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Revealing the Tree Species Diversity within Koto Mahligai Temple Ruin, Muaro Jambi

Rizmoon Nurul Zulkarnaen^{1,2,3*}, Muhammad Rifqi Hariri⁴, Lutfi Rahmaningtiyas⁵, Wahyu Adi Nugroho⁶

- ¹ Research Center for Plant Conservation, Botanic Gardens, and Forestry, National Research and Innovation Agency, Bogor, Indonesia
- ² Faculty of Science, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Tungku Link, Gadong, Brunei Darussalam
- ³ Innovation Centre for Tropical Sciences, Bogor Raya Permai, Curug, Bogor, Indonesia

⁴ Research Center for Biosystematics and Evolution, National Research and Innovation Agency, Bogor, Indonesia

- ⁵ Directorate of Management for Scientific Collection, National Research and Innovation Agency, Bogor, Indonesia
- ⁶ Center of Cultural Preservation Region V, Jambi, Indonesia
- * Corresponding Author. E-mail address: rizmoon.zulkar@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Koto Mahligai Temple is a cultural heritage site in the Muaro Jambi Regency. Environmental disturbances, especially plant-related ones, are rare at this precious shrine. As a result, plant diversity is still sustained. The research aimed to evaluate the plant diversity and general vegetation condition in the Koto Mahligai Temple. The method used was the comprehensive inventory approach, focusing on woody plants through the census sampling method. Vital data were meticulously collected for each tree, including height, diameter, and morphological characteristics. The result found 246 trees from 26 species in the vicinity, including native and introduced species. Local plants that are infrequently seen in urban areas, such as Bouea macrophylla, Canthiumera robusta, Dillenia sumatrana, Flacourtia rukam, and Semecarpus heterophyllus, are among these species. The result suggested that the Koto Mahligai Temple could be well developed into a public site for stakeholders interested in studying plant diversity in Muaro Jambi Regency, owing to the variety and distinctiveness of its plants. Furthermore, the cultural significance of these plants is tied to the Koto Mahligai Temple, which attracts tourists. The study emphasizes the need for future strategies that harmonize plant preservation, archaeological exploration, and temple restoration efforts.

1. Introduction

Jambi Province is rich in biological and cultural variety (Pamungkas and Agustiningsih 2018; Tamin et al. 2019). The total forest area in Jambi Province is 2,098,535 ha (Dinas Kehutanan Jambi 2019). The peatland ecosystem is one of the Jambi habitats rich in species. Susanti et al. (2020) believed that peatland vegetation, which includes the habitat around the Koto Mahligai Temple and the Muaro Jambi Temple (Pamungkas and Agustiningsih 2018), would evolve into a distinct and uncommon flora species.

Koto Mahligai Temple is one of the cultural heritage sites in Muaro Jambi Regency (Meilania and Febrianti 2019). This temple is recognized as a National Cultural Heritage Area (Ministerial Decision Number 259/M/2013). The National Cultural Heritage Area of Muara Jambi

has a total area of approximately 3981 ha. Meanwhile, the Koto Mahligai Temple covers about 2 ha. The Koto Mahligai Temple's existence is one of the Sriwijaya Kingdom's legacies and is considered a cultural and monumental heritage of Buddhist culture (Sadzali et al. 2021; Siswanto et al. 2017; Yulianti and Seprina 2022). It is a unique tourist destination because it has a richness of temples and a diverse range of existing plants (Firdaus 2017; Nugraha et al. 2015; Saputra et al. 2016).

Koto Mahligai Temple's management is also targeting temple restoration/excavation shortly. The temple's presence and vegetation are critical to the restoration plan. Temple restoration must be carried out carefully since it tries to reveal hidden historical significance from when the temple was formerly standing (Duranti 1997; Foley and Valenzuela 2005; Parlindungan et al. 2021). Cultural awareness can be gained through language, form, and style (Fisher-Borne et al. 2015; Foley and Valenzuela 2005). In addition, the existence of vegetation of Koto Mahligai Temple can also play a role in supporting efforts to increase the value of green open space in Jambi, where green open space in Jambi has decreased as the population increases, as well as support tourism (Napitupulu et al. 2022; Saputra et al. 2016; Ulfa and Fazriyas 2020).

