

World Congress in Probability and Statistics

Symposium in Honor of Kiyosi Itô >>>



Guest of Honor and other guests with main speakers, BS and IMS Executive Committees, Scientific Program Committee, Organizers and Chairs of Invited Sessions, Panel Sessions Organizers Members, Organizers of the In Memoriam Session and Local Organizing Committee

-- Louis Chen and Anthony Kuk

[Editor's note: Louis Chen chaired, and Anthony Kuk co-chaired, the Local Organizing Committee for the recent meeting in Singapore. Their report, which appeared in Volume 37, Issue 8 of the IMS Bulletin, is reproduced here with permission of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics.]

The joint Seventh World Congress of the Bernoulli Society and 71st Annual Meeting of the IMS took place at the National University of Singapore (NUS) in Singapore from July 14 to 19, 2008. It was jointly organized by the Department of Statistics and Applied Probability, Department of Mathematics, and Institute for Mathematical Sciences, of the National University of Singapore. The joint meeting was for the first time called the World Congress in Probability and Statistics, jointly sponsored by the Bernoulli Society and the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, a new name which will be used for all future such joint meetings of the two societies.

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The road ahead, a wilderness . . .

Chasing dreams . . .

Ah, someday, someone may follow this path.

- From lyrics of Subaru (Star) by Shinji Tanimura (1948 -)

On 7 July 2008, certain parts of Japan celebrated an age-old festival called the Tanabata (七夕 or Star Festival) in which individual wishes are written on colored strips of paper and hung with other paper ornaments from bamboo branches. It is a tradition with origins in the romantic Chinese legend of the annual celestial meeting of two stars Altair (personified by the Cow Herder) and Vega (personified by the Weaving Princess) from across the Milky Way. On a smaller scale, the colorful tradition of this festival was reflected in the multitude of origami decorations, streamers, hanging strips of paper written in Japanese calligraphy, bamboo stalks and leaves at the entrance of a ward in a hospital in Kyoto. Standing almost incongruously out of this were two printed



A small token for Kiyosi Itô presented to Masatoshi Fukushima

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The World Congress is a major international event in probability and statistics and is held every four years. It features the latest scientific developments in the fields of probability and statistics and their applications, and is one of the most prestigious meetings in these fields.

Singapore is the first city in the Asia-Pacific region to have hosted the World Congress. The six previous World Congresses were held in Tashkent (Soviet Union, 1986), Uppsala (Sweden, 1990), Chapel Hill (North Carolina, USA, 1994), Vienna (Austria, 1996), Guanajuato (Mexico, 2000) and Barcelona (Spain, 2004). The fourth World Congress in Vienna was brought forward by two years to avoid a clash with the International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM), also held every four years, and also to allow the fifth World Congress to be held in the auspicious year of 2000.

The Chair of the Scientific Program Committee for the seventh World Congress was Ruth Williams. There were 13 keynote speakers, 34 invited sessions, 82 contributed sessions and 3 poster sessions, covering a wide spectrum of topics and a myriad of applications. The keynote speakers were: Richard Durrett (IMS Wald Lectures), Jianqing Fan (Laplace Lecture), Alice Guionnet (Lévy Lecture), Peter McCullagh (IMS Neyman Lecture), Oded Schramm (BS-IMS Special Lecture), David Spiegelhalter (Bernoulli Lecture), Alain-Sol Sznitman (Kolmogorov Lecture), Elizabeth Thompson (Tukey Lecture), Wendelin Werner (BS-IMS Special Lecture), Martin Barlow (IMS Medallion Lecture), Zhi-Ming Ma (IMS Medallion Lecture), Mark Low (IMS Medallion Lecture), Douglas Nychka (Public Lecture). There were also two panel discussions on challenges and opportunities in probability and in statistics, and an 'In Memoriam' session commemorating the passing of David Kendall (1918–2007) and Chris Heyde (1939–2008), past Presidents of the Bernoulli Society, and of Samuel Karlin (1924–2007), past President of IMS. More than 570 participants from 55 countries attended the Seventh World Congress, which opened on Monday, July 14 with speeches delivered by Louis Chen (Chair of the Local Organizing Committee), Ruth Williams (Chair of the Scientific Program Committee), Jean Jacod (President of the Bernoulli Society), Jianqing Fan (President of IMS) and guest of honor SHIH Choon Fong (President of NUS). A Welcome Reception followed the IMS Presidential Address on Monday evening. There was also a Special Reception on Tuesday, July 15 to honor Wendelin Werner for being the first probabilist-trained mathematician to have been awarded the Fields Medal. Werner won the Fields Medal for his revolutionary work on stochastic Loewner evolution and the geometry of two-dimensional Brownian motion, part of which was done in collaboration with Oded Schramm and Gregory Lawler. This reception was graced by the Provost of NUS, Eng Chye Tan, who spoke on how the 2006 ICM was a watershed

for probability theory and probabilists [see his speech on page 3]. A half-day city tour was held on Thursday, July 19, followed by the Congress Banquet at The Pines, a town and country club. The banquet was attended by about 310 people, who were enthralled by a musical performance featuring tenor John Chen, academic-turned-politician-turned entrepreneur, pianist Bernard Lanskey, Director of the NUS Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music, and clarinetist Dai Le and cellist Zhou Mi, who were graduates of the Conservatory, with music by Bernard Tan, composer, physicist and former Dean of Science at NUS. Apart from the Bernoulli Society and IMS, which were the sponsoring societies, other sponsors of the seventh World Congress were NUS, Singapore Tourism Board, Saw Swee Hock, Lee Foundation, World Scientific, Singapore Management University and Elsevier. The Congress ended successfully on Saturday, July 19, 2008. There are photos on the Congress website at <http://www.ims.nus.edu.sg/Programs/wc2008/gallery.htm>



Opening ceremony: (From Left) Institute of Mathematical Statistics President Jianqing Fan, Bernoulli Society President Jean Jacod, Louis Chen, Guest of Honor National University of Singapore President SHIH Choon Fong



Special reception



Wald Lecturer Richard Durrett