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Intense examination of unusual case of companion tracing

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Abstract

Forgery means making a false document with intent to defraud. It is one of the techniques of fraud that includes identity theft. On exploring the concept of forgery, the easiest and commonly attempted one is the traced forgery in which a forger tries to reproduce the exact outlines of the model by some tracing process. A traced forgery thus committed necessarily bears a closest resemblance and exactly similar mathematical measurements with the model. For the present investigation a peculiar real time case has been undertaken in which there were two disputed signatures with strictly similar style of writing and due to unavailability of specimen, an inter-se examination of these two disputed signatures has been carried out. The results revealed that the two disputed signatures were 'Companion Traced Forgery'.

Keywords: Forgery, Tracing, Disputed signatures, Inter-se & Companion tracing

1. Introduction

A good number of documents become subject-matter of litigation in which a clever forger prepares documents by using signatures obtained on blank paper by trickery or by using the available blank space above the signatures on some other documents and tearing off the portion containing previous writings. Cases have also been reported where the original writing has been erased physically or chemically and the document has been re-written / typed on the erased surface. Also in some cases, when documents have been prepared by transplanting signatures on the documents from some other documents. On the other hand, genuine documents at times are also denied by executants on the ground that signatures are genuine but the writing of the document has been written later on. A traced forgery is one in which an attempt is made to reproduce the exact outlines of the model by some tracing process. A forgery thus committed necessarily bears a close resemblance to the model, especially in the general forms of the letters. [5, 6]

When there are cases related to disputed signature and writings, the expert need to compare the disputed signatures with specimen/ known signatures of that person who had denied and doubted on the authenticity of disputed signatures. Then the role of questioned document expert is to look for similarities and dissimilarities between two sets of signatures. Exceptionally, there are problems when there is no contemporary writings/ signatures available. In those cases in which the writer admitted 'freehand/ simulated forgery' it may sometimes be identified, as in freehand/ simulated forgery the forger sometimes injects his own handwriting characteristics in terms of habits subconsciously. Due to the traces of his own handwriting features on disputed documents an expert can ascertain those injected habits in forgery after obtaining the specimen writings of suspect/ suspects. But in cases of traced forgery it is difficult for the expert to identify the forger, as tracing is a mechanical act (not a natural process of writing) which reflects exact mathematical measurements which can be made evident by superimposition of two signatures (disputed and model signature) as in tracing forger's own handwriting features are not found. Even an illiterate person can trace the model signature of a literate person.

2. Material and Methods

To undertake this present investigation this unique case has been selected on companion tracing. The instruments used are –

1. Hand lens for preliminary analysis of the class and individual characteristics of handwritings.
2. Stereo microscope to extrude out the minute details in terms of individual handwriting characteristics and focus on the manner of letter formation, initial and terminating strokes.
3. Ruler to mark the measurements and to authenticate the examination.

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- Transmitted light source for the process of superimposition of the two disputed signatures.

3. Result and Discussion

In the case selected for the purpose of study have two disputed signatures written as 'K, m, h, s, i, n, g, h (not fully legible) on two cheques, one of them has seen in Figure 1.. They strokes were slowly drawn, has indentations on the back surfaces, tremors, concealed joining, unnatural pen pauses and pen lifts showing line quality defects.

There are some suspicious similarities in the form of letters on examination of the two signatures when kept in a superimposed manner. Letters 'S' of 'Singh' in two disputed signatures were not found exactly superimposing in respect of length of upper curve of 'S', but, surprisingly, the curves of initial and terminal strokes were found superimposing each other and even the bottom leftward horizontal stroke showed some angle, these features are very much evident in Figure 2 and 3.

The peculiar and characteristic features found in this case that should be taken into consideration are the overall superimposition of the signatures is missing in trace forgery administered in this case, the reason behind can be as some of the forgers keep in mind the danger of exact duplication and they deliberately change the curve, loops, and length of strokes in two companion tracings. In most of the cases it has been found that the total length of two companion tracings may be found similar but in certain clever attempts in tracing, especially when signature comprises of two words, the forger usually change interspacing between two words which is very much evident in this case. Thus, the examiner should take composite/superimposed photographs in two or more adjustments by moving the two signatures left or right side. So if in case they are not very clear in one photograph, it can be made evident in the other photograph so as superimposition in major parts can be demonstrated separately. In this case the similar methodology has been adopted to demonstrate the same.