The plants that comprise the Muaro Jambi Temple Complex, notably Koto Mahligai Temple, are classified as lowland forest flora (Tamin et al. 2019). Tamin et al. (2019) undertook an exploratory study on plant diversity in the Koto Mahligai Temple area that needed to be thoroughly carried out, notably by supplementing sampling sites, resulting in a shortage of information gathered. As a result, this study was carried out to complete the data and information about the richness and diversity of plants in the Koto Mahligai Temple area. Also, the health of trees in the Koto Mahligai Temple area was investigated in this study.

This study aimed to evaluate the diversity of plants and analyze the health of plants in the Koto Mahligai area. The study findings are likely to boost the conservation value of the Koto Mahligai Temple's plants. Furthermore, the results of this study are likely one of the foundations for dealing with harmful plants in the future, increasing the value of comfort and safety.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Location

The study was conducted in the Muaro Jambi Regency of Jambi Province, specifically within the Koto Mahligai Temple Area, Muaro Jambi Village, Sebo District, and Muaro Jambi (**Fig. 1**). The Koto Mahligai Temple is 2 ha in size. The research was carried out between November 2021 and July 2022.

2.2. Tree Inventory, Species Identification, and Data Analysis

We used the complete explorative approach for woody plants to inventory the plants at Koto Mahligai Temple (Mueller-Dombois and Ellenbergh 2016; Rugayah et al. 2004), as also implemented by Hidayat and Kurniawati (2021). Species, family, native area distribution, and IUCN status are among the observable variables. Furthermore, we collected plant materials as specimen vouchers in the procedures RBGE (2017), particularly for species we could not identify in the field. Flora of Java Vols. I-III (Backer and Bakhuizen van den Brink 1963; 1965; 1968) and Flora Malesiana Series I Vol. 17(2) (Berg and Corner 2005) were relied upon to determine plant species based on their morphological features. To confirm the accepted species names and native

distribution of each plant, we used the Plants of The World Online website (POWO 2023). Furthermore, we used the IUCN website to determine the plants' threatened status (IUCN 2023). The data were analyzed descriptively based on the species composition, native distribution, and IUCN status of the observed plants.

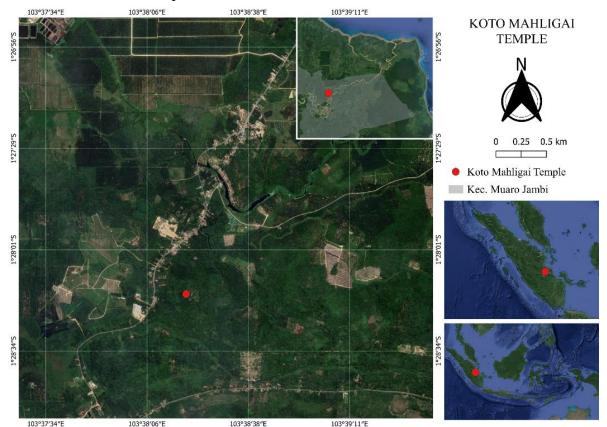


Fig. 1. Research location.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Tree Species Diversity

The survey of plants that comprise the Koto Mahligai Temple area yielded 248 individuals representing 27 species from 16 groups (**Table 1**). Table 1 also includes information on the number of individuals, namely, *Peronema canescens* (64 individuals), *Dimocarpus longan* (59 individuals), *Lansium domesticum* (25), *Tetrameles nudiflora* (25), and *Sterculia gilva* (19) have the most. In the meantime, only one individual was discovered in nine species, including *Aglaia* sp., *Aporosa* sp., *Averrhoa carambola, Averrhoa bilimbi, Dracontomelon dao, Dysoxylum densiflorum, Ficus ardisioides, Nauclea subdita,* and *Vitex pinnata*. Local plants that are infrequently seen in urban areas, such as *Bouea macrophylla, Canthiumera robusta, Dillenia sumatrana, Flacourtia rukam,* and *Semecarpus heterophyllus,* are among these species.

