

People Who Knew Each Other in Past Lives

Though reincarnation researchers have not found evidence to support New Age notions of permanent 'soul groups' or 'soul mates', they have discovered cases in which people verifiably knew each other in previous lives.

Background: Soul Mates

The concept of 'soul groups' is strong in New Age belief. Popular [reincarnation](#) author Michael Newton, for instance, discusses at length the dynamics of soul groups as part of a set and fairly rigid model of what happens between lives, based on hypnotic regressions he has conducted. These groups seem mandatory, or at least normal.^[1]

While Newton's model includes soul mates as well, the term long precedes New Age belief. An early version of it is found in Plato's *Symposium*, where the philosopher has the comic playwright Aristophanes narrate a tongue-in-cheek creation myth in which people originally had four legs and arms: universally split apart by Zeus, they have been searching for their 'other half' ever since. The term appears in its modern usage in a 1822 poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Since the 1990s, the idea of [soul mates](#) occurs frequently in published books.

Reincarnation research by the seminal researcher in the field [Ian Stevenson](#) and others has failed to uncover substantial evidence for either soul groups or soul mates, however.^[2] There is evidence, however, for people having known each other in previous lives, as exemplified in cases below. Reincarnation researcher [James Matlock](#) writes:

We do come back to be with each other again and again, but in varying relationships. There is some evidence of minds meeting up between lives and returning together as twins, but very rarely for co-ordinating group returns.^[3]

Twin Cases

A case of Burmese twins published in 1898 by Henry Fielding Hall presaged the [twin cases](#) that Stevenson would write about a century later, showing many of the same features: the twin boys Maung Gyi and Maung Nge spoke of their past-life memories, knew their way around their former home village, and recognized people they had known. They also had known each other in their previous lives as childhood friends who had grown up to become a married couple.^[4]

In *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*, Stevenson performed an analysis of 42 pairs of twins, of whom he and his colleagues had investigated forty.^[5]

For 31 pairs, the previous incarnations of both twins had been identified. In every single case, they had known each other in their immediately-previous lives. Five pairs had been married couples; eleven had been siblings, including two pairs as twins; six had been relatives of other types; and nine had been friends, acquaintances or business associates. Stevenson found a similar pattern, as best he could tell, in the other eleven cases, in which only one or neither previous life had been identified, though there were some exceptions.^[6]

Sivanthie and Sheromie Hettiaratchi

These Sri Lankan twins remembered having previously been male lovers who fought for the insurgency in Sri Lanka in 1971, and were both caught and killed by police on the same day.^[7] Ma

Khin Ma Gyi and Ma Khin Ma Nge of Burma, both girls, recalled having been their maternal grandparents, and showed respective physical and [behavioural traits](#) resembling the couple.^[8] Ma San Nyunt and Ma Nyunt San of Burma had been sisters who were distantly related to their current family.^[9]

Ma Khin San Tin and Ma Khin San Yin

These twins of Myanmar (then Burma) recalled being a pair of very close Japanese brothers, as yet unidentified, who had enlisted together in the Japanese army during World War II and were killed together in Burma by Allied bombing at the end of the Japanese occupation. They were reborn as twins in a house about ten metres away from where they had been killed, becoming the children of a woman who had seen them fleeing for cover.^[10]

The Pollock Twins

In England, sisters [Joanna and Jacqueline Pollock](#) both died instantly at the ages of eleven and six respectively when they were run over by a temporarily-insane driver. Their father, John Pollock, was convinced their spirits remained close to the family and would return to be born as twins; their mother, Florence Pollock, did not believe in reincarnation, and when she became pregnant, the attending doctor was sure she was carrying a single child. However, twin girls were born, and in early childhood Gillian and Jennifer began speaking of their previous lives as Joanna and Jacqueline, even making macabre mention of the accident. The twins showed behavioural similarities to their late elder sisters; in addition, Jennifer had [birthmarks](#) corresponding with a birthmark and a scar that Jacqueline had had.^[11]

