

**STATEMENT BY TIMUAY NOVAL LAMBO OF
ZAMBOANGA CITY, MINDANAO, PHILIPPINES**

TO

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

MARCH 23, 2005 - OTTAWA

[The following is an open letter by Subanon elder and chief, Timuay Noval Lambo, in response to TVI Pacific employee Juanito Tumangkis, who has adopted for himself the hereditary and traditional title of Timuay, against Subanon cultural tradition, and who has written an open letter slandering Timuay Lambo and others, which TVI Pacific has posted on its web site.]

Tupo Nog Pito Kobogulalan Pogokbit Nog Gulal Sog Pito Kodolungan

BALOY NOG GUKOM

No. 53, Natividad St., Tetuan, Zamboanga City

March 12, 2005

RE: Some Issues of Concern and Clarifications to the Open Letter of Juanito Tumangkis and Attorney Pablo Bernardo

To Whom It May Concern:

Warmest greetings of peace and solidarity.

I write to everyone of you due to my deep concern of my people, the *Subanon sa Pito ko Dolungan* or the Subanons of the Seven Rivers, and all those who are involved or affected by the issues and developments in Canatuan, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.

I am deeply saddened by the turn of events in the past decade that have severely affected our people particularly in Canatuan and generally within the Zamboanga Peninsula. I am deeply disturbed by the events that led to the lost of our ancestral domains, the desecration of our sacred places, the disrespect to our customs and traditions, and the sharpening division of our people. The most recent and most glaring of this all is the open letter of self-proclaimed "Timuay" Juanito Tumangkis assisted by Atty. Pablo Bernardo, a relative of mine who know me and who I am in the Subanon community.

The claims and allegations of self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis is a clear manifestation of his ignorance to the history of our people and disrespect to our customs and traditions. These are clear proof of his being the real stranger to Siocon and a Subanon alienated from his own culture.

To shed light on the various issues raised by self-proclaimed “Timuay” Tumangkis and to explain why I am deeply involved in the issues in Siocon despite of my being not a resident of the Municipality, let me give you a brief historical background of the Subanons sa Pito ko Dolungan.

I am Timuay Noval Lambo, the **Gulang Gukom** (*The Most Senior Elder*) of the *Gukom sa Pito Kobogolalan sa Pito ka Dolungan*, the Supreme Council of the Confederation of the Seven Councils of Elders of the Seven Rivers. I am a direct descendant of Timuay Manglang, the founding Timuay of the *Confederation of the Seven Councils of Elders of the Pito ka Dolungan*.

I felt compelled to narrate to you the guarded history of our clan and our people in order to shed light and answer the allegations of self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis that I have no authority to speak for the Subanons of Siocon and that Timuay Boy Anoy is not a real Timuay and Onsino Mato has no right to speak for the Subanons of Canatuan because he comes from Barangay Candis.

The *Confederation of the Seven Councils of Elders of the Pito ka Dolungan* was composed of the seven *Kobogolalan* or Councils of the major *Pigbogolalans*(communities) in the present southern part of the Zamboanga Peninsula. These *Kobogolalans* were based in the seven major rivers in the region and their respective traditional territories covers the whole *Tinubigan* or the whole watershed region draining to the main river. Within these watershed regions small groups of Subanon families settled mostly along the smaller rivers. The Timuay or Chief and most of the ranking members of the *Kobogolalan* settles along the major river where it is the most accessible, most of the families also settled and, trade and commerce were also active. These place is referred to as the *Dolungan* or the “direction where the water converge” or “the place where people go.” In later times, the Dolungan refers to the place or settlement where the religious, political and economic activities of the Subanons become most active. Hence, the term “Pito ka Dolungan.”

It is very ironic that the major rivers that serve as the source of identity of each Dolungan and the roots of our people presently become the legal boundaries of the modern municipalities that divided the traditional ancestral territories of our people. These new political subdivision greatly confused our people who now need to identify themselves with the *Tinubigan* and the municipality that serve as their place of residence.

The seven Dolungans are: Mokupal (recorded as Siocon by the Spanish), Kipit, Patawag, Pongunodan, Malayal, Tupilak and Bakalan. It is interesting to note that in the written accounts of Pigafetta, the chronicler of Magellan’s Expedition, he and the remnants of the expedition passed by and meet the chief of Kipit (spelled Quipit in Spanish records) in 1521 after escaping from Cebu and on their way to the Moluccas. Most historians confirm that the Quipit mentioned by Pigafetta is no other than the settlement along Kipit river which is no other than the *Dolungan sa Kipit*.

