CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale

In an ethnic tourist market, it is not only culture which is consumed by tourists, but something as abstract as ethnic hospitality becomes a commodity to be consumed and experienced. Ethnic hospitality becomes one of the important commodities sold and consumed in the cultural economy of ethnic tourist market. This commodification of cultural hospitality is what this study is about. By taking two White Tai ethnic tourist villages in Mai Châu, Vietnam, as ethnographic case studies, this study attempts to understand and clarify the process of commodification of ethnic hospitality. As early as 1990s, many villages here jumped on the new economic bandwagon and embraced tourism with a hope to change their economic situation. This open embrace was helped by Vietnamese state's choice of Mai Châu as a tourist oriented district and sought to develop its infrastructures. Vietnam hoped to transform ethnic villages into handicraft centers and envisioned them as sites for tradition and the modernity (Lan 2000: 118). Today Mai Châu has become an important tourist destination, providing the tourists experiences of the "authentic" ethnic and cultural sites and sights. This study will show that, in the tourist market, commodities are not only ethnic handicrafts or other souvenirs; but the culture of hospitality itself becomes a commodity to be sold and consumed. A tourist village is not only a handicraft village as envisioned and promoted by government, it has become an ethnic tourist village.

This study aims to investigate two such ethnic tourist villages in Chiềng Châu commune in the northwest uplands of Vietnam – Bản Lác and Bản Pom Coọng. These two villages are located in a valley administered into Mai Châu district in Hòa Bình Province. According to my survey, about 44 percent households in Bản Lác and 26 percent in Bản Pom Coọng are engaged in tourism related souvenir business.

And only 2 per cent households in Bản Lác and 10 percent in Bản Pom Coọng are not engaged in any tourism related business (Field survey, 2011). Tourism related activities or business, such as homestay, performance of traditional dances and songs and, production of hand-woven textiles for both foreign and domestic tourists. The data indicates that majority of the villagers are engaged in the tourism. The tourist market, thus, has been of great importance for villagers' livelihoods. These data suggest that Tourism has become a main source of income for many households in Bản Lác and is now expanding to the nearby village, Bản Pom Coọng. For Vietnam as a whole, the tourist market attracts more than five million foreign visitors every year (www.vietnamtourism.com). In Mai Châu, about 27,000 people visit each year, of which about thirty percent are foreigners (interview with the tourist police in 2011). This raises a few questions, including: How do we explain the area's success in the tourist market? What do these successes say about the kind of socialism promoted by the Vietnam state for more than forty years? How does it redefine the identity of ethnic minority groups in Socialist Vietnam?

Mai Châu is represented, by Vietnam state, as an authentic area of exotic backward people steeped in tradition (i.e. textile, stilt house, local alcohol) and warm hospitality. This offers a sense of scenic ethnic landscapes infused with symbols and social relations. As a tourist location, Mai Châu is primarily represented for its homestays - as an "ethnic homestay village", with each ethnic (White Tai) homestay providing the tourists with accommodation (an overnight stay), meals and cultural entertainment such as cultural shows. From here on in, I will refer to the ethnic homestays simply as "homestays". Ethnic homestays in Mai Châu conjures up, in the touristic imagination, such a landscape – geography of "unspoiled" "authentic" ethnic experience. This representation of Mai Châu is reproduced or represented by the pictures (showing White Tai culture in Mai Châu) hung on many hotel billboards, websites, and in books such as **Lonely Planet** (a famous travel guidebook). These images allegedly capture White Tai culture portrayed by White Tai ladies wearing traditional costume: standing, weaving cloth, performing traditional dance, making or drinking traditional alcohol in front of a traditional house. This type of culture-promoting pictures also appears on some homestay name cards. The questions then are: one, what are the process of producing tourist market and, as well as, the images

and myths of Mai Châu as an authentic ethnic place?; two, how and why do the villagers perceive and react to such images and myths?; three, what is the alternative gaze that tourists exercise?

For a tourist, the journey into ethnic touristic space is motivated by search for self-discovery and self-expressive experience (Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 310). It may also be seen as searching for his/her lost self or seeking, what MacCannell (1976) calls, "authenticity" elsewhere – authenticity in other historical period or in other cultures. But the human body and mind are more complex than just following the dominant tourist images and myths, especially for the educated person whose concern lies in cultural diversification. Sometimes, as Graburn puts it (1989: 22), time spent in tourism is more real than real life. Furthermore, Chambers (2009) believes that a tourist after his touristic experience will plan his future to be less regulated by cash consumption; to give more priority to relationship and conservation of environment; and life free from commodity and entertainment. As ethnic tourism steadily grows there is a call for the niche market of alternative tourism.

More than a decade after Đổi Mới, many Vietnamese, particularly from Hanoi, Hải Phòng, and Hồ Chí Minh City have become rich (Michaud and Turner 2006: 793). Vietnamese from these places make up bulk of the domestic tourists travelling to north-western region of the country – Sa Pa (in Lào Cai province), Lai Châu, Điện Biên Phủ (in Điện Biên province), Sơn La, and Mai Châu (in Hòa Bình province). Michaud and Turner (2006: 792) pointed out that, in 2003 Kinh (dominant community in Vietnam) made up 73 percent of the total tourists travelling into this region. However, as a form of ethnic tourism, many not-so-rich tourists also travel to Mai Châu, and most of them do not depend on packaged tour groups. Therefore, in general, it is time to rethink several concepts in tourism studies, including "tourist gaze" of Urry (2004, 1990), which in a rudimentary sense means ethnicity constructed as an object of the tourists' gaze, and the "staged authenticity" of MacCannell (1973, 1976), whereby villagers become as performers on a stage, and most importantly, for this thesis, the idea of "hospitality". We need to rethink the concept of "hospitality" because the interaction between host and tourist in the commodification context of tourism has already been criticized (Tucker 2003: 21). The actual host-guest

interactions are more complex and less one-sided than so far thought to be. I will discuss these concepts in more detail in the section headed as "Theoretical Review".

One more phenomenon which prods one to rethink these concepts is that, in Mai Châu, the villagers themselves own and operate majority of tourism related businesses. In other ethnic tourist villages, the villages are passive actors coping with market threats as the tourist businesses are controlled by non-villagers (Cohen 1988, Stronza 2001, Suvantola 2004, Michaud and Turner 2006). Unlike elsewhere, the villagers from three villages in Mai Châu have played important role in managing and controlling their ethnic tourist businesses. These businesses are linked to many other business units, as a way of expanding their market network through business contract, social ties and informal relationships, including family members, children who are studying in Hanoi, business partners, friends and patrons. Additionally, Mai Châu has also become a place of cross-cultural encounters for a variety of different people, people whose world views are quite different from each other, and from Mai Châu villagers' diverse perspectives. Tourism produces much more complicated and complex relationships than livelihoods based on agriculture and natural resources. It is this complex relationship this study aspires to investigate – how various actors in the tourism construct the tourist market, negotiate authenticity and identity, and define their relationship to one another.

This set of questions becomes important when framed within the prevailing Kinh-White Tai ethnic relation in Vietnam. The history of relationship between majority Kinh and minority White Tai ethnic groups has always been complex. This relationship seldom takes place outside some kind of ethnic biases. In the beginning of 1950s, Vietnam sought to create a "new culture" (*văn hóa mới*), a "new way of life" (*nếp sống mới*), a "new mankind" (*con người mới*) based on "socialist ideology, sentiments and manners" (*tư tưởng, tình cảm và tác phong sinh hoạt xã hội hóa*). This new culture, ostensibly, was aimed at eradicating "backwardness" (*lạc hậu*) and "superstitions" (*mê tín dị đoan*) among ethnic minorities in Vietnam. This traditional practices and beliefs were blamed for the continuing economic stagnation among Vietnam's minority people in general and, Tai in particular (Yukti 2007: 252).

A particularly sensitive outcome of this campaign was the burning of Tai ancient documents. Such a policy by the Socialist state was viewed by Tai as cultural

intervention whose sole objective was an attempt to assimilate Tai into Kinh culture (Yukti 2007: 253). The legacy of this policy – the Tai as behind time – continues to dominate ethnic relationship in the tourist space (Yukti 2007: 22). In the course of my fieldwork, it was quite clear to me that, Kinh continue to view Tai as backward, and a Tai usually do not trust a Kinh. My many interviews, among the Tai, suggest that Kinh is considered as "other" by the Tai people. Both the groups nurture negative images of one another. Therefore, when a Kinh tourist travels among the Tai – with a hope to consume the exotic other of a pre-modern society, the "authentic" – there is always the possibility of conflict and dissonance. The dissonance – between Tai's display of modernity (such as satellite TV and washing machines) and Kinh's desire for the premodern – animates modern ethnic politics between the two.

There are then other forms of ethnic subordination politics. A Kinh would attempt to escape the dissonance by its modern economic power: the purchase of White Tai hospitality. By being able to flaunt affluence and purchase of hospitality, a Kinh tourist replicates the old dichotomous relationship that justifies its ethnic gaze and reinforces the superiority of Kinh over Tai. This researcher observed, from close quarters, how Kinh tourists belonging to high social position flaunts their wealth and power. Some of them use money around the homestay host and order him/her like their personal retinue. They have no qualms in disrupting Tai traditional way of life in terms of appropriateness of time and place – to say certain things and to do certain things. Such behaviour is tolerated because this group is one of their preferred targets to expand their Homestay business, since most of them do not have contract with tourist agencies and hotels. Another reason – or an excuse – that explain this sufferance is that through experiences of White Tai hospitality a Kinh may learn to respect White Tai culture and view them as equal. The question then is: Do these interactions actually redefine or rework ethnic relation in the tourist space? It will be interesting to carry out an analysis of various interactions between Tai and Kinh tourists/tour operators, and as well as between foreign tourists and the White Tai villagers, especially the French who are accorded the status of "old enemy" by both White Tai and Kinh. For, a French tourist, seemingly, would assume to have basic ideas about their former colonies (Dahm1999: 39).

Besides these ethnic biases, the prevailing political economy of Vietnam – tension between socialist ideology and market economy – also animates the politics of tourism. There is bound to be subtle tensions when market reforms take place while retaining communist party rule (Lloyd 2003: 352). In the 1990s, when state began to promote tourism in Mai Châu, local authorities tried to control tourist business by asking homestays to register and to pay a small amount of tax. According to a Mai Châu tour guide, this was because the state still did not know how tourism worked; nor knew how to control it. In the context of Mai Châu, it is not easy to control tourist market through a top-down approach, since tourist market is more socially embedded and contingent upon everyday life (Lloyd 2003: 353). Because, unlike in other post-socialist countries, e.g. China, the desire for market reform in Vietnam has largely a bottom-up process (Fforde and Vylder 1996). Lloyd (2003) and Bennett (2009) pointed out that government's attempts to regulate tourist industry are undermined by social networks of personal contracts, represented at all levels.

For example, in Mai Châu, based on my observations, most of the Kinh tourists are government officials, scholars, and university students. It is with these people, homestay owners make personal contact and convince them to experience and understand authentic White Tai rural livelihoods. Therefore, in such a tourist market, authenticity becomes an essential tool to negotiate business and market share. What follows, from this negotiation, is that a White Tai, in his/her role as a host, entrepreneur, local authority employee and farmer, attempts to change the power relations between him/her and the Kinh tourists. And, as well as, is the relation between them and local authority and state. They act to contest tourist representation and myths.

Touristic relations and prevailing political economy are not the only issues that animate politics of tourism in Mai Châu. What is more important for this study is the touristic commodity that insinuates local conflict in tourist business. For Mai Châu tourism, the main tourist resource is the ethnic "culture" which is a common: it belongs to everyone. It essentially flags off a debate or discourse of about what is the authentic culture of the White Tai. Are the products, the souvenirs, traded as "White Tai" are authentic? More specifically, who defines a culture as authentic White Tai culture or a souvenir as authentic White Tai?

It appears that, in the tourist market, not only do the White Tai people disagree about the authenticity of "culture" and "commodity"; even the tourists blame them for passing-off fake White Tai souvenirs – meaning that they are not produced by the White Tai but made in a factory. In fact, the authenticity of White Tai food served in various homestays itself is a hugely contested subject. For many White Tai locals, there is nothing traditional about these foods which are merely replica of White Tai traditional food that resembles Kinh food. White Tai people, inhabiting the mountainous periphery of the tourist ethnic villages, prowl the tourist infested areas and attempt to entice away prospective tourists by promising to offer "real" "traditional" White Tai culture and food. Reciprocally, the modern homestay owners, in the ethnic villages, accused the former as "dirty villagers", who keep their cattle inside their houses. Interethnic tourist village rivalry is also perceptible in the ways local people cautions tourists about unsafe conditions in other-than-his/her village. For example, an informant cautioned me that the tourist village, Bản Pom Coọng, was not safe from thieves.

Apparently, in the two case studies – despite sharing resources, tourists and spaces – there is disagreement and negotiation about what is the authentic White Tai among villagers. The discourse of authenticity does not only affect the interaction between hosts and guests and between local people and local authority, but as well as among the villagers themselves in the everyday life of the ethnic tourist villages. How tourism affects the discourse and politics of authenticity? Who interprets what is authentic White Tai culture? And what shape "culture" takes within such politics? These are some of the overlapping questions I aspire to tease out in my study of ethnic tourist villages in Vietnam.

1.2 Research Questions

The above discussion and subsequent overlapping questions suggests three important research questions for this study. I will try to clarify the above mentioned overlapping questions by framing them within these four major questions. By doing so, may be, I would be able to successfully problematize this study.

1.2.1) How does the local ethnic group engage with the cultural economy of ethnic tourism market? And how does this kind of engagement change the villagers' social positions and their relationships with the outsiders?

1.2.2) What are the impacts of commodification of culture on White Tai identities in relations to their ethnicity and authenticity in Mai Châu tourist market?

1.2.3) In what ways and why ethnic authenticity of culture has been constructed, commodified and negotiated in a tourist space?

1.3 Research Objectives

1.3.1) To explore the complex relationship dynamics to be found among the various actors engaged and participating in the tourist market.

1.3.2) To understand the complex relationships developed as part of the negotiation of authenticity and the reconstruction of White Tai identities, within the context of the ethnic tourism market in a post-socialist Vietnam and a globalized market, and the associated multi-ethnic relations and relations of domination that exist.

1.3.3) To analyze those issues related to the process of constructing a tourism market and negotiating the authenticity and reconstruction of White Tai identity, and the effects these issues have had on the cultural economy of the village, its actors and their relations.

1.3.4) To examine the transformation of host-guest relations and social positions that has taken place in the study villages, plus the redefined relationships that exist there.

1.4 Review of Theories and Concepts

In order to draw the conceptual framework of negotiating authenticity based on notion of cultural economy in ethnic tourist market, in this section, I shall run the review through the lens of one, cultural economy of ethnic/cultural tourist market; two, authenticity associated with commodification of identity; and three, constructing

hospitality in the social space of complex interactions. All these theories and concepts are an influence on ethnic tourism studies.

1.4.1 Cultural Economy of Ethnic/Cultural Tourist Market

Before discussing the cultural economy of the ethnic/cultural tourist market, I will first elaborate upon the notion of "culture and economy, and the cultural economy". In any action and observation, one can often see the role of culture in terms of explaining, judging and determining the actions and relations that take place, and can therefore see culture as an intellectual property. We see culture through the way people act, give meaning to it and their interpretation of it. In the other words, culture is seen as symbols or meanings that are incorporated into their actions and relationships with various people. Therefore, actions are often meaningful, or signifying. In addition, the signifying actions can be perceived as a representation. So culture is involved in our daily life generally. However, it is not something fixed and static; in contrast, it is the process of change. We may either say that culture is a contested and negotiated space (Smith 1998: 264-7).

In order to explain the interaction between culture and economy – which is called "cultural economy" – several approaches are applicable: First, according to economic neo-liberalism, culture is a macro structure, which is in antonym of economic structure. Culture plays an external role in defending against the incursion of economic rationality (Allen 2002) while, in economic discourse, perceiving (traditional) culture as a weak point for modern economic development. Nonetheless, it is not necessary that the role of two realms is offending or contradictory to each other. Allen considers the interaction between culture and economy as a "new culturalized economy". Specifically, culture makes economy creative by adding values/meanings. From this perspective, culture plays an important role in understanding the economy. However, the spheres of the both are still separated, not combined. Second, in contrast to neo-liberals perspective, the substantives, led by Polanyi's **"The Great Transformation"**, are of the opinion that economic activities are embedded in social structure or institution (1957), and in social relations/network (Granovetter 1985).

Third, the postmodern perspective view "culturalization," as shift from material to sign (Ray and Sayer 1999: 3). Ray and Sayer accept the role of cultural discourse in the intervention and dematerialization of the domain of economic, and see the product as a text or sign. But they ignore the relation, institution and practice – value and meaning are static and fixed with object. However according to Slater (2002: 72-3), it is wrong to reduce economic aspects into just production of sign. There is more than an effort to see what really happen in constructing meanings in micro interactions of various actors in particular contexts.

Fourth, cultural economy is also viewed in the form of "cultural commodity" in the commodification process. Specifically, culture operates in things. According to Appadurai's notion of the **"Social Life of Things"** (1986), cultural value is added into commodity; that is so-called "cultural commodity". The meanings of the product are operated through social practices in relations of consumption. Thing is not isolated (the commodity as text or sign), rather it is a commodity plus cultural meaning. On the other hand, of course, cultural commodification can be interpreted as the way of "economization" (value added to commodity) because it might be result of commodification (Warde 2002: 185). Anyway, meaning or value added can be contested and negotiated in the relation of consumption. According to Kneafsey 2001: 780), cultural economy can be considered through contesting something which is seemingly fixed. Furthermore, culture is not only to add value in commodification, it also plays a central role in the operation of the economy/market (Warde 2002: 187). It of course works in social practices of constructing market/economic. It also explains why the products are produced, marketed, and consumed in our society. This means that culture constructs market/economy.

Thus the fifth approach goes beyond perceiving culture as something external, causing/shaping the economic/commodity. One such approach is Slater's notion of internal relation between economic and culture (Slater 2002: 77). To him it is not economic embeddedness as postulated by substantivism[1]; rather, the interweaving between economic and culture in the micro interaction which is important.Taking a boader view in interdependence between culture and economy, Slater and Tonkiss

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[1] Economic activity is embedded in the culture and/or social structure.

(2001: 195) argues against the reduced (postmodernism) and/or separate forms (formalism) of culture and economy. In their view, market and culture are entangled and interdependent within market space. Both culture and economics are redefined and conceptualized within social practices of economic/market spaces (Slater 2002: 63). For that reason, cultural economy, as hinted by these notions, can be seen as lived process (du Gay and Pryke 2002: 15).

Together these approaches, posits that cultural economy works in between two sides of economy – *viz.* production side (commodification/economization) and consumption side (value and meaning/culturalization). Importantly, the boundaries of the two sides are blurred – Slater recognizes their "mutual interaction"– if it is seen through the lens of "lived practices of market". According to du Gay and Pryke (2002: 12), cultural practices run through the economic. The producers turn out goods launching into the market; concurrently practices in the relation of consumptions (between producers and consumers) manipulate the goods. As a consequence the meaning/value of the goods has been changed. And the relation of consumptions results in the determination of what goods should be produced and marketed.

In the study of ethnic tourist market there are three ways of looking at cultural economy: one, commodification of ethnicity and culture, or landscape; two, negotiation of ethnic authenticity, identity, and place and; three, internalization (localization) of the host community. The first approach recognizes that, instead of looking at products as merely objects or materials, we give certain meanings to them. Ray and Sayer (1999: 3) stated that, in the market, the consumers' views on products have changed from material to symbolic dimensions. In other words, we consume meanings and symbols of goods (that is, ethnicity). Therefore, products sold in the market are being dematerialized by cultural and symbolic dimensions added into them. Influenced by this notion, commodification of ethnic tourism studies is not different from that of other products. Tourism organizations have been producing ethnicity and ethnic identity to be symbolic goods, myths, and images for marketing. Therefore, the tourist place is the touring object for gaze (Urry 2004 (1990)); that the tourist market emerges by the successful representation which discourses operate as systems of it.

Tourist market is accordingly performed and enacted by that very discourse; that "discourses construct market" (Slater and Tonkiss 2001, du Guy and Pryke 2002). For example, Gotham (2007: 138) pointed out that among the communities in New Orleans, USA, the elite groups construct discourse as a tool for marketing ethnicity and culture. In addition, according to Smith (1998), discourses inhabit culture. We can thus conclude that cultures appear as representations in which discourses perform, constitute market as objects of knowledge and objects of action (Slater and Tonkiss 2001). For this reason, culture, like market, can be seen as a structure.

Discourses of the market come to prevail upon or dominate social relations, and the state plays an important role in constructing the discourse of the market in a hegemonic manner, using a number of technologies of power. As a result, people construct a counter-discourse, or even articulate it with other discourses (Dilley 1992: 26) in order to liberate them from ideological domination or to problematize it. However, Dilley (1992) and other sociologists, in order to contest hegemonic discourses, attempt to see culturally constructed discourses articulating with available discourses. As a result, the market gets transformed, mediated, and translated within its new cultural environment. The market space, a space of culture, can accordingly be seen as process of contesting discourse of market. Still, it must deal with changing power relations among various market actors.

The second approach to cultural economy is this – it is an open space for every interaction. It lays more emphasize on cultural contestation and negotiation. In other words, within that open space new values and identities are negotiated. It is a struggle over the symbolic construction in order to objectify new meanings of products (Meethan 2001: 37). For example, the interactions between producers (host communities) and consumers (tourists) lead to negotiation of meanings of products and differentiate the products which suit for each customer group (Fligstein and Dauter 2007: 115). Moreover, the meanings resulting from the host-tourist interactions bring about a lived experience for the tourists, as much as for the locals. The cultural production and consumption are thus constructed from both materials and symbols (Meethan 2001, Terkenli 2001). Such negotiations reach to an accomplishment by considering the historic and newer social relations which constitute the tourist places (Kneafsey 2001) as well as local people's identity.

Consequently, by contesting and negotiating meanings, market space is increasingly seen as the locus of identity formation and as the construction of meaningful social life (Slater and Tonkiss 2001: 175-6). That is to say, negotiating new meaning can boost the self-confidence of local people, and subsequently it can bring about local development and valorize local resources (Kneafsey 2001: 763-4, 780). The constructed meaning is accordingly not only for tourists who want to claim identity from their consumption but for the locals as well.

Nevertheless, negotiating meanings does not take place only between tourists and hosts but also among the hosts themselves. Within the notion of commodification, culture is not just considered a symbol and representation, but also as a "resource" which must be managed. However, whereas ethnic tourism studies in Southeast Asia and Southwest China have paid little attention to the notion of "culture as a (common) resource", that will be the focus of this thesis. The notion of "culture as a common resource" among a host community implies that villagers have the right to deal with their own culture, to interpret and practice their culture (or in business terms, the "management of culture").

Management of culture begins when the local members become aware that their culture has been threatened. This sense of belonging to a particular culture motivates them to take part in managing their cultural resources (Picard 1995: 46). This participation in tourism resources management occurs in various forms (Picard 1995, Notzke 1999, Palmer 2006). For example, ethnic groups in Arctic region, Canada, participate in resource co-management which is achieved by various levels of integration of local and state level system that retains substantial self-management power (Notzke 1999: 63). In some other communities, local power may be too weak to resist the influences that state and tourism enterprise exert upon the representation of ethnic cultures and the local reality of ethnic groups, for example, the case of Dai communities in Xishuangbanna in China (Li 2004: 328).

Furthermore, "culture as a resource" in some cases is intertwined with symbol or representation. As a result, culture can be interpreted in many different values and meanings by stakeholders, especially by villagers who are the owners of culture. Managing culture inevitably thus works through a process of negotiation (Henderson 2008: 343, Williams 2009: 152). Taking Bali in Indonesia as an example, ever since the

touristification (localization) of their society, Balinese people have raised the questions pertaining to cultural values. Since 1970s, they have participated in managing culture as an ongoing process in many ways; including organizing seminars, publishing their ideas on mass media (Picard 1995), holding public hearings, and launching movements for reform and development of tourism (Picard 2003). Another example of contestation and negotiation of authenticity is the Manggarians of Flores (Eastern Indonesia) who are involved in defining the meanings of authenticity of the ritual ceremony. For many Manggarians, a lot of value or meaning is attached to act or practice of migrating to Jakarta, (capital city of Indonesia) and coming back to their village with big amount of cash to arrange the ceremony they want to show. But for other locals who live in the village, that ritual is inauthentic and deterritorialized. They abhor this idea of making "inauthenticity"; that the Jakartan Manggarians claim as reviving local culture. To resolve this conflict, celebration was split into two locations, and one of which tagged itself as for all Manggarians, i.e. the Manggarians deterritorialized (Erb 2003). These two cases reveal the ways in which villagers have managed their culture (as resource), by struggling with the meanings in order to claim their rights to manage it.

Finally, according to the touristification (or localization) view, marketing is or becomes an organic part of the community's life because, according to Picard (1995), touristification is considered a process of internalization. Explicitly, tourism is commonly considered an economic threat to local culture, because economics and culture, from this perspective, are viewed as inhabiting different domains. Accordingly, the community's culture becomes objectified and separated from the original community, so that it is turned into a commodity for the tourists' consumption (George and Reid 2005: 101). However, to deal with the forces of tourism (seen as a global force), once local people have learned to live with the tourism market, they are able to manipulate such forces. Thus, tourism culture becomes assimilated on the cultural norm of host societies in terms of locality and identity, the pattern of daily life, and the practices of representation and knowledge. In a comprehensible case of Bali, Indonesia, Picard (1995, 2003) argued that tourism should be viewed as an integral part of Balinese culture for the difficulty to have a distinction of culture, whether to belong to tourists or to local people. So, tourism is not considered as external forces anymore. That is to say, in Bali, the boundary between economic

values and cultural values, between the sacred and the profane, between what can be sold and what must be protected, has been blurred. Touristification is inevitably bound up in an ongoing process of cultural construction of Bali; it cannot be conceived as outside culture anymore.

