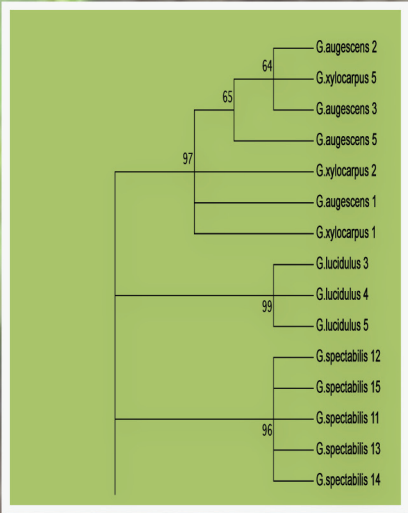


# DEVELOPMENT OF DNA SEQUENCE DATABASE OF RAMIN FOR DNA-BASED SPECIES IDENTIFICATION



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ITTO-CITES Activity: Use of DNA for Identification of *Gonystylus*  
species and Timber Geographical Origin in Sarawak

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## List of Abbreviations

|                   |                                      |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| DNA               | Deoxyribonucleic acid                |
| PCR               | Polymerase chain reaction            |
| nrDNA             | Nuclear DNA                          |
| cpDNA             | Chloroplast DNA                      |
| MgCl <sub>2</sub> | Magnesium chloride                   |
| dNTPs             | Deoxynucleotides                     |
| NJ                | Neighbor-Joining                     |
| K2P               | Kimura 2-paramter                    |
| BLAST             | Basic Local Alignment Search Tool    |
| NCBI              | Center for Biotechnology Information |

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## Summary

A molecular genetic tool for species identification was developed for *Gonystylus* species. The development of this tool is urgently needed as 15 *Gonystylus* species (including *G. bancanus*) are listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and all these 15 species are also listed in Appendix II of CITES. The objective of this study is to establish a database for *Gonystylus* species identification using selected chloroplast DNA and nuclear DNA markers. A total of 21 *Gonystylus* species was collected and studied. For sequence data analysis, four regions (trnL, trnH-psbA, trnF-trnE and ITS2) were included. The sequences of these regions were combined and showed 90.48%, 85.71% and 80.95% of resolution in the analysis of the phylogenetic tree, genetic gap distance and BLAST, respectively. Overall, 85.71% of the species can be resolved according to the database generated in this study. The result obtained validated the feasibility of using the molecular genetic tool for species identification in *Gonystylus*.



## 1.0 Introduction

*Gonystylus*, locally known as Ramin, is a commercial timber but its habitat has been over-exploited in the South East Asian countries. It has resulted in approximately half of the genus (15 species including *G. bancanus*) being classified as vulnerable in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and all these 15 species are also listed in Appendix II of CITES. This is not only due to the extensive logging but also due to the natural slow regeneration of these species. The average annual increment in height is 100 cm and 0.79 cm in diameter (CITES, 2008). Although law enforcement in accordance with CITES regulations has controlled the trade for these species, illegal logging operations and laundering activities still cannot be stopped. The source and identity of the Ramin logs could be falsified along the supply chain. Therefore, a tool which is able to confirm the identity of the timber and overrule the questionable certificate or documentation is highly needed for the trade of legal timber and the development of conservation strategies for Ramin species.

Usually, timber species are identified by wood anatomy expert through light microscopy, but it only goes down to the genus level for Ramin (Gasson, 2011). Moreover, the reference database for species identification is inadequate since not every species in the taxa is well described and wood anatomy varies in different position on the tree and the age of the wood material (Wheeler and Baas, 1998). However, precise identification to species level is needed for the detection of the threatened timber species particularly those listed in Appendix II of CITES. DNA barcodes which are universally amplified, short, and highly variable DNA markers, are believed to

be useful for discrimination among closely related species and yet able to differentiate genetically distant species (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2009). In animals *cytochrome c oxidase I* (CO1) is the standard marker for DNA barcoding, however, the standard barcoding marker for the vast plant kingdom is still controversial. Several proposals have been made on chloroplast DNA, such as *trnH-psbA* (Kress and Erickson, 2007), *matK* (Sun *et al.*, 2012; Lahaye *et al.*, 2008), *trnL* (Kress and Erickson, 2007), as well as nuclear DNA, such as *ITS2* (Chen *et al.*, 2010), or a combination of several regions.

