



Research Article

Maize Downy Mildew (*Peronosclerospora neglecta*) in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Peronosclerospora species cause downy mildew diseases on maize (*Zea mays*) worldwide. Maize leaves with symptoms of downy mildew were collected from field crops in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand, during surveys between 2018 and 2022. Initial determination of the presence of downy mildew on specimens was determined microscopically by the presence of conidiophores and/or oospores in leaf tissue. Phylogenetic analyses of the cytochrome c oxidase subunit II (*cox2*) gene sequences showed that all specimens were *Peronosclerospora neglecta*. Reference specimens from Thailand were deposited at the Thai Plant Pathology Herbarium, Bangkok, Thailand, while those from Cambodia and Lao PDR were deposited at the Queensland Plant Pathology Herbarium, Australia. *Peronosclerospora neglecta* was widespread in field crops of maize in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand during the survey period. This is the first time that *P. neglecta* has been reported in Cambodia and Lao PDR.

Keywords: crops surveyed, disease, downy mildew, grasses, phylogeny

1. INTRODUCTION

Downy mildew caused by species of *Peronosclerospora* (Peronosporaceae, Peronosporales) are responsible for severe damage to maize (*Zea mays* L.) crops worldwide [1]. Eight species of *Peronosclerospora* have been reported on maize, namely *P. eriochloae*, *P. heteropogonis*, *P. maydis*, *P. neglecta*, *P. philippinensis*, *P. sacchari*, *P. sorghi*, and *P. spontanea* [2–5]. *Peronosclerospora neglecta* on maize was reported as widely distributed from Thailand to eastern Indonesia [2], with the earliest

specimen collected in Thailand in 2018 [6]. The first report of *P. neglecta* from Thailand was based on a reassessment of GenBank sequences first identified as *P. maydis* [2,6]. *Peronosclerospora maydis* has generally been considered the cause of downy mildew on maize in Thailand [5,6]. In Cambodia, both *P. sorghi* and *P. maydis*, have been reported on maize [7]. There are no reports in the literature of downy mildew on maize in Lao PDR.

The accurate identification of maize downy mildews in South-East Asia is important, as breeding maize varieties with resistance to downy mildew is an important tool in disease management [2,8]. In the past, the nomenclature of plant pathogenic fungi was based only on morphological characteristics, or sometimes their host associations played an important role in species delimitation, with little consideration for morphology [9]. Definitions of species evolve over time as knowledge of the biology, morphology, and evolutionary relationships of fungi increases [10]. Many of the historical reports of downy mildew on maize in south-east Asia are unverifiable as they were based on morphological traits that are highly variable within a species and overlap between species [11]. Further, it has become increasingly apparent that some downy mildews have multiple hosts [5]. Accurate species identification is important for plant pathology and plant quarantine [12]. Molecular methods have been increasingly used for accurate species identification, as morphology alone is often unreliable [10]. In this study we compared *cox2* gene sequences with ex-type reference barcodes [5] to identify downy mildews collected from

maize crops in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand between 2018 and 2022.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sample Collection and Examination

Leaf specimens of maize with chlorotic streaks symptomatic of downy mildew (Figure 1) were collected from Thailand, Cambodia and Lao PDR between 2018 and 2022. The morphology of conidia and conidiophores were examined under stereo (Carl Zeiss Stemi 2000-C) and compound (Olympus System Microscope Model BX53) microscopes from small pieces (1 mm²) of leaf tissue excised with a scalpel and mounted in lactoglycerol.

2.2 DNA Extraction, PCR, Sequences and Phylogenetic Analysis

Leaves found to have downy mildew were cut into small pieces and transferred to a microfuge tube for DNA extraction. Genomic DNA was extracted with the PureDireX Genomic DNA Isolation Kit (Blood/Cultured Cell/Fungus) (Bio-Helix Co., Ltd.) in accordance with the methods of Doungsa-ard et al. [13]. A partial



Figure 1. Downy mildew symptoms on maize in Kanchanaburi province.

