

Caves in the Shan States / Myanmar



Results of the Speleological Expeditions in January 2012 in cooperation with the Myanmar Tourism Promotion Board

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Compiled by Dr. Joerg Dreybrodt with Dr. Peter Talling

**Coordinators of the
Myanmar Cave Documentation Project**

www.myanmarcaves.com

1. Introduction and Summary

This year saw the continuation of explorations on the Shan plateau in Northeast Myanmar with two independent expedition teams from December 2011 to February 2012. Since 2009 one British and one international team are active to document caves in cooperation with the Myanmar Tourism Promotion Board. The last two years focused successfully on Hopon close to Taunggyi, with only a very brief reconnaissance in the north near Lashio. This year the activities were extended to Kalaw, Pinlaung, Nyaung Shwe and Ywangan, along with a return to Lashio, in order to cover more parts of the vast lime stone plateau. This resulted in the discovery of the new longest and deepest caves of Myanmar.

The first team split their expedition between two areas. Initially 10 days were spent based in Ywangan Township. A number of small caves were explored, as well as the extensive Kyauk Khaung (Stone Cave). Here the Elephant Whirlpool river flows into a classic limestone cliff entrance. Although the river soon sumps, an extensive high level series was discovered as well as a regaining the river beyond the initial sump. After four days of intensive exploration and surveying Kyauk Khaung was confirmed as the longest cave currently mapped in Myanmar at 2,355m in length. With 92m vertical range it was also briefly the longest cave in the country. The cave was left ongoing in a number of areas.

The first team then moved to Lashio to continue the reconnaissance started in this area in 2011. In particular, it was important to build on the local contacts made during 2011, and therefore obtaining further information. We were able to map around 867m of cave passage to the south of Lashio, close to the Mandalay Road. In total the first expedition mapped 3.3Km of cave passages at 6 sites and recorded a further 14 sites of speleological interest.

The second team ventured to the Kalaw and Pinlaung regions which were targeted during the British/Italian La Venta expedition in 2005 and since then has not been accessible due to political reasons. The most significant findings are in a lime stone ridge few km west of Pinlaung. It hosts a series of big chambers with pitches below which line up nicely every few hundred meters. The largest cave is Mai Lone Kho with an open entrance hall of 80 m length, 60 m width and 35 m height. The descent of the following shafts resulted in a total depth of -160m. It is the new deepest known cave in Myanmar. The plain east of Pinlaung has sinkholes with disappearing rivers. The Nanpa and Bilu Chaung Ye Hwut Caves were surveyed to 308m and 322 m before the passages sumped.

The visit to the Kalaw area was brief and only one river cave could be pushed to a length of 490 m. The last days were spent on the ridge near Nyaung Shwe and resulted in several caves of a few hundred meter length. The area would be therefore worth a more systematic exploration. In total the 2nd team surveyed 3 km of cave passages in 15 days.

The findings of the 2012 expedition teams confirm the long assumed potential of the limestone plateau of Shan State for larger cave systems. As in previous years, access is the key as the road network is limited and in places only partially drivable. The explorations will continue in 2013.

Myanmar Cave Documentation Project 2012

Expedition members 2012:

Ywangan/Lashio C Densham (GB), T Guilford (GB), L Hong (China), F. Loveridge, L Maurice (GB), P. Talling (co-ordinator, GB)

Kalaw/Pinlaung J. Dreybrodt (co-ordinator, D), U. Etter (CH), M. Olliphant (USA), N. Pistole (USA), A. Romeo (I) H. Steiner (D)

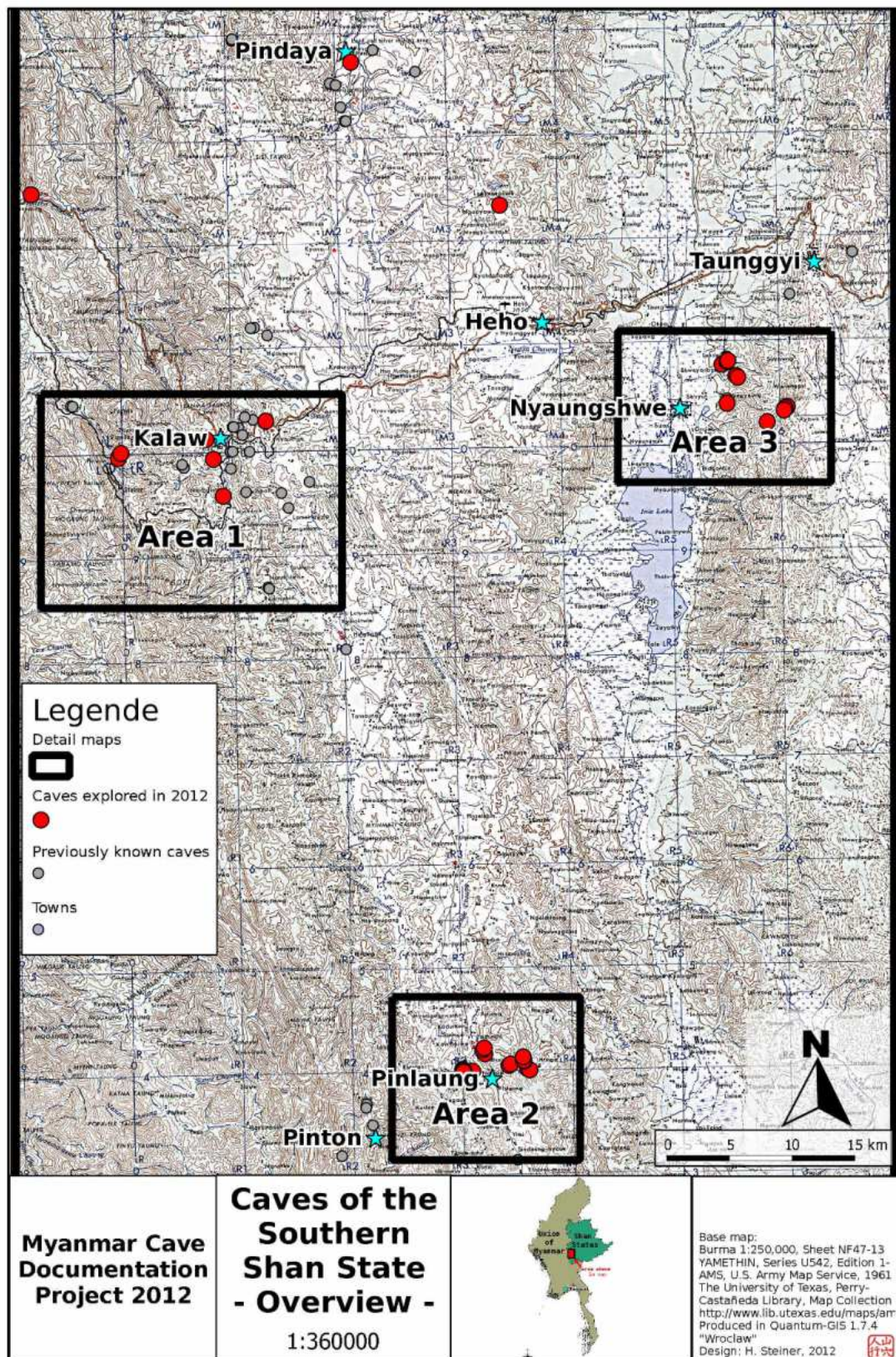
Overview of main caves surveyed in 2012:

No	Name	Village	Township	State	Length (m)
1	Kyauk Khaung	Ywangan	Ywangan	Southern Shan State	2355
2	Lim Nho	Man Aing	Lashio	Northern Shan State	589
3	Twinn II Gu (Gu Nan)	Pinwon	Kalaw	Southern Shan State	490
4	Bilu Chaung Ye Hwut Gu	Minbu	Pinlaung	Southern Shan State	340
5	Mai Lone Kho	Hti Hwali	Pinlaung	Southern Shan State	339
6	Nanpha Gu	Pinlaung	Pinlaung	Southern Shan State	322
7	Yum Gu	Pinwon	Kalaw	Southern Shan State	282
8	Kyan Lin Gu	Minbu	Pinlaung	Southern Shan State	277
9	Thang	Nan Ngwe	Nyaungshwe	Southern Shan State	150

2. Location of caves by area

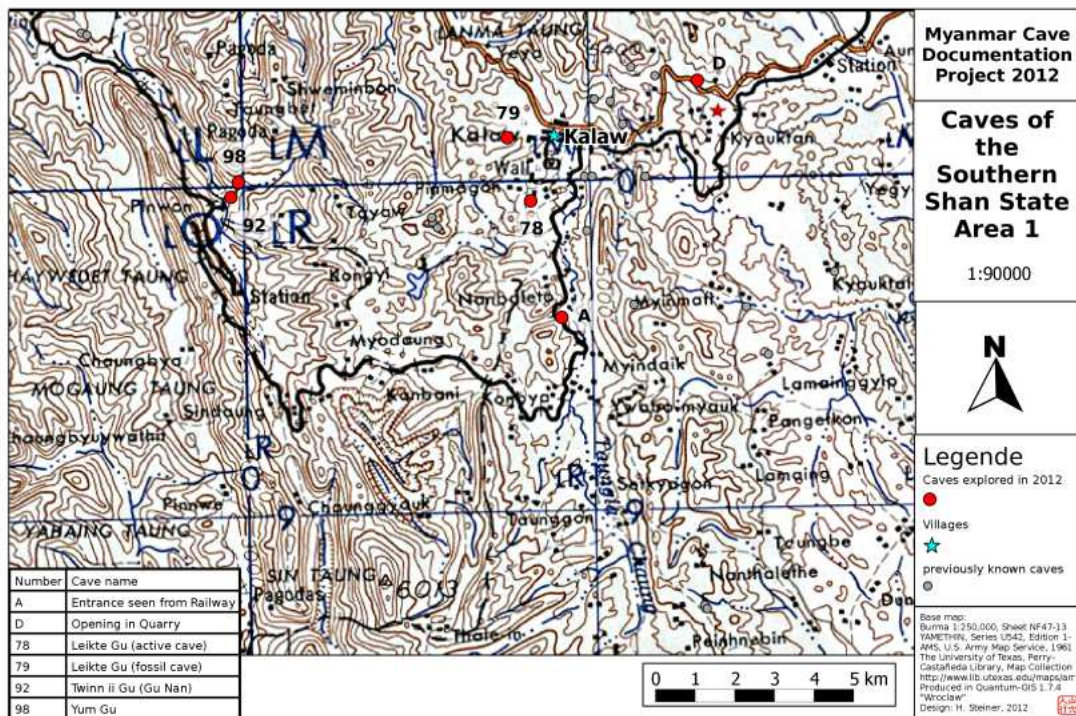
a.) Kalaw-Pinlaung-Nyaungshwe

Topographic map with an overview of the visited area with cave entrances marked as red dots.