cpDNA is a highly conserved region, but interspecific introgression can occur in closely related species which cause limitation in the species identification down to species level (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2009). While on the contrary, nrDNA possesses high species discrimination ability, the universal primer for nrDNA is not available (Duminil *et al.*, 2010). As both of these regions exhibit properties needed in species identification, the comparison of these regions may show better insight in this analysis (Madesis *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, it is claimed that the ITS2 region was capable of discriminating plant taxa at the genus and species level, and was able to discriminate 92.70% of the medicinal plants (Chen *et al.*, 2010). The inclusion of this region for Ramin species identification is beneficial for this study as the discrimination to species level is needed and amplification efficiency of this region was poor in certain families (Liu *et al.*, 2011).

The application of DNA barcoding for timber tracking requires the establishment of a database system which works as a foundation for future diagnostic efforts but also offer quick, cheap, high-volume processing and expressed statistical certainty of results in timber

tracking (Lowe and Cross, 2011). At the same time, it is difficult or impossible to falsify the DNA profile of individual logs (Lowe *et al.*, 2010).

The objective of this study is to establish a DNA sequence database for the identification of *Gonystylus* species using selected chloroplast DNA and nuclear DNA markers.

## **2.0 Materials and Method**

### **2.1 Plant samples**

A total of 80 samples comprising 21 species, were collected from 13 locations in Sarawak. Each species was represented by two to five samples according to the availability of the samples (*n* in Appendix A). The samples were first identified to species based on the morphological characters at the Sarawak Herbarium at the Forest Research Centre, Kuching, Sarawak. Fresh leaf tissue was preserved in silica gel in the field and DNA extraction was carried out right after the samples were brought back to the laboratory. Voucher specimens for each of the samples are kept at the working herbarium of the Botanical Research Centre (BRC), Kuching, Sarawak.

### **2.2 DNA extraction and purification**

DNA was extracted according to the method as stated in the report "Standard DNA Extraction protocol for *Gonystylus* species", (Diway *et al.*, 2014). All DNA samples were further purified with the High

Pure PCR Template Preparation Kit (Roche, USA) according to the manufacturer's protocol. The DNA was quantified by NanoDrop (Thermo Fisher Scientific Inc., USA) and diluted to 20 ng /  $\mu$ l.

### **2.3 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)**

The extracted DNA underwent PCR amplification using Type-it<sup>®</sup> Microsatellite PCR kit (Qiagen, Germany). A total of one nuclear (nrDNA) (internal transcribed spacer 2 - ITS2) and three chloroplast (cpDNA) (*trnF-trnE*, *trnL* and *trnH-psbA*) DNA regions were selected for the species identification (Appendix B). The total PCR reaction volume of 20  $\mu$ l contained 40 ng of genomic DNA, HotStarTaq<sup>®</sup>Plus DNA Polymerase, Type-it Microsatellite PCR buffer with 6 mM MgCl<sub>2</sub> and dNTPs. PCR reactions were carried under the thermal cycling profile as follows: 95°C for 5 minutes, followed by 28 cycles of denaturation at 95°C for 30 seconds, annealing at 65°C for 90 seconds and extension at 72°C for 60 seconds, with final extension at 60°C for 30 minutes.

### **2.4 DNA sequencing**

The PCR products were purified using USB<sup>®</sup>ExoSAP-IT PCR Product cleanup (Affymetrix, USA) and sequenced in both directions using the BigDye<sup>®</sup>Terminator Sequencing Kit (Applied Biosystems, USA) based on the standard dideoxy-mediated chain termination method. Sequencing reactions were purified using ethanol precipitation and sequences were resolved on an ABI3130xl Genetic

Analyzer (Applied Biosystems, USA). The sequences were assembled and edited using Sequencher® version 5.0 (Gene Codes Corporation, USA) sequence analysis software. The sequence from each sample was trimmed to the same length.

## **2.5 Data analysis**

The informative variable sites, both substitutions and insertions and deletions (indels), which distinguish Ramin species were extracted (Appendix A). The sequences of four regions were combined to form a long sequence and analyzed in three different analyses to verify the resolution of species identification. First, sequences were aligned and a Neighbor-Joining (NJ) tree was constructed using MEGA5 (Tamura *et al.*, 2011). The NJ tree was constructed using Kimura 2-parameter (K2P) model with 1000 bootstrap replicates. Then, the pairwise K2P distance was calculated. The highest interspecies value and lowest intraspecies value for each species were plotted using Microsoft Excel. In the final analysis, each individual sequence was blasted to the local database which was created using the sequences generated from this project. This analysis was carried using a stand alone Basic Local Alignment Search Tool (BLAST) from the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI)([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)) (United States of America). The blast match which has 100 - 99.80% identity was filtered and applied in the analysis.



