Ngas Concept of Tuput: Reincarnation or Resurrection?

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Abstract
In this article, we interrogate the concept of *tuput* ("to die and come out") and the subsequent equation of it with reincarnation by the Ngas people of Plateau State in Nigeria, wherein it is claimed that persons who have undergone the ritual processes of *tuput*-enablement reincarnate within 2 days of their death, not by way of rebirth through conception and delivery but by just mysteriously reappearing in their full former selves and then resuming their normal life as though they never died. This claim raises a stir in us. In exploring the *tuput* phenomenon, we interviewed some indigenes of the Ngas community concerning the phenomenon. Thereafter, we situated the claims about *tuput* within the framework of existing theories of reincarnation and juxtaposed them with resurrection—another related theory of afterlife. Our findings reveal among other things that (a) although *tuput* is a theory of afterlife, it is not reincarnation. *Tuput* comes closer to the theory of resurrection as a theory of afterlife; (b) belief in *tuput* is unreflective and its associated claims are laden with internal contradictions; and (c) although *tuput* suffers the defects listed in (b), it nevertheless has some underlying values and promises that could be harnessed to enrich human knowledge and expand the scope of existing literature, if investigated further.

Keywords
*tuput*, reincarnation, resurrection, afterlife, resurrection body, Ngas

Introduction
As a survival concept, the term reincarnation ordinarily represents the theory that after bodily death, the soul becomes incarnate by means of rebirth in a new human or animal body. In this context, the survival concept is used to mean any concept that tends to suggest that there is something in humans that survive bodily death. It is a process by which the soul of a dead human being informs another body for another round of earthly existence. In Africa, the notion of reincarnation (ilo-uwa) is common and the belief in it is widespread, although Africans’ notion and understanding of reincarnation differ in a great measure from the classical conception of it. For Africans, there is a special place (ancestral home) meant for the stay of persons who have died. It is from this central abode (otherwise called the land of spirits) that they effect their own form of reincarnation in a mystical manner while at the same time retaining their individual existence in their ancestral home.

These common ideas about reincarnation as highlighted above hardly pose a surprise to many. What would strike one as wonder and which is what we are investigating is a concept known as *tuput* among the Ngas people of Plateau State of Nigeria which they equate with reincarnation. On the claims of *tuput*, there is immediate reentry of the dead person’s soul into the same body, with absolute retention of all memories so that the reincarnated person is able to continue his life as though death never occurred. This *tuput* phenomenon is not only strange but also contradicts all known popular notions of reincarnation, be them Western or African.

Our aim is to examine and determine the status of *tuput* as an afterlife theory as well as the underlying implications, if proven to be real. In the context of our discourse, “afterlife” is used to mean a concept or those concepts which tend to suggest that human life continues beyond the present one, that is, a life that one experiences only after the present one has ended. A theory is said to be afterlife if and only if it purports that the death of our material body is not the end of our existence. This research is unique in that this is the first time the idea of *tuput* as a theory of afterlife (reincarnation) is being subjected to a philosophical investigation and analysis by scholars. In the event that the claims of *tuput* are proven to be real, our research would have revealed its importance not only by further enriching our (human)
knowledge and contributing to the existing literature but also by redefining the concept of reincarnation.

The rest of the article is divided as follows: First, we shall consider the appeal of reincarnation and the associated debates. In this regard, we will argue that reincarnation enjoys a cross-cultural appeal that bothers mainly on the in-built desire in man for immortality. We shall examine the classical and the dominant views on reincarnation (section “The Appeal of Reincarnation and the Great Debate”). We will follow this with an exposition of the popular Africans’ view on reincarnation, using the Igbo notion of it to represent the rest of Africa. The idea here is to demonstrate that tuput taken as reincarnation is strange (section “Africans on Reincarnation: The Popular View”). Sections “The Appeal of Reincarnation and the Great Debate” and “Africans on Reincarnation: The Popular View” constitute the lens through which the theoretical status of tuput will be determined. Next, we examine the concept of “tuput” as reincarnation among the people of Ngas. Here, we shall examine the processes by which alleged (tuput) reincarnation power is acquired in Ngas by the intending gyerimris as well as the post-reincarnation life of tuput initiates (section “Reincarnation (tuput) among the Ngas”). In section “Instances of tuput Manifestations among the Ngas,” we shall present instances of “tuput” manifestation among the Ngas. The aim is to demonstrate that the Ngas people really believe in the reality of tuput as both a concept and a mechanism for reincarnation. Section “Discussion” centers on a discussion and analysis of our findings. At this juncture, we shall embark on in-depth analysis and evaluation of the Ngas concept of tuput, its contents, and its processes. We will argue that the notion of “tuput” is a self-contradictory and irrational piece of belief that cannot stand the test of logic. Against the popular opinion of the Ngas people, we shall deny that tuput is reincarnation. But we shall argue that although tuput falls short of the defining features of resurrection in the classical sense, it is nevertheless closer in resemblance to the theory of resurrection and is worth further investigation for a better understanding and interpretation. Finally, we shall argue that the ideas underlying the claims of tuput can be harnessed to enrich human knowledge and expand the scope of existing literature (section “Conclusion”).

The Appeal of Reincarnation and the Great Debate

The meaning of reincarnation is not in contention in the reincarnation debate. All the participants therein seem to agree that the concept of reincarnation implies a claim that upon bodily death, the soul of a dead person informs another body and stages a come back for another round of earthly existence. What is obviously in contention and at the heart of the debate is the possibility, the reality, and the “how” of the claims surrounding the notion of reincarnation. Thus, participants in the reincarnation debate are divided along the lines of those for and those against the reality of reincarnation. Among the pros (both ancient and contemporary) are the likes of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Empedocles, Plotinus, Almeder, Ezekwugo, and so on. Opposed to the reality of reincarnation are the likes of Flew, Parfit, Hales, and so on. Let us undertake an overview of the opinions of some of these philosophers from both sides of the divide.

