The child born later, a girl, subsequently gave some quite impressive evidence of knowledge of the life and friends of Mrs. Bigelow. In this case, the child had no birthmark and she did not receive Mrs. Bigelow's name.

2. A Tlingit woman lost one of her sons, Joseph, to whom she was much attached. After Joseph's death she gave birth to two daughters and then became pregnant again. Two days before her delivery she had the following dream: She was landing from a ship at Juneau and on the dock she saw a nurse holding Joseph. He was dressed in pajamas, but had a coat on. She stretched out her hands and the nurse gave him to her. To the boy who was born two days later, the family gave a Christian name different from that of the deceased Joseph. But they gave him the same Tlingit or tribal name. This boy subsequently made a few fragmentary statements suggesting paranormal knowledge of the life of his older deceased brother, Joseph.

3. After the death of her father, a Tlingit woman who had lost many other relatives felt very lonely, all the more so because she had moved (after marrying) to another town. Two years after her father's death she dreamed that her father got off a boat with his suitcase and came to see her in a bakery which she was then running. She told him he had died, but he replied that he was coming to stay with her and also that lots of her relatives were coming to stay with her. The dream woke her up and she told it to her husband in the middle of the night. He said it meant she would have a large family. Shortly thereafter she became pregnant (or may already have been so) and later gave birth to her first child, a boy. His parents gave him the name of the dreamer's husband. This boy never said anything suggestive of a memory of a previous life, or at least not to his mother. She, however, did have a large family of children.

4. During a pregnancy a Tlingit woman had a dream in which two deceased relatives (Fred and Harry) appeared to her. Fred said: "Harry wants to come down too." This dream led the dreamer's mother to predict that the pregnant woman would have a boy, which she did. This child subsequently gave some evidence of paranormal knowledge of the deceased personality, Harry. The significance of Fred saying "too" in the dream lay in the fact that the family had already obtained some evidence (including a highly specific birthmark) which satisfied them that Fred had already been reborn into the family. Thus these two men, cousins and friends in their previous lives were, according to the dream, to be together again in other lives. But at the time of the dream, one personality (Fred) had already supposedly returned, although in the dream he appeared as the previous personality, not as a young child.

5. A pregnant Tlingit woman dreamed that her great-grandmother (who had died when the dreamer was a small child) was visiting her and seated at a table. The great-grandmother said she would come back with them because they were the only grandchildren who had taken care of her. She also said she was coming to stay with the dreamer "because she liked the tea and pastry we had." (In fact, the dreamer's mother had taken care of her grandmother who was rather neglected by her other relatives.) The dreamer woke up after or during the dream and told her husband they were going to have a girl and a girl was later born.

If we ask why such announcing dreams occur more commonly among the Tlingit cases suggestive of reincarnation than among cases elsewhere, we may perhaps again find the answer in the great importance which the Tlingits attach to proper identification of the returning personality. It is important for the Tlingit to be reborn in the right family among his own people, and important for them to recognize him and give him the status, respect, and care which he earned in the last life. The dreams, like the birthmarks, help in correct recognition.

DISCUSSION

The foregoing by no means exhausts the possibilities for studying patterns of cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingits in relation to other features of the culture. For example, the Tlingit belief in reincarnation does not allow for a change of sex from one incarnation to another. Some other cultures, including that of the Eskimos, accept this possibility. Cases with a difference of sex between the previous and present personality account for about ten per cent of all the cases in my collection. But no instance of this kind occurs among the forty-three Tlingit cases. Two instances of sex difference occur among the fifteen Eskimo cases.

However, the three prominent features of the Tlingit cases which I have described show adequately, I think, the importance of relating parapsychological and ethnographical observations in studying such cases. Before outlining some of my own proposed future investigations, I shall draw attention to the probability that paranormal experiences influence culture just as much as culture influences paranormal experiences.

For example, the apparent success of Tlingit women in predicting the sex of unborn babies from their dreams must reinforce the Tlingit belief in reincarnation. And such an effect would occur even more noticeably from instances in which a child gave parents veridical information about a previous personality which, so far as the parents could tell, the child had no normal means of acquiring.

Thus, although a belief in reincarnation in, say, southeastern Asia and southeastern Alaska favors the occurrence, or at least the reporting, of cases of the reincarnation type, these cases, to the extent that they satisfy local inquirers, must strengthen the original belief in reincarnation.

We can perhaps take these speculations of interrelationships one step further. Let us suppose for this discussion that reincarnation occurs and that many reported cases have happened more or less as the witnesses describe them. The chances of verification of a case then depend upon possibilities for the families of the two personalities reaching each other to exchange verifiable information. Such meetings will be most difficult if the two families live in different countries or states, less difficult if they live in different villages, but not far separated, and easiest of all if the two personalities belong to the same family, as seems usually to be the case among the Tlingits. Tlingit cultural patterns favor the expectation that a deceased person will be reborn as his sister's child or grandchild. But perhaps also the occurrence of easily verifiable cases with both personalities occurring in the same family has reinforced the tribal belief in the importance of family relationships, and indeed in the importance of the whole system of matrilineal kinship among the Tlingits.

