Message Conveyed by Loach Sushi

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The loach is very familiar to humans. Children always draw pictures of the loach with a round head, barbel around the mouth, and round tail. The loach is also familiar to adults because of the loach scooping game, etc.

Eating the loach in a pot, soup, or grilled is seen everywhere in Japan. It may seem unusual, but loach sushi is also made. Some such sushi still exists. However, many of them are about to disappear without being recorded. This article focuses on loach sushi, and the first goal is to accurately document recipes.

I investigated loach sushi (Misgurnus anguillicaudatus) in Saku City, Nagano Prefecture, Toyoyama-cho, Aichi Prefecture, Ritto City, Shiga Prefecture, Toyonaka City, Osaka Prefecture, and Sasayama City, Hyogo Prefecture. I also investigated spined loach sushi (Cobitis biwae) and Japanese eight-barbel loach sushi (Lefua echigonia) in Utsunomiya City, Tochigi Prefecture, as well as Ajime-loach sushi (Niwella delicata) in Ono City, Fukui Prefecture, and Gero City, Gifu Prefecture. As a result, it was confirmed that there are various recipes for loach sushi. Judging from the types of loach sushi, it is clear that there are so many different versions.

Based on the above, I would like to consider the reason why loach sushi is disappearing, and the message conveyed by the loach.

The loach is unique compared to other freshwater fish. It is long and thin unlike crucian carp (Carassius) and moroko (chub) which we are used to eating. Although we adults know that fish is something to eat, we think that the fish must have the shape of a typical fish like crucian carp and moroko unlike the loach which is long and thin. Therefore, we hesitate to eat the loach for various reasons.

Furthermore, children draw endearing pictures of the loach. In some nursery schools and elementary schools, children observe the loach to write a diary. Why do we have to eat such endearing creatures? Eating the loach makes us feel guilty.

Anciently, everything in nature was food for us, including the loach. Thus, we worshipped nature with a feeling of gratitude or awe. But today, not only children but also adults have lost the feeling of awe toward nature. As a result, the loach has become "something endearing," or adversely "strange
fish different from common fish," and it is no longer considered as "something to eat" at least.

The disappearance of loach sushi can be attributed to humans alone. I believe that this is the silent message conveyed by the loach.

Key words: Paddy field, loach, Narezushi (fermented fish sushi), loach sushi, fermentation