The Modernization of Paj Ntaub in China
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Background Information
- Eight students and two faculty members traveled to 16 Hmong villages to conduct qualitative research in Yunnan Province during July 2012.
- The project was funded by The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire International Fellows Program and AsiaNetwork.
- My focus was to learn about the history and practices of Paj Ntaub. Paj Ntaub is a general term used for stitch work that includes textile art for clothing, accessories, and artwork in general.
- This was qualitative research through dialogue and group interpretation that took place in Hmong and English.
- We visited 16 villages as a group but I spoke with villagers from only 13 villages.

Importance of Paj Ntaub
- Commonly done by women as a way to maintain tradition and for recreation.
- In recent decades Paj Ntaub - Story Cloths have been produced from refugee camps telling the story of the Hmong peoples’ migration from Laos to Thailand after the Secret War (Ma, 2005).
- Traditionally Paj Ntaub shows the status of the person wearing it.
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- The quality of the stitch work showed the ability of the woman; being able to sew durable stitches meant she would be a promising wife/daughter-in-law (Craig, 2010).

Findings
- With the help of technology, making Paj Ntaub is a lot more convenient however the uniqueness of each outfit and stitch is becoming more rare.
- Industrial machines are able to mass produce Paj Ntaub in a short amount of time and able to pleat a skirt in a few seconds when a skirt being pleated traditionally took hours.
- Though seamstresses are able to create a unique outfit with their own personal sewing machines, it is still not as unique as one made by hand because the Paj Ntaub textiles used by the seamstresses are manufactured by only a hand full of companies, ultimately resulting in similar Paj Ntaub with slightly different styles of the outfits.
- More recently, summer dresses and evening gowns with signature textiles have become very popular. The modern dress is a cross between a westernized summer dress, but because they are printed with Hmong Paj Ntaub textiles, they remain identifiable Hmong.

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References