



## Transformation of Information Communication in Mizos Society and Culture by Social Media

<sup>1</sup>Vanlalmuanpuii Chawngthu,<sup>2</sup>Irene Lalruatkimi

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar,<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor

<sup>1</sup>Department of Mass Communication,

<sup>1</sup>Mizoram University

**Abstract :** This paper is a qualitative form of historical research which deals with the transformation of information communication among the Mizos society and culture led by social media. Mizo people are tribal living in the North-Eastern part of India. They got introduced to the internet world or the world of social media in the recent years and this led to a drastic change in the cultural norms of societal communications. This paper deals with such transformations by highlighting the history of information communication in Mizoram. Most data are secondary data taken from journals, books and other publications which are used to explain the transformation of information communication among the Mizos.

**IndexTerms - transformation, information communication, Mizos, history.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Mizos, a small tribe living in the northeast part of India, a state called Mizoram, comprises of around 12 lakhs only, remains as one of the most strong, vibrant and peaceful state. The Mizos are a close-knit society. The culture and society of the Mizos is very young. They started to have their own language Mizo alphabet only after the arrival of British Christian missionary in the year 1980. They are known and loved by their way of living in the society and their various cultural practices. Today, with the power of media especially the social media affecting everyone does not leave the Mizo. The society and culture of the Mizos has been transformed both in a positive and negative way. The easy technology specially the mobile phone made many changes. There are many cultural practices which were not seen any more after the arrival of social media. This paper will explore and discuss why the Mizos uses social media which becomes an important tool for their society and cultural transformation. This paper seeks to provide a better and more comprehensive understanding of the use social media in Mizoram which led to its transformation.

### II. Development of Social Media and Internet

The world has seen a lot technological development especially after the Industrial Revolution. In early years, the most common form of mass communication was the print media like pamphlets, newspaper and magazines. With the advancement in technology, we later came to the age of radio and television which has the ability to entertain our ears and eyes. Therefore, such forms of media are regarded as the traditional media (Rajendran & Thesinghraj, 2016). With further development, we've seen the days of the internet world, which relies on digital technology with the assistance of the satellite. It allows us to further our abilities through the interlinked words, images, videos and so forth. With the internet age came the social media which allows users from each end of the world to be connected. Social media has its various platforms with Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Whatsapp as the major platforms in terms of the number of users (Miller, et al., 2016). Social media has changed the way in which society functions and it plays a crucial role in superseding the way in which information and entertainment content are disseminated (Harper, 2010). A series of memos made by J.C.R. Licklider of MIT in August 1962 detailing his "Galactic Network" concept was the very first recorded explanation of the "social interactions" that could be allowed through networking. He envisioned a world in which a network of networked computers that enabled everyone to access information fast on any site's data and programme. In spirit, the notion was similar to that of today's internet. The Federal Networking Council (FNC) overwhelmingly passed a resolution defining the word Internet on October 24, 1995. Members of the internet and intellectual property rights groups helped to draught this concept. The Federal Networking Council (FNC) agrees that the following definition of the term "Internet" is accurate. The term "Internet" refers to a global information system that: (i) is logically linked together by a globally unique address space based on the Internet Protocol (IP) or its subsequent extensions/follow-ons; (ii) can support communications using the Transmission Control Protocol/Internet Protocol (TCP/IP) suite or other IP-compatible protocols; and (iii) provides, uses, or makes accessible, either publicly or privately, high-speed data transmission (Leiner, et al., 1997).

### III. Mizoram at a glance

Mizoram is located on the north-east region of India bordering Assam, Tripura and Manipur. It situated on the south tip among the eight north-eastern states, mainly known as North-East 8 Sisters (Rajbhavan). The origin of the Mizo tribes is still up for debate but the cultural and traditional norms of the various tribes never stood far from each other (Chhuanawma, 2020). The Mizo people lived with their chiefs on hills and each village happened to have their own 'Zawlbuk', the bachelor's dormitory. In Zawlbuk all boys who attained the age of 10 and above slept at night and is also regarded as a place where boys learned their way into the society (Lawmsanga, 2010). On March 15, 1891 Christian missionaries reached Mizoram and in the year 1893, the Mizos

got their first alphabet 'A, Aw, B' with the help of the missionaries (Ralte, 2020). Christianity had a major impact on the lives of the Mizos because they started to develop the Western lifestyle and started seeing their previous lifestyle as outdated (Rohmingmawii, 2013). Zawlbuk was slowly put to end along with several other traditions previously adopted by the Mizos. The pre-colonial Mizoram was adopted by blind faith and practices of omen and believing in superstition. But most these were changed due to colonialism and its attributions like Christianity and education that come with it (Lalremruata, 2019).

In modern days, Mizoram has its own assembly and a working government. The state has declared itself as a Christian state though other religions also existed. As a replacement of Zawlbuk, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) existed, which was established in 1935. YMA took actions inside their each and own locality or village with Central YMA as the head of its joint association. It is a "non-political organization" working for the likes of the community (Zorema, 2007). Mizoram had also stood third in terms of literacy rate among the 28 states of India as per 2011 Census report (Nag, 2001).

