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**THE TRANSLATION OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE INTO MIZO**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the
award of the Degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ANGELA ZOTHANPUII

SUPERVISOR

PROF. MAKARAND PARANJAPE



CETRE OF LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH
School of Language Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi- 110067

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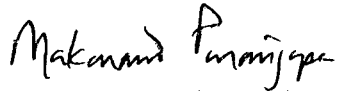


CENTRE OF LINGUISTICS & ENGLISH
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled “**The Translation of English Literature into Mizo**” submitted by **Ms. Angela Zothanpuui**, Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university.

This may, therefore, be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**.



Prof. Makarand Paranjape

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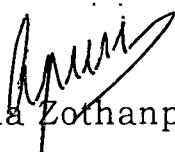
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DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This Dissertation entitled, **The Translation of English Literature into Mizo**, submitted by me to the Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university.


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*Dedicated to Apa,
Who taught me how to read and write*

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Angela Zothanpuii

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INTRODUCTION

We live at a time when indigenous peoples all over the world are facing the threat of extinction. As a result, these minorities are looking for new ways to assert their identity. Some groups seek to regain their ancestral lands, whereas others demand greater political rights and the power to control their futures. For these people, there is a deep need to maintain their ethnical distinctiveness. This need is expressed in their attempts to preserve their languages, literatures, and other cultural forms and traditions.

Languages and literatures, like species and cultures, have the power to evolve. But this is increasingly becoming difficult for those languages without a written script which are spoken by minorities. The survival of oral traditions is possible in societies that maintain a high degree of social contact within the community. In our present age, minorities are finding it harder to withstand the pressures they face from the growing influence of major languages like English. Modern devices like television and the demands of long working hours

in many occupations tend to discourage the kind of sharing of oral traditions that will allow them to evolve. A body of written literature thus serves the purpose of sustaining the language and prevents it from 'dying out'

On the other hand, having a shared written script and literature is one of the most effective means of unifying an ethnic pride and identity. The Mizos of North East India are one of the minority groups for whom their language is both a means of preserving and expressing their ethnic identity.

Until the advent of Christian missionaries in the late nineteenth century, the Mizo language had no written script and therefore its literature was purely in the oral tradition.¹

One of the pioneer missionaries, J.H. Lorrain wrote:

"It therefore fell to our lot to reduce the language to writing in such a way that our system could be readily

¹ However, the Mizos seem to have had an awareness of the art of writing. This is evidenced by the legend of 'savun lehkha' ("leather parchment"), which supposedly contained the original script of the Mizo language, but was lost forever after the parchment was eaten by a dog. The legend thus served to fill a gap and owed its persistent popularity to the sense of loss felt by the Mizos due to the absence of a written script.

adopted by the people themselves. For this purpose we chose the simple Roman script, with a phonetic form of spelling based on the well-known Hunterian system, and this, with a few slight emendations adopted since, is still used throughout the tribe with eminently satisfactory results.”²

The missionaries initiated written literary production in Mizo by translating the Bible. Translation occupies an important place in the study of Mizo literature, as the moment of translation was also the moment of origin of written literature. It is the purpose of this dissertation to examine the role and impact of the colonial encounter through an analysis of works of English literature, which have been translated into Mizo. Prominent works, such as Shakespeare’s plays, which after translation are being read as part of the Mizo syllabus in learning institutions, will be highlighted.

Any study which probes at the characteristics of ethnic groups, be it their cultural forms or literature, gives rise to

² J.H. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1940) p (v) of Introduction.

attempt to explore beyond the critical analysis of translated texts. I shall investigate how far the translation of English literature into Mizo has been influential to the formation of a Mizo canon of literature and also to the formation of Mizo identity.

The **Introductory Chapter** deals with a brief chronological outline of Mizo history and literature. As the land and its people, let alone its literature, are still a source of mystery to many outsiders, this is done so as to clear basic doubts, and to answer some of the questions regarding the origins of the Mizos and their literature.

Chapter Two looks at the growing field of Translation Studies. This chapter includes in brief the history of translation and different theories of translation leading to present trends of cultural approaches in translation studies. Translation is described as an interdisciplinary practice that occurs in diverse contexts across various cultures. The second

part of this study explores the implications of the post-colonial argument regarding cultural and literary transgression in translation. The case of Mizoram is then taken up for analysis.

The focus of **Chapter Three** is on a selected group of translated texts that are being studied by students of Mizo language and literature. Inputs are also added from interviews held with translators and teachers of the translated texts.

The Concluding Chapter analyses the impact and influence of translated works upon Mizo literature. The cultural role of translation in the formulation of Mizo identity shall also be explored and elaborated.

Origin of the Mizos And Literary History: An Overview

The Mizos belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Mongoloid race and according to their oldest oral accounts, their original home was Chhinlung.³ According to Lalrimawia, this claim “is supported by the traditional songs, innumerable poems and legends about Chhinlung civilization handed down from generation to generation. As related in one of the songs, the Mizos were pushed out of the Chhinlung city by more powerful and innumerable peoples.”⁴ After successive waves of migration, the Mizos came to settle in Burma, initially in the Shan state, followed by the Kabaw Valley and finally in the plains surrounding the capital town of Khampat. Burmese accounts tell us that a total of ten different clans inhabited this area, and the Lusei were one of these clans.⁵

³ Chhinlung or Sinlung lies on the bank of the Yalung River in the Szechwan Province of China

⁴ Lalrimawia, *Mizoram: History and Cultural Identity 1800-1947* (Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1995) p. 12

⁵ The term ‘Lusei’ (transliterated by the British as ‘Lushai’) originates from the Burmese ‘Luse’ (‘Lu’ meaning ‘clan’ and ‘Se’ meaning ‘Ten’) which stands for “Tenth Clan” or “Tenth Group”

The next phase of migration of the Mizos was clan-wise, and the clans migrated in different phases towards the Indo-Burmese areas or the Chin Hills.⁶ This ultimately led to the loss of communication and gave rise to the growth of clan dialects. By the year 1700, most of the Zo tribes had crossed the Tiau River, which still forms the boundary between India and Myanmar. The Lusei chiefs were the last to migrate from the Chin Hills and they drove out earlier Kuki tribes from the area that is presently known as Mizoram.⁷ By 1750-1760, they were well spread throughout this area, with the Lusei Sailos finally coming into prominence amidst all the wars and clannish rivalries.⁸

Mizo life was simple and primitive before the establishment of a proper contact with more civilized societies.

⁶ Here, it must be noted that the term 'Mizo' is another form of the generic term 'Zo' which includes the various clans of the Kuki-Chin group of people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock and are spread throughout Northeast India. This dissertation will focus attention on the people inhabiting the present state of Mizoram (formerly Lushai Hills District) who were known to the British as 'Lushais' but now simply answer to the name 'Mizos'

⁷ The term 'Kuki' was given by the Bengalis to the Zo clans, whereas Chin is the name by which the clans are known in Myanmar.

⁸ The Sailos were the descendants of Chief Sailova and their area included most of Mizoram

The literature consisted mainly of folktales and short songs composed either as couplets or triplets. Traditional Mizo poetry is chiefly lyrical, and is accompanied by folk instruments. The songs, which were sung in times of wars and raids, were known as "*Bawhhla*" and the songs sung during hunting expeditions were called "*Hlado*". Most of the folktales of the pre-literate period survive to this day. '*Thlanrawkpa Khuangchawi*' is the story of a great feast in the form of an animal fable. All the creatures attend this feast called by the central character named "Thlanrawkpa". Another folktale, '*Chawngchilhi*', tells us the story of a girl who falls in love with the snake king. This tale has a parallel in most of the Southeast Asian cultures and therefore it must have originated at a very early point in Mizo history.

The first great famine of Mizoram, locally known as "Mautam", took place in the year 1861. By this time, various new styles of folksongs had emerged, each named after the composer or the occasion in which the song was sung. The songs that could be sung to the accompaniment of a gong

were called “*Dar hla*”.⁹ Songs that were sung by priests during ceremonies were jealously guarded and were learnt only by future priests and these were known as “*Thiam hla*”.¹⁰ Almost similar to these were magical chants known as “*Dawi hla*”¹¹ which were in the Hmar language. Songs, which were sung on special occasions, include ‘*Chawngchen zai*’, ‘*Chai Hla*’ and ‘*Puma zai*’. Some of these songs that were named after their composers were- ‘*Pi Hmuaki hla*’, ‘*Lianchhiari zai*’ and ‘*Laltheri zai*’. Later poets include Saikuti and Awithangpa.

