Transfiguration of the Suburbs of Tokyo
from 1920 to 1935

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This paper relates to the process of urbanization of the suburbs of Tokyo from 1920 to 1935, before and after the Kanto Earthquake.

Around 1914 the population of the urban center of Tokyo had already more than two millions of established population. The City was then saturated.

Thereafter the urbanization of adjacent municipalities gradually progressed, and we see a radical population increase during eight years from 1920 to 1928. The eighty four towns and villages in the suburbs of Tokyo counted 1 million and four hundred seventy thousands of population increase, which was about 32.5 times that in the central part of Tokyo. The most of that increase was inflow from other prefectures and the natural increase is unworthy of serious attention.

The abnormal population increase has thus far been difficult to analyze since this happened in the midst of the depression after the World War I which coincided with the unprecedented hard times under the almost complete destruction of the central part of Tokyo by the Kanto Earthquake, the financial crisis and deadlock in rural economy.

With such a situation in mind, we attempted to elucidate the evolution of population, the agricultural landscape in the suburban regions and the influence of the urbanization, on the basis of some statistical data, documentary records and hearings.

As a result, we are convinced that we could clearly demonstrate the following three points:

First the agricultural regions which had supplied fresh vegetables to the heart of the metropolis were rapidly transformed into housing area and further industrialized, thereby causing much confusion and disorganization.

Second, it was no other than because of the open-mindedness of the capital departing from convention, different from any local municipalities, that the
population in that region abnormally increased despite the depression.

Third, said open-mindedness has been based upon the traditional great composite of the city through incessant inflow of population from locals since the Edo era.

In addition, and finally, the administrative countermeasures during this period were limited to some development of urban areas and the underdevelopment in the urban facilities, hygiene and maintenance in public peace and order led to the Tokyo's being stigmatized as an extended rural regions.