1.4.2 Negotiating Authenticity in the Context of Commodification of Culture

Driven by commodified culture – ethnicity and place are inter-linked with debates about authenticity and identity – the commodification of culture is inevitably engaged in a process of negotiation. On the one hand, commercialized local culture is posed for its authenticity. On the other hand, we find the role of toured objects in negotiating the relation of domination, in which the negotiation can be used as a force to be mobilized, and reconstruction of identity (Adams 1998, 2006; Cole 2008).

The concept of authenticity in ethnic tourism was first conceptualized in the ideas of Dean MacCannell in the early 1970s. His influential idea was the concept of "staged authenticity" (Cohen 2002, Williams 2009). The idea behind this concept is that, owing to earlier work by Goffman, the concept of social space is divided into a front stage (the encounter between the host and the guest) and the back stage (the area which is inaccessible to the guest) (Williams 2009: 136). In addition, MacCannell's concept is influenced by the notion of mass culture and industrialization, people experience feelings of lack or loss and thereby sought the "authentic" to fill their life (Cohen 2002). MacCannell (1976) assumes that people hope to experience authenticity in an encounter with authentic sites, objects or events which he calls "staged authenticity". However, authenticity in this sense has been challenged for its meanings. Ethnic tourism debate has centered on the space of inauthenticity for decades. Such debate ties the argument on the meaning and definition of authenticity.

Authenticity is closely associated with the notion of cultural commodification, in terms of the commodification of otherness (Cole 2007: 944-6). The notion of authenticity[2] (MacCannell 2004 (1973)) relates to the concepts of "the tourist gaze" (Urry 2004 (1990, 1996)), the "stage of authenticity" (Picard 1992, Cohen 2001, Meethan 2001), the "empty meeting ground" (MacCannell: 1992 cited in Erb 2004)

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[2] It is the tourist's interest to experience something real, not fake.

and "commodity relations" (Meethan 2001: 35). Nevertheless, I will explore authenticity from the point of view of such strict concepts by analyzing its notions, which I will outline in section 7.2.

This concept regards ethnic tourism as one aspect of modernization and as part of the globalization of commodification, as it has an exchange value, somewhat like trade (Boissevain 1996: 11, Stronza 2001: 268). The search for the authentic, the pre-modern and the primitive (Boissevain 1996: 9); the quest for the "other" (Berghe 1994) and for rituals, these are the aims of the tourists. Considered as a pre-requisite for modernity, such purposes also respond to the notion of "alienation" or "otherness" (Meethan 2001: 12, Taylor 2001). To gaze upon the other without developing social relations is ethno-centric, romantic and imperialist (Hunter 2004 (2001): 289-9). Thus, by this notion, tourists wield power through the way they look at local people and expect them to appear and behave (Urry 2004 (1990, 1996)). In this way, villagers become performers on the stage of authenticity, and their roles are scripted, whether or not they gaze back at the tourists (Stronza 2001: 271). This is evidence of the practical consequences of the tourist's "discourse of exoticness" (Suvantola 2002: 217) and "discourse of otherness", which creates a "peripheralization of the other" (Fees 1996: 124) and depersonalizes the relationship (Hunter 2004 (2001): 299).

Besides commodity relations, dealing with consumption, which modernization and globalization tend to standardize, is influenced by tourism discourses such as standardization, commoditization and authenticity (Suvantola 2002). These tourism discourses are the foundation for constructing an ethnic stereotypical image (Cohen 1993: 37, Hashimoto 2002: 221), as presented through the ethnic tourism market. Furthermore, those who have the authority to define something as authentic tend not to be the villagers themselves (Fees 1996: 124), and in some cases, such discourses run counter to the spiritual and personal reason for travelling in the first place (Hunter 2004 (2001): 299), which is to gain an authentic "experience".

Authenticity has been studied extensively, and these studies can be divided into three approaches. First, modernists/realists like Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell 1973) discern authenticity as object for events, practices and culture, generally underpinned by a fixed and known reality (Reisinger and Steiner 2006: 66). In this notion, authenticity is posed as objectivism. Boorstin (1961) subsequently criticizes

tourism as the way to generate pseudo-events in the commodification of culture which claims to homogenize and "standardize experience". It is standardized to make judgments on what is authentic (Reisinger and Steiner 2006: 67-8). Accordingly, "the tourist gaze" through which what is authentic is experienced also relies on and perpetuates "ethnic stereotypes" about locals (Urry 2004 (1999)). The action of tourist gaze is an evidence of the practical consequences of the tourist's discourse of exoticness and the discourse of otherness. That discourse of otherness creates a "peripheralization of the other" (Fees 1996: 124,Suvantola 2002: 217) and depersonalizes the relationship between others (Hunter 2004 (2001): 299). Thus, this determines the pattern of consumer behavior called "relations of power". Those who have economic and ideological power to shape institutions and consciousness to suit their ends are able to structure and standardize taste, and codify value priorities. This is a structural determination of tourism experience where tourists do not have much freedom and personal choice (Watson and Kopachevsky (2004 (1994): 278). However, it seems that, in the commodification of objective authenticity, both tourists and hosts lose control over their relationship.

Second, authenticity is considered by constructivists. It is a value placed on an object or place by the outsiders; mainly because it needs a form, style, symbol, and language (Taylor 2001: 7). In this sense, authenticity can be a kind of image and myth making. Symbol gives objects its identity, clarity, and definition. Touristic encounters, therefore, are bound to a system of meanings and values that may never move beyond the representation produced by state and tourism industry (Taylor 1995: 8). However, the authenticity, regardless of being constructed by power of symbol, may fail when engaged in the politics of minorities' identity and tourist negotiating authenticity. That is, contemporary researchers have not argued for only one example of hegemonic power that can dominate all meanings. This is because, authenticity is not an absolute notion; rather it is dynamic, fluid, and negotiated. Constructivists, including Wood (1993), Bruner (2001), Taylor (2001), and Cohen (2002), characterized authenticity as a socially constructed interpretation of the authenticity of observable things. The authentic is constructed by beliefs, perspectives, or power (Ning Wang 2004). For constructivists, the constructed authenticity depends on contexts, ideologies, dreams, images, or expectations of the toured objects (Reisinger

and Steiner 2006: 69), local values, stereotypes, personal feelings, concerns, experiences, commitments, the interaction between consumers and producers, and the social atmosphere (Yang and Wall 2009: 251-2).

There are then, almost always, various versions of authenticities regarding the same object (Ning Wang 2004 (1999): 212). According to Graburn (1976) inauthentic may become authentic over time through the process, that Cohen (1988) calls, "emergent authenticity" (Reisinger and Steiner 2006: 70). The case about the different perceptions of local food is a good example. Whereas the concern of local food producers is the origin of material of foods so as to show their identity, the tourists, instead, concentrate on other symbolic attributes (Sims 2009: 332).

Therefore, constructive authenticity is always seen under the condition of a dynamic tension between outside forces and local traditions. On the local side, if people perceive that the authenticity of their culture is threatened, they will do something to protect it seriously. For instance, minority group, in rural Guizhou, China, attempted to reject Hantification for making claim about themselves and their villages as well as for regaining the lost sense of authenticity (Oakes 1997: 67). Besides, local people have struggled to play up to this image and myth in their relation with tourists.

Authenticity, then, is intimately associated with identity: a commodity that local people negotiate with tourists' demands. It is fulfilled by reinventing and re-contriving of their identity while resisting the traditional and backward identities placed upon them. It also shows their authority – that they have a hand in managing tourism in the area (Tucker 2002: 151-7). Thus there is a need to focus on tourism policies and the relation between authenticity, identity and politics, as the cases discussed above. A new identity is recreated through commodification of authenticity. Commodification confers, on the local groups, new political and economic capitals (Adams 1996, Wood 1997, Cole 2007). Thus, commodification of ethnicity is evidently not a threat to local identity as many scholars fear. Rather, it acts as another resource through which identities are constructed. Hence, we should not frame authenticity for merely its instrumental use, but consider people as active agents of change (Meethan 2001: 142, 170).

Moreover, in the cases discussed above, authenticity is treated as something that is prerogative of the host community and that the tourist discovers upon them. But authenticity is a facet discovery of self as equal as the other. So, the third approach is drawn on Ning Wang's idea (2004 (1999)) of authenticity. Wang introduces alternative meaning of authenticity – an "existential authenticity" - which can be different from the authenticity of toured object and constructive authenticity. In this framework, according to Wang, what the tourists are seeking is their "own selves" – of their true self lost in work place or in their public role/spheres in the modern society (Ning Wang 2004 (1999): 219-20, Yu Wang 2007: 795). The existential authenticity can be constructed in every touristic place, not only in the given site and object or event which may be conceived as authentic, even on the beach. It is this constructedness through subjectivity or inter-subjectivity which Sims (2009: 325) called "sense of self". Despite being a subjective or inter-subjective feeling, it is real to the tourists, because the tourists feel themselves to be in touch with a real world and with their real selves (Handler & Saxton 1988: 242, Ning Wang 2004 (1999): 222). So both objective and constructive meaning of authenticity which depends on toured object must be reconsidered for accomplishing the purpose of sacred journey or self discovery. Existential authenticity acts to resist or invert the dominant rational order of the mainstream institution in modernity. It is the balance between rational and non-rational factors such as emotion, bodily feeling, and spontaneity (Ning Wang (2004 (1999): 222).

Ning Wang's notion of existential authenticity is influenced by the existential philosopher Heidegger. Heidegger's (1962: 484) central idea did not revolve around representation of "thing"; rather, he tried to show how human beings understand themselves in relation to "things", so that their decision to be authentic or not is taken in the existential moment, in the moment of fundamental self-understanding. Heidegger goes beyond the constructivist and postmodernist way of seeing, who deny or bemoan the elusiveness of truth. For him, thing can be more than their appearance, both to reveal and to conceal itself. Whatever is given in existential moment is subsequently a gift to be valued and appreciated. Reisinger and Steiner (2006: 77-8) believe that tourists who can embrace all experiences, good or bad, authentic or not, as the gifts of tourism, are likely to have far more pleasant experiences than those who

travel with a head full of expectations. They are bound to be disappointed somewhere along the line.

Importantly, the notion of "existential authenticity" is always about free choices, and neither about maintaining traditions nor regarding identity politics (Steiner and Reisinger 2006: 309), as well as commodification of culture. Belhassen *et al.* (2008: 685) argued that the existential experience of authenticity cannot be separated from toured object. That is to say, the existential meaning even based on things, is apart from things. In contrast, Sims (2009: 333) also argued that tourists' identity formed through existential authenticity is associated with engagement to people and place. As with the case of local food, she opined that local products have a story – and a meaning – behind them that can be related to place and culture. In the end, as hinted by these two assertions, existential authenticity can linked the object and subject together by the combination of place, belief (meaning), action, and self.

1.4.3 Constructing Hospitality in the Complex Tourist Space

White Tai hospitality is the most important aspect of all tourist attractions in Mai Châu. Concept of hospitality can be considered into two approaches. First, hospitality (and the space where tourists experienced it) is the main space for tourists to grapple the ethnic authenticity of White Tai. Hospitality is a meeting place for a variety of different people whose worlds are quite apart from each other. It is considered by local people to be an integral part of their traditional culture; and tourist who usually receives that hospitality often testifies to their friendliness and helpfulness (Tucker 2003: 118-122). Thus, hospitality is a kind of setting that brings the hosts and the guests to a close encounter – a setting, where people encounter different mixes of both familiarity and strangeness (Yu Wang 2007: 796). Moreover, hospitality works in between commercial and traditional extremes (Heuman 2005: 416). Even though, in the context of commodification of ethnic culture, space of hospitality such as homestay is not just a transient interaction like shopping, attending cultural show, or consuming ethnic food. It also encompasses what happens latter: relationship between hosts and guests can bring about conflict relations as discussed

in the previous section; but it also can generate mutual understanding and authenticity. It depends on what happens in the tourist market – a space of practice.

The notion of tourist market as a space of practice is modified from integration of three kinds of spaces in Lefebvre's concept. Lefebvre (2002: 131-141) in his major work, "**The Production of Space"**, makes a three-fold distinction of space: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces. "Spatial practice" is concerned with production and reproduction, and the particular locations and spatial sets of characteristic of each social formation. "Representations of space" are the space of planners, urbanists technocratic subdividers and social engineers which tend towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) sign. While "representational space" is concerned with its inhabitants and users; this space is directly lived through its associated images and symbols which tend towards more or less coherent systems of nonverbal symbols and signs. In other words, representational spaces are those partly imagined and can provide the focus for identity (Meethan 2001: 37). Lefebvre's insights help in seeing or conceptualizing hospitality and the production and consumption of hospitality as a process of interaction and change without reducing one to the other. That is to say, it is concerned with material, knowledge and symbolic as a production of space.