Between 1837-1872, the Mizo chiefs carried out several raids in the Cachar district of Assam. More than three hundred people were killed in these attacks, and others were captured as slaves. The main cause of these raids, as Lalrimawia has pointed out, was that “the extension of tea gardens encroached upon the forests of the Lushai Hills,” which the Mizos “considered... as a check upon their natural

⁹ “Dar” means “gong” and “hla” means “song”

¹⁰ “Thiam” is a shortened form of “puithiam” which means “priest”

¹¹ “Dawi” means “magic” or the practice of witchcraft, used for casting spells upon others

right of hunting".¹² In January 1871, the Mizo chief Bengkhuaia killed a planter in the tea garden of Alexanderpur named Mr. James Winchester in a raid. His five-year-old daughter, Mary Winchester, was abducted by the Mizos. This event prompted a retaliatory military expedition and Mary Winchester was taken back by the British on 21st January 1872. Most of the Mizo chiefs had to acknowledge the superiority of the British, who had established military outposts in Lunglei (South Lushai Hills) and Aizawl (North Lushai Hills) by the end of the Chin-Lushai Expedition of 1889-90. The North and South Lushai Hills were amalgamated as the Lushai Hills District of Assam in 1898.

During their military expeditions, some of the British administrators initiated research on the Mizos and the Mizo language.¹³ These books are the earliest available resources on Mizo history and literature. They were to provide a wealth of information to the Christian missionaries who entered Mizoram in the last decade of the 19th Century. Two of these

¹² Lalrimawia, n.4, p. 5

¹³ This refers to the "Dulien" or "Duhlian" dialect spoken by the Lushais.

important works were T.H. Lewin's *Progressive Colloquial Exercise in the Lushai Dialect* (1874) and Brojo Nath Saha's *A Grammar of the Lushai Language* (1884).

The first Christian missionary to arrive in Mizoram was Rev. William Williams. He was a Welsh missionary working in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. He arrived in Aizawl on 20th March, 1891 and he left on 17th April, 1891. R.L. Thanmawia writes that after "... considering his report, the General Assembly of the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Church in 1892 decided to open a new mission field in Mizoram".¹⁴

After Rev. Williams, Rev. J.H. Lorrain and Rev. F.W. Savidge, both members of the Highgate Baptist Church in London, arrived in Aizawl on 11th January, 1894. (This date is marked as the date of the arrival of the Gospel to Mizoram) These men were sent under the aegis of the 'Arthington Aborigines Mission', and they handed over the Lushai Hills

¹⁴ R.L. Thanmawia, *Mizo Poetry* (Aizawl, Din Din Heaven, 1998) p. 55

Mission Field to the Welsh three years after their stay.¹⁵ Rev. D.E. Jones and Edwin Rowlands of the Welsh Mission arrived respectively on 31st August, 1897 and 31st December, 1898. After the re-arrival of Lorrain and Savidge on 13th March, 1903, the Baptist Missionary Society took charge of the South Lushai Hills, while the North Lushai Hills remained under the Welsh Presbyterians.

One of the earliest efforts of the missionaries was to reduce the Mizo language into writing. Thus, started the period that is popularly known as 'The Missionary Age' (1894-1920) in the history of Mizo literature. The missionaries were concerned not only with Biblical translations but also with the spread of education. Savidge and Lorrain opened a school and the first school texts - '*Zirtanbu*' (Lushai Primer) and '*Zawhna leh Chhana*' (Question and Answer Book) were printed in 1896. As in the West, the first Mizo literates who

¹⁵ A prosperous Christian named Robert Arthington established the Arthington Aborigines Mission, with its headquarters at Leeds. It was his aim to spread the gospel to every tribe and nation.

began the work of writing Mizo literature belonged to members of the clergy.

The first Christian Hymn Book in Mizo was published in 1899 and it contained eighteen hymns. Most of the hymns were translated from English hymns. The traditional songs slowly came to be replaced by hymns. Today, the Christian Hymn Book in Mizo contains more than five hundred hymns.

Dramatic performances in Mizoram arose after the arrival of the missionaries. The first plays were short morality-type plays, which originated in Christmas celebrations. Ch. Pasena was the first Mizo dramatist who wrote plays based on Biblical themes and social issues. His play, *Sailoka*, was dramatised in 1926.¹⁶ The first Drama Competition was held in Aizawl on 3rd October 1940. It was named 'Zosiami Cup', after Zosiami who was the daughter of the missionary Samuel Davies. The sum of Rs. 70, which was collected from the sale of tickets, was donated to the British Government as War Fund.

¹⁶ This play was a rough translation of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*. It is interesting to note that it was called *Sailoka* for Shylock.

J. Shakespear, who left the Lushai Hills in 1905 as the Superintendent, worked among the Mizos for around fifteen years (1889-1905). During his time, in Mizoram, his patronage led to the origin of the first Mizo newspaper called *Mizo Chanchin Laisuih*.¹⁷ This paper was hand written by newly educated Mizos. The first printing press was established in Lunglei in 1909. This manual press was a gift to the Baptist Mission. The second printing press named Aijal Printing Press was installed with the help of Dr. Peter Fraser in Aizawl in the year 1911.

R.L. Thanmawia writes that “the Missionary Age may also be called ‘The Translational Period’”.¹⁸ Besides the missionaries, early translators include Thanga who translated King Solomon’s Proverbs in 1914. Challiana translated ‘*The Story of the Bible*’ (‘Pathian Lehkhabu Chanchin’) in 1908. Chuaftera’s translation of ‘*The Pilgrims Progress*’ was first published in 1910.

¹⁷ The first issue of this newspaper is believed to have come out sometime during May-June 1898

¹⁸ R.L. Thanmawia, n 14, p.77

When the First World War broke out in 1914, a total of 2,100 Mizo youths were chosen to participate on the side of the Allies. The Mizos were grouped together as the '27th Lushai Labour Corps', and it was the first time that they gained a collective exposure to the outside world. More Mizos took part in the Second World War when the British declared war on Germany and Japan. The Japanese were advancing towards India after occupying Burma, but the Lushai Brigade was able to stop them. New forms of folksongs, such as 'German run zai' arose due to Mizo participation in the two world wars.¹⁹ There were joyous celebrations all over Mizoram when England gained the upper hand at the end of these two wars.

When India gained independence in August 1947, Mizoram remained under India and it held the status of Autonomous District Council by 1952. The Office of the Superintendent was abolished, with his duties taken over by a Deputy Commissioner. In 1955, Chieftainship was also abolished and Village Council Administration was introduced.

¹⁹ 'German run zai' denotes a song which is sung on the occasion of an attack on Germany

The Mizo National Front (MNF) was formed on 12th October, 1962 by Laldenga, who demanded “sovereign independence of Greater Mizoram”.²⁰ Within a short period of time, members of the front acquired the status of underground rebels. Mizoram became a Union Territory of India on 21st January, 1972. But the front remained in conflict with the national government until the signing of a Peace Accord on 30th June, 1986. Today, the MNF is the ruling political party in Mizoram.

Mizo literature had developed by leaps and bounds during the period 1920-1965. The first Mizo novel, *Hawilopari*, written by Biakliana, was published in 1936. The complete Mizo Bible was also published for the first time in 1959. Henrik Sienkeiwiz’s *Quo Vadis* (1899) was translated by Rev. Nikhama and it was published in 1954. Another famous novel that touched the hearts of many Mizo readers was *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, translated as *Pu Tawma In* by Lalkailuaia and published in 1950. New genres of songs also arose during this

²⁰ ‘Greater Mizoram’ covers areas covered by the Kuki-Chin tribes known as Mizo. The area includes surrounding states, as well as parts of Bangladesh and Myanmar

time. 'Lengkhawm Hla' were songs sung to the beat of the cowhide drum whenever people came together for religious activities or community gatherings like funerals and weddings. They are still widely popular today, many are sung around the Christmas season when there many such songs depicting the birth of Christ. Two other types of songs which became popular during this time were 'Hnam hla' (Songs with a patriotic theme) and 'Lengzem hla' which consisted mainly of love songs. Most of the love songs have a Westernized tune, using instruments like the guitar, drum set and keyboard instead of traditional instruments.

The Mizos faced very hard times with the outbreak of insurgency in 1966. Literary output suffered a great decline, and it was only with the formation of a Union Territory in 1972 that a sense of stability returned. Literacy and the influence of outside contact changed the mindset of the people. Cultural homogeneity was maintained, yet foolish practices had been discarded.

Mizoram became the twenty-fifth state of the Indian Union on 20th February 1987. In recent years there has been a great rise in literary production, especially in works translated from popular English fiction. At present, Mizoram claims to have a literacy rate of 95 per cent, which is the highest in the country. The Mizos place a high degree of importance on the value of higher learning and with the rise of English medium-schools; many Mizos have now become bilingual. A new interest has been generated in the study of folk forms of literature, especially with the establishment of separate departments in colleges for the study of Mizo literature. Many of these students and researchers will hopefully enhance present knowledge of the literary past of the Mizos, and make them known to the rest of the world.

Chapter 2 TRANSLATION AND CULTURAL CONTACT

2.1- A Theoretical History of Translation

The need for inter-communication between groups of people speaking different languages led to the practice of translation, which is one of the oldest human activities. Multi-lingual inscriptions such as the Rosetta stone and the edicts of Emperor Asoka are proof of the antiquity of inter-lingual exchanges. Even before the invention of writing, the communication between people of different tongues was possible only with the help of interpreters, those bilinguals who were in a way, the first “translators”.

Even though a translated text derives its existence from a source text, it is undoubtedly a separate creation. Therefore, there are many disagreements regarding the degree of similarity and allegiance that a translated text ‘owes’ to its source text. Initially, translations were divided into two types, namely – literary and non-literary translations. Literary

translations gave a freer rein to the translators and they were favoured by Roman writers such as Cicero and Horace, who saw translation as 'rivalry' of the original author. Non-literary translations included scientific writings and medical treatises. In this type of translation, also known as technical translation, the subject matter is more precise and thus there is a closer adherence to the Source Text.

The earliest translators of religious texts favoured the literal method of translation which requires the closest possible correspondence between two words. It was felt that the sanctity of the original message should be preserved as much as possible, and thus the greatest emphasis was on word-for-word rendering of the original text.

Translation into vernacular languages in Europe started around the 10th Century A.D., and the rise of these languages shifted the focus of translation from technical translation to literary translation. There was a rapid growth in the translation of the Bible after the Protestant Reformation.

Religious texts came to be treated on the same level as other texts as the demand for literalness became less rigid. One of the most popular vernacular Bibles was Martin Luther's German Bible, published in 1534.

The neoclassical poet and translator John Dryden made a distinction between three types of translation in the preface of Ovid's Epistles (1680), thereby initiating a theory of translation based on the way in which the form and content of texts are handled. According to this theory, the three types of translation are – metaphrase, paraphrase and imitation. Metaphrase is literal translation where a text is turned from one language into another using line-by-line translation. In imitation, the translator exercises his licence to the fullest extent by abandoning the text of the original as he sees fit. Dryden's ideal was paraphrase, in which the deepest emphasis is laid on sense-for-sense translation.

During the Romantic period 'translation' became popularly identified with literary translation. Johann Wolfgang

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von Goethe (1748-1832) made a classification of three types of translation. Literal translation or word-for-word translation was to be used only if no other form was possible. The second was 'parody' translation in which the translator imposed himself and his society on the original. The third type of translation was interlinearversion, which penetrated to the very essence of the source text. The Romantics saw the role of the translator as that of a teacher who introduces a literature to the great things in other literatures. This view has had a deep impact on the issue of preservation of minority identity. The minorities have to decide whether to absorb cultural materials from more dominant groups, or they will continue to stand aloof and resist possible changes which may result.

In 1862, Mathew Arnold delivered a series of lectures entitled 'On Translating Homer' at Oxford University. Arnold's main insistence was on the presentation of Homer as poetry that conformed to the contemporary experience, deleting more archaic qualities. Arnold seemed to see the close relationship that translation of classical works had with broader cultural

issues about canon formation and other questions concerning the literary tradition. Arnold argued that Homer could provide the needs of the 'modern' (Victorian) age with spiritual sustenance if one could understand Homer in relation to an English tradition of Homeric translation. Arnold was attracted by the simplicity and rapidity of Homer, for he found these qualities lacking in modern literature.

The theory of translation, which was initially derived from practical observations, gradually broadened to encompass hermeneutic activities and enquiries into the 'meaning' of translation. For example, the German Marxist theoretician, Walter Benjamin, saw Arnold's views as illusory, for texts and languages are always changing¹. Thus the translator must find that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it an 'echo' of the original.

By the mid-20th Century, Bible Societies had been formed all over Europe and the United States. It was the aim of these

¹ Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", 1923. Trans. Harry Zohn *Illuminations* (London : Fontana, 1973)

societies to spread Biblical knowledge throughout the world and in as many languages as possible. Missionaries created literacy in hitherto unwritten languages, giving a strong anthropological bias to translation studies. Eugene Nida, one of the foremost theorists of translation in the 20th Century, was a leading member of the United Bible Societies (UBS) in America. His theories are mainly derived from his study of Biblical translations, with fieldwork conducted in over eighty-five countries and more than two hundred languages.

It was Nida who sparkled the onset of linguistic enquiries in translation, most notably with his distinction between 'dynamic equivalence' and 'formal equivalence', later termed as 'formal correspondence'.² Formal correspondence is seen in a translation which is more oriented towards the preservation of the source language. It is defined as the "quality of a translation in which the features of the form of the source text have been mechanically reproduced in the receptor language." It "typically... distorts the message, so as to cause the receptor

² E.A. Nida and C.R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1969)

to misunderstand or to labour unduly hard.³ Opposed to this, dynamic equivalence is defined as the “quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Frequently, the form of the original text is changed; but as long as the change followed the rules of back transformation in the source language of contextual consistency in the transfer, and of transformation in the receptor language, the message is preserved and the translation is faithful.”⁴ The emphasis on the response of the reader and the priority given to meaning rather than form is in tune with modern literary theories of reader reception.

The idea of achieving a complete equivalence becomes problematized when one takes into account the fact that no two languages are completely identical and may exist in widely varying cultural matrices. This gives rise to the question of translatability/ untranslatability. J.C. Catford made a

³ Ibid, p. 201

⁴ Ibid, p. 200

distinction between linguistic and cultural untranslatability. According to Catford, linguistic untranslatability arises due to differences in syntax and lexicon between source and target languages, whereas cultural untranslatability is due to the absence of relevant situational features in the culture of the receptor.⁵ On literary translation, translatability thus becomes determined by the ability of the translator to create a balance between the gestalts of the Source and Target Societies. The implications of the contact between two cultures are one of the major issues in translation studies. The problem of untranslatability may arise even in situations when the translator has managed to locate a word in the target language which corresponds exactly to the word in the source language. This is because the referential meaning can be completely different in the receiving culture. Also, there is the possibility that a word in one language can cover two concepts which are kept distinct by another. For example, the Mizo language has one word for "He", "She", and "It" but at least three words for

⁵ J.C. Catford, *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics*. (London, Oxford University Press, 1965)

“We”. With situations such as these, the translator is left to formulate strategies for the maintenance of equivalence.

By the late 1970's, enquiries into the nature of equivalence and translatability had led to the rise of a new approach in translation studies known as polysystems theory. This theory was propounded by Itamar Evan-Zohar and Gideon Toury in Tel-Aviv and later it was taken up by scholars like Andre Lefevere and James Holmes. The focus of polysystems theory was on the reception of the text in the target cultural system. After the 1980s, translation studies have come to rest on a synthesis of various discourses, both political and theoretical. Members of the 'Manipulation Group' have laid an emphasis on the ideological implications of translation.⁶ Their aim is to analyse the role played by cultural politics in determining not only which texts are translated in a given literary system, but also why and how they are translated. Recent studies have moved towards a cultural approach away from a linguistic approach away from a

⁶ This group includes Susan Bassnett and Andre Lefevere.

linguistic approach to translation studies. The focus is on how the translator represents the 'other' (either the culture from or into whom he is translating) in ways which "represent and address the interests of the translator culture".⁷

Translation studies focuses on the study of texts across cultural boundaries, and because of this the act of translation has been seen as "a way of establishing contacts between cultures".⁸

In an often-quoted passage on the cultural translation that accompanies inter-linguistic translation, J.B. Casagrande has written:

"In effect, one does not translate LANGUAGES, one translates CULTURES... That is possible to translate one culture to another at all attests to the universalities in culture, to common vicissitudes of human life, and to the life capabilities of men throughout the earth, as well to the

⁷ Website- www.und.ac.za/english/curwrit.

