



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***AN ANALYSIS METHOD OF FORENSIC INVESTIGATION FOR
PLATFORM-AS-A-SERVICE CLOUD STORAGE SERVICES***

KAVEH SHAERPOUR

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**AN ANALYSIS METHOD OF FORENSIC INVESTIGATION FOR
PLATFORM-AS-A-SERVICE CLOUD STORAGE SERVICES**

By

KAVEH SHAERPOUR

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

December 2016

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of University Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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December 2016

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Cloud computing has changed most of the ways users interact with computers and mobile devices. Every user, power-users or normal users, can take advantage of Cloud storage and in such a way that they can develop or store their data in cloud and access them anytime they want. There are three types of cloud Platform as a Service (PaaS), Software as a Service (SaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) but our focus is PaaS. Though, PaaS has made it easier to code and develop new application for developers, it has helped criminals to write their malicious application with minimum trace as well. PaaS cloud client applications could be a very useful for forensics investigators as they contain much information about the user. Although, there have been many digital forensics researches done on SaaS and IaaS, there have been close to none such research on PaaS. Therefore, the problem here is first there is not enough research in PaaS and second criminals use this service to create malicious applications.

Previous researches on forensic analysis of PaaS cloud applications on Windows machines and smartphones used present forensic analyser tools and failed to detect all the data remnants such as file contents, email addresses, activity trails of users and many more. Also, majority of works were done on SaaS and IaaS cloud applications.

In this research, to address the problems of lack of work on PaaS and lack of enough forensic data after analysis we propose a new analysis method for PaaS cloud applications to maximise the amount forensic that can be extracted in process of analysis. The proposed analysis method is valid for examining the internal storage, internal memory and network traffic of PC and smartphones. In the proposed analysis method of this project, the raw data of collected images is analysed. This analysis is done based on predefined keywords to detect login information. Upon identification of user's data and pattern, the keywords which are common among PaaS applications are defined and then the raw data of images are analysed once again to find any remaining

data remnants on the system. After the evidences are found and extracted then the researcher proceeds to presenting the findings in a report form. The new analysis method is tested on popular PaaS client applications namely Openshift and Heroku on Windows PC and mobile platforms iOS and Android.

The outcome of this research establishes the use of the mentioned PaaS applications on the investigated computers and smartphones and results in identification of artefacts such as usernames, passwords, login information, application source code and application information. The result of this research assists forensic examiners and practitioners in understanding the types of artefacts that are likely to remain on Windows machines and iOS and Android smartphones after using PaaS applications and also it helps these applications' developers to make the applications more secure and users to know the security issues of these applications.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**KAEDAH ANALITIK UNTUK PENYIASATAN FORENSIK BAGI
PERKHIDMATAN STORAN AWAN PLATFORM-SEBAGAI-PERKHIDMATAN**

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Pengkomputeran cloud telah mengubah kebanyakan cara berinteraksi antara komputer dan peranti mudah alih. Setiap pengguna, samada power users atau pengguna biasa, boleh memanfaatkan penyimpanan cloud di dalam apa-apa cara dimana mereka boleh membangunkan atau menyimpan data mereka di dalam cloud dan mengaksesnya bila-bila saja mereka mahu. Terdapat tiga jenis cloud, Platform as a Service (PaaS), Software as a Service (SaaS) dan Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) tetapi tumpuan utama kita adalah PaaS. Walaupun PaaS telah memudahkan kod dan membangunkan aplikasi baru untuk pemaju, ia juga telah membantu penjenayah untuk menulis aplikasi tidak baik mereka sendiri dengan kesan yang minima. Klien aplikasi PaaS cloud boleh menjadi sangat berguna untuk penyiasat forensik kerana ia mengandungi banyak informasi tentang pengguna. Walaupun terdapat banyak kajian forensik digital yang telah dilakukan pada SaaS dan IaaS, tiada kajian berkenaan PaaS. Oleh itu, masalah di sini adalah pertama, tiada kajian yang mencukupi keatas PaaS dan kedua, penjenayah menggunakan servis ini untuk mencipta aplikasi yang tidak baik.

