

Column 2

Edible Seaweeds in the Islands Life

Seaweed is a group of macroscopic marine benthic **S**algae, that can be found commonly in the coastal areas, especially in the coral lagoons and rocky shores. Nobody can be sure of the exact number of the seaweed found in the islands of Kagoshima, however, more than 400 species have been reported from this region (SHINMURA 1990).

In these islands, seaweeds have been harvested for local food and other valuable uses. These seaweeds are used in foods such as salads, soups, and seaweed jelly. These seaweed foods are indispensable to local dietary culture in this region. Furthermore, some seaweeds, such as *Digenea simplex* (Fig. 1), have been harvested and used for anthelmintics in the island villages. Seaweeds are also used for the industrial material. Especially, some species of red alga, such as *Gloiopeltis furcata* (Fig. 2), which has been used for the starch to weave the local woven cloth “*Oshima-Pongee*.”

In general, seaweed can be found during winter to early summer (January to June), harvest of seaweeds are regarded as the seasonal event for local commu-



Fig. 1. *Digenea simplex*.



Fig. 2. *Gloiopeltis furcata*.

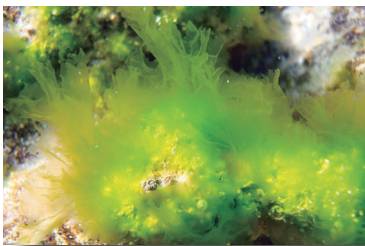


Fig. 3. *Monostroma nitidum*.

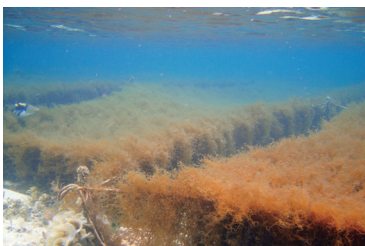


Fig. 4. *Cladosiphon okamuranus*.

nity. Especially, the green alga, *Monostroma nitidum*, which is known as the most popular edible seaweed in this region (Fig. 3). Not only the harvest of natural plants, cultivation of this species has also been conducted at various islands. People eat it as the contents of “*Miso-soup*” or “*Tenpura*.”

A brown alga, *Cladosiphon okamuranus*, is also a popular seaweed, and cultivation has been conducted in Amami Islands as well as Okinawa Prefecture (Fig. 4). This species is harvested in both Kagoshima and Okinawa Prefectures and is mostly exported to Japan proper. These prefectures supply nearly 100 % of entire Japanese market. Cultivation areas are mostly placed in sheltered coastal area such like coral lagoons. However, these areas are often strongly influenced by the development of coastal structures. Conservation of the coastal environment is strongly required for the sustainable use of such seaweeds.

References

SHINMURA, I. 1990. Mem. Kagoshima Fish. Exp.Sta., 13: 1-112.

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