Non-Twin Cases

İsmail Altıncılıç and Cevriye Bayrı

The case of [İsmail Altıncılıç and Cevriye Bayrı](#) comes from the the Bey district of the Turkish city of Adana, in the Alevi (reincarnationist) community. A man named Abit Süzülmüş lived with his two wives, Hatice and Şehide, and his five children, all by Şehide. On the night of 31 January 1957, when Şehide was just going into labour with her sixth child, Abit was lured out to his stable and murdered by a blow to the head with a blacksmith's hammer. Şehide, concerned that he had not returned, went to find him, and was murdered the same way. The two youngest children were also murdered with the hammer, having accompanied either their father or their mother to the stable. The killers were later apprehended and hanged for their crimes.

Later in 1957, a boy named İsmail Altıncılıç was born in the Mıdık district of Adana, which adjoins the Bey district. The house in which he lived was situated about two kilometers from Abit Süzülmüş's home. When İsmail was about eighteen months old, he began speaking as if he were Abit. His father recalled that the first time he spoke fluently, he denied being İsmail and insisted he was Abit, naming both Abit's wives and his three still-living children accurately. He then said he was owed private debts by several men and recounted details about the murder, including that a man named Ramazan had done the deed. He insisted that his parents take him to his previous family.

When İsmail was three, his father took him to the Bey district, allowing him to lead the way. Abit had owned two houses, and İsmail went to the one where the murder had taken place. He recognized various persons whom Abit had known.

The case was investigated by researcher R Bayer after he heard about it via newspapers in Turkey and beyond; Stevenson became interested after he heard about it from an associate who sent him a

Reuters dispatch in 1962.^[12]

İsmail recounted many more details he could not have known in normal ways, and also showed behaviours reminiscent of Abit. He was so insistent that his true name was Abit that his parents allowed him to use it for his school registration – something Stevenson had never seen in any other case. He liked to drink liquor and wear a cloth over his shoulder as Abit had done. When he heard that Ramazan had been hanged, he was overjoyed. He complained that his current family was poor, contrasting with his previous relative wealth.

The two families met on further occasions, and İsmail retained his affection for the Süzülmüş family. He frequently took gifts to his former children and aged sixteen still considered his name to be Abit. On learning of the death of Abit's mother, he wept and went to bed without supper.

Cevriye Bayrı was born in the Akkapı district of Adana, about six kilometers from the house of Abit Süzülmüş, on 1 October 1958. Stevenson first heard of her case in 1964 and co-investigated it with Bayer.

According to her older brother, Cevriye began to speak before her first birthday and started referring to her previous life almost immediately. One of her first words eventually developed into the two-word sentence 'Ramazan killed'. Between the ages of two and three, she gave details of the murder from Şehide Süzülmüş's point of view, including how she went out into the dark to look for him, how the murderer had taken her necklace, and how the baby she was carrying was born after she died (this was accurate though the baby did not survive). She correctly gave the names of Şehide's children and correctly recognized former relatives and friends both in person and in photographs, including ones not known to her own family. She was very affectionate with the Süzülmüş family.

Cevriye also showed behaviours relating to the life of Şehide. Unlike any other member of her family, she suffered from extremely severe headaches as a child, which diminished as she grew up. She appeared fearful as a small child, often running to her mother for protection, and was particularly afraid of the dark (Şehide had been murdered in darkness). In an incident when she was two years old, a power cut extinguished the lights and she began to cry 'Ramazan is going to kill me!' Similar to İsmail, she wanted to change her name from Cevriye to Şehide. She also showed great interest in Şehide's children.

When the Süzülmüş family learned that Cevriye might be the reincarnation of Şehide, both families decided the two children should meet, and İsmail was brought to Cevriye's family's home by his father and several other witnesses. İsmail was five and Cevriye was four.

