

PROJECT PROPOSAL

1. **PROJECT TITLE:** *Alamat* : 1st International Conference on Myths and Symbols (ALAMAT- 1st ICOMS)

Theme : Flood Stories, Lost Lands and Drowned Continents in Myths and Symbols

(Rediscovering and Disseminating the Contemporary Significance of Ancient Myths and Symbols for Myth-Making)

(November 25-27, 2008)
CCP Little Theater

2. **PROJECT CATEGORY:** Conference

3. **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

There is a great need to rediscover and disseminate the significance of ancient myths and symbols in contemporary life, especially for myth-making. Myth, translated as “alamat” is understood in the following senses: first, as a belief or story that is false or make believe; second, as a body of fantastic or fabulous stories on the life of the gods, ancestors, heroes, legendary creatures, etc.; third, as a sacred story involving deities and ancestral figures; fourth, as a “story” from the Greek word “muthos” (“mythos”) or “word” arising from the mouth (the inspiration of speech / sacred sounds) referring to the sacred narratives regarding the deeds of the gods in the beginning of creation; and fifth, as a story reflecting human consciousness as creator, based on a “mytho-poetic” mind (myth-logic, or the logic of images, metaphors and symbols encoded in stories) believed to spring from the animism of past cultures but is now considered as a manifestation of the ecological mind, grounded upon the paradigm of the Gaia Hypothesis, the Global Brain and the Morphogenetic Fields.

In this regard, myths, popularly understood as “fiction”; regarded as “regressive” by evolutionists; and viewed as “instruments of domination” by postmodernists – need to be rediscovered – not just as folkloric and literary material or text, but also as indicators of past astronomical, geological, meteorological, pre-historic, historical, and cultural events and phenomena (whose value and significance are just being brought to the fore by contemporary studies in various academic disciplines and fields of knowledge). As such they become sources of knowledge for deeper understanding of the consciousness of peoples, their ways of life, migration patterns, values and aspirations, etc. Moreover, the knowledge of myths may serve as a way of linking the past, present and future, through their symbolic patterns and significance, and by serving as empirical indicators of past events and phenomena.

A multi-disciplinary, multi-sectoral, and multi-dimensional approach to the study of myths and symbols will bring together various sectors and approaches involved in the study and use of myths - for the purpose of collectively realizing common endeavors in nation-building, regional identity-formation, or global networks in preserving nature and the environment, as well as in using pro-nature alternative ways of producing and using energy resources.

For this reason, the *Alamat* : International Conference on Myths and Symbols (Alamat-ICOMS) will focus on the study of myths and symbols with the timely motifs of the great flood, lost lands and drowned continents in world mythology. Due to the predominance of the themes of massive flooding, disappearance of lands and islands, and submergence of bodies of lands under the sea in the oral traditions of Southeast Asia and the Pacific regions, the Conference organizers have hypothesized that beyond their symbolic value, they might also serve as empirical indicators of some past actual events that may reframe the present understanding of the whole region.

Taking its inspiration from the book *Eden in the East : The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia* (1998) by Dr. Stephen Oppenheimer of Oxford University, the Conference organizers have conceptualized an international conference to gather related researches made by various sectors on this theme. It aims to consolidate data-based researches from the academic sector, independent researchers, environmentalists, arts and culture promoters, and other interested groups from the religious sector, the business and industry sector, etc. These data could be packaged both to inspire people toward nation-building and social transformation, and to warn them about impending dangers to our native land from water-based catastrophes, if we do not act collectively to address the serious environmental and ecological problems now.

Using his studies on genetics, Dr. Stephen Oppenheimer corroborates the mythical and folkloric view of an existing ancient civilization or continent in Southeast Asia that used to connect insular and mainland Southeast Asia. This continent he calls "Sundaland" which he believes to have drowned in a series of flooding that have occurred in the last inter-glacial period, the last deluge happening as late as 5,000 B.C. Based on this series of events, he presents his studies in genetics as explaining two major events : first, a migration belt eastward from the drowned continent of Southeast Asia to the Pacific islands; and second, a migration pattern westwards from Southeast Asia to the Mediterranean - passing through India, Mesopotamia, Egypt and the Mediterranean. The drowning of the old continent of *Sundaland* that once connected mainland and insular Southeast Asia, Oppenheimer claims, resulted in the dispersal of its surviving peoples to various places of the world, bringing their advance cultures to these places – as he claims in the book *Eden in the East : The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia* (1998). From the cultural and technological contributions made by the migrants to these various areas, the Neolithic Revolution transpired. Not discounting the belief in the growth of multiple centers of civilization, this hypothesis made by Oppenheimer makes Southeast Asia as one of the probable earliest centers of civilizations in the world. Side by side with the *Nusantao Hypothesis* of the archeologist Dr. Wilhelm Solheim, the *Austrie-Hypothesis* in linguistics, as well as the *Bird and Dragon* clan study of Paul Kekail Manansala (which favor the peopling of the region from this possible "lost continent", a new way of looking into the prehistory of the region, and its renewed threat of water-based catastrophes in the region might be just ripe for the current discussion on the massive flooding threat arising in the region brought about by the melting of the polar ice caps due to global warming.