### 3.0 Results and discussion

#### 3.1 DNA sequence variation among species

A total of two nrDNA and eight cpDNA regions were tested in the current study for species identification of Ramin. However, we found only four (one nrDNA and three cpDNA) that were variable among Ramin species. The selected regions consisted of trnL (235-241bp), trnH-psbA (293-405 bp), trnF-trnE (375-424 bp) and ITS2 (333-336 bp). The alignment of the sequences for trnH-psbA required addition of gaps, whereas the others were straightforward. Similar with the present study, trnH-psbA intergenic spacer also showed significant length variation in the study of *Carex* species by Starr *et al.*(2009).

#### 3.2 Neighbor-Joining tree

The sequences of the four regions were combined in the sequence of trnL - trnH-psbA - trnF-trnE - ITS2. The total aligned length for these regions are 1430 bp. According to the generated phylogenetic tree (Figure 1), 19 out of 21 (90.48%) Ramin species that were analyzed have been resolved. The representative individuals for each of these species were clustered in the same clade. However, all of the representative individuals of *G. augescens* and *G. xylocarpus* were grouped in the same cluster, showing that these two species could not to be resolved.

Based on the constructed phylogenetic tree, two major clusters were formed. In a previous Ramin species study by Bogor (2010), *G. brunnescens*, *G. consanguineus* and *G. velutinus* were clustered

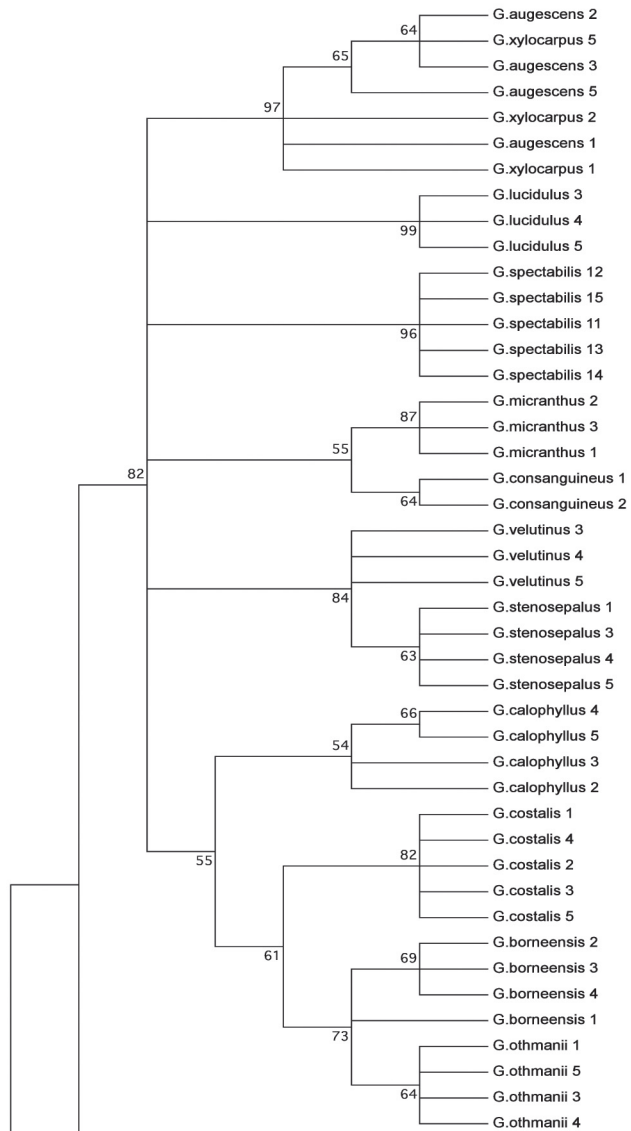


Figure 1: Phylogenetic tree of Ramin constructed using 4 regions (trnL, trnH, trnF and ITS2).