The Timuays or Chiefs of the Pito ka Dolungan were related to each other and could trace their ancestry to their forefathers from Nawan, the present-day Zamboanga City. The Confederation of the Seven Councils of the Pito ka Dolungan was organized by our great ancestor, Apo Manglang, who ruled as Timuay of the Dolungan of Siocon sometime in the middle of the 17th century.

Apo Manglang was very much alarmed by the rapid encroachment of the Spanish missionaries in his own and nearby territories where some of the Subanons were converted to Christianity and were conscripted as soldiers in the Spanish army. Many of those conscripted had never returned to their place. Confronted this threat, Timuay Manglang summoned the other Timuays of the seven Dolungans who were also his kin. The

historic meeting that took place in Siocon, gave birth to the Confederation of the Councils of the Seven Dolungans. In response to the growing threat, the Confederation formed an army led by the great warrior Apo Monukon, a nephew of Timuay Manglang. The Subanon army attacked the Spanish settlement in Siocon killing several Spanish soldiers, a priest and a number of non-Spanish Christians. This drove out the Spanish from Siocon for many years.

This event was never recorded in the Philippine History, however, Fr. Horacio de la Costa in his book *"The Jesuits in the Philippines"* mentioned that Fr. Juan del Campo, S.J. who heads the mission in Siocon was killed by Subanons who attacked their mission house on January 27, 1650. Fr. de la Costa further mentioned that one possible cause of the uprising in Siocon was the labor draft of 1649 where converts were sent to other places to build forts. This perfectly coincided with the reasons told and retold by our forefathers on the reasons of their resistance and attack of Siocon.

From the time of its establishment until the present, the leadership of the Confederation was vested to the descendants of Timuay Manglang whom I got the title of Timuay and Gulang Gukom.

Self-proclaimed "Timuay" Juanito Tumangkis alleged that I have no right and credibility to speak about the Subanons of Siocon because I came from and reside in Lintangan, Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte. Let me again clarify this matter.

During the leadership of Timuay Bugag, a grandson of Apo Manglang, less than a century later, relative peace was experienced in Siocon and the Spanish forces withdraw from their bases including those stationed in Nawan and other Spanish settlements. Timuay Bugag decided to move to the Dolungan of Malayal, hoping that from there he can led his people to return to Nawan, (the present-day Zamboanga City) which was named after the daughter of Apo Tobunaway, the first Timuay of the Subanons. The Subanons were slowly driven off from Nawan by the Muslims from the South who slowly migrated to the Zamboanga Peninsula and mainland Mindanao in the 15th century.

Our tradition always mentioned of the *Kondit* (Peace Pact) between Timuay Tobunaway and Salingaya Bungso who came from a far Kingdom. After the *Kondit*, some of the people of Salingaya Bungso settled in Nawan while some of them continued their journey to other parts of Mindanao. The Peace Pact was never recorded in the Philippine History. However, eminent American historian Najeeb Saleeby who came to the Philippines in the early 20th century and respected Muslim historian Cesar Adib Majul agreed that between 1475 and 1515, a Muslim Prince from Johore named Sharif Muhammad Kabungsuwan together with his followers escaped from Malacca after it was captured by the Portuguese in 1511, came to Mindanao particularly in Malabang, now part of Lanao del Sur province. I strongly believe that the Sharif Kabungsuwan and Salingaya Bungso could be the same person or if different, the latter could be a representative of the former who sued peace with the Subanons in Nawan.

As our ancestors departed Nawan to escape conversion to Islam and enslavement, it has been their cherished dream to return to Nawan. This dream was passed from one generation to another. Timuay Manglang was the first to attempt to settle in Malayal and Lintangan, all part of present-day municipality of Sibuco, when the Spanish left Siocon for unknown reason years after the attack. It seems to me that this attempt happened after 1663 when the Spanish left their forts in Zamboanga and neighboring settlements to re-enforce and defend Manila from the threat poised by the Chinese corsair Koxinga in 1662- 1663. Timuay Manglang's return to Siocon was probably prompted by the return of the Spanish soldiers and missionaries in early 18th century.