Kajian sebelum ini terhadap analisis forensik aplikasi PaaS cloud pada mesin Windows dan telefon pintar menggunakan alatan analisis forensik masa kini dan gagal untuk mengesan kesemua sisa data seperti kandungan fail, alamat email, jejak aktiviti pengguna dan banyak lagi. Juga, majoriti kerja dilakukan pada SaaS dan aplikasi cloud IaaS.

Dalam kajian ini, bagi menangani masalah kekurangan kerja ke atas PaaS dan kekurangan data forensik selepas analisis, kami mencadangkan satu kaedah analisis baru untuk aplikasi cloud PaaS supaya dapat memaksimumkan jumlah forensik yang boleh diekstrak dalam proses analisis. Kaedah analisis yang dicadangkan sah untuk memeriksa penyimpanan dalaman, memori dalaman dan rangkaian trafik PC dan telefon pintar. Dalam cadangan kaedah analisis projek ini, data mentah imej yang terkumpul dianalisis. Analisis ini dilakukan berdasarkan kata kunci yang telah

ditetapkan untuk mengesan maklumat log masuk. Melalui pengenalpastian data dan corak pengguna, kata kunci yang biasa dikalangan aplikasi PaaS ditakrifkan dan kemudian imej data mentah dianalisis sekali lagi untuk mencari mana-mana baki sisa data di dalam sistem. Selepas menjumpai bukti-bukti dan diekstrak, penyelidik kemudiannya membentangkan hasil kajian dalam bentuk laporan. Kaedah analisis baru ini telah diuji terhadap klien aplikasi PaaS yang popular iaitu Openshift dan Heroku pada Windows PC dan platform mudah alih iOS dan Android.

Hasil kajian ini menetapkan penggunaan aplikasi PaaS yang disebut pada komputer dan telefon pintar yang disiasat dan hasil identifikasi dari artifak seperti nama pengguna, kata laluan, maklumat log masuk, aplikasi kod sumber dan aplikasi maklumat. Hasil kajian ini membantu pengamal dan pemeriksa forensik dalam memahami jenis artifak yang berkemungkinan kekal pada mesin Windows dan telefon mudah alih iOS dan Android selepas menggunakan aplikasi PaaS dan juga membantu pemaju-pemaju aplikasi ini untuk membuat aplikasi yang lebih selamat dan pengguna tahu tentang isu keselamatan aplikasi ini.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 22 December 2016 to conduct the final examination of Kaveh Shaerpour on his thesis entitled "An Analysis Method of Forensic Investigation for Platform-as-a-Service Cloud Storage Services" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
DD	Disk Dump
DFRWS	Digital Forensic Research Workshop
FTK	Forensic Tool Kit
iOS	Apple iPhone Operating System
IP	Internet Protocol
MD5	Message Digest 5
NIJ	National Institute of Justice
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
OS	Operating System
PCAP	Network Traffic Capture File
SHA1	Secure Hash Algorithm 1
SWGDE	Scientific Working Group on Digital Evidence
USB	Universal Serial Bus

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cloud storage is relatively a new field in Information Technology although it has its roots in 1960's ARPA projects (Watson, 2009). Cloud storage is the network of servers that are accessible from anywhere any time. NIST have defined cloud as "Cloud computing is a model for enabling ubiquitous, convenient, on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources that can be rapidly provisioned and released with minimal management effort or service provider interaction" (Mell & Grance, 2011). Baun, et al. (2011) have explained NIST model more in depth and they stated that NIST model consists of five crucial characteristics, three kind of service model and four deployment models. The five characteristics of NIST cloud model are on demand self-service, ubiquitous (broad) network access, resource pooling, rapid elasticity or expansion and measured service. Yang & Jia (2014) have explained the service models and deployment models of cloud storage services. The deployment models of cloud storage services are private cloud, community cloud, public cloud and hybrid cloud. Daryabar et al. (2013) have identified three service models of cloud based on NIST model as Software as a Service (SaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS) and Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS).

Since the rate of growth and popularity of cloud between users has increased in past few years each company has started to offer a cloud storage service such as Dropbox, Amazon and Evernote (Chung, et al. 2012) and Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive (Quick & Choo, 2013b, 2013c) and Apple iCloud (Oestreicher, 2014). All these attentions given to cloud has attracted different kind of clients, some just upload their personal or corporate data and some commit criminal activities in the cloud.

Criminals have started to use cloud to either target other cloud storage systems or to store their criminal data. They use cloud to store materials such as child pornography videos or pictures, data about their illegal operation or they use cloud storage services (Martini & Choo, 2013) to attack other services which happened to Sony PlayStation store which was attack from an Amazon server (Wagenseil, 2011) or they attack the cloud storage services and leak users' personal data as happened in iCloud incident (Griffiths, 2014). The issue facing forensic investigators is to identify the data remnant such as login information. Therefore, analysis of devices such computers or smartphones may provide helpful information for investigators.

1.2 Problem Statement

In recent researches on cloud forensics, Zhu (2011) investigated cloud client application of Dropbox on Android and iOS. In that research by using tools such as XRY and Oxygen forensic tools, the researcher found and retrieved information such

usernames and filenames but not contents of the files. Chung et al. (2012) proposed a process model for forensic investigation of SaaS applications such as Amazon S3, Dropbox, Evernote and Google Docs on Windows and Android and iOS. The proposed model was designed to investigate back up files of internal storages. Hale (2013) discussed the data remnants of Amazon cloud drive on Windows XP and 7. Mahajan, et al. (2013) performed digital forensic investigation on Viber and WhatsApp client applications on Android devices. Ruan & Carthy (2013) have experimented a forensics model for cloud storage services such as PaaS. The model is Cloud Forensic Maturity Model (CFMM) which composes of two inter-related parts, the Cloud Forensic Investigative Architecture (CFIA) and the Cloud Forensic Capability Matrix (CFCM). In their research, the researchers aimed to create a unified framework for cloud forensics on computers. Quick and Choo (2013c) proposed a forensic analysis cycle for Google Drive on Windows 7 and iPhone 3G. They used XRY application to perform iOS device investigation. Furthermore, the authors have performed same analysis by using their proposed framework on SkyDrive (2013a) and Dropbox (2013b) on a virtual machine running Microsoft Windows 7. Alqahtany et al. (2016) proposed A forensic acquisition and analysis system for IaaS which consists of multiple agents to gather data from different parts of cloud to perform analysis on it.

Regarding data remnants findings in the mentioned researches, Zhu (2011) could not retrieve the content of files by using forensic tools. Chung et al (2012) showed that internal memory of smartphones could potentially contain valuable information such as login data. Ruan & Carthy (2013) only provided their model that was proposed for PaaS and the rest of cloud types but they did not show any analysis done using the model. Alqahtany et al. (2016) did not provide any findings of experiment in their research.

Even though the researches done by Zhu (2011), Chung et al. (2012), Hale (2013) Quick and Choo (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) and Alqahtany et al. (2016) have existed and many current analysis tools and methods are able to retrieve very important information from VoIP, Social networking and SaaS cloud applications on smartphones and computers but the methods used in these researches and tools may not retrieve enough valuable information from cloud client applications on both computers and smartphone (Simou et al, 2014). As it is shown the most of these analysis methods are focused on SaaS type of cloud and there is close to none models on PaaS cloud and they do not help investigator to retrieve majority of forensic data. To fill this gap and create an analysis method to maximise the extraction of valuable forensic data which is developed for PaaS cloud type, the objective 1 was defined.

1.3 Research Objectives

This research proposes an analysis method to investigate both computers and smartphones to retrieve valuable forensic artefacts stored on them after using PaaS cloud storage client applications. The objective of this research is as follow

- 1) To develop an analysis method to help examiners, researchers and investigators to follow a forensically sound standard process when analysing PaaS cloud storage applications.

The discovery of data remnants provides a more in-depth understanding of the kind of artefacts that are most likely to remain and help the examiners in different stage of their examinations.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions are defined to achieve the research objectives in more organised manner.

