



## Introduction

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This issue of *Asian Review* contains articles focusing on trans-Asian perspectives and approaches to critically examine the diversity of forms of migration in Asia. It can be seen that the Asia region is home to a growing number of migrants moving from their communities to others in the same country or to other countries. The rise of a middle-class in many parts of Asia has been intensifying people's cross-border mobility within the region. Additionally, greater connectivity between and among countries has promoted human mobility. Migration can be a powerful contributor to economic and social development. At the same time it can add to overcrowding in cities, strain social cohesion in migrant-receiving areas, and be tied up with human trafficking.

The emergence of international retirement migration has broadly been conceptualized as “lifestyle migration” focusing on its leisure-oriented nature as a part of second-home residential tourism. This was certainly the case when the international retirement migration scheme was proposed by the Japanese government in 1986. Mika Toyota examines the increasing trans-Asia migration of elderly Japanese and the rise of the retirement industries. The article also discusses the interplay between the driving forces from above, namely state policies and industry initiatives, and dynamics from below, as represented by individual strategies and networks.

Koh Sin Yee also uses the concept of “lifestyle migration” to investigate the way through which real estate developers and their agents facilitate the investment-migration mobility of middle-class investor-migrants in Asia. Using cases from Brunei and Iskandar Malaysia, Koh

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Sin Yee shows that the growth of the middle-class in emerging Asian economies has resulted in a growing population of lifestyle migrants. Property agents and intermediaries assist in educating and influencing potential investor-migrants to realize their transnational lifestyle migration project. The international property marketing industry could be conceptualized as a transnational mobility industry.

Focusing on the relations between Japan and Thailand, Saikaew Thipakorn examines the development of Japanese mobility to Thailand since the end of World War Two. Japan-Thailand relations have been truly dynamic, shifting from a focus on economic investment to cultural diplomacy. Saikaew Thipakorn discusses that, in the case of Thailand and Japan, mobility of people happened mainly because of economic factors, but when the economic relationship was disturbed, it was the cultural sphere of people-to-people interactions that restored the overall relations between the two countries.

On human mobility within a country, Jelka Guenther investigates the domestic tourism in Thailand. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in a small Northeastern town, her study found that the constructions of the “Other” in domestic tourism in Thailand are embedded in powerful notions of urban-rural relations in contemporary Thai society. By looking at these host-guest interactions, Jelka Guenther argues that domestic tourism produces its own surprising notions of the “Other.” The urban Thai becomes the new “other” in tourism encounters. This finding, therefore, prompts a critical rethinking of notions of the familiar and the strange in tourism research.

Literature in transmigration is another significant element in trans-Asia flows and connections. Frederick B. Goss examines and compares the Rama story in various cultures and societies of Southeast Asia. The story of Rama, known as *Ramayana* in the Indian subcontinent where it originated, has migrated and spread to nearly every culture and society in Asia. In each place, the story has been adapted and absorbed into the local culture. The analysis shows how the tradition has moved and been shared from one locality to another, and has the ability to serve as a cultural peace ambassador promoting mutual understanding among the people of this region. Lastly, it should be noted that papers of this special issues (except Frederick Goss’ paper) were originally presented at an international conference on Trans-Asian Mobilities and Encounters Exchange, Commodification and



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