

High genetic diversity and mixing of coastal horseshoe crab (*Tachypelus gigas*) across major habitats in Sundaland, Indonesia

Naila Khuril Aini¹, Yusli Wardiatno^{2,3}, Hefni Effendi^{2,3}, Ali Mashar³, Hawis Madduppa^{Corresp. 4,5}

¹ Study Program of Aquatic Resources, Department of Aquatic Resources Management, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Graduate School of IPB University, Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

² Environmental Research Center, IPB University, Bogor, Indonesia

³ Department of Aquatic Resources Management, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

⁴ Department of Marine Science and Technology, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, IPB University, Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor, Jawa Barat, Indonesia

⁵ Oceanogen Environmental Biotechnology Laboklinikum, Bogor, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Hawis Madduppa

Email address: hawis@apps.ipb.ac.id

Species with limited dispersal capabilities are often composed of highly genetically structured populations across small geographic ranges. This study aimed to investigate the haplotype diversity and genetic connectivity of the coastal horseshoe crab (*Tachypelus gigas*) in Indonesia. To achieve this, we collected a total of 91 samples from six main *T. gigas* habitats: Bintan, Balikpapan, Demak, Madura, Subang, and Ujung Kulon. The samples were amplified using primers for mitochondrial (mt) AT-rich region DNA sequences. The results showed 34 haplotypes, including six shared and 22 unique haplotypes, ^{across} from all localities. The pairwise genetic differentiation (F_{ST}) values were low (0 to 0.13) and not significantly different ($p > 0.05$), except ^{among} in samples from Ujung Kulon-Madura and Kulon-Subang ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, the analysis of molecular variance (AMOVA) showed the most variation within populations (95.23%) compared to ^{less} among populations (4.77%). The haplotype network showed evidence of shared haplotypes between populations. Tajima's D and Fu's F_s test values indicated a population expansion. Our results showed a low level of differentiation, suggesting a single stock and high connectivity. Therefore, a regionally-based conservation strategy is recommended for the coastal horseshoe crab in Indonesia.

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5 Naila Khuril Aini¹, Yusli Wardiatno², Hefni Effendi², Ali Mashar², Hawis Madduppa^{3,4}

6
7 ¹Study Program of Aquatic Resources in the Department of Aquatic Resources Management,
8 Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Graduate School of Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor,
9 Indonesia

10 ²Department of Aquatic Resources Management, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences,
11 Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor, Indonesia

12 ³Department of Marine Science and Technology, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences,
13 Institut Pertanian Bogor, Bogor, Indonesia

14 ⁴Oceanogen Environmental Biotechnology Laboklinikum, Bogor, Indonesia

15
16
17 Corresponding Author:

18 Hawis Madduppa⁴

19 Dramaga, Bogor, Indonesia

20 Email address: hawis@apps.ipb.ac.id

21 22 23 Abstract

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35 shared haplotypes between populations. Tajima's D and Fu's F_S test values indicated a
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37 and high connectivity. Therefore, a regionally-based conservation strategy is recommended for
38 the coastal horseshoe crab in Indonesia.

39 40 Introduction

41 High rates of gene flow are common in marine organisms that are spread across large
42 geographic ranges (Palumbi, 1994; Crandall et al., 2019). Several marine organisms also exhibit
43 low levels of genetic differentiation across large geographic scales (Avice, 2000). Population
44 structures are reportedly affected by genetic drift, strong post-settlement selection (Hedgecock,
45 1986), and spatial-landscape patterns (Johnson & Black, 1998; Watts & Johnson, 2004). Species

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46 with limited ^{ped} dispersal capabilities are often composed of highly genetically structured
47 populations with small geographic ranges (Collin, 2001). This creates opportunities to compare
48 the depths and positions of intraspecific genetic differentiation when using location as an
49 extrinsic factor (Bernardi & Talley, 2000).

