

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 I will also show that, within the consumption process, the commodity in this context is de-commodified 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.

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