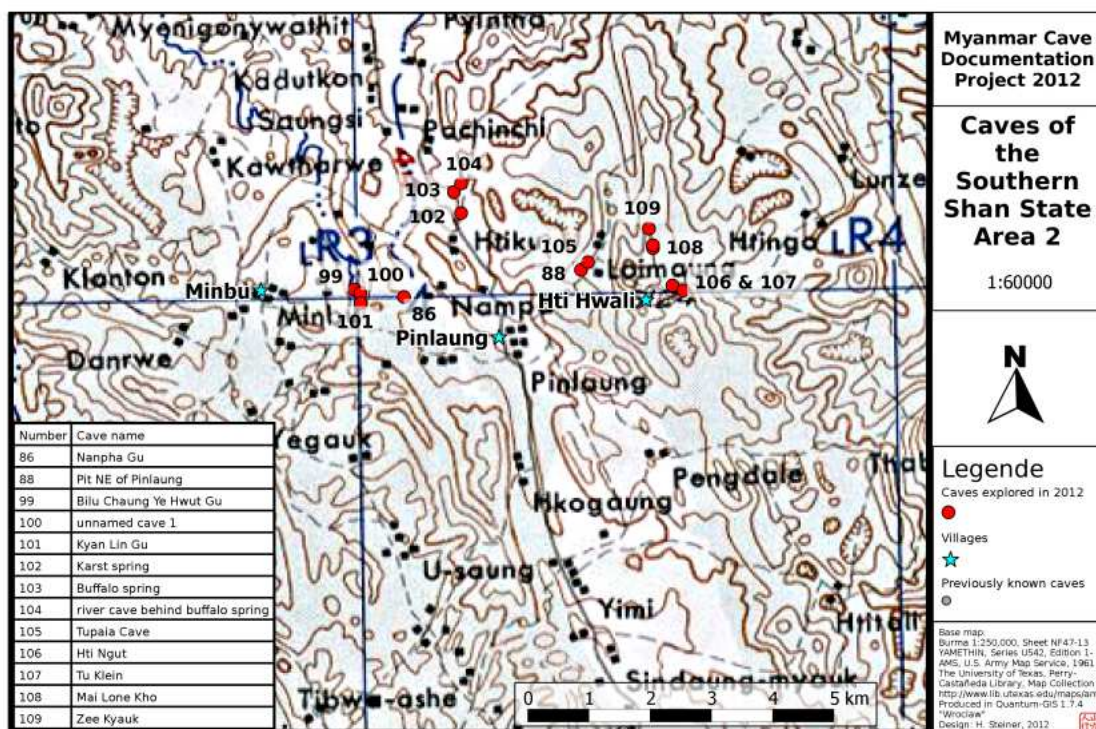


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Area 1 - Kalaw

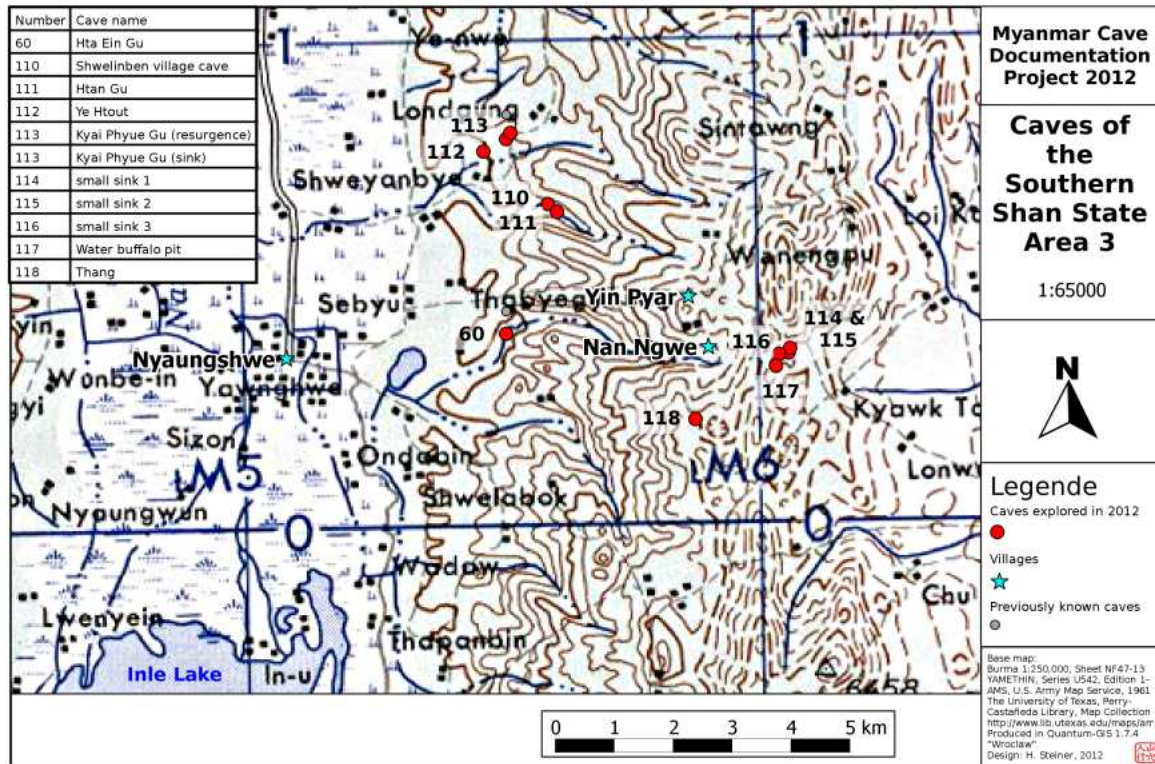


Area 2 - Pinlaung



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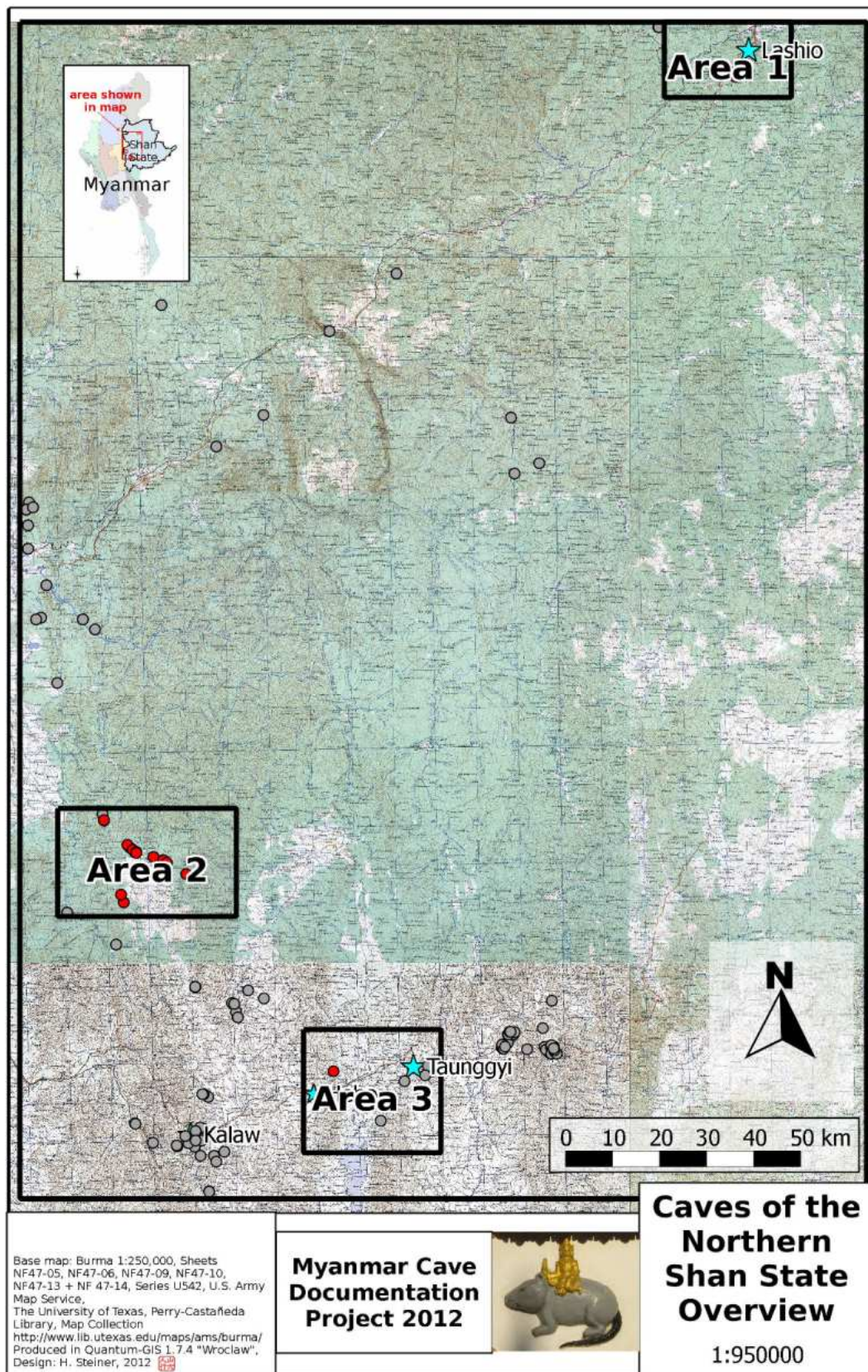
Area 3 - Nyaungshwe