50 Horseshoe crabs, an interesting group of marine organisms considered “living fossils”
51 (Eldredge & Stanley 1984), have been extant for almost 500 million years. There are four extant
52 species of horseshoe crabs: the American horseshoe crab (*Limulus polyphemus*) found along the
53 eastern coast of North America from Maine to Mexico (Walls et al., 2002; Rutecki et al., 2004),
54 and three Asian horseshoe crabs species (the mangrove horseshoe crab [*Carcinoscorpius*
55 *rotundicauda*], the coastal horseshoe crab [*Tachypleus gigas*], and the tri-spined horseshoe crab
56 [*Tachypleus tridentatus*]) (John et al., 2018; Vestbo, 2018) that are sporadically distributed
57 across Southeast Asia and Japan. They are ancient marine arthropods that exhibit life-histories
58 and habitat preferences that suggest a restricted dispersal capability (Sekiguchi, 1988). The Asian
59 species are found in Indonesian coastal waters, dispersed around Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, and
60 Sulawesi (Rubiyanto, 2012; Mashar et al., 2017; Meilana et al., 2016).

61 Throughout their life cycle, horseshoe crabs are highly dependent on environmental
62 conditions in coastal habitats. Most research suggests that they are declining both locally and
63 regionally due to over-harvesting for food, ^{and} biomedicine, and coastal development (Itow, 1993;
64 Botton, 2001; Chen et al., 2004) and the loss of suitable spawning grounds. *T. gigas* was once
65 relatively common along the northern Java sea. However, coastal and mangrove horseshoe crab
66 populations have an undetermined conservation status due to insufficient data (World
67 Conservation Monitoring Centre, 1996). Furthermore, most population genetic studies on
68 horseshoe crabs have focused on the American horseshoe crab, with little attention paid to the
69 Asian horseshoe crab (Pierce et al., 2000; King et al., 2004; King et al., 2005; Yang et al., 2007;
70 Rozihan & Ismail 2011; King et al., 2015). Therefore, this study examined the genetic diversity,
71 connectivity, and population structure of coastal horseshoe crabs by screening an AT-rich region
72 of mitochondrial DNA, an established genetic marker for arthropods (Brehm et al., 2001). Our
73 aim was to use genetic evidence to facilitate horseshoe crab conservation efforts in Indonesia.
74

75 **Materials & Methods**

76 **Study area and sample collection**

77 With the help of a local fisherman, adult and juvenile *T. gigas* specimens were collected
78 from shallow waters in six locations around Indonesia: Bintan, Balikpapan, Demak, Madura,
79 Subang, and Ujung Kulon (Fig. 1). We collected the hemolymph from a total of 91 *T. gigas*
80 specimens between April 2019 and August 2020. There were eight, 14, 16, 13, 20, and 20
81 samples from Bintan Island (BT), Balikpapan (BP), Demak (DK), Madura (MD), Subang (SB),
82 and Ujung Kulon (UK), respectively. The hemolymph was collected from each individual and
83 immediately preserved in absolute ethanol. Field experiments were approved by the Research
84 Council of the Study Program from IPB University (letter number
85 1426/IT3.F3.2/KP.03.03.2019).
86

87 **Genomic DNA extraction, amplification, and DNA sequencing**

88 Genomic DNA was isolated from the hemolymph using the GeneAiD extraction kit ^(manufacturer?)
89 following the manufacturer's instructions. A fragment of the AT-rich region was amplified using
90 a pair of primers, Hb-12S (5'-GTCTAACCGCGGTAGCTGGCAC-3') and Hb-trna
91 (5'GAGCCCAATAGCTTAAATTAGCTTA-3'), designed from the mitochondrial genome of

