

## WHY LUANGDIMAI FOR OUR NOMENCLATURE?

A Paper presented on the 5th General Meeting of the Zeliangrong Theological Forum at Jalukie 'B' on May 30, 2010)

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### Introduction

The search for a nomenclature of our people which would be more inclusive than Zeliangrong has been in ZTF discussion since 2006. The first attempt, in this regard, was made in the second ZTF conference (2006) held at Zeliangrong Baptist Church, Tamenglong in which Lungsanliu and Ehusing presented papers proposing Hamai and Dimai respectively to replace the name Zeliangrong. Though the proposed name Dimai made a new entry into the issue of discussion, the proposed name Hamai has been in popular discussion at various levels of Zeliangrong people's social forums. Nevertheless, these two names could not make a breakthrough in arriving at a common consensus. In this presentation, we are taking a detour from the previous papers and progress. Here we attempt to highlight the problem and issues involves in framing a new name to replace the name Zeliangrong while at same time we propose new nomenclature to advance the issue.

### The Problem

We all think, in some way that the name "Zeliangrong" seems to be an ambiguous and an inadequate shorthand expression which is imposed/packed with the meaning to be connoting the totality of our people socially and also politically in many ways. The exclusion of "Puime" is one glaring inadequacy of the name. We can take, perhaps what appears to be the greatest weakness of the name – the visibility of the Ze, Liang and Rong each having a separate signified group when one becomes particular in spelling out. The problem is compounded by the ideological conflicts within our community; some group aspiring to *make* Zeliangrong while some to *break* it or remodel the way one should understand of the name – its essential meaning. At the present juncture of competing efforts at making and breaking or remodeling Zeliangrong, we found it a far fetch attempt to displace the popular name with a new name *outrightly*. We do not contradict constructing or framing a new name but we are equally concern about "the how" of doing it.

While the name Zeliangrong poses some question (as stated above), it has already earned a legitimate position in the common usage of the people. It stands best as the uniting force at least presently because no other name is popular in the common usage to replace Zeliangrong. Though the lacunae of the name Zeliangrong have motivated the search for new name, the new name cannot erase the memory of the old at a go, and hence the trauma that would persist after the effacing of the old name from our archives needs to be considered seriously to avoid the uncertainty of whether the privileging of the new name can really supersede the old name. This is because the name "Zeliangrong" has an indelible relationship with our Zeliangrong people's history and has become "the" name for our people at least *presently*. To enforce a new name "abruptly" will not be well received by any group but rather compound the issue of nomenclature.

### Previous Attempts and the Present Challenges

Zeliangrong is the most legitimate expression as of now, hence any name proposed to replace Zeliangrong at once would be problematic and confusing. The problem will not be necessarily that of the *name* as of its *limited usage*, though the propriety of any proposed nomenclature should preclude usage. The feasibility of using Hamai/Hamei was well documented by Lungsanliu in the Second Meeting held at Tamenlong in Summer 2006. However, it was rather an attempt to find out what our people called themselves in the past before the name “Zeliangrong” came into being. But we know that the proposed “Hamei/Hamai” is ambiguous and has a lot of controversies behind it. Etymologically or in its original connotation, it refers to “non-plains people” (the hills people) or “people who are not from the plains.” The name is *not* specific of Zeliangrong people but the meaning covers all who were not from the “plains area”; a name that differentiates the “hills people” from the “plains people.” Similarly, Ihusing had proposed Dimai to replace Zeliangrong. However, while the name is good as presented in the paper, the name is rather too self exulting with little or no historical roots concomitant with our history. Moreover, even the proposed discussion takes place only within the terrain of a few elite who are interested in the construction of a new name, while the common people are not at all aware of any such development. If any other nomenclature has to replace the present popular name Zeliangrong, it has to become a common usage. Our people should become comfortable with the name both in understanding and usage. For that matter, not only in talks but more importantly it should be made popular in popular media.

Usage is important because it is only after repeating again and again normalcy is establish. The name Zeliangrong is also a constructed name and for that matter every name is a construction. It is never there from the beginning. We learned from history that our fathers give the name in a meeting at Kaishamthong, Imphal on February 15, 1947. Prior to that we do not have a “commonly established name” to call ourselves other than the known fact that we came from the same root, share the same root and constitute a community. However, it is only after repeating again and again for years that “Zeliangrong” has appeared today as the legitimate name-tag and so is used in every popular media. Our point is that, since name is a construction of the people so interested in it, we can always go for a better and more suitable nomenclature; however, it must pass through the test of people’s acceptability before it replaces the old name.

