Young Asian Dutch constructing Asianness

Understanding the role of Asian popular culture

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This PhD thesis is not simply the outcome of five years of research undertaken in isolation. I have been fortunate enough to have been surrounded, inspired, and supported by quite a few wonderful people during the course of my PhD research. Furthermore, my PhD research is not a stand-alone project disconnected from my private, public and professional past; rather, it is a continuation thereof. Thus, there are many people – past and present – who I would like to thank for their support and contributions to my PhD project.

I would like to start by thanking my supervisor Ed Tan. Ed, you were the sole reason for me to take my project to the Amsterdam School of Communication Research. You have given me unconditional support and indispensable guidance from the very beginning, when I was writing my first research proposal and only few others in the department showed any interest or confidence in me and my research project, till the very end. In particular, I would like to thank you for guiding me through difficult times during the final stages of the project. I especially enjoyed our meetings that would more often than not turn into talks about our families and our upbrinings, having a cup of coffee, dim sum or dinner with you, and catching Asian movies together. To me you were not ‘just’ an outstanding supervisor, but, in line with a theme that emerged from the research, I have come to regard you as family. I look forward to more talks over coffee or dim sum in Amsterdam, Copenhagen or, who knows, London.

I am grateful and honored to have professors Jeroen de Kloet, Giselinde Kuipers, Anthony Fung, Halleh Ghorashi, Jan Rath, and Yiu Fai Chow as members of the doctorate committee. I would like to thank you for your time, effort, and commitment to review my PhD thesis.

I need to mention several members of the committee separately as well. First, Jeroen de Kloet, I thank you for your unwavering support for me and this research project. And for selling the idea of doing a PhD to me by mentioning that it involves travelling to conferences in nice places in Asia and elsewhere. Giselinde Kuipers, I also want to thank you for your interest in this project from the start. Your valuable comments and advice have helped me in shaping the studies I conducted. And Yiu Fai Chow, I thank you for contributing to my academic development in several ways. From giving feedback on my papers to inviting me to join your panel at Crossroads in Hong Kong, my very first conference. But most of all for being a continuous inspiration, both academically and artistically.

When I was a student I had some excellent professors whose classes and teaching prompted me to consider a career in academia. This includes Ed Tan and Jeroen de Kloet who I have already mentioned. I need to add Cees Hamelink and Sikko Visscher, and especially Liesbet van Zoonen whose course ‘Entertaining the Citizen’ played a pivotal role in evoking an interest in an academic career in me, and who later hired me as a lecturer with the department of communication science, a key event in my professional life for which I am still grateful. I thank you all for your inspiring teaching.
Many times people reacted surprised when I told them my research project is based at ASCoR. Indeed, ASCoR has not always felt like a proper or even welcoming academic home to the project. Nonetheless, there have been many colleagues who made my stay at ASCoR and the department of Communication Science pleasurable and a valuable experience. I would like to mention Mario Keer, Miruna Doicaru, Damian Trilling, Björn Burscher and Peter Lewinski with whom I shared a room in OIH, Johannes von Engelhardt, Cem Gömüşay, Sheila van Pelt, Eric Groothedde, Jochem Alsemgeest and Vedrana Halepović with whom I shared the attic in OIH, Julia Hoffmann, Bregje van Groningen, Martijn Vlug, Susanne Baumgartner, Rens Vliegenthart, Helen Vossen, Jochen Peter, Mirjam Baars, Monique Timmers, Sarah de Jong, Carmina Rodriguez, Claire Segijn, Maria Koutamanis, Floris Müller, Sandra Zwier, Connie de Boer, Peter Neijens and Danny van der Poel, all members and conveners of the PhD club, and last but not least all the colleagues at the various secretariats and offices who always helped me out with forms, procedures, and the like: Ardy Grefhorst, Miriam Schmidt, Jeanette Wevers, Esther Erents, Elske Verkrujsse, Rosanne Eijssink, Kathleen Hair, Esther Nipperus, Margriet Smit, Riek Slotboom, Inke Thakoersingh, Noura Bouras and Donna Martens.

I need to give a special mention to a few colleagues. Karin Fikkers, a very special thanks to you for being a friend who has always been stand-by with advice and words of encouragement during my sometimes difficult PhD journey. I enjoy our conversations about all kinds of stuff (Harry Potter! Cakes and pies! Multicultural society! Cakes and pies!) and of course our shared passion for uh, cakes and pies. I am counting on many more cake dates in the future! And thank you for being one of my paranymphs! A big shout out to Moniza Waheed, my Asian homegirl. It was great fun sharing an office room with you and talking about important stuff like (Asian) food and fashion. Room C0.07b has never been the same since you left. Hope to see you in KL! Talking about food, I need to mention Suchi Joshi too. I enjoyed hanging out with you a lot: having an ice cream after work, going for lunch with our infamous dim sum club. I hope to see you (and adorable little Suneri!) sometime soon in Amsterdam! Marleen Klaassen, thanks for being involved in my research. It was fun doing field work together at a K-pop concert and it felt good to have a colleague with whom I could talk Japanese and Korean food and popular culture. I look forward to meeting up for bibimbap or ramen! And finally, Rena Zendadel. I like how we connected straight away, it might have something to do with our qualitative mindsets. We have had too few meet ups though, but now that my project is finished we should be able to fix that pretty soon. Coffee and cake, here we (finally) come!

