Digital illustration

Punlope Chantravekin

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DIGITAL ILLUSTRATION

by
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INTRODUCTION
**INTRODUCTION**

Folklore, a branch of cultural anthropology, is the scientific study of the cultural acts of any people. These acts are characterized principally by being anonymous and noninstitutionalized, and eventually by being ancient, functional, and prelogical. The objective of Folklore is to discover the rules governing the formation, organization, and metamorphosis of these cultural acts for the benefit of mankind.¹ Folklore is also the echo of the past, but at the same time it is the powerful voice of the present.²

Since I was a child, I have had an interest in children's literature, mythology and folklore. I have always created my own world that no one could ever reach. When I grew up, my world did change because I learnt more things. My unlimited world was narrowed by what I had known. Then I realized that the more we learn, the more realistic we view the world.

The project I did is to recreate the images for the famous Thai literature, *Sang Thong*, which was composed by King Rama II (1809-1824) of Thailand. The reason for its popularity is that it contains everything: the supernatural, war, revenge and romance, and embodies psychological depth and universal truth. The original tale was so long and very complex that I had to summarize and cut down some parts to simplify the story.

Though considered the royal composition of King Rama II, this does not mean that the king wrote *Sang Thong* all by himself. He mainly designed the plot, and assigned the writing to others. In this respect, the king was no less the poet than if he had done the writing himself. Among the poets who wrote *Sang Thong* were Sunthorn Phu, one of the most famous poets of Thailand and Prince Jesdabodin who later became King Rama III.

One of the problems I came across was about the language because I had to translate the whole story from Thai to English. Afterward I had to shorten and adjust the story to make it more understandable. Of course, the taste of the story


²Wilson, *The Concept of FOLKLORE*, 36.
could be diluted because of the translation procedure, but I believe that the main plot is still fantastic.

The illustrations in the story are good examples to visualize the “Thai Lifestyle”. They reflect Thai culture and Thai thinking. I tried to put into the details as much as I could to mirror Thai feelings.

I decided to use the computer for my illustrations because I wanted to show that the computer could do not only technically high quality graphics, but also traditional works that have many details and give the gentle feeling of Thai art.

By using a computer as my illustration tool, I felt so comfortable because I could do many things that I had dreamed about for a long time. It let me use my drawing skill perfectly. Creating the illustrations involved an exploration of digital image processing, using scanned images and my drawings to create the wonderful pieces of work.

Nowadays computers play so many roles in the society. They have so much influence in every field: engineering, accounting, science, animation, design, and even illustration. That is why I chose to study in Computer Graphics Design. Before getting into the program, I had gotten a Bachelor Degree in Visual Communication Design from Silpakorn University, a very famous art university of Thailand. I considered myself as a conservative person. I did not like computer at all. I had no idea what computer was, or how it worked!!!

After graduating, I worked for a while. I was a junior art director in an advertising agency. I did not really enjoy my job. Then I quit and tried to find new life, so I came here to learn new things. It was a big decision then that I decided to get into this program because it meant I had to start from zero. Even though I had strong background in graphic design, still the computer was so new to me.

Another big problem for me then was language. I had a very hard time because I understood very little in class, so I had to study harder. But the teachers in the program were so helpful to me. They were kind and reasonable. I really appreciated their generosity. I thought I was so lucky to be in their classes.

Now that I have finished the program, I did not regret my decision. I would love to learn more and more about computers and I am ready to face my new career in computer field.
PHRA SANG THONG
Once upon a time, there was a king named Thao Yosawimon who did not have a male heir. Worried about this, he told his Queen, Chan Thevi, and all his concubines, that whoever bears him a son will become the mother of the next king. Soon, Queen Chan Thevi and one of the concubines, Chanta, became pregnant. A court astrologer predicted a great son for the Queen and a daughter for the concubine. This made the concubine jealous and she bribed the astrologer to change his prophecy. When Queen Chan Thevi delivered a boy born in a conch shell, the astrologer said that he would bring destruction to the kingdom. The king was forced to banish his wife and his newborn son.

Subsequently, Queen Chan Thevi carried her son into the forest and sought shelter with an old couple. She did menial tasks, and in vain, urged her son to leave the conch-shell to help her.