region of the cytochrome c oxidase subunit II (*cox2*) gene from mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) was amplified with Taq DNA Polymerase [Green Hot Start PCR Master Mix Direct-Load, 2x (biotech rabbit)]. The *cox2* gene was amplified with the primers COX2-F/COX2-RC4 [14]. The PCR cycling conditions were 95 °C for 4 min, 36 cycles of 95 °C for 40 s, 50 °C for 40 s, 72 °C for 60 s; and final extension of 72 °C for 5 min. The PCR products were purified and sequenced by Macrogen Incorporated (Seoul, Korea). The *cox2* sequences were assembled in contigs with Geneious Prime (Biomatters Ltd., New Zealand) and deposited in GenBank (Table 1). These sequences were aligned with reference sequences retrieved from GenBank with the MAFFT v7.450 standard alignment algorithm in Geneious. Sequences from *Sclerospora graminicola* were used as the outgroup. Maximum likelihood (ML) analysis was performed with RAxML v8.1.15 [15] in Geneious. The resulting tree was evaluated with 1000 bootstrap replications of maximum likelihood bootstrap to test the clade stability.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Sample Collection and Disease Symptom

The primary symptoms of infection by *P. neglecta* were chlorotic leaf streaks that developed from the base of the younger leaves and stunted plants. Leaf shredding and the formation of oospores in leaf tissue were not observed. This survey was found that *P. neglecta* was prevalent in sweet corn and waxy corn in Chiang Mai and Kanchanaburi provinces, Thailand. The highest rates of infection were seen on eight-row corn at Klongtakot (Photharam district, Ratchaburi province), Thailand and hybrid sweet corn, hybrid waxy corn, and field corn (grown from self-harvested seed) at Mueang Ka Rung (Ban Rai district, Uthai Thani Province), Thailand. *Peronosclerospora neglecta* was not found in baby corn in this survey. Conidiophores and conidia of *P. neglecta* were produced on both surfaces of the leaf. *Peronosclerospora maydis*, *P. philippinensis*,

P. sorghi, and *P. spontanea*, have also been reported on maize in Thailand [26]. The conidia of *P. neglecta* range in shape from subglobose to ovoid, and are larger than those of *P. maydis* [28], and smaller than those of *P. sorghi* [5,29], *P. philippinensis* [30] and *P. spontanea* [31]. However, the morphology of downy mildews has little diagnostic value in their identification as environmental factors and varietal host range may influence conidial and other dimensions [21]. The results of this study show that *P. neglecta* is widespread and damaging on maize in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand. Similarly, *P. neglecta* is widespread on maize in Thailand, with a distribution extending eastwards to Indonesia and northwards to Cambodia and Lao PDR [2,6,26, this study]. This is the first reported of *P. neglecta* in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Reliable and accurate identification of downy mildews is essential for successful disease management as well as to prevent their spread through seed exportation.

3.2 Phylogenetic Analysis

Phylogenetic analysis of the *cox2* gene sequences from Cambodian, Lao and Thai specimens showed that they belonged to a strongly supported clade, which included the ex-type *cox2* gene sequence of *P. neglecta* from Indonesia (Table 1, Figure 2). Five other species of *Peronosclerospora* that had previously been reported on maize in Thailand [6, 16–19], namely *P. maydis*, *P. philippinensis*, *P. sacchari*, *P. sorghi*, and *P. spontanea*, were not found. Reference sequences of *P. spontanea* were not available from type material or bona fide specimens for inclusion in our study, which is significant as a possible occurrence of *P. spontanea* was reported from Thailand [20].

3.3 Taxonomy

Peronosclerospora neglecta Muis, Ryley, Suharjo, Y.P. Tan, Thines & R.G. Shivas, *Mycol. Prog.* 22: 3 (2023) Figure 3.

Description: *Asexual sporulation* of *Peronosclerospora neglecta* was found on 20 maize leaf specimens

Table 1. Specimens included in the phylogenetic analysis. Accession numbers from this study are in bold.

