

Development of Certainty About the Correct Deceased Person in a Case of the Reincarnation Type in Lebanon: The Case of Nazih Al-Danaf

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Abstract-This case concerns a young boy in Baalchmay, Lebanon, who made specific statements before several family members asserting memories of a previous life, such as being a man who carried pistols and hand-grenades, having a mute friend, describing a house, having children, living in the village of Quaberchamoun, and being shot by armed people. The case is unusual because when the child was taken at age 7 to the village, a corresponding deceased person was identified by means of his claimed memories, and the widow and the man's brother became certain of the authenticity of the child's reincarnation through his correct answers to their questions, recognition of people and possessions, and his own knowledgeable questions to them.

Keywords: past life memories-personal identity-Lebanon-Druze-memory-reincarnation-violent death

Introduction

From August 1988 to March 2001 the first author made six journeys to Lebanon to conduct a psychological study of children who claim to have memories of a previous life or who are believed to have them by those around them. Thirty such children were found, 19 boys and 11 girls, all in the Druze community in Lebanon. A few cases were picked out for a detailed investigation.

This paper reports one case which is notable for several features. Nazih Al-Danaf lives with his father Sabir Al-Danaf, his mother Naaim, and seven sisters and brothers in Baalchmay, about 15 miles east of Beirut. The exceptional features of his case (e.g., the number of witnesses to his statements before an attempt was made to find a deceased person) seemed in particular to deserve a thorough investigation.

The family and home of the claimed previous person were found by following Nazih's directions. The two families were complete strangers with no previous meeting or connection between them. There were a high number of

recognitions made by the child as he first met the wife and children of the deceased person, and the person's brother. The family of the deceased probed the child's detailed knowledge of the life of the individual they had known, and verified his memories.

This paper describes our investigation of this case and also the process of how members of the alleged previous family responded to Nazih's statements and tested him until they arrived at a certainty about his claims and came to accept him as a rebirth of a previous member of their family.

Previously the first author (E.H.) has investigated and published reports on a number of cases in Sri Lanka (Haraldsson, 1991, 2000a, b; Haraldsson & Samararatne, 1999; Mills et al., 1994), besides conducting two psychological studies of children who claimed memories of a previous life (Haraldsson, 1995, 1997; Haraldsson et al., 2000). The second author (M.A.I.) has an intimate knowledge of Druze culture, served as an interpreter, took an active part in the investigation of this case, and assisted another researcher, Ian Stevenson, in the investigation of numerous cases in Lebanon in the seventies (Stevenson, 1980).

The Druzes

The Druzes are one of four main ethnic communities of Lebanon, the others being Christian Maronites, Sunni and Shiite Muslims. The Druzes number about 300,000 in Lebanon and also live in Syria, Jordan and Israel and as immigrants in other countries. The Druze religion is generally considered a subgroup within Islam with its origin traced back to the 11th century, but is sometimes looked upon as independent of Islam (Abu-Izzeddin, 1993; Makarem, 1979). The Druzes tend to cloak their religion in secrecy and differ from mainstream Muslims in many important respects, such their scriptures, and by showing no observance of the five fundamental tenets of Islam. Their religious scriptures are kept secret from non-Druzes as well as the great majority of Druzes (the *juhhal*, perhaps 90% of the community) who have not been initiated into their religion. Around 10% of Druzes (the *uqqal*), go through religious training and are initiated into their religion, usually in later life, and then obtain the honorific title of Sheikh or Sheikha in the case of women. They abstain from alcohol and tobacco and are expected to lead a more virtuous life and take on a dress that distinguishes them from the rest of the population, although the last requirement is not always observed among Druzes working in higher positions in Beirut. Plato, the Greek philosopher that predates Islam by many centuries, is held in great esteem in the Druze scriptures, and in his writings the concept of reincarnation plays an important role. Reincarnation is an important tenet of the Druze religion.

Methodology

The methodology applied in investigating cases of claimed memories of previous lives consists primarily of the following steps.

1. Ascertain the facts of each case by interviewing independently available witnesses as to the child's statements about a previous life. We conducted interviews about this case with the principal witnesses-Nazih's mother and father and his six older sisters and his older brother, all at the family's home. We interviewed the family during three trips to Lebanon, in May 2000 and in January and March 2001. We visited their home seven times for interviewing, and thus came to know them fairly well, which is essential if a case is to be studied thoroughly. With a few exceptions the interviews were conducted in Arabic and interpreted by M.A.I. Relevant notes from the interviews were in most instances later checked with the interviewees.

