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¹To really understand what I mean here, please turn to Chapter 1: *Introduction* of this dissertation.

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Despite the mathematical trappings, this dissertation may serve as a disguised photo album for me, which depicts a large part of my (academic) life for the past 6 years. However, there is also a significant part of my life that involves the Chinese community here in Amsterdam, which I have not mentioned yet. I probably need a separate appendix to list my good Chinese friends who helped me in one way or the other. For the sake of relevance and space, I can only mention a few of them who had direct impact on my Amsterdam life and this dissertation.

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I sometimes find myself dry in words (but wet from sweating - an iconic heritage from my father) and this is one of those moments: I am risking not mentioning all the people that I should mention here. Nevertheless, I want to take this chance to express my sincere love to all my close Chinese friends here in the Netherlands, and without loss of generality I suppose you feel the same.

This almost concludes my acknowledgements and my Amsterdam life. Finally, I reserve my deepest gratitude to my parents for their unlimited love, support, and understanding. I shall be around soon!

Yanjing Wang
Amsterdam, July 2010.



²Association of Chinese Students and Scholars in the Netherlands, Amsterdam Branch