



A study on translation of Christian missionaries in Bodo language and its impact in emerging pure written Bodo literature in pre-independence period

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Abstract

The history of Bodo literature depicts that the Bodos who belong to the greatest indigenous Bodo community of North East India did not have any textual or written literature in their own Bodo language prior to advent of Christian Missionaries among them, although this community has been rich enough socially, culturally and linguistically since beyond the long centuries. Arriving among the Bodos with a main aim of preaching Christianity among Bodos they started to work in different fields of Bodo community and thus by the initiation of Christian Missionaries Bodo language got the privilege to be textualised in books, as they were the first one who initiated to write on Bodo language, grammar, literature, culture, folk narratives etc. and published them in books, although in English language, where many translational works in Bodo language are observed carried out by them. In the paper an attempt has been made particularly to study and explore the translational works of Christian Missionaries in Bodo language and its impact in emerging pure written Bodo literature in pre-independence period.

Keywords: Bodo language, literature, Christian missionaries

1. Introduction

The history of Bodo literature depicts that prior to emergence of pure written Bodo literature the Christian Missionaries initiated to work in the field of Bodo language and literature besides preaching Christianity among Bodos from the middle part of 19th century. They learnt Bodo language and collected information and knowledge regarding Bodos and transmitted those into books in English language. They wrote books on Bodo vocabularies, grammar, literature, culture, folk-tales, folk songs etc. in English language where many translational works in Bodo language are observed giving this language a scope to flourish in the hearth of books. Brian Houghton Hodgson used Bodo word for the first time in written form in the year 1846. He translated many English vocabularies into Bodo and published them in the book entitled "Essay the First on the Kocch, Bódó and Dhimál Tribes" in 1847. Thus translation in Bodo language has emerged from the middle part of 19th century by the initiation of Christian Missionaries. In this paper attempt has been made particularly to explore and study the translational works of Christian Missionaries in Bodo language during pre-independence period and how those translational works impacted towards the emergence of pure written Bodo literature in that period.

2. Methodology

The data collected for this research paper are primarily based on historical documents. This paper is a historical descriptive study. To prepare this paper data are mainly collected from secondary sources available in books, journals and E-books and reference books.

3. Advent of Christian missionaries in Bodo community

Prior to discuss Christian Missionaries' translational works in Bodo language and its impact towards the emergence of pure written Bodo literature let this paper to give a brief note about the arrival of Christian Missionaries among Bodos. Christian Missionaries were legally permitted to preach their religion by Charter Act of India of 1813. Availing this permission many groups of Missionaries started to preach their religion all over India. The data collected about preaching Christianity reveals that among various denominations of Missionaries, the American Baptist Missionaries were the first one to step their feet to come into contact with Bodos in the early part of 19th century and started to work many charitable activities to attract them towards their religion. Missionaries started to work in the field of Bodo language and literature publishing in English language where many translational works in Bodo language are observed, which this paper attempts to explore and study and how far those translational works impacted in emerging pure written Bodo literature in pre-independence period. Following are the books where many translations in Bodo language are observed carried out and brought out by Christian Missionaries in pre-independence period.

4. Essay the first on the Kocch, Bódó and Dhimál Tribes (1847) ^[1]

In the history of written Bodo literature, Bodos can never forget the name of Brian Houghton Hodgson as he is known to be the first British person to work on Bodo vocabulary and grammar. He came to India in 1818 and worked as a writer under British East India Company. He learnt many Indian languages to be familiar to different language speaking communities of India. In the perspective of works on Bodo language, he collected as many as 1800 Bodo words including

loan words mostly from its neighboring languages i.e. Bengali and Assamese which he incorporated in the book "Essay the First on the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimál Tribes" published by J. Thomas, Baptist Mission press in 1847, Calcutta giving this language a great privilege to be written in the book for the first time. This book basically contains three parts.

Part I: Vocabulary

Part II: Grammar

Part III: Their origin location, numbers, creed, customs, character and condition with a general description of the climate they dwell in.