According to İsmail's father, the two children ran to each other, kissed and embraced warmly. Someone brought some ice cream for İsmail and he gave it to Cevriye. Cevriye's mother said that İsmail embraced Cevriye but that Cevriye's reaction was less warm: she then quizzed İsmail on facts which both Abit and Şehide Süzülmüş would have known, such as the number of cattle they owned, and corrected him when he got them wrong. Cevriye told Stevenson, at the age of nine, that İsmail caressed her hand, and they exchanged gifts. She also said they shared accounts of the murders, and he asked why she had not come to his aid; according to Cevriye's mother, she asked him the same question. (In truth, as Stevenson pointed out, neither of them was able to help the other.)

On one occasion, İsmail said that he wanted to marry Cevriye and would die if he could not. They visited on several more occasions, but she was cool to him. Despite this, and also despite her mother forbidding her daughter to meet him, he was still talking about the possibility at the age of sixteen. At the age of fifteen, despite apparently retaining original memories, Cevriye had become embarrassed by her own claim of having had a husband in a previous life, but was still close to the Süzülmüş family. She said she saw İsmail now and then on the street but did not talk to him, too

embarrassed to do so, but was still visiting two of Şehide's children now and then.

U Kalar

Stevenson presents this case in *Reincarnation and Biology* as an example of 'pigmentation abnormalities', but it is also notable in that the child met another child who was discovered to be the reincarnation of the man who had shared his past-life fate. The case was investigated by a Burmese researcher, Daw Hnin Aye. Stevenson's case presentation is based on her notes.^[13]

U Kalar was born around 1942 in the village of Soo-dut-gyi in northern Burma. Prior to this, his father, U Maung Sein, told his wife, Daw Saw Nyunt, that he had taken the bodies of two murdered Indian soldiers out of the village for disposal. Sometime after that, she had a dream that one of the murder victims came into the house, and when she asked why, said he had come back to live with them. A month later, Kalar was born. He was named 'Kalar' ('U' is the standard mature-male prefix for Burmese names), meaning 'Indian', because of the dream and also because of the unusual darkness of his skin and his Indian-like features, which his parents noticed at his birth. He began speaking of a previous life at age four or five, and had unusual dietary preferences, as described by his mother. He also said that two birthmarks corresponded to past-life wounds.

Even at his advanced age, 42 at the time of the investigation, Kalar said he could remember the end of his previous life vividly. He had been an Indian soldier with the British Army, and took part in the British retreat from Rangoon into northern Burma after the Japanese declared war, travelling along the Rangoon-Magwe Road. After he and a buddy strayed away from the rest of their unit, they were lured to Soo-dut-gyi on the promise of alcohol. As they were getting drunk, the villagers attacked them with swords, axes and sticks, killing them and taking their guns. Kalar remembered Maung Sein loading the bodies onto the cart and dumping them off a cliff. Kalar said that as a disembodied spirit he followed Maung Sein home, and after a discarnate period of seven days, entered the foetus Saw Nyunt was carrying. His memories were triggered by seeing Allied soldiers and their guns in Soo-dut-gyi again, in 1945.

In his story as transposed from Hnin Aye's notes into the first person, Kalar recounts:

When I was about four or five years old, I met at the monastery school a child whom I recognized as the comrade who had been with me when I was killed in the previous life. He also had been reborn in Soo-dut-gyi village. This man, now called U Kyaw Nyein, also recognized me, and we became good friends at once and have remained friends.^[14]

Another associate of Stevenson, U E Maung, photographed Kalar with his brother to show how much darker-skinned he was. He also photographed Kyaw Nyein, illustrating how he too had a much darker complexion than the average Burmese person. Kyaw Nyein said he had no past-life memories – but apparently did remember just enough to recognize his former buddy and fellow murder victim.

Imad Elawar and Sleimann Bouhamzy

This is a case in which the two subjects likely never would have come to know each other if they had never expressed past-life memories. It was investigated by Stevenson and published in his book *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation*.^[15]

[Imad Elawar](#) was born to a Druze family in a village near Beirut, Lebanon. (The Druzes follow an esoteric Abrahamic religion that includes belief in reincarnation). Before he was two years old he began speaking of a past life, saying he had lived in a village named Khriby, a member of the Bouhamzy family. He repeatedly mentioned the names 'Mahmoud' and 'Jamileh'^[16] and described an

incident in which a truck had been driven over a man, possibly purposely, breaking both his legs and killing him. He also expressed great joy in being able to walk.