### III. Information & Communication in Mizoram

During the pre-colonial period, there used to be a village crier, known as 'Tlangau'. He gives assistance to the village chiefs by crying out orders among the villagers. It is also regarded as a work which is assisted to the lower class of the society (Rokhum, 2013). Apart from Tlangau, during the early Mizo society when a person dies, they send a messenger to spread the news of the death of their friends or loved ones which is known as 'Zualko'. In other words, it can be said as a messenger of bad news whom no one desired (Ralte R. L., 2018). Communication and information is done through word of mouth. After that the Christian missionaries established schools and started to teach the Mizo tribes and also spread the gospel in Mizoram. The first hand-written Mizo journal was started in 1898, four years prior to the introduction of Mizo alphabet. In 1902 the first regular monthly magazine 'Mizo leh Vai Chanchinbu' was started (OneIndia, 2017). Looking through the data of RNI (Registrar of Newspaper in India), there are 204 publications registered in Mizoram. Among the Mizo people, the most common form of mass communication is television and at present there are 29 cable operators. Among such operators, Zonet and LPS are the local cable network. Besides, Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio functions inside the state (Vanamamalai, 2018).

### IV. Mizo technique of Information

The first form of communication that the Mizo had was word of mouth or oral literature. They started composing songs about nature and wild animals or their daily life involving agriculture and it was developing itself with the influence of clans by other clans and also with Christianity. But, during the early years of Christianity in Mizoram, singing and dancing were seen as a taboo against Christianity and even the Mizo Khuang (drum) was removed from the church which led to a downslide in Mizos oral style of passing information down to generations through the use of songs. But, that was altered after years Christianity. The traditional form of singing, dancing and beating drums were degraded by the people themselves (Rohmingmawii, Christianity and Society in Mizoram, 2021).

The Mizos have their own traditional way of giving information out to the masses inside the society such instances can be seen in the administration of Zawlbuk, Tlangau, Zualko and Committee 'kohna' (notice for committee). The Tlangau or herald/village crier was changed, because during the early days Tlangau shouted information from their own mouth while in modern days, Tlangau use long horns which were installed in different locations to hand out information. With the development in education, the Mizos started their own form of handing out information through newspaper and television. Every sections or locality and the churches have their own local newspaper or journal which presents the various important notices and news worthy for their own dwellers and members (Rohmingmawii, Christianity and Society in Mizoram, 2021). Zualko or urgent messenger was an important role in the Mizo society during the early years. Whenever there is the need to hand out an urgent message especially the death of a person Zualko was sent. They went to the next villages or farther villages to deliver the death of their relatives or friends. There was no appointed Zualko rather any person can be a Zualko.

With Christianity and education a more developed association and different branches or different departments inside the church came into existence. Young Mizo Association (YMA) functions on the local level which replaced the early traditions of Zawlbuk, Zualko and smaller attributions. Under each local YMA there are different sub-committees like refreshment, decoration, education, environment protection and others. Likewise, different churches have different department under them, for instance, the youth department, ladies department, men's department, children, church board and others. Each departments and sub-committees handed out notice for their own committee in printed form.

### V. Changes in social institutions and traditions through social media

The social institutions and traditions in Mizo society have changed; and are changing drastically due to the social media. The Mizo people are social learners and are easily adapted to change. They find ease in the existence of social media and utilize the same for their own social and traditional purposes. As mentioned above, the idea of Zawlbuk is carried on by YMA with other altruistic activities. YMA acts as a social agent and its objectives are: 1) to use leisure for beneficial activities; 2) to serve for the welfare of the people and 3) to promote Christian way of living. Social media helps YMA in disseminating information easier and more efficient. In today's world, Tlangau (village crier) still exists but YMA took the initiative and announcements like the death of a person, notice on Government ration, vaccination drive and many other important things were carried on by the Tlangau with long horns fixed on different locations inside each local in Aizawl and villages. This has proved the theory 'the medium is the message' which was put forth by Marshall McLuhan because the 'medium' – long horns replaced the oral shout of Tlangau during the early years of Mizo society.

The term 'Zualko' is still relevant today but its use is different now because urgent messages were easily send through social media platforms like Whatsapp or Facebook and physical appearances were no more needed. There is no need for walking up to the next village, social media has made it easier and it is more efficient. Urgent information were easily pass on through social media and this has improved the previous traditions in a lot of ways. Notice for committee of churches, YMA, sub-committees and other organizations which were hand out in printed form were replaced by social media. It cannot be said that all printed form were eradicated due to social media but most of it were passed on through different platforms of social media. It is far more efficient and their reaches were not limited.

Furthermore, during the pandemic lockdown different churches and YMA send out their own local newsletter or organ through social media among their members. This is due to the fact that households were troubled by door to door contact of the

distributors. In this stance, social media platforms like Whatsapp and Facebook played the most crucial role for disseminating of the newsletter by PDF file.