Each witness was interviewed individually, mostly alone but sometimes someone else or others were present in the living room where the interviews took place. (In small apartments where many family members live, it may be difficult to ask people to leave the living room.) The witness would be asked to sit on a special chair, and if others were present, they would be asked to keep quiet while the witness was interviewed. We emphasized that each witness should only report what s/he had heard or witnessed directly, not what s/he had heard others say. Thus we obtained testimony from nine witnesses regarding the statements that Nazih had been making about a previous life, particularly statements that he had made before the first contact with the alleged previous family. All the major witnesses were interviewed on more than one occasion several months apart. Their testimony was on the whole consistent over time but additional testimony would sometimes emerge on a later visit that the witness did not recall in the earlier interview, as is not uncommon when interviewing witnesses.

The witnesses were cooperative. Our impression was that they were honest and open about their observations and did not try to embellish the case. Nazih's sisters and brother would sometimes argue about some differences in their observations, in those few instances when more than one witness was present. They would generally be very clear about which statements they had heard Nazih make and which they had not.

2. The second step in investigations of claimed spontaneous past-life memories is to ascertain how far each case may already have been verified when the investigator comes to the scene, and to critically examine that verification, by a new thorough investigation. We therefore interviewed on two occasions the principal witnesses of the family in Quaberchamoun that was traced through Nazih's instructions and became identified by him as his previous family. Great care was taken in finding and interviewing persons who knew intimately Fuad Assad Khaddage, the deceased person that Nazih claims to have been. Extensive notes were taken of our interviews, often first in Arabic by M.A.I. and then in English as they were translated into English during the interviews.

3. The final step consists in checking the correctness of each statement made by the child by comparing each of them to life events and characteristics of the person(s) who have been identified as a potential "previous person-

ality". The methods of investigating cases of claimed memories of previous lives, or spontaneous past-life experiences, have been amply described elsewhere (Haraldsson, 199 1; Stevenson, 200 1).

Nazih's Initial Statements Regarding his Previous Life

Nazih was born February 29, 1992, and was eight years old when we first met him at his home in Baalchmay in May 2000. We learned about this case from the family of another child. We had some difficulties finding Nazih's home on the Beirut-Damascus highway, and stopped at a shop to ask where Nazih's father lived. When the shopkeeper learned that we wanted to speak to his son Nazih, he seemed in no doubt what the errand might be: "What has he done now? He is a naughty boy."

Nazih was in school when we arrived and his mother, Naa'im Al-Danaf, was, at first somewhat reluctantly, willing to speak to us. We asked her what first made her think that Nazih was speaking of a previous life. According to her he was only a year and a half old when he began using words that they did not expect a child of his age to know. He would tell his mother, "I am not small, I am big. I carry two pistols. I carry four hand-grenades. *I am 'qabadai'* (a fearless strong person). Don't be scared by the hand-grenades. I know how to handle them. I have a lot of weapons. My children are young and I want to go and see them." He also told her how many children he had, but she has forgotten the number now. He did not give their names to his mother.

Nazih stated that he wanted to go to his previous home to get some papers for money that he had lent to people so that he could get the money back. He said his previous name was Fuad. In a later interview Nazih's mother withdrew that statement and thought that name first came up after the first visit to the village of Qaberchamoun where his previous family was identified. Nazih's sister Sabrine insists she heard him say the name Fuad before that visit.

Nazih's mother did not encourage Nazih to speak about his previous life. She had an older daughter, 23 years at the time of our first interview, who had also talked of a previous life. "Life is not easy for such children," the mother said, "as they want to see their previous family." She did not want to go through that strain again. Nazih used to tell his mother. "My wife is prettier than you. Her eyes and mouth are more beautiful." This statement may in fact have been the first that made her think that he was talking about a previous life. Later we learned that Nazih also said this to most of his six sisters who are older than he is.

When he was around four he saw a young woman that worked in a store across the street. His mother and sister Mirna remember him saying that she looked like his previous wife and had the same beautiful eyes. He liked her a lot and went as far as to ask her to marry him!

Nazih's mother told us that she remembered hearing him saying to his father that he had lots of weapons and that he knew how to handle them. He wanted to bring his father to his house and show him the weapons. He told him that, like his father, he had children and deeds for a house. He often talked about a friend who was mute and had only one hand (or he may have said that there was something wrong with his hand). Nazih said his friend could hold a gun in one hand and work it, getting it ready to shoot. He referred to him as "my friend the mute."