92 the ^{American} Atlantic horseshoe crab (Lavrov et al., 2000). A 25- μ L PCR reaction was carried out with
 93 12.5 μ L MyTaq HS Red Mix, 9 μ L ddH₂O, 1.25 μ L forward and reverse primer, and 1 μ L DNA
 94 template. The entire reaction mixture was amplified using a polymerase chain reaction (PCR)
 95 thermocycler, following Yang et al.'s (2007) amplification steps. The mixture underwent pre-
 96 denaturation at 95°C for 3 mins, followed by 30 cycles of denaturation at 94°C for 30 sec,
 97 annealing at 50°C for 1 min, extension at 72°C for 2 min, one cycle at 72°C for 2 min, and 25°C
 98 for 5 min. The PCR product was visualized using electrophoresis on 1% agarose gel in TAE
 99 buffer with ethidium bromide at 100 V for 30 min. After electrophoresis, the gel was placed
 100 under UV light for band detection to determine the presence of a DNA fragment. The DNA
 101 sequencing was performed by 1st BASE DNA Sequencing Services, Selangor, Malaysia.

102 Data analysis

103 A total of 91 AT-rich region sequences were obtained, and MEGA X (Kumar et al., 2018)
 104 was used to generate multiple alignments of the edited sequences. Genetic diversity was
 105 measured using the number of haplotypes (Hn), haplotype diversity (Hd), nucleotide diversity
 106 (π), and DNASp v6 (Rozas et al., 2017). The population structure was ^{indicated} using Wright's ^{assessed}
 107 fixation index (F_{ST}) and analysis of molecular variance (AMOVA). The significance level
 108 threshold (α), used to determine the pattern of differentiation between locations, was 0.05. The
 109 pairwise F -statistic (F_{ST}) was calculated as the genetic distance based on the population
 110 differences using DNASp v6 (Rozas et al., 2017). The haplotype network across populations was
 111 estimated using a median joining (MJ) network (Bandelt et al., 1999) and was calculated using
 112 Network v 4.6.1.0 based on haplotype data. The haplotype composition across all study areas
 113 was illustrated in a map to show the distribution and genetic connectivity patterns across the
 114 populations. Tajima's D (1989) and Fu's F_S (1997) statistical tests were used to assess the
 115 population equilibrium. ^{the analysis was conducted} using the Arlequin v.3.5 program (Excoffier
 116 & Lischer, 2010).

117 Results

118 Genetic diversity

119 We obtained a total of 91 AT-rich sequences ^{of} and approximately 670 bp across all sampling
 120 locations, including Java (UK, SB, DK, and MD), Sumatra Island, and ~~mostly~~ in Bintan and
 121 Borneo (Balikpapan). In total, 43 variable nucleotide sites and 34 haplotypes were observed. The
 122 haplotypes consisted of both unique (only found in certain locations) and common haplotypes
 123 (Table 1). The genetic diversity of the coastal horseshoe crab varied across sampling sites (Table
 124 2). The percentage of A+T composition in each location, ^{which differed slightly,} was slightly different, which was
 125 approximately 81%.

126 At a glance, the obtained haplotype diversity was high, ranging from $h = 0.783$ to 0.945 ,
 127 with a mean gene diversity per population $h = 0.935$. Conversely, the nucleotide diversity was
 128 relatively low in all locations, ranging from $\pi = 0.004$ to 0.009 . The overall diversity was similar
 129 across populations, and DK had the lowest haplotype and nucleotide diversity ($h = 0.783$, $\pi =$
 130 0.004). BP had the highest haplotype and nucleotide diversity ($h = 0.945$, $\pi = 0.009$), followed by
 131 UK ($h = 0.942$, $\pi = 0.005$), SB ($h = 0.926$, $\pi = 0.005$), MD ($h = 0.910$, $\pi = 0.006$), and BT ($h =$
 132 0.892 , $\pi = 0.006$) (Table 2).