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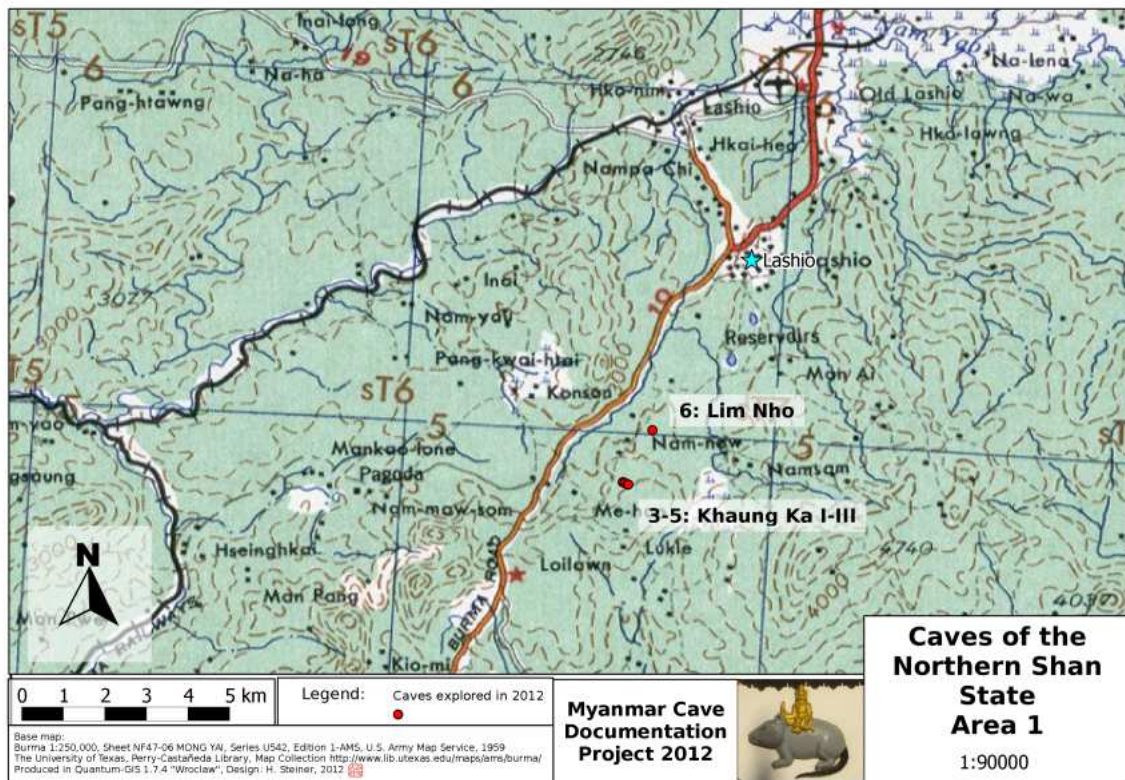
b.) Kalaw-Pinlaung-Nyaungshwe

Topographic map with an overview of the visited area with cave entrances marked as red dots.