⁸ Vladimir Ivir, "Procedures and Strategies for the Translation of Culture", Ed. Gideon Toury in *Translation Across Cultures* (New Delhi. Bahri Publications, 1987) p.35

inherent nature of language and the character of the communication process itself.”⁹

2.2 The Post-Colonial Context

Post-colonial theorists, writing on the translator’s role during the Colonial Age, focus on the deliberate imposition of an unequal power relationship between the Source and Target texts, so as to control the way in which the native readers perceived and received the source text. Mahasweta Sengupta writes:

“By formulating an identity that is acceptable to the dominant culture, the translator selects and rewrites only those texts that conform to the target culture’s “image” of the source culture; the rewriting often involves intense manipulation and simplification for the sake of gaining recognition in the metropole.”¹⁰

⁹ J.B. Casagrande, “The Ends of Translation”, *International Journal of American Linguistics* 20/4 (1954) p. 338

¹⁰ Mahasweta Sengupta, “Translation as Manipulation”, *Between Languages and Cultures: Translation and Cross-cultural Contexts*. Ed. Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1996) p.160

The image of India that was constructed by the British during the colonial rule was that of a spiritual and mystical 'oriental' culture with a "golden age" that existed long before the Mughals came to rule India. Tejaswani Niranjana sites translation within "the coercive machinery of the imperial state," by which it "shapes and takes shape within, the asymmetrical relations of power that operate under colonialism. What is at stake here is the representation of the colonized, who need to be produced in such a manner as to justify colonial domination..."¹¹

This representation was internalized to such an extent by Indian writers during the colonial period that many writers of that age, and up to this day, conform to the 'oriental image' of India as constructed by the British. Indra Nath Chaudhuri has commented:

"In the colonial period even a great writer like Tagore while translating his poetry into English appears to have

¹¹ Tejaswani Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Hyderabad, Orient Longman, 1995) pp 1-2

accepted this hegemonic language – culture of the Edwardian English and corrupted his own translation.”¹²

Mahasweta Sengupta also notes that Tagore altered his poetry while translating it from Bengali into English to such an extent that “... even when he became conscious of the duplicity involved in the process, he could not but submit to the hegemonic power of the “images” that constituted the identity of the “native” from the colonized world”.¹³

The dominance of the source culture, especially that of the way in which Europe presented itself during the colonial age, is one of the chief concerns of post-colonial theory. In translations, the colonies were represented in ways that addressed the interests of the colonizer. I quote here a passage from the Introduction of a recent volume edited by Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi:

“Europe was regarded as the great original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies or ‘translations’

¹² Indra Nath Chaudhuri, “Plurality of Languages and Literature in Translation”, *Translation and Multilingualism: Post Colonial Contexts*. Ed Shanta Ramakrishna (New Delhi, Pencraft International, 1997) p. 31

¹³ Mahasweta Sengupta, n. 10, pp 170-171

of Europe which they were supposed to duplicate. Moreover, being copies, translations were evaluated as less than originals, and the myth of the translation as something that diminished the original established itself. It is important also to remember that the language of 'loss' has featured so strongly in many comments on translation."¹⁴

The sense of loss in translation that is often repeated in the Western literary tradition is inapplicable in the context of the Indian tradition. Indra Nath Chaudhuri has noted that "the major difference between translation practice in the West and in India is that in the West, translation is considered a complicated linguistic and literary act, while in India it is an inevitable way of life. In the West, translation has been subjected to scrutiny from a variety of perspectives... in India the focus has been more on the pragmatic aspects of translation".¹⁵

¹⁴ Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi, Eds, *Post Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice* (London, Routledge, 1999)

¹⁵ Indra Nath Chaudhuri, n. 12, p. 30.

A translator of texts of other languages into Malayalam has also remarked:

“All through the Middle Ages, throughout the length and breadth of India, Sanskrit classics like the epics and Puranas continued to be retold, adapted, subverted, and “translated” without worrying about the exactness and accuracy of formal equivalence.”¹⁶

Ganesh Devy calls Indian literary traditions “essentially traditions of translation”¹⁷ He explains this by saying that just as Western traditions of translations are parallel to the Christian metaphysics of the Fall, in India the tradition of translation parallels the cyclical notion of birth, death and rebirth found in Hindu metaphysics. The language of loss predominant in translation criticism in the west “provides for the guilt of translations for coming into being after the original.”¹⁸ Devy points out that in India “elements of plot, stories, characters, can be used again and again by new

¹⁶ K. Ayappa Paniker, “The Anxiety of Authenticity: Reflections on Literary Translation”, *Translations: Its Theory and Practice*, Ed. Avadesh K. Singh (New Delhi, Creative Books, 1996) p.37

¹⁷ Ganesh Devy, “Translation and Literary History: An Indian View” *Post-Colonial Translation: Theory and Practice*, Ed. Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi (London, Routledge, 1999) p. 187

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p.182

generations of writers because Indian literary theory does not lay undue emphasis on originality.”¹⁹ It is felt that the colonial encounter with the British and the promotion of English at the cost of Indian languages and literatures led the Indians to perceive themselves as the ‘other’ or ‘unoriginal’, and therefore, inadequate. The British devalued the Indian tradition and created a class of Anglicists among the Indians who began to support the rising importance of English. Till today, many Indians associate vernacular languages with the lower classes whereas English is associated with the elite upper class.

The politics of translation between the colonizer and the colonized began to undergo a sea change when English came into the hands of freedom fighters. Their own language came to be used against the British. R.K. Agnihotri writes of English:

“For freedom fighters coming from different parts of the country, it constituted a shared mass of knowledge and a means of communication among themselves. They could also

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 187

use the language of the rulers to subvert their rule. Leaders of the freedom movement needed English to decode and attack the colonial designs”.²⁰

Thus English became a filter language for different communities to come into contact with each other. Post Independence, translation via English has become one of the major means of developing inter-cultural communications in a multicultural and multilingual country like India. It aids national integration and builds up a cultural cohesiveness in order to create a pan-Indian national identity among the various communities that inhabit India. In the post-colonial period, a reverse colonization is taking place. Translators belonging to former colonies are using the practice of translation to break down the power structure which was built by colonizers through translation. The former colonizer is now re-invented as the ‘other’ as the post-colonial translator deliberately misinterprets the source text. This act of misinterpretation undermines the authority of the source text

²⁰ R.K. Agnihotri, “Multilingualism, Colonialism and Translation”, *Translation and Multilingualism: Post-Colonial Contexts*, Ed. Shanta Ramakrishna (New Delhi, Pencraft, 1997) p.39

and brings into prominence the power of the target culture and text. This gives way to new readings of translated texts. But all texts, especially translated texts, need to be read in the context of cultural situations. We must keep in mind the peculiarities of specific cultures while analysing source and translated texts, and also the power relations that may occur between the languages and the cultural matrices where these texts are located.

In Mizoram, which is one of the present Indian states which was under colonial rule, the interplay of power politics in translation during the colonial and post-colonial periods exists as it does in other former colonies. As it was in the rest of India, the British were all to maintain their power and hegemony through the loyalty of the natives. In the minds of the Mizos, the English language and literature still occupy an exalted position and speakers of English are given a higher status than monolinguals who speak only Mizo. But the British contact had many unique implications for the Mizos, therefore Mizo literature has to be studied and explained in its

own context which is very different from other Indian traditions. Mizo literature can neither be understood only in the light of western theories.

The British arrived in Mizoram almost two hundred years after they had entered India, first as traders then as colonizers. Even before the British came to India, most of the Indian languages had well-carved identities of their own, with rich traditions of oral and written literature. Compared to these, Mizoram was totally backward in terms of a written literary tradition. It was only with British initiation that the Mizos acquired a written script and literary production was started. Mizoram was also almost completely isolated from the rest of India at the time of colonial contact. The Mizos were unaware of major international languages, as their contact was limited only to those clans speaking Zo sub-dialects or the occasional Bengali trader who supplied them with basic needs like salt and gunpowder. Therefore the sudden contact that the Mizos had with an international language, which at the time was at its imperial height and occupied a privileged role

even in India, was bound to have major consequences. Most language groups have one 'master language' (e.g. – Sanskrit for Hindi and Persian for Urdu) against which they are compared and contrasted. For the Mizos, English came to occupy this vacant space, and the translation of English literature in Mizo became a means of reinvention for the Mizos, as it gave them a new way of affirming their identity. The absence of written records had always been a major reason as to why Mizo identity and origins were shrouded in obscurity, amidst many controversies. After the colonial contact, and with the influence of Biblical and Christian works which have been translated into Mizo, the Mizos have gone on to trace their history among various races of the world. A notable theory of origin that has arisen in recent times claims that the Mizos are the lost tribe of Israel which are mentioned in the Bible. Some Mizos, who staunchly support this theory, have converted to Judaism and have even "returned" to settle in Israel.

India was a vast subcontinent inhabited by diverse ethnic groups and religions at the time of British arrival. The British were aware of the unending protests they would face if they tried to supplant major religions like Hinduism and Islam with Christianity. Thus missionary work was carefully controlled and monitored by the government. In Mizoram, the situation was again different. Whereas there was no sudden break with the religious practices in the rest of India, drastic changes took place in Mizoram. Before the advent of the British, the Mizos believed in the existence of supernatural beings and evil spirits who caused illness and misfortunes. Thus they used to make different kinds of sacrifices to appease the evil spirits and prevent them from hurting humans. The 'puithiam' or village priest was a very important member of Mizo society. The arrival of Christianity in Mizoram led to the abolishment of all these religious practices, which came to be regarded as sinful activities and were banned by the church. The practice of drinking 'Zu', a locally brewed rice beer, had also been popular among the Mizos and was an important element in their social gatherings. This also came to be regarded as a

sinful activity. To this day, the churches of Mizoram rigidly support the imposition of total prohibition of liquor in the state.

