

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *A Review of Suspect Identities: A History of Fingerprinting and Criminal Identification*

REFERENCE: Cole SA. *Suspect Identities: A history of fingerprinting and criminal identification*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2001, 369 pp., \$35.00.

Students, researchers, educators, and practitioners in the field of personal identification and forensics will find the text interesting and informative. Cole uses photographs and charts to illustrate and emphasize important concepts associated with the history of personal identification. Cases and issues are summarized that are relevant in the development of the identification system used in America. Many of the cornerstone decisions that were made in the field of identification resulted from the collective efforts of individuals and organizations whose initial objectives were to create an infallible link between records and people.

Cole's book is a historical portrayal of fingerprinting, anthropometry, and other forms of personal identification that emerged around the world and specifically how fingerprinting developed as a science in the United States. The primary emphasis is on fingerprinting; however, other areas of forensic science are noted with primary emphasis on fingerprints. Contributions of many American, British, and European scientists and fingerprint identification visionaries are discussed. In the early days of the new science, it was termed "dactyloscopy" and later "dermatoglyphics" was coined to identify the science of fingerprinting. Early researchers explored multiple fingerprint applications from heredity to personality typing; however, personal identification was the most widely accepted application.

The author examines why police agencies needed a system of personal identification and begins with the discussion of crude forms of ancient identification such as decalvation of convicts, tattooing, and branding to the introduction of modern documents such as driver licenses and passports. Recidivism and the inability to track individuals once they are in the system are also discussed. Included are the impact of early theories of criminality, the use of phrenological and craniometric approaches to identify

the criminal and how they emerged among other efforts to identify individuals.

Cole discusses the first observations of friction skin by both ancient and civilized societies as well as the possible significance of the friction skin. The author describes the first classification of patterns and other physiological functions and significance as reported by early scientists like Malpighi, Mayer, and Purkyne. In addition, he discusses the adoption and use of fingerprints in British India by William Herschel and the later contributions of Henry, Faulds, and Galton. Emphasis is placed on the development and use of the leading fingerprint system in English speaking countries, the Henry System.

In order to prevent civil service exam fraud in the early nineteen hundreds, Henry DeForest recommended fingerprinting as a system of personal identification to the New York Civil Service Commission. The fingerprint system was also adopted by the New York prison system and officials of the Bureau of Prisons sent representatives to the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition to demonstrate the advances in criminal identification. Consequently, the system of anthropometry for personal identification was diminishing and fingerprinting was gaining popularity.

By 1906, the United States Army began using fingerprints as a method of personal identification. Not only was the system more precise in identification, it did not take as long to record the fingerprints as the measurements required by the system of anthropometry. Additionally, the author examines the 1912 Jennings case, the 1919 Moon case, and other historical fingerprint cases and legal issues dealing with fingerprint identification. The successful fingerprint system also contributed to the passage of new legislation known as "Baumes Laws." The new legislation changed sentencing guidelines, and offenders identified with prior convictions received increased sentences.

The requirements for matching fingerprints have been a debated topic for the past several years among fingerprint examiners. Cole discusses the requirements for making a fingerprint match based on ridge characteristics in the United States and England. Also, he includes a comparison between the strategy in-

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volving the number of matching ridges and standards expected for a positive identification versus relying on the judgment of the experts.

The final chapter appropriately addresses the use of DNA as a method of identification in investigations and the impact of fingerprinting on the origin of DNA evidence. In this chapter, cases are discussed and a general overview of DNA is explained. The author

points out that the scientific foundation of DNA evidence may outweigh the foundation used in the acceptance of fingerprinting as a reliable system of identification. Cole concludes that fingerprinting was instrumental in the origins of "DNA fingerprinting" and that DNA evidence has often been compared with forensic fingerprinting evidence. However, he emphasizes that DNA is surpassing its fingerprinting role model.