(D) Hmong

Hmong Daw (which belongs to the Hmong Mien language family, along with several other Hmong languages) is spoken by approximately 165 thousand people in south-eastern China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam, and some other countries.

In the 1960s Shong Lue Yang, a peasant from the Hmong Daw nation (also known as White Miao), invented an original writing system for his native language. This writing system is still in use alongside a Roman-based alphabet created by Christian missionaries.

Here are several words and phrases in the Hmong Daw language written in Shong Lue Yang’s script and the missionaries’ alphabet, as well as their English translations:

1. Ḳìn̤ x̂u̍n̤ kev ntsuas no degree
2. ḳ̄̄n̤ hauv inside
3. ḳ̄̄nḡ n̤̄ḡ s̄̄u̍n̤ raug raws cai legal
4. ḳ̄̄nḡ n̤̄ḡ hloov mus transfer
5. ṭ̄̄ x̂ qhua guest
6. ḳ̄̄nḡ n̤̄ḡ n̤̄n̤ ŷḡ los n̤̄ḡ it is raining
7. ṭ̄̄ x̂ kwv yees guess
8. ḳ̄̄nḡ ṭ̄̄ x̂ ris ceg luv Bermuda shorts

In the missionaries’ alphabet the letter w stands for a specific vowel. The letters g, s and v at the ends of the syllables aren’t consonants; instead, they denote the so-called tones (specific ways of pronouncing the vowels).

D1. Write in the missionaries’ alphabet (and explain):

9. ṭ̄̄ n̤̄n̤ bird
10. ṭ̄̄ n̤̄n̤ lobster
11. ṭ̄̄ n̤̄n̤̄ n̤̄ n̤̄ speak
12. ṭ̄̄ n̤̄ n̤̄̄ n̤̄ dizzy

D2. Write in Shong Lue Yang’s script (and explain):

13. hluav ash
14. li cas how?
15. neeg ntse smart, wise
16. yawg grandfather