Mizo society thus seems to have underwent a complete overhaul as a result of colonization. The missionary J.H. Lorrain remarked upon the changes imposed upon the Mizos:

“With the suppression of head hunting and the establishment of law and order by the British Raj – followed almost immediately by the arrival of Rev. F.W. Savidge and myself as Christian missionaries – a new day dawned upon the Lushai Hills, giving to the hardy inhabitants just the opportunity they needed to develop their latent powers of heart and mind hitherto held in check by the deadening weight of their animistic beliefs and fears. We have had the privilege of watching from the beginning the wonderful change, which – thanks to a sympathetic and wise government and the God – blessed labours of many missionaries... - has gradually through the years transformed this once wholly illiterate and

semi-savage tribe into one of the most loyal, literate and progressive communities in the Assam province”.²¹

The Mizos, when coming into contact with a dominant power, did not resist many of the changes that came along. They collaborated in order to survive. That is why many traditions in the folk arts continue to be as popular as they were many years ago. With English playing such a pivotal role in the literary history of the Mizos, and with the societal changes that accompanied the Christianization of the Mizos, it is amazing that the Mizo language has not evolved into a sub-variety of English. Such varieties like Creole and Butler English usually come into existence after the kind of impact that took place in Mizoram. The answer lies in the unique nature of the contact and the adaptability of the Mizos. The nature of the contact shall be examined and elaborated in the following chapters. As for their adaptation, the Mizos were faced with overwhelming historical and political circumstances. Changes were inevitable for their survival. The

²¹ J.H. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1940) p. (v) Introduction.

loss of some aspects of their society was inevitable as the old made way for the new. In this context, translation offered the choice of adaptation for the Mizos. It was an alternative means of self-expression amidst the dilemma of changing and shifting identities. The next chapter analyses works of English literature which were translated at different phases during the colonial and post-colonial periods in Mizoram. The efforts of different Mizo translators are cited, and their aims and objectives are examined to show the role played by these texts maintaining and creating a new identity for the Mizo people.

CHAPTER 3- ENGLISH LITERATURE TRANSLATION INTO MIZO

3.1 Translation Practices

We have already seen how translated works marked the onset of written literature in Mizo. In this chapter, I have chosen for analysis three translated texts (English – Mizo) which are being read as “Mizo texts” in schools and colleges in Mizoram. All these texts belong to periods and geographical locations widely separate from their course texts. The language family to which they belong is also completely different from the source text, and there are no shared historical pasts. Yet an attempt shall be made to draw parallels between each source and target text and their cultural contexts.

The translators of the chosen texts are all Mizos. None of them were aware that their translations would be included as school and college texts at the time of translation. The role that the translators play is somewhat similar to that of the interpreters before the arrival of the colonizers to Mizoram, for they have allowed

messages from another language and culture to enter the domain of the Mizos. None of them are professional translators; they belong to various occupations ranging from a Pastor to a State Minister's Personal Secretary. These translators focus on the practice of their art, rather than giving the text a theoretical thrust or following a formal style of translating. They are not hindered by their ignorance of scientific and 'correct' methods of translating, therefore the usage of the 'translator's licence' is freely expressed. The translated texts engage the creativity of the translator to such an extent that the style of the translator is seen in the text, rather than the style of the source text author.

As all translated texts are bound to their source texts, there are many problematic issues faced by translators. The translator is bound to convey the message that is found in the source text; he cannot deviate or digress in such a way that the translation will have no bearing of its source text. A successful translation is one which minimizes the divergent movement of the translated text away from the source text. The ways in which the Mizo translators have

minimized these divergences will be examined in the course of this chapter. The difficulties faced by translators are often specific to pairs of languages, therefore an attempt is made to compare English and Mizo, while keeping in mind the immense impact that English has had on Mizo after the colonial rule.

Two basic requirements laid down for translators are – a *perfect* understanding of cultural situations, combined with a *perfect* knowledge of the languages of the source and target texts. But the idea of perfection is problematic, as both culture and language are in a constant state of flux. Each text in this study is read in the context of its historical background, so as to reflect the changes and prevailing ideas in Mizo society through different periods of time.

Translators have a great role to play in the changes that take place within languages, as they are influenced by their cultural situations. Language as a form of communication is constantly undergoing a process of change. This chapter includes a diachronic

study of the changes that took place in Mizo language and literature during the colonial period and afterwards, therefore the texts are arranged in a chronological order based on the date of translation.

All the texts that are analyzed in this chapter lay an emphasis on the maintenance of the message of the Source Text. The form is often changed and the poetic blank verse found in Renaissance Drama, is entirely missing. This is because the translators prioritized dynamic equivalence over formal correspondence, though they may have been unaware of these scientific terms. *The Pilgrim's Progress* and *Doctor Faustus* were translated because of the message that they imparted to the Christian reader, whereas *Hamlet* was translated for the sheer appreciation of the original author.

Many works of western literature, including the Bible, have had a deep impact on the life and writings of indigenous people. These texts, which occupy a central position in the English literary canon have come to occupy a similar position as a part of the Mizo canon of

literature. Although none were translated for academic purposes, their inclusion in school and university syllabi demonstrates that the didactic message has been sufficiently recreated by the translators.

Translation has the ability to link theory, history, and the usage of creativity. All these aspects will be combined to examine the texts in this chapter. The focus will be on the gradual development of Mizo literature after the establishment of a written tradition. The British occupied Mizoram for almost sixty years from 1890 to 1948. The influence of the British as colonizers and missionaries and the views that they imparted to the Mizos, shall be highlighted by these textual analyses.

3.2 Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu

Source Text – The Pilgrim's Progress

*Some say the Pilgrim's Progress is not mine;
Insinuating as if I would shine
In name and fame by the worth of another,
Like some made rich by robbing of their Brother.*

The lines quoted above were written by John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, as a vindication of authorship at the end of the book. One wonders how Bunyan would have reacted if he had known the amount of translations that his work would generate. *The Pilgrim's Progress* has been translated into 147 languages, most of whom were unheard of by the English when the book was first published in the year 1678. This book; written during a term of imprisonment, has come to be regarded as one of the masterpieces of the English language. The form is that of a Christian allegory, with the characters having names like those in a morality play. The characters stand for the personifications of

vices and virtues that the protagonist, Christian, meets in the course of his pilgrimage. Next to the Bible, *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the most widely translated and published work of Christian literature.

Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu was first published in 1910. At this time, the British had settled in Mizoram for around twenty years. Even though there were many who had converted to Christianity, the Christians faced persecution from the chiefs who saw Christian practices as a threat to their way of life. The main aim of this text was to deliver the message on the trials of Christian life, and the rewards that awaited the faithful. As the economy was very low, there was no 'market' for translations. Thus the text was meant to be a religious aid and help the missionaries in their work of propagating Christianity among the Mizos. By this time the missionaries had come to occupy an important place in Mizo society. They were affectionately called 'Zosap'.¹

¹ A combination of 'Zo' (Mizo) and 'sap'. 'Sap' is a localized form of the Hindi word 'Sahib', it refers to foreigners and especially Caucasians.

Laltluangliana has remarked :

“Christian missionaries were given *carte blanche* to guide and mould the life of the primitive society. For that reason, for half a century (1894-1947) the church and not the Government was the focal agency for shaping the Lushai community.”²

The uniqueness of the colonial experience in Mizoram lies in the fact that very often the missionaries and the administrators differed in opinion about their role in shaping developments. In the year 1910, when *Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu* was published, an argument broke out between the Superintendent. H.W.G. Cole and the missionary Dr Peter Fraser. The issue was on the abolishment of “bawi” system, a kind of indentured slavery which was practiced by the Mizos. The missionary wanted this system to be abolished, whereas the administrator defended it by claiming that it was not a rigid slavery as in other places. After much debate, the cause of Dr Fraser won, but not without the reappointment of both men to other posts in other places. By this time most of the Mizos had begun to view

² Laltluangliana Khiantge, *Mizo Drama* (New Delhi : Cosmo Publications, 1993), p.14.

themselves as part of the British Empire, which they called "Kumpinu" after the East India *Company*. But the 'Zosap' were regarded different and separate from the administrators.

The Pilgrim's Progress was written by a working man who became a preacher, the Mizo translation was written by a professional preacher. The translator, Pastor Chuautera (1889-1960) was the first ordained pastor of the Baptist church of Mizoram in 1914. In 1907, the missionary F.W. Savidge had taken Chuautera and another pastor of the same church on a tour of England. Chuautera was therefore one of the first Mizos to visit England, and one of the very few to see it through the eyes of the colonized. He was a devoted Christian, and besides this text he also translated many books of the Bible and hymns, five of which are still present in the Mizo Christian Hymn Book.