133 Population structure

137 Pairwise F_{ST} values ranged from 0 to 0.13 across the populations (Table 3). Generally, the
 138 F_{ST} value among locations was not significantly different ($p > 0.05$) with the exception of UK-MD
 139 and UK-SB, indicating the restricted gene flow in these populations. Populations with higher
 140 pairwise F_{ST} values included BT-MD ($p > 0.05$), BT-SB ($p > 0.05$), UK-MD ($p < 0.05$), and UK-SB
 141 ($p < 0.05$). The pairwise F_{ST} values of UK-BT, DB-DK, and SB-MD were effectively zero. Our
 142 AMOVA results showed that the majority of variations were found within (95.23%) rather than
 143 among (4.77%) populations (Table 4).

144

145 Population connectivity

146 The relationship of the 34 haplotypes was illustrated using a median-joining network (Fig.
 147 2). The haplotype network showed that there were shared haplotypes (H1, H3, H5, H8, H9, and
 148 H18) across the geographic sites. H3 was the most common, and was identified in ~~about~~ 15
 149 individuals. H5 was found in 12 individuals from the BT, BP, DK, SB, and UK populations.
 150 However, specific haplotypes were only found in certain locations. The UK population had the
 151 highest number of specific haplotypes (seven). Meanwhile, BT had the lowest number of
 152 haplotypes (two) (Fig. 3).

153 We assessed historical demography based on mtDNA AT-rich region haplotype
 154 frequencies. There were shared haplotypes in all locations (Fig. 2). Furthermore, the Tajima's D
 155 test values (Table 5) were negative across all populations, with the exception of DK, MD, and
 156 SB. They showed no significant p -values, indicating that there was no evidence of selection.
 157 Similarly, the Fu's F_s test results (Table 5) were negative (except in DK), with no significant p -
 158 values across all six populations. This indicated an excess number of haplotypes, as expected due
 159 to a recent population expansion.

160

161 Discussion

162 In this study, there was high haplotype diversity in six coastal horseshoe crab populations
 163 in the northern Java Sea, Bintan, and Balikpapan waters of Indonesia. There was also a high
 164 number of polymorphic sites (43, with 34 defined haplotypes) in Indonesian coastal horseshoe
 165 crab populations. The mean haplotype diversity ($h = 0.935$) was quite high while nucleotide
 166 diversity ($\pi = 0.006$) was low across all populations. Similarly high haplotype diversity values
 167 were reported in *T. gigas* ($h = 0.797 \pm 0.129$ and $\pi = 0.058 \pm 0.001$; Rozihan & Ismail, 2011) in
 168 Malaysia and tri-spined horseshoe crab (*T. tridentatus*) in Taiwan ($h = 0.626 \pm 0.075$ and $\pi =$
 169 0.003 ± 0.005 ; Yang et al., 2007).

170 Previous studies reported generally high genetic diversity in coastal horseshoe crab. In this
 171 study, our results showed high genetic diversity but low nucleotide diversity. The high number of
 172 haplotypes indicates that these populations were large enough to maintain a high level of genetic
 173 diversity. These small differences are the signature of rapid demographic expansion from a small
 174 ~~and~~ effective population size (Avise, 2000). Nucleotide diversity is a sensitive index when
 175 analyzing population genetic diversity (Nei & Li, 1979), which is influenced by life-history
 176 characteristics, environmental heterogeneity, large population size (Nei, 1987; Avise, 2000),
 177 fishing pressure (Madduppa et al., 2018), reduced larval transport, and limited exchange with
 178 other populations (Timm et al., 2017). The rate of mitochondrial evolution and historical factors
 179 play an important role in determining genetic variability patterns (Grant et al., 2006; Xiao et al.,
 180 2009; Yamaguchi et al., 2010).