The dualist, Pythagoras, is of the view that the soul aspect of man is an immortal entity that passes through series of reincarnation upon the death of a person. According to his own version of reincarnation, upon bodily death, the soul of the dead person informs the body of a human or an animal for another round of existence. His injunction that we should avoid cruelty to animals is a direct consequence of his idea of reincarnation. Pythagoras feels that an animal to be killed could be harboring a friend’s soul (Heinrik, 2012). The views of Empedocles on reincarnation are similar to that of Pythagoras for, like him, Empedocles frowns at killing animals on the grounds that the occupant soul of a given animal to be killed could be that of a loved one in disguise. Fragment 137 of Empedocles’ famous poem, Purifications, captures the thrust of his theory of reincarnation. In it, he writes,

Taking up his own dear son, though changed in form, the father, great fool, cuts his throat and offers prayer. . .And in the same way son taking up father, children their mother, they bereave them of life and feast on their beloved flesh. (Osborne, 2007, p. 47)

In his theory of reincarnation, Plato (1987) not only conceives the soul as an immortal entity but also equally thinks that a disembodied soul is capable of transmigrating in both human and animal bodies. Plato’s popular “myth of Er” encapsulates his theory of reincarnation (cf. pt 11.Bk 10 614-21 a-d). Among other things, Plato advances the doctrine of “recollection” as a conclusive proof of the immortality of the soul. As an epistemological theory in Plato’s philosophy, recollection purports that by means of questioning (dialectics), a teacher is able to prove that knowledge is innate and not just obtained from experience. The fact of a present soul recollecting concepts and ideas about which questions have been posed is a pointer that it had previous existence.

Plotinus, a neo-Platonist philosopher, also affirms the reality of reincarnation. His neo-Platonism notwithstanding, he introduced some elements of originality in his reincarnation theory by going beyond Plato’s position that human souls transmigrate in humans’, animals’, or birds’ bodies to include plant bodies among the entities in which human souls transmigrate. In the course of his treatment of reincarnation, Rich (1957) notes that Plotinus categorized death into two forms, namely, death that translates into a final awakening from a sleep that will never recur, and death that represents both temporary awakening and a prelude to falling asleep again in a different bed. As he puts it,

. . .some souls only take a temporary bow from the stage of life. Soon they are back again in different role and in different
costume. Others, however, leave the scene never to reappear. For them, death is a complete laying aside of the body. (p. 234)

The implication flowing from Plotinus’s theory of death is that souls that experience temporary death are in for reincarnation for the purposes of purification. Almeder (2001) is an apostle of reincarnation advocacy. For him, the phenomenon of reincarnation enjoys both theoretical and practical reality. Almeder displayed a good philosophical defense of the phenomenon of reincarnation as could be seen in his academic exchanges with Hales on the matter (For details on Almeder’s views on reincarnation, see Almeder (1992) and Almeder (2001)). In response to Hales’s (2001b) call for the rejection of reincarnation hypothesis on the grounds that it claims reincarnation is true without knowing why, how, or the causal factor, Almeder (2001) argues that we can certainly justifiably assert the existence of a certain entity or process as explanation for a body of data without having to say how or why the entities appealed to in the explanation work as they do in causing the data explained by appeal to them. (p. 349)

In defense of his position, Almeder introduces an analogous case of primary schizophrenia in which he says that the geneticists claim that the best available data indicated that a gene or complex of genes was responsible for the disease but do not know what gene was responsible or how they worked. Accordingly, he submits that “failure to know why or how the disease occurred was by no means evidence for either an unconscionable haziness or the illegitimacy of the explanatory belief that primary schizophrenia is often, or even most often, a purely genetic disease” (p. 349).

On the contrary, Ayer (1956), Flew (1976), Parfit (1984), and Hales, (2001a, 2001b) all put forward some criteria or conditions that they independently think must be fulfilled before any alleged reincarnation of someone else could be truly deemed to be so. The whole criteria bother on empirical verifiability. Interestingly, they all were unanimous in declaring that reincarnation theory and all attendant claims are unable to satisfy the laid down conditions. In his own case, Ayer is of the opinion that if the alleged reincarnation of someone else possesses the verified memories, we would expect of an already dead person that appealed to in facts that were not items of public knowledge, then and only then should we come to the conclusion that the person in question is the dead man reincarnated. In pp. 193–194 of his work under reference, he uses a hypothetical case involving Julius Caesar to drive home his point.

In a similar vein, Flew relied on the non-repeatability of the evidence for reincarnation under scientifically controlled conditions to reject reincarnation claims as untenable. He opines that compared with scientific claims, statements claiming evidence of reincarnation cannot be subjected to laboratory experiments for the purposes of validation. Accordingly, it would be grossly unjustifiable for us to base our belief in the reality of reincarnation on the mere anecdotal account. Reasoning along with the same trend of thought, Parfit submits that the reincarnation hypothesis does not offer a plausible account of the mind. His criteria for accepting reincarnation as true are contained in p. 227 of his work under reference, wherein he offers a hypothetical account of what could pass for reincarnation. The account is about a Japanese woman who claimed to remember living as a Celtic hunter and warrior in the Bronze Age. In his assessment of the hypothetical account, Parfit observes that there is a lack of physical continuity between the Celtic warrior and the Japanese woman. This being the case, he concludes that we have no evidence of the sort required to justify our belief in reincarnation.

Another scholar who maintained a critical stand against the reincarnation hypothesis is Steven D. Hales. Hales seems to have an extremist materialist conception of the mind, a position that made him claim that the dualists’ much-touted reincarnation and resurrection phenomena are explainable within the framework of materialism. This could be seen in his sundry reflections and intellectual exchanges with Almeder on the subject (Hales, 2001a, 2001b). Hales’s (2001b) major grouse with alleged reincarnation theory of mind is not just that “it lacks evidence in support of its claims, but that even in the face of its claims, it lacks a well developed and systematic theory such that the epistemic warrant of materialist theories weighs against accepting the reincarnation hypothesis” (p. 359). His reason is that its claims lack a coherent theoretical framework to support it. For Hales, the claims of a new and consummate theory should be strong enough to supplant the existing one. This very attribute, for him, is what is lacking in the reincarnation hypothesis and accounts for why even in the face of some evidence reincarnation claims have not been able to dethrone or supplant the materialist theories.

