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Abstract

Vom Nichtimmigrationsland zum Immigrationsland: der regionale Kontext der neuen Migration nach Japan

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Japan has often been regarded as an exception among advanced industrialised economies. The lack of labour immigration from abroad in the post-war era up to the late 1970s seems to be an example of this singularity. National factors such as the large labour pool in Japan's agricultural sector at the beginning of the high-growth era, a mono-ethnic self-definition of Japan as a nation and the influence of the strong developmental state have all been proposed by experts as explanations of the absence of immigration movements. This article argues that Japan's apparent uniqueness regarding immigration needs to be analysed in a regional context; by taking this approach, Japan can be seen to have followed the general development in East Asia. Parallel to East Asia's change from a non-migration to a migration region, Japan turned from a non-immigration country to a land of immigration. Japan has become a partial exception from a regional viewpoint only because of the return migration of Japanese emigrants and their descendants from South America after the reform of Japanese migration regulations in 1990.