

Winter 1962

Police Science Book Reviews

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Police Science Book Reviews, 53 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 535 (1962)

This Criminology is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

September 1961. A discussion of antibodies, antibody-antigen reactions and the preparation of serum in connection with testing for human blood is treated. (OH)

How to Identify Sharp Instruments—Emin Güven, *International Criminal Police Review*, No. 150: 217-19, August-September 1961. The Turkish police are confronted with numerous problems where trees have been cut down in violation of the law. The author describes their technique for lifting tool mark impressions from the edges of cut wood by means of paper, and their methods of providing comparison material from suspected instruments. The simple process of placing the paper on the cut edge and rubbing it with the side of a pencil lead to pick up the tool marks, and the striations on the cutting edge are marked on paper by moving the edge across a sheet of carbon paper placed face down on the paper. (OH)

The P & O Method for Whorl Problems—S. K. Chatterjee, *International Criminal Police Review*, No. 151: 243-47, October 1961. The author describes a method of sub-dividing whorl patterns in fingerprint classification problems. (OH)

When Experts do not Agree, A Case of Handwriting Expertise—L. L. Lerich, *International Criminal Police Review*, No. 151: 248-53, October 1961. The author is Juge d'Instruction in the Paris courts and described a handwriting case in which conflicting expert testimony was submitted. He then describes the consideration of all other evidence in the case which was necessary for him to reach a verdict as to the authorship of the writing. (OH)

French Police and Juvenile Delinquency—M. Yzerman, *International Criminal Police Review*, No. 152: 65-71 (November 1961). The author describes an experimental procedure used by French police in an effort to cut down on juvenile delinquency, and discusses special problems of the area and the effectiveness of the operation. (OH)

Identification of a Tire-Track—H. Piette, *International Criminal Police Review*, No. 152: 284-5 (November 1961). An illustrated article discussing a positive identification of a tire track in which it was found that the tread had been hand cut in the tire. (OH)

First International Meeting of Questioned Document Examiners—In connection with the Third International Meeting of Forensic Immunology, Medicine, Pathology and Toxicology, there will be a two day meeting devoted to questioned documents in London, England, April 17. & 18, 1963. Document examiners throughout the world are invited to attend and participate. Registration fees for the meetings before December 31, 1962 £9 or \$27, after January 1, 1963 £10 or \$30. Registration should be sent to the Secretariat, Third International Meeting in F.I.M.P. & T. 28 Portland Pl. London, W. 1, England. Papers are solicited dealing with new methods and research findings, handwriting and typewriting problems, laboratory investigation including photography and chemical and microscopic methods, writing instruments, and the document examiner in court. Examiners desiring to present a paper should communicate as soon as possible with P. G. Baxter, 55 Crescent Road, Brentwood, Essex, England.

POLICE SCIENCE BOOK REVIEWS

Edited by
Richard B. Holcomb*

THE IDENTIFICATION OF HANDWRITING AND THE CROSS EXAMINATION OF EXPERTS. By M. K. Mehta. N. M. Tripathi Private Ltd., Bombay, 1961, Pp. 287.

The author of this book, M. K. Mehta, is a well

* Chief, Bureau of Police Science, Institute of Public Affairs, State University of Iowa, Iowa City.

known author and examiner of questioned documents of Bombay, India—*The Identification of Handwriting and the Cross Examination of Experts* representing a revised and expanded version of an earlier publication *How to Cross Examine Handwriting Experts*.

The format of this book is rather unique among

questioned document publications. The forepart of each chapter is somewhat conventional, dealing with the fundamentals of the particular subject under discussion, but is concluded by a series of cross examination questions designed to aid the practicing attorney confronted with opposing experts testimony. In these questions, Mehta carefully avoids an approach intended to smear or discredit the witness even when that person is known to be incompetent or unethical. Instead he advocates careful study and preparation by the attorney to the end of inquiring into the expert's knowledge, the reasons for his opinion, methods of examination, and similar matters dealing with the evidence itself. This emphasis on cross examination should make the book a valuable addition to the library of attorneys engaged in trial work as well as practicing questioned document examiners.

The chapter headings are arranged as follows:

- I Is the Identification of Handwriting a Science?
- II The Experts
- III The Importance of Cross Examination
- IV The First Approach
- V General Characteristics
- VI Writing Habits
- VII Formations and Variations
- VIII Forgeries
- IX Disguised Writings
- X Inks, Additions, Alterations, Erasures and Sequence of Strokes
- XI Typescripts
- XII Examination-in-Chief

It will be noticed that many of these chapters deal with handwriting problems which is not too surprising when one considers the high incidence of check forgeries in India. Then, too, the handwriting expert's problem in India is complicated by the great variety of languages and systems in use with which he must be familiar.

Illustrations in *The Identification of Handwriting and the Cross Examination of Experts* for the most part are adequate for the purposes intended but leave something to be desired in clarity and quality. The Index to the book is quite complete and appears to cover most of the subjects therein.

In reviewing the words of various authorities cited in Mehta's book, one is struck by the contrast in the court's attitude towards experts' testimony in this country and in India. Even in the Forward section of the book, where writers are prone to insert the most favorable comments regarding their own profession, Mehta is apparently unable to find a complete advocate for his cause, the High Court Justice making reference to the lack of professional ethics among Indian handwriting experts, the problem of conflicts in opinions, and the high incidence of "obscure" opinions. A great number of the legal decisions quoted are also highly critical of expert testimony, and one is constrained to think that the courts themselves will benefit the most from Mehta's excellent work which should not only enlighten but also dispel some of the misapprehensions regarding conflicts in expert testimony. As Mehta points out, there is a world of difference between the opinions of competent experts giving scientific, demonstrable reasons for their opinions, and the dogmatic conclusions of the incompetent or pretender.

It is this reviewer's opinion that *The Identification of Handwriting and the Cross Examination of Experts* represents a significant contribution to the questioned document literature, and despite the difference in types of cases handled, the serious student in America will want to have Mehta's book, and, of course, the practicing lawyer may find the book a valuable source of information for cross examining experts in disputed document cases.

DONALD DOUD

Milwaukee, Wis.