**Africans on Reincarnation: The Popular View**

Do Africans believe in reincarnation? Opinions on this are divided. Onyewuenyi (1996), Ezekwugo (1992), Eneh (1987), and Edeh (1985) are of the opinion that belief in reincarnation is widely reported in Africa. They all agree that the idea that human beings can come back to life after death is basic to Africans conception of reality. Onyewuenyi was expansive in his discourse on (Igbo) African notion of reincarnation. Although he gave a graphic picture of what Africans (the Igbos) take to be reincarnation and the way/ways a reincarnated person could be identified, he ended up positing that Africans do not believe in reincarnation in the classical sense of the word and that the term “reincarnation” itself is “a language of accommodation employed by the Western Anthropologists and churchmen with the sole aim of
making concrete and real that which is abstract and immate-
rial” (p. 42). He adds that the notion of “rebirth” or “return” is
among the many realities in Africa that appeared incompre-
hsensible to the early Western researchers. This resulted in
the formulation of certain working definitions by these research-
erers to cloak these seemingly incomprehensible realities.

Although we do not completely disagree with
Onyewuenyi’s position, we are of the view that the contents
of his much touted “cultural concept of Africans in connec-
tion with the return or rebirth of ancestors in their living
descendants” are pointers to their belief in reincarnation. To
this end, therefore, the contents of this very African cultural
concept of rebirth in their living descendant will be presented
here as the African notion of reincarnation. Onyewuenyi
(1996) used the notion of “vital force” to explain Africans’
belief or purported belief in reincarnation. According to the
“vital force theory,” beings are essentially forces. A being is
made up of visible and invisible aspects. It is the invisible
aspect of a being that makes that being what it is. Onyewuenyi
calls the invisible aspect of a being “the inner nature” or
“force of the being.” The implication here is that when a man
dies “his bodily energy goes (vanishes) but his vital force
persists and waxes stronger and stronger ontologically” (p.
38). Vital forces are ontologically graded such that the vital
force of the dead occupies a higher ontological hierarchy
than that of the living. Owing to their acquisition of an
enhanced vital force and superiority of intelligence over the
living coupled with the ontological relationship existing
between them and the living members of their family, the
dead ancestors are able to replicate themselves in the living
members of their family. He holds that the Igbo convince
themselves that a child is a reincarnate of a dead ancestor if
that child exhibits human features or characteristics of the
living-dead. In addition, the Igbo cite the occurrence of
child prodigies with their pre-incarnation intellectual and
physical acquisitions as proof of their belief in reincarnation
(p. 20). For the Igbo, according to Onyewuenyi, child prodi-
gies are a pointer to the fact that the child is a reincarnate of
a deceased intelligent, crafty, and successful person from his
lineage. The reappearance of bodily marks of a deceased per-
son on the body of a newborn child is yet another basis for
the Igbo’s (Africans’) belief in reincarnation. Among
Africans, first names are also pointers to their belief in re-
incarnation. In this regard, upon birth, children are usually
scrutinized to ascertain their resemblances to past parents or
ancestors. In some cases, oracles are consulted to determine
who among the ancestors has staged a comeback. Thus, such
names among the Igbo as Nna-Nna (the father of his father),
Nne-Nna (the mother of her father), and other similar names
are evidence of their belief in the return of specific individual
ancestors. A similar thing obtains in the Yoruba part of
Nigeria, where people are given names such as Babatunde,
meaning father has come back, and Yetunde, meaning mother
has returned. As Onyewuenyi rightly observed, the quantum
of respect given to a deceased ancestor is extended to any
child believed to be a reincarnate of the ancestor. Thus, for
the (Igbo) Africans, the dead ancestors reincarnate in their
living descendants. “Ilo uwa,” which is their equivalent term
for reincarnation, literally means “a return to the world.”

It is instructive to note here that although Onyewuenyi
offered this narrative as the account of Africans’ belief in
reincarnation; he nevertheless opined that it is a non-philo-
sophical data of African culture requiring philosophical tin-
kering. It is also worthy to note that in his discourse on African
belief in reincarnation, Onyewuenyi used the Igbo and Yoruba
views (but principally, the Igbo perception) on reincarnation
as representative of Africa. In the same vein, in our present
discourse, we adopted and generalized the Igbo context for
the whole of Africa. Our reason is that although there are
some peculiarities in worldviews, virtually all African com-
unities are united in their belief in after-life and in the dual
nature of man as a being composed of body and soul.

The African and the Western conceptions of reincarnation
are diametrically opposed. This can be seen in the fact that
the Western framework for reincarnation does not accommo-
date the notion of “the ancestral world” as is obtainable in the
African cosmological setting. There is nothing like the soul
being in both hell or heaven and here on earth simultane-
ously. For the Western believers in reincarnation, upon the
death of the body, the soul informs a new body for another
span of earthly life, as a human, a tree, or an animal, and, by
doing so, it ceases to exist outside the body. The African ver-
ion of reincarnation takes the form of the person or appear-
ance of the dead ancestor manifesting in the facial appearance
and exhibited innate capabilities of several of their living
descendants.

Reincarnation (Tuput) Among the Ngas

We refer to tuput as reincarnation simply to be on the same
page with the Ngas people who equate the concept with
reincarnation. Whether we take tuput to mean reincarnation
as the Ngas do will be determined, at the end, by the out-
come of our analysis and evaluation. Our account of tuput
here and its associated processes are, as we obtained from
the indigenes of Ngas, that we interviewed. The same thing
applies to the instances of tuput manifestation as presented
below. And for a brief religious and cultural historiography
of the Ngas people, see the News Tower Magazine (2008)
and Joshua Project (n.d.).

