

render them in perspicacious English as a felicitous meeting place between two very different modes of linguistic being-in-the-world. To the degree that I succeeded, to the degree that it is useful, this is what I hope to be an adequate first comprehensive Icéôtôd-English lexicon.

The English definitions the reader will find are of various types. Some Icéôtôd words lend themselves easily to one-word, entirely accurate glosses, for example, *gubérá-* as 'leopard'. Others require a short phrase in English, for instance, *kóré-* as 'back of the knee'. Still others, the ones that are conceptually more distant from English, call for longer descriptions, as when *makúlí-* is defined as 'round grass beehive cover that goes over the end of a hollow beehive'.

As well as being a record of modern Icéôtôd to be used for modern purposes, this dictionary also provides much data for historical research. Because Ik culture has left little in the way of archaeology, and because oral histories tend to be vague, inconsistent, and undated, language is one of the few lenses through which to investigate prehistory. Already the Icéôtôd lexicon gives some tantalizing hints as to the ancient northern East African origins of the Ik, for example in the link between words like *sókó-* 'hoof' and Arabic *saaq* 'foot' and Gumuz *tʃagw* 'foot', or between *kídɜ-* 'bite' and Maltese Arabic *gidem* 'bite' and Uduk *k'ūcūr* 'suck'. Every Ik word is a cultural relic, a linguistic artifact sticking out of the red clays of time and memory. Each one has been molded by a million mouthings, much as grains of sand are ground down by water and wind. Each has its own history, an origin and a tortuous path of descent to its present form, the same path, we can assume, that its many speakers have taken. This is where the fields of etymology, historical linguistics, or 'paleolinguistics' can provide some evidence on which to build identity and cultural history.

A rooted sense of history and identity can help give the Ik a sure footing as they transition into a nationally and globally minded society. As I ponder the future fate of the Ik language, I see two possible paths it could take. One is that it could be totally assimilated by Karimojong much like Nyang'áa and Soo/Tepeth already have, or it could succumb to the dazzling promise of upward mobility that English makes to the young people. If either of these forms of language death should happen, at least this book would remain as a monument to a once noble language-mediated worldview.