Saw Swee Hock Public Lecture in Statistics

Who committed the Black Death crime in 1347-1353?
-A case from UCOS
(Unsolved Crime & Open Case Squad)

by Professor Howell Tong
London School of Economics, UK

December 14, 2015 (Monday)
6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.
Rayson Huang Theatre(黃麗松講堂), HKU
Tea Reception at 5:30 p.m.

About the Talk

The notorious Black Death caused devastation in medieval Europe, wiping out almost half of her population. It was the black rat that was always believed to be responsible for the crime of spreading the deadly plague. However, recent scientific research conducted by a team of scientists from different disciplines and led by Professor Nils Christian Stenseth, formerly President of the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, has re-opened the investigation with the help of statisticians. Their findings in 2015 have taken the scientific world completely by surprise, so much so that the excitement has filtered into international news media such as the BBC. A leading newspaper in the United Kingdom even carried an editorial entitled "Apology to the black rat"!

This talk will start with tracing the history of the Black Death, with reference to its epidemic route, human sufferings and social impact. It will then report recent findings, in layman terms, from the case book of UCOS, emphasizing the role of modern statistical forensics developed by Hong Kong born statisticians. It will conclude with a brief reference to some on-going investigation aiming at nailing the culprit once and for all, as well as to possible impact of climate change on future prevalence of the deadly epidemic world wide.

The entire talk will be presented as a case of UCOS, in the spirit of the popular TV series 'New Tricks' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Tricks), and in a non-technical language.

For online registration, please go to http://www.saasweb.hku.hk/seminar/20151214.html

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All interested are welcome

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