Therefore, space of practice of hospitality is associated with many factors and conditions. According to Yu Wang (2007), modern tourists actually seek a type of authenticity that combine a preoccupied imagery of otherness and an inherent pursuit of a sense of home. It is also a sign that the local people seek to protect for tourists. There are reciprocal exchange of gift (non-monetary); an element of obedience of tourists to the expectations of local; and a performance of deference that accompanies interaction (Heuman 2005: 415-6). Hospitality is a combination of tourists' feeling of "at home" and the traditional hospitality culture of local. It does not matter even if the interaction involves money. It creates a position of obligation. Certainly, hospitality is kind of mutual obligations where the host is in a superior situation because they offer to serve and take care of tourists. According to (Zarkia 1996, Erb 2000, Tucker 2003), hospitality relationship will bind a person with reciprocity once that person inserts oneself into it. However, how much it binds or puts off guests depends on what hosts offers as a service of friendship regardless of the law of commerce (Zakia

1996: 163), and as well as on duration and depth of transaction. For example, in Dai homestay of Jinghong, Yunnan, China, tourists are not made to feel they are bound to hosts' offerings. This makes their stay relaxed and comfortable there (Yang and Wall 2009). Whereas in Goreme village, Turkey, some tourists are made to feel trapped and restricted by the obligatory ties.

There are multiple outcomes of hospitality in tourist space. First, a host can negotiate relation of equality and respect with his guest and bring about mutual understanding and meanings (Tucker 2003: 118-122). Moreover, a host can claim right over definition and perception of what is authentic relation with guests (Reisinger and Steiner 2006: 72). For example, if a host tries to produce authenticity by appealing to "sincerity" and is genuinely experienced by guest, authenticity which is constructed by tour agency is more positively redefined (Taylor 2001: 23). However, it is not always that the hosts play important role in controlling the meaning of authenticity. It is a communicative event involving important values in which both host and guest involved. Authenticity may be more positively redefined in terms of local value within sincere cultural experience, where tourists and hosts are encouraged to meet half way (Taylor 2001: 8-9). Besides, in Maori community, (Christchurch, New Zealand) authenticity is evident in the moment of interactively shared experience and genuine hospitality. Furthermore, an authentic cultural experience may be reportedly gained despite compromises to cultural values or modifications made to the cultural activities presented to tourists (McIntosh and Jonhson 2005: 49). Sharing experience blurs the boundary between who is on display and who is consuming the event (Taylor 2001: 24). It is an aspect of setting situational authenticity and of tourists' fulfilling personal needs through the experience of ethnic culture (McIntosh and Johnson 2005: 49).

Second, hospitality is a kind of power relation – control over tourists' behavior – as pointed out in the case of Manggarai of Flores, Indonesia. In this case, the host employs a ritual to bind the guests with reciprocal relationships created in order to gain much more than they pay as guest (Erb 2000). It is similar to local hotel in Goreme villages, Turkey where local people can control tourists by recommending tours and walks, as well as which restaurant, carpet shop and tour agency to patronize (Tucker 2003: 128). Thus, hosts who have power over their guest exerts some form of control

and demand some sort of leveling in their relationship with the tourists they let in to look at their lives, by placing the tourist in the position of guests. As guests, tourists have to oblige their hosts by accepting the hand-crafted headscarf offered to them, and have to pay a small fee. Tourists have certain obligations placed on them, since the guest is obliged (Tucker 2003: 125). This is not a one way around, in some case villagers increasingly may feel that their hospitality is abused and eroded by tourists (Tucker 2003: 135).

In sum, negotiation of authenticity can take place in the new opportunity created, hospitality. The new opportunity created is established from cultural hybridization between host-guest. It is also the amplification of local identity on the national and global scales. So that tourism practice is intertwined in social relations and institutions which constrain and enable their action in situated locals (Gotham 2007: 335).

1.5 Review of Related Studies: Ethnic/Cultural Tourism in Southeast Asia and Southern China

In the last two decades, ethnic tourism in Southeast Asia and Southern China, the concerned has been centered around the several key concepts such as authenticity and commodification, power relation, and globalization and modernity. The following three principle issues are discussed as follow.

1.5.1 The First Issue: Commodification of Authentic Culture

The notion of ethnic tourism as a commodification of culture is a product of consumerism. It visualizes, "ethnic authenticity" as an important product of ethnic tourism. Tourists, who take ethnic tour, especially in Southeast Asia and Southern China, usually search for the authenticity (Doorne, Ateljevic, and Bai 2003, Johnson 2007: 156-8). This is basically a search for the "exotic" destination (King 2008: 107), the unspoiled natives, primitive and natural areas which are absent or no longer exist in the world of the tourist (Doorne, Ateljevic, and Bai 2003). For this reason, there is an underlying apprehension among some scholars that commodification may cause

host communities to lose their authenticity as well as identity (Stronza 2001: 270). However, it does not mean that everything can be reduced to material relationship (Shaw and Williams 2004). Recent studies in ethnic tourism in Southeast Asia and Southern China portray something different. According to the case of ethnic handicraft sold in tourist market at "Ban Thawai" in Chiang Mai province, Thailand, it cannot be said that the commercial world of handicraft lessens the authenticity. On the other side, it is romanticized to say that local artisans occupy the world of self-expression and cultural authenticity, if they abandon the market. It can be like saving culture by selling it. Therefore, to go to global level is not forsaking authenticity. Rather, artisans being in interactions to agency, national and foreign capitalists in the global context differentiate the meanings of authenticity (Wherry 2006). In the same way, we cannot separate the cultural parts and then choose some parts to sell and hide (what we differentiate) the authentic parts; especially in the form of cultural/ritual performance like Manggarai people of Flores, Indonesia performing the ritual to welcome their tourists (Erb 2000: 732).

The authenticity in the sense of commodification is the objective authenticity which is seen as a real property of "toured object". The meaning of objective authenticity is fixed and can be referred to as a standard for making judgment over what is authentic (Reisinger and Steiner 2006: 68). In this sense, authenticity is immersed in a complex pattern of symbolic valuation which both tourists and hosts cannot control (Watson and Kopachevsky 2004 (1994): 227). What authenticity relies on is "ethnic stereotypes" as point of reference rather than on ethnic history and culture (Adams 1984). The ethnic stereotype is defined by outsiders (Fees 1996: 124); who are mainly (in Southeast Asia and China) government and tour agent (Cohen2001: 33, Su and Teo 2008: 158). The "relation of domination" is always present in the commodification and stereotyping of ethnicity. In theory, tourists' stereotypes are transmitted to locals through what Urry (2004 (1990)) calls "the tourist gaze", i.e. a tourist looks at local people and expect them to appear and behave according to representation constructed. In this way, villagers become performers on the stage of authenticity, and their roles are scripted, whether or not the locals gaze back upon the tourists (Stronza 2001: 271).

However, authenticity, even if in the form of "toured object", is negotiable, negotiating the meanings (Adams 1984, 1997, Cohen 2001, 2002, Wall and Xie 2005). Nothing is pure and fixed in authenticity term. These studies suggest that authenticity cannot be seen as a one-sided perspective (that is, pure ethnic handicraft is not in the market, or goods sold in the market are fakes), or dualism (that is, culture can be divided into two parts: the touristic for sale and the authentic for local). Indeed, authenticity is the socially constructed, negotiated, and contested (Wood 1993, Cohen 2001, Cole 2008: 24). These scholars have shown that authenticity is always negotiated; it is always constructed in the process of interaction between tourism actors. Interaction itself is full of complexities and conflicts. It becomes more than these two once the state intervenes or interferes.

In terms of the commodification of culture, local people can negotiate and in some cases turn it to their own advantage. For instance, the Li ethnic of Hinan, China (Wall and Xie 2005) and Bai people in Dali, Yunnan, China (Zhihong 2007) uses commodification of their culture to promote their local economy. Similarly, commodification do not prevent ethnic minority group in Ngadha village, Flores, Indonesia, from taking pride in their culture, and thereby attract foreign tourists. It is used as a tool to shakes off the shame of peasantry (Cole 2007: 956). Wall and Xie (2005) suggested that one see negotiated authenticity through community perspective as a means of gaining jobs and incomes for local people.

Commodification may be also seen in the fact that other stakeholders hold different ideas about the authenticity of their own culture, and can then engage (input) in culture as a commodity bought or sold on the market. Yu Wang (2007) offers an insight when he pointed out how a Naxi homestay in Lijiang, Yunnan, China customizes authenticity for its tourist guests. The homestay owner attempts to "customize cultural authenticity" by combining preoccupied imagery of otherness and the tourists' sense of home. In such a customized authentic homestay, a tourist can display his/her own "self" or "personal identity". This then is another kind of authenticity, different from "toured object" and its symbolic meaning. Ning Wang (2004 (1999)) calls this authenticity "existential authenticity" or "authentic self". In this case, tourists can experience authentic self by simultaneously constructing "objective authenticity" and "meaning of self".

1.5.2 The Second Issue: Conflict Relations in Tourism Management

This perspective focuses on tourism management and its benefits. As Wood (1977: 16) states, tourism is imbued with power and resources and becomes an important new resource for inter-group rivalry and status competition (Cole 2008: 19). This issue can be found in a number of economic perspectives such as "Mekong Tourism: Blessings for all?" edited by Mingsarn (2007), which focuses on the share of the money spent by tourist in the Mekong region. The benefit that accrues to the ethnic group or their share from the tourist market is negligible. Another example is Michaud's (1999) finding in a hill tourist region in Thailand. He pointed out that the particular hill tribe village in Thailand only gained 1.5 percent of total money spent by tourists (Cohen 2001: 39). However, in some cases, the share of ethnic group tends to be significant, such ethnic groups like "Meo Doi Pui", a hill tribe village in Thailand (Cohen 2001: 39-40), the Balinese in Indonesia (Zhihong 2007), Naxi people in Lijiang town, Yunnan, China (Yu Wang 2007).

There is another concern in ethnic tourism: this type of tourism tends to exacerbate income or economic disparity among the ethnic community (Cohen 1996b: 135, 2001: 40). Yang and Wall's (2008) study in Xinshuangbanna, Yunnan, highlights one such case. In this particular case, entrepreneurs, most of who jointly work with state, are not the ethnic minority community. It is this tourism related entrepreneurs who play important role in developing ethnic tourism. In such a situation, the ethnic groups, whose ethnic setting attracts tourism, tend to resent the outsider who controls the tourist market. In this particular case, these scholars have pointed out instances of conflicts – between ethnic minority and Han Chinese – in many ethnic villages.

The cases taken in this study are very different from the ones cited above from China. In Vietnam, the state's strategy for controlling tourism businesses is done through centralized state regulations of tourism activities – regulation of private small-scale business like travelling cafe (Lloyd 2003), hotel, and tour agency (Bennett 2009). In Indonesia, state tires to control tourism by empowering or training local people in tourism management (Cole 2008). Cole found that, the lack of community consensus among local people for management tourism affects their negotiation with state. However, the local people are learning to manipulate it (Cole 2008: 208). Thus,

tourism, as delineated by these ideas, has become a locus for contestation, articulation of power, and as means of balancing the influences as different groups (Cole 2008: 186).

Another issue, in ethnic tourism, underlined by researchers, is that ethnic tourism can whip up conflicts between state, outside entrepreneurs, and local people. More importantly, ethnic tourism, at times, may vitiate the encounter between tourist and host. The latter becomes an issue because exchange with tourists is a short term exchange between strangers and can generate feeling of suspicion and hostility in them. Erb (2004) argues that differences in values and meanings can cause conflicts between tourists and local people in their interaction; especially on money matters. The case of Ngadha people in Indonesia, cited by Cole, is the case in point (2008: 36). Cultural encounter is fraught with miscommunications prone to hostilities. These issues demand modification, and urge us to go beyond the study of tourists' motivations (for example the quest for ethnic authenticity), attitudes, and behaviors in different kinds of tourists. The reason is that within tourist space, cultural values are essential to interaction between tourist and ethnic people. Cultural values are different and unless these differences are appreciated, there are always possibilities for conflict (Erb 2004: 76). More importantly, there is a need to recognize that values are not given; instead they are socially constructed, and in this case produced in the tourist space that mediates the meeting of different cultures (Cole 2008: 34). It may, therefore, be reiterated that ethnic tourism in Southeast Asia and Southern China are battlefields of meanings, mistrust, misunderstanding and values.