Nazih described how he had died. "Armed people came and shot at us. I also shot at them and killed one. We were shot and later taken by an ambulance." (And thus his life ended.) Nazih told his mother that he remembered that they gave him a shot of anesthesia in his arm in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. He would point to a spot on his upper arm and say: "This is where they stuck the needle." We did not see there any sign of a birthmark.

Nazih often insisted that his parents take him to his previous home so that he could see his children and do other things already mentioned. Nazih's mother did not recall that he had specified where he had lived. Sometimes he would threaten them: "If you don't take me there I am going to walk." His statements are listed in Table 1.

Not only did Nazih's claims of previous life memories puzzle his family; he also has some behavioral characteristics that are unusual for a child of his age, apart from his fearless, firm behavior. When he sees a cigarette box he, on occasion, wants to get it and smoke from a cigarette. If someone has a whisky, he wants it too. This was particularly the case during the period when he spoke most about his previous life, which was until the alleged previous family was identified.

Description of Nazih

Nazih returned from school near the end of our first interview with his mother. He is a slim, well-built and handsome boy, alert and attentive but did not seem much interested in us. His mother told us that he is no longer spontaneously speaking of his previous life, will only do so when asked and only remembers bits of what he earlier was talking about. This is in line with the general tendency of children who around the age of five to six either stop speaking of their previous life or do so much less than before, and then seem to have forgotten most or much of their former memories. In Nazih's case the forgetting seems not to have started until after he met the previous family. However, Nazih still remembers the fearful events that lead to his death, and still speaks of being a brave, fearless person.

The following are some of Nazih's mother's responses to the Child Behavior Checklist that was administered to her: he argues a lot, wants to be involved in discussions and convinced by arguments, prefers being with older children, tends to hang around with boys who get into trouble, does not seem to feel guilty after misbehaving, feels he has to be perfect, gets in many

fighters, gets teased, is nervous and high-strung, is much concerned with neatness and cleanliness, tends to boast and brag and show off, is unusually loud and hot tempered, and talks too much. He gets along with his sisters and brother no better or worse than children tend to do. He is helpful to his mother around the house and to his sisters and brother when they need him. These characteristics are found in a number of children who speak about a previous life (Haraldsson, 1977; Haraldsson et al., 2000). According to Nazih's teacher, he works 'much less hard' than other pupils, is not learning much, but behaves a bit better than the average pupil. It seems that Nazih behaves well at home and in school and his naughtiness finds expression elsewhere.

We did not meet Nazih's father, Sabir Al-Danaf, a mason by profession, until during our visit in January 2001. He told us that he had been more ready to listen to Nazih's talk about the previous life than his mother. He did not encourage Nazih, but he listened to him, although he also did not want his son to get mixed up with two lives. "Besides, his mother feared that he might go away to the previous family", Sabir said. This fear is common among mothers of children who speak about a previous life.

Nazih's First Visit to Qaberchamoun

According to his father Sabir, Nazih insisted that his parents take him to Qaberchamoun, a small town that is about 17 km away. "My home (house) is in Qaberchamoun", he said. Nazih wanted to show them where his house was. "If you don't take me there I am going to walk there", he threatened. His father states that when Nazih was 2.5 years old, he drew a map of his previous house for them and also of an intersection near his house. Unfortunately these drawings no longer exist. Nazih's father tried for a long time to put off bringing Nazih to his previous home in spite of his persistent requests. Nazih also told his sisters and brother that he wanted to go and see his children and get his weapons and other things.

Nazih's mother, sisters and brother, however, do not remember that Qaberchamoun was mentioned by Nazih before they went there, whereas his father claims that he did, and that is why they drove to Qaberchamoun. Qaberchamoun is at an intersection of major roads. Sabir had been there and has relatives near the village but had no knowledge of anyone living in the village itself. We made two trips from Baalchmay to Qaberchamoun to try to reconstruct what happened during Nazih's first visit to Qaberchamoun when they traced the alleged previous family. Our first trip was with Nazih and his older sister Sabrine, and the second with Nazih and his father Sabir.

When Nazih was six years old (early 1998, witnesses not quite sure) his father and mother finally agreed to drive Nazih to Qaberchamoun. They were accompanied by his sisters Sabrine and Hanan and his brother Baha. When they came to Ainab, a place about a kilometer away from Qaberchamoun, Nazih asked them to stop at a mud road on the left side. He told them that this

road came to a dead end and that there was a cave there. They did not inspect it and went on.

When they arrived at the intersection in Qaberchamoun where six roads converge Sabir stopped the car and asked Nazih where to go. Nazih pointed to a road to the left downward, and told him to continue on that road until they come to a road that forks off upward. "My house is there."