Part 1: Vocabulary

Some examples of Bodo vocabularies collected by B. H. Hodgson which are quoted from the said book:

NOUNS.

1ST.—THINGS AND BEINGS.

<i>English.</i>	<i>Kocch.</i>	<i>Bodo.</i>	<i>Dhimál.</i>
Sun,	Bélá,	Shán,	Bélá.
Moon,	Chánd,	Nókhábir,	Táli.
Dark half of,	Badi,	Dán khomshi,	
Bright ditto,	Súdi,	Dán shráng,	

Part 2: Grammar

In the grammar part of this book B. H. Hodgson discussed about articles, substantives, adjectives, comparison, pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, numeration, verbs, construction etc. and broadly discussed about some aspects of traditional grammar based on morphology and syntax of Bodo language giving many sentences as illustrations to show the structures of sentences of Bodo language related to rules of Bodo grammar in the book. In given examples many sentences translated from English to Bodo language are seen. Following are the some examples which are quoted from the book:

The girl is older than the boy, but the boy is taller than the girl.†

Bodo.—Hinjougothoã gibi, hîwá gothóã gódóî; tóblábo hinjougo thono hîwágothóã jou (for gajou) sin.

5. Outline Grammar of the Kachári (Bârâ) Language as Spoken in District Darrang, Assam (1884)

Another most important book written about Bodo language by Christian Missionary is "Outline Grammar of the Kachári (Bârâ) Language as Spoken in District Darrang, Assam" by Rev. Sydney Endle published in the year of 1884 at Assam Secretariat Press in Shillong. The book was written in English language explaining many grammatical rules of Bodo language. He discussed different aspects of linguistics-phonology, morphology, syntax and miscellaneous phrases of Bodo language. This book made a brief comparative discussion on Bodo Kachári vocabularies spoken in hills and plains giving equivalent English meaning with instances which are seen in the chapter "Hills Kachári Compared with that Spoken in the Plains". He gives some examples of

sentences to make better understanding of Bodo grammar and language by translating from English to both in hills and plains Kachári (Bârâ) languages with literal translation. In the part III of the book where he discussed about the syntax of the Kachári language, ample examples of sentences translated from English to Bodo language are seen being given by him to make proper understanding of Bodo grammar like gender, number, case, adjectives, pronouns, kind of verbs- like negative verbs, causative verb, compound verb, defective and auxiliary verb, voice, adverbs, preposition, conjunction, phrases etc. Besides grammatical discussion along with exemplified sentences, he also added three texts of conversation with an aim to discuss about miscellaneous phrases by translating whole text from English to Bodo language. First one is "Travel", second one is "Conversation with a Mouzáhdár" and third one is "Tea Factory Talk with Kachári Labourers". This was really great work on the part of this European writer, as this grammar book certainly offered a scope to read and learn the Bodo language with these three conversational texts. Here are some of the examples of translational works quoted from above discussed book:

1.—GENDER.

(The boys and girls) are coming.	(Gáthá gátháifrá) fuidang.
(The cock) is crowing	... (Dáu zlaiú) gáspí dang.
(The hen) lay, eggs	... (Dáu zúú) bidíú dūúú.
The (he-goat) eats grass	... (Burmá fanthaiú) gángsú zúúú.

II.—CONVERSATION WITH A MOUZÁHDÁR.

Are the rice-crops doing well in your mouzáh ?	Nangni mouzáúú mai gahám- hūú ankhatdang ná ?
Yes, Sir, but we want more rain.	Núnggô, síheb, khintu akhá zúbráhúú nánggô.
You should make water-channels, and bring water	Nang danggá zúanánoi dūis- únífráí dūú lábonú nánggô.

Continue.....

