

Useful plants in Sudan <Part 7>

The Three Faces of Tamarind

Tamarind (*Tamarindus L.*) is an evergreen tall tree of the legume family, and according to the Heibonsha World Encyclopedia of Useful Plants (1989), it is native to Africa and is a monotypic genus with only one species. Tamarind is collectively called "Aladeep" in Sudan, but it shows different faces as a useful plant. In this article, I would like to describe the three faces of tamarind confirmed in Sudan, which is considered as a minor crop in Japan, and introduce how it is used in Sudanto.

The first face of tamarind is as a standard product in a traditional dried goods store. In Sudan, due to the dry climate, various sun-dried goods are sold. Tamarind pods are displayed in the store along with other dried goods such as beans, various spices, tomatoes, hibiscus, ginger, and baobab seeds.



Original Tamarind

The tamarind in this dried goods store is sold with the pods stuck together in a complex manner, and at first glance, it does not at all resemble the image of tamarind as a cultivated plant. However, this is probably the original form of this plant in Africa. The first way to use tamarind is as a juice ingredient, soaked in water and boiled in the same way as the baobab seeds mentioned above, and drunk. It is a refreshing soft drink with a slight sweetness and sourness. However, although this first face is a regular item at dried food stores, I have never seen it actually cultivated in northeastern Sudan.

The second face is cultivation as a hedge to prevent livestock from invading farmland in rural areas, and this type is actually planted in irrigation schemes in River Nile State. A similar fence material is mesquite, a legume introduced in the previous article in this series, which has thorny branches and is used as a natural hedge. However, mesquite has the risk of escaping from human control and spreading into the surrounding area due to its vigorous seed reproduction ecology.

Therefore, the safest way to use it is to bundle up the stems and branches after cutting, and pile them up to create an artificial fence. On the other hand,



Tamarinds used as a hedge

tamarind grows and develops at the same rate as mesquite, but the planting process is more easily calculated, and it is mainly used as a hedge. These hedge tamarinds also produce red pods in May, which become a snack for village children, and are sold in the market as seasonal fresh tamarinds.

The third face is the imported tamarind. Tamarind is said to have originated in Africa, spread to Asia, and was improved in India and developed into an edible variety. This cultivated tamarind was then re-imported to Sudan and sold in boxes in supermarkets. This is the third face seen in Sudan. The tamarind in this supermarket looks so different from the first face in the dried goods store that it is hard to believe it is the same plant, and it gives a very refined impression.



Improved variety imported from Asian countries.

Now, even though the second face of tamarind, which is used for hedges, is also eaten raw, the amateur eye does not immediately think that they are the same species from the first and third faces, in terms of fruit morphology. However, all the seeds from the first to the third face are identical. Tamarind is a mysterious plant that has many faces, but in the end, it is undeniably the same monotypic genus in taxonomic terms.