

## Useful plants in Sudan <Part 8>

### Herb

There are many teahouses (cafes) in the shade of trees on roads and alleys in Sudan's cities. These teahouses are a quiet and calm spaces amid the hustle and bustle of the city. In the scorching climate of Sudan, when you go into the shade of the trees to avoid the strong sunlight, you feel a little cooler and your mood is soothed. These teahouses function as places of relaxation for citizens, and are an important component of the cityscape as part of Sudan's tea culture.

Generally, tea and coffee are the main drinks at the under-tree café. Coffee is mixed with ginger according to the person's preference, and tea is often mixed



with milk first thing in the morning or before going to bed at night. Sudanese people also add sugar to make it very sweet. In addition, the under- a selection of herbal teas such as Karkade (*Hibiscus*), Herba, and as side options. This time, we will focus on these herbal plants and introduce three representative useful plants served at the under-tree cafes, along with Sudanese people's discourse on their benefits.



The first, Karkade (*Hibiscus spp.*), is tea from the mallow family, which was also featured in the third installment of this series. It is a popular drink at the under- tree cafe,

along with black tea and coffee. Karkade tea is made from dried flower petals and is characterized by its red color and sour flavor. It can be drunk warm or chilled with ice. According to literature, Karkade contains a wealth of antioxidants and has antioxidant properties. There are also scientific studies that suggest it is effective in managing high blood pressure. The author was once recommended by a Sudanese person to drink Karkade tea with ginger to relieve symptoms such as when he had a cold and a sore throat.

The second is herba. Herba is a legume called fenugreek (*Trigonella foenum-graecum*), which is not yet well known in Japan, but is a plant known to almost everyone in Sudan. At the under-tree cafes, herba tea is served after boiling or filtering the powder. Herba tea has a unique flavor and aroma, and is slightly sweet, but also bitter and astringent, making it a delicious drink. I personally love it, buta this may be a matter of personal preference. From my experience, I think it is effective in normalizing the stomach and intestines when you have diarrhea. When I get a sudden stomachache while traveling by car, I rush to the under-tree cafe and drink it as a herbal medicine.

The third drink I would like to introduce is drink made from the leaves of Ahrigel (A plant of Apocynaceae family. This plant is also not well known in Japan.



It appears to be recognized in literature as being effective for stomach pain, loss of appetite, and indigestion. What I often hear from the Sudanese around me is that it has the opposite effect of Herba, regulating the intestines and improving bowel movements. It may be recommended for those who tend to be constipated.

First and foremost, the under tree teahouses are places of relaxation, and I also use them as places to refresh myself and to discuss technical cooperation activities with my Sudanese counterparts and national staff. However, it is not just a cafe, and I noticed that the Sudanese choose and combine the drinks they order according to their physical condition that day. Although the excessive sugar intake of the Sudanese is a separate issue, the side drink options at the under-tree cafe are "herbal medicines" that improve their physical condition, and I think that it is a place where the famous supporting plants can play a lively role as conscious and proactive daily health drinks.