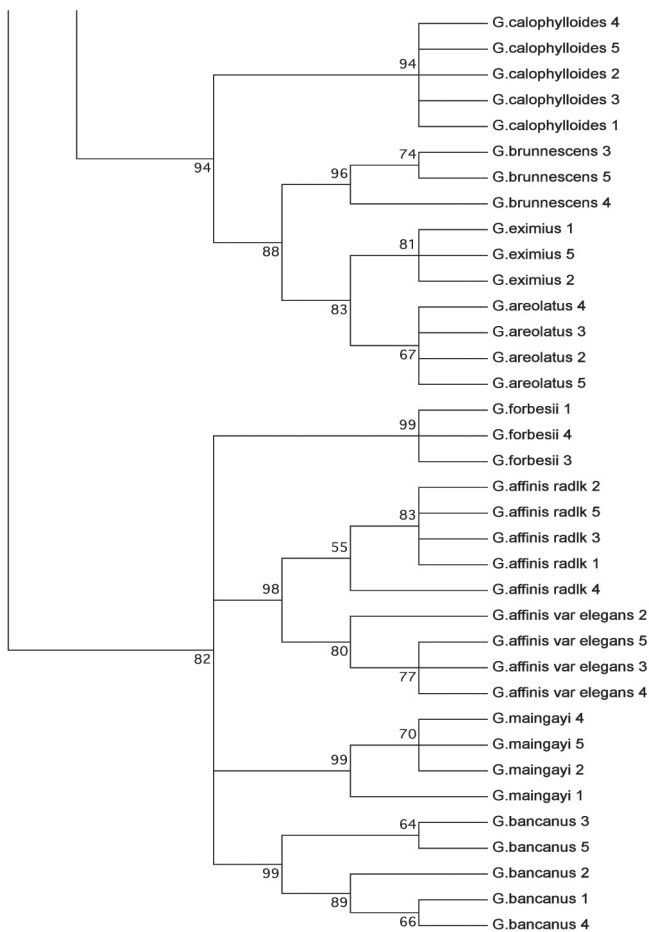


Figure 1: Phylogenetic tree of Ramin constructed using 4 regions (trnL, trnH, trnF and ITS2 2) (continued).

together while *G. bancanus* was in another cluster. Our results are in agreement with his study where *G. bancanus* was separated from the other three species in another major cluster.

### 3.3 Genetic gap distance

The genetic gap distance was calculated using MEGA 6 and the comparison of inter-species (vertical axis) and intra-species (horizontal axis) gap distance were plotted (Figure 2). A suitable barcode must exhibit high sequence variation between species which can be discriminated from one another and low within species which create a significant gap between intra- and inter-specific genetic variation (Lahaye *et al.*, 2008; Meyer and Paulay, 2005). Hence, the species which are plotted above the plotted linear line are defined as resolved, whereas, those on or below the linear line are determined as unresolved. The result generated showed that 85.71% (18/21) of Ramin species, which have higher inter-specific distance compared to intra-specific distance, were resolved. The two unresolved species (intra-specific > inter-specific) are *G. augescens* and *G. xylocarpus*, whereas *G. borneensis* is on the linear line (intraspecific = interspecific).

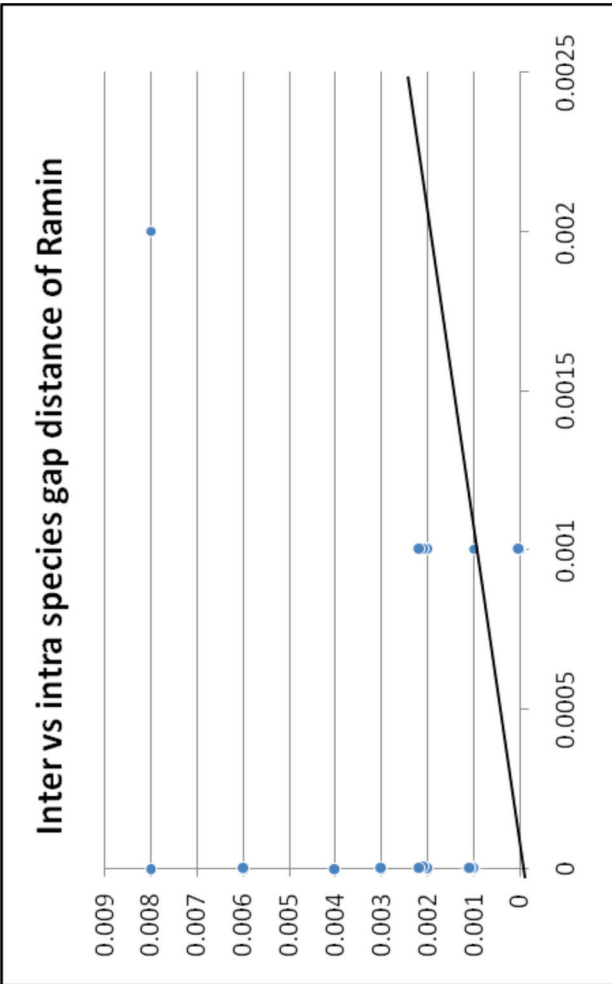


Figure 2: The comparison of inter-species and intra-species gap distance.