1.5.3 The Third Issue: Ethnic Tourism as Practices in Changing Relations of Domination

The focus on tourism and construction of ethnic authenticity is not new. For more than two decades, anthropologists working on ethnic tourism in Southeast Asia and Southern China have already moved away from studying the impacts of tourism and tourist behaviors. Their focus has been on the construction ethnic authenticity associated with identity. The discourse and narrative of identity has been bound up with related concept of authenticity: whether or not one's identity and its cultural

expression is authentic (King 2008: 113). The local people, who are the subject and objective of ethnic tourists must negotiate the meaning of authentic with the tourists. Like the artisans of Ban Thawai, Chiang Mai, who, in their interaction with outsiders, competitors, and business partners, negotiate by differentiating meanings of authenticity of handicraft and in the same time develop strategies to deal with buyers, tourists, sellers, national and foreign capitalists.

The subject of authenticity is dominated and interfered by state, and external agents (Cohen 2001: 30, 35). The role of the state in creating tourism discourse based on ethnicity has been intimately interwoven with production of ethnic stereotypes. State can define, sanction, objectify, organize and marginalize and constitute ethnic identities. In addition, ethnic images are marked by the tourist media (Cohen 2001: 33, Su and Teo 2008: 158). We need to accept the fact that many ethnic groups are unaware of their representations by the "other", forget about ethnic groups countering these representations (Cohen 2001: 30). However, there are numerous cases where ethnic groups cease to be passive actors or mere objects of tourist gaze in ethnic tourism. They contest what they deemed, negative representations of their culture and identity (Cohen 2001: 43, Picard 1995: 46). For example, Naxi ethnic group of Southwest China are alert to negative representations. They would invariably counter, subvert, and thwart such representation of them (Su and Teo 2008: 152, 164). Some groups reify their cultural and identity (Chee-Beng 2001: 17), campaign for spread of self-awareness among members of their ethnic group and, intensify their concern for their identity (Cohen 2001: 43). Some re-fashion the outsider imagery (Adams 1997: 318). However, in practice, these interventions or reconstructions of identity usually take place among ethnic minorities long associated with ethnic tourism (Cohen 2001: 33).

Simultaneous to self-expression as a form of resistance, ethnic groups also take advantage of the opportunities of ethnic representation promoted by the state and partake in touristic process (Cohen 2001: 44). For example, Tana Torajan people of Sulawesi, Indonesia resort to borrowing the authoritative voice of outsider to challenge their old images and reshape their traditions and past and enhance their group's image (Adams 1997: 315-8). Another example is the Bai community in Dali, Yunnan, who, by using the self-reflexive symbolic activity of cultural politics, have adopted the state-granted label while maintaining their own subjectivity and treating the Baize label

(which state constructs) as something to be strategically deployed and represented (Zhihong 2007: 246). But then, some ethnic groups, like Ngaddha people of Flores in Eastern Indonesia are not much concerned with their image constructed by outsiders because the image instills pride and confidence to the community and erases the shame associated with peasantry. This is seen as an initial step to being recognized by state and outsiders (Cole 2007: 954-5, 2008: 23), despite their economically and politically subordinate position. Ngadha and Tana Toraja people are examples of how practices of self-empowerments are a process of construction of their authenticity through self-reflective authenticity or authentic self of the locals (not tourists). Such authentic self helps to wield local power and to some extent exert control over ethnic tourism (Cole 2007).

Cohen (2001: 38) also argues that there is a connection between empowerment of ethnic groups and their self-consciousness, and improvement of their economic condition. In terms of instrumental thinking, ethnic groups who are keen to represent or construct their own identity make various demands on the state. These demands may include improved infrastructure (Chee-Beng 2001: 17), enhancement of their position in the national hierarchy of ethnic group, and as well as their own local standing (Adams 1997: 310), ethnic recognition (Cole 2007: 955), and making claim about themselves and their villages (Oakes 1997: 67). In the long run, such identity can be claimed for dealing with the state regulations, and state controls in tourism.

The cases discussed above talks about practices in host communities. Evidently, as the case of tourism in Thailand reveals the act of reconstructing meanings of authenticity takes place when tourism actors (host and guest) associate with each other at different levels. It shows that even though tourists enter touristic space with preconceived ideas, the reality of what is authentic is different from tourists' initial imagination (Johnson 2007). This is how tourists and hosts react to the image constructed by the tour mediator or the state.

Another focus point, in ethnic tourism study, is the micro relationship of "host-guest" interaction. This type of interaction enhances cultural understanding between hosts and guests (via communication) though the host-guest interaction is in unequal, core-periphery relationship, (King 2008: 106). However, host-guest interaction can create different possibilities of interaction between peoples of two different worlds

(Erb 2000). Erb states that local people of Manggarai, Indonesia, try to contain and control tourists considered as unpredictable. This is exercised by the tourists who are received as guest, given hospitality, coaxed into a relationship of debt, in a ritualized way. Thus, the initial interaction between tourist and host is transformed into reciprocal relationships. The relationship of host is one of power which seeks to control the way tourist behaves. Erb (2000: 733) argues that this practice of commodification of culture is both an economic rationality of profit, and a different rationality that which is the basis for human spiritual/powerful relationships: the web of reciprocity or known as relation in debt. I am of the opinion that studies on inter-ethnic relationship which goes beyond economic rationality, particularly in the tourism studies in Southeast Asia and Southern China, is still under-examined subject requiring further investigation. This is the goal of this study.

As highlighted above, the debates, on ethnic tourism, in Southeast Asia and Southern China is still centered on the dichotomy of a representational space of "inauthenticity" and "negotiated ethnic identity". These studies cannot see the emergence of alternative development path nor other processes of changes generated simultaneously with tourism process. In order to go beyond such dichotomy and to see alternative development in ethnic tourism, we must realize that ethnic tourism depends on complex social relations and ethnic relations that are associated with a bundle of cultural values and various categories and notions.

1.5.4 Ethnicity and Ethnic-Based Tourism in Vietnam's National Economy

Vietnam is a multi-ethnic country. The ethnic majority "Kinh" accounts for eighty four per cent of the population: the rest comprises of other fifty three ethnic groups. The majority Kinh – meaning "capital" people – is perceived as "lowlanders", while the inhabitants of remote mountainous regions, except "Hoa" who are known as Sino-Vietnamese, are considered as "highlanders". There is a significant difference in living standards between the lowlanders and highlanders (Baulch *et al.* 2007: 1155).

It may be worth mentioning here that ethnic minorities in Vietnam were devastated by the American War (1960s-70s) (Tomei 2005: 41). After the war, during

socialist period (1958-1979), ethnic minority groups were often in contradictory relationships with the majority Kinh. On the one hand, apparently, the Vietnamese state tolerated cultural differences of an ethnic group as long as it was not perceived as a threat to communism. This policy was called "selective cultural preservation" (Michaud 2009:32). Seemingly, after 1970s this policy has been appended with a new policy of peace-building among minority groups (Michaud 2009: 42). Under this policies, the state offices which aim to help in maintaining (*bảo tồn*) and developing (*phát huy*) cultural identity; particularly, dances, folklore and modes of dress.

On the other hand, in a very subtle manner, Vietnamese government had pursued policies for assimilation of minorities into the Vietnamese society for many years after reunification (Baulch *et al.* 2002). It is much advertised propagandas since the 1950s, such as creation of "new culture" (*văn hóa mới*), a "new way of life" (*nếp sống mới*), a "new mankind" (*con người mới*), based on "socialist ideology, sentiments and manners" (*tư tưởng, tình cảm và tác phong sinh hoạt xã hội chủ nghĩa*), tell of different story. These propagandas or policies or socialist objectives were allegedly aimed at eradication of "backwardness" (*lạc hậu*) and "superstitions" (*mê tín dị đoan*) among its ethnic minorities, including the White Tai. Evidently, the beliefs and practices of the ethnic minorities in Vietnam were considered impediments to economic productivity (Yukti 2007: 252). The consequences of such perceptions were education that emphasized *Kinh* culture and history; banning or discouragement of traditional customs and practices; and relocation into permanent settlements (Baulch *et al.* 2002: 10-11). These acts clearly exhibited Vietnamese State's desire to promote assimilation and Vietnamization.

According to Taylor (2007), Vietnamese government's tendency to see ethnic groups as backward, careless and causing social deviation does not solve the problem. He argues for a new concept of the livelihood studies: what is really needed is not only economic capital but also "all capitals". He suggests that people put, all they have, their life into the market system to create alternatives ways of life. In that way, he argues, it may be possible to challenge the failure of economic when ethnic minority people enter into the market system (Taylor 2007). In other words, locals people will no longer seek to accumulate wealth as an object. This alternative way of

life would consist in the way villagers give meaning to the term "development" and enhance their quality of life, even though their choice of living is different from the state's definitions.

Taylor tends to see ethnic people as only resisting market forces, whereas in contrast, Sikor (2001) maintains that local people can, not only resist, but also negotiate and manipulate market forces. He studied the relationship between the national economic structure and the local economy. Focusing on three Black Tai villages in Chiềng Đông commune in Sơn La province, he highlights various ways in which people interact with the national economy. He argues that negotiation can help to constitute alternative ways of making changes at the local level among villagers. These alternative ways are markedly different from the policies and economic development of the state at macro level. A growing market creates new opportunities for people to involve in trade and when the economic is controlled by market rather by state: local people can take advantage of the system in order to expand and strengthened their control over productive resources. This is reflective of the interaction between macro level structure and local economy. Accordingly, people are rich or poor and do not depend on such structural changes but on the condition that exists before or after Đổi Mới. Several years later, Sikor and Vi (2005) studied the dynamics of the local market in Chiềng Phủ village, Sơn La province. They found out that major market-driven changes can be seen through villagers' livelihoods, social relations and the landscape. The market has woven villagers into trade networks which result in both income and risk distribution to the villagers' life at the same time.

In Vietnam then, the connection between national economy and issue of ethnicity and tourism have a knotted history, particularly after 1975. The policy of "selective cultural preservation", which allowed non-problematic ethnic groups to maintain their culture, continues to mediate the relationship between state and ethnic minorities. This is because ethnic groups as tourist attractions contribute to the national economy (Michaud, 2009: 32). But according to Taylor economic benefit actually goes to tour agencies (Taylor 2008: 8). Instead of studying how tourism business work, tourism studies in Vietnam focuses on tourist's perceptions and the representation of Vietnam (Alneng 2002, Michaud and Turner 2006), changing domestic tourists' identity (Gillen 2009), and the cultural and gender politics (Chan

2009). Nonetheless these studies ignore local people's ability in constructing and developing local economy and tourism market. As Hitchcock (2000: 210) suggests, ethnicity maybe seen as a resource in business management in terms of creating their worlds, mobilizing resources and networking. Taken together, these studies of tourism in Vietnam laid emphasis on the processes of economic transition that facilitates running of private tourism business.

In many ways, there is certain vagueness in Vietnam's tourism related regulatory framework affecting the working of decentralization of power, and tense relationship between private tourism businesses and local authority. The development of the private domestic sector clearly represents this tension: between economic liberalization and political control. Economic transition thus is not independent; entrepreneurs must deal with many state regulations and mechanisms by building personal network with the local authorities (Lloyd 2003, Bennett 2009).

In more ways the one, the primary objective of Vietnamese authority has been to actually take advantage of culture and other resources of ethnic groups for bringing minority groups under the direct control of lowland authority (Cooper 2000: 174). Cohen (2001: 30-31) has challenged the fact of 53 ethnic minority classification in Vietnam so as to show the representation of marked ethnic groups. This representation facilitates cultural tourism development. Nevertheless, local actors are not passive. They do make attempts to contest against their representation by state and the discourses in tourism that controls them (Lloyd 2003, Michaud and Sarah 2006), so as to build identity and change (Gillen 2009), and to negotiate their local life (Chan 2009).

1.6 Conceptual Framework

According to my review of the literature and the theories and concepts, tourist space is a space of practice. In this space of practice and under the notion of "cultural economy", I will delineate the complex relations that occur between various actors as agents of change, through the processes of (i) the commodification of the culture of hospitality, which can be considered essentialistic ethnicity, as a hybridized resource with modern facilities and ideas, and as traditions reinvented, (ii) localization

(touristification) within the cultural construct of the tourist market, and (iii) the negotiation of ethnic authenticity and identity. Within these market spaces, local people have been able to negotiate and engage with their ethnic and cultural authenticity, as essentialized by the state and outsiders, so as to mark out a space for redefining their relationships, and for them as people to be taken notice of in Vietnam and across the world.

All these issues can be seen through the linking concepts - negotiating the meanings of authenticity of various tourist actors. The framework therefore starts by looking at the outlook behind the "commodification" of ethnic culture, claimed as authenticity by the White Tai in Mai Châu and as "essentialism", as the state has tried to essentialize Tai identity. However, ethnic authenticity and identity have been reconstructed, commodified and negotiated by the White Tai in relation to the tourists and the Kinh, and the commodification of hospitality has impacted upon the complex relationships in place. For this reason, and in order to achieve my research purposes, I will apply the processes of the reconstructing of White Tai identity through the negotiating of authenticity, as a working concept. The construction of identity and the negotiation of authenticity can be seen through all three processes, and based on three analytical concepts. First, there is the "transformation" of local people's identity, from being peasants to entrepreneurs and merchants - which has brought about a new social position, and from culture to commodity - which reveals the way in which local people have converted their social and cultural capital to economic capital. The second working concept is "strategic essentialism", through which local identities and authenticities are constructed in various situations, bringing about redefined relationships. The third is about "hybridization", which in my research I call "hybridizing hospitality" (that which is sold on the market), and which includes "essentialistic ethnicity" and modern facilities and ideas, as well as traditions reinvented as "marketing mix strategies". Essentialistic ethnicity engages in producing hospitality, which can thus be called "strategic ethnicity".