According to earlier research, *Lansium domesticum* and *Peronema canescens* predominate outside the Koto Mahligai Temple area (Tamin et al. 2019). The findings of this study are significantly associated with the temple's proximity to the villagers, as evidenced by the abundance of fruit trees and plants widely used as firewood, such as *Peronema canescens*. Nonetheless, Susanti et al. (2020) recorded roughly 65 species of constituent plants in the Muaro Jambi Temple complex (shared with Koto Mahligai Temple in the same complex area), with 52

species being woody trees. Among the ten woody plants found outside Koto Mahligai Temple are *Archidendron pauciflorum*, *Averrhoa bilimbi*, *Ficus variegata*, *Flacourtia rukam*, *Lagerstroemia speciosa*, *Lansium domesticum*, *Peronema cenescens*, *Radermachera glandulosa*, *Spondias dulcis*, and *Vitex pinnata*. The vast majority of these plants develop quickly. Hidayat (2012) described these plants as pioneer species with low wood strength and endurance.

No	Species name	Local name	Family	Total Individual
1	<i>Aglaia</i> sp.	Langsatan	Meliaceae	1
2	Aporosa sp.	Rambai hutan	Phyllanthaceae	1
3	Archidendron pauciflorum	Jering	Fabaceae	2
4	Averrhoa bilimbi	Belimbing wuluh	Oxalidaceae	1
5	Averrhoa carambola	Belimbing	Oxalidaceae	1
6	Bouea macrophylla*	Gandaria/Raman	Anacardiaceae	2
7	Canthiumera robusta	Kopi hijau	Rubiaceae	2
8	Dillenia sumatrana*	Simpur	Dilleniaceae	2
9	Dimocarpus longan*	Bedaro	Sapindaceae	59
10	Dracontomelon dao	Dao	Anacardiaceae	1
11	Epicharis densiflora*	Tipis kulit	Meliaceae	1
12	Ficus ardisioides	Aro	Moraceae	1
13	Ficus variegate*	Klebuk	Moraceae	6
14	Flacourtia rukam*	Rukam	Salicaceae	3
15	Lagerstroemia speciosa*	Bungur	Lythraceae	3
16	Lansium domesticum*	Duku	Meliaceae	25
17	Nauclea subdita*	Bengkal	Rubiaceae	1
18	Peronema canescens*	Sungkai	Lamiaceae	64
19	Planchonia valida*	Putat lembek	Lechytidaceae	6
20	Pometia pinnata	Matoa	Sapindaceae	4
21	Radermachera quadripinnata*	Banai-banai	Bignoniaceae	9
22	Semecarpus heterophyllus*	Rengas manuk	Anacardiaceae	4
23	Spondias pinnata	Kedondong	Anacardiaceae	2
24	Sterculia gilva	Belanti	Malvaceae	19
25	Tetrameles nudiflora*	Kundur	Tetramelaceae	25
26	Vitex pinnata*	Leban	Lamiaceae	1
Total				246

Table 1. List of species diversity in Koto Mahligai Temple

Note: *native distribution to Sumatra.