From all this his parents deduced that he had been a Mahmoud Bouhamzy of Khriby who had had a wife named Jamileh and had been run over by a truck and killed. However, when Stevenson journeyed to Khriby, he found out that while Mahmoud Bouhamzy did have a wife named Jamileh, he had not been run over by a truck. That had happened instead to Said Bouhamzy: following Said's death, a young man named Sleimann Bouhamzy had shown sufficient knowledge of Said's life as a child that the family had accepted him as Said's reincarnation. This of course meant that Imad could not be Said reincarnated.

On investigation, Stevenson found that many of Imad's statements matched the life of Ibrahim Bouhamzy, who had had a mistress named Jamileh and had died of tuberculosis, likely spinal, that had kept him bedridden toward the end of his life. Imad recalled far more details about the life and surroundings of Ibrahim than of Said, and made more recognitions of Ibrahim's house and relatives than of Said's. He exhibited behaviours similar to Ibrahim's, such as a belligerent side, a strong interest in hunting, and a good ability to speak French (which Ibrahim had learned in the French army in Lebanon). Because he had been cousins and friends with Said, he had been very much affected by the accident that killed him. He was also affected by an accident in which a bus he had been driving slipped its brakes and overturned.

In the process of investigating Imad's case, Stevenson interviewed Sleimann Bouhamzy, concluding that Sleimann's case would have proved equally strong had an investigator taken down his statements before he met the previous person's family – as Stevenson had done with Imad. He noted over time that Sleimann's phobia of vehicles was stronger than Imad's, corresponding with the difference between being aware of someone else's fatal accident and experiencing one's own.

It is not clear from Stevenson's case report whether Imad Elawar and Sleimann Bouhamzy ever met, but they certainly knew of each other.

Will and Elise

[Adult cases of past life memories](#) are found much less frequently than those involving children, and there is only one known adult case in which memories by two individuals who knew each other in the previous life have been verified. It concerns 'Will' and 'Elise',^[17] an American couple who claim to have known each other in three and four past lives respectively.^[18]

Will retains a rich collection of memories and exhibits physical and behavioural signs suggestive of a previous life as Wilhelm Emmerich (1916–1945), a non-commissioned SS officer in Nazi Germany. Emmerich worked in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp from 1941 to early 1945; he was then transferred to the Bergen-Belsen camp, where he died of typhus.

Elise likewise shows similar memories and behavioural and physical signs of a former life as Gerhard Palitzsch (1913–1944), a non-commissioned SS officer who worked in the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp, from 1940 to 1943. He was then transferred to the Eastern front, and was killed a short time later.^[19]

Both men were involved with keeping internal order in the camp, Palitzsch as a *Rapportführer* and Emmerich one rank below as a *Blockführer*, and there is strong circumstantial historical evidence that they knew each other. Will and Elise both maintain that they did, though they were not friends.

^[20]

A complexity of this case is that it includes memories of other former lives. Elise has memories and

behavioural signs that match the life following that of the SS officer, as Larry Johnson, an American soldier killed in the Vietnam War in 1968. She also claims to remember that the comrade in whose arms Johnson died was a previous incarnation of Will, who also has strong memories and behavioural signs of having been an American soldier who fought in Vietnam, in a unit of the same type as Johnson's. This soldier, however, has not yet been identified, so the relationship cannot be verified.

Elise further claims to recall having been reborn as this same soldier's son in the life immediately previous to her current one, also as yet unidentified. Wehrstein notes that these events are reminiscent of the case of [Rolf Wolf](#), published by reincarnation researcher Dieter Hassler in 2013, in which a young man who had been run over by a car and comforted as he died by a woman who stopped to help him was reborn as her son.^[21]

Children Who Recall Meeting in the Intermission Period

Two published accounts of children's past life memories include mention of children having met people as spirits in the [intermission](#) period (the period between lives) whom they now knew again in their current lives.