Species	Voucher	Host	Locality	GenBank Accessions No. (cox2)	Reference
<i>Baobabopsis marneyi</i>	BRIP 70341 ^T	<i>Enneapogon polyphyllus</i>	Georgetown, Australia	OK336436	[23]
<i>Eraphthora drentbii</i>	DAR 4201 ^T	<i>Eragrostis cilianensis</i>	Gunnedah, Australia	HQ413338	[24]
<i>Peronosclerospora aristidae</i>	BRIP 67069 ^T	<i>Aristida hygrometrica</i>	Mareeba, Australia	OK336438	[23]
<i>P. boughtoniae</i>	BRIP 14388 ^T	<i>Sorghum plumosum</i>	Lizard Island, Australia	OK336439	[23]
<i>P. eriochloae</i>	BRIP 13693 ^T	<i>Eriochloa pseudoacrotricha</i>	Upper Pilton, Australia	OK336442	[23]
<i>P. heteropogonis</i>	HOH HUH 898	<i>Heteropogon contortus</i>	Udaiur, Rajasthan, India	EU116054	[25]
<i>P. ischaemi</i>	BRP 70369 ^T	<i>Ischaemum fragile</i>	Croydon, Australia	OK336443	[23]
<i>P. jamesiae</i>	BRIP 65234 ^T	<i>Sorghum intrans</i>	Wagait Beach, Australia	OK336444	[23]
<i>P. mactaggartii</i>	BRIP 57677 ^T	<i>Sorghum timorense</i>	Robin Falls, Australia	OK336446	[23]
<i>P. maydis</i>	BRIP 46736 ^{TA}	<i>S. timorense</i>	Valentine Springs, Australia	HQ261797	[26]
	KRAM O-5859(J) ^T	<i>Zea mays</i>	Java, Indonesia	MW025835	[27]
<i>P. miscanthi</i>	NY	<i>Miscanthus japonicus</i>	Luzon, Philippines	HQ261811	[28]
<i>P. neglecta</i>	BO 24212 ^T	<i>Z. mays</i>	East Java, Indonesia	OK336429	[2]
	TPPH 05625	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Chiang Mai, Thailand	OR838703	This study
	TPPH 05672	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Chiang Mai, Thailand	OR838713	This study
	TPPH 05676	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>indenata</i>	Chiang Mai, Thailand	OR838715	This study
	TPPH 05675	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>indenata</i>	Chonburi, Thailand	OR838714	This study
	TPPH 05571	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Kanchanaburi, Thailand	OR838699	This study
	TPPH 05574	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Kanchanaburi, Thailand	OR838700	This study
	TPPH 05620	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Kanchanaburi, Thailand	OR838702	This study
	TPPH 05659	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Kanchanaburi, Thailand	OR838707	This study
	TPPH 05703	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Lamphun, Thailand	OR838716	This study
	TPPH 06029	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Loei, Thailand	OR838718	This study
	TPPH 05669	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Nakhon Pathom, Thailand	OR838712	This study
	TPPH 05577	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>indenata</i>	Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand	OR838701	This study
	TPPH 05650	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>indenata</i>	Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand	OR838704	This study
	TPPH 05653	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Ratchaburi, Thailand	OR838705	This study
	TPPH 05656	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Ratchaburi, Thailand	OR838706	This study
	TPPH 05704	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Saraburi, Thailand	OR838717	This study
	TPPH 05661	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>indenata</i>	Uthaithani, Thailand	OR838708	This study

Note: Stevens' Philippine Fungi, Island of Luzon, No.811; ^T holotype; ^{TA} ex-type of *Peronosclerospora australiensis*.

Table 1. (Continued).