The processes mentioned above are situated within the context of multi-ethnic relations, relations of domination, the post-socialist time and the global market. This is therefore about dealing with ethnic conflict/hierarchies and external forces, as well as dominant-subordinate relationships, so that the local people are able to transform
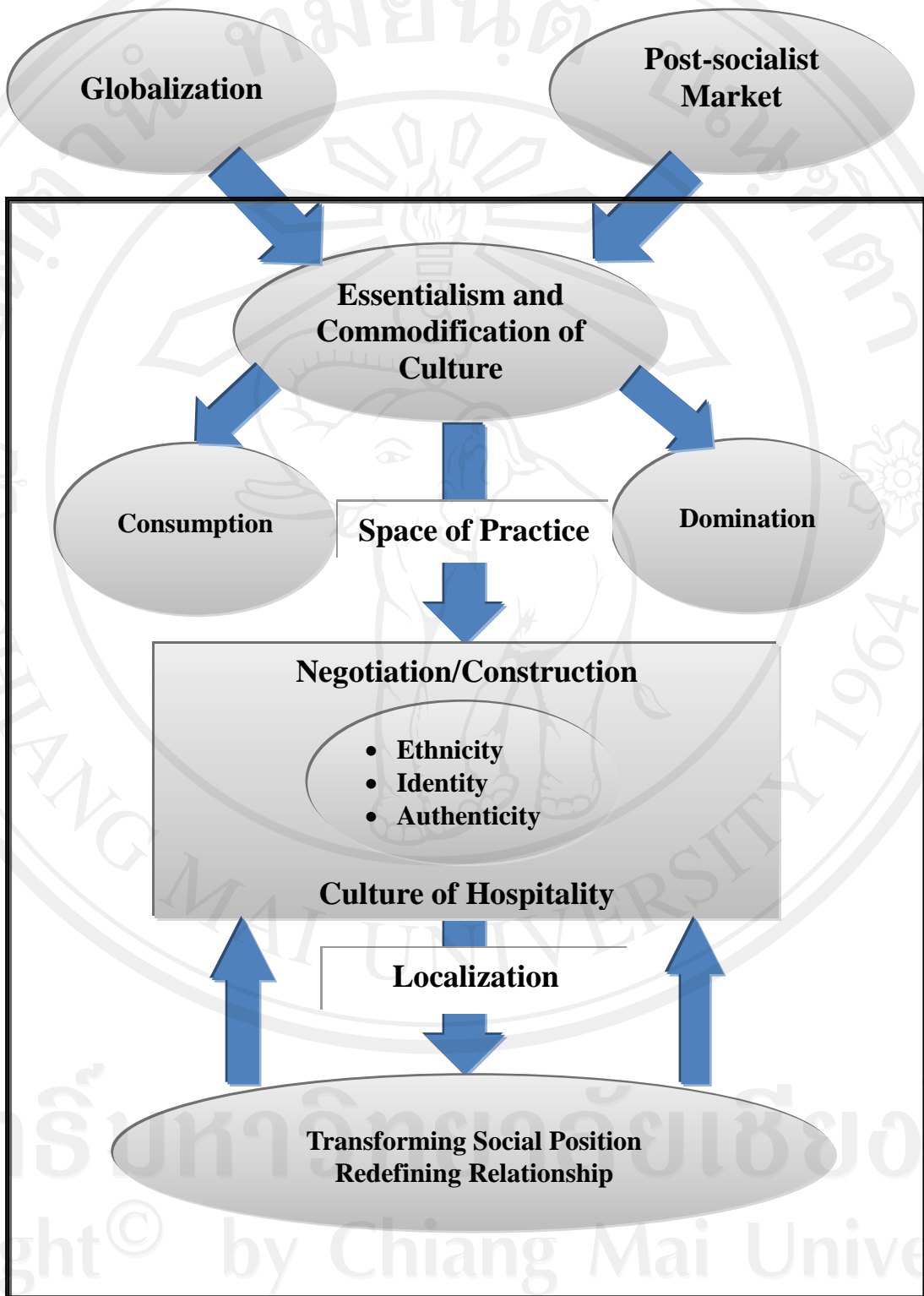
Figure 1.1 Conceptual Framework

their social position and redefine relationships - the possibility for hosts and tourists to comply with labels images and intimate interactions. As a result of these processes, new identities have been constructed and a level of authenticity negotiated in the way the local people can control the meanings and relations, as well as bridge ethnic hierarchical gaps, in order to position themselves as somebody in the contemporary Vietnamese world.

In the consumption site, in the negotiating process meanings are constructed through exchange relation (based on things) and beyond exchange relation (based on relationship). While in the case of production, as mentioned earlier this research focuses on "constructing tourist market" and "commodification of hospitality". In these processes culture and economy are mutually constructed in the tourist market (Slater and Tonkiss 2001: 194). This notion of cultural economy looks further than or beyond Polanyi's concept of embeddedness. What underlying the processes of construction of tourist market as well as local identity and authenticity is the White Tai culture and habitus. Such processes can be considered as localization of cultural life of host community which has been changed from living with agriculture to living with tourism, and with modernity.

1.7 Methodology

1.7.1 Level and Unit of Analysis, and Operationalization

Based on my conceptual framework, this study has been carried out at three levels of analyses. The first level deals with the micro interaction of various market actors in constructing tourist market – tourists, hosts, tour guides, and between tourists and hosts, hosts and tour guides, hosts and local authority, tourists and tour guides . They are involved in connecting economy and culture in everyday economic actions (Slater 2002: 75).

The second level looks into the process of negotiation of authenticity in three modes of cultural economy: first, commodification of hospitality and ethnic authenticity; second, (re)construction of identity and; third, touristification. They can be seen through the process of negotiating authenticity in the space of practices where the global and the local interact; the way the villagers turn global market forces to be

localized process. This is the third level of abstraction. The space of practice is concerned with and combined in both production and consumption, in material as much as in symbol. And the last one, the highest level of abstraction, is the emerging of touristification and alternative development paths of Mai Châu tourist market.

Within these three units of analyses, as mentioned in the previous section, I will deal with the concept of cultural economy that encage with "lived social practices" (Slater 2002: 61), practice of cultural construction of tourist market, and negotiation of authenticity emphasizing on balance of power between different meanings and market discourses, and mobilization of identity.

In terms of operationalization, the pivotal spaces of practice are specified to analyze cultural construction of tourist market, and negotiation of authenticity. In actual sense, it is difficult to specify such intensive space of negotiating authenticity in Mai Châu since, as mentioned in the section "introduction," tourist attraction is the cultural atmosphere which consists of landscape, ethnic culture, traditional house and things. However, according to the tourists, "a must do in Mai Châu" is to stay overnight in the traditional stilt house and be served by White Tai homestay owners and enjoy a cultural show. It can be argued here, that, what a White Tai family sells is their "hospitality". Therefore, one of the main tourist attractions of Mai Châu, "hospitality" is a space of negotiation.

"Hospitality" is not used with the sense that local culture of hospitality is authentic (sold in the market). Rather, because hospitality is a good setting for close interaction between hosts and guests; it is sometimes not just a transient interaction. Negotiating authenticity through hospitality emphasizes on authentic meanings and relations since guests and hosts insert themselves to interact with each other. However, the relation may be perceived as the authentic at that moment. A negotiated authentic relation based on hospitality may constitute the tourist and host identities and vice versa. However, the space of hospitality is rather limited to managing of culture in terms of common property since each household (in relation to the tourists) has their own autonomy to construct hospitality.

Another important space of negotiation is the production and marketing of souvenir. Because every step of production takes place in the village. For example, textile is produced in the village – they grow mulberry, cotton, make silk/cotton

thread, dye the thread, weave, and sell the products by themselves. Apart from textiles, according to the villagers, other hand-made or industrial products are also produced in the villages.

In terms of scale of analysis, this study is divided into three units, from macro to micro levels. However, all three units of analysis are not separated sections in terms of contents; rather they interact with each other. The first is, the global tourist market works through discourses of "otherness" (like exotic other, authentic ethnic culture), and tourism business such as "cleanliness", "standard price", being comfortable", "modern toilet", and no cheating. Secondly, in the meso level my objective is to see how, during the market transition of post-socialist Vietnam, state and local authority tries to control or even take benefit from tourism business through regulations and organization of minority groups. In addition, historical memory is applied in ethnic relations in Vietnam, together with situating interactions among hosts and guests in Mai Châu. The third level of analysis is the tourist market networks. It is in the community or tourist place. At this level, the situation is complex; tourist cultural resources management and income distribution are considered in order to see conflicts in the villages regarding to tourism. In this analysis, interactions between various actors – tourists and hosts, villagers who engage in the market and those who are not, villagers and local authority – are taken into account too.

1.7.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

As can be gleaned from my discussion above, I used ethnography as the primary method for this study. However, in order to study a complex phenomenon like cultural market, my methodology of this study has been eclectic. I have used other methods, such as, participant observation, informal talk, and documentary analysis. Such eclectic methodology, to take a cue from Meethan, helps in analyzing complexities involved in the localized forms of practice and relation, and also helps to contextualize these in terms of transformation (Meethan 2001: 172). Furthermore, I have conducted questionnaire surveys and adopted quantitative analysis to understand

the complex perceptions and relations in tourist market in general, and the complex practices and relationships of tourist actors in particular.

During my fieldwork, I usually stayed in the main tourist villages and occasionally visited Hanoi to interview tour agencies. Occasionally, I went trekking with tourists so as to observe their activities and interactions among them and between them and hosts. I used the informal talks with these people as one of the sources of data.

The process ofdata analysis is discussed, in detail, in the following steps. First, I took observation notes everyday. In these observation notes, I analyzed the notes I took down depending on a working hypothesis. From this working hypothesis, I began to understand what kind of data were required to be collected so as to make my analysis more robust. Second, simultaneous to taking notes, I began writing the thesis following a planned structure, which might have to be flexible so as to answer the research questions effectively.

This study differentiates several actors: Mai Châu hosts and tourists in many statuses. For example, hosts can be differentiated as entrepreneurs, farmers, Vietnamese citizens, minority groups who call for equality, and so on, while tourists can be differentiated as Hanoians and university students, as the ethnic majority group who hold ethnic bias, work as tour guides and drivers; as foreign tourists living in Vietnam or depending on group tours, and as backpackers. Additionally, actors can be distinguished by socio-economic status, age, education, and perspective about cultural diversity. Households can be identified into three groups: (a) toursit market oriented (b) mixed strategies, and (c) minimal engagement (in tourism).

As mentioned previously, questionnaire had been used to employ descriptive statistics to analyze the data, such as cross-tabulation. Sample size determination is based on the Roscoe's rules of thumb for determining sample size which are the sample size of household is larger than 20 and the tourists is about 130 consisting of 46 cases of domestic tourists and 84 cases of foreign tourists. For this study, it employs only 2 or 3 variables in each time of analysis so that the rule number should not be interpreted strictly.