The road to the left that started downward leveled off and became flat. Sabir drove on, perhaps 100 to 120 meters, until he came to the first road upward. He drove up the very steep road and had to stop a few car-lengths up the gravel road. A man was washing the stairs of his house with a water hose and the road had become too wet and slippery for the car.

Here Nazih opened the car and ran out while his father backed the car down to the flat road and parked it. Then he walked up the road to find Nazih while his wife and daughters remained near the car. Sabir asked the man washing the stairs if anyone around had died in the war (been "martyred"). Yes, a young man had been martyred nearby. Sabir went to that house and asked if somebody had died in the circumstances described in Nazih's statements. The man who had lived in this house had died in a bomb-blast so that did not fit. Sabir went further up the road to look for Nazih and found him. Nazih had also been looking for the right house. Nazih asked: "Take me to where I can see the white villa on the other side of the valley; I used to see it from my house." Then they walked down the steep road.

The women who stayed with the car saw a young man who was washing a car only a few meters below where they originally had to stop their car on the steep road. They started speaking to him. This is how he, Kamal Khaddage, described their first meeting:

I was washing my car and watering at the entrance to our house. A car came up the road, stopped at the next house above and on the other side of the road. A young boy sprang out of the car. Then the car backed down and parked on the level road below at the corner of our lot. A man [Nazih's father] left the car and walked up the road to follow the boy. The women saw me and walked towards me. They asked if I knew someone who had been shot, they did not know his name but he had carried handguns, hand-grenades, and had owned a red car.

Kamal was surprised because the boy described by the women seemed to remember life as his father, Fuad Khaddage; his father had died many years ago, so he asked about the age of the boy. Kamal said that Nazih's mother told him he was around seven. The visitors said more about the person whose life the boy seemed to remember but Kamal does not remember further details. What they did tell him fitted his father. He then shouted to his mother, who was working in a field close by, that they had visitors. At this time Nazih and his father joined the group.

Najdiyah Khaddage's Account of her First Meeting with Nazih

Najdiyah Khaddage was Kamal's mother and the wife of Fuad, the alleged previous personality. "When Nazih came here I was picking olives in our garden some distance away. My children yelled at me that there was a boy who said that he was their father, and they wanted me to come and see if he would recognize me. I went to them and told his mother that my husband died in the war. When he saw me, he looked like he knew me, and looked up and down at me. Kamal then said to him: Is she her [your previous wife] or not? Nazih smiled."

Najdiyah told us, "I wanted to be sure of him, sure that he was my previous husband". She asked him: "Who built the foundation of this gate at the entrance of this house?" Nazih replied: "A man from the Faraj family." This was correct.

Najdiyah continued, "Next, we invited them into the house. He went by himself to a room and pointed to a cupboard: 'Here I used to put my pistols', he said and pointed to the right side of the cupboard. 'Here I used to put the weapons' [used *slah* in Arabic which means unspecific kinds of weapons], and he pointed to the left side of the cupboard. Then he asked: 'Where are they?' I explained to him that they had been stolen. He did not say anything. Fuad had kept his arms in this cupboard and in the way Nazih described." Najdiyah's account confirmed what Nazih's father and mother had reported to us before our first visit to Qaberchamoun.

Najdiyah decided to put some more questions to Nazih to test his memories. She asked him if she had had any accident when they were living at the house in Ainab. (They lived in Ainab when they were building this house, and it was not fully completed when Fuad died, see below.) He replied that she had fallen and dislocated her shoulder-that this had happened in the morning-and that Asaad, Fuad's father, was with them. Nazih said that she had skidded on plastic nylon while picking pinecones for her children to play with. Najdiyah said that Nazih mentioned that at the time he had told her: "After I come back home from work in the afternoon I will take you to the doctor," which he did. He said that a cast was put on her shoulder that she had on for some time. Najdiyah said that everything that Nazih had told her was correct.

Najdiyah also asked Nazih if he remembered how their young daughter Fairuz got seriously sick. He said: "She was poisoned from my medication and I took her to the hospital." Fairuz had in fact eaten Fuad's medication pills that were in his jacket. She was four years old at the time, and had become very sick.

According to Najdiyah, Nazih also reminded her of some incidents in their life: "Do you remember when we were going up from Beirut in the car and the car stopped and twice the Israeli soldiers fixed it for us?" That was true. The Israeli soldiers had charged the car battery twice.

He told her of another incident: "One night I came home drunk. You locked the door and I slept outside the house on a rocking sofa." This was true; she was scared, so she locked the door.

