

0 INTRODUCTION

The Samo language is spoken by approximately 600 people living on the plain east of the Strickland River between the Nomad and Cecilia Rivers in Western Province, Papua New Guinea (Shaw 1975). Samo occupies a central position, geographically and linguistically, in a chain composed of six communalects (McElhanon 1970) which extends for 150 kilometers along the Strickland River. Samo is mutually intelligible with all of these, though the communalects at the extreme ends of the chain are not mutually intelligible with each other. These communalects and their linguistic relationships have been described elsewhere (Shaw 1973), allowing us to focus here on the phonemic description of Samo without detailed reference to the neighboring groups. This is a description of the phonemic system of the Samo language, the interpretation of the sound system as it relates to the phonemic structure of the language, and the practical orthography which results.

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