Alexandrina and Maria Pace Samonà

The Italian case of [Alexandrina Samonà](#) was published first by her own father, then by an investigator, in the early twentieth century. Stevenson recounts it in his book *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type*,^[22]

Carmelo Samonà, a physician in Palermo, Italy, and his wife Adele lost their daughter Alexandrina to meningitis on 10 March 1910, when she was five. Three days later, Adele had the first of two dreams in which Alexandrina reassured her that she was not gone and would return. After the family heard three mysterious knocks on a door, they decided to try mediumistic seances, and reported receiving communications from the spirits of both Alexandrina and Carmelo's sister Giannina, who had died many years before. 'Alexandrina' promised that she would return before Christmas.

On 10 April, Adele became aware she was pregnant. During a mediumistic session on 4 May, 'Alexandrina' said, confusedly, that there was someone else around her mother; 'Giannina' explained that there was a second spirit who also wanted to be reborn as Adele's child. Later, 'Alexandrina' said a twin sister would be born along with her.

Adele was indeed pregnant with twins and gave birth on 22 November. One was observed to closely resemble Alexandrina, and so was given the same name; the other was named Maria Pace. As she grew, Alexandrina was observed to have many of the same behaviours as her deceased namesake, such as quietness, little interest in toys, a phobia of barbers, a dislike of cheese, a fascination with playing with cloth and shoes, a tendency to refer to herself in the third person, and left-handedness. Her single mention of past-life knowledge referred to the city of Monreale, which she insisted she had seen before, although she had not. She described sights that the first Alexandrina had seen when the family had visited previously.

In sum, Alexandrina had apparently not known her twin sister, Maria Pace, in her past life, but they agreed in the intermission to be reborn as twin sisters.

Kazuya, Masatoshi, Haruka and Soshi

This interesting case was presented in documentary form,^[23] a book by the grandmother of one of the four children involved, Minamiyama Kazuya,^[24] and in a paper by reincarnation researcher Ohkado

Masayuki on the reincarnation case of Kazuya.^[25]

Ohkado's conclusion, based on some typical reincarnation signs (remembering his former name, referring to relatives as if they were related to the previous person, similar behaviours to the previous person) was that Kazuya was the reincarnation of his half-uncle Jun, who had committed suicide at the age of 22.

Of special interest were Kazuya's memories of the time between death and conception. He spoke of them in the documentary and also in interviews with Ohkado, who provides this summary version:

After I died, I regretted committing suicide and entered the 'reflection room', a dark room for the dead who regrets what s/he has done while s/he was alive. I was there for a while, reflecting on my past conduct, and when I felt I would be able to start over again, I decided to be born to my Mama. I have come here to give 'presents' to those who I had hurt before [to make those I had hurt before happy].^[26]

Ohkado also interviewed three other children, Masatoshi, Haruka and Soshi, whose mother was a close friend of Kazuya's mother. They all claimed that they had been with Kazuya in between lives, and that all four children had made a pact to be together when they were reborn. Both their mother and Kazuya's grandmother recalled that when the three siblings met Kazuya for the first time, sometime before Kazuya turned four, Masatoshi, who was about two years older and the eldest of the four, said 'When we were up there, we promised to be together [on earth]', and the other three all agreed.

Ohkado interviewed Masatoshi and Haruka when they were thirteen and twelve respectively, by which time their original memories as shared in the documentary had faded. But they both said they had been in the 'reflection room'. Haruka recalled a past life as a selfish woman whom no one had mourned; Masatoshi did not share past-life memories except to say he had seen combat in war, but described the 'reflection room' as a place entered and left voluntarily, where spirits who feel they did something wrong in life go to reflect upon it.