One most important note made by the Mizos in their use of social media is the utilization of short-hand spellings of words. For instance, the word 'kan' meaning 'we' in English is simply written as 'kn' in short-hand, there are loads of other instances and this is what worries the Mizos. They are afraid of degrading their own language and culture but this is the consequences of development and cultural change that is prevalent in the whole world.

## VI. Conclusion

This study explored the area where social media led to a transformation among the Mizo culture of handing out information. The study had covered the history of Mizo alphabets and the development in education, communication and media. It has put forth the ways of the traditional media which was changed by social media. Social media has overcome the traditional style of disseminating information and it has proved to be far more time-saver and efficient. The easy availability of resources and the vast reach of social media proved to be the reason of transformation. The researcher has also found that topics on 'Zualko' or 'urgent messenger' is still under-studied which needed more stress upon it because it is an important milestone among the Mizos history of communication.

## VII. Acknowledgement

We would like to thank our colleagues, friends and family for supporting us and help make this paper a success. We thank the department and the university itself for their support and their humble words and suggestions.

## REFERENCES

- Chhuanawma, L. (2020). Revisiting Chhinlung: A search for the original home of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts (IJCRT)* , 3395-3430.
- Harper, R. A. (2010). *Inquiries Journal*. Retrieved March 27, 2022, from Inquiries Journal Website: <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/202/the-social-media-revolution-exploring-the-impact-on-journalism-and-news-media-organizations>
- Lalmuansangkimi, D. C. (2015). A Reflection on the Emergence of Print and Electronic Media in Mizoram. *Global Media Journal - Indian Edition* , 1-16.
- Lalremruata, T. (2019). Impact of Colonialism on the Traditional Beliefs and Practices of the Mizo. *Mizoram University Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* , 142-149.
- Lawmsanga. (2010). A Critical Study on Christian Mission with special reference to Presbyterian Church of Mizoram. *Edgbaston: Univeristy of Birmingham* .
- Leiner, B. M., Cerf, V. G., Clark, D. D., Kahn, R. E., Kleinrock, L., Lynch, D. C., et al. (1997). *internetsociety.org*. Retrieved April 1, 2022, from Internet Society Website: [https://www.internetsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ISOC-History-of-the-Internet\\_1997.pdf](https://www.internetsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ISOC-History-of-the-Internet_1997.pdf)
- Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., McDonald, T., Nicolescu, R., Sinanan, J., et al. (2016). *How the World Changed Social Media*. London: UCL Press.
- Nag, S. (2001). Tribals, Rats, Famine, State and the Nation. *Economic and Political Weekly* , pp. 1029-1033.
- OneIndia. (2017, November 18). *OneIndia*. Retrieved March 29, 2022, from OneIndia Website: <https://www.oneindia.com/2007/11/18/media-growing-strong-in-mizoram-1195363974.html>
- Rajbhavan. (n.d.). *Rajbhavan Mizoram Government*. Retrieved March 28, 2022, from Rajbhavan Mizoram Government Website: Rajbhavan Mizoram Government
- Rajendran, L., & Thesinghraj, P. (2016, October 12). *ResearchGate*. Retrieved March 27, 2022, from ResearchGate Website: [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Preethi-Thesinghraj/publication/309014723\\_The\\_Impact\\_of\\_New\\_Media\\_on\\_Traditional\\_Media/links/57fe403108ae6b2da3c88978/The-Impact-of-New-Media-on-Traditional-Media.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Preethi-Thesinghraj/publication/309014723_The_Impact_of_New_Media_on_Traditional_Media/links/57fe403108ae6b2da3c88978/The-Impact-of-New-Media-on-Traditional-Media.pdf)
- Ralte, L. (2020, February 11). *The Mizo*. Retrieved March 29, 2022, from The Mizo Website: <https://www.themizo.us/l/zo-tawng-hawrawp-a-aw-b-tobul-leh-a-chhehvel/>
- Ralte, R. L. (2018). *mzuir.inflibnet.in*. Retrieved March 29, 2022, from MZU Website: <http://mzuir.inflibnet.ac.in/jspui/bitstream/123456789/759/1/Ruth%20Laldintluangi%20Ralte%2CMizo.pdf>
- Rohmingmawii. (2013). Christianity and Society in Mizoram. In Malsawmdawngliana, & Rohmingmawii, *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram* (pp. 193-240). Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre.

Rohmingmawii. (2021). Christianity and Society in Mizoram. In Malsawmdawngliana, & Rohmingmawii, *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram* (pp. 193-240). Guwahati: South Eastern Book Agencies.

Rokhum, N. L. (2013). Social Stratification of the Mizos. In Malsawmdawngliana, & Rohmingmawii, *Mizo Narratives: accounts from Mizoram* (pp. 27-44). Guwahati: South Eastern Book Agencies.

Vanamamalai, R. (2018). Culture of Daily Newspapers in Mizoram. *Journal of Advanced Research in Journalism & Mass Communication* , 88-91.

Zorema, J. (2007). *Indirect rule in Mizoram 1890-1954*. Kolkatta: Mittal Publications.