Even though the source Text and the Translated Text belong to widely different cultures, with a gap of more than 200 years in between them, they share many

similarities besides the occupations of the author and translator. Both texts were written at a time when Christians were facing persecution for their faith, and the religious aim of the source text is maintained by the translated text. Thus the translated text shares a sympathetic identification with the source text. The divergences because of time and location are lessened by the parallel cultural contexts. The message of the source text is successfully transported to the reader of the translated text, and in this way, there is a balance and dynamic equivalence is maintained.

The second part of the source text, which is about the similar pilgrimage of the protagonist's family, has not been included in the translation. Perhaps as the translator was interested in conveying the Christian message, he found the first part adequate for this purpose. Chautera has been praised by many reviewers for his ability to locate words which correspond almost exactly in Mizo, for the names of the vices and virtues.

Chauautera also managed to find similar cultural references and add them in the text. There is a passage in the source text which goes –

*“Then Christian began to gird up his loins, and to address himself to his journey.”*³

This has been translated as –

*“Chutichuan Kristiana³ Chuan a puan a veng a, kal tur chuan a insiam leh ta a.”*⁴

The phrase, “*girding up loins*”, is often found in the Bible. It refers to the long flowing garments worn by men who live in the East. When they want to move faster, they gird up their skirts around their waists.

In the translation, there is a similar reference to the act of Mizo men wearing a cloth around their waists.

³ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. London, 1678. 3rd ed. (London : Everyman's Library, 1985), p.30.

⁴ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Trans. Chauautera Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu 1910. (Serkawn, Baptist Printing Press 2001), p.18.

Thus a literal reference becomes possible in such an instance when the translator has located corresponding cultural situations.

Most modern editions of *The Pilgrim's Progress* are meant to be read as a part of the English canon, therefore the scriptural references are omitted. But the Mizo translation published by the Baptist Printing Press continues to carry these references. *Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu* was adapted into a play by the Mizo playwright Chawngzika and the missionary Samuel Davis. In 1938, it was successfully enacted in different schools in Aizawl. In these performances, Chawngzika took on the role of the protagonist, Christian. Thus the translator took an active part in imparting a practical message to his audience. The title of the translated text makes it clear that the pilgrimage/ journey described in the text is that of a Christian. The religious aim of the text is thus maintained from the beginning to the end. The text is widely successful in Mizoram, and it has just completed its 18th reprint of 20,000 copies. Its inclusion in the school syllabus is indicative of the success of the missionaries and the predominance of Christianity in

Mizoram today. The difficulties and problems faced due to difference between languages are overcome by the common Christian experience.

3.3 Hamlet

J.F. Laldailova, an officer in the Assam Rifles, translated '*Hamlet*' and some other plays of Shakespeare into Mizo during the 1980s. Among all these plays, '*Hamlet*' became the most popular and it generated not only several reprints but also audio-cassettes which sold like hot-cakes on the streets of Aizawl. During the years 1984-85, a group of young people formed a theatrical group named 'Redemption Theatricals'. They performed the play at various venues and the enactments were highly valued by the Mizo audience. After the inclusion of the text in the syllabus of the Master's Degree (in Mizo), the text was completely revised with students' notes by Dr Laltluangliana Khiangte. However, my study is concerned with the earlier translation by J.F. Laldailova.

Many interesting changes had followed the departure of the British from Mizoram. At the time of independence, many Mizos could not decide whether they were to remain a part of the British Empire or they would join the Burmese. They could not find an affinity with the plains people of India, with whom they differed in most social

and cultural aspects due to their long isolation. Lalrimawia has noted that “the feeling of being ethnically and racially different from the rest of the subcontinent had been growing among the hill people more rapidly after the Second world war. In fact this has been the decisive factor for one major group to launch a defensive guerilla war. There is no doubt that the strong feelings of being ‘different’ would be further galvanized on the Lushais and other hill people by westernized Christianity and education, but it was ethnicity that has been the prime mover, the fundamental cause for the bitter battles of the future.”⁵ At the time when *Hamlet* was being translated, the insurgency movement was brewing in Mizoram.

By the 1960s most of the Mizos had become Christians, and young Mizos had started getting their education in other places like Shillong and Guwahati. The Govt. of India proposed a three language formula in 1961, but Mizoram opted to have a two-language policy in its educational system – English and Mizo. The exposure

⁵ Lalrimawia, *Mizoram : History and Cultural Identity 1800-1947* (Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1995), p.108.

of the Mizos to works of English literature other than those related to Christian themes, greatly impressed them to enrich their own literature by translating these works into Mizo. The prefaces of most of these translations read as apologies for inadequacies of the translated texts. The superior position of the British still loomed large in the Mizo mind, which was still influenced by the attitude of the colonizers. At the same time, the Mizos were unable to identify themselves as subjects of the Indian nation. J.F. Laldailova compared his translation of *Hamlet* to killing a sacred snake, for it left one with deep feelings of worries and insecurities. The sense of 'loss' was a major concern of the translator.

The play, *Hamlet*, written in 1601, has generated a wide amount of criticism down the ages. The 18th century neoclassicists praised its emotional power and conceptual vigour, but found it 'improper'. The Romantics regarded *Hamlet* as a sentimental hero as they focused on his indecisiveness and his insanity. The French playwright Ducis invented an alternative happy ending for *Hamlet*, as did a German actor-manager in the 18th century. The 20th century Historicists saw *Hamlet* as a reflection of the

moral, social and theological attitude of Shakespeare's times. Critics of the psychoanalytical movement attempt to resolve the ambiguities of Hamlet's character by using the theories of Sigmund Freud. The translator of *Hamlet* into Mizo debunked the impact of the enormous amount of critical writing in the western literary tradition that has been inspired by *Hamlet*. He gave a free rein to his creativity, and translated *Hamlet* to be simply read and enjoyed. Therefore, the play is divided into chapters, and the Acts and Scenes are omitted. The translator thus deliberately blurs the distinctiveness of the dramatic genre as it is known by the western reader. The preface advises the reader to read the text aloud, "in front of at least three people".⁶ Thus it was clearly not intended for a dramatic performance.

It has often been remarked that Laldailova's translation of *Hamlet* owed its success and popularity to his mastery over English and Mizo, which are the two languages of his source and target texts. He possessed an imaginative suppleness and creative skills which enabled him to bring out a Mizo-English and English-Mizo

⁶ My translation.

Dictionary. This dictionary is found in most Mizo homes, and Laldailova was undoubtedly the most successful lexicographer of the Mizo language. Due to the influence of the issues of ethnicity in his time, his main aim was to preserve the Mizo language. The political problems led to a decline in literary production during the 1960's, but it was translations such as *Hamlet* that kept the hopes and spirit of the people alive. The new government did not encourage and patronize stage enactments like the missionaries had, and perhaps that is why Laldailova's *Hamlet* is divided into twenty-one chapters instead of following the formal divisions of a play. The conditions in Mizoram at the time of translation were such that people neither had the time, inclination nor economic ability to enjoy dramatic performances.

Besides the change of formal dramatic division into prose form, Laldailova exercised his 'translator's license' to make certain adjustments in the form of omissions, additions and adaptations. The first twenty lines of the play and the character of Francisco the soldier are not found in the translated text. Instead, Laldailova's *Hamlet* opens with the following lines by Horatio:-

“In thil chu zanin a rawn inlar leh tawh em ?”

(“What, has this thing appeared again to night ?”)

A few lines later Bernando Mocks Horatio:-

“Ho tichung zel sia fiah tuma I lo kal si maw le ?”

(“Why do you come to prove it if you do not believe it ?”)

To which Horatio replies :

“Ddwt pawh hi fiah a nih hma chuan dawt a thing ngai lo.”

(“Even a lie is not worthy to be called a lie until it is proved to be a lie.”)

This exchange, not present in the source text, is an addition made by the translator. Many other additions and omissions are found in the translated text. Some of the names of the characters have been altered to suit the Mizo imagination – ‘Polonius’ becomes ‘Polonia’ (in doing so, Laldailova was imitating the style of Bible translators who altered Roman names in a similar way), ‘Ophelia’

becomes 'Awfeli' and 'Rosencrantz' and 'Guildenstern' are shortened to 'Rozen' and 'Gilden'.

Because of the differences between Mizo and English, Laldailova completely abandoned the form of blank verse used by Shakespeare. All the conversations are read as normal dialogues. But some of the songs, such as those sung by Ophelia, have been translated using language that is poetic even in translation. Mizo poetry has its own diction, which is entirely separate from conversational Mizo. To cite a powerful example of how Laldailova has successfully translated the poetic form and idiomatic meaning of the source text I quote Ophelia's song in Act Four, Scene Five, Lines 47-54 :-

*"To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine;
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clo'es,
And dupp'd the chamber - door,
Let in the maid, that out a maid
Never departed more."*

The concept of Saint Valentine's Day is alien to Mizo culture, but Laldailova locates a parallel sense of youthful love and gaiety by evoking the 'Kut' or harvest festivals in the translated text. These traditional feasts witnessed a great merriment and dancing by young men and women. Thus Laldailova's translation of Ophelia's song reads :

*"Kut ni vangthla a lo thleng,
Val leh la zawngte lawmah;
Kutpui a tiak, val an val reng,
La erawh la zui lo ve."*

A rough translation of the above may read :

*"The time of Kut has arrived once more
To the great joy of all young men and women;
The kut gets over, the young man remains the same,
But the young woman is no more a maid."*

The translation of Ophelia's song, though shorter and not literal, manages to evoke the same kind of

feelings in the mind of its Mizo reader. Although it is literally different, the translation retains the original ideas of festivity, youthful love and the issue of fidelity among young people.