The Ngas (also called Angas) people presently occupy the
Pankshin and Kanke local government areas in the central
zone of plateau state of Nigeria (Raphael’s, 2011, http://
raphael-gold.blogspot.com.ng/2011/12/rites-of-passage-of-
ngas-people-of.html?m=1sourced:25/05/2018). As shown by the
News Tower Magazine (2008, http://newstoweronline.
blogspot.com.ng/2008/08/ngas-link.html), Ngas people are
also found in some parts of Bauchi, Kaduna, and Taraba
States. Among the Ngas people, however, the general opinion
is that Plateau state is their ultimate home in Nigeria.
Historically, the Ngas people are categorized into two, namely, the Hill Ngas and the Plain Ngas. While the Hill Ngas occupy the mountains of Pankshin, Wokkos, Garam, and other places, the Plain Ngas occupy the areas of Amper, Kabwir, Dawaki, Ampank East, and Gyangyang. The Ngas people are basically farmers. There is a popular belief among them that that militancy runs in their blood. Their historical encounters with other people, especially the settled and wandering Fulani herders, have shaped for them a military life which, in turn, has carved out a career niche for them in the Nigerian military. It is, therefore, little wonder that sudden death is a common challenge for them. The Ngas have a culture of high Christianity and traditional spirituality.

Ordinarily, one would have expected that Ngas people, being Africans, were captured in the consideration of the popular/dominant African view on reincarnation discussed above using the Igbos of Nigeria. However, it has to be observed that Ngas people have a version of reincarnation that appears to be unique. This version of reincarnation goes by the name “tuput.” Like the term “reincarnation” that is obtained from a combination of two Latin words “re” and “incarnare,” “tuput” is a derivative of two Ngas words “tu,” which means, according to our findings, “to die,” and “put,” meaning “to come out.” Thus, when put together, “tuput” means “to die and come out.” It is a theory that upon death, the soul of the dead person comes out temporarily and thereafter reenter the already discarded body within a specified period of time and continues its earthly existence as though no death has taken place.

It is interesting to note that it is not every Ngas indigene that has “tuput” ability (i.e., the ability for his soul to come out of the body upon death and reenter it within a specific period of time) in him. The power or ability to undergo this form of reincarnation is acquired through some special ritual processes to be organized by a special class of elderly people. A person with “tuput” ability is known as “gyemrit,” which means “blessed child.” Collectively, those with “tuput” ability are called “gep rit nwa,” meaning “children of God.” Among the Taroks of Hausa Land, a “gyemrit” is also referred to as “Maza.” “Maza” is a Hausa name for man. This is in the sense that the gyemrit is strong-hearted. A gyemrit has a maximum of 2 days after his death to come back and present himself to his immediate family for either acceptance or rejection. If he is accepted to come back (the appeal is usually made to and granted by the eldest man in the family), then he reincarnates immediately, that is, resumes his normal life. Seen thus, the whole essence of acquiring “tuput” power is to enable the person possessing it, who is now a gyemrit, to, upon death, reincarnate into his immediate family and continue with his usual life as though nothing (no death) has occurred. What makes “tuput” a special and ambitious form of reincarnation (assuming, at last, it is accepted to be reincarnation) is that a return to life is achieved without undergoing a physical rebirth.

Our interview reveals that although some people are born gyemrit, becoming one by those that are not born gyemrit is a matter of individual choice. Once the choice to become a gyemrit is made, the postulant must undergo the necessary rituals as would be performed by the custodians of the “tuput” mystery. In theory, becoming a gyemrit is open to both male and female members of Ngas, but in practice, women hardly volunteer to acquire the “tuput” power.

Processes of tuput Enablement

For a postulant to become “tuput-enabled,” he would be required to undergo a rigorous process involving 7 days of ritual exercise. The postulant is given some water contained in a calabash along with other ground substances. For 7 days, he is to take his bath with the water from the calabash, using raffia sponge. While the ritual processes lasted, the prospective “gyemrit” must avoid taking his bath with soap and ordinary water. He must scoop and drink water from the calabash 7 times (it shows the norm or rule as inviolable) every morning for the 7 days that the ritual will last. We were meant to understand that the number of times a prospective gyemrit is required to scoop water from the calabash is subject to the number of times he would like to reincarnate (it shows that he can drink any number of times, maximum up to 7).

One of the ground substances is to be mixed with a local gin (drink) and another poured into soup. The prospective gyemrit has to apply the powdered substances to “kwunu” (a kind of drink among the Hausas) and soup in cross-motion. He is also required to be in a cross-motion if and whenever he wants to stir either the drink or the soup. He has to take three gulps from the drink every morning; this is even as he is required to eat from the soup every morning and night for the 7 days. The success or otherwise of the whole exercise would be confirmed by the custodians of the practice. It is of essence to note that for the 7 days that the ceremony lasted, the prospective gyemrit must avoid sex. And to guarantee continued efficacy after the enabling processes must have been consummated, the gyemrit must henceforth refrain from having sexual intercourse with a woman in her menstrual period. Besides, he must from then onward never eat straight from a pot.

From the onset of the tuput-enablement ceremony, the number of times the postulant can return would be determined. The number of times to be returned is a matter of choice to be made by a prospective gyemrit. However, the maximum times a gyemrit can come back is 7 times, and whatever becomes the choice of a prospective gyemrit is built in as part of the whole ritual process. The number of times an initiate would be required to scoop water from the calabash is symbolic of the number of times he is to stage a comeback after death. Thus, if the person has made a choice of coming back 3 times, the details of the rituals would require him to scoop and drink only three handfuls of the
water in the calabash every morning for the 7 days of the ritual exercise. Although the numbers 3 and 7 are often the options of time open to the prospective gyemrit, he is at liberty to utilize his return chances a number of times less than the maximum (assuming he had earlier chosen the maximum number).