Nazih told her that there had been a barrel in the garden where he used to teach her to shoot. "Where is it now?" he asked. She told him it was in the garden. Nazih wanted to look at it so they went out to the garden. When he saw the barrel, he said: "this is it." This was correct. Fuad's widow added: "Once my son Kamal said we should throw this rusted barrel away. I replied, maybe my husband comes back reincarnated and recognizes the barrel, so it was left there." Najdiyah told us she showed Nazih a photograph of Fuad and asked him: "Who is this?" He replied: "This is me, I was big but now I am small."

Najdiyah was much impressed and so were his five children. They told us that they all believed that Nazih was Fuad reborn. This was the only way they could understand how Nazih was able to reveal such knowledge of their father's life. Since that time the families occasionally visit one another and have, evidently, an affectionate relationship. We observed affectionate embraces between Nazih and the family as we parted.

Further Statements by Nazih and Claims of Observed Recognitions

Nazih visited Fuad's younger brother Sheikh Adeeb' at his home in Kfermatta shortly after the first meeting with the family in Qaberchamoun. Sheikh Adeeb is a senior employee of an airline and works in Beirut. This is Sheikh Adeeb's account of their first meeting:

Nazih, and his family came to my house and asked for me. I was at a Druze prayer house [majlis] and left immediately to find my house full of people. I saw a boy running towards me who said: "Here comes my brother Adeeb", and hugged me. I remember it was wintertime and Nazih said: "How do you go out like this (not warmly dressed), put something on your ears." Then he told me: "I am your brother Fuad." I looked at him and said: "What is the proof that you are my brother Fuad." He said that he once gave me a handgun as a gift. Then I asked, what kind of gun? He told me: "I gave you a Checki 16" (a gun from Czechoslovakia). Nazih asked me if I still had it. Then I hugged him and was 100% sure that he was my brother.

The Checki 16 is not common in Lebanon and is considered a precious item. Fuad had given this handgun to his brother around 1980. "Fuad liked guns a lot", Sheikh Adeeb added. Fuad had also given a gun or guns to his other brother Ibrahim who died in the war.

Sheikh Adeeb asked Nazih where his original house was (where he lived with his first wife). Nazih asked him to go out so he could show him the house. Sheikh Adeeb reported, "We walked a little further down the same street, and Nazih said: 'This is the house of my father and this [he pointed to that next house] is my first house'. This was absolutely correct. Inside the latter house, Nazih said, he had made one wooden ladder that still stands there." Adeeb affirms that he remembers that Fuad made this wooden ladder. Fuad's previous wife still lives in the house. Adeeb asked him afterwards about the

woman that they met in the house. Nazih replied: "That is my wife Im Nazih." (Fuad's oldest boy was named Nazih. Druze women are often called after their oldest son, namely mother of so and so, in this case Nazih.) Sheikh Adeeb felt sure that no one would have told Nazih who had lived in these two houses as he was visiting Kfarmatta for the first time in his life.

Sheikh Adeeb showed Nazih a photo of three men and asked him who they were. Nazih pointed with his finger at each of them and told who they were: Adeeb, Ibrahim and Fuad. He showed him one more picture and Nazih told him that this was their father, which was correct. Sheikh Adeeb showed us these photographs.

Nazih asked where their father was. Adeeb told him he had died, but he had been alive when Fuad died. Sheikh Adeeb told us that the first meeting with Nazih was very emotional, people were crying and hugging, as it brought back so many memories. Table 2 summarizes the statements and confirmations in meetings with the family and brother of Fuad Khaddage.

Later Sheikh Adeeb visited Nazih at his home in Baalchmay. He took a handgun with him and asked Nazih if it was the gun that he gave to him. Nazih replied with a no and that was correct. It was, in particular, the story of the Checki 16 handgun that completely convinced Sheikh Adeeb that Nazih was his brother Fuad reborn, because nobody would have known about Fuad giving this handgun to him. Sheikh Adeeb admitted that perhaps his wife might have known, but not anyone else. By the time we met him he had sold this gun.

Major Events in the Life of Fuad Asaad Khaddage

Fuad was born 1925 in Kfermatta, which is only a few kilometers away from Qaberchamoun. He had two brothers, Ibrahim and Sheikh Adeeb, who gave us valuable information about Fuad. Fuad's first wife was Fida, with whom he had eight children. They divorced and he married Najdiyah. They had five children. The oldest was 8 years old when he died.

