In this paper I explore transgender and transsexual practices within spirit possession rituals loosely associated with Buddhist, Daoist and Confucianist cosmologies in various regions of Vietnam. In different ways and with different degrees of explicitness, spirit possession privileges male-to-female and female-to-male transgender practices, constituting an arena of gendered license in an otherwise sexually restrictive cultural space. In this paper I look at ways in which transgender and transsexual categories converge with religious boundaries and simultaneously offer privileged conduits for communication between this world and the other world within the ritual time-space of spirit possession practices, often taking place in the context of village festivals and (Buddhist) pilgrimages. I pay particular attention to the co-occurrence and articulation of religious, sexual, entertainment and material desires through sexualized transgender dance, music, juggling and bingo performances during two ritual events: a village festival and a temple festival at a Buddhist pilgrimage site.

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