Species	Voucher	Host	Locality	GenBank Accessions No. (<i>cox2</i>)	Reference
	TPPH 05663	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>rugosa</i>	Uthaihani, Thailand	OR838709	This study
	TPPH 05665	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Uthaihani, Thailand	OR838710	This study
	TPPH 05668	<i>Z. mays</i> var. <i>ceratina</i>	Uthaihani, Thailand	OR838711	This study
	BRIP 67693	<i>Z. mays</i>	Vientiane, Lao PDR	PP061441	This study
	BRIP 67695	<i>Z. mays</i>	Vientiane, Lao PDR	PP061442	This study
	BRIP 70147	<i>Z. mays</i>	Champasak, Lao PDR	PP061447	This study
	BRIP 70148	<i>Z. mays</i>	Champasak, Lao PDR	PP061448	This study
	BRIP 69061	<i>Z. mays</i>	Kampong Cham, Cambodia	PP061445	This study
	BRIP 69045	<i>Z. mays</i>	Kandal, Cambodia	PP061443	This study
	BRIP 69046	<i>Z. mays</i>	Kandal, Cambodia	PP061444	This study
	BRIP 69063	<i>Z. mays</i>	Preah Vihea, Cambodia	PP061446	This study
<i>P. noblei</i>	BPI 187306	<i>S. leiocladum</i>	Australia	OK185343	[5]
<i>P. panic</i>	DAR 35733 ^T	<i>Panicum laevinode</i>	Narromine, Australia	HQ261814	[23]
<i>P. philippinensis</i>	BPI 187044	<i>Z. mays</i>	Los Banos, Philippines	OK185341	[5]
<i>P. sacchari</i>	BRIP 44241	<i>Saccharum</i> sp.	Lautem, Timor Leste	HQ261791	[28]
<i>P. sargae</i>	BRIP 27691 ^T	<i>S. timorense</i>	Litchfield, Australia	HQ261809	[26]
<i>P. schizachyrii</i>	BRIP 67070 ^T	<i>Schizachyrium fragile</i>	Mareeba Wetlands, Australia	OK336452	[23]
<i>P. sehimatis</i>	BRIP 49806 ^T	<i>Sehima nervosum</i>	Arnhem Hwy, Australia	OK336453	[23]
<i>P. sorghi</i>	HOH HUH 897	<i>S. bicolor</i>	Karnakata, India	EU116055	[28]
<i>Sclerospora graminicola</i>	HOH HUH 894	<i>Pennisetum glaucum</i>	India	EU116050	[26]
	FR-0046007	<i>Cenchrus americanus</i>	Gujarat, India	HQ261789	[28]

Note: Stevens' Philippine Fungi, Island of Luzon, No.811; ^T holotype; ^{TA} ex-type of *Peronosclerospora australiensis*.

from Thailand (in 10 provinces); four from Cambodia; and four from Lao PDR. Typically, *P. neglecta* on maize in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand produced erect, dichotomously branched *conidiophores*, 180–280 µm long, that emerged from stromata; with oval, thin-walled, smooth and hyaline *conidia*, 16–25 × 10–20 µm that germinated by a germ tube. *Oospores* were not found.

Specimens examined: CAMBODIA, Kampong Cham, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 5 Sep. 2018, S. Thavrith, O. Samoul, R. Vanna, M. Socheat, M.D.E. Shivas, R.G. Shivas (BRIP 69061); Kandal, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 3 Sep. 2018, S. Thavrith, O. Samoul, R.

Vanna, M. Socheat, M.D.E. Shivas, R.G. Shivas (BRIP 69045); Kandal, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 3 Sep. 2018, S. Thavrith, O. Samoul, R. Vanna, M. Socheat, M.D.E. Shivas, and R.G. Shivas (BRIP 69046); Preah Vihea, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 5 Sep. 2018, S. Thavrith, O. Samoul, R. Vanna, M. Socheat, M.D.E. Shivas, R.G. Shivas (BRIP 69063); LAO PDR, Champasak, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 27 Jul. 2018, R.G. Shivas, M.D.E. Shivas, K. Chittarhat, Soulin (BRIP 70147); Champasak, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 27 Jul. 2018, R.G. Shivas, M.D.E. Shivas, K. Chittarhat, Soulin (BRIP 70148); Vientiane, *Z. mays*, 9 Jul. 2018, K. Chittarhat, M.D.E. Shivas,