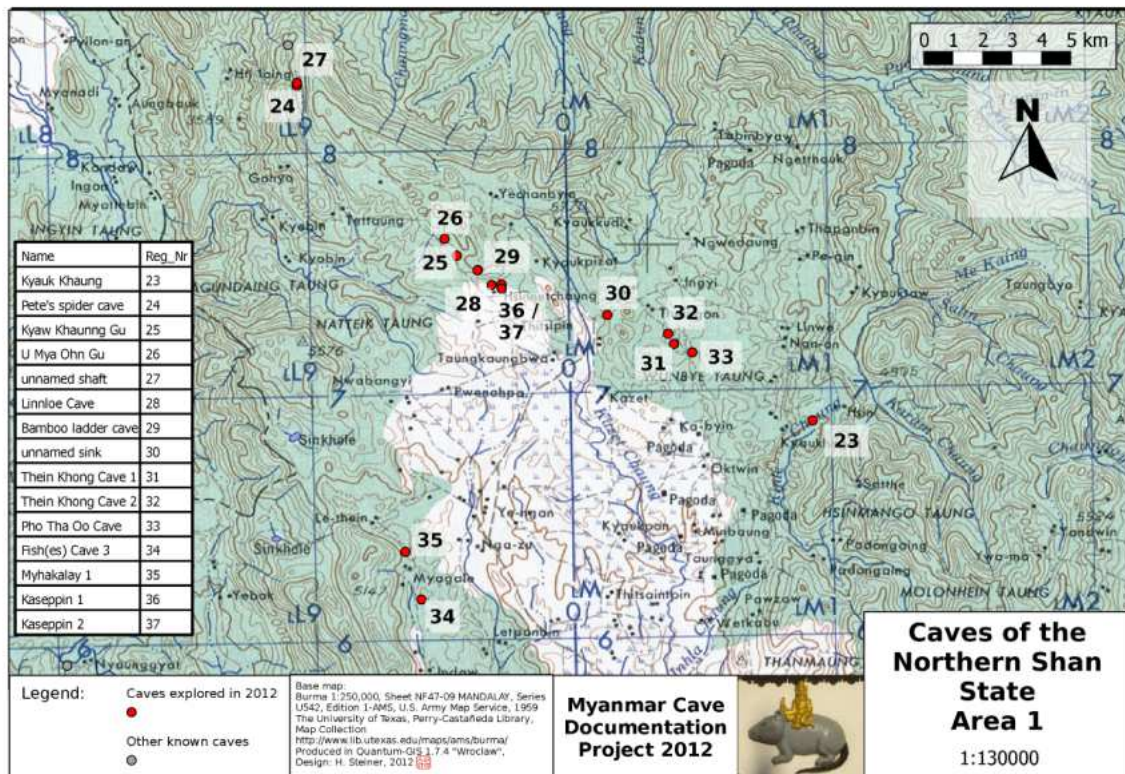


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Area 1 - Lashio

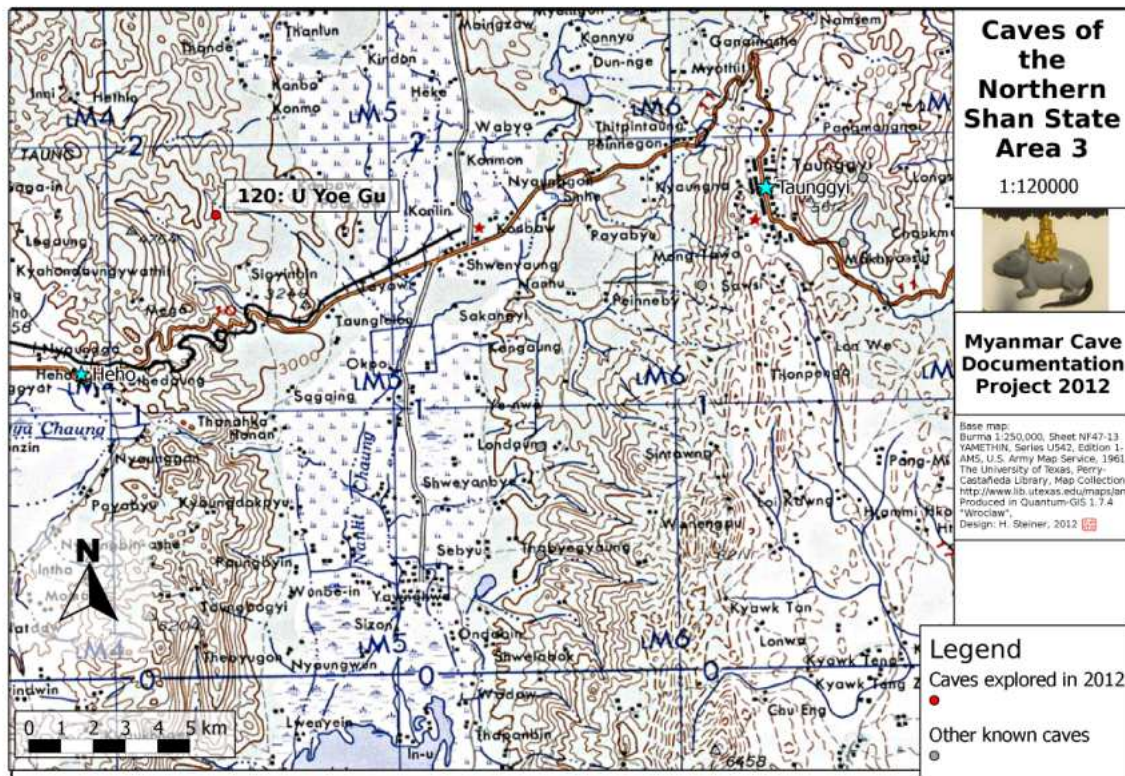


Area 2 - Ywangan



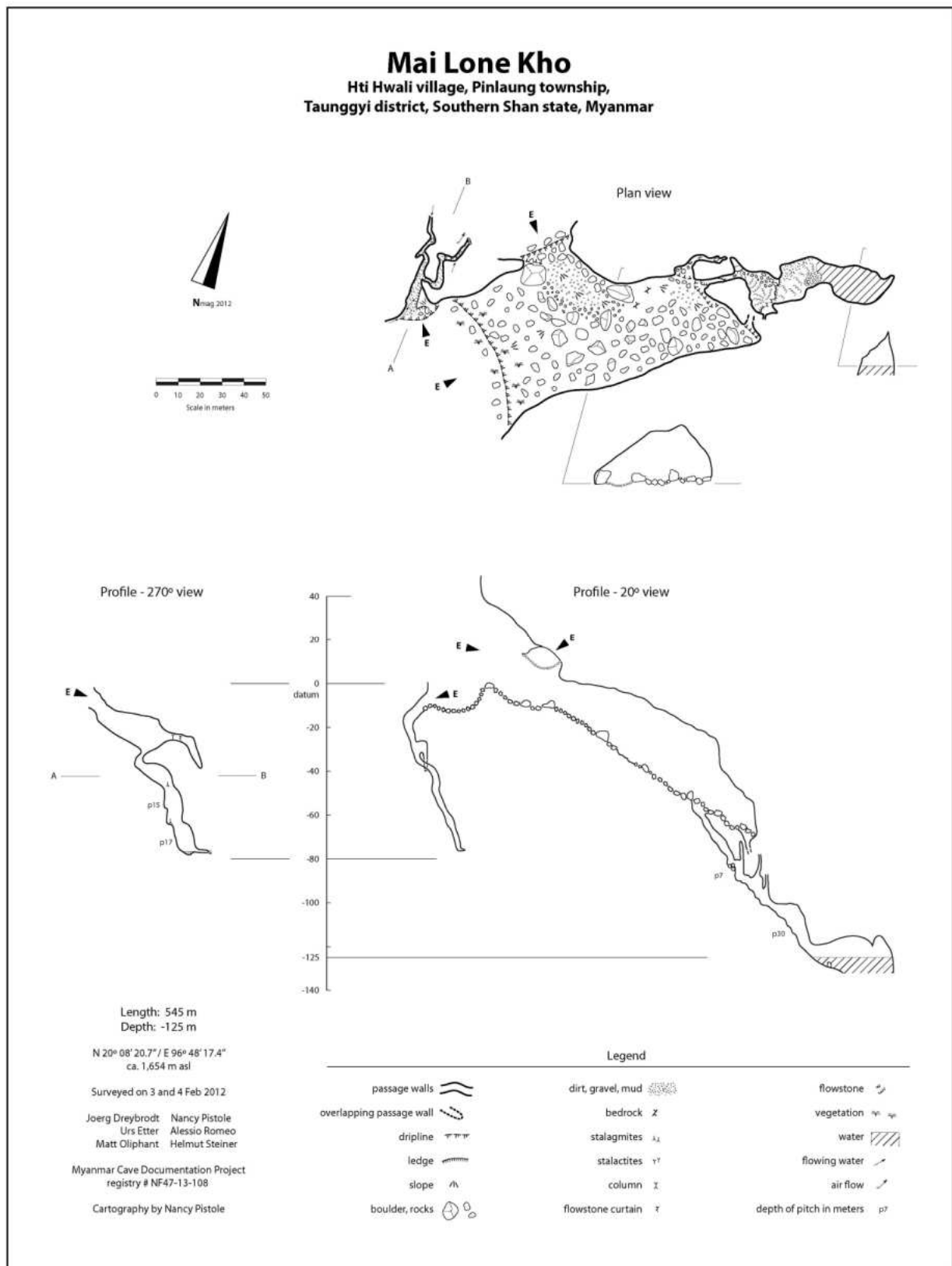
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Area 3 - Heho



