



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***ESTABLISHING THE TOOLS FOR ROUTINE ANALYSIS OF
CHLOROPLAST DNA DIVERSITY IN OIL PALM (ELAEIS SPP.)***

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By
Ho Carl Miew



**Thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for
the degree of Master of Science**

December 2014

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chair: Professor Tan Soon Guan, PhD

Faculty: Biotechnology and Biomolecular Sciences

Oil palm (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.), a member of family Palmae, is one of the most efficient oilseed crops in the world. In order to meet the rising global demand on palm oil, efforts have focused on enhancing oil palm breeding, developing palms resistance towards trunk and root diseases as well as on improving stress tolerance. Molecular markers can play a vital role in improving the oil palm. To date, for oil palm, molecular markers analysis has been restricted to nuclear DNA. However, due to its non-recombinant nature and uniparental inheritance, detecting useful polymorphism at population level can be meaningful for evolutionary studies as well as to characterize the diversity of oil palm chloroplast DNA (cpDNA). Studies of chloroplast DNA diversity can reveal insights into the evolutionary and domestication history of a species. In this study, the development of an approach for isolating enriched oil palm cpDNA was a necessity in order to be able to analyze the variations present in oil palm cpDNA of selected palm germplasms. An enrichment cpDNA protocol using the combination method of sucrose gradient and cesium chloride gradient separation was adopted in order to isolate oil palm chloroplast DNA. A total of six oil palm germplasm collections (namely Angola, Ghana, Nigeria, Madagascar, Costa Rica and Suriname) were selected and the cpDNA was extracted using modified cpDNA enrichment protocol. The protocol first isolated the organelle and then using isopycnic centrifugation, cpDNA was purified. The extracted enriched oil palm cpDNA was initially verified using restriction enzyme analysis. To characterize the diversity of oil palm cpDNA, chloroplast microsatellite (cpSSR) primers were developed from chloroplast derived sequences obtained from the hypomethylated regions of oil palm as well as from the sequences reported in the published *E. guineensis* chloroplast genome in Gen Bank. Three chloroplast universal primers were also employed to analyze the diversity of oil palm cpDNA. In order to further validate the reliability of extraction protocol and cpSSR primers, PCR amplicons of a small subset of samples were sequenced. The sequencing results were then searched against public databases. Subsequently, twelve pairs of oil palm cpSSR and two chloroplast- specific universal primers were used to genotype the cpDNA diversity. The positive allele frequencies of the microsatellites locus

for the five germplasms ranged from 0.2 to 1.0. The Madagascar germplasm with positive allele frequencies ranging from 0.22 to 0.89 demonstrated the greatest diversity among the other five germplasm collections analyzed in this study. Moreover, one polymorphic oil palm cpSSR primer (*atp1*) demonstrated interspecific positive band variation between *E. guineensis* Jacq. and *E. oleifera* Cortez. The level of SSR polymorphism detected within species was low suggesting that the rate of molecular evolution in oil palm cpDNA was relatively low. However, higher levels of cpDNA polymorphisms between *Elaeis* species were detected.



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**PENUBUHAN ALAT UNTUK ANALISIS RUTIN KEPELBAGAIAN DNA
KELAPA SAWIT (*ELAEIS* SPP.)**

