

**1. Title of submission** – The Melodic Preaching in Northeastern Thailand: The Relationship between Artistic and Religious Tradition of Theravada Buddhist Monks

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## **5. Abstract**

### 5.1 Background

This paper aims to present the results of the ethnomusicological research, which investigates a phenomenon of Maha Chataka (the story of Lord Buddha's last life before he attained his Buddhahip after a long chain of re-births). The story was recounted by monks in a form of melodic preaching. The fieldwork was conducted in Ubonrachathanee, a province along the Mekhong River, which marks the Thai-Laotian border. Today, it is still a popular belief amongst Theravada Buddhists in Thailand and Laos that to listen to the Maha Chataka Preaching in a lifetime is the best beneficial method to make merits.

### 5.2 Aims

This paper aims to trace how important the melodic chanting is to the community at present. The paper also aims to investigate how monks use artistic expressions to convey religious texts to laymen without breaking their religious precepts.

### 5.3 Method

The paper is based on the results of fieldwork in the northeastern part of Thailand between February to August 2007. Fifty-nine monks were interviewed. The paper has three sections. The first part of the paper deals with the background of the Maha Chataka preaching festival in the northeastern part of Thailand. The second part of the paper deals with the process of the festival. According to the fieldwork in the northeastern part, the Maha Chataka preaching took about two days to complete. In the northeastern part of Thailand, each temple organized its own Maha Chataka Preaching Festival. This paper will present two versions of the Maha Chataka Festival, which were observed in two different temples in the northeastern part of Thailand. The third part deals with musical aspects, artistic expressions, and social meanings of the festival.

### 5.4 Results

The Maha Chataka consists of thirteen parts. Each part contains its own musical theme. People came to this festival not only to gain great merits but they also wanted to listen the voice of their favorite presiding monks, to hear his melodious voices, and to help with monasteries' preparations.

### 5.5 Conclusion

Because Theravada Buddhism prohibited monks from engaging in performance, each monk has his own reasons and motivations to deal with the conflicts of employing artistic and musical expressions in his preaching.

### 5.6 Keywords

Melodic Preaching, Music and Buddhism, Melodic Chanting, Artistic and Religious Tradition

**6. Special Equipments:** LCD projector, Computer notebook and window media player program to play clips from DVDs and VCDs