A detailed study of the plants at Koto Mahligai Temple reveals an iconic and culturally significant plant known as kundur (*Tetrameles nudiflora*) (**Fig. 2**). Through interviews with the Head of BPCB Jambi (*Balai Pelestarian Cagar Budaya Provinsi Jambi*), this plant has a strong historical association with Buddhist culture and will be kept as part of temple renovation plans to improve the temple's appeal. There are 25 documented kundur specimens with an older age category and an average diameter of 90-100 cm. Reproduction as seed stock is critical to the survival of this species and other conservation concerns. Interestingly, the kundur plant is unique to the Koto Mahligai Temple area since we spotted some growing in Koto Mahligai and only one tree in the Muaro Jambi Temple area.

Dapadeda et al. (2017) explained that temperature substantially influences kundur growth, with higher temperatures lowering their survival. Pumijumnong and Buajan (2013) said that kundur is most active when rainfall reaches its maximum. Furthermore, Koto Mahligai Temple, being a tourist destination, is responsible for safeguarding tourists from tree falls. It is an important

concern, in addition to preserving cultural values in the Koto Mahligai Temple area. Kundur, which has the dominant layer or is the highest tree within Koto Mahligai Temple, requires diligent monitoring to ensure its health, particularly in the stems (Martiansyah et al. 2022; Tsani and Safe'i 2018; Zulkarnaen et al. 2021). According to Martiansyah et al. (2022) and Zulkarnaen et al. (2021), tree damage frequently occurs in the stem and crown. Tsani and Safe'i (2018) also discovered that the dominance of the location of damage in stems was also detected in trees in the Way Kambas National Park Training Center. The management of Koto Mahligai Temple must be aware of the indicators of stem damage, since the roots of some trees are clasping into the remnants of the temple, and address them as soon as possible to avoid any casualties, either the staff or the restored temple (**Fig. 3**).

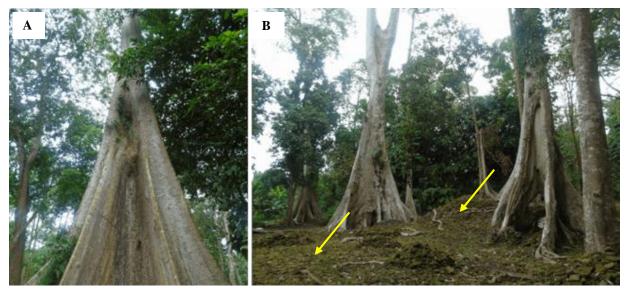


Fig. 2. Kundur (*Tetrameles nudiflora*): (a) an individual of kundur and (b) temple ruins at the kundur root area (yellow sign).

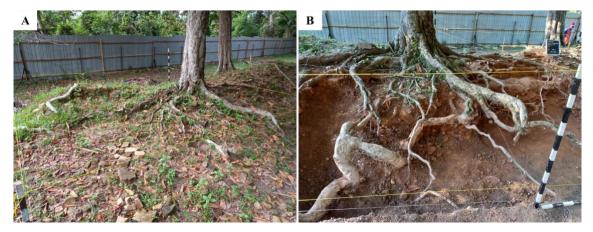


Fig. 3. Part of Koto Mahligai Temple ruins where the roots of *Dimocarpus longan* are clasping into some remnants: (a) before excavation and (b) after partial excavation.

3.2. Enigmatic and Potential Tree within Koto Mahligai Temple

Six species of ornamental plants, each characterized by their distinctive features, have been identified at Koto Mahligai Temple. These species, including sungkai (*Peronema canescens*), aro (*Ficus ardisioides*), klebuk (*Ficus variegata*), rengas manuk (*Semecarpus heterophyllus*), kundur

(*Tetrameles nudiflora*), and belanti (*Sterculia gilva*), hold promising potential for various applications and purposes within the temple's surroundings.

