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Sex chromosome evolution in the house fly

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Acknowledgment

This journey started on November 15th, 2015, when I received an email from a Dutch professor named **Leo W. Beukeboom**, asking me whether I would be interested in doing a CSC-funded PhD in his group studying fascinating house fly sex determination system. At that time, I happened to decide that I want to continue my study in the field of evolutionary genetics. Naturally, I was very much intrigued and very quickly agreed on proceeding with the project. In September 2016, after all the preparation work, I left my homeland for the first time and settled myself in this supposedly the sixth-largest city in the Netherlands, Groningen, and the rest is history.

It has been a long journey. Now at the near end, over five years have passed by. Mr. Carson of Downton Abbey once said: “The business of life is the acquisition of memories. In the end that's all there is.” In my PhD period, I would say that I have gathered fairly amount of memories, of which the most are about the people with whom I shared my journey. The four people that played the most important roles in my journey are the original “Muscateers”, Leo, **Louis van de Zande**, **Daniel Bopp** and **Ernst Wimmer**. Needless to say, I would not be here finishing my PhD if Leo did not recruit me. However, all “Muscateers”, being as knowledgable as they are, have kindly provided me with great guidance and intellectual input that ultimately elevated me to a stage where I can achieve this thesis. Ernst also served as my reading committee member, together with **František Marec** and **Sander van Doorn**. For their effort, I would like to show my gratitude. Additionally, I would like to thank František for hosting me in his lab in 2018 to do FISH work on house flies and of course, good beer.

I share my memories with all the boys and ladies of the EvolGen group. Particularly, I would like to mention my paranymphs, **Peter Hoitinga** and **Martijn Schenkel**, who are also my dear office mates. We have a lot of laughter together within and outside the office. Although now we are moving on to different directions, I am glad we have spent time together and I thank both for the joyful company. I give my special thanks to **Sander Visser**, the only tall Dutch boy in the group (which is quite odd considering the average height of the Dutch population). I got to know Sander at the beginning of 2018 when he visited the group. Later that year, he kindly let me stay at his apartment for two weeks when I paid my visit to Budejovice. In 2020, he rejoined the EvolGen group as a postdoc. Since then, we have been working together on my projects as well as my thesis. Fairly speaking, the amount of assistance that I got from

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I appreciate friends outside the EvolGen group too. **Yacine Ben Chehida**, he taught me a lot in the bioinformatics course. Later, we started to train together and become gym buddies. He has been a good motivation and kept me fit. **Jan Weigand** and **Kai Epstude**, who I have known for years, always cared about my being and stayed in touch. I give a special shout-out to my “Chinese gang”, **Fangying Chen**, **Ke Gao**, **Yuan Zou**, **Bingrun Zhu**, **Wensi Hao**, **Lisa Sánchez**, **Jeroen Coenen** (yes, Lis & Lulu you are a part of the “gang” too), **Xue Li**, **Yun Si**, **Suqing Wu**, **Cheng Sun**, **Liang Xu**, **Li Huang**, **Shuxian Hu**, **Jinrui Zhang**, **Qingqing Yuan**, **Ting Huang**, **Fuyu Ye** and all the other dear friends. Having you around compensated for my ever-growing homesickness. You are a constant reminder of my culture, my root and that warms my heart in this rainy, windy foreign land. I cherish all the conversations, dinner parties, trips and game evenings we had together. It is sentimental that one by one, you set off to “conquer” different places and started new lives. However, I am sure our friendships will keep thriving despite where we end up in this vast world.

Acknowledgment

This thesis, in its purest form, is a love letter to **my parents**. They are the ones who taught me appreciation of knowledge in the first place. My dad obtained his PhD in his thirties and now is a professor in a university. He is the role model that I always look up to and the reason that inspired me to pursue a PhD. My mom shaped my character as I grew up and made me who I am today. Both of my parents have unconditionally provided me enormous support and love throughout the years. They have been extremely understanding and nurturing when I encountered difficult situations such as self-doubts and demotivation. They made sure that I am aware that no matter what, they always have my back and I always have a home to go back to. For this, I can never pay them back. What I can do is to dedicate this thesis to them, and let them know this is theirs as much as mine.

Xuan
Groningen, February 2022