One of the many reasons for the popularity of Shakespeare is his mastery over the English language, demonstrated by such methods as in his usage of the quibble. This is possible when the same word contains more than one semantic element in a particular language, and it is used as a literary device for displaying either puns or irony, when the text is translated into another language, the “double meaning often gets lost because of linguistic differences. To cite an example from *Hamlet*, in Act Three, Scene One, L. 105, Hamlet asks Ophelia :

“Are you fair ?”

Here he is referring not only to her outward beauty but also to her honesty. In Mizo, these two concepts do not share a synonym as they do in English. Therefore the translation reads :

“I hmel I tha em ?

(“Are you beautiful ?”)

Laldailova also makes adjustments in the translated text so that the Mizo reader will locate cultural equivalents. For example, the whale – like cloud (Act Three, Scene Two, L.345) seen by Hamlet and Polonius becomes one that resembles a “*chhimtir*” (the shrew mouse) after translation. Mizoram does not have a body of water large enough to fit a whale, and the existence of such a fish would have been unimaginable for the Mizos. The plot is also slightly altered. Claudius is made to be the arch – villain of the play when all evil plans, like dipping the sword in prison (in the source Text it is the idea of Laertes) are made by him in the translated text.

In the translated *Hamlet* we see how the Mizo translator was increasingly becoming more assertive and aware of his powers to recreate the text without destroying its original meaning. Many written literary traditions which begin with translations tend to accord a mystical value to translation, and this was also seen in the case of Mizo literature in its earlier stages. By the time that J.F. Laldailova translated *Hamlet*, Mizo literature was shedding itself of colonial influences. The main aim was to broaden the scope of the Mizo tradition

by translating these texts, instead of merely emulating what was perceived as a “greater original”. Shakespeare’s universal appeal combined with the translator’s genius, allowed the text to transcend the boundaries of time and space. Like many other people in different countries around the world, the Mizos were able to find an affinity with Hamlet’s melancholic disposition and his expressions of deeper concerns about the human condition. All the actors in the Redemption Theatricals’ production of *Hamlet* in Mizo admitted to identifying themselves with certain aspects of their characters. Pankaj Bhutalia’s documentary on this production opens with the actor who played Hamlet saying the line –

“When Hamlet came to Mizoram, he became a Mizo.”

3.4 Doctor Faustus

Doctor Faustus was written by Christopher Marlowe, one of the 'University Wits', in 1592. The text of the play is based on a German narrative describing the career of an academic who sold his soul to the devil. The story of the play is that of a scholar at the university of Wittenberg in the sixteenth century, whose ambition leads him to pursue necromancy (black magic). In spite of warnings from the Good Angel, Faustus enters into a contract with the Devil, whereby he can have anything he wants for twenty-four years, but at the end he must give up his soul. Faustus travels the world and explores the frontiers of knowledge, enjoying the fruits of his power and ability to perform magic. At the end of twenty-four years Faustus realizes the futility of his decision as he faces inevitable damnation. But he believes that it is impossible to repent, and he is led away by the devils to hell at the stroke of midnight. A commentator, called the chorus, who had introduced Faustus at the beginning of the play, reappears and says that the fate of Faustus should be an example to all.

There are two opposing interpretations of Marlowe's text. One view holds that the play is a Christian warning against the dangers of leading a sinful life. The other view paints Faustus as a heroic figure who dares to rebel against a malevolently designed universe. The final act of *Faustus* shows us that Marlowe sympathized with the latter viewpoint. Marlowe was himself a controversial figure, who faced charges of atheism, blasphemy and homosexuality right before his death in a bar room brawl at the age of twenty nine. He stood at a crossroad in time in history. When the medieval mindset was in conflict with Renaissance philosophy. *Doctor Faustus* can be read as a play about a man in transition, torn apart by the twin forces of his rejection and his aspiration.

Doctor Faustus was translated into Mizo by Laltlankima in 1990, and this translation was first published in 1993. By this time, Mizoram had attained statehood and it had arguably become the most peaceful state in North East India. The church had gained a stronghold over the life of the Mizos. Even though many other denominations like the Roman Catholics and the Salvation Army have established churches in Mizoram.

majority of the Mizos belong to the churches established by the pioneer missionaries- Presbyterian and Baptist. Like many other parts of India, the religious beliefs of the majority have a strong influence on the political machinery of the state. Many Mizos who hold key positions in the running of the state are also active church members and elders of the churches that they attend. The people have imbibed the Christian values preached by the missionaries such that they have become Mizo values. There has been a great fear among the Mizos that their exposure to the influences of the other faiths would lead to a degeneration of their Christian values. The Mizos are also concerned that the peace and prosperity that they enjoy will lead to greed decadence and overambition. The Calvinist themes of fear of damnation and repentance are a major part of the Mizo mindset.

Andre Lefevre writes that “particular themes tend to dominate certain periods in the evolution of a system.”⁷ The theme of Calvinistic determinism, prevalent in

⁷ Andre Lefevre: Translation Rewriting and the Manipulation of literary fane (London: Routledge, 1992) p.34

England at the time of Marlowe and prevailing in Mizoram at the present time, links the source and translated texts. It is no wonder then that C. Laltlankima, the translator of *Doctor Faustus* into Mizo was motivated by what he saw as a moral guide for Christians.⁸ He wanted to warn the Mizo reader about the price one had to pay for leading a sinful life.

There are two versions of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, named the A-text and the B-text. Scholars over the years have debated on the authenticity of these texts, because both show evidences of the work of a collaborator. The Mizo translation of the play relies only upon the A-text for its source, as it was the only version known by the translator. The translator came across the source text as a student of English literature, he completed the translation in 1990, which was later published in 1993. After its inclusion in the Mizo syllabus, Laltluangliana Khiangte revised the text and added notes for students. The revised text, used as the primary textbook by students, retains the English names of all the characters. However, Laltluangliana notes in the preface that the

⁸ This, and such other views thereof, are based on an interview held on 2/1/2002..

reader is free to call them by what names they may wish (eg: “Good Angel” can also be “Angel that” in Mizo). The Seven Deadly Sins are called “Thihna sual Pasarih.” While making this literal translation, the translator remarks that he was strongly influenced by Chuaftera’s translation of the names of characters in *Kristian Vanram Kawngzawh Thu*. The option given to the reader, to interpret the names of the character, reflects the growth of bilingualism among the Mizos. It is assumed that the reader will know the meanings of these words in Mizo even if they are not translated.

The blank verse followed by Marlowe is not maintained in the translation. Normal prose is used throughout the translated text. The translator “does not regret” the loss of style because his main aim was to impart the message of the source text, and he feels that the translated text is not lacking in this regard. Besides a fulfilling the Christian aim, he sees the play as a contribution to Mizo literature. While translating the play, he did not regard the differences between the cultures and the times in which the source text and the translated text are located. The translator also claims

that the knowledge of Mizo is more important than the knowledge of English for a translator who is translating works of English literature into Mizo.

The translated text follows the formal division of the play into Acts and scenes. 'Act' is translated as 'Chan' and 'Scenes' as 'Lan'. The meanings are more or less literal. This method is used by most of the modern Mizo playwrights. R.Lalrawna first used it in his translation of *Macbeth* in 1964.

During the course of an interview held with the translator, he revealed that he would have been more careful with the translation if he had known that students would read the translated text. As one reads and compares the source and translated texts, there are several mistakes that could have been averted with a more thorough research. For example, there is a reference to "Abanus' works" in Act One, Scene One (L.153) in the source text. 'Abanus' was Pietro d' Abano, a thirteenth century Italian philosopher who gained the image of a sorcerer during Marlowe's time. The translated

text changes him into Magnus Albertus, a theologian of the same period. Many soliloquies of Faustus contain omissions in the translated text.

The translated text also has two significant mentions of terms which would have been culturally inappropriate if the time of Marlowe's life is considered. One is the substitution of "Indian Moors" (Act One, Scene One, L 120, of ST) with "Red Indian" in the translated text. The other reference is made in (Act Four Scene Four, L 49-64 in the A text) by the Horse Courses to *Cowboys*. These two examples, however, make sense for the Mizo reader because of the popularity of reading translated western novels among the Mizos.