3. Maps of some caves

The drawings of all caves are not finished yet.



Bilu Chaung Ye Hwut Gu

Minbu / Pinlaung / Southern Shan State / Myanmar

N 20° 07' 56.0" / E 96° 45' 22.9" / ca. 1423 m asl

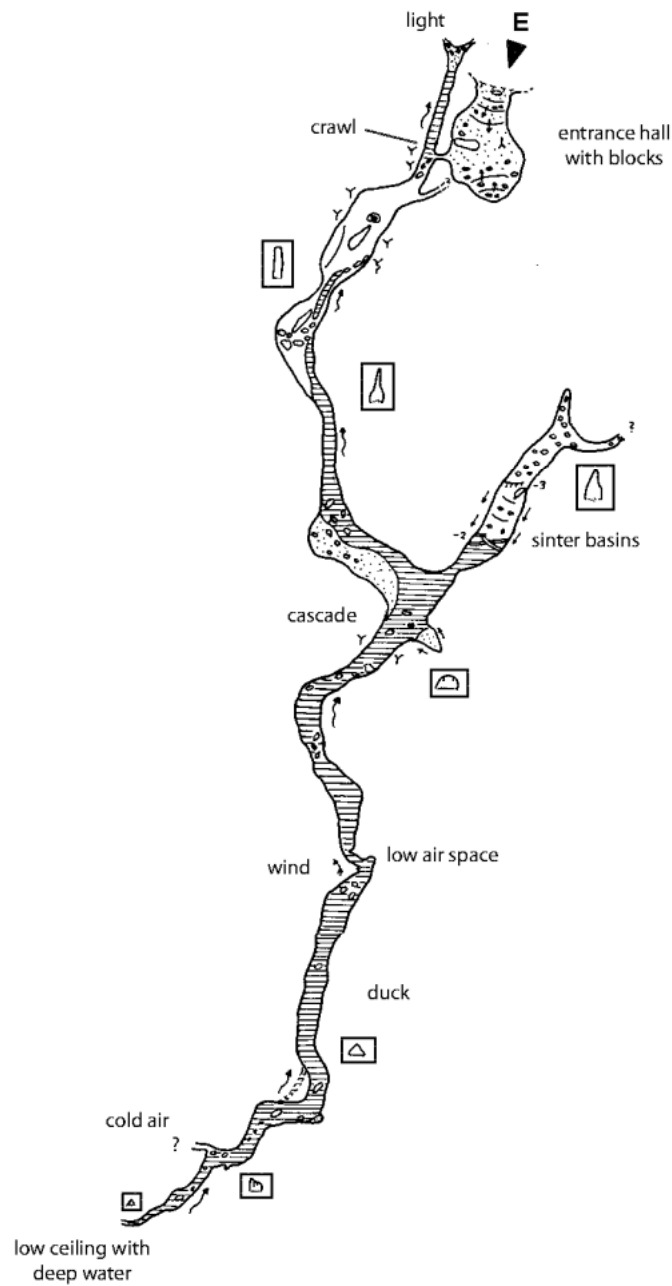
Length: 340 m

Surveyed by Myanmar Cave Documentation Project

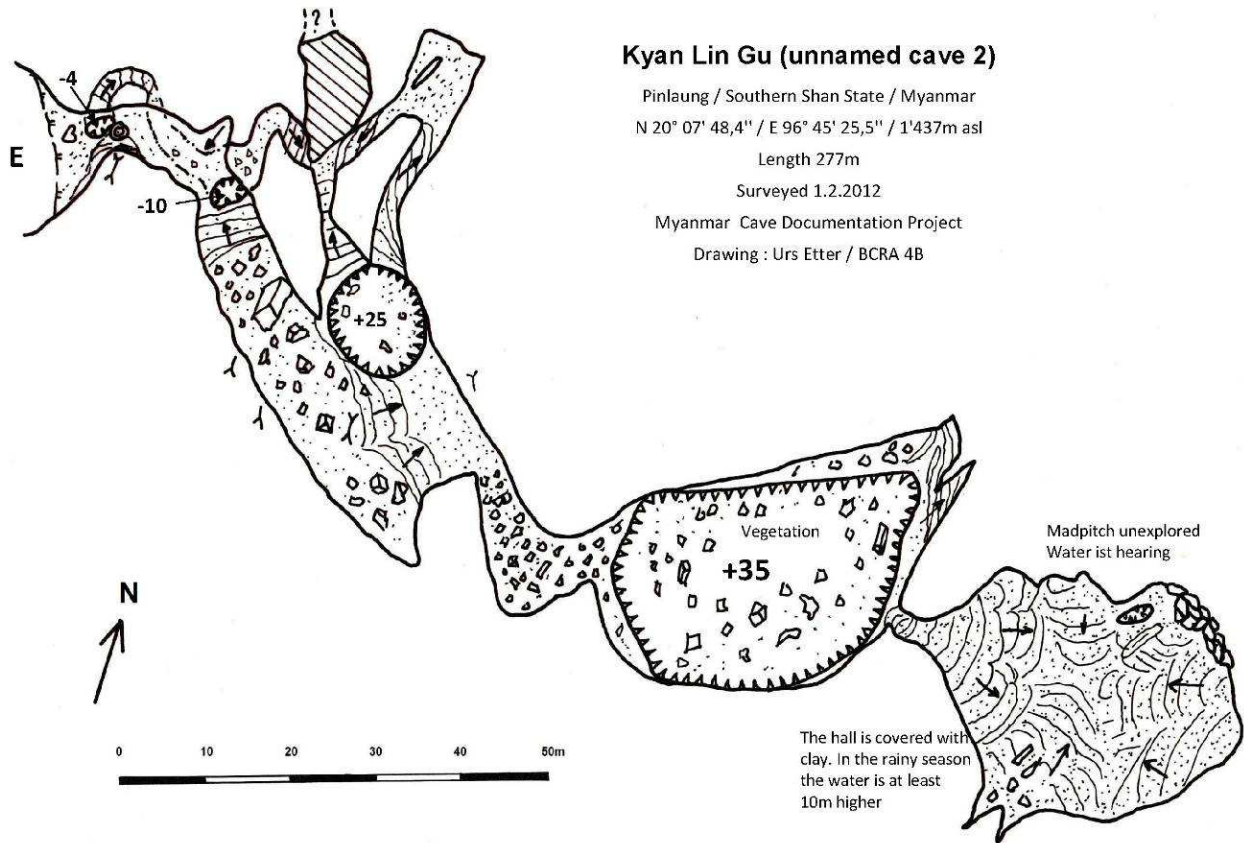
01.02.12 to BCRA Grade 5C

Drawing: J. Dreybrodt

0 m meters 50 m

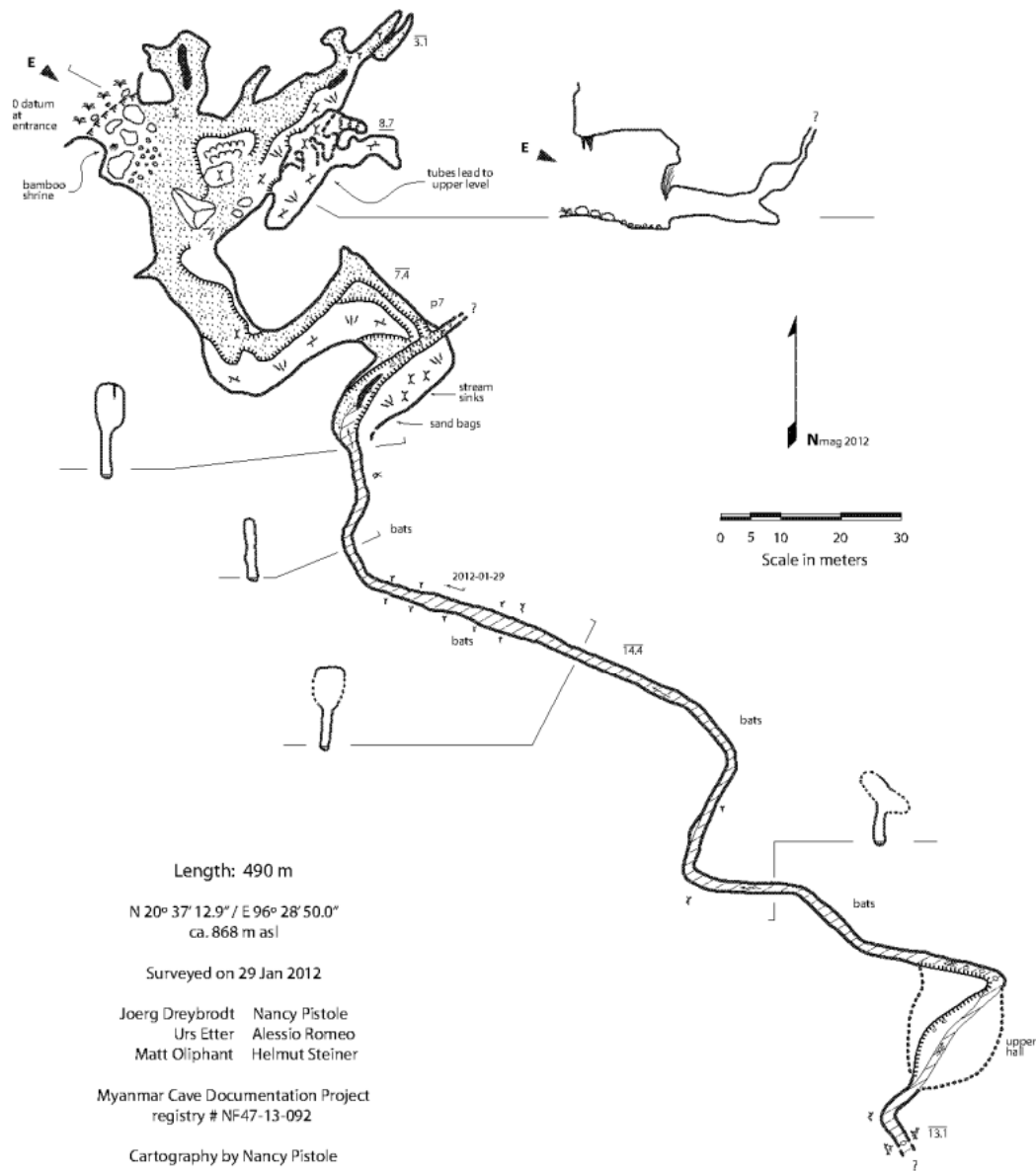


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Twinn ii Gu

Pinwon village, Kalaw township,