One day, when she was drying rice, an angel saw she needed the help of her son. The angel appeared in the shape of a wild cock and began to scatter the rice in hopes of luring the prince out of his protective shell. The prince emerged from his shell and began shooing the pesky cock away. For a few days the mother witnessed the ritual of the boy scaring the animal and one day around the same time the cock would appear, she hid in the shadows until her son left his shell. When he was far enough away from his shell, she destroyed it. The angel's plan worked.

The king missed his banished wife and son terribly. He could not sleep or govern his people properly. This also affected his relationship with his daughter's mother. The jealous concubine paid a sorcerer to cast a spell on the ruler to have his son executed. The king ordered his son's killing. As a super-natural being, Phra Sang could not be killed by any weapons. The attempted executioners then decided to drown the future king.

Phra Sang was thrown into the water with a heavy stone attached to his body. He sank to the ocean depths but did not die. A serpent king rescued him and brought him to an ogress friend named Punturat, a childless widow. Her love for her adopted son was so strong that she transformed herself and her subjects into human beings so that her son would inherit her kingdom.
However, as an ogress, Punturat sometimes felt a hunger for flesh. From time to time she had to go away to assume her natural form and satiate her appetite. Phra Sang discovered the truth about his new mother and decided to escape. While she was away, he stole her magic mask, her magic wand, and her crystal shoes that allowed him to fly, and he flew away, but not before dipping himself into the Queen's gold well and layering his entire body with gold.

Punturat pursued Phra Sang and caught up with him at a hill where he rested from exhaustion. The ogress was unable to climb the hill because of a spell from the prince. Unable to reach him, she wrote the spell to summon any animal and then died at the foot of the hill.

After paying homage to her body, Phra Sang continued on his way and reached the kingdom of Thao Samon. He arrived on the day of the free-choice wedding where the King's seven daughters would throw garlands at their chosen suitors. With the stolen mask, Phra Sang transformed himself into Chao Ngoa, a darkened savage with kinky hair, hardly a suitor for any princess.

However, Thao Samon's youngest and most beautiful daughter, Rotchana, was unimpressed by any of the suitors. She still had not chosen one even two hours after the last sister had chosen her suitor. The impatient King summoned Chao Ngoa in hopes of prodding her into choosing someone else. She was not fooled by the stranger's physical appearance, she knew of his true nature and chose him as her suitor. The King was furious. Even after the two were married, the King was still trying to find ways of getting rid of Chao Ngoa.

He devised games in which his son-in-law must fetch fish and deer for him. Whoever gathered the least, courted death. This, however, became an opportunity for Phra Sang to use his incantation. When he removed his mask and sat under a tree, the other six sons-in-law who came to look for fish and deer mistook him for a forest deity. They fell to their knees and begged his assistance. For just a few fish and a deer, each had to forfeit their noses and ears. Chao Ngoa won the game.

Phra Sang seemed to get very comfortable with the mask and there was the possibility that he would remain in the form of Chao Ngoa despite his wife's pleas. Feeling Rotchana's sorrow, the god Indra came down in hopes of making Chao Ngoa return to his true form.
Indra arrived and laid siege to Thao Samon’s kingdom. According to the god’s messenger, Indra wanted to play polo against the best players in the kingdom. The six sons-in-law were the first to go onto the field. They made fools of themselves and easily lost the game. Indra demanded to play against the final son-in-law, Chao Ngoa. Thao Samon sent his wife to get their daughter’s husband as their last hope. Chao Ngoa adamantly refused to help, but changed his mind when his princess threatened to kill herself.

Later when Thao Samon followed his wife into Rotchana’s cabin, he was shocked to see that the prince had removed his mask and revealed his true golden form. After Phra Sang recounted the story of his life, the King clapped his hands and exclaimed, “My son-in-law is nobly born, he is the son of a King! This is how it should be! Now I will not be ashamed any longer!” He stroked the young man’s back and kindly asked for his help.

In the ensuing game, both the prince and the god exhibited great skill. After a while the god seemed to be losing the game, but it was all a ploy to convince the King that the prince had won the contest. Indra flew to the sky and declared Phra Sang the winner and the savior of the kingdom. Thao Samon crowned the victor King of his kingdom.

Directly after the contest with Phra Sang, Indra visited Thao Yosawimon in a fierce form and threatened his life if he did not recall his wife and son back to the kingdom. The fear of death broke the concubine’s spell and the King went to his Queen and asked her forgiveness.