In such cases, the skill and practices of demonstration of superimposition of signatures need some different technique so as an expert can have a new broader vision and perspective of action in dealing with these types of cases. In this case, the two composite photographs have been taken and two signatures were rotated in clockwise or anti-clockwise direction in composite position so as to keep one signature over the other to verify whether they are fitting into each other or not. In the absence of specimen signatures, experts are not in position to study the real range of 'natural variation' so in such examination, the expert must demonstrate the 'deliberate deviations of tracing' as 'artificial/deceptive variation'. At the same time, if other evidences of tracing can be shown, it can be confidently established that the two disputed signatures are in fact 'companion tracing'.

The oblique light photography for back-side indentation has been adopted and while taking the photograph with camera, it has been held in perpendicular position. In this case it has been demonstrated that the evidence of tracing on the supplied composite photographs, in which two signatures were found to bear 95% resemblance. There are line quality defects as well as both were showing 'deceptive variations' in most of the letters. As the principle of handwriting examination states that 'No one can make his two signatures alike as our hand is not a rubber stamp' and since 95% parts of two signatures show exact similarities, both are concluded

as companion tracing, copied by a model signature unknown/fictitious signatures.

With explicit findings gathered from this case one thing is very evident and clear that in cases where the signature was used as model for tracing and there are no specimens available, though in such cases as well investigation. Such type of cases can be undertaken by considering the principles of handwriting identification. Although, in most of the cases, tracing is being done by using genuine model signature of an individual and that individual is made available to provide specimens so that the actual range of natural variations can be observed in genuine specimen.

Along with the above discussed observations with the help of this study characteristic features of traced forgery is formulated as –

Absence of Natural variations in addition to line quality defects a=& indentation on backside along with 95%superimposition will be prominently seen as an inevitable features of Traced forgery.

4. Tables and Figures

Tables - Nil

Figures

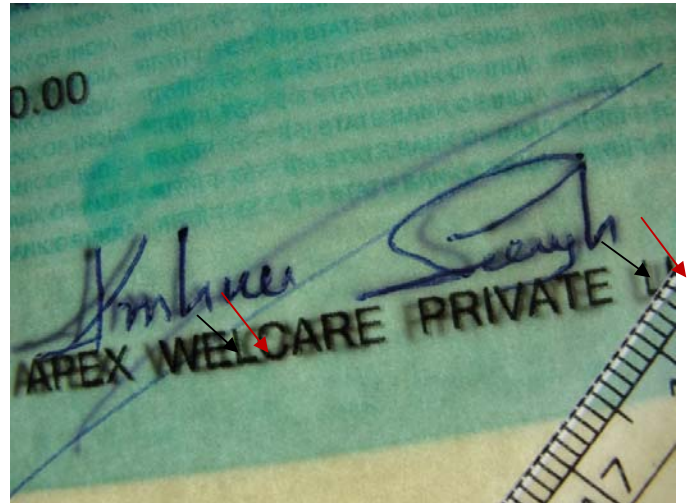


Fig 1: showing superimposition of two disputed signatures by red and black arrows.



Fig 2: showing superimposition of 'Singh' of two disputed signatures by red and black arrows.



Fig 3: showing superimposition of 'kmhur' of two disputed signatures by red and black arrows.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of the observations in this particular case with the help of innovation and experimental tricks used for analysis it has been established that this is a case of Companion tracing, without any doubt. At the time of dealing with the case that was selected for the research, there was an absence of specimen which in turn restricts the presence of master pattern and natural variation range though by adopting the methodology that has been formulated in present investigation, one can conclusively prove "Companion tracing". The formulas devised i.e. adding on Absence of natural variations, line quality defects, indentation on back side, 95% superimposition will results into Traced Forgery. These observations extruded out from this research will aid and can be utilized for dealing with similar type of unusual cases.

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