The translator has thus made alterations in his text which reveal the growing influence of the outside world upon the Mizos. A significant substitution made in the translated text is seen in Act One Scene Four (L 12 of ST) when Robin the Clown talks of 'sauce' to add to a 'well roasted' shoulder of mutton. "Sauce" is translated as

'chawtani', a Mizo transliteration of the Hindu word 'chutney'. The translator explains this and the reference made to westerns by saying that it is "clearer" for the Mizo reader. The growing inclusion of Hindi words such as 'chutney' and 'bazaar' in the daily language of the Mizos is indicative of their growing acculturation and their acceptance of the mainland Indian culture. The Mizo vocabulary is expanding with the inclusion of these words acquired in contact with other cultures. At the same time, the modern Mizo translator tries to decolonize Mizo literature by completely disregarding the cultural context of the source text and concentrating only on the interests of the translating culture.

CONCLUSION:IMPACT AND INFLUENCE

The post-colonial view of translation during the colonial age is that of a form of establishing hegemonic power by the colonizer. Translation is seen as a method of containment, manipulation and domination. In the case of the Mizos, there was a subjugation and imposition of colonial attitudes at the societal level but right from the very beginning translation became a means of intellectual liberation.

In the previous chapter we had seen how the Mizos gradually broke away from colonial influences through translated literature. This was reflected by the growing assertiveness of the Mizo translator in altering and rewriting what the source text presented as the 'original' interpretation. The Mizo translator, by prioritizing the reception of the Mizo reader, deliberately ignored concerns about not being 'adequate' enough. Dr.Laltluangliana, who has undergone the task of revising translated texts for students, says, "the practice of translation should be used to bring out the beauty Mizo language."¹

¹ From a personal interview conducted on 15/5/2002

Chapter 2 had briefly touched upon the 'unique nature' of the colonial contact that had allowed the survival of the Mizo language and Mizo folk traditions, even if in a somewhat altered state. Before the arrival of the British, the idea of a 'Mizo identity' was blurred by the fact that the Mizos at that time consisted of various independent clans living under separate chieftainships. These clans were united first in their initial struggle against the British, and later with the demarcation of a territorial boundary by the British rules. Even after the occupation of the Lushai Hills, the chiefs were given the authority to settle most of their own affairs. It was only after India gained independence that the Village Councils overtook the system of hereditary rulership in Mizoram.

The British ensured the isolation of the Mizos by using safeguards such as the Inner Line Permit, which exists to this day. According to this system, all foreigners have to be issued a pass by the Deputy Commissioner or his assistants in the areas before they can enter Mizoram. The boundary of the Inner Line was made by the British, and the drawing of this boundary was based mostly on linguistic divisions. When India gained independence, many Mizos wanted to join Burma but they opted to remain with India on the condition that the

existing safeguards on their territory and traditions would be maintained. Lalrimawia writes:

“Provisions were made in the sixth schedule of the India Constitution for protecting the people of the hills from domination of the plains. A regional autonomy had thus emerged to enable the hills people to safeguard their ways of life to participate in the political life of the country and to develop themselves according to their own genius and tradition.”²

The Mizos collaborated with their colonizers in order to carve out a new identity for themselves. Mizos took an active part in translating works of English literature into Mizo from the very beginning when the Bible was being translated into Mizo. This ensured a certain degree of safety from the overwhelming influence of the dominant power and from being labeled as the “other”.

The translation of English literature into Mizo was accompanied by transcreation at various levels of Mizo society. Most of the Mizos became Christians and adapted Christian

² Lalrimawia, *Mizoram: History and Cultural Identity 1800-1947* (Guwahati, Spectrum Publications, 1995) p.12.

values. Education also led to bilingualism among the Mizos. The British did impose their faith and ideals upon the Mizos, but they also lived among the people in a way which allowed them to be as affected by the Mizos as they had affected the Mizos. J.H. Lorrain, the pioneer missionary, wrote about the tonal usage of words in the Mizo language in the preface to his *Dictionary of the Lushai Language*:

“The best and the only way to learn these various tones is to live amongst the Lushai people until it becomes natural to speak as they speak.”³

It would seem that the British, instead of merely acting as subjugative power, occupied the “in between” space “where the self or one culture encounters, and, more importantly, *interacts* with an “other” or another culture. It is a fertile space...a sphere (or zone) in which one both abandons and assumes associations.”⁴

The interaction between the British and the Mizos allowed a two-way influence to take place. As the Mizos were

³ J.H. Lorrain, *Dictionary of the Lushai Language* (Calcutta: The Asiatic Society, 1940) p (xiv), Introduction.

⁴ Anuradha Dingwaney and Carol Maier, eds, *Between languages and cultures: Translation and Cross cultural contexts* (Delhi Oxford University Press, 1996), p 8

using translation to recreate their identity, they were also transcreating the identity of the missionaries and the administrators in their own terms. This is proved by the fact that every missionary and Superintendent who came to Mizoram had a Mizo name, by which the people addressed him/her. The missionaries are still known as “Zosap” by the Mizos and referred by their Mizo names in many historical accounts.

The demarcation of Lushai territory on linguistic lines allowed them to be isolated from the rest of the Kuki-Chin clans. “Duhlian” dialect became the *lingua franca* of all the Lushais, who called themselves Mizos. Most of the former clan dialects have been lost after the British united the Mizos under a single rule. An integrated Mizo linguistic identity, territorial claims and ethnic identity were concepts formed by the Mizos after the impact of colonial rule.

The formation of a canon of literature was a part of the broader cultural changes that took place under colonial rule. The Mizos did not have any previous civilizational links with the British, and when these two cultures came into contact it led to many significant changes. The British introduced the

alphabet among the Mizos. A written script is one of the hallmarks of a civilized society. Writing gave the Mizos the power to innovate and translation gave them the inspiration to create a new body of written literature. Earlier, the concept of 'literature' as an integrated whole consisting of the output of human creative thought was absent in Mizo culture, and folktales and folksongs occupied separate spheres of their own. Today, after the inception of the written tradition, Mizo literature has emerged as a field of study in its own, with the establishment of a department of Mizo up to the University level.

Translated works are an integral part of Mizo literature, which has its beginnings in the translation of the Bible by missionaries. The canon of Mizo literature that arose with the written tradition was very different from the earlier tradition. Folk songs and religious chants were completely replaced by Christian hymns. Most of Mizo poetry continues to be lyrical, but non-lyrical poetry has also been introduced after the introduction of writing. Many of the Christian hymns are literal translations done by the missionaries and early Christians. As the Mizos are fond of musical forms, Christian hymns have been adapted to be sung to the beat of the

traditional cowhide drum. Many of these tunes follow the older lyrical forms in Mizo poetry.

Two significant new genres, which arose in Mizo literature under the direct influence of translation, were the novel and drama. The first Mizo novel, *Hawilopari* was written by Biakliana in the year 1936. The same writer also authored the first Mizo short story called *Lali*, which was published in 1937. Both of these stories are named after their women protagonists.

The earliest dramatic performances were enacted with the supervision of the missionaries. A majority of the plots are based on Christian themes and social issues. Today, drama is widely popular among members of the church youth groups, and their enactments are televised in the local cable channels in Mizoram. Most the English plays that have been translated are read instead of being performed. The local enactments are performed without much deliberations of a script, with impromptu improvisations.

There is also a growing market for works with popular fiction, which have been translated from English into Mizo. Of

these translations, Western and Romance novels for the bulk of books which cater to the local tastes. The languages of these novels have crept into everyday usage as it was demonstrated earlier in *Doctor Faustus*. For example, to be called a “cowboy” is a popular Mizo slang that denotes a sense of recklessness and slightly immoral character. Even linguistic terms have acquired new meanings after a direct translation. Literature is being commodified and commercialized with the widespread sale of translated works. At the same time, the study of translated works in learning institutions creates new pathways for critiques and lends a heuristic value to literary enquiries.

A Mizo scholar has remarked:

“In order to help evolve a national identity, translators must be encouraged, for it is them who can act as national integrators and cultural synthesizers.”⁵

There has been a growing encouragement for the inter-translation of literatures of different Indian languages. In the context of post-colonial theory this can be seen as a subversion of colonial rule, and an attempt to de-colonize the

⁵ Margaret Ch Zama: “The problems of translation”-Katha workshop on Translation, Aizawl, 9-10 December, 1999.

self. Mizos are also taking an active part in interlingual translation between Indian languages.

Modern Mizo identity is one of the many emergent forms of post-colonial identity. But this identity occupies a space of its own which can neither conform to western definitions nor can it be simply annexed to the identity of the nation state of India. The modern Mizo youth with a hybrid identity is equally comfortable in a multilingual classroom, in a folk dance performance, or in a church singing Christian hymns. Translated works have allowed the Mizos to maintain the specific aspects of their culture while at the same time integrating them with the rest of India.

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