When Fuad had finished compulsory schooling he started to work at the Druze Orphanage in Abey, and then at the Druze Center (Dar El Taifeh) in Beirut, where he was employed for 30 years. He worked for Sheikh Al Aql (title for the highest sheikh, who is the spiritual leader of the Druze community). At this time Sheikh Al Aql was Mohammad Abu-Chakra. The Dar El Taifeh is the religious center for Druzes in Beirut. It consists of an imposing building that houses assembly halls where Druzes hold religious meetings and funerals, and where their religious leaders have their offices. On the compound there are also some smaller buildings, a burial site and a shrine.

At the time Fuad was assassinated he was manager at the Center and responsible for all paperwork. At the same time he was the companion/bodyguard for Sheikh Al Aql, who was usually accompanied by three bodyguards. Fuad also served as a bodyguard to Khalid Baik Jumblatt (deceased). During

TABLE 2
List of Nazih's Additional Statements and Recognitions at his First Meetings With the Alleged
Previous Family

Place of meeting	Statements, questions, recognitions	Answers, comments	
Najdiyah's home	Nazih asked Najdiyah:		
	1. Do you remember when we were going up from Beirut, the car broke down and twice Israeli soldiers charged the battery for us?	Yes (correct).	
	2. Do you remember that one night I came home drunk and you locked the door and I slept outside on a rocking sofa?	Yes (correct).	
	3. Where is the barrel where I taught you to shoot'?	It is in the garden (correct).	
	Najdiyah asked Nazih:		
	4. Who built the foundations of this gate'?	A man of the Faraj family (correct).	
	5. Did she have an accident when they lived in Ainab?	She fell and dislocated her shoulder (correct).	
	6. Does he remember how their young daughter got seriously sick'?	She was poisoned by taking my medication and I took her to the hospital (correct).	
	7. Nazih showed Fuad's family in which cupboard he had kept his arms.	Correct.	
	8. Nazih said to Fuad's brother Adeeb as they met: Here comes my brother Adeeb. I am your brother Fuad.	Correct.	
	Adeeb's home	Adeeb asked Nazih:	
		9. What is the proof that you are my brother?	I once gave you a pistol (correct).
		10. What kind of a pistol?	It was a Checki 16 (correct).
		11. Where was the house of your father and your first house?	Nazih stepped out and showed him both houses (correct).
12. Inside Fuad's first house Nazih pointed to a ladder and said he had made it.		Correct.	
13. Nazih recognized Fuad's first wife and referred to her as Im (mother of) Nazih.		Fuad's oldest son was named Nazih (correct).	
14. Adeeb showed Nazih a photo of three men.		Nazih pointed correctly to each and gave their names as Adeeb, Ibrahim and Fuad.	
Nazih's home	15. Adeeb brought a pistol to Nazih to test him.	Nazih correctly stated: This is not the pistol I gave to you.	

the civil war Fuad armed himself with two pistols and hand-grenades whenever he left the Center.

What kind of man was Fuad? His brother Sheikh Adeeb described him:

“He was a brave person, fearless, who liked people and they liked him. He was very honest, spoke gently and nicely to people, had a sweet tongue as they say here. He did not have enemies.” His cousin Sheikh Mosleh, whom we visited in Beirut, described him as follows: “Fuad was brave, overexcited, took risks, liked weapons a lot, was ‘qabadai’. ‘Qabadai’ means a brave courageous man, honest and the word has only a positive meaning. Fuad did not take part in the war. He liked to show off with his pistols, but never used them. He also worked for a very important person, Sheikh Al Aql and that he apparently enjoyed.” Sheikh Mosleh’s daughter Wafa added: “He used to like any kind of show off.”

At the time of his death Fuad and his wife Najdiyah lived at the Dar El Taifeh in Beirut. He would work three days and have three days off when they would go up to Ainab and Qaberchamoun, where they were building a house and where they spent their nights. Before they started to build their house, they lived for about five years in a house in Ainab that was provided for them, only a kilometer away from Qaberchamoun. They moved there during the civil war at the time when the Syrian army entered Lebanon.

The Israelis were invading Lebanon around the time Fuad died. Because of this he brought his wife and children to their house in Qaberchamoun, which is about half an hour drive from downtown Beirut up in the hills-which is to say it was safer. Then he went back to Beirut.

Death of Fuad Khaddage in Dar El Taifeh

The following night, July 22, 1982, three armed men broke into Dar El-Taifeh and shot two guards at the gate and Fuad who was inside the building. Apparently the attackers tried unsuccessfully to set the house on fire and then ran away, and were never identified. According to newspaper reports the bodies of the three men were brought to the American University of Beirut Hospital for examination. This was Thursday night, the night of prayer for the Druzes. The three men were not sheikhs (religious men) and they were not in the prayer assembly hall when they were shot.