What we mean here is that, we cannot impose a new name to replace the old abruptly without any preparatory ground work. We should disseminate the new name to such an extent that people would begin to use the new and the old synonymously. To arrive at such a stage would require us not only to construct a new name but actively participate in popularizing it in our discourses. Though it is well taken that, the main objective of this venture in the first place, is to coin for our Forum, a name, that does not exclude anyone but includes all the *four* groups of Zeliangrong, caution must also be taken that our forum is not a legislative assembly. However, the new name will not come out of the blue without an effort. Therefore, taking this space as the ground for our search, we can and should begin to evolve a new nomenclature.

In this regard, we attempt to propose a new nomenclature(s) that, in our opinion, all our people share in common. Nevertheless, our proposal is for further discussions and deliberations in the present meeting and not conclusive in itself. This is because, a good deal of talking and reasoning is important before we come to a consensual conclusion.

### **The Proposed New Nomenclature(s)**

The history of all the four groups in general agree that Makuilongdi is the point of reference for all the Zeliangrong people. Since we all trace our origins to this village as one

people, we gather that the best way/name that will include all tribes would be to point ourselves to this place of our common origin. Since this village still exists today, the “new name” should not be confused with the name used by/ for the present villagers of Makuilongdi/Nkuilongdi, we need to find out which name would be appropriate for our Forum and for the common identity of our tribe as a whole.

Taking Makuilongdi or Nkuilongdi as the stem for naming we can come out with Makuilongdimai, Nkuilongdimai, Makuimai, Longdimai, Makuilongmai, Kuilongmai etc. as possible names.

But before proceeding to make a choice, a brief summary of the meaning of Makuilongdi/Nkuilongdi would be helpful. The name Nkuilongdi is a combination of two words: *Nkui*- feast or Banquet (that which also connotes the feast of merit or merit feast known in our tradition), and *Longdi*- a big range or hill. Which means Nkuilongdi is “a big range of continuous feast”. Nkuilongdi was a place of great prosperity. Their economic position was sound and they do not know scarcity of food and drinks. Feasting was part of their lives. From that background, the name, Nkuilongdi, was derived.[1] Perhaps Nkuilongdi is the more original name though Makuilongdi had become the synonymous name.

In our opinion, *Makuimai* or *Longdimai* would be the most suiting name if we are to derive from Nkuilongdi/Makuilongdi. The long form (Makuilongdimai/ Nkuilongdimai) is rather too long (even unnecessary) though it would come as a self explanatory nomenclature. One may ask why the shortening of the long form. However, this question would not come as a setback because, the shortened name carries in itself the explanation of the long form. It is a matter of coining a more polished name which is linked to the root of the long name. Of course, a polished or a smooth name is not the search here, “a convenient name for usage” cannot be underestimated after all it would be used by even other people. Though the name is shortened, it is not devoid of the meaning of the long name; rather a good explanation would always accompany the short name if one is interested to know in depth the meaning of *Longdimai* or *Makuimai*. Moreover, name is always a social construction, hence we can name our name the way we desire best.

While proposing a choice between *Longdimai* or *Makuimai*, we do not intend to impose that either of these has to be adopted. However, if the forum wills to evolve a new inclusive nomenclature, it must decide on what would be that name sooner or later.

## **Conclusion**

Regarding the “how” of doing it, we can begin by using slash alongside the present name Zeliangrong. With a slash we can call our Forum by that name, use it in our publications, calendars, and then bring in Inpuimei membership into our Forum. We can then, suggest this name to those concerned with this issue. Presently, the Zeliangrong Naga Council/Zeliangrong Interim Body is also having a debate in the nomenclature whether our people should use Zeliangrong Union (the old name) or Zeliangrong Baudi (the new name) for the highest social forum of our people. Though this issue is not directly related to our paper, it is not totally unrelated. The point here is that, our people at large is also working on the issue of nomenclature. In this regards, our Forum, once we name our name, we can play a progressive role on the ongoing deliberation of this issue.

The intellectual class can do better to advertise the name in writing and texting the name. It lies within the domain of the intellectual artistic discourse to popularize it, though it would take

some time for people to accept the new name. If we begin to use in our popular literature and strive to let it sink into the mind of common people, it would one day become a legitimate expression. Usage becomes the rule. Usage is primary. Without popular usage, our decision here to affirm or approve would not impact the popular language because we are not legislatures.

[1] Rabi Pame, *An Evaluatory Study of the History and Growth of the Zeliangrong Churches in Nagaland with Special Reference to the Zeme Baptist Church Council*, A Thesis submitted in Partial satisfaction of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Theology in Missiology, 1993. 14-15.