Sungkai (Peronema canescens) belongs to the Lamiaceae family (formerly Verbenaceae), that grows abundantly at Koto Mahligai Temple. This species is indigenous to Sumatra, and its natural range extends from the Thai Peninsula to West Malesia (Fig. 4a) (POWO 2023). Sungkai is a species with slowing growth with particular benefits. It can be regenerated through vegetatively. Therefore, it is independent of the flowering and fruiting seasons (Nugroho and Istikowati 2020). According to Olmstead (2013), verbenaceous trees are stubborn survivors, even when cultivated far from their ecological optimum, despite having crooked stems and low development. Sungkai is typically propagated through cuttings rather than seeds since it is simple to cultivate and independent of the fruiting season. In general, the availability of sungkai cuttings at a particular location is deemed to be more important than the quality of specific trees as cutting sources. Sungkai wood is predominantly used for furniture (Nugroho and Istikowati 2020; Sahwalita 2017; Samboro et al. 2017). Residents cut down small trees (diameter of 10 cm) to use them as support for roofs in South Kalimantan (Puspita et al. 2020). Additionally, it has found applications in cabinetry, molding, veneer, plywood, and handicrafts. The rising need for sungkai wood as a raw material is driven by the increasing demand for products made from sungkai wood (Farizan et al. 2018).

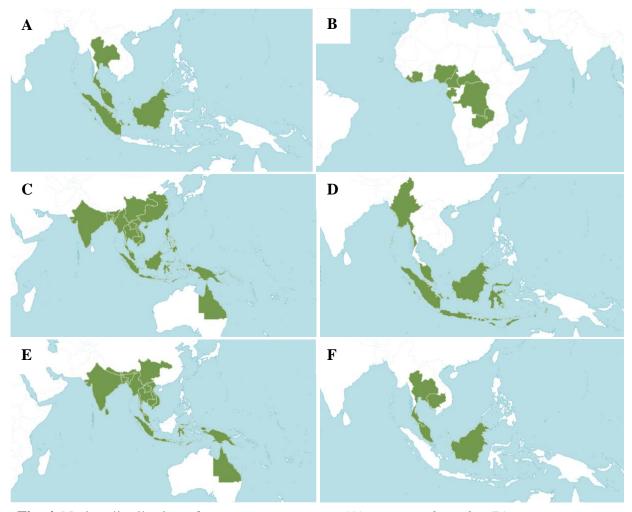


Fig. 4. Native distribution of *Peronema canescens* (A), *Ficus ardisioides* (B), *Ficus variegata* (C), *Semecarpus heterophyllus* (D), *Tetrameles nudiflora* (E), and *Sterculia gilva* (F) (POWO 2023).

Koto Mahligai Temple has two Moraceae members, namely aro (*Ficus ardisioides*) and klebuk (*Ficus variegata*) (**Fig. 4b-c**). Surprisingly, the number of klebuk was more than that of aro. This tendency was made possible by the differences in the original distribution of the two species, which caused aro to adapt more slowly, and the absence of pollinators to aid in its generative reproduction (**Fig. 4b**) (Ebika et al. 2018; POWO 2023). Several figs, such as *F. racemosa* and *F. variegata*, are widespread in numerous geographical regions (Berg and Corner 2005). This species can grow to at least 20 m and is distinguished by its red berries. Segments of pale green or yellow fruit were among the mature red fruit. The pale green group known as gall fruit is believed to correlate with the evolution of monkeys' eyesight (Berg and Corner 2005). In addition to its conservation value, this species can play a significant role in land restoration, as it is a pioneer species abundant in natural forests following the fire (Hendrayana et al. 2021).

Rengas manuk (*Semecarpus heterophyllus*) is an Anacardiaceae belonging to the Koto Mahligai Temple, which is indigenous to Andaman and Nicobar Islands to West and Central Malesia (**Fig. 4d**) (POWO 2023). This species consists of two trees and is classified as near-threatened (NT), meaning that if the disturbance continues, this species will become extinct in the wild (Ganesan 2021). When exposed to water, the resinous sap of Anacardiaceae hardens and turns black. Several species in the family, particularly *Toxicodendron* and *Semecarpus*, can produce severe dermatitis after contact, particularly in those sensitized to plants by long-term exposure (LeCoz et al. 2011). Thus, the existence of this species in the area must be considered by adding information to warn visitors and cultural heritage employees.