6. A Collection of Kachári Folk-Tales and Rhymes (1895)

The book "A Collection of Kachari Folk-Tales and Rhymes" was intended as a supplement to Reverend Sidney Endle's Kachári grammar by James Drummond Anderson. This book was published to offer as a reading book to those people who have acquired an elementary knowledge of Bodo Kachári and with a most significant aim that the specimens of the Bodo folk lore of very simple and primitive people may be motivating to those who did not care to learn Kachári and that it might stimulate others to make more successful excursions into an unexplored field of Bodo Kachári folk lore. He had good command of Bengali, Assamese, Bodo Kachári and many of the north-eastern tribal languages of India. J. D. Anderson besides his administrative works, he contributed in literary creation also. In the book "A Collection of Kachári-Folk Tales and Rhymes" many Bodo folk tales, folk songs and nursery rhymes are incorporated by him by using Darrang dialect of Bodo language. The material contains also a translation in

English language done with considerable care. He collected some Bodo folk tales, folk songs and nursery rhymes orally circulated among rural Bodo people and translated those tales, folk songs and nursery rhymes into English and textualised those tales both in English and in its original language i.e. Bodo language in this book. Following are the some of his translated textual folk tales, folk songs and nursery rhymes from Bodo to English language.

6.1 Folk tales

(1) Dùimâ dùisâ ni khorâng (How the rivers were made), (2) Sàsè olsiâ gâthâ nê khorâng (The story of the Lazy Boy), (3) Gâthâ mâmra nî khorâng (The seven Champions), (4) Sásè phâlângi gâthâni khorâng (The Story of the Merchant's son), (5) Bîdá bînâunî khorâng (Brother and Sister), (6) Embu Bonglá nî Khorâng (The Story of the toad), (7) Mùì ârù daukhâ dandâ nî khorâng (The Story of the Doe and the Raven), (8) Brai Sásè nî Khorâng (The Old Man and the Tiger), (9) Mùkhrâ ârù Sessâ nî Khorâng (The Tale of the Monkey and the Hare), (10) Khusung ârù Mùkhrâ (The Tortoise and Monkey), (11) Bâmun deârù bînî sâkor nî khorâng (The Brahmin and his Servant), (12) Abrâ ní khorâng (The Story of the Simpleton), (13) Sâ-sní âbrâ nî Khorâng (The Story of the Seven Simpletons), (14) Khânâ Khuzâ nî khorâng (The Story of Blind man and the Hunchback), (15) Sásè âbrâ brai nî khorâng (The Story of a silly old man), (16) Brai Bùrùini Khorâng (The Story of four Thieves).

6.1.1 Example of a few lines of translation of a folk tale from Bodo to English language

Dùimâ Dùisâ ni khorâng (Bodo)

Sânùì brai burui man. Phâre unau bîsur gothai brai-burui zâlângbâ buruiâ zingâsnânai brainu khinhânai "Brai zang-fûrhâ zî dânai fisâfur dang, bîsur mâ zânânai thânggan?" Eruì bungbâ braia mai hu khâmnu lâgi Khubernâiu thângnânai, mai sobai bîsor ârù lai-megong lâfâ megong bîfûr mânî-nî bîgot-zului bînânai nâ-i au lâbônânai sâsnî sânzât lâmâiau hor thânânai nâ man-fai-nânai buruìnù khithanai:

How the rivers were made (English translation)

Once upon a time there lived an old man and an old woman. And when they were quite old, the old, woman said to her husband, "How shall these our children get food when we are gone?" So the old man travelled afar to the great god Kuvera,* the god of riches, and, taking from him seedlings of paddy, pulse, mustard, and gourds, journeyed for eight days and so reached his home.

6.2 Folk songs and nursery rhymes

(1) Addressed to a spoiled Child, (2) To a conceited Child, (3) Of Woman, (4) A Nursery Rhyme, (5) What Women Sing at Weddings, (6) A Woman to her Lover, (7) An exchange of Compliments, (8) What Women sing when the Bride is taken away, (9) The lament of a Mother, (10) Buffalo Girls come out to play, (11) A Love Song, (12) A Mother-in-law scolds her Daughter-in-law, (13) A Woman to her Husband, (14) Courtship, (15) A Love Song, (16) Women's work, (17) Reproach of Women.