### 3.4 BLAST

The sequences generated were compiled and a local database was constructed. Each of the sequence was then blasted individually to the local database. From the result obtained, the blast match which has 100% to 99.80% identity were considered as resolved species. The result showed that 17 out of 21 (80.95%) Ramin species were correctly assigned back to the same species and the remaining species which were not correctly assigned are *G. augescens*, *G. calophyllus*, *G. velutinus* and *G. xylocarpus*.

### 3.5 Resolution of DNA-based species identification in Ramin

Overall, by combining the percentage of resolution from each analysis, approximately 85.71% of Ramin species can be resolved (Table 1). This percentages of resolution is comparable to the results obtained by Burgess *et al.*(2011), Seberg and Petersen (2009), Lahaye *et al.* (2008) and Kress and Erickson (2007) where the percentage of resolution were approximately 90% or greater. The two species which could not be resolved in the three analyses were *G. augescens* and *G. xylocarpus*. *G. bancanus* was resolved in all three analyses and this would make this database valuable for the timber tracking of this threatened species.

Table 1: Average resolution percentage of Ramin species resolved.

| Analysis              | Resolution (%) |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Phylogenetic tree     | 90.48          |
| Genetic gaps distance | 85.71          |
| BLAST                 | 80.95          |
| Average               | 85.71          |

**3.6 Variable sites for species identification**

Notwithstanding the most accurate way to identify the species is by blasting the whole generated sequence with the database, the list of the informative variable sites (Appendix A) provided a clue on the sequence variations for each species. There are two informative variable sites which distinguish Ramin species found in the trnL region; seven in the trnF-trnE region; three in the trnH-psbA; and 17 in ITS2 region. There are more variable sites found in the ITS2 because this region possesses high interspecific divergence (Chen *et al.*, 2010). Most of the species can be distinguished by referring to one variable site of the regions, whereas *G. areolatus* requires six variable sites to be distinguished from the other species. Moreover, *G.augescens* and *G xylocarpus* were not resolved in the three analyses mentioned above as they appeared genetically identical, and thus, these species were not distinguishable in this study. The two species were either genetically close to each other or errors could have occurred in the species identification using morphological characteristics. If the morphological identification

errors were ruled out, more or different cpDNA regions would be required to further resolve the identification of these two species.

Additionally, *G. bancanus*, which is listed as vulnerable in The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and Appendix II of the CITES, was found to contain several unique sites in the ITS2 region. These specific sites are leads to identify this species genetically. Hence, unknown samples or samples which are suspected to be *G. bancanus* could be screened using this database to solve queries on their identities.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

A total of 17 Ramin species, including *G. bancanus*, were genetically distinguishable using the four variable regions in this study using the DNA. A DNA database for Ramin species was established and the capability of molecular genetics in the identification of Ramin species in Sarawak was proven. However, more Ramin species and samples from other locations in Sarawak should be analyzed to build a more comprehensive and complete database which is necessary for creating an effective and validated forensic identification tool for Ramin species identification.

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## Appendix A

DNA database for Ramin species from trnL, trnF-trnE, trnH-psbA and ITS2.