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Disember 2014

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Kelapa sawit (*Elaeis guineensis* Jacq.), adalah daripada famili Palmae, yang merupakan salah satu jenis tanaman benih minyak yang paling efisien di dunia. Demi memenuhi permintaan global yang semakin meningkat dalam hasil minyak sawit, pelbagai usaha telah dilakukan terhadap penambahbaikan prestasi sawit seperti skim biakbaka kelapa sawit, menghasilkan baka yang rintang terhadap penyakit batang dan akar serta penambahbaikan toleransi tekanan. Namun sedemikian, kebanyakan pengajian kepelbagaian DNA hanya fokus pada nuclear DNA. Oleh kerana kloroplas merupakan organel yang mempunyai DNA tersendiri yang diwarisi secara unik, pengesanan polimorfisme pada peringkat populasi membolehkan kajian tersebut lebih bermakna terhadap kajian evolusi serta pencirian kepelbagaian DNA kloroplas kelapa sawit. Kajian terhadap kepelbagaian DNA kloroplas juga membolehkan kita memahami evolusi dan domestikasi sesuatu spesis tumbuhan. Dalam kajian ini, penghasilan protokol pengekstrakan yang diperkayakan dengan DNA kloroplas sawit adalah diutamakan. DNA kloroplas tersebut kemudian boleh digunakan untuk mengkaji variasi DNA kloroplas dalam sawit populasi terpilih. Protokol pengayaan kloroplas DNA tersebut mempergunakan cara mempergabungkan pemisahan kecerunan sukrose dan pemisahan sesium klorida yang dirujuk untuk mengasingkan DNA kloroplas kelapa sawit. Enam kutipan germplasma (Angola, Gahan, Nigeria, Madagascar, Costa Rica dan Suriname) telah dipilih dan sampel DNA kloroplas sawit itu diekstrakkan dengan protokol kloroplas DNA pengayaan yang diubah suai. Protokol tersebut bertujuan mengasingkan organel kemudian menggunakan teknik pengasingan isopiknik untuk mengasingkan kloroplas DNA. Sawit DNA kloroplas yang terperkaya itu ditahkikkan dengan menjalankan analisis enzim penyekatan. Untuk mencirikan kepelbagaian DNA kloroplas sawit, primer mikrosatelit kloroplas (cpSSR) telah dihasilkan daripada kontaminasi kloroplas hasil jujukan kawasan hipomefikasi dan juga berdasarkan jujukan kloroplas *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq. Sebanyak tiga primer kloroplas sejagat (Chloroplast universal primer) juga telah digunakan untuk menganalisis kepelbagaian DNA kloroplas kelapa sawit. Untuk pengesanan lanjutan terhadap keutuhan protokol pengekstrakan dan kloroplas mikrosatelit, hasil amplifikasi primer sampel kajian yang terpilih telah diklon dan dihantar untuk penjujukan. Keputusan penjujukan dianalisis

dengan menggunakan pangkalan data umum. Kemudian, sebanyak dua belas pasang primer mikrosatelit kloroplas sawit serta dua pasang primer kloroplas sejagat telah digunakan untuk mengentotip kepelbagaian DNA kloroplas sawit. Frekuensi alel positif daripada lima germplasma (Costa Rica dikecualikan) untuk setiap lokus mikrosatelit adalah di antara 0.2 dan 1.0. germplasma. Germplasma Madagascar dengan frekuensi alel positif antara 0.22 dan 0.89 telah menunjukkan kepelbagaian yang terbesar antara kelima-lima germplasma yang dianalisis dalam kajian ini. Tambahan pula, satu polimorfik cpSSR sawit (*atp1*) didapati menunjuk variasi interspesies jalur positif antara *E. guineensis* Jacq. and *E. oleifera* Cortez. Polimorfisme SSR yang dikesan dalam species adalah rendah, maka, ini menunjukkan kadar molekul evolusi DNA kloroplas sawit adalah rendah. Bagaimanapun, variasi antara species *Elaeis* dalam DNA kloroplas kelapa sawit masih dapat dikesan.

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APPROVAL SHEET

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (8-12-2014) to conduct the final examination of Ho Carl Miew on her thesis entitled “Establishing the tools for routine analysis of chloroplast DNA diversity in oil palm (*Elaeis* spp.)” in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination committee are as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	Page i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOLWGEMENTS	v
APPROVALSHEETS	vi
DECLARATION FORM	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xviii

CHAPTER

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	
	2.1 Chloroplast DNA (cpDNA) diversity	3
	2.2 Extraction of chloroplast DNA	4
	2.3 Importance of chloroplast DNA research	5
	2.4 Evolution of chloroplast DNA	6
	2.5 Chloroplast microsatellites (cpSSR)	8
3	MATERIALS AND METHODS	
	3.1 Plant material	10
	3.2 Oil palm enriched cpDNA extraction protocol	10
	3.2.1 Mourad (1998) cpDNA extraction protocol	11
	3.2.2 Mauriac <i>et al.</i> (2000) cpDNA extraction protocol	12
	3.3 Evaluation of the oil palm enriched cpDNA	13
	3.3.1 Analysis of restriction enzyme digestion	13
	3.3.2 Digestion of nuclear DNA	14
	3.3.3 Mitochondrial contamination analysis	14
	3.3.4 Further purification of cpDNA with GeneAll Exgene Plant SV mini DNA purification kit (GeneAll Biotechnology)	15
	3.4 Development of Simple Sequence Repeat (SSR) primers	15
	3.5 Evaluation of oil palm cpSSR and chloroplast specific- universal primers	17
	3.6 Cloning and sequencing oil palm SSR amplicons	17
	3.6.1 Amplification of informative cpSSR primers on forty four samples (six	18

	germplasms)	
	3.7 Analysis of the diversity of oil palm chloroplast DNA using oil palm chloroplast microsatellite (oil palm cpSSR) and chloroplast-specific universal primers	18
	3.8 Allele Scoring	19
	3.9 Data analysis	19
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
	4.1 Development of oil palm cpDNA extraction protocol	21
	4.1.1 Establishment of optimized oil palm enriched chloroplast DNA protocol	21
	4.1.2 Spectrophotometric analysis of oil palm cpDNA	28
	4.1.3 First stage of cpDNA validation – Restriction enzyme analysis	29
	4.1.4 Large scale extraction of oil palm cpDNA from six germplasms	31
	4.1.5 Improving the quality of cpDNA sample	32
	4.1.6 Mitochondrial contamination	36
	4.2 Mining of oil palm chloroplast sequences for SSR primers	37
	4.3 Shortlisting of confirmed oil palm cpSSR and chloroplast specific- universal primers	38
	4.3.1 Development of oil palm cpSSR primers	39
	4.3.2 Cloning of oil palm SSR primers	40
	4.3.3 Screening and optimizatiOn of oil palm cpSSR primers	43
	4.4 Diversity analysis – Genotyping of cpDNA using purified cpDNA and optimized PCR conditions	48
	4.4.1 Genotype results for oil palm cpDNA	48
	4.4.2 Null alleles in oil palm chloroplast DNA	49
	4.4.3 Cluster analysis of cpSSR haplotypes	54
5	SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	57
	REFERENCES/BIBLIOLOGY	59
	APPENDICES	67
	BIODATA OF STUDENT	78
	LIST OF PUBLICATION	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Pages
1	The sequences of chloroplast- specific universal primers.	16
2	Comparison between chloroplast DNA extraction protocols using different parameters for sucrose gradient separation.	24
3	Spectrophotometric measurements for oil palm cpDNA that extracted using Mourad (1998) and Mauriac <i>et al</i> 's (2000) protocols. The purity and yield of the cpDNA were quantified using Multiskan GO Microplate Spectrophotometer (Thermo Scientific).	28
4	Spectrophotometric measurements of purified cpDNA samples for Nigeria, Madagascar, Ghana and Costa Rica germplasm.	35
5	Number of oil palm cpDNA sequences containing SSR motifs. These sequences formed the basis for designing primers used to characterize the oil palm cpDNA.	37
6	Oil palm chloroplast DNA non-redundant SSRs discovered from Gene Thresher sequences (Low <i>et al.</i> , 2014) and from the published <i>Elaeis guineensis</i> Jacq chloroplast genome.	38
7	Summary of oil palm cpSSR primers in this study.	42
8	Summary of three independent PCR analyses on forty four samples. The <i>italicized</i> primers are those that were able to amplify across the five germplasms. <i>N</i> indicate the sample size of each germplasm	43
9	Summary of PCR optimization for Nigeria, Madagascar, Ghana and Costa Rica germplasms.	46
10	Genotyping results for five oil palm germplasms (Purified cpDNA samples and optimized PCR reaction conditions).	48
11	Genotype frequencies for each microsatellite loci. <i>P</i> indicates the positive alleles (positive bands) while <i>n</i> indicates the null alleles (absence of bands).	50
12a	SSR allele frequency for positive bands (positive alleles) observed within the six germplasms analyzed in this study. Allele fragment	52

size is indicated as well as the proportion of alleles occurring within samples of each germplasms. *N* is the number of individual palms. (-) denotes the absence of bands for PCR reaction.