Upon death, a gyemrit is expected to report to his family within 2 days. This is the usual length the Ngas people consider as safe to keep a death secret. Their reason is that the corpse of a dead person must have gotten a decomposing smell after 2 days, and the family of the dead would not like to bury their dead person in secret. Even the 2-day limit can be cut short by a careless or genuine exposure of the gyemrit’s death. It is customary that once women have cried, following their knowledge of a person’s death, the dead person (if he is a gyemrit) would not be accepted if he returns to life. The understanding here is that such a person’s return would create a permanent fear in women and children. If after 2 days of his death a confirmed gyemrit does not appear to negotiate for his return to life, it would be taken that either his tuput power has been de-empowered or that he no longer desires to return to life any longer.

It is believed that whatever happens to the corpse of a gyemrit has no impact on his ability to return to life. Once the blood of a tuput-enabled person touches the ground, his soul (in the event of accident) will immediately leave the scene of his imminent death and commences the journey back to life. What has an impact on the gyemrit’s ability to return to life is the state/condition of the dead body as occasioned by the circumstances of death. For instance, too many wounds or the scattering of the body parts can leave the soul weak and slow in the whole process of departing from the original body, assuming another body, and proceeding to a confidant. Upon return to life, the first thing a gyemrit does is to report to his confidant and member of the family, usually his father, who knows his secret of being a “maza.” The appearance and consultation are usually done at night to shield the “maza” from being seen by unwanted people pending his acceptance by the family. A gyemrit seeking to return can also return to an elder.

Life After Reincarnation

Upon return to life, a supposedly reincarnated gyemrit has one basic challenge: How to be accepted back by his family. A gyemrit seeking to return (reincarnate) is sure to be accepted so long as women never cried in the knowledge of his death. However, in the absence of the father, an uncle, or brother, or even the eldest son can be a competent confidant, depending on the age, closeness, trust, and nearness.

It is common for a rejected reincarnated person to leave the community for an unknown place. However, it is not impossible to find cases of reincarnates who insist on being re-assimilated into the family and community. For instance, our source has it that there was a case in 1998 of a young man who died too openly and was, as a matter of fact, rejected when he returned to life. The young man was so nostalgic for his community that he kept coming to the relaxation square and visiting families, wanting to mingle with people that were his. This lasted for upward of 3 weeks until some elders confronted him.

Once a reincarnate is accepted back, he lives a normal life like every other member of the community. He suffers no loss vis-à-vis his known natural capabilities prior to his death, just as he does not possess or manifest any power or ability considered strange or above human challenges. There is, however, a wide belief that reincarnates are more enterprising, prosperous, and more successful in their new life. A reincarnate may have on his body marks showing where he had injuries that led to his death. But the pains from the injuries do not continue in his present life.

In Ngas, alleged reincarnated persons have a certain behavior that differentiates them from others, thereby making them easily identifiable. For instance, they feel uncomfortable and somewhat unsafe when people stare at them. Staring at them is one thing they abhor. During the conversation, they maintain an unsteady look, turning their face from side to side, all in a bid to avoid engaging the eyes of the other person. They turn aggressive whenever they notice that someone is staring at them. Their aggressiveness is usually shown by the issuance of a stern warning to the offending party. For the Ngas people, such queer behavior is enough to identify a reincarnate.

Instances of tuput manifestations among the Ngas. Here, we present some specific cases of tuput (reincarnation) manifestations in Ngas as were presented to us in the course of our research. According to our sources, the names in the instances below and their accompanying claims are real, not imaginary.

Example 1: Reuben. Our source has it that Reuben hails from Langtan in Langtan North Local Government Area. He is about 40 years of age, with a wife and children. At present, he lives in Langtung. It happened that around September 2011, Reuben was killed in a tribal clash. The youths of his village had carried out revenge on the Fulani Camp, following an attack on his village by the Fulani people. Reuben was in the frontline of the attack, and he was gunned down by the Fulanis in the course of the clash. According to our source who doubles as Reuben’s maternal nephew, Reuben was struck by a bullet from the Fulanis. He went on to add that they could not announce his death immediately as it is against their tradition to report death anyhow. The interesting thing, however, is that Reuben was able to return home quickly for the reason that the body injury he sustained at the point of death was not massive enough to have weakened the soul and slow down its movement. Reuben was accepted back into his family, and he has since been living a normal life. Source: The name of our source here is Solomon, a land agent, who is at present 38 years old.
Example 2: Amos. He is a young man in his late 30s in the continuous count of his life, and he hails from Garam in Kanke Local government Area of Plateau State. Amos reportedly started independent living at an early age, making a living by paid farming and all sorts of menial jobs. Once upon a time, he left home for Taraba along with some boys from his village as commercial migrant farmers. One day, while in Taraba, they met some men who came to contract as many young men as possible for work at a farm in Ilorin, Kwara State. All other boys from Garam turned down the offer except Amos who accepted it and followed the visiting team to Ilorin.

The farm in Ilorin turned out to be a captive Kola nut farm where people are killed in the course of time on the reason of having become too weak for active farm work or for any other reason as the case may be. In the seventh year of his stay at the farm, Amos was killed. Nevertheless, he returned home and joined his family. He has since been living a normal life and has equally gotten two more children in addition to the ones they have before. Source: Our source in this regard is a barber by name Sunday. He is 30 years of age.

Example 3: Chindaba. Chindaba’s case is one of an unwelcomed reincarnate due to open knowledge of his death. He had died once earlier and returned to life. This was to be his second return to life, had his request been granted. Chindaba fell sick with an ailment that was to later kill him. While on the hospital bed, he envisaged his death and asked his friend who came to look after him to take him away into the forest where he could die secretly. Chindaba’s friend declined his request, and later on Chindaba died at the hospital in the presence of women. He later returned home at night but was not accepted back for the reason that the news of his death has gone round. Consequent upon this, he left Garam, his community, that very night and went and settled at Damagara in Bauchi State. He is still seen there till date. Source: The same as in Example 2.