Ohkado observed all four children together for some six hours and found that they all seemed happy together. In an endnote, he adds:

I know of two other cases in which girls from different families talked about their life-between-life memories, saying they had promised to be together on earth. There are many cases in which siblings say they promised to be together on earth while they were in the life-between-life state.
^[27]

KM Wehrstein

Literature

Fielding [Hall], H. (1898). *The Soul of a People*. London: Bentley and Son.

Haraldsson, E., & Matlock, J.G. (2016). *I Saw A Light And Came Here: Children's Experiences of Reincarnation*. Hove, UK: White Crow Books.

Hassler, D. (2013). A new European case of the reincarnation type. *Journal of the Society for Psychological Research* 77, 19-31.

Minamiyama, M. (2014). *Mama ga "Iiyo" tte Ittekureta kara Umaretekoretan dayo (I Was Able to Be Born Because Mom Said "Yes")*. Tokyo: Zennichi Publishing.

Newton, M. (2000). *Destiny of Souls: New Case Studies of Life Between Lives*. St. Paul, Minnesota, USA: Llewellyn.

Ogikubo, N. (2013). *A Promise with God* [Motion Picture]. Japan: Kumanekodo.

Ohkado, M. (2016). A same-family case of the reincarnation type in Japan. *Journal of Scientific Exploration* 30/4, 524-36.

Stevenson, I. (1974). *Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation* (2nd ed., rev.). Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: University Press of Virginia.

Stevenson, I. (1980). *Cases of the Reincarnation Type. Vol. III: Twelve Cases in Lebanon and Turkey*. Charlottesville, Virginia, USA: University Press of Virginia.

Stevenson, I. (1997). *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects. Volume 2: Birth Defects and Other Anomalies*. Westport, Connecticut, USA: Praeger.

Stevenson, I. (2003). *European Cases of the Reincarnation Type*. Jefferson, North Carolina, USA: McFarland.

Wehrstein, K.M. (2019). An adult reincarnation case with multiple solved lives: Recalling Wilhelm Emmerich. *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research* 81, 1-17.

Wehrstein, K.M. (in submission). An adult reincarnation case with multiple solved lives: Recalling Gerhard Palitzsch.

Wehrstein, K.M. (in preparation). Two adult reincarnation cases with multiple solved lives: Testing the theories and beliefs.

References

Footnotes

- 1.^ See Newton (2000).
- 2.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 273.
- 3.^ Haraldsson & Matlock (2016), 273.
- 4.^ Fielding [Hall] (1898). Summarized in Haraldsson & Matlock (2017), 277.
- 5.^ Stevenson (1997), 931-2062.
- 6.^ Stevenson (1997), Table 25-4, 1937.
- 7.^ Stevenson (1997), 1940-70.
- 8.^ Stevenson (1997), 2000-17.
- 9.^ Stevenson (1997), 2017-25.
- 10.^ Stevenson (1997), 2025-34.
- 11.^ Stevenson (1997), 2041-58.
- 12.^ Stevenson (1980). Full case study of İsmail Altınkılıç: 194-235. Full case study of Cevriye Bayrı: 236-259. All information in this section is drawn from these except where otherwise noted.
- 13.^ Stevenson (1997), 1745. All information in this section is drawn from this source.
- 14.^ Stevenson (1997), 1747.
- 15.^ Stevenson (1974), 274-320. All information in this section is drawn from this source.
- 16.^ Not her real name; Stevenson changed it for reasons of privacy.

- 17.^ Their names are changed for reasons of privacy.
- 18.^ Wehrstein (2019) is the first of a planned series of papers on them.
- 19.^ Wehrstein (in submission).
- 20.^ Wehrstein (in preparation).
- 21.^ Hassler (2013).
- 22.^ Stevenson (2003), 23-27. All information in this section is drawn from this source.
- 23.^ Ogikubo (2013).
- 24.^ Minamiyama (2014).
- 25.^ Ohkado (2016). All information in this section is drawn from this paper.
- 26.^ Ohkado (2016), 527.
- 27.^ Ohkado (2016), 535-36 n8.