1.8 Field Experiences

1.8.1 Description of the Field Site and White Tai in Mai Châu

Mai Châu is considered to be a gateway to the north-western region of Vietnam. It is made up of varied topography with mountain-chains embracing valleys, and plentiful streams favorable for agriculture. In addition, Mai Châu is mentioned in the tourist map as ethnic tourist place with attractive White Tai Homestays and cultural atmosphere. In my opinion, Mai Châu is a perfect case for understanding cultural economy in various approaches, such as, commodification of culture, cultural construction of tourist market, localization (touristification), and negotiating authenticity.
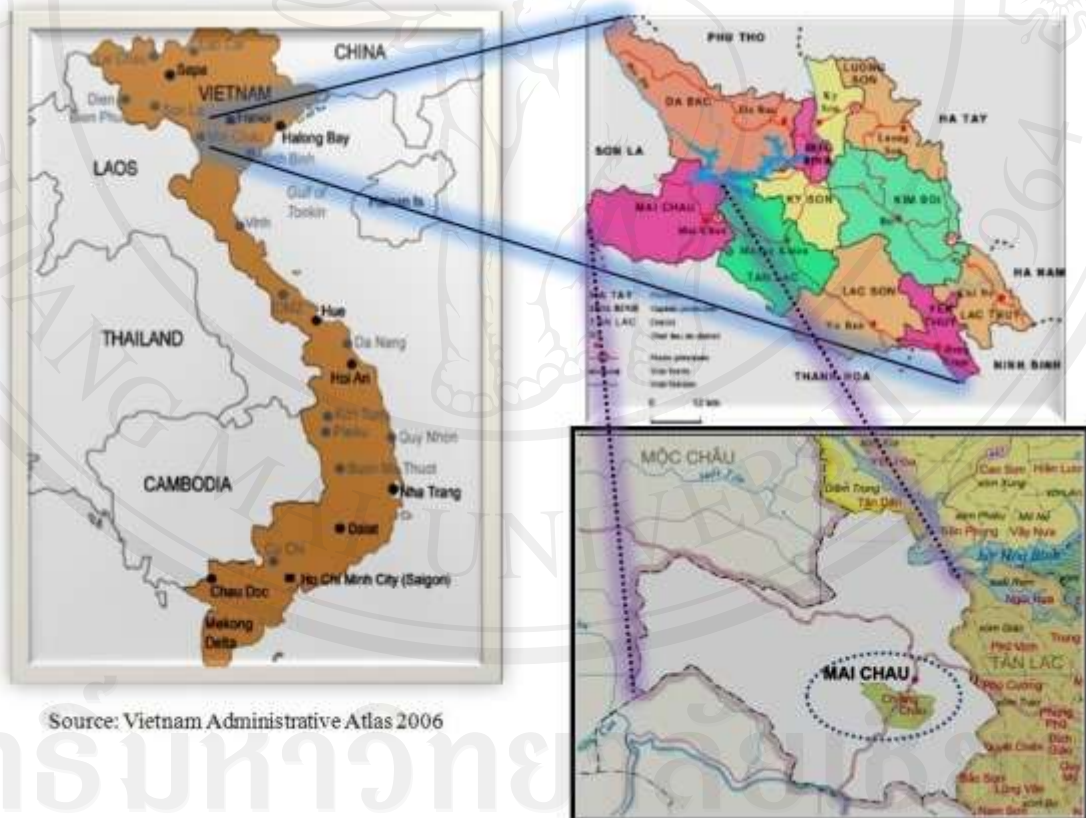

Source: Vietnam Administrative Atlas 2006

Figure 1.2 Map of Mai Châu District, Hòa Bình Province, Vietnam

As outlined earlier, this research is a case study of White Tai (known as Thái Trắng in Vietnam) ethnic minority engaged in ethnic tourism. I have taken two villages as my case study, viz. Bản Lác and Bản Pom Coọng. As stated earlier, since

the first half of the 1990s, the "tourist market" has held an increasing importance for villagers' livelihood; it has become one of the main sources of income for most households, especially in Bản Lác. And as pointed out before, the tourist market in these two places are controlled mainly by the villagers.

Even though it is hard to find published document on White Tai in Vietnam, there are few documents that talk about White Tais in Mai Châu. In the past Mai Châu was known as Mường Mùn (Lan 2000: 2) The white Tai have lived there for over 400 years (Cam 1999). According to Cam Trong (2007: 2-3), White Tai in Mai Châu is the second White Tai group which migrated from the Red river delta, in the central north part of Vietnam and then moved to the Đà river valleys, in the northwestern Vietnam, before they reached Mai Châu. However, according to informal discussions I had with various villagers, educated elders and local officials, as well as the ancient documents written in White Tai that I read, the White Tai people have been settled in Mai Châu since the 13th century.

In the past Mai Châu also used to be a strategic place for trading and (nonpayment) tourism. According to the villagers and a journalist I have interviewed, Mai Châu was a hub of opium trade. Mai Châu itself has two areas, highland and lowland; opium poppies used to be cultivated in the mountainous area of Mai Châu and of northwest region and and transported to Hanoi through Mai Châu valley. Opium trade gave Mai Châu a particular strategic area. In 1947, French troop occupied Mai Châu and took control over opium trade.

Mai Châu became a fierce battlefield before being liberated by Việt Minh[3] in November 11, 1949. During 1947–1954 White Tai in Mai Châu took part in the wars of resistance fought against the French. French rulers encouraged opium trade in Mai Châu. The intention of France, in gaining control over the northern Vietnam, was that it wanted to control opium production and trading. To conciliate the elites of the Mai Châu chiefdom, the French offered them incentives, especially money and women. The members of elite family did not need to work as laborers and as soldiers for the French troop (Tu 2011). According to Tu, French troop treated White Tai people

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[3] *Việt Minh* is a federal alliance for independent Vietnam. It was found in 1941. Its goal was to repel foreign invaders such as France and Japan for national independence of Vietnam (Pichet 2009: 174).

badly. They collected cooolies, conscripted, requested women for entertainment, and as well forcibly collected rice for feeding soldiers. Besides, thousands of people were forcibly taken away to build military post in far off places. As a result many local people did not appreciate the White Tai elite group and French troop. When Mai Châu became a fierce battlefield between Việt Minh and French troop, Mr. Hà Trọng Sinh (common person but educated), Mr. Phạm Minh (cadre of the district), Mr. Hoàng Ba (party committe secretary of Mai – Trung – Lê at Hỏm cave), Mr. Hà Công Mùi (president of administrative resistance committee of Mai Châu), and local people (who were secret agent of Việt Minh) contributed to the victory against French. Mr. Hà Trọng Sinh became communist party member after liberation of Mai Châu, and was selected as district party committee secretary of Mai Châu (Please see chapter 4 for more elaboration about White Tai ethnicity)

1.8.2 Carrying out Ethnographical Fieldwork

As an anthropologist, and one had who gained a fair degree of skill in speaking, reading and writing Vietnamese before, I spent significant amount of time carrying out ethnographical fieldwork. I collected primary data during 2007-2011 by informally talking to informants and long-stay observation in a variety of roles (as tourist, student studying White Tai, and finally as a researcher). This was followed by a more detailed examination of the sites: employing questionnaire for survey of the livelihoods of villagers and questionnaire interviewing tour guides. These were carried out in Vietnamese. As a tourist, I have been there five times. Each time, I stayed for about two weeks. While doing research, in 2010, I spent four months taking White Tai language lessons from a retired policeman who lived nearby the tourist village I was staying. I learned to read some White Tai ancient document possessed by him, such as genesis (which is the creation of the world), history, magic, and poem. During March - April 2011, I went back to Mai Châu as a researcher and carried out both ethnographical fieldwork and questionnaire survey.

Anthropologist as a Tourist

To carry out this study, I was both an anthropologist and a tourist. As a tourist, I went to Mai Châu four times, spending three to twelve days, snooping around for a research topic and making preliminary survey. I did not disclose my other identity, the identity of an anthropology researcher, for I had not yet obtained research permission from the state authorities in Vietnam. It is illegal to carry out research in Vietnam without permission. You can be arrested by police. On a very personal note, my stay in this village made me feel closer to my ancestor's land. My maternal grandmother was a White Tai. I had taken flowers from Hanoi to pray and pay respect to the spirit of the land to which my grandmother belonged.

I want to confess that I was an amateur anthropologist, acting as a tourist. I had just started reading anthropological theories and concepts and had not yet developed a focal point for my research. I lacked the outlook of an anthropologist. I felt like I was in a similar situation like Barley (1983: 51 quoted in Crick 1995: 214), who, in the early stage of research, didn't know how to be an anthropologist. Thus I am not a sophisticated anthropological type of tourist as Pearce (1982: 17), MacCannell (1976: 10), Krippendorf (1987: 41) (quoted in Crick 1995: 209) stated. But I believe, I always had the urge to deal with people in an egalitarian manner, whether as a tourist or as a researcher.

It is also worth noting that I found these two villages by accident. I was looking for a research site in a White Tai agricultural community, in the province nearby, Sơn La, but just two days before my arrival in Vietnam I found out that my application for research permission was rejected. But I had already bought the tickets. So instead of going to where I intended, so as not to attract police attention, I went to Bản Lác, a White Tai tourist village. A Vietnamese friend of mine recommended me to a homestay he had stayed before. The hospitality was amazing. In fact, during my first meal with the host family, the host decided to call me, "Chị Thái Lan", meaning "Thai elder sister" and served my meals with salt and pepper. I was no longer just a "Khách nhà", a visitor. It appeared to me, I was immediately incorporated into their village kinship system. It fascinated me and aroused the anthropologist's curiosity in

me. Why and when do a host actually decide to incorporate guests into their world of kinship?

During my second stay in this village, a Singaporean backpacker, dressed like hippie, and carrying a Vietnamese language handbook came to stay at the Homestay where I was staying. It was his first visit. He was a hotel manager in Sa Pa, a famous tourist site in Northern Vietnam. On the second day, he slumped on a chair, in front of the homestay, and sang Western songs at the top of his voice. It caused some sort of discomfiture to my host and the villagers around. Neither did the host invite him to eat with the family nor serve him salt and pepper powder. It occurred to me, that, immediately on his arrival (as a backpacker) the host have classified him as "Tây ba lô" – meaning foreign backpacker. Though we both were satisfied with the hospitality bestowed on us, at the end of the stay, he was charged double of what I had to pay. He was of the opinion that he had to pay more because the language barrier between him and the host. I think it was more that.

When we came to Bản Lác, we both could barely speak smattering Vietnamese. But my Thai identity and its supposed association with "Tai" – besides my genuine interest in breaking the language barrier by learning to speak to them in Tai – endeared me to the host instantly. Perhaps, it was not language per se, but the prevailing "tourist discourses" which became an impregnable obstacle for him and the host. It was rare for them to see, a Thai speaking to them, and learning from them, in their language. I was invited by my host's neighbours for lunch or dinner. . On many occasions, I helped my host to cook, and ate and watched TV with them. In a short span of time, most of Bản Lác people knew me and were friendly to me. I was, then, treated by the host as a close (also important) guest. They invited me to sit at the front table during the "new rice celebration" party – this is held once in a year and such seats are normally reserved for the eldest relatives or revered guests, who are normally male. In short, I was incorporated into their world, life, kinship system.

Of course, this incorporation and the interactions were seldom outside touristic desire. This incorporation and interactions has to be seen as ways of making networks that are ultimately concerned with ethnic tourism. Some interacted with me in a business-like manner. Some wanted to discuss and discover our cultural similarities and differences. And there were some who were sincerely interested in building

friendship with me. I see these relationships and interactions within the framework of building the tourist market: as cultural practices characteristic to ethnic tourist market. The Singaporean backpacker only wanted to relax and to be served by villagers, instead of participating in ethnic and cultural learning. This may be the reason why he was not perceived as a potential network. He saw hospitality or host-guest relationship from the point of view of a commodity to be purchased: hospitality as a standardized facility, a commodified culture.

The relationship, between host and guest, in the ethnic tourist market is never given. Suvaltola (2002: 168) made a pithy observation when he said; tourist experiences are shaped by various tourist discourses. The Singaporean man tried to understand the villagers in the context "market discourses", which is powerfully affected by "tourist discourses". He is trapped into the world of (tourist) business. Therefore, the relationship between him and his host was immersed within the transaction of "economic rationality of profit". When a tourist doesn't care to respect local culture and livelihood, their interaction will only be characterized by so-called "instrumental interaction". The ethnic touristic space for understanding ethnic culture cannot be opened for anyone who is embedded within the tourist discourses.

Anthropologist as a Student Studying White Tai and Vietnamese

As I had mentioned, one requires permission to do research in Vietnam. To obtain this permission one must have a host institute in Vietnam. And because I did not have sufficient research grant to pay for host's academic service, I pretended to be a student interested in learning Vietnamese and White Tai. I got visa type B. Each month I spend around 25 days for studying White Tai in Mai Châu, and 4-5 days for studying Vietnamese in Hanoi. I had a hunch that villagers and local authorities would be suspicious about my motive of studying White Tai. I had clarified my purpose was to prepare myself for future research to be carried out with state permission. Fortunately, I chose a retired policeman as my White Tai instructor. In our first meeting, my instructor took me to a magician (Thầy Mo). He tried to convince me that to learn about their culture, I have to know him. Perhaps, he wanted to make sure

my coming was not a bad omen for him and his neighbors. I guessed, it was a mechanism of self-protection.

My instructor treated me very well. He added a prefix "Nang" (meaning female lord which only aristocrat family had merit to use) before my name. He liked showing me around Mai Châu. He became one of my key informants of White Tai history and culture. He did not care to teach me the language per se. He likes to talk about White Tai history, cultures, and identities. He mostly talked in Vietnamese. I took note in "Thai" karaoke words. At night I transferred the Thai karaoke to Vietnamese. When I failed to understand what he said I asked my Vietnamese friend to translate it. When I talked to villagers, I could not take note (I had not yet got research permission) so I remembered the key words and entered them in note when I am alone.

To make sure people felt I was not researching them, I did not interview or ask people much. Taking note was meticulously avoided. My everyday conversation casual and when a villager say something very informative, and I am eager to know, I pretend by action that it is not interesting. Or I just listen without any more question. Even my principal advisor and his wife paid a visit to my field site for few days pretending to be my uncle and aunt. We spend much of the time out off the village as if their purpose is traveling rather than observing my field work.