During the course of my PhD project, the Transasia Cultural Studies reading group at the Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis was my academic shelter. I very much enjoyed the discussions, food and drinks I had with the group’s members including Gladys Chong, Bram Hendrawan, Penn Ip, Svetlana Kharchenkova, David Kloos, Lena Scheen, Ian Yang, Guohua Zeng and aforementioned Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen de Kloet. And especially Leonie Schmidt, it is always a joy to talk about all things Asia(n) with you. I look
forward to meet up with you in London and check out one of the city’s many wonderful Asian restaurants.

Three former UvA colleagues-turned-friends need to be thanked too: Pauline van Romondt Vis, Linda Duits and Joyce Neys. I always look forward to meeting up with you because I know it always involves fun and insightful talks, whether about good coffee (Pauline), Star Wars (Linda), or our little brats (Joyce). Or about academicy stuff of course. You guys have kept me motivated and inspired me, all in your very own ways. Thanks a million!

Last year I started to work as a lecturer at the department of Media and Culture Studies at Utrecht University. After having spent almost fifteen years at the University of Amsterdam, my new workplace could have felt strange and I could have felt out of place. Thanks to outstanding colleagues who have given me a warm welcome, it did not take long for me to feel at home. I thank my new colleagues, and in particular Vincent Crone and Hanna Surma.

During the course of my PhD project I have visited several international conferences. It was always nice to meet and mingle with colleagues from other countries, and one international colleague in particular: Andrew Loo Hong Chuang, whom I met a conference in Kuala Lumpur and with whom I later set up a short-term collaboration between our colleges in Amsterdam and Kuala Lumpur. Andrew, I enjoyed working with you on our program a lot, you have been an exceptional counterpart in the project. But more so, I value our friendship that grew out of this project. I hope to see you sometime soon in KL or Amsterdam, I will bring you stroopwafels!

A lot of people were involved in this research project in one way or another. First of all many participants filled out the online survey for the first study and I interviewed many participants for the studies on Asian parties and Japanese and South Korean film and television. I thank all participants for their time and effort. Your contributions to this research project have been invaluable. Secondly, several people have helped me to recruit participants for the three studies, in particular Urwin Sluisdom, Melvin Tiao, and Rienk Su. Many thanks for your help! Thirdly, a number of people assisted with transcribing the interviews: Rachel Kaersenhout, Lieneke Leep, Sherice Hudson, Jessica de Graaf, Siu Liën, Debby van Adrichem, and Désirée Oldenhuis. Thank you for all the work you have done and for your valuable feedback on the project.

In a way this research project is a continuation of my previous involvement with the Asian scene in the Netherlands and in particular my involvement with Asian Dutch online community VeryAzN.nl. So I also thank all the people who have contributed to my involvement with the Asian scene. The people who I co-founded VeryAzN with: my cousin Quint Hudson, Bryan Mendean and Jacques Nanlohy who introduced me to many aspects of the Asian scene in the Netherlands. And then there are the many people
who built VeryAzN with us, in particular Bjørn Reinacher, Barry van Weldam, Frederique Stutvoet, James Ali, Nga Woen Wong, Julia Tan, Sander Busser, Sander Albinus, Milko Hitijabessy, Jason Tan, Timmy Haryono, and Arun van Loveren. Furthermore, I like to thank the people at CinemAsia Film festival where I served as a board member.

Why work in an office room, when you can do your reading and writing and have a good cup of coffee in one of the cool coffee shops in Amsterdam and London? So that is what I did. Quite regularly. In Amsterdam I spent a lot of time in CC Nieuwe Doelen, CC Oosterdok, CC Westerdok, Espressofabriek Westergas, Filter, and Il Memento. Fix Whitecross street, Hackney Bureau, Timberyard Old Street, Department of Coffee and Social Affairs, and Foyles were my favorite workplaces in London. A shout out to all the baristas for their hospitality and their nice coffees.

I would like to thank several friends – old ones and new ones – for their friendship and support throughout the years. They often also contributed to the project and my thinking about ethnic diversity and so on, sometimes without even knowing. My long, longtime friends Elwin Johan, Raoul Pinto (411 forever!), VU/makan buddies Fendy Sutandar and Ivor Broekhuis, Heleen Tanner-Deenik (30 years of friendship and counting!), MART-radio friends Cindy Klaver, Simone Weimans, and Özgür Canel, my London posse Dominique Nok-Doesburg and Luke Helaha, Burcu Sikar, James Ali, Wiwi Cao, Kai-Yin Or, Ka-Min Lung, Andhika Rutten, Ricci Scheldwacht, and John Olivieira.

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A big hug to Merlijn Juliard, my best mate, my brother from another mother (and father). Merlijn, I am honored and grateful to have you as a friend, a friend who has always been there for me. Over the years we have seen one another turn into older and hopefully wiser men, so it is only fitting that now, as a paranymp, you are part of another important event in my personal trajectory. Thank you. One love.

Amin Widjojoatmodjo, we have known one another since primary school and we grew up together. We have always considered one another as family, as cousins. That is also why, even after long periods of being out of one another’s life, we always feel a warm bond. That warm bond is now extended to my son, whom you are such a kind and caring uncle to. I thank you for this.
My cousin Robert Ayal, my best man, needs to be mentioned as well. Robert, you have known me since I was a baby, and I have always seen you as an older brother really. I enjoy the long conversations we have about our families and their migration histories, digging up heartwarming anecdotes. I thank you for always being my big cousin.

From a young age, my cousin Quint Hudson has been my partner-in-crime. For a long time we shared similar dreams and interests, from graffiti and hip-hop to stock trading and Star Wars. Our last joint effort was Asian Dutch online community VeryAzN.nl, which eventually led to this research project. Thanks for being around Quint!

A few years ago I got married into the Wong family. I thank my parents-in-law and Sau-Han Wong, Waihan Wong, and Joost Niewenhuijse for welcoming me into their family. I have felt at home in your/our family from the beginning. I would also like to thank you for always showing support for my PhD project and for stuffing me with delicious food!

Big hugs to my sister Chandra Rietmeijer-Kartosen and my brother Irwan Kartosen. Chandra, thanks for always keeping me sharp on social and political issues. I fondly remember how we would have long political discussions during dinner when we were students, which eventually led to mum and dad voting for leftist parties. This still plays a role in my work. And thanks for bringing Dennis Rietmeijer into the family, I could not have wished for a better brother-in-law. Irwan, my not-so-little-anymore brother, thanks for supporting me when I was involved in the Asian scene and when I was doing my research on the Asian scene. We rarely see one another due to your busy schedule being a dj, but I just want to let you know that I am proud of your achievements as a dj so far. Hugs!

My grandmother Jane Hudson-Klein is one of the most special people in my life. Omie, I am so very happy to have you as a grandmother. You have always been a caring and loving grandmother, and now a caring and loving great-grandmother. I have so many wonderful memories with you and I plan to make many more. Thank you for being the best (great-)grandmother!

My grandfather Sam Hudson was one of my most important role models. I looked up to him. I learned from him, even if only years after the fact. He would always tell me to be inquisitive and think critical, and read. And that is precisely what I did for my research project, so I would imagine my grandfather would be rather happy about this. Opie, I thank you for all the love and knowledge you have given me.

I have so much to thank my parents Gloria Kartosen-Hudson and Wahyudi Kartosen for. I do not even know where to start. Mum, dad, thank you for always supporting me in my choices, whether personal or professional, and for giving me the freedom to choose my own path. But most of all I will always be indebted to you for all the sacrifices you have made to make sure me, Chandra, and Irwan had everything we need. And now you are giving your grandchildren the same love and care that I have received. I am honored, grateful, and proud to have you as my parents. Terima kasih.
Two years ago my son Sam-Ming Malique Kartosen was born. No words can express how much I love him and how important he is to me. What I can say, is that Sam inspired me when I was writing this PhD thesis: Sam was one more reason to finish this thesis properly. But more so, Sam inspired me because in all his panethnic Asianness, he symbolizes this research project. I thank you and I love you Sam.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Authors’ initials
Reza Kartosen-Wong (RK)
Ed Tan (ET)

Chapter 2
Articulating Asianness: Young Asian Dutch and Asian/Asian Dutch popular culture
RK performed the literature review, ET provided input. RK and ET developed the outline, research design, and online questionnaire. RK recruited research participants and conducted the online survey. RK and ET analyzed the survey data. RK wrote several concept versions and the final version of the manuscript. ET provided input for revisions of the manuscript. RK presented preliminary results at several conferences and submitted the manuscript to International Communication Gazette. RK and ET revised the manuscript for resubmission. Both authors reviewed and edited the final manuscript.

Chapter 3
Asian Parties in the Netherlands: (Re)producing Asianness in Dutch Nightlife
RK performed the literature review, developed the outline and research design, designed a semi-structured topic list, recruited research participants, conducted participatory observations and in depth interviews, analysed the data, and wrote several concept versions and the final version of the manuscript. ET reviewed all analyses and all versions of the manuscript and provided input for revisions. RK presented preliminary results at several conferences and submitted the manuscript to Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies. Both authors reviewed and edited the final manuscript.

Chapter 4
Imagining Asianness: Young Asian Dutch and Japanese/South Korean Film and Television
RK performed the literature review, ET provided input. RK and ET developed the outline and research design. RK designed a semi-structured topic list and short questionnaire, recruited research participants, and conducted focus group interviews. RK and ET analyzed the data. RK wrote several concept versions and the final version of the manuscript. ET provided input for revisions. RK presented preliminary results at several conferences and submitted the manuscript to Journal of Communication. Both authors reviewed and edited the final manuscript.