Kundur (*Tetrameles nudiflora*) is a Tetramelaceae plant present in the Koto Mahligai Temple. This species is native to Sumatra, and its natural range spans from South Yunnan, China, to Tropical Asia and North Queensland, Australia (**Fig. 4e**) (POWO 2023). The roots of huge *T. nudiflora* are typically regarded as damaging to archaeological constructions (André et al. 2014; Caneva et al. 2016). Nonetheless, many artistic masterpieces are still engulfed by vegetation and should not be eliminated based on a misguided understanding of the tree's function. The fact that individual trees pose a local hazard to archaeological sites should not obscure the protective function of the canopy as a whole. Even though forest ecosystems are recognized as buffers against coastal and river erosion (Mazda et al. 2002; Zaimes et al. 2004), their protective function at heritage sites remains unacknowledged.

Belanti (*Sterculia gilva*) is a member of the Malvaceae family and one of the dominant species in the Koto Mahligai Temple. This species is native to Sumatra, and its natural range stretches from southern Indo-China to western Malesia (**Fig. 4f**) (POWO 2023). *Sterculia gilva* is a tree with a maximum height of 40 m that thrives in lowland swamp and peat-swamp forests. As a deciduous tree that produces fruit and flowers, wood is used as a building material (Lisdayanti et al. 2016). *Sterculia gilva* seedlings grown from seeds have a high survival rate, allowing for more effective generative reproduction and the development of viable offspring.

3.3. Recommendation for Tree Conservation during Excavation

The Koto Mahligai Temple, situated along the major road in Jambi Regency, is one of the cultural heritages with green open spaces that must be preserved. The ecological and cultural significance of the temple grounds is increased by the presence of several plant species. The presence of this complex is crucial for the preservation of both the temple area and the plant species that comprise it. It could be caused that a region with several plant species can provide a home for

numerous animal species (Batoro and Lutfi 2017; Canády and Mošansky 2017; Meltriana et al. 2018). In addition to its ecological, socio-cultural, architectural, and economic roles, a green open space with a clear legal standing should also support educational or research activities for the community.

Koto Mahligai Temple has not been fully utilized as a public site for studying the flora and fauna diversity of the Jambi Regency. Koto Mahligai Temple requires more care to provide the community with educational opportunities to learn about the surrounding biodiversity. Historical tour activities coupled with an introduction to the various species of plants at the Koto Mahligai Temple can be activities that attract the interest of Jambi Regency residents. The recognition of the buffering function of forest cover as an ecosystem service at heritage sites should motivate stakeholders to incorporate integrated management of the plant cover into their conservation strategy (André et al. 2014; Nugraha et al. 2015). Further research on the flora and fauna biodiversity in the Koto Mahligai Temple region is required to ensure the integrity of the obtained data, and community perception can be an added value to visualize their comfort and preferences, as previously reported by Sulistyana et al. (2017) in Metro City, Lampung. Moreover, the obtained biodiversity data might be the foundation for creating cultural heritage regions based on ecotourism (Saputra et al. 2016).

4. Conclusions

The presence of flora within Koto Mahligai Temple is a natural resource that must be appropriately preserved. The study showed 246 trees from 26 species (native and introduced species) in the area. *Bouea macrophylla*, *Canthiumera robusta*, *Dillenia sumatrana*, *Flacourtia rukam*, and *Semecarpus heterophyllus* are urban rarities. Due to its diverse plants, the Koto Mahligai Temple could be an excellent public location for stakeholders studying plant diversity in the Muaro Jambi Regency. Furthermore, the cultural significance of these plants is tied to the Koto Mahligai Temple, which attracts tourists. The study's future suggestions include the hope that interested parties reach an agreement between the goals of plant protection and the importance of excavation and temple repair.

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