181 We detected very low extensive differentiation across populations (not significant F_{ST}
 182 values between 0 and 0.13), with exceptions between UK-MD and UK-SB. This indicated that

183

183 there was little subdivision across populations. ~~Conversely,~~ ^{However,} the horseshoe crab life-history
 184 characteristics and habitat preferences suggested restricted dispersal capabilities (Sekiguchi,
 185 1988). The crab showed limited movement capabilities only in their home range area. Individual
 186 distances up to 30 km have been observed in Malaysian crabs (Mohamad et al., 2019), while the
 187 movement capabilities of tri-spined horseshoe crab did not exceed 150 km (Yang et al., 2007).
 188 Similarly, the American horseshoe crab in the Great Bay Estuary (USA) has a maximum mean
 189 annual linear distance ranging between 4.5 km and 9.2 km (Schaller et al., 2010). Studies by
 190 Swan (2005) over multiple years found that *Limulus* moved from 104 to 265 km from their
 191 release sites. Ecological observations showed that their hatched larvae swim freely for
 192 approximately 6 days and then settle in the bottom of shallow waters around their natal beaches
 193 (Shuster, 1982). However, larvae have a strong tendency to concentrate in inshore rather than
 194 offshore waters (100-200 km) (Botton & Loveland, 2003), suggesting a limited capability for
 195 long-range dispersal between estuaries. Additionally, ~~the~~ low F_{ST} levels reflect inter-population
 196 movement over mutigenerational intervals that short-term tagging studies cannot document.
 197 Long-term tagging studies have found that horseshoe crabs can move ~~up to~~ ^{from} 5-500 km ^{end up to}
 198 ~~dominated in~~ 5-30 km (Beekey & Mattei, 2015), while around 767 km over their long lifetimes
 199 (E. Hallerman, 2020, personal communication). A similar study by Rozihan & Ismail (2011)
 200 reported that the crab's F_{ST} value along the west coast of peninsular Malaysia ranges from 0.111
 201 - 0.557, indicating moderate to high genetic differentiation (Wright, 1978; Hartl & Clark, 1977).
 202 Other reports in the area used microsatellite markers to find a F_{ST} value between 0.144 and
 203 0.846.

204 There were only ~~six~~ ^{several} shared haplotypes among the 34 total haplotypes ~~discovered~~ ^{observed among} from all
 205 91 samples. The median-joining network analysis ~~showed~~ ^{indicated} past population expansions with
 206 shared haplotypes among localities. Overall, relationship patterns at the mtDNA level ~~reduced~~
 207 geographical structure. The haplotype network revealed recent demographic processes, but the
 208 small sample sizes also limited the possibility of observing the intermediate haplotypes inferred
 209 to exist in the network. Moreover, ^{including Tajima's D and Fu's Fs test} ~~indicated~~ the occurrence of
 210 population expansion. Common haplotypes shared between localities can also be explained by
 211 the history of biogeography in this Southeast Asian region known as the Sunda Shelves, which
 212 includes Java, Sumatera, and Borneo. Historically, Sundaland experienced both dewatering and
 213 inundation during the Pleistocene period. Haplotype sharing in this study is attributed to breeding
 214 migration and pelagic larvae, as well as the sharing of common ancestors (Frankham, 1996). The
 215 occurrence of many specific haplotypes can be explained by the small sample size and perhaps
 216 isolation during the Last Glacial Maximum. Many species became isolated in refugia, ^{and} genetic
 217 differentiation and divergence occurred due to the retreat and dispersal of glacial ice sheets
 218 (Hewitt, 2000). ^{geographic site} ^{glacial} ^{historical} ^{historical} ^{shared little}

219 A proactive management approach regarding the Asian coastal horseshoe crab (*T. gigas*) in
 220 Indonesia should consider population genetics. High haplotype diversity that occurs with low
 221 nucleotide diversity has been associated with population growth or expansion after a period of
 222 low effective population growth (Grant & Bowen, 1998). ~~Moreover,~~ ^{our} findings indicate that *T.*
 223 *gigas* in Indonesia have low genetic differentiation but high population connectivity and
 224 expansion. Therefore, ~~all the~~ ^{our} results suggest that there is a single stock of Indonesia coastal
 225 horseshoe crab. ~~However,~~ the best conservation strategy is one that combines both local and
 226 regional management. Additionally, an advanced population genetic analysis based on male and
 227 female horseshoe crabs and the nuclear genome (e.g., microsatellites or SNPs) should be

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To expand our knowledge base

would be

228 ^{conducted} explored in the future. This ^{should} ~~would~~ also ^{include} require expanding the scope of geographic sampling
 229 around Indonesia.