12b	SSR allele frequency for null bands (null alleles) observed within the six germplasms analyzed in this study. Allele fragment size is indicated as well as the proportion of alleles occurring within samples of each germplasms. <i>N</i> is the number of individual palms that showed amplification.	53
13	List of the six selected germplasms (forty four samples)	70
14	Comparisons between the Mourad and the Mauriac <i>et al.</i> protocols for cpDNA extraction.	71
15	Sequences of confirm oil palm cpSSR primers and chloroplast-specific universal primers used to characterize Angola, Nigeria, Ghana, Madagascar, Costa Rica and Suriname germplasms.	72
16	Summary of BLAST results for oil palm cpSSR and chloroplast-specific universal amplicons.	74
17	Spectrophotometric measurements of the six cpDNA oil palm germplasms (forty four samples).	75
18	Summary of genotype frequencies of the forty four cpDNA samples (six germplasm collections) after purification was carried out. (+) denotes the positive band (positive alleles).	76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1	Chloroplast organelle isolated using Sucrose gradient. Different volumes of each sucrose percentage were tested. (A) 2.8 mL and 7.8 mL of 30% and 50% sucrose layers respectively (Shi <i>et al.</i> , (2012). (B) 3 mL of each layer for 55%: 40%: 20% (Mourad, 1995). (C) 3 mL of each layer for 60%: 40%: 20%. Impurities such as debris and proteins were precipitated at the bottom of the tubes.	24
2	Preparation of cesium chloride separation for isolating oil palm cpDNA.	26
3	Final volume adjustment for cesium chloride separation using an equal volume of filling buffer.	27
4	Separation of cpDNA from total genomic DNA via Cesium chloride.	27
5	Results of <i>Hind</i> III digestion cpDNA extracted from the same Angola sample (0.311/415) using the Mourad (1995) and the Mauriac <i>et al.</i> (2000) protocols. 1: Mourad uncut cpDNA; 2: Mourad cpDNA digested with <i>Hind</i> III; 3: Mauriac uncut cpDNA and 4: Mauriac cpDNA digested with <i>Hind</i> III. M: Biotinylated 2-Log DNA Ladder; 0.1-10 kb (New England BioLabs)	29
6	Oil palm cpDNA (0.311/415) was digested with <i>Eco</i> RI and <i>Eco</i> RV restriction enzymes (Promega). The cpDNA template was extracted using Mourad's (1998) method with slight modification. 1 and 5: the digested cpDNA using <i>Eco</i> RI and <i>Eco</i> RV enzyme respective; 2 and 6: the uncut cpDNA; 3 and 7: the negative control while 4 and 8: Oil palm nuclear DNA digested with <i>Eco</i> RI and <i>Eco</i> RV enzymes respective	30
7	Ten Angola cpDNA samples were screened using the three chloroplast- specific universal primers. Several samples could not be amplified using the primers. Further purification of the cpDNA was carried out. A: Uni1; B: Uni2; C: Uni3 and M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (New England Biolabs)	32
8	The uncut oil palm cpDNA samples of six germplasms were selected randomly to check for the cpDNA purity. 1 and 2:	33

Angola; 3 and 4: Nigeria; 5 and 6: Madagascar; 7 and 8: Ghana; 9 and 10: Costa Rica; 11 and 12: Suriname. M1: 0.1-10 kb (New England BioLabs) and M2: 100 bp DNA Ladder (New England Biolabs)

- 9 Profiles of samples from five germplasms after *Hind*III digestion including: A: Angola; B and C: Ghana; D and E: Nigeria; F: Madagascar; G: Costa Rica; H: Distilled miliQ water (negative control) and M: Biotinylated 2-Log DNA Ladder; 0.1-10 kb (New England BioLabs). Angola was included as a positive control as the cpDNA could be amplified in a PCR reaction 33
- 10 The re-extracted B: Ghana and C: Costa Rica samples were analyzed by observing the *Hind*III digestion pattern. A: Distilled miliQ water (negative control) and M: 1-kb DNA ladder (Promega). 34
- 11 Five cpDNA samples from four germplasms (Angola, Nigeria, Ghana and Madagascar) were used to test for the cpSSR amplification after purification and also for the mitochondrial contamination. The *rps3* (280 bp) primers (A) are oil palm cpSSR markers and were included as the positive control. C: Negative control is MiliQ water; M: 100 bp Ladder (GeneRuler). A1 and A2: Angola; N: Nigeria; G: Ghana and M: Madagascar 36
- 12 Screening analyses of oil palm SSR primers (*rpoC1*, *atp1* and *pbs1*) developed from chloroplast sequences in Gene Thresher (Low *et al.*, 2014). The oil palm SSR showed the expected band sizes on the two Angola cpDNA samples (0.311/414 and 0.311/415): (A) *rpoC1*, (A) *pet1*, (B) *atp1*, (C) *pbs1* and (D) chloroplast specific- universal primers tested out on 0.311/415 cpDNA sample. L: 100bp Ladder (GeneRuler). 39
- 13 Multiple banding patterns for the primers were observed. This could be due to several reasons including high concentration of magnesium chloride and primers or incorrect annealing temperature. A: primer *rps3* tested on Angola samples; B: Correct band size for *rps3* after optimization 67
- 14 Evaluation of *atp1* (272 bp) and *pbs2* (253 bp) amplicons via colony PCR using the respective primers and visualized on 1.2% agarose gel. M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (GeneRuler) 41
- 15 The sequencing result of *rps3* clone 1 was analyzed using ChromasPro (Version 1.49 beta). The sequence was trimmed by identifying the forward and reverse primers (blue box). The 42