| Position                    | trnL |    |     | trnF-trnE |            |                  |     |         | trnH-psbA |     |     |     |     |
|-----------------------------|------|----|-----|-----------|------------|------------------|-----|---------|-----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                             | n    | 82 | 184 | 111-118   | 119-133    | 134-149          | 158 | 343-347 | 354       | 406 | 374 | 390 | 434 |
| <i>G. affinisradlk</i>      | 5    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. areolatus</i>         | 4    | A  | A   | TTAATATT  | AAAATA     | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. augescens</i>         | 4    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. bancanus</i>          | 5    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. borneensis</i>        | 4    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. brunescens</i>        | 3    | A  | A   | TTAATATT  | AAAATA     | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. calophyllus</i>       | 4    | A  | A   | :         | :          | :                | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. consanguinues</i>     | 2    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. forbesii</i>          | 3    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. lucidulus</i>         | 3    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | AAAGAATA   | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | C   | G   | T   | T   |
| <i>G. micranthus</i>        | 3    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. othmanii</i>          | 4    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. velutinus</i>         | 3    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | AAATAAAAAA | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. xylocarpus</i>        | 3    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. calophylloides</i>    | 5    | A  | A   | TTAATATT  | AAAATA     | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. affinisvarelegans</i> | 4    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. stenosepalus</i>      | 4    | A  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | AAAGA   | A         | A   | A   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. eximius</i>           | 3    | A  | A   | TTAATATT  | AAAATA     | AAAGTCAAAAAAAGTA | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. maingayi</i>          | 4    | C  | A   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | G   |
| <i>G. costalis</i>          | 5    | A  | A   | TTAAAAA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | G   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |
| <i>G. spectabilis</i>       | 5    | A  | C   | TTAAATA   | :          | AAAGTAAAAAAGTA   | A   | :       | A         | A   | G   | C   | T   |

DNA database for Ramin species from trnL, trnF-trnE, trnH-psbA and ITS2. (continued)

| Position                    | ITS2 |    |        |          |         |     |     |     |         |         |     |     |     |         |         |         |     |
|-----------------------------|------|----|--------|----------|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|---------|---------|-----|
|                             | 58   | 67 | 68-73  | 89-96    | 100-103 | 114 | 122 | 142 | 171-172 | 191-192 | 197 | 203 | 230 | 257-259 | 265-266 | 270-275 | 280 |
| <i>G. affinisradlk</i>      | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ACGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | AC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. areolatus</i>         | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. augescens</i>         | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | GTGA    | C   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | T   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. bancanus</i>          | A    | T  | ACC    | AGGGG    | ACGA    | G   | A   | :   | A       | TT      | T   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | CATCTG  | T   |
| <i>G. borneensis</i>        | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | G   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GT      | TATATA  | T   |
| <i>G. brunnescens</i>       | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | A   | A   | :   | TG      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. calophyllus</i>       | A    | T  | GCCACC | GGGGG    | ACGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. consanguiniues</i>    | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | T   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TGTCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. forbesii</i>          | A    | T  | GCC    | GGGGG    | ACGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. lucidulus</i>         | A    | A  | ACC    | GGGGGGGG | ATGA    | A   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | CAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. micranthus</i>        | G    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. othmanii</i>          | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | G   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GT      | TATATA  | T   |
| <i>G. velutinus</i>         | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TG      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. xylocarpus</i>        | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | GTGA    | C   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | T   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. calophyllioides</i>   | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGGG   | ATGA    | G   | A   | G   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. affinisvarelegans</i> | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ACGG    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAG     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. stenosepalus</i>      | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TG      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. eximius</i>           | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | CC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. maingayi</i>          | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | A   | G   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | A   |
| <i>G. costalis</i>          | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | G   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |
| <i>G. spectabilis</i>       | A    | T  | ACC    | GGGGG    | ATGA    | G   | A   | :   | TA      | TC      | A   | :   | G   | TAA     | GC      | TATCTA  | T   |

## Appendix B

### CpDNA and nrDNA Primers Information

| Primer    | Sequence                                 | Fragment size<br>(bp) |
|-----------|--|-----------------------|
| trnF-trnE | trnF (F): 5'-ATTTGAACTGGTGACACGAG-3'     | 449                   |
|           | trnE (R): 5'-GGTTCAAGTCCCTCTATCCCC-3'    |                       |
| trnL      | trnL (F): 5'-CGAAATCGGTAGACGCTACG-3'     | 243                   |
|           | trnL (R): 5'-GGGGATAGAGGGACTTGAAC-3'     |                       |
| ITS 2     | ITS2 (F): 5'-ATGCGATACTTGGTGTGAAT-3'     | 341                   |
|           | ITS2 (R): 5'-GACGCTTCTCCAGACTACAAAT-3'   |                       |
| trnH-psbA | trnH (F): 5'-CGCGCATGGTGGATTACACAATCC-3' | 445                   |
|           | psbA (R): 5'-GTTATGCATGAACGTAATGCTC-3'   |                       |







*Gonystylus bancanus*

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