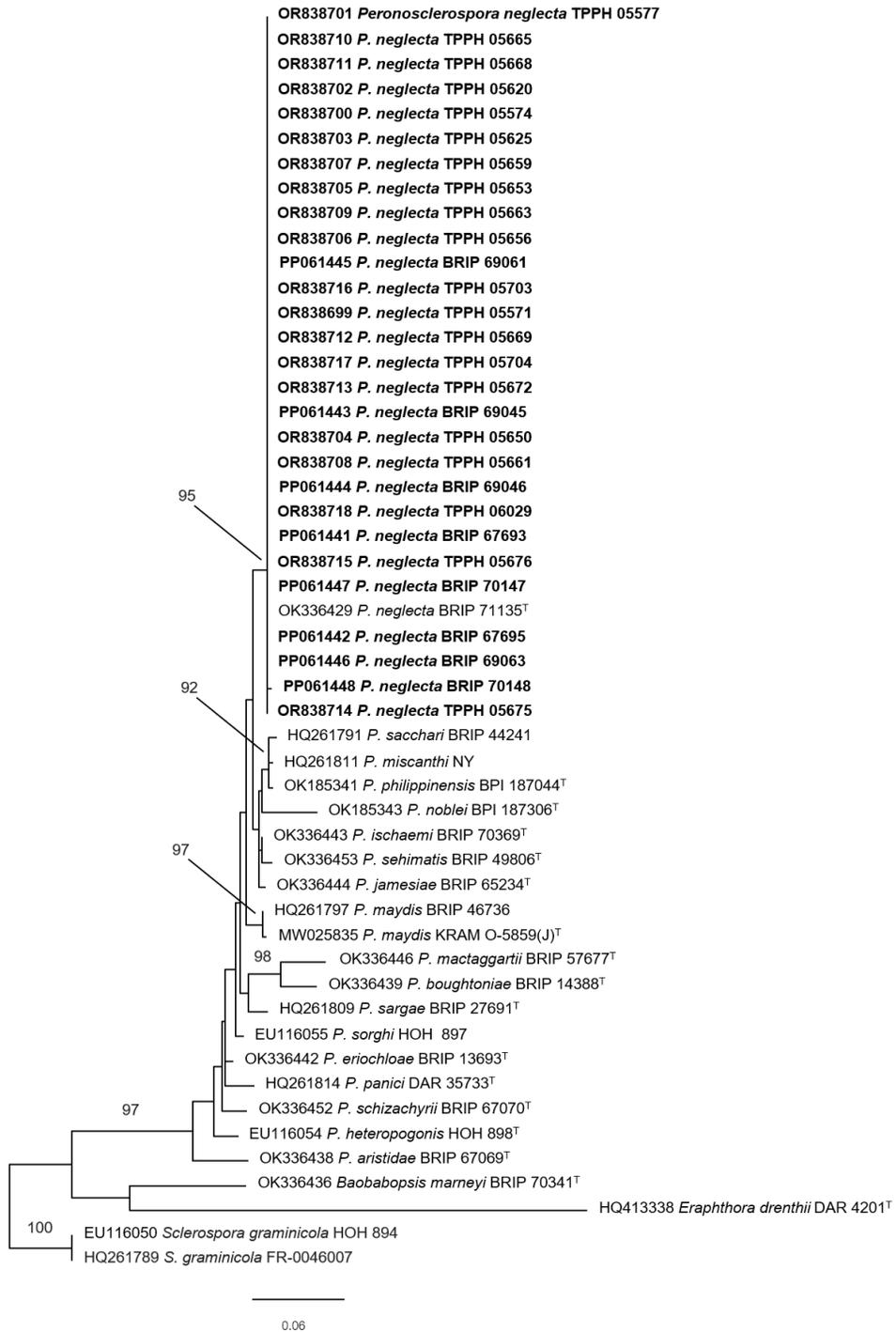


Figure 2. RAxML tree generated by maximum likelihood analysis of *cox2* sequence data. Bootstrap support values for maximum likelihood (ML, left) $\geq 70\%$. The tree is rooted to *Sclerospora graminicola* (HOH894) and *S. graminicola* (FR-0046007). The superscript “T” indicates ex-type strains. Specimens from this study are in bold.



