

## Ceremony Exercise

The Emperor and his assistants spend a lot of time preparing for the ceremony. These slides present a brief overview to these preparations. These descriptions are found in a book published in Vietnam in 1968 called *The Great Rituals and Dances of the Vietnamese Kings*.

Read the ritual steps below. Play the track on the slide when indicated below.

Two days before the ceremony, the Emperor stops eating meat and only eats vegetables. The Emperor was forbidden to eat animal products of any kind.

One day before the ceremony, the ritual space is prepared. The Emperor's assistants placed tables in front of the Heaven and Earth god altars. They would place offerings on these tables during the ceremony, so it was important to be prepared!

On the day of the ceremony, the Emperor and his assistants need to follow specific steps so the ceremony would be considered successful. Please follow the directions of your teacher now to act out the ritual! Who will play the Emperor? Who will help prepare the offerings?

The Emperor washes his hands.

The Emperor walks through the middle entrance to the ritual space. His assistants walk through the side doors.

The bell sounds three times.

Everyone waits for the bell to finish sounding.

The assistants go to their designated positions.

The Emperor goes to the position where he will pray to the Heaven and Earth gods.

Assistants bring an offering of smoked meat to the ritual space from the easterly direction.

**Music begins to play. The ensemble is comprised of a drum (*trống*), oboe (*kèn*) and gong (*thanh la*). (See Component 2 for more information about these instruments).**

Assistants bring an offering of liquid from the northwesterly direction.

The music stops.

The emperor goes before the table upon which incense is placed.

The ritual orchestra begins again.

The Emperor kneels down.

The Emperor scoops up the offering with a small ladle.

Assistants kneel and assist with the preparation of the offering in a metal vessel (called censer, like in a church setting).

The Emperor picks up the container with this hands.

The Emperor prostrates (or kneels and bows) downwards.

The Emperor stands up.

While standing upright, the Emperor clasps his hands together as if praying.

The music stops.

All welcome the gods with a sung chant meaning “Song of Desire for Peace and Success.”

We thank you for protecting us  
With the general decree:  
We offer incense first.  
Our drum resounds in reverence.  
Our vessels contain pure offerings.  
As the bell tolls,  
You, gods, return the benefits  
For all of us to enjoy.

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