230

231 Conclusion

232 High genetic diversity and low levels of differentiation across coastal horseshoe crab (*T.*
 233 *gigas*) populations in Indonesia indicated a single ~~species~~ stock with high connectivity. A
 234 locally-based conservation management method is suggested as ~~one~~ ^a precautionary approach to
 235 conserving the Indonesian coastal horseshoe crab.

236

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1 Tabel 2
 2 Genetic diversity of *Tachypleus gigas* in each locations

3

Population	Code	A+T%	n	Nh	h	π
Bintan	BT	81.597	8	6	0.892	0.006
Balikpapan	BP	81.473	14	10	0.945	0.009
Demak	DK	81.568	16	6	0.783	0.004
Madura	MD	81.412	13	8	0.910	0.006
Subang	SB	81.548	20	11	0.926	0.005
Ujung Kulon	UK	81.434	20	12	0.942	0.005
Total or mean			91		0.935	0.0064

4

5

Notes: n= number of samples; Nh= number of haplotype; h= haplotype diversity; π = nucleotide diversity

6

7

1 Tabel 3
 2 Pairwise F_{ST} between populations of *Tachypleus gigas* in six sampling locations

3

	BT	BP	DK	MD	SB	UK
BT	-					
BP	0.05	-				
DK	0.08	0.00	-			
MD	0.13	0.00	0.00	-		
SB	0.11	0.01	0.00	0.00	-	
UK	0.00	0.08	0.09	0.10*	0.10*	-

4 Notes : F_{ST} value significantly different, $(p < 0.05)^*$; BT= Bintan; BP=Balikpapan; DK=
 Demak; MD= Madura; SB= Subang; UK= Ujung Kulon

5
 6

1 Tabel 4
2 The analysis of molecular variation (AMOVA) that conducted based on the haplotype frequencies
3 of *Tachypleus gigas*

4

Source of variation	d.f	Percentage of variation	F_{ST}	p -values
Among populations	5	4.77	0.04	0.006
Within populations	85	95.23		
Total	90			

5
6

- 1 Table 5:
2 Results of Tajima's D and Fu's F_S tests including associated p -values in all locations

3

Population	Tajima's D	Fu's F_S
Bintan	-0.646 ^{ns}	-0.608 ^{ns}
Balikpapan	0.601 ^{ns}	0.847 ^{ns}
Demak	0.325 ^{ns}	-2.941 ^{ns}
Madura	-0.875 ^{ns}	-1.532 ^{ns}
Subang	0.166 ^{ns}	-0.891 ^{ns}
Ujung Kulon	-0.318 ^{ns}	-3.865 ^{ns}

- 4 *No values were*
5 Notes: ~~ns~~ = not significant

Figure 1

Sampling locations ^{for} of *Tachypleus gigas* ; There were eight, 14, 16, 13, 20, and 20 samples from Bintan Island (BT) = 8, Balikpapan (BP) = 14, Demak (DK) = 16, Madura (MD) = 13, Subang (SB) = 20 and Ujung Kulon (UK) = 20