Taunggyi district, Southern Shan state, Myanmar

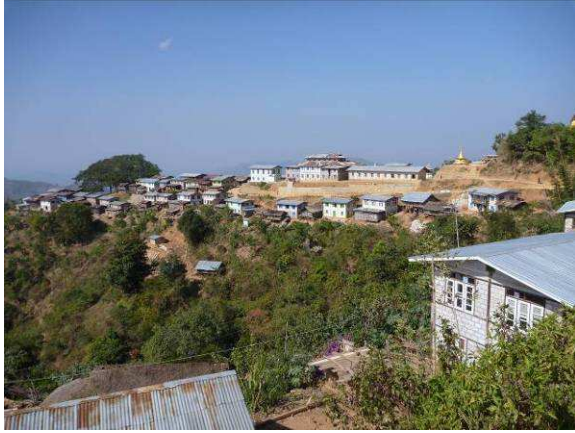


Legend

indeterminant passage wall	bedrock	vegetation
outline of lower passage	stalagmites	water
dripline	stalactites	flowing water
ledge	column	cascades
slope	flowstone curtains	air flow
boulder, rocks	disc, shield	depth of pitch in meters
dirt, gravel, mud	flowstone	meters above / below datum

4. Pictures of Regions and Caves

a.) Kalaw



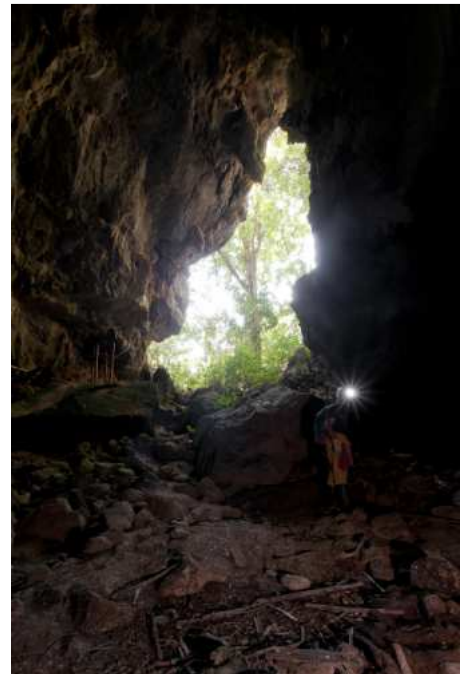
Hill top village 1 hour from Kalaw



Yum Gu end hall



Yum Gu entrance