It was Timuay Bugag, the grandson of Timuay Manglang who finally transferred the seat of leadership of the Confederation in Malayal and Lintangan decades later when the Spanish Missionaries and soldiers again left Siocon and did not return for a long time. The transfer happened slowly until such time that Timuay

Bugag transferred residence in Lintangan and formed a new Kobogolalan to administer the Dolungan of Siocon. The period of transfer probably happened sometime after 1768 when the Jesuits were removed from the Philippines and many of their missions were temporarily abandoned, perhaps including that in Siocon.

Before Timuay Bugag finally left Siocon, he summoned Tukimbing, his cousin-in-law (the husband of his cousin Anun) and his nephews Anoy and Mudai to constitute the *Kobogolalan* of Siocon. Being the eldest Tukimbing was designated as the regent Timuay while Anoy was still young.

After the death of Timuay Tukimbing, Anoy assumed as the Timuay while the descendants of Tukimbing who also have direct descent from Apo Manglang thru Anun, their mother, remained to be the members of the *Kobogolalan of Siocon*. The descendants of Mudai moved to Malayal in the present-day municipality of Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte. Mudai was the great grandfather of Timuay Fernando Mudai, one of those accused by TVI of masterminding the ambush of their employees in December 26, 2002. The case has just been recently dismissed by the Court.

Timuay Anoy has two sons - Diwana, the elder and Agbog, the younger. Diwana, who as the elder has the hereditary right of succession, however, he declined to be the next Timuay in favor of his younger brother, Agbog who supposed to be the Soliling or Deputy. Diwana was also a known medicine man or traditional healer, thus, he was known as a *Bolian*. By tradition, the title should be returned to the family of Diwana after the death of Agbog and his descendants will assume the rightful ranks traditionally accorded to them.

As more and more Christian settlers settled in Siocon, the descendants of Timuay Anoy moved to the interior parts of Siocon living the descendants of Timuay Tukimbing in Manaol, just a kilometer away from the present Poblacion.

The family of Timuay Agbog moved to Molungon (a barangay which was then part of the Municipality of Siocon but now part of the municipality of Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay). This also moved the seat of leadership of the *Kobogolalan of Siocon* to Molungon. The family and relatives of Diwana moved to Lituban which then comprises the present barangays of D. Riconalla, Malipot, Lituban and Tabayoa, all along the Lituban River.

Upon the death of Timuay Agbog, his son Tagah become Timuay because none of Diwana's sons accepted the *Golal*. It was during the leadership of Timuay Tagah that the elders of the Dolungan of Siocon decided to divide the Dolungan into two *Pigbogolalans* or communities. Each *Pigbogolalan* shall be headed by a Timuay. The two *Pigbogolalans* are Siocon, with Salacao, the son of Timuay Tukimbing as the Timuay; and Lituban with Tagah as the Timuay. Before Timuay Tagah died, he returned the *Golal* or rank of the Timuay of the Dolungan sa Siocon to the family of Diwana, by this time led by Lomuyod. Lomuyod, like his father was a skilled *bolian* and already old, declined to accept the *Golal* and passed it to his son Jose Boy Anoy. Upon the death of Timuay Tagah, Jose Boy Anoy ascended as the Timuay of the *Dolungan sa Siocon*. Thus, contrary to what "Timuay" Jaunito Tumangkis is alleging, Jose Boy Anoy is the rightful Timuay of the Dolungan sa Siocon and have jurisdiction over the areas traditionally belonging to the *Pigbogolalan of Lituban* which included the communities belonging to the present-day barangays of Tabayo, Candis and Malungon which before form part of the Municipality of Siocon. When the Municipality of Tungawan was formed, Molungon become part of it.

Timuay Tagah is the brother of Onsino Mato's mother. Since Timuay Tagah returned the *Golal* to the descendants of Diwana, Onsino belongs to the family with the rank of Soliling sa Dolungan sa Siocon and therefore, has the right and responsibility to speak for the *Pigbogolalan of Lituban* Dolungan sa Siocon.

Canatuan is among the sacred ground of the Subanons of Siocon. The word Canatuan originate from the Subanon word “konotuan” which means a place where something like flowers are picked. Our ancestors believe that in the wilderness of the mountains of Canatuan live bad spirits who preyed on the people that cross the mountains from Siocon to Tupilak or other Pigbogolalans. Through the intercession of Apo Magiba-Sanag, our ancestors and the bad spirits agreed that they will stop preying our kins provided that our ancestors will guard the mountains. From then on, our ancestors were can then cross the mountains safely and they became free to pick or “*konot*” the plants in that mountain that were proven to be effective medicines. Thus the place was named “Konotuan” that eventually become Canatuan.

Canatuan is part of the Dolungan sa Siocon, hence Timuay Boy Anoy and Soliling Onsino Mato can speak for it wherever they are. It is also part of the *Pito ka Dolungan* hence, I could also speak for it being the present Gulang Gukom of the Confederation of the Seven Councils of the Pito ka Dolungan.

It is with great sadness but not entirely a surprise that Mr. Juanito Tumangkis, Atty. Bernardo and Mr. Ponciano Agbadan, the NCIP representative, are all ignorant of this historical facts. Its because they do not come from the lineage of the Timuays of Siocon nor a member of any *Kobogolalan* within the region covered by the Confederation.

Self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis hails from Patalon. His father Nunga Tumangkis married to a Subanon woman from Siocon and settled there for some time until he went to hiding after being involved with armed groups who were involve in extortion activities. Nunga was also known as Kumander Tumangkis who for a time allied with the local group of Moro rebels. Nunga, along with his sons, including “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis surrendered to Melanio Limposon, a former commander of a unit of the Civilian Home Defense Force (CHDF), the paramilitary unit that fought against the Moro and communist rebels during the Marcos regime. Melanio Limposon has a close contact in the Southern Command of the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the person of then Col. Lucero who was his superior during his CHDF days.

Nunga’s surrender was not completed because Melanio Limposon died, hence, he and his sons including “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis were not fully cleared forcing them to went into hiding again. Nunga moved to Malubal, settled there until he died in the in the ancestral land of Timuay Fernando Mudai.

“Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis continued hiding after he and his group was charged with brigandage. He was able to work as a small scale miner in Guinabucan, R.T. Lim and eventually to Canatuan in the mid-nineties. He could be the President of the Siocon Subanon Association, Inc. (SSAI) but he can never be a legitimate Timuay. On the other hand, SSAI is not the legitimate CADT holder because it is not an indigenous peoples organization (IPO) that complies with the requirements mandated in Section 2, Part II, Rule IV of the NCIP Administrative Order No. 1 s. 1998 or the Rules and Regulation Implementing R.A. No. 8371. SSAI is a non-stock corporation registered in the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) under the provisions of the Corporation Code of the Philippines. This unrefutable truth is recognized by the NCIP when it issued the Certificate of Recognition of Ancestral Domain Area in May 31, 2002 to the Subanon Tribe of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte represented by the head claimant Timuay Jose Anoy.

It is also not true that Timuay Jose Boy Anoy allowed the entry of small scale miners in Mt. Canatuan. It is on record that Timuay Boy Anoy objected the entry of logging but they were helpless to prevent the entry of armed logging guards who confiscated even their bolos used for their kaingin farms. In 1992, Timuay Jose Boy Anoy opposed the entry of small scale miners led by Ramon Bosque who become the original owner of the Mineral Production Sharing Agreement (MPSA) that is now used by TVI after Bosque’s rights were sold to the company. These small-scale miners included self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis who came from the gold rush area in Guinabukan, about 15 kilometers away from Canatuan.

It is ironic that self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis would claim that Timuay Jose Boy Anoy who now temporarily reside in Siocon about 20 kilometers from Canatuan and Soliling Onsino Mato who now temporarily reside in Loder, Tungawan about 10 kilometers away from Canatuan do not have the right to speak for the Subanons of Canatuan for simply not staying in Canatuan while he who came from Patalon hundred of kilometers away become a Timuay because he was elected as President of SSAI, a registered non-stock corporation who is now an employee of TVI and reside in their mining area that is within the ancestral domain area.

What makes the situation more scandalous is the fact that the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) from its Technical Assistant up to the Commissioners recognize all these as facts and correct in violation of there mandate a stipulated in Section 39, Chapter VII of Republic Act 8371 otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act or IPRA that states:

“The NCIP shall protect and promote the interest and well-being of the Indigenous Cultural Communities / Indigenous Peoples (ICC/IP) with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions and institutions”.

I am very thankful to all individuals, organizations and institutions who continue to support our struggle for justice, respect and self-determination. We strongly believe that the power of the truth will overcome all the lies spread by self-proclaimed “Timuay” Juanito Tumangkis and Atty. Pablo Bernardo.

May the blessings of our great ancestors be with us all.

Respectfully yours,

(SGD) Timuay Noval Lambo
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