Directed by Indra, both the King and Queen went to Thao Samon’s kingdom. Once they arrived they assumed the roles of commoners and sought employment in the palace. The Queen was chosen for the kitchen where she proved to be an excellent cook. One day, while preparing food for her son, she created scenes of her son’s life only they knew on melon pieces.

One piece showed the Queen giving birth to a child in a conch-shell. Another depicted their banishment from the kingdom. Another showed the wild cock scattering the rice. And yet another showed the attempted assassins throwing Phra Sang into the river.

The effect of the Queen’s art worked on her son. As Phra Sang was devouring his meal, he was about to eat the melon pieces until he noticed their unusual shape. Curious, he inspected each one closely. He was surprised that
they showed his life and wanted to know who had fashioned the pieces. He called for the cook and instantly recognized her as his true mother and fell to his knees crying. “I have finally found my true mother! I am so happy! My life is finally complete. I have a wife who is with child, I am the ruler of a kingdom, and I have finally found my true parents!”

Phra Sang was brought back to his rightful kingdom where he was crowned King. He became the ruler of two of the larger kingdoms in the area and proved to be one of the very best. His child, and his child's child never had to go through what he did and they too carried on the line of great rulers.
ILLUSTRATION PROCEDURES
ILLUSTRATION PROCEDURES

At first I planned to do the illustrations for SangThong by using my drawing skill to draw the images and scanning them into computer, then colorize them by using the abilities of computer. I made rough sketches. Later I drew the first picture. It took me for 3 days to finish just one picture. It was only the outline drawing, but I had to be so careful about the details because I wanted it to be clear enough for scanning process. It would be easier for me to colorize the clear image.

After spending so much time only for the first drawing, I realized that the project could not be done on time because I had just about 7 weeks left to finish my work, so I had to find a new way to save my time and it must look good at the same time. Finally, I had a new idea for my project. It was to find the images that were similar to my drawing, then scanned them into computer, and edited them to my drawing. By this way I could save time in colorizing. So for the later pictures I had to draw, I did not have to spend as much time as the first one because I did not need so much detail. The problem I had to solve next was to find the right artist whose works and style I could adapt for my project.

I thought about many Thai artists. Then I decided to choose my favorite one, Professor Chakrabhand Posayakrit, whose works and style I had appreciated for a long time. He is so talented in Thai art: portrait, Thai puppet and writing. The techniques he uses for his works are oil, water color, pastel, etc. Being so popular for a long time, all his works are so unique that no one could imitate as well as the original.

The technique that I concentrated in the thesis was retouching. I felt so challenged in neatly changing the original pictures to be new characters I wanted for the illustrations. Sometimes I had to use more than 30 scanned pictures to make just one illustration.

The following pages give a brief outline on how I put the images together. Creating the illustrations involved an exploration of digital image processing, using scanned images and my drawing to create unique Thai style images. The softwares to create these images are Adobe Photoshop 2.5, The Adobe Gallery Effect plug-ins, and Fractal Painter 2.0.
Description of how the illustration “The Unhappy Family” was completed:

The Unhappy Family is the first scene in the story. Everyone’s face does not look so happy because they do not have a child. The Queen sits next to the King. The standing woman is the concubine of the King.

Background
The wall, the sky, and the bush were constructed from the top left part of image-A. I used the selection tool to select the area I wanted, then copied and pasted to the new opening window. While the selection area was still activating, I flipped the image.

The King
Before putting him to the background, I had to make him act like in the drawing. I opened the drawing file that I had drawn and scanned before to be the guide for putting each part together. Each part of the King came from different images.
- The crown
I cut out only the top part of the crown in image-B by using path tool and when I satisfied with the shape I wanted, I saved the path to make any changes later. Next I cut out only the right side of the crown in image-C by using the path tool and saved it. Then I selected the first path, copied, and pasted it to the drawing file that was already opened. I had to adjust the size and the position to make it fit to the top crown of the drawing. I did the same thing with the second path.
- The face
I cut out only the face from image-D and pasted to my drawing at a percentage 50% to make it transparent. I did this because I also liked the face in my drawing, so I wanted both faces to blend together. I used an air brush tool and smudge tool to adjust the parts that were not blended smoothly.
The cloth
The cloth in image-C was not in the shape I wanted, so I did the same thing I had done with the crown by using path tool to make the shape I wanted. Then I pasted each part to the cloth in the drawing. Some parts needed to be adjusted the shape to make them fit with the drawing. For the pattern of the cloth, I selected just one small flower from the cloth in image-C and pasted it to the drawing then copied one by one to fill the cloth area. Before this process I had to get rid of the old pattern by covering them with the background color of the cloth because the old pattern was not in the position I wanted.

