The Factors that Cause the Misjudgement in Questioned Document Examination: Extraneous Marks and Deteriorating Factors

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Background

The factors that cause the misjudgement on identification of questioned signature or handwriting are not new challenging problems for questioned document examiners. These factors appear in different forms and shapes which can be named as "artificial defects". These factors were classified to two categories by us: Extraneous marks and deteriorating factors. In this study, real case samples collected from our questioned document laboratory are presented.

Extraneous marks are "ink leakage from the pen", "the trace formed because of the pen did not write correctly in the first attempt", "marks such as cross or dots that formed by other person for the purpose of pointing out the signature section on the document", "masking the signature partially by stamp ink", "stroke remnants from the previous person who halted her/his signature because of wrong location" and **"**overlapping signatures due to signing in a limited space".

Deteriorating factors are "partially loss of signature or handwriting stroke on the folded or cut part of paper", "staple and/or puncher holes on the signed or written part of the document", "superfiacial abrassion or tearing of the paper due to sloppy handling during the chain of evidence delivery" and "attrition of questioned document contacting with adhesive materials such as envelope glue".

Material and Methods

A total of 100 even numbered file cases were selected backwards from the present for analysis. The images of these cases which had been taken with VSC8000 (Foster & Freeman, UK) were called from electronic archives of our laboratory. These cases were examined independently by two different handwriting examiners at first, after that they evaluate and discuss their opinions interactively and it was decided which of the two types described above they fit.

Results

It's found that 41 of a total of 100 cases include either extraneous marks or deteriorating factors.

Count (Percentage)	**Extraneous Marks**
7 (%17,1)	Ink leakage from the pen
9 (%22)	The trace formed because of the pen did not write correctly in the first attempt
11 (% 26,8)	Marks such as cross or dots that formed by other person for the purpose of pointing out the signature section on the document

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5 (%12,2)	Masking the signature partially by stamp ink
1 (%2,4)	Stroke remnants from the previous person who halted her/his signature because of wrong location
2 (%4,9)	Overlapping signatures due to signing in a limited space

Count (Percentage)	**Deteriorating Factors**
2 (%4,9)	Partially loss of signature or handwriting stroke on the folded or cut part of paper
2 (%4,9)	Staple and/or puncher holes on the signed or written part of the document
1 (%2,4)	Superfiacial abrassion or tearing of the paper due to sloppy handling during the chain of evidence delivery
1 (%2,4)	Attrition of questioned document contacting with adhessive materials such as envelope glue

Conclusion

As a result, the amount of artificial defects we came across in this study demonstrated to us several precautions should be taken to decrease the effects of them on the judicial process:

-This subject should be included in the training program of expert candidates.

- Experts should keep in mind the possibility of artificial defects and thus avoid the misinterpretation. For example, signs used for indicative purposes should not be mistakenly considered as diacritic.

- Law inforcement and judicial justice personnel in charge of evidence delivery and document processing should be trained about avoiding the creation of these types of effect.