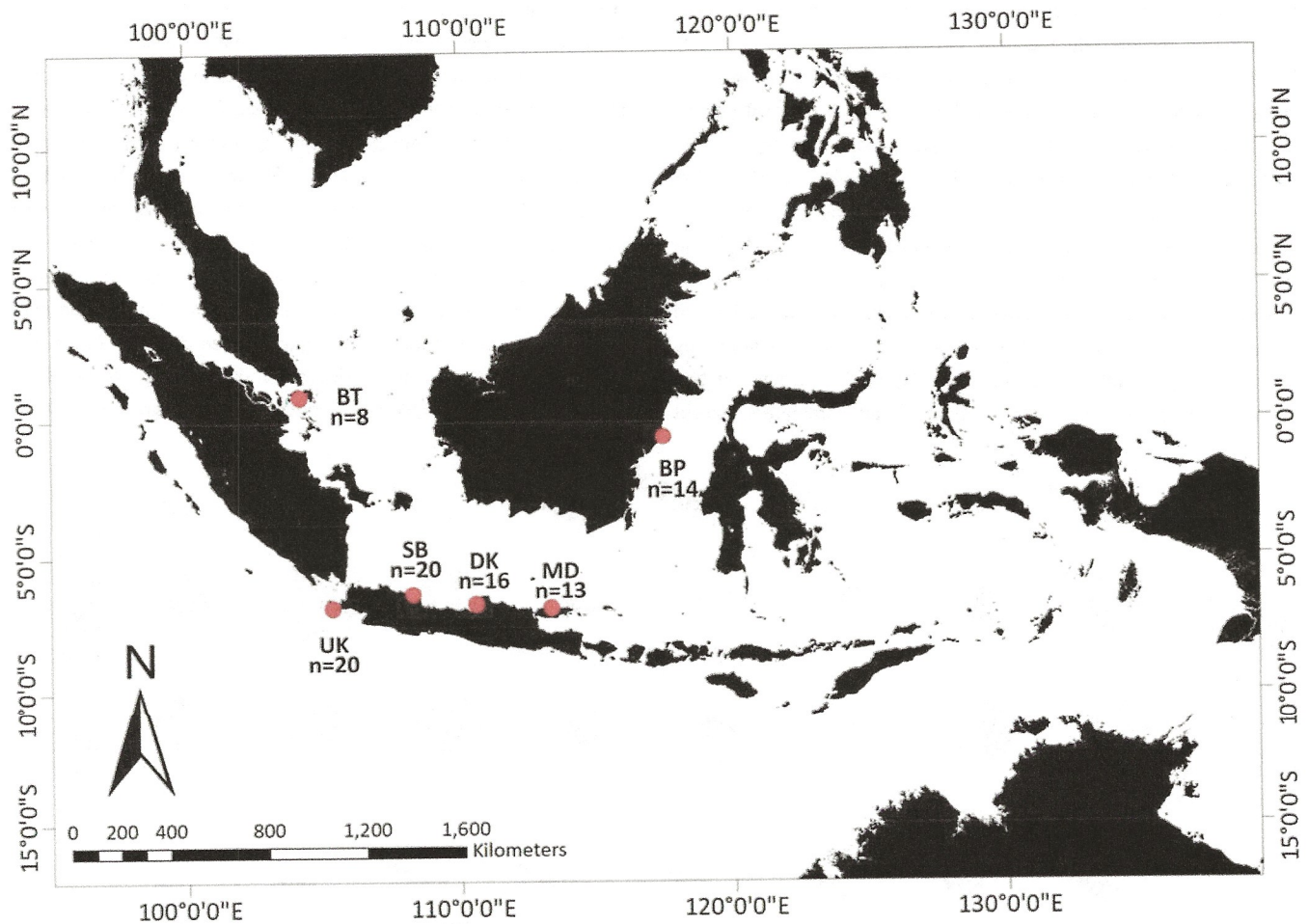


Figure 2

Haplotype network of *Tachypleus gigas* (n= 91) population in six locations around Indonesia, constructed with Median-Joining method

