

Supplementary File 1

Demonstration of Anonymized Qualitative Data

1. Note on Data and Anonymization

The qualitative information presented below consists of transcribed snippets from ethnographic field notes and in-depth interviews conducted between 2018 and 2023 in various ethnic minority communities in the Central Highlands of Vietnam. These samples are intended to demonstrate the empirical grounding of the analysis presented in the article.

All personal names and identifying details have been replaced with pseudonyms. Contextual identifiers that could disclose specific sites have been omitted. These excerpts highlight the analytical framework of the study, particularly the concepts of ritual refusal, ritual translation, and changing configurations of authority and belonging. The complete field notes and transcripts cannot be made publicly available due to confidentiality and ethical considerations.

2. Interview and Fieldnote Extracts

Extract 1 – Elder and Ritual Organizer

Male, 63 years old, Village A, 2021

“In the past, when we announced the buffalo sacrifice, people from every household in the village would attend, without exception. Now, there are families that do not come at all. We do not say anything to them. We understand. But when people do not come, the ceremony feels lighter — and not in a positive way. It feels incomplete.”

This quote reflects the concerns of community elders. Participation in the buffalo sacrifice ritual is more than simple attendance; it represents a communal obligation. As participation decreases, ritual authority is perceived to weaken.

Extract 2 – Protestant Convert

Female, 35 years old, Village B, 2022

“I still respect the village elders. I greet them and help when there is community work. But I cannot join the ritual anymore. My faith teaches me not to worship spirits. If I attend, even just standing there, it would mean I agree. So I stay at home.”

This excerpt illustrates ritual refusal and shows how an individual may withdraw from ritual participation while maintaining other forms of community involvement.

Extract 3 – Younger Migrant Worker

Male, 27 years old, Village C, 2020

“Most of the year I work in the city. I try to come back for the rituals, but sometimes I can’t. The elders complain that young people do not care anymore. It’s not that we do not care. We just have different obligations now.”

This quote demonstrates how migration reshapes participation patterns and produces new generational interpretations of responsibility.

Extract 4 – Fieldnote Observation (Mortuary Ritual)

Village A, 2019

As households prepared food for the ceremony, many contributed less than in previous years. One elder remarked quietly to another, “Times have changed. We cannot ask like that anymore” (fieldnotes). The ritual was modified, with fewer sacrifices and shortened sequences. Even so, the typical seating arrangement — with elders near the altar and women at the periphery — was preserved.

This example captures ritual translation: the form was adjusted, but the structures of hierarchy and relational belonging were maintained.

Extract 5 – Village Head (Administrative Role)

Male, 48 years old, Village B, 2022

“Now we have to balance many things. Some villagers are Christian, some follow the old ways. When we organize a ceremony, we make it shorter. We do not force anyone. If we insist, it creates division. If we adjust, at least people can still gather.”

This excerpt reflects the redistribution of authority and pragmatic mediation in the presence of multiple moral orders.

Extract 6 – Middle-aged Non-Convert Household Head

Male, 44 years old, Village A, 2021

“Initially, we were angry and thought they were abandoning the ancestors. But we realized that if we tried to force them, the village would split. So we perform the ritual with whoever is willing to come. It is smaller, but it is still our ritual.”

This comment illustrates the village’s shift from confrontation to accommodation and highlights how ritual authority responds to declining participation.

Extract 7 – Fieldnote Observation (Agricultural Ritual Planning Meeting)

Village C, 2022

In preparation for the annual agricultural ritual, village elders discussed possible changes to the sacrificial components. One elder suggested reducing the number of sacrifices “so that those who are uncomfortable can still come.” Another responded that “if all the sacrifices are removed, then what is left of the ritual?” In the end, they decided to retain the opening invocation but omit some sacrificial acts.

This example demonstrates how ritual translation is internally negotiated rather than externally imposed.

Extract 8 – Young Woman (Second Generation Protestant)

Female, 22 years old, Village B, 2023

“I saw most of the rituals growing up, but I did not understand their meaning. When I was young, my parents changed their faith. I often feel like I am between two worlds. I attend weddings and funerals, but I remain outside the main ritual space. I am not completely outside, but I am not fully inside either. I feel like I am in the middle.”

This quote captures generational ambiguity and partial belonging, reinforcing the argument that ritual participation today often operates along a spectrum rather than a simple binary of presence versus absence.

3. Clarification on Use of Extracts

These excerpts should not be understood as statistically representative samples. Rather, they illustrate recurring patterns identified through iterative coding and comparative analysis across multiple field sites. They demonstrate how ritual participation, refusal, and translation are articulated in everyday discourse and practice.

Additional de-identified materials may be made available upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations.