I. INTRODUCTION.

I.1. Literature.

The first grammatical description of the Sentani language was published by this writer in *Oceania*, vols. XXI (1950-'51), pp. 214-228 and 302-309; and XXII (1951-'52), pp. 53-71 and 315-316, under the title of “Notes on Sentani Grammar”. It was the result of fieldwork during my stay in West New Guinea in the years 1946-1950. As was stated at the time in the introduction, this fieldwork could only be done to the extent that official civil service duties permitted. But during a further term of service, which finally ended in 1956, I had the opportunity of collecting more data concerning the language. This has led to the present much more complete new grammar.

The following texts have been published by the author before:
(1) A specimen text in the “Notes on Sentani Grammar” forementioned, being a translation of part of the Story of the Prodigal Son, which is now published in full in the present work;
(2) “Een volksverhaal van het Sentanimeer” (in *Bingkisan Budi*, the collection of papers by colleagues and former pupils of the late Professor Ph. S. van Ronkel, presented to him at the occasion of his 80th birthday in 1950). This appeared before the “Notes” and was, for that reason, provided with an extensive grammatical annotation as well as a translation in Dutch. This text is reprinted in this book in a slightly revised form;
(3) “Drie verhalen in Sentani-taal” (in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde*, 108, 1952). These texts too have been provided with extensive notes as well as a translation, but reference was largely made to the “Notes on Sentani Grammar”. A different version of the first of these stories is included in the present work.

I.2. Area and Relations.

The Sentani language\(^1\) is spoken by some six thousand people,

\(^1\) The name “Sentani” probably originates from the coastal tribes of the Humboldt Bay. The Sentani speaking people have no name for themselves as a tribe. The Sentani Lake is called by them *Bu Jakala*, “Clear Water”.

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inhabiting the Sentani Lake district in north-eastern West New Guinea. Roughly three principal dialects can be distinguished: an eastern dialect, chiefly including the villages of Buaj (vulgo: Puai), Ǝjafo (vulgo: Ajapo) and Ohej (vulgo: Asei); a central dialect including the villages of the central area of the lake from Nødali (vulgo: Netaar) as far west as the western end of the strait of Fomfolo (vulgo: Simporo), and a western dialect including the region to the west of this strait. Smaller differences of dialect exist between the various villages within each area. This grammar is concerned with the eastern dialect, more particularly that of Ǝjafo.

The Sentani language is one of a group of closely related Papuan languages, which I have named the Sentani group, and which includes Sentani proper in the Sentani Lake district, the language of Nafri on the Jotefa Bay to the east, and the language of Tanah Merah on the bay of that name to the west. It appears to be more or less distantly related to the Demta language to the west of Tanah Merah, which occupies only a small area, but seems to constitute a group by itself. Both the Sentani group and Demta seem to belong to a much larger supergroup of distantly related groups of languages, which I have named the "North Papuan phylum", and whose nearest neighbour to Sentani is the Nimboran language group. The exact nature of the relations involved in this phylum, and the position of each group, and notably of Sentani, within it, are, however, still very unclear.2

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