microsatellite region is underlined in red.

16	The purified Nigeria samples were able to be amplified by three primers namely, A: cpSSR00010, B: cpSSR00014 and C: cpSSR00015. M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (Promega)	45
17	Ghana (A) and Madagascar (B) purified cpDNA were tested out using the Uni2 primer. The results showed null phenotypes in the same samples as before the cpDNA purification process. M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (Promega)	45
18	Four germplasms were genotyped using <i>rps3</i> oil palm cpSSR primers (280 bp). Madagascar samples that originally show null phenotype were able to amplify after optimization of PCR conditions. A: Ghana; B: Madagascar; C: Nigeria and D: Angola. M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (GeneRuler)	47
19	Samples of Madagascar were able to amplify using oil palm cpSSR primers, A: cpSSR00010 (225 bp) and B: cpSSR00005 (227 bp) after optimization was carried out. C: Angola (positive control). M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (GeneRuler)	47
20	Nine purified cpDNA samples from Madagascar subjected to PCR amplification. Seven samples could be consistently amplified as demonstrated by A: cpSSR00014 (290 bp) and B: cpSSR00015 (243 bp), which developed from the published <i>Elaeis guineensis</i> Jacq. chloroplast genome. C: Angola sample (positive control); M: 100 bp DNA Ladder (Promega)	50
21	Polymorphism was observed between Angola (A) and Suriname (B) germplasms by using <i>atp1</i> cpSSR primer (272 bp). M: 100 bp DNA ladder (Gene Ruler).	53
22	Dendrogram constructed according to UPGMA method based on Dice dissimilarity matrix computed for the germplasm samples analyzed using cpSSR markers. Palms that showed null alleles for all primers (1 palm from Madagascar, 8 palms from Ghana and all palms from Costa Rica) were excluded from the analysis. Black: Angola, Red: Ghana, Purple: Nigeria, Blue: Madagascar and Grey: Suriname.	55
22	Oil palm enriched cpDNA extraction protocol flow chart	68
23	Research flow chart	69

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

µg	Microgram
µL	Microliter
×g	Relative centrifugal force
bp	Base-pair
BLAST	Basic Local Alignment Search Tool
BLASTn	BLAST search nucleotide databases using nucleotide query
BSA	Bovine serum albumin
cpDNA	Chloroplast DNA
cpSSR	Chloroplast simple sequence repeat/ chloroplast microsatellite
CsCl	Cesium chloride
CTAB	Cetyltrimethylammonium bromide
DIECA	Diethyldithiocarbamic Acid
D-loop	Displacement loop
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
dNTPs	Deoxynucleosidetriphosphates
EDTA	Ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid disodium salt
e-value	Expected value
Gb	Gigabase
INDELs	Insertions and deletions
IR	Inverted repeat
LB	Luria broth
kbp	Kilobase-pair
M	Mole
MCA1	RNA stability factor for <i>PetA</i>
MF	Methylation filtration
mg	Milligram
MgCl ₂	Magnesium chloride
MISA	Microsatellite Search Tool
mM	Millimole
MPOB	Malaysia Palm Oil Board
NaCl	Sodium chloride
NaOAc	Sodium acetate
PA	Phosphatic acid
<i>Pet</i>	Cytochrome <i>b₆f</i> complex
PCR	Polymerase chain reaction
Poly A/T	Poly (deoxyadenosine: deoxythymidine)
PVP	Polyvinylpyrrolidone
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulphate
SFR	Super fine resolution