6.2.1 Example of a few lines of translation of a folk song from Bodo to English language

A Woman to her Husband

Bodo	English
Hî dai dai hùbâbâ	If I weave him cloth
Zimmù rangeâ.	He can't put it on.
Mâ huâ zang gorop-khù!	What husband have I got!
Zangnî khâfâlâ!	Ah! My evil luck
Sûnî khâfâlâ	My dreadful luck.

7. The Kachâris

"The Kachâris" is second book written by Rev. Sidney Endle published in 1911 where he wrote about social customs, agriculture, festivals, food habits, religion, rituals, crafts and textiles etc. of Bodos. He also added a chapter on Bodo Grammar. This simple, honest and gregarious person who had a good sense of humor worked for the all round development of Bodo community besides preaching and propagating Christianity among Bodos. He researched the Bodo society and collected a lot of information about the Bodos and finally he brought out his Monograph "The Kachâris" incorporating all his collected information of Bodo race. In this Monograph the writer wrote not only about Bodo race but also incorporated some specimens of Bodo folk tales both in English and Bodo languages and also discussed about Bodo grammar. Following are the folk tales that are incorporated in the Book.

1. Dùima dùisâ ni khorâng (How the rivers were made),
2. Sàsè olsiâ gâthâ ni khorâng (The Story of the Lazy Boy)
3. Bâmun âru bini Sâkor ni Khorâng (The Brâhmin and his Servant)
4. Kachâri Theory of Thunder and Lightning
5. ÂBRÂ-NĪ KHORÂNG (The story of the simpleton)
6. MŪKHRĀ ĀRŪ SESSĀ-NĪ KHORĀNG (The tale of the monkey and the hare)
7. SĀ-SE PHĀLĀNGĪ GOTHO-NĪ KHORĀG (The story of the merchant lad)

7.1 Example of a few lines of translation of a folk tale from Bodo to English language

Bâmun âru bini sâkor ni khorâng (Bodo)

Sásè Bâmun dangman, âru bihá sâkor sâse dangman. Sânsè sânsè zang Bâmun ni bihau-bikhunzu-ni naiau thangnù-lâgi thâlit gur gâkhir sorai lánânai sâkhor-kho bán húnânai, bikho khithânai "Nang be thâlit-furkho dá zá. Zábâ ánghá khithu fâtsè bù megon dang."

The Brâhmin and his Servant (English translation)

There was once a Brâhmin who had a servant. And one day when they were going to the house of the Brâhmin's mother-in-law, the Brâhmin gave his servant a bunch of plantains and other things to carry, and said to him, "Now mind you don't eat those plantains, for I can see just as well behind as I can in front".

8. Linguistic survey of India (Vol. III, Part-II)

In “Linguistic Survey of India (VOL.III, Part-II)” compiled and edited by an eminent scholar and linguist George Abraham Grierson working during British India a few translational works are observed. Moreover, he made a brief discussion on Bodo language. This book is also one of the documents where Bodo language is textualised. In this book four specimens written by J. D. Anderson are incorporated. The first one is the ‘Statement of an Accused Person’ which was translated from Assamese language to Bodo language. In order to show how the Assamese idiom has been followed, the original version in that language is also given in italics with which the Bodo version agrees word for word. Secondly a fable ‘The Fable of the False Friend’ was incorporated which bears the signs of translation from Bodo language to English language. Third one is folk tale and finally some folk songs translated from Bodo to English language. It is evident that in the history of Bodo literature the first translation from other language i.e. Assamese to Bodo language was carried out by J.D. Anderson. That specimen was ‘The Statement of an Accused Person’. This is incorporated in the book “Linguistic Survey of India (Vol. III, Part-II)”.