Najdiyah learned about her husband’s death from neighbors who heard the news over the radio. There was a funeral for Fuad in Dar El Taifeh but she was not present. His body was brought the next day to Qaberchamoun and then to his village Kfarmatta, where he was buried.

We were able to obtain a post mortem report on Fuad dated July 2, 1982, and signed by Dr. Hussary. There it is stated that he died from gun shot wounds. One ran in vertical direction in the right front section of the head, another on the right neck with gunpowder blaze and burns at the edges, which indicates that the distance was less than one half meter. “And this shot hit the main artery which caused the quick death.”

Verification of Nazih's Statements

The 23 statements listed in Table 1 were uttered by Nazih **before** his first visit to Qaberchamoun that took place about two years before we first met him in May 2000. This is what our nine witnesses affirmed when we interviewed them, some on more than one occasion and in most instances independently of one another. There is always some risk that such lists may be contaminated by knowledge gained after the two families meet. Fortunately there were many witnesses to Nazih's statements because he had six sisters and one brother, all of whom were older than he, and that reduces the likelihood of contamination. These witnesses agree that he used to talk a lot about his previous life until he met his alleged previous family. Then he became more relaxed and spoke much less about it.

As can be seen in Table 1 all the witnesses heard him talk about carrying pistols and hand-grenades and being a brave person ('qabadai'). That fits Fuad perfectly as those who knew him describe him. So does the statement that he had many children and the very specific statement that he had a mute friend. Sheikh Adeeb told us he knew him well. His name was Aref Ghallab from Kfermatta; he disappeared before the civil war was over. Fuad's wife and Kamal knew about him but never met him. Sheikh Adeeb was not aware that there was anything wrong with his hand or arm.

Of the 23 items, 17 seem to fit the life of Fuad. We cannot be sure but it seems quite unlikely that one of them is correct, i.e., that he received a shot of anesthesia in his arm as the ambulance brought him to the hospital. Why would he have been given an injection, since he apparently died immediately when he received his second shot?

We could not verify that there was anything wrong with his mute friend's arm as we were unable to trace close relatives of Aref Ghallab to get full certainty about this statement. Furthermore, Nazih claims that he shot at the attackers and killed one of them. When witnesses came to the scene the attackers had left so it is not known if Fuad shot at them and wounded or killed anyone. We were not able to get at any report of an investigation into this incident. Our inquiries revealed that no official investigation was conducted by the public prosecutor as this occurred in the midst of the civil war, and during the Israeli occupation, when the government was paralyzed. One important sheikh in Beirut told us that there were rumors about a shoot-out during the attack. This is not mentioned in newspaper reports of the incidents, but we also have no proof that it did not take place.

Nazih had stated that he lived in a house with two stories and that it was like a villa with trees around it. His parents and Fuad's family understood that he was here referring to the house in Ainab where his family lived for a few years, including the time during which they were building the house in Qaberchamoun (which was not fully completed when Fuad died). These statements fit the house in Ainab that is located next to the mud road where Nazih stop-

ped during his first trip to Qaberchamoun. Nazih had also stated that there was a cave near this house. At this mud road there is indeed a cave and it is only a few minutes walk from the house. We found it large enough to hold several people.

For two items we have only one witness. First, Nazih's father states that he mentioned the location Qaberchamoun before they went there. (Why would they have gone there if Nazih had not mentioned it?) Secondly Nazih's brother Baha reports that once when they were standing on their veranda watching the cars passing by, they saw a red Transam car. Nazih then claimed he had owned a car like that. According to his wife, Fuad had owned four cars, first a red car with a black roof that could be removed, then a white Volkswagen, a blue Mercedes and last, a red Datsun. A red car was one of the items that Kamal Khaddage remembers that Nazih's mother or sister mentioned, and hence was one of the statements that lead to the identification of Fuad as Nazih's previous personality. This item of the red car came up in one of our last interviews, and we did not have a chance (or forgot) to check this item with Nazih's sisters.

Najdiyah and Sheikh Adeeb were not aware that Fuad had any outstanding money owed to him. In Lebanese society men tend not to involve their wives in financial matters and relatives may not be well informed either, so this statement can neither be verified or falsified. The statement that his wife of the previous life was prettier than his mother is a matter of aesthetic taste. Perhaps he was right. Now middle-aged and not in good health, Najdiyah's features are still strikingly feminine. A photograph taken at her wedding shows a beautiful woman. Being a widow with five young children has been difficult, and still is. They are a poor family; Kamal is an automechanic, another son is a barber but unemployment is high in Lebanon. They were very hospitable to us.