The arms and the hand
I liked the arms and the hand of my drawing, so I just colorized them by selecting the color from the face using selection tool to select small area in the face, copied and pasted to the arm. Then I magnified the area I wanted to colorize and used the rubber stamp tool to grow the color I pasted. This process was very slow because I had to be very careful about the outline. I did not want the color to go out from the outline.

The brace lace
I cut out the brace lace in image-E, but it was not in the right shape, so I had to adjust the shape by doing the same process as the crown.

The rings
I took the green part of the brace lace by copying it and then pasted it to the ring, adjusted the size later. I did the same thing to the other rings. I changed the color of them by using Color balance in the Adjust menu under the Image menu.

The Queen
The Queen in my drawing already looked good, but I liked the one in image-E more, so I replaced the Queen in my drawing by cutting the one from image-E out. Then I pasted her to my drawing. I did this process after I had already put the concubine of the King because some parts of the Queen should be in the front.
The concubine

She was the mixture between the scanned images and my drawing.

-The Head

I took her head from image-F, but I had to flip the head to make her turn right. The mouth in image-F was smiling, but I did not want her to be happy, so I selected the edge of her mouth and flip down. Then it looked as if she was sad.

-The cloth

The upper part I took from image-G, adjusted the shape, changed the color by selecting only the blue part and using color balance. The arms and the skirt were my drawing. I colorized the arms like what I had done to the King’s arms, added the brace lace from image-E, adjusted the shape to fit to the right position. The skirt part I colorized by using Painter 2.0 because I could use the water color in this program that is very beautiful and it gives the same feeling as the real water color. When she was done, it was hard to see the difference between the scanned image and my drawing part. I did blur her because she was far away and I did not want her to be more attractive than the Queen.

The pillow of the King

I took from image-H. I pasted the pillow before I pasted the King to make the pillow stand behind the King.

All the other illustration were completed in a similar manner.
SUMMARY

While doing the thesis, I had learnt so many things. This includes researching for the information about folklore especially Thai folklore. After I decided about the story I wanted to do, for the perfect story, I had to compile the story of Sang Thong from many books and some parts are from my memory about the story that I had known before to compare the story which one was the most understandable. Next I translated from Thai to English with my American friends’ helping. I wanted the story to be concise, so I cut down, added and rewrote many parts but the main plot is still the same.

Afterward I sketched many pictures to choose for the ones that were appropriated with the scenes in the story. I decided to use computer for my illustrations because I wanted to show that computer could do not only high-technology graphics, but also traditional works that have so many details and give the gentle feeling like Thai art. I used my drawing skill and the broad abilities of computer creating the unique Thai style illustrations. I had to be very patient and careful to create the illustrations in the characters I wanted. The scanned pictures I had scanned before were often not exactly what I wanted, so I had to retouch almost all of them before I could use them later to edit to the drawings I had drawn.

Furthermore I had to learn about the output how to make them as precise as they could be. I learnt about the ratios of resolution to file size. I did many experiments about printing process to compare between different factors for the best results.

Though it was a tough job, I did enjoy doing it very much because I always love to learn new things and this thesis forced me to know plenty of new techniques almost all the time since I had started until the end. The technique that I concentrated in the thesis was retouching. I felt so challenged in neatly changing the original pictures to be new characters I wanted. Sometimes I had to use more than 30 scanned pictures to make just one illustration.

What I gained from doing this thesis is not only just learning many things like I had said before, but also being proud that my illustrations satisfied myself and other people who saw my works. My endeavor helped me easily pass all the trouble I met. I think that my works could tell their value and my intention that I had done my best.
APPENDIX I
The Unhappy Family
Breaking the Conch
The Step-mother
Escaping
Calling Fish
In the Kitchen
Sketches
APPENDIX II
EQUIPMENT

Hardware
15" NEC Color Monitor
Macintosh Centris 650
44 Megabyte Syquest Drive
Apple Color One Scanner
Apple Laser Writer IINT
Canon CL 500 Color Copier
Kodak 7700 Continuous Tone Printer

Software
Adobe Photoshop 2.5
Adobe Gallery Effects
Fractal Painter 2.0
QuarkXPress 3.2
Microsoft Word 5.1