Figure 3. *Peronosclerospora neglecta* on maize collected from Ratchaburi Province, Thailand. (A) conidia and conidiophores on maize leaf, (B) conidia and conidiophore. Scale bar B = 40 μm

R.G. Shivas (BRIP 67693); Vientiane, on leaves of *Z. mays*, 9 Jul. 2018, K. Chittarhat, M.D.E. Shivas, R.G. Shivas (BRIP 67695); THAILAND, Chiang Mai, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 18°33'00.0"N, 98°52'16.7"E, 288.7 m., 12 Dec. 2021, J. Tongnok, (TPPH 05625); Chiang Mai, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 19°04'25.7"N, 98°56'01.3"E, 331.2 m., 24 Jun. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, A. Chaiyasen, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05672); Chiang Mai, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *indenata*, 19°11'54.7"N, 99°10'23.2"E, 398.8 m., 8 Sep. 2022, A. Chaiyasen (TPPH 05676); Chonburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *indenata* 13°13'02.2"N, 101°14'14.3"E, 62.6 m., 5 Oct. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05675); Kanchanaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 13°57'38.9"N, 99°39'04.7"E, 23.4 m., 25 Mar. 2021, M. Sudsanguan, K. Srimai, P. Maneechoat (TPPH 05571); Kanchanaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 13°55'51.2"N, 99°28'35.0"E, 34.0 m., 25 Mar.

2021, M. Sudsanguan, K. Srimai, P. Maneechoat (TPPH 05574); Kanchanaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 13°58'24.2"N, 99°27'21.2"E, 38.1 m., 25 Mar. 2021, M. Sudsanguan, K. Srimai, P. Maneechoat (TPPH 05620); Kanchanaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 13°56'19.6"N, 99°34'10.6"E, 45.7 m., 30 Mar. 2022, A. Tanutong (TPPH 05659); Lamphun, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 18°41'58.6"N, 99°08'55.8"E, 318.4 m., 22 Sep. 2022, J. Tongnok (TPPH 05703); Loei, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 17°43'55.6"N, 101°43'33.6"E, 238 m., 5 Feb. 2023, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham, Y.P. Tan, M.D.E. Shivas and R.G. Shivas (TPPH 06029); Nakhon Pathom, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 14°00'29.6"N, 99°57'20.8"E, 10.6 m., 13 Sep. 2022, P. Patanavipas, W. Chaersa-ard (TPPH 05669); Nakhon Ratchasima, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *indenata* 14°38'54.5"N, 101°18'39.1"E, 383.7 m., 11 Aug. 2021, W. Bunkoed (TPPH 05577); Nakhon Ratchasima, on leaves of *Z. mays*

var. *indenata*, 14°38'56.2"N, 101°18'39.2"E, 384.9 m., 29 Jan. 2022, W. Bunkoed (TPPH 05650); Ratchaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 13°42'59.7"N, 99°51'09.0"E, 18.9 m., 26 Feb. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, S. Sriwilaiwan, C. Pothikhawet (TPPH 05653); Ratchaburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 13°42'58.2"N, 99°51'09.5"E, 17.4 m., 26 Feb. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, S. Sriwilaiwan, C. Pothikhawet (TPPH 05656); Saraburi, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 14°44'38.4"N, 100°50'16.9"E, 105.1 m., 14 Dec. 2022, P. Trakunsukharat (TPPH 05704); Uthaithani, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *indenata*, 15°12'51.1"N, 99°42'28.4"E, 93.6 m., 18 Jun. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Athipunyakom, S. Likhitekaraj, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05661); Uthaithani, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *rugosa*, 15°12'51.0"N, 99°42'29.6"E, 94.3 m., 18 Jun. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Athipunyakom, S. Likhitekaraj, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05663); Uthaithani, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 15°12'48.1"N, 99°42'27.1"E, 96.8 m., 18 Jun. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Athipunyakom, S. Likhitekaraj, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05665); Uthaithani, on leaves of *Z. mays* var. *ceratina*, 15°12'48.0"N, 99°42'28.6"E, 94.4 m., 18 Jun. 2022, M. Sudsanguan, C. Doungsa-ard, W. Pet-amphai, P. Athipunyakom, S. Likhitekaraj, P. Yoosabai, O. Luenkham (TPPH 05668).

Known distribution: Cambodia [This study], Indonesia [2], Lao PDR [This study], and Thailand [6, this study].

4. CONCLUSIONS

This study showed that *P. neglecta* was widespread on maize in Thailand and also present on maize in Cambodia and Lao PDR. Accurate identification of maize downy mildew pathogens is important for disease management through breeding resistant maize varieties. The distribution and regional presence of maize downy mildews may also have biosecurity implications for the movement of planting material, especially seed.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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