During my initial four-month stay, occasionally, villagers invited me to have (free) meals with their family. They like inviting visitors to their house, and chat, drink tea, and/or have a meal. Declining an invitation is generally not taken too well and is considered a disregard towards them. I had been invited to take part in rice ceremony banquets, thank giving banquets, and so on. At the banquets, I am forced to drink very strong local brew. Though I don't take alcohol I drink and pretend that it is good. Sometimes when I manage to tactically decline the offer, I felt my behavior was unbecoming of a good anthropologist.

I had helped my host and some villagers cultivate wet rice, washed dishes and serve food during funeral ceremony, and saw pillow for wedding party, and translate English. I had become familiar with a few villagers. We would watch TV together. I would help them sell souvenir. I would follow them around to see their economic and social actions, see how my confidant plays role as a local tour guide.

This space of hospitality is a good setting leading me to get closer to the villagers. Sometimes, villagers passing my place stop and sit down, and talk to me. Since White Tai are hospitable, I feel free to go into many households to talk to or observe the interactions between them and tourists, and/or cultural show, and so on. The villagers like to hear my White Tai accent, my words mixed with Vietnamese, and my speaking style. Many a times they are amused and entertained by my speaking style. Some of them told me that my speaking is lovely and they enjoy listening. I like taking villagers' photos and print photos for them. They appreciate and feel thankful to me.

Villagers mostly appreciate my studying White Tai because although I am a foreigner, I value their cultural heritage. They told me, they would like their children to study their written language with me. Thanks to my insufficient grant, I could not be hosted by any academic institute, which pushes me to be a student that helped me learned a lot from this role. Generally, the villagers are kind to me. Not mention about their hospitality again, at business transactions, I get a cheaper price or free of charge for some service the sell. Before leaving Mai Châu at this moment, a villager, perceived generally as a stingy woman gave me an old silver bracelet. I felt so embarrassed and gave her my special silver-quartz ring. My hosts took good care of me. They cared for my safety and health. When I decided to leaving for Thailand, my hosts performed a "calling back spiritual ceremony" (Hiêc Khoan) to make my body and mind strong for the journey.

Once while taking White Tai lesson at my homestay (normally I study at my teacher's house at the village nearby), four district policemen came and talked to my host. My host called me to talk to the policemen. I feared that they may dismiss me to Hanoi because I had not yet got student visa. It was in the process. And of course, I have no research permission. I may not be able to convince them that I am studying White Tai language without any hidden agenda. If I am taken out to Hanoi, my thesis project will be finished. Subsequently, I will face difficulty in pursuing Ph.D. I informed my teacher about my fear. He assured me that there will be no problem; he is the father of the Mai Châu policemen. So I came out to talk to the policemen with a big smile. I knew, at the back of my mind, that I should impress them. I spruce up my conversation with jokes and at times teased them. Two of the policemen were White

Tai, so I made use of my being "Thai" saying we belong to same ethnic "Thai". I told them I had come to study Thai cultural heritage and would like to help preserve it. That they should encourage me to keep their culture, wisdom and language and promote them to the academic world. I convinced them that I will be able to produce my visa by the beginning of next month. The strategy worked. But I think, from then on, my everyday movement and actions were unofficially monitored by my hosts, village security, and sub-district policeman, sometimes by district police man.

In dealing with the police, I also got the support of a police friend. We came to know each other through a mutual friend, a Thai scholar. We became close friend very easily. He said he liked me. Even though I did not like him much, when I am in Hanoi and Mai Châu I dated him sometimes and pretended that he was a special friend. He promised me that he will protect me. So on one occasion when a provincial policeman accused questions in one of my questionnaire surveys to be contradictory to socialist ideology and called my host institute to interrogate me he (my friend) clarified and defended me.

Anthropologist as a Researcher

In February 2011, after the Vietnamese New Year, I went back to Mai Châu to observe the Lễ Xên Mường (city worship ceremony) with lots of gifts for my hosts and villagers close to me. They appreciated the gifts, not because of the exchange and use values of the gifts, but the meaning of the gifts. That is, the gifts were from a foreigner and of course from Thailand. In Vietnam, people tend to like any product made in Thailand, more than the products made in China.

I told them that my application for research permission is in the process. After I got research permission and visa for doing research in March 2011, I was hosted by Institute of Cultural Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences. So during March – April 2011, I became a formal researcher doing field work in Mai Châu. Working with this institute I was able to manage without hiring a research assistance assigned by the institute. By this time, I had become quite familiar with people, culture, and local language. The research permission made it possible for me to be introduced by my host institute to some local authorities at district level. I came to know the deputy

sheriff and head of cultural department of district, and of province. I am glad that I was introduced to Mr. Khà Tiến, retired head of cultural department of the district. He became one of my key informants. He was impressed by my ability to read White Tai documents written in ancient word/style of writing. He gave me some valuable documents, a Vietnamese translation of White Tai archives written hundreds years ago. He wanted me to, jokingly, to become a daughter in law of a Mai Châu person.

As a formal researcher, I was able to do questionnaire surveys, informal talk, participatory observation, and interview. I hired my (policeman) friend and some homestay hosts and a local guide to distribute and collect the questionnaires interviewing tourists for me. I hired a villager to do questionnaire interview to the villagers and tour guides. I conducted questionnaire interviews by myself even though my White Tai and Vietnamese vocabulary was not good enough for questionnaire interview which were rather formal. On some occasions, I did the interview by reading the questionnaire in Vietnamese, the interviewees feel it is too slow; they take my questionnaire, read and fill out by themselves. Sometimes the villagers were suspicious of the questionnaire survey. They thought it was an economic/income survey done by local authority to find out about their taxable income.

Connecting to the tourists and tour guides

I made use of their hospitality to observe the interactions between host/villagers and tourists. I would sit at many Homestays, and pretend to talk with the household members while observing such interactions. Sometimes I would ask the villagers why they or tourists or tour guide act in particular way, which I did not understand. Sometimes I would talk to the tourists. Anyway, to me, to deal with or ask a Vietnamese tourist is easier than talking to foreign tourists. This is because Vietnamese tourists like talking to a foreigner who can speak Vietnamese. If they know that I am a Vietnamese speaking foreigner, they will come to me and open conversation. It is easier to deal with male tour guides and drivers. In the case of foreign tourists, to get close to them I acted as a translator for my and other Homestay owners. I liked to be a translator for my village confidant during trekking tour, and stopping for taking a rest at her house. It is a good chance to see what they talk to

each other via me, and to talk to the tourists. I can get familiar with some tourists and take them shopping, watch cultural show for free, take a stroll and go for sightseeing, help in negotiating transportation price and so on. These close interactions offers insightful information.

1.9 The Organization of this Thesis

The structure of thesis is to elaborate and analyze the complexity of ethnicity, and cultural change in terms of "authenticity" through Mai Châu tourist market under the contexts of (i) post-socialist transition, (ii) Vietnam's entering to the global market, and (iii) multi-ethnicity. In chapter 2 I begin the discussion with what I call the "awkward rural economy under socialism" in Vietnam. What I mean by this is the application of socialist ideology by Vietnam state for the transformation of the White Tai rural community, which lasted for about 40 years, appeared awkward since the White Tai culture and habitus could not be articulated with socialist ideology. It was only after the initiation of post-socialist market transition (after the late 1980s) Mai Châi's economic landscape began to be transformed drastically – it was constructed and represented as a tourist landscape. The household economy, during the market transition period, began to acquire forms and identity different from that of socialist period. My suspicion is that, this is because White Tai culture and habitus, in the process of cultural constrcuting tourist market, are complemented very well by the tourist market or cultural economy. Their intensive engagement with tourist market weaves them into the complex socio-businees networks of the global market, resembling a web of social relationships in the form of friendship and partnership. This web of social relationship encourages economic liberalism and individual/household choice/freedom - ideals promoted by the policy of economy revolution (Đổi Mới). White Tais' engagement with market also illustrates their abilities to relatively manipulate global market to turn it into local process. I would therefore argue that – contrary to Vietnamese state's characterization of ethnic minorities culture as obstacles to economic improvement – the minority's culture is not an obstacle to economic development. This chapter tries to show, in this case study, that free market is unable to work without communal and cultural support.

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Besides, this chapter reveals that tourist market is not something subsituted agricultural based economy, rather they are about mutural support. Tourist market so far has not changed the community's social structure as many tourism studies found. Economic rationality, although exists in the villages, is not a threat to social coherence.

In Chapter 3, I make an attempt to illustrate localization, arguing that the global tourist market has been articulated within the local livelihoods. In this chapter I show the diverse economic strategies and differentiated livelihoods of local people which increased livelihood options for everyone including the poor. This chapter also digs deeper into how local people turn global force into localized process by converting social and cultural capitals into economic capitals in order to make a sustainable living. More specifically, converting such capitals, in the process of commodification of culture of hospitality, transforms local people as "entrepreneurs". Enterpreneurship is an important factor for agrarian transformation so as to live with tourist market. There are many small scale businesses such as homestays and souvenir shops. In this chapter, I make an attempt to point out that constructing tourism business also leads to conflicting engagement with politics of social exclusion. This conflict can be lessened by improvizing White Tai habitus of hospitality which brings about freedom from violence of politics of social exclusion. Explicitly villagers interpret and practice culture of hospitality to enter into the market, and even create market segment. Finally, by cultural constructing tourist market, the villagers are able to construct their new identity as entrepreneur and merchant. The villagers (the entrepreneurs) are able to negotiate with the market, relatively bypassing the state and which brings about ethnic identity and pride. It is evident that the global process is contradictory. On one hand it is widely acknowledge as a threat to indigenous cultures, but on the other hand, it leads to expression of local identity – as somebody in Vietnam and a marked locality on the Vietnamese tourist map.

In Chapter 4, I will examine the process of negotiation of ethnicity by the White Tai, in the pre and post tourist market. This chapter analyzes the dynamic process of ethnicity through a historical lense: How did the White Tai view themselves and invent their identity in relation to the Kinh majority and the tourists?

This chapter depicts the representation of White Tai in the past conceived as essentialistic ethnicity which was about primitiveness and backwardness based on the dominant-subordinate relationship with the Kinh. This relationship changed once they are entered global tourist market. Earlier their representation was dominated and intervened by the state and outsiders. However, the White Tai have been able to situate their ethnicity and identity considerably since their engagement with tourism – they have appropriated or reclaimed their right to represent their culture and identity and Mai Châu by themselves. They did this through what I call "politics of strategic essentialism": local people have turned essentialistic White Tai to be a strategy to negotiate identity. These negotiations are expressed through bounded culture which is constantly constructed, reinvented and contested. Moreover, they are able to overturn the essential White Tai to claim economic benefit and ethnic dignity as well as erase ethnic hierarchical relationship. It is certain that their identity have undergone a shift in the contexts of modernity and global tourist market.

Chapter 5 is an attempt to elaborate the process of negotiation of authenticity which takes place through the interaction between hosts and tourists in the contexts of consumer's demand in global market and multi-ethnic relations. This chapter reveals the perceptions and behaviors of various types of tourists. In relation to the tourists, the hosts play a crucial role in production process of hospitality by creating market strategies called "hybridizing hospitality", which are, one, ethnicity (essentialistic White Tai and reinvented traditions) and two, hybridized modern facilities/idea. To be free from domination and fixed representations, the White Tai hosts have negotiated their authenticity by blurring the boundaries between ethnicity and modernity, things and relations, so that they have had to become somewhat ambiguous and construct situated relationships. In this chapter 1 will also show that, within the consumption process, the commodity in this context is decommodified hospitality. Because of the commodified hospitality, the normal host-tourist relationships have been transformed into host-guest relations, considered as "authentic relations", bringing about an intimate relationship based on long term transactions. Intimate relations are thus relationships redefined. Furthermore various relationships reveal the complexity of ethnic relations in context specific expressing complexity of White Tai ethnicity identity and the types of negotiation processes. Apart from the discussion on host-

tourist relations, I try to delineate how the production and consumption processes are internalized as new behavior and habit of the White Tai in their consumption of modernity so as better their quality of life and living too.

In Chapter 6, which is the conclusion chapter, I discuss and analyze the major findings of the study, which are that (i) within the tourist market space, the White Tai have been transformed from peasants into a variety of business persons, whether it be moral entrepreneurs, moral merchants, polite vendors, moral hosts or intimate hosts. This transformation has occurred through the localization (touristification) of culture, through the construction of a tourist market and new identity, and the negotiation authenticity through "strategic essentialism, (ii) the authentic White Tai in some conditions and sometimes seem ambiguous, since they have blurred the boundaries between essentialistic ethnicity, reinvented traditions and modernity, and between things and relations, and (iii) normal host-tourist relations have been transformed into intimate relations through the process of decommodifying hospitality. As the effects of such a process have continued, the White Tai's relationships with outsiders (i.e. the Kinh and the tourists) have been redefined; the ethnic hierarchical gap has been bridged and their identities have been changed into being somebody in Vietnam and the world.