1.4.1 Research Question 1

Question 1. What data remnants remains on hard disk using PaaS cloud storage services within Microsoft Windows, iOS and Android?

Question 1 leads to hypothesis 1 and 2;

Hypothesis 1. There are data remnants when using the PaaS cloud storage applications on Microsoft Windows, iOS and Android which can be used to identify login information, application storage data and application modification data.

Hypothesis 2. There are no data remnants when using the PaaS cloud storage applications on Microsoft Windows, iOS and Android which can be used to identify login information, application storage data and application modification data.

1.5 Research Scope

In this research, it is assume that the person who investigate the victim's machine has a real-time access to it. This scenario is applied when the victim's machine is connected to a network and its administrator has complete access to it or investigators have gotten real-time access with rootkits. This assumption is critical because some of the remnants are found in the internal memory.

The proposed framework of this research can be used on most of the PaaS cloud clients on computers and smartphones, however, different types of data remnants could be recovered when different platforms, versions and hardware are investigated, therefore, limitations of this research are only relevant to the data remnants and recovered artefacts not to the proposed framework.

1.5.1 Version Dependent

Since this research is quasi-experimental in nature, obtained results are applicable to the software versions available at the time of conducting the research. Previous

software versions may result in different findings and future software versions may have different outcomes from the ones obtained in this research.

1.5.2 Platform Dependent

This research focused on identifying the data remnants residing on Windows, Android and iOS platforms from the use of Heroku, and Openshift applications. Alternative platforms such as OS X and Windows Phone may produce different data remnants. Furthermore, other such applications such as Bluemix, Azure and AWS Elastic Beanstalk may result in different data remnants. Therefore, different outcomes may be achieved in relation to research questions when different platforms and applications are involved.

1.5.3 Hardware Dependent

This research was conducted using a Windows 8.1 PC, a jailbroken Apple iPhone running iOS 8.1 and a rooted Samsung Galaxy S4 running Android 4.4.2. Thus, other OS versions and other phones may present different results. In addition, a non-jailbroken or not rooted devices may provide less information since acquiring a physical image and obtaining the slack spaces from the internal storage is not possible.

1.6 Thesis Organisation

This thesis begins with an abstract which provides a summary of the research and continues with acknowledgments, approval, and declaration, list of figures, list of tables and list of abbreviations used in the thesis.

Chapter 1- Introduction begins with background which provides information about PaaS Cloud storage and digital forensic investigation to introduce the topic of the research to reader. Background is followed by problem statement where the gap of research and the reason for conducting this research is described. Then, the objectives of the research are outlined. Finally, research scopes are highlighted and structure of the thesis is explained.

Chapter 2- Literature Review provides a review of current literature relevant to this research. This chapter provides an outline on PaaS cloud, digital forensic analysis and mobile forensics analysis. Existing issues in forensic analysis of PaaS cloud storage services applications are highlighted and a summary concludes the chapter.

Chapter 3- Methodology explains the nature of the research and outlines the research steps. Research methodology for each research objective and experiments process are described in detail along with the dataset used for experiments. Finally, equipment and software used for research experiments are listed and the chapter is concluded.

Chapter 4- The Design of Analysis Method presents the analysis method proposed for this research and explains each step of the analysis method and listing all the necessary keywords to perform the analysis on the machines.

Chapter 5- Results and Discussions presents analysis results of Heroku and Openshift PaaS cloud storage services applications within Windows, Android and iOS devices utilizing the proposed analysis method. Analysis is undertaken to determine the data remnants of each application. Afterwards, integrity and validity of file data and metadata of PaaS cloud storage services files on each application within Windows, Android and iOS platforms are discussed. Results and findings of the analysis are presented and discussed and the chapter is concluded with the summary.

Chapter 6- Conclusion provides a summary of the research and thesis. First, a summary of what has been done throughout the thesis is provided and then the results and outcomes of the research are presented. Finally, validity, implications of the research and future research opportunities are discussed.

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