There exists the further possibility that pre-mortem beliefs about culturally acceptable and appropriate homes in which to be reborn influence what actually happens if and when rebirth occurs. On this last possibility we have extremely scanty data, but some rather well-attested cases have occurred among the Tlingits and elsewhere in which a person has announced before death where he expects to be reborn and subsequently a child of this family (or place) has given evidence of apparent paranormal knowledge of the life of this deceased personality. In ten of the forty-three cases of the present Tlingit series, the previous personality had predicted his own rebirth; in eight of these cases, the previous personality had selected a particular couple to be his next parents.

The present report can provide only a preliminary account of work in progress. But what I have already observed gives suggestions for further investigations which I now plan, not only among the Tlingits, but in other cultural groups. If, as I have said, cultural forces do not account for *all* the apparently paranormal features of cases suggestive of reincarnation, they clearly *do* account for some of the variations in the cases. Moreover, we have indications in the material already gathered that the cultural forces or attitudes of a people may influence the paranormal as well as the normal features of these experiences. We may even be justified in speculating that the power of our beliefs may extend into lives beyond this one.

For the immediate future I project a more careful study of the announcing dreams of pregnancy among the women of one or two Tlingit villages. I hope to obtain information about the incidence of such dreams among all the pregnant women of such villages and to make accurate records (in advance of the birth of the child) of the details of the dreams. (Readers must remember that I only heard about the dreams reported above *after* the child had been born and this leaves room for some retrospective falsification of detail.)

We need much additional information about birthmarks before they can be interpreted adequately. We should try to learn about the incidence of all birthmarks among the Tlingits and other peoples. Do they occur more often in peoples whose lives make them more susceptible to wounds and injuries than among other peoples? Sometimes birthmarks occur in children who make no claim to remember a previous life and we need to know how often this happens.

I hope also to gather more information about predictions of rebirth made in advance, and then observe their fulfillment or not as events occur. Sometimes Tlingits (and also members of other cultures, e.g., Hindus of India) point to marks on their bodies and indicate that they may be recognized by the "reappearance" of these marks on their next bodies, that is, after their rebirths. I have described two such cases elsewhere (5). Cases of this kind offer the possibility of careful pre-mortem documentation of the site and appearance of bodily marks which might later correspond with similar marks on the body of a baby born after the death of the first personality. I have now under observation the case mentioned of a man who showed me a bodily scar which, after his death, will be "reproduced" (so he believes) on his next physical body. And I am now following some small children who have provided some evidence of remembering the lives of deceased personalities who, when they were living, predicted their rebirths. I hope to follow these children as they develop and observe similarities in their personalities and the reported behavior of the related previous personalities. To the extent that we find evidence of the fulfillment of the prediction we will also wish to have some objective data on the features of personality shown by the deceased and present personality. How much do they resemble, how much do they differ from each other? A pilot study to investigate with objective methods the correlations of traits in previous and present personalities of cases of this type is now under way in India.

Finally, we need to deepen our understanding of the influence of parents' expectations about the return of a loved deceased person in shaping the personality of the growing child whom they relate to that deceased personality. With its high incidence of kinship

relations between the two personalities in these cases, the Tlingit culture provides excellent opportunities for observing and weighing the contribution of adult expectations to the behavior of the children involved. It appears that occasionally parents make a "mistake" in identifying the child with a particular deceased personality, the child showing no paranormal knowledge of this personality, but demonstrating such knowledge for the life of another deceased personality. I have reported one such case elsewhere (5). Cases of this kind might permit a dissection of the normal forces and the paranormal processes accounting for the behavior of the child.

SUMMARY

Cases suggestive of reincarnation have occurred in a wide variety of cultures. The characteristics of cases from different cultures show many similarities and also some differences. Cultural factors seem to influence the incidence of reported cases of this type since cases are reported much more frequently in southern Asia (especially northern India) and in southeastern Alaska than elsewhere in the world so far as is now known.

Cultural factors also seem to lead to a greater incidence of certain features of cases in some cultures than in others. Thus blood relationships between the two personalities, birthmarks, and announcing dreams all occur as features of such cases in many parts of the world. But they occur more frequently in the reported cases suggestive of reincarnation among the Tlingit Indians than in cases occurring in other cultures. We can identify aspects of the Tlingit culture which emphasize these particular features, giving them a greater significance than they have in other cultures.

In a series of announcing dreams the sex of the baby to be born (reborn, the Tlingits would say) was correctly predicted in twenty-six out of twenty-nine dreams.

Although cultural beliefs influence the patterns of cases and their occurrence (or at least their reporting), we also have some grounds for believing that the occurrence of cases with verified paranormal features can influence the culture.

Further investigations of the relationship between cases suggestive of reincarnation and cultural patterns are planned both for the Tlingit culture and other cultures.

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Department of Neurology and Psychiatry
School of Medicine
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22901