For this reason, the Department of Arts and Communication sees the need to hold an international conference on this particular theme to consolidate and disseminate all the studies and researchers so far made on this theme, as well as to see how thus far the thesis made by Oppenheimer is borne by current research, and furthermore, how it can be used for renewal, transformation, healing and

empowerment projects and programs not just for Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific region, but also for the whole world.

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

4.1 Nature of the Project and activities

The University of the Philippines Manila, is coming up with an international conference titled “ALAMAT : International Conference on Myths and Symbols” (Alamat-1st ICOMS) with the theme, “Flood Stories, Lost Lands and Drowned Continents of the World” to be held at the Little Theater, Cultural Center of the Philippines, on November 25-27, 2008.

The three-day conference shall be a venue for academic discussions on the status of current and past studies on myths and symbols scholarship pertaining to the Conference Theme. A Call for Papers from all interested parties in the local, national and international levels have been done – from the academic and research institutions; the educational sector; the business and industry sector; the media sector; the arts, artists, and culture organizations; religious community and church groups, as well as the government sector, non-governmental groups and civil society, people’s groups, the *kapatiran*, “*fellowship*” sector, and the local government units. **Sixteen** individual speakers based on a Call for Papers would be selected. Panel discussants representing various sectors in the Philippines will be invited.

Other features of the conference are the following:

- Pre-Alamat Conference Promotional Concert (ALAMAT Concert)
- *Opening Program’s Main Speaker : Dr. Stephen James Oppenheimer, M.D. (Green College and School of Anthropology, Oxford University) author Eden in the East : The Drowned Continent of Southeast Asia (London : Phoenix Paperback, Orion Books Ltd., 1998) , on November 24, 2008*
- *Other Main Speakers : Dr. Wilhelm Solheim II, Paul Kekai Manansala*
- Panel Discussion of Various Sectors
- *Gala Night and Thanksgiving Concert (First Night) November 25, 2008*
- *Book Sale November 25-27 (featuring the books of Dr. Stephen Oppenheimer and other related books by Filipino and international scholars*

4.2 Target date of implementation

September 2007 – October 2008 (Preparatory and Promotion phase)
September 2008 – Promotional ALAMAT Concert
November 25-27, 2008 (Conference Proper)

4.3 Venue

Little Theater, Cultural Center of the Philippines

5. OBJECTIVES

As a whole, the Conference will serve as a venue for the documentation, presentation, discussion and dissemination of all kinds of studies on myths and symbols all over the world – using disciplinary, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, non-disciplinary, or even that of mixed

methodologies – which would give a chance for all voices to be heard, be they part of mainstream, conventional, academic (covering studies grounded in the sciences, social sciences, arts and the humanities), alternative, popular, folkloric and marginalized views.

The conference further aims to collect the ancient beliefs, myths, and legends on the phenomena of great flooding, lost lands, and drowned continents all over the world and then connect them with contemporary parallel events and phenomena such as that of global warming.

Moreover, the conference explores the myth-making potential and endeavors made by individuals and groups, for nation-building and the possibility of forging regional and global ties based on their common myths and symbols, thus, reclaim the ancient prehistory of the region based on ancient myths and symbols serving as indicators, signs and symptoms of external physical and material realities. Such a reconnection with our ancient roots will help us define our identity on the personal, national, regional and even global levels. Reconnecting with one's ancient roots is a necessary part of humanity's self-healing and self-formation.

Lastly, the conference also aims to be the venue for discussing and disseminating the contemporary implications and significance of the pre-diluvian myths and symbols to contemporary problems such as global warming, climate change, earthquakes, etc.

