Aspects of Crime and Folkloric Mind

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(1) This paper chooses as theme the “crimes”, in applying the folkloric point of view of YANAGITA Kunio when he compiled the “History of Showa Era, Social Conditions” after he published the “History of Meiji and Taisho Eras”. After discussing in many ways the former, IROKAWA Daikichi has pointed out several issues arising therefrom. These points were distributed to so many researchers for them to analyze more deeply. The author decided to take as his own theme the “crimes” applying YANAGITA’s viewpoints on the “poverty and disease” and social disease”.

(2) Investigation of the history of crimes has revealed that new types of crimes emerge almost always at the turning points of ages. The crimes disclose the “spirit of times” hidden in the depths of a society as well as the “pathology of the society”. In an attempt to grasp the “Social History of Showa Era”, the following points have been taken into particular consideration:

(a) That the urban type crimes have been committed by the wandering people into cities;
(b) That the crimes have been characterized by impulsiveness and unexpectedness;
(c) That they are largely reflection of the human relations in the families;
(d) And that they are closely related with the “Non-Dailiness” or “Extraordinary Characters” of urban life.

(3) It has further been pointed out, through researches into such lineage of crimes as phantom killers, indiscriminate murder and incendiary maniac, that the crimes have been given rise to by alcoholism, narcotics and stimulant drugs which have tremendous influences on unstable emotion of the weak. As for the places, not only in the amusement quarters but also near the boundary of cities with villages the crimes have occurred in many cases.

(4) In general too rapid a change in urban life alters or abolishes to a great extent the folklore in villages. On the other hand, the urban folklore in large
cities and towns have changed one after another bewilderingly to develop new cultures. The crimes have as their base some social phenomena arising out of abolished folkloric life. In these cases the extremely important is the analyses of human relations in the families.