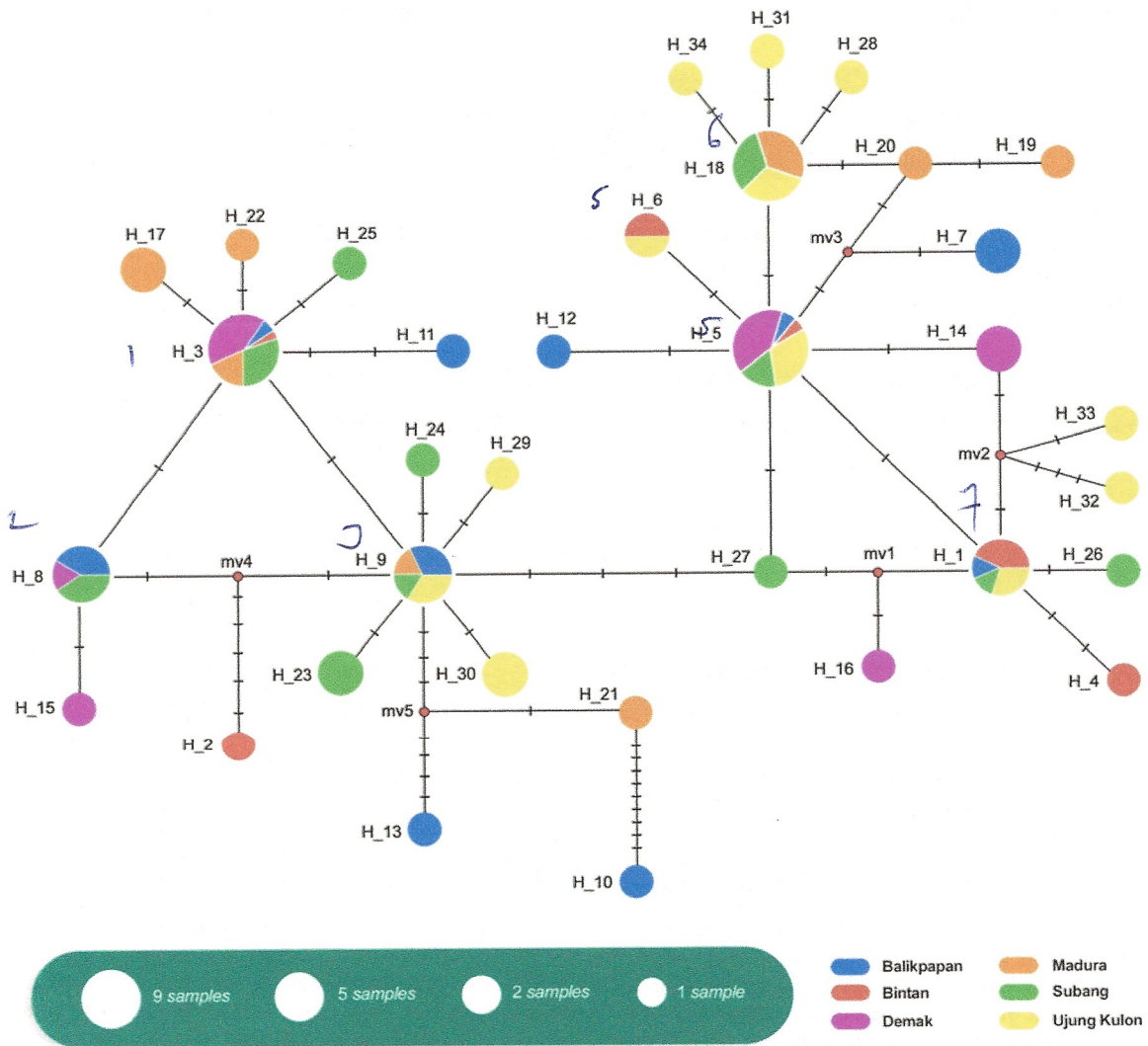


Figure 3

Distribution of 34 haplotypes of *Tachypleus gigas* population ²⁰⁰³⁵ from six locations in ~~around~~ Indonesia

