

Oxystigma msoo**Indigenous**

COMMON NAMES: Pokomo: Mchochozi.

DESCRIPTION: A large tree to 40 m or more. **BARK:** Pale grey, **slightly flaking**. **LEAVES:** Compound, with **5–7 alternate leaflets**, up to 7 x 14 cm. Leaflets widest at the middle or towards the base. Tip pointed, base usually rounded. **FLOWERS:** Borne in a **loosely branched inflorescence** (flowering part or branch) to 17 cm long, **each branch ending in a spike** to 12 cm long or more. Individual flowers small, less than 3 mm, yellowish white; petals absent; 10 stamens. **FRUIT:** Round but slightly elongate, **flattened, asymmetric**, 1-seeded, somewhat winged, to 6 cm long.

ECOLOGY: Restricted to Tanzania and Kenya. Found mainly in evergreen riverine forests, e.g. at Pangani and in the lower parts of Tana River (the Primate Reserve) and in the Tana Delta, 0–100 m. Agroclimatic Zones I–II.

USES: Firewood, timber, boat/canoe building, construction.

REMARKS: This is a rare species, classified as vulnerable, but an important source of timber in the lower parts of Tana River. The timber is used by the Pokomo to build canoes, but is reportedly attacked by borers after some time.

A few other species in this genus occur in Africa and most are good timber trees. *O. msoo* is one of many coastal timber and construction species in the family Fabaceae. The following, not covered elsewhere in this book, are worth a mention. They can all be large trees 20–30 m high, often with smooth grey bark and compound leaves with just a few leaflets. *Erythrophleum suaveolens* (**Boni:** Kina; **Swahili:** Mkelekele, Mbaraka mkuu) has hard, durable wood resistant to borers. The bark is brown, fissured; leaves are divided into 2–4 pairs of pinnae, each with 7–14 leaflets. It is found in evergreen humid forests and wooded grassland along the coast. The bark is a source of dye. Bark and seeds are said to be poisonous. *Julbernardia magnistipulata* (**Digo:** Mkue; **Giriama:** Msahe; **Swahili:** Mkue, Mukuwa) usually has a buttressed trunk with smooth grey bark. Leaves are up to 7 x 14 cm with 2–3 pairs of asymmetric leaflets and oblong fruit to 3.5 x 14 cm. The tree is found in *Brachystegia* woodlands, at creek edges and in evergreen forest. A species related to this is *Paramacrolobium coeruleum* (**Digo:** Mkua, Mrihi; **Swahili:** Mkue) with drooping branches and a spreading crown and smooth bark. Leaves are 4.5 x 10 cm with 2–5 pairs of leaflets. Flowers are blue to mauve with one large petal. The bark is a source of fibre. The fruit is a pod to 8 x 18 cm. The species is common at the south coast, especially in *Brachystegia* woodland. *Scorodophloeos fischeri* (**Duruma:** Kifunga tanzu; **Swahili:** Mgodoma) has a slightly buttressed trunk, smooth grey bark and 3–5 alternate leaflets, which tend to be larger and conspicuously asymmetric towards the tip. Flowers are white. Fruits are short and thick to 4.5 x 7 cm. It is found in coastal evergreen forests and woodlands. *Gigasiphon macrosiphon* is a rare tree with smooth grey bark. Unlike the other species, leaves are simple and up to 16 x 20 cm,

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rather broad and tending to a heart shape. The fruit is a grey-black flattened pod to 7.5 x 30 cm. It occurs in a few isolated forests in coastal Kenya and into Tanzania, and has received great attention by conservationists as it is regarded as endangered.

FURTHER READING: Beentje, 1994.