Conclusion

Regarding the statements that Nazih made before he visited his alleged previous family we may say after extensive interviewing and inquiries that 17 of the 23 statements correspond to facts in the life of Fuad Khaddage, one is most likely wrong (no. 21 in Table 1) and five proved uncheckable (8, 12, 13, 16, 20).

At the time Nazih first met the members of his alleged previous family he made, according to our witnesses, at least eight additional correct statements (nos. 1-6, 7, 8 in Table 2) **about** his previous life, most of them highly specific, like the statements that he had given his brother a Checki 16 pistol, and that a man of the Faraj family had erected the gate at Najdiyah's house. Furthermore there are seven cases of recognitions which apparently were quite convincing to those present, although they are in retrospect hard to evaluate. Quite remarkable is item 15 in Table 2, where Sheikh Adeeb brought a pistol

TABLE 3
A Brief Chronology and Some Characteristics of the Case of Nazih Al-Danaf

Year of birth of Fuad A. Khaddage	1925
Date of death	July 2, 1982
Age at death	57 years
Mode of death	Shooting/murder
Date of birth of Nazih Al-Danaf	February 29, 1992
Age in years when first speaks of memories	2-2.5
Age in years at first meeting with alleged previous family	5-6
Interval between death of Fuad and birth of Nazih	8 years
Number of statements made by Nazih	31
Statements fitting Fuad Khaddage	25
Statements not fitting Fuad Khaddage	1
Unverifiable/unfalsifiable statements	5
First investigation of case by EH and MA1	May 2000
Further visits to sites	January 2001 March 2001

to Nazih to test him and he responded that this was not the pistol that he (Fuad) had given to him. To summarize: Thirty-one different statements of Nazih came to light in our investigation of this case. A total of 26 could be checked by witnesses and all but one of them proved correct, as summarized in Table 3, which also gives the chronology of the case.

The principal weakness of this case is that no record was made of Nazih's statements before he met the previous family. This is mitigated by the fact that there were many witnesses that testified to his statements. When evaluating this case it should also be born in mind that thousands of men were killed in the Lebanese civil war, many of them carried arms of various sorts, and would have owned a house and had children. However, Nazih made some very specific statements. We may ask how many of the men who died in the war had a mute friend and a cave near their house, had given their brother a Checki 16 pistol and had a gate built in front of their house by a man from the Faraj family? In this case the combined odds against chance seem very high indeed, assuming that we can trust the testimony of our witnesses.

The many recognitions of things and persons are particularly impressive in this case, and come from two persons. In 60 cases that the author has investigated in Sri Lanka and 30 in Lebanon, he has not come across such an impressive array of recognitions reported by more than one person. How well can we trust them? Were some of them obtained by leading questions or helpful comments that are not reported, or forgotten? After a thorough interviewing of the witnesses this does not appear a likely explanation. The witnesses seem credible people with no axe to grind. There was no social or financial benefit for Nazih or his family to get to know the poor Khaddage family. The witnesses were consistent in interviews conducted months apart, although there is an exception. Nazih's mother first told us that Nazih had mentioned the name Fuad as his previous name, but when we met her the next year she

claimed that he had mentioned no name before the first meeting with the Khaddage family. (We stressed more in the second interview that she should only tell us what Nazih said about his previous life, *before* his meeting with the previous family. That might explain the difference.)

The consistency across witnesses was good and supports the conclusion that they are accurately reporting what they witnessed. They differed somewhat in the number of Nazih's statements they witnessed (see Table I), which is natural. Worth mentioning is that it is only the father who recalls Nazih giving the name Qaberchamoun, where Nazih claimed to have lived before. Is there still a missing link we have not found? Those who accompanied Nazih to Qaberchamoun in search for his previous family all agree that it was a genuine search. The hypothesis of fraud or general family fantasy is made remote by the sheer number of individuals who were interviewed and gave consistent testimony.

Belief in reincarnation is an important tenet of the Druze religion and that brings with it a certain readiness to accept claims of memories of a previous life, and probably a tendency to process relevant material in a pro-reincarnationistic way. Although Nazih's statements about Fuad's life were impressive, the two main witnesses, Najdiyah (Fuad's widow) and Sheikh Adeeb, further explicitly tested Nazih about his knowledge of Fuad before they accepted his claim. The additional statements that then emerged brought them certainty that Nazih was Fuad Khaddage reborn.

Notes

¹ Sheikh is here a honorific not a personal name and refers to the fact that Adeeb Khaddage has received Druze religious training and observes the Druze religion.

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