Gu Nan entrance



Walk from the tops down to cave valley



Conglomerate ceiling

b.) Pinlaung



Descent to Mai Lone Kho entrance



Entrance hall Mai Lone Kho



Pinlaung with karst hills



Descend near Mai Lone Kho



Discussing caves near Phinton with district head man



Phinton Village

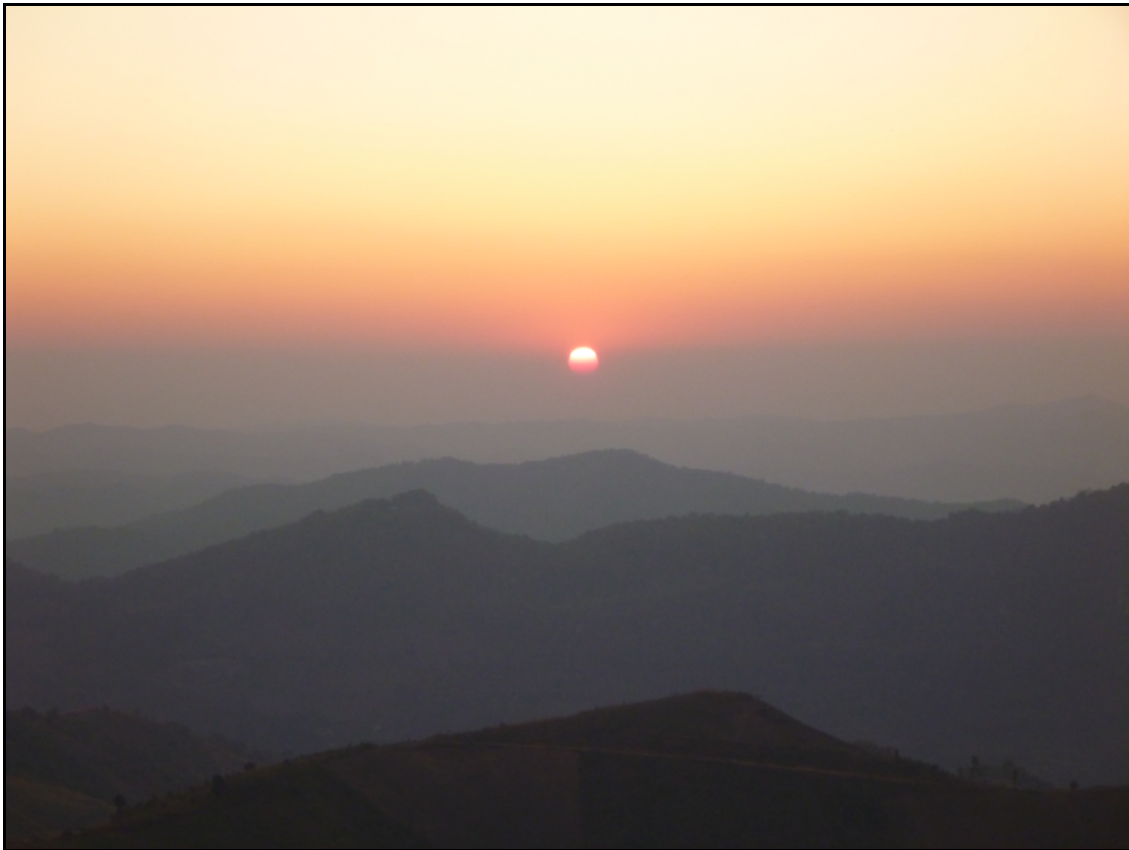
Acknowledgement

We acknowledge to cooperation of the Myanmar Tourism Promotion Board

Especially we thank

Mr. Phyoe Wai Yar Zar (Chairman)

Yan Naing (Guide and Translator)



Sunset at Kalaw View point