Discussion

Given the classical meaning ascribed to reincarnation as well as the popular conception of it by Africans, can we say that tuput is reincarnation? There is no doubt that both tuput and reincarnation share certain features in common. For instance, both are theories of afterlife, and both touch on the subject of immortality and personal identity, just as the concept of the “old soul” is central to both. These common features notwithstanding our finding is that tuput is not reincarnation. Our reason is that the concept of the Ngas tuput as reincarnation is bedeviled by certain procedural hitches that will put any critical observer toward thinking that using the English word “reincarnation” for the Ngas’ tuput phenomenon is a case of language of accommodation. The reason is that the African concept of reincarnation would in no way of interpretation mean, as in Ngas’ tuput phenomenon, that the soul of the dead person comes out temporarily and thereafter reenters the already discarded body within a specified period of time and continues its earthly existence as though no death has taken place. The ordinary notion of reincarnation implies that the returning soul can inherit any new body, including humans, animals, or trees. Whatever be the case, it also implies the idea that in each case, the soul exits the old body and inhabits a new one. Similarly, tuput, being a derivative of two Ngas words, means “to die and come out.” It connotes the idea of a soul coming out of a dead body to inherit a new body. However, in the case of the theory of tuput, the soul comes out of a dead body only to inhabit the same body that it had previously occupied. In other words, a given reincarnated person is only a reincarnation of himself and not that of his father’s father or mother’s mother as the case may be. This poses a serious problem for the tuput theorist because in the context of reincarnation discourse, any alleged reincarnated person is believed to be a reincarnation of a certain person different from himself, at least in terms of name, age, height, education, and in some other respects. As we can see, the allegedly reincarnated person on the platform of tuput fails to satisfy most of the questions we raised above. In the popular African theory of reincarnation, certain newborn babies are believed to be either their parents’ father or mother come back—Nnanna (father of my father) and Nnenna (mother of my mother). By virtue of undergoing a new conception and a new birth, a reincarnation of a dead person, logically considered, is supposed to be very much younger in age than the dead person. This cardinal feature that is conspicuously lacking in the mechanism of tuput poses a special difficulty for those who may want it to be taken as reincarnation.

One may still be tempted to allow tuput the status of reincarnation regardless of the attendant shortcomings and contradictions, seeing that a product of its process is most likely to satisfy Ayer’s (1956) and Parfit’s (1984) criteria for validating reincarnation. Ayer had noted that a necessary and sufficient condition for somebody claiming to be a reincarnation of another person, say Julius Caesar, is for the claimant not only to remember having lived as Julius Caesar but also for him to have the confirmed memories that only Julius Caesar could have had a limited number of other mental states or dispositions having to do with the claimant’s sense of humor, temperament, and so on, possessed by the previous personality (see pp. 193–194). Parfit maintains a similar position. He puts forward twofold evidential requirements for validating reincarnation claims—verified memory and physical continuity. Using the hypothetical story of a Japanese woman who claimed to remember living as a Celtic hunter and a warrior in the Bronze Age, Parfit gives the insinuation that although reincarnation seems to fulfill one leg of his criteria, it could not satisfy the other leg of it that bothers on physical continuity between the alleged dead person and the purported reincarnation of him. It is based on this observation that Parfit was quick to state that reincarnation,
along with the hypothesis that there is some basic aspect of human personality that survives death, is false because such claims lack strict empirical validation.

Recall that Hales (2001b) also denies reincarnation the status of a theory on the grounds that it claims that something is true without knowing why, how, or the causal factor. One wonders if it will not amount to scientific extremism to deny tuput the status of reincarnation on the basis of Parfit’s or any other anti-Cartesian’s dualism criteriology, knowing that a good number of sciences have emerged from what initially appeared to be paranormal. Almender (2001) reasons in this direction when, in defense of reincarnation, he invokes the analogy of “the geneticists and schizophrenia,” wherein he says that

...we knew long before the discovery of the gene causing primary schizophrenia, and long before we knew how the gene works in causing the disease, that a certain percentage of the cases of primary schizophrenia were in fact of a purely genetic origin. Failure to know why or how the disease occurred was by no means evidence for either an unconscionable haziness or the illegitimacy of the explanatory belief that primary schizophrenia is often, or even most often, a purely genetic disease. (p. 350)

Our take on this is that inasmuch as we are not comfortable with the extreme scientific stance of the anti-Cartesian dualism advocates, we are of the affirmation that even if tuput satisfies the criteria of the likes of Ayer, Flew, Parfit, Hales, and others, we will still deny it the status of reincarnation, principally on the grounds of the absence of the notion of “cross-speciesism,” which we consider a major defining feature of reincarnation in its mechanism, seeing that none of them could be said to have come back to life by informing a new body different from his former one. It is based on the former that we deny that tuput is reincarnation.

Now that we have ruled out tuput as being synonymous with reincarnation, both in the classical and in the popular African notion of it, are we justified if we hold that tuput is resurrection? Resurrection is “the act of causing something that had ended or been forgotten or lost to exist again, to be used again, etc.” (Merriam Webster Dictionary online). Placed in the context of (Christian) religion, resurrection refers to “the theory of bodily resurrection or an event in which a person or people are brought back to embodied life after death” (Altman-Newell, 2017, p. 3). Banwari (2015) conceives resurrection in terms of coming back to life by the same being without changing form. Resurrection could be physical or spiritual (Altman-Newell, 2017; Banwari 2015). A major trait of physical resurrection is that the resurrected body is identical to the body that had earlier been killed or destroyed. In the Christian bible, the resurrection cases of Jesus and Lazarus form good examples of physical/bodily resurrection (Cf. Lk.24.36–44; MK. 16:1–8; Jn. 20:1–10; Jn. 11:38–45).