SNP	Single nucleotide polymorphisms
SSR	Simple sequence repeat
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
rpm	Rotation per minute
RAPD	Randomly amplified polymorphic DNA
RE	Restriction enzyme
RNAase	Ribonuclease
TAE	Tris-Acetate-Ethylene Diamine Tetra Acetic Acid
TCA1	RNA translation factor 1 for <i>PetA</i>
TE	Tris-EDTA
<i>Trn</i>	Transfer RNA
Uni	chloroplast specific- universal primer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Oil palm, belongs to the genus *Elaeis* and comprises of two species; *Elaeis guineensis* Jacq. and *E. oleifera* Cortez (Hartley, 1988; Price *et al.*, 2007). The commercial oil palm, *E. guineensis* is native to Africa while *E. oleifera* is found in Central South America (Hartley, 1988; Sasidharan *et al.*, 2010; Zaki *et al.*, 2010). Commercially grown *E. guineensis* can be further divided into three fruit forms: Tenera (hybrid of Dura and Pisifera), Dura and Pisifera. Palm oil is used both for edible (90%) and non-edible (10%) purposes.

Oil palm is a long lasting crop with a generic life of more than 200 years but an economic life span at 20 to 25 years (Hartley, 1988). In addition, intensive breeding research has been carried out to further improve the performance of the golden crop. The agronomic traits of interest to oil palm breeders are high yield, improved oil quality, slow trunk growth and disease resistance (Zaki *et al.*, 2010). To assist the breeders, molecular marker technology has also been developed (Singh *et al.*, 2007; Singh *et al.*, 2008a; Singh *et al.*, 2008b). For example, microsatellites or simple sequence repeat (SSR) markers have been applied for genetic diversity studies to develop genetic maps and have been linked to specific traits such as shell thickness (Ting *et al.*, 2010). Molecular markers can help to improve the efficiency of breeding schemes and crop yield by identifying the factors such as traits that related to the crop performance (Diekmann *et al.*, 2008; Singh *et al.*, 2008a). However, for oil palm, molecular markers have been used mostly to analyze nuclear DNA. Chloroplast DNA has not been extensively studied. The uniparental inheritance and non-recombination nature of chloroplast DNA give advantages in analysis such as parentage and taxonomic studies. The variability of the independently transmitted genomes can be analyzed via microsatellites simultaneously in order to understand the nuclear-chloroplast interactions of oil palm as well as unravel the origin of polyploidy complexes that are common in flowering plant evolution (Powell *et al.*, 1996).

The major goal of oil palm research is to help the industry elevate profit per hectare in plantations; this is of interest not only to oil palm investors but also to breeders' as well as agronomist (Price *et al.*, 2007). As know today, the use of palm oil is no longer limited to the production of edible oil; it is also being actively used as a commercially viable source of biodiesel. The tremendous progress in oil palm research has given the industry confidence to meet the challenges facing this remarkably productive crop. Despite the improvements made in the oil palm industry in the last 50 years, there remains considerable scope for further enhancing research and development activities to uplift both the upstream and downstream productivity (Basiron, 2007). Therefore, in this study, the oil palm cpSSR- based markers were used to analyze the chloroplast diversity of oil palm germplasm. Moreover, the study of oil palm chloroplast DNA is important as it provides opportunities to examine the lipid biosynthesis organelle of oil palm at the molecular level.

In this study, chloroplast DNA (cpDNA) will be the choice for analyses at the molecular level due to its potential information content (Mohanty *et al.*, 2003) with three main objectives, which are as follow:

1. To establish a method for extracting enriched chloroplast DNA (cpDNA) for oil palm
2. To identify oil palm chloroplast microsatellites or Simple Sequence Repeat (SSR) markers from existing oil palm chloroplast sequences including
 - a. Gene Thresher library whereby the chloroplast sequences were derived as contaminants from the genomic library constructed from the hypomethylated region of the oil palm (Low *et al.*, 2014)
 - b. Published *E. guineensis* Jacq. chloroplast genome in Gen Bank
3. To analyze oil palm chloroplast diversity and polymorphism in selected oil palm germplasm collections

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