

Juryrapport

Jan Brouwer Scriptieprijs 2020 – Taal- en literatuurwetenschappen

Alexander Elias (Universiteit Leiden)

Lio and the Central Flores Languages

Many excellent, well-written, innovative master theses on a broad range of topics in the domain of language and literature have been submitted for the Jan Brouwer Scriptieprijs. There was a lot of praise for all of them, and unsurprisingly, some critical aspects for most of them as well: after all, these are master theses, carried out in a limited amount of time by beginning academics.

One thesis rose above all, as it was outstanding in several respects, and it was hard to find critical points. The thesis that is awarded with the Jan Brouwer Scriptieprijs 2020 is

‘Lio and the Central Flores languages’ by Alexander Elias

Alexander Elias provides a detailed description of the phonology of Lio, a largely undocumented Austronesian language spoken on Flores, one of the Eastern Indonesian islands. The description is largely the result of Elias’ own fieldwork, which was prepared and planned extremely well, as he managed to collect the data in only two months. Elias provides a clear account of the segmental inventory, phonotaxis and syllable structure, and word stress of Lio, and motivates his choices convincingly with both data observations and theoretical considerations. He includes an analysis of loan words to further argue for the phonological description provided. It is written in a very clear and convincing style.

This part of the thesis would in itself be a more than fine master thesis, but Elias has written an even more impressive second part of his thesis in which he evaluates the historical relationships between the languages in the region of Central Flores and the status of Lio within that set of languages. In particular, Elias investigates by means of historical glottometry, a method for investigating historical relationships, how Lio evolved from Proto-Central Flores. This is a novel method which deviates from the standard tree-based method typically used in historical linguistics. Elias convincingly shows that this method much better captures the historical developments. As such, this thesis also contributes to an important methodological innovation in historical linguistics.

The second part of the thesis is without doubt an exceptional achievement as it required Elias to not only compare the synchronic linguistic systems of the various languages – for which he used his own fieldwork method, as well as detailed investigation of the available materials on these languages (many of which can be found in the appendices to the thesis) – he also needed to gain insight into the linguistic systems of the historical systems of those languages. The fact that he managed to do this in such a short time is an absolutely remarkable achievement. That he managed to write this complex story in a very clear thesis is another remarkable achievement.

In short, this thesis is an exemplary combination of meticulous fieldwork into an underdescribed language leading to a crystal clear description of the phonology of Lio; it furthermore uses a novel methodology (historical glottometry) to gain insight into the historical developments in the

Central Flores languages, and the place of Lio in those historical developments. This thesis fully deserves the Jan Brouwer Scriptieprijs 2020.

The jury congratulates Alexander Elias, as well as his supervisors Prof. Marian Klamer and dr. Crevels.

Prof. dr. J.P.M. (Paula) Fikkert, hoogleraar eerste taalverwerving en fonologie Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Prof. dr. E.J. (Liesbeth) Korthals Altes, hoogleraar algemene literatuurwetenschap en moderne Franse letterkunde Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

De jury vergaderde op 27 februari 2020 onder leiding van KHMW-directeur Dr. F.J.H. (Henk) Don, in de aanwezigheid van Prof. dr. R.B. Andeweg, secretaris geestes- en maatschappijwetenschappen KHMW en S. de Boer (notulen).