In the bible, the Apostle Paul provides the account of what is today referred to as the spiritual version of resurrection (cf. Cor,15:35–54). Spiritual resurrection is like the physical resurrection in every respect except that it entails physical change with a spiritual dimension. In a spiritual resurrection, there is “a direct relationship concerning the material body in the grave and the transformed, resurrected spiritual one” (Banwari, 2015, p. 5). Paul stated in the Scripture that

...The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. ...For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. (1 Cor. 15:35–54)

But he was actually giving the impression that although it was the same premortem body that is now raised, it has received a spiritual stamp and thereby qualitatively upgraded. It is the observation that there is no fundamental difference between the premortem body and the resurrection body except for the qualitative upgrading from material to spiritual pedestal that made (Altman-Newell, 2017) submit that “the New Testament presents the spiritual resurrection body as physically and spatio-temporally contiguous with the premortem body” (p. 8).

Different theories of resurrection have been advanced. Among them are (a) the revival/revision/animation theory with varying versions, including the biblical version and the body-snatching version of Van Inwagen (1978) and the particle-fission version of Zimmerman (1999, 2010). Other revival/re-animation theorists are the likes of Corcoran (2001) and Hudson (2001). All the revival theorists are united by their affirmation that the resurrection of a dead body is possible by way of re-animation. (b) The resurrection by assembly theory which holds that persons who ceased to exist long ago can be brought back into being by reassembling them from the particles that composed them before they perished (Mooney, 2018; Hasker, 2011, p. 83; Steinhart, 2008a, 2008b). (c) The replication theory of resurrection as advanced by the likes of Hick (1976), Reichenbach (1978), and Moravec (1988). Underlying the theory of resurrection by replication is the idea of two worlds/universes—this world/universe and the resurrection world/universe. According to the replication theorists, at resurrection time following our death, God produces a replica of our dead bodies with the same type of atoms arranged in exactly the same way as our earthly bodies prior to their individual deaths. (d) The rebirth theory of resurrection—this theory which harbors the idea of two worlds like the replication theory assumes the existence of a planet in this or other universe where all people will be born again (Forrest, 1995; Shorter, 1962; Sutherland, 1964 and Kundera, 1999).

Generally, threefold stages are involved in resurrection, namely, (a) a living body dies; (b) the dead body is buried; and (c) a resurrection body that is the same as the earthly body appears (cf. Steinhart, 2008b supra. We deduced these stages from Steinhart’s exposition of varying theories of resurrection). To what extent does the phenomenon of tuput fit
into this template and the overall meaning of resurrection as displayed earlier? To start with, while assuming the phenomenon of resurrection to be real, we are of the affirmation that tuput comes within the meaning of resurrection as portrayed earlier. Then, given the claims of tuput, we affirm that it satisfies Stage 1 without any difficulty, but satisfies Stages 2 and 3 with varying degrees of difficulty. To this effect, tuput claim gets entangled in the highest level of controversy at Stage 2 when compared with Stage 3. Placed on the scaling machine of Stage 2, tuput will manifest a high degree of controversy, given the fact that in all the instances of tuput manifestation presented above, evidence of burial, which is a crucial aspect in the whole process of resurrection, is conspicuously missing. The importance of “burial” to the phenomenon of resurrection is attested to by the resurrection stories of Jesus and Lazarus in the Bible. As the death of a gyemrit is kept secret to avoid women weeping by the time they see the corpse and thereby prevent the gyemrit from coming back to life, does it then mean that the corpse of a gyemrit is usually not buried? If there is a claim that A once died and resurrected, but with no evidence that A was at any time buried or his corpse actually witnessed by many, how on earth will such a claim that A resurrected be accepted as true? If the dead body is mysteriously resurrected without undergoing burial, the Ngas people are yet to tell us the mechanism by which this mystical feat is achieved—whether it is by command and by whom, as can be seen in the Pauline version of resurrection, or by any other process. Assuming a gyemrit dies and his body is deposited in a mortuary where it stays for a period beyond 2 days (as is seemingly the case with Chindaba in our Example 3), and let us also assume for the sake of argument that he comes back to life (resurrects) within the required maximum period of 2 days and is accepted, what happens to the body (corpse) at the hospital? Won’t it be collected from the hospital for burial, and whose body will it be by now? Or, does the corpse disappear from the morgue the moment the dead gyemrit decides to return, following the acceptance of his plea to return? These are some of the consequential questions that our respective sources could not answer to our satisfaction.

With reference to Stage 3, we affirm that tuput reasonably satisfies it, assuming its claim to that effect is true. Our reason for this position is clear: “the gyemrit come-back-to-life” is the same premortem gyemrit in all ramifications (the same physical appearance, the same height, the same size, the same verified memory, and so on). Accepting this claim has a lot of implications when placed on the framework of Stage 3 of our threefold stages of resurrection above. For instance, assuming a person dies in a ghastly motor accident that sees his body shattered into pieces and scattered beyond re-assembling, with which body will the soul that has come out come back to life? Will it find another dead body whose soul has exited and then occupy it? Even if that occurs, what happens to the bodily identity?

We had observed earlier that the theory of resurrection, just like that of reincarnation, is a theory of personal identity. A dominant claim in personal identity is that a person x that is claimed to be the same as the person p that had earlier existed must be both quantitatively (numerically) and qualitatively identical with the person p (Altman-Newell, 2017; Buckareff & Van Wagenen, 2010; Connolly, 2011; Mooney, 2018; Steinhart, 2008a). In other words, in a claim of after-life bothering on resurrection, the embodied self that is resurrected must be numerically and qualitatively identical with the embodied life that had previously died. The alleged postmortem gyemrit being identical in all respect with the premortem gyemrit seems to have satisfied these requirements. But even with this appearance, we deny that he has satisfied all. Our reason is that because a gyemrit’s death is always shrouded in secrecy and there is no evidence of burial following his death, the most reasonable conclusion to hold is that he is likely not to have died and, therefore, the alleged postmortem gyemrit before us now is neither the premortem nor the postmortem gyemrit (because we have no evidence that he had died earlier), but simply the gyemrit we used to know. We agree that tuput’s components and processes betray it more as resurrection than reincarnation, but we are of the affirmation that it does not pass the strict test of resurrection as we know it. Our reason is that in the case of resurrection, apart from the dead being healed of every infirmity and restored in full vitality and health, his corpse must have first of all been buried or at least his death and corpse have been known and seen by many before his eventual resurrection. Notwithstanding these observations, it is our disposition to affirm that tuput could be an emerging form of resurrection.

On our finding that tuput and the associated claims are unreflective and suffer from internal contradictions, we state that there are many questions that are begging for answers. For instance, is it possible for a person to die and reincarnate within 2 days, not by way of new conception and delivery, but in his or her complete former self and resume his or her normal life as though death never occurred? Let us assume that the alleged reincarnated person had earlier died as claimed, how sure are we that the so-called reincarnated person before us now is the same person we used to know and are sure had earlier died? Can he still become the head of the family? If, for instance, he was married, does his wife answer a widow during the pendency of his death? What is the status of children by the product of “tuput”? How would Ngas people address the issue of widowhood given that the death of a gyemrit is kept secret from women? If the claims of tuput are anything to go by, then the question of widowhood is ruled out in Ngas, at least until the death following the exhaustion of the number of opportunities a gyemrit has to reincarnate. If a person dies and returns within 2 days as the theory of tuput claims, does he adopt a new name, or does he retain his former name? Assuming the answer is the latter, how does
the continued existence of the person make any difference or meaning to those who were never aware of his earlier death(s)? As numbers 3 and 7 as contained in tuput-enable-ment rituals are absolutes, what happens when a person who chose number 7 as the maximum number of times he would reincarnate dies for the first time at the age of 120? Let us assume that in each return to life he stays for at least 30 years before the next death. It follows that $30 \times 7$ will give us 210 years. The 210 years added to the 120 years he had earlier spent will add up to 330 years. Is attaining such age still feasible in our present world? Again, assuming a person dies in a ghastly motor accident that sees his body shattered into pieces and scattered beyond re-assembling, with which body will the soul that has come out reincarnate? Will it find another dead body whose soul has exited and then occupy it? Even if that occurs, what happens to the bodily identity?

Still on the unreflective, uncritical, and self-contradictory character of claims of tuput, let us do some pondering on the claims contained in the instances we presented as manifestations of reincarnation in Ngas. With regard to the purported death and return of Reuben, the following questions arise: Was the nephew who gave this information there? Who certified Reuben to be dead? Are there differences in his present age, stature, status, or attitude by which people can differentiate Reuben of the present from Reuben of the past? As for Amos, who witnessed his death/killing? Or, was it Amos that said he was killed? Was the so-called neighbor part of the captives to Ilorin? If no, how did he become certain that Amos was killed? With regard to Chindaba, what happened to his corpse that was supposedly deposited in the mortuary? Didn’t the family go to claim his corpse and bury it, even as they are aware that he is alive and with them? Or did the corpse disappear from the morgue the moment he returned home to plead for acceptance? These and more are some of the consequential questions the answers to which seem to be lacking in the explanatory framework of tuput and which our sources themselves do not have satisfactory answers to. This is a clear case of tuput being laden with internal contradictions.

**Conclusion**

In concluding this article, it has to be restated that we denied tuput the status of reincarnation on the basis that unlike reincarnation, it does not involve fresh conception, new birth, and cross-speciesism. Although there is no convincing evidence of tuput being resurrection in the strict sense of the word, we are of the position that as a theory of afterlife, tuput is nearer to the concept of resurrection than reincarnation. One may call it a “new-found resurrection,” “an emerging theory of resurrection,” or “self-orchestrated resurrection.” One may even choose to categorize resurrection into two broad types: the “classical/conventional/popular resurrection” and the “Ngas self-orchestrated resurrection.” Nonsensical and self-contradictory as the Ngas’ belief in the reality of tuput might be, it goes on to support Long’s (2018) submission that beliefs in afterlife are tied to human beings’ strong desire not to be forever separated from their loved ones by their sense of justice and by their views about the limits and scope of the natural sciences (cf. p.2). The Ngas people’s linkage of the rationale behind their reincarnation theory with their desire not to lose their men of valor justifies Long’s assertion. Our resolve to propose tuput as a form of resurrection theory follows from the fact that it satisfies, to a great extent, the requirements of the threefold stages comprising resurrection listed above.

Similarly, our suggestion that it could be construed as a “self-orchestrated resurrection” follows from our observation that in tuput’s framework, it is only those individuals that are either naturally or ritually enabled that can manifest that sort of resurrection. In other words, resurrection of this sort is a matter of individual’s choice. Our position in this regard is further buttressed by Di Muzio’s (2013) observation in connection with the Christian theory of resurrection and reincarnation that “Reincarnation may be viewed as a special case of resurrection.” (Our submission here is that tuput is not reincarnation as the Ngas people deem it to be, but is, instead, an emerging form of resurrection.) The knotty issue to unravel about the Ngas’ tuput phenomenon is the following: Given the fact that no non-initiate of the practice has, in practice, verified its claims, how are we to be epistemically justified in holding the notion (tuput) to be true? Are we to do that by simply appealing to the testimony of Ngas indigenes acclaimed to be tuput-enabled? The dangers about toeing this line are many, one of it being that non-initiates as seekers of validation lack the needed mechanism for doing so. This, obviously, was a serious limitation of this study. Be that as it may, we throw up the tuput phenomenon as a challenge to scholars, especially those of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, religion, cultural studies, and of course psychology, with the hope that a better study and interpretation of tuput might emerge.

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