As specific objectives, the conference will have the following goals:

1. to compile the scattered bits and pieces of references and studies made on the myths and symbols pertaining to flood stories, lost lands, and drowned continents in Asia, the Pacific Region and the world;
2. to compile studies on science and social sciences-related investigations, issues, and controversies pertaining to the theme and symbols of the flood, lost lands and sunken continents;
3. to compile studies on survivals, remnants and vestiges of probable pre-diluvian myths, symbols and artifacts as revealed by the arts, literature, religion and folklore of the world;
4. to document the current beliefs on this theme from the marginalized sectors of the "kapatiran" and other religious folk groups and urban 'esoteric' groups in the Philippines such as those of the Banahaw groups, the Rizalista groups, the Adarnistas', etc., as part of an empowerment and advocacy agenda;
5. to document the use and application of rediscovered and reclaimed myths and symbols by various groups for cultural and ecological advocacy as well as for personal and social inspiration, liberation, healing and empowerment projects; and
6. to hear out and document contemporary personal narrative accounts by victims of today's catastrophic events such as flooding, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, tornadoes, etc. – indicating not only the evolving process of myth-making, but also showing that myth is the web of the past, present and future interacting;
7. to put up poster exhibits of relevant papers, as well as art works, pertaining to the conference theme that will be later documented; and
8. to rediscover the contemporary significance of myths and disseminate its communicative functions and myth-making powers by going over following

topics : the pre-diluvian heritage of the Philippines and Southeast Asian nations; myths and symbols as guiding and warning indicators applied to healing the earth, in line with global warming; and the need to heal the earth through inner transformation and rebonding with Mother Earth.

EXPECTED OUTPUT

1. CD copies of Conference Papers (150 copies initially) for dissemination at the Conference period
2. CD copies of Conference Papers (500) for distribution to high school libraries, college libraries and universities in selected areas of the Philippines
3. Music Video of ALAMAT Concert
4. Music Video of ALAMAT Theme Song
5. Video Copy of the Conference Proceedings
6. Video Documentation of the Poster Exhibits / Arts Exhibits
7. Establishment of the ALAMAT (Alamat at Mito Aral Tayo) as a Department-based but nationally-oriented student group tasked to promote, preserve, advocate and disseminate knowledge and uses of myths and symbol studies in all the regions of the Philippines
8. Establishment of an International Society for Myth and Symbol Studies - an international society of scholars, researchers, professionals, civil society groups, environmentalists, students tasked with studying myths and symbols and applying this knowledge for individual, social, national, regional and global transformation projects and activities in the interest of healing the earth and advancing the causes of humanity and of life in general, as well as disseminating

7.PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

1. The College of Arts and Sciences, other UP Manila units, the academic and research institutions as well as the educational sector; the business and industry sector; the media sector; the arts, artists, and culture organizations; religious community and church groups, as well as the government sector, non-governmental groups and civil society, people's groups, and the local government units to participate in this international conference – updating their knowledge and forging a deeper understanding on the significance of myths and symbols to contemporary life; and a chance to demonstrate cooperation and harmony among different sectors, as well as unity in the context of diversity
 2. Institutions, schools, and groups based in Manila– rediscovering Manila as the first city to be called “Pearl of the Orient” in the Philippines, and one of the many “Pearls of the Orient” in Asia and the Pacific, with its myth and symbol of a vanished kingdom of the East
 3. For the nation – rediscovering its noble and great pre-diluvian roots and heritage, its ancient wisdom and glory as the probable “cradle of ancient civilization”
 4. For the Asia and the Pacific region – establishing linkages with the Asia and the Pacific academic, research, GUs, LGUs, NGOs, and Pos institutions
9. **Total Project Cost P 700,000.00**
10. **UNESCO Funding Assistance: P 100,000.00**
11. **Counterpart Funding:** human resources; snacks; venues for meetings; office supplies; concept

12. PROJECT PROPONENT

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BREAKDOWN OF BUDGET REQUESTED FROM UNESCO:

Seed Money:

Transportation	: P 10,000
Communication	: P 10,000
Promo Materials	: P 20,000

Promotional Activities

Press Conference (October 2008)	: P 20,000
Promotional ALAMAT Concert	
• One Singer	: P 10,000 (honoraria)
• Musician (pianist)	: P 10,000 (honoraria)
• Two dancers	: P 20,000 (honoraria)

**TOTAL AMOUNT REQUEST FROM
UNESCO : P 100,000**