Example of a few lines of translation of ‘The Statement of an Accused Person’ from Assamese to Bodo language along with word to word English translation:

Assamese:	Tumi	ki	kaba	khuzâ?	
Bodo:	Nang	mâ	bûng-nũ	namai-dang?	
English:	You	what	to-say	wish?	
Assamese:	Mângâl bâr	dinâ	may	ishkhula-lai	goisilõ
Bodo:	Mongolbâr	din-au	âng	ishkhûla-au	thâng-dang-man
English:	Tuesday	day	I	to-school	went

9. Census of India, 1891 (Assam)

Edward Albert Gait was the Superintendent of Census Operation in Assam from Indian Civil Service. Under his supervision census of Assam was done in the year of 1891 which he compiled all the data in book “CENSUS OF INDIA, 1891 (ASSAM)”. In the chapter VIII of Part II of this book the language data of different languages of then undivided Assam were collected for appropriate report of census. In this Book some grammatical sketch of Kachári or Bodo language has also been sketched by E. A. Gait. He wrote about gender, number, adjective, degree, noun, pronouns, adverbs etc. In this census report book it is seen of giving some examples of words of other branches of Bodo group similar to Kachári language with equivalent English meaning.

For example

English	Morán	Káchári
Sun	sán	sán
Moon	dá	dán
Stars	hatarai	háthorkhi
Tree	aonphang	bangpáng
Cloth	hingka	hi

10. Conclusion

From the study of the paper it has been cleared that the Christian Missionaries did not write any pure Bodo literature,

but wrote books on Bodo language, vocabularies, grammar, literature, folk tales, folk songs, nursery rhymes etc. in English language where many translations from English to Bodo and from Bodo to English language had been taken place thereby giving Bodo language a great privilege to be textualised. Now the question is whether the translational works appeared in all those above discussed books carried out by the Christian Missionaries have really impacted in emerging pure textual or written Bodo literature or not in pre-independence period? In reply it can rightly be said that the writing books on Bodo language, vocabularies, grammar, literature, folk-tales, folk-songs, nursery rhymes etc., although these books are not considered to be of pure Bodo written literature, where many translational works in Bodo language are observed carried out by Christian Missionaries, really impacted tremendously towards the development of Bodo language and literature by opening the veiled rich treasure of the language, literatures and folklores of Bodos motivating and stimulating of then budding Bodo literate people to prosper creative writings in their own Bodo language starting from the second decade of 20th century and thus gradually pure written Bodo literature began to flourish. Christian Missionaries deserved to be credited for their firsthand step in bringing out Bodo literature into light by writing in different aspects of Bodos although it was in English language motivating the Bodo literate people to bloom and prosper pure Bodo written literature during that period. As a result of which pure written Bodo literature got the track to emerge in the second decade of the twentieth century with the emergence of “Bodoni Fisa O Aiyen”, a book on traditions and customary laws of Bodo community published in 1915 by Habraghat Bodo Sanmilani. After that mention may be made of first Bodo magazine namely “Bibar” published in 1920 in the form of manuscript and in printed form in the year of 1924 as a mouthpiece of Bodo Chattra Sammilani which brought awareness among of then educated Bodo young generations motivating them towards the literary activities and creating writing talents in Bodo language. After Bibar magazine some more magazines were published in subsequent year viz. “Khonthai Methai” having 26 lyrics and 8 poems in 1923, “Jenthokha” in 1926, “Bithorai” in 1932, “Alongbar” in 1938 and “Nayak” in 1940. Apart from those magazines many Bodo writers came forward to write Bodo dramas mostly translating from Bengali to Bodo language. Today the Bodos have a huge treasure of literary creations in every aspect of literature in their own language to fit worldwide recognition and this has certainly developed this language socially, politically, educationally, literarily, culturally and linguistically. Though these developments have been achieved as a result of social awakening awareness among the Bodos, nevertheless the pioneering and motivational works and contributions of Christian Missionaries in the field of Bodo language and literature can never be ignored and forgotten because they were the first one to unveil rich Bodo language and literature in books through writings although in English language prior to emergence of pure written Bodo literature in pre-independence period.

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