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SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES IN ASEAN

A comparative study between Japanese and Thai rocket festivals: Yoshida Ryusei festival
and Ban Pa-Aw Bang-fai rocket festival
Chomnard Seisarn

The anti-Japanese movement in Thailand in the 1970s in international
and domestic perspective
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Higher Education in ASEAN with special reference to Thailand
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Improving the human capital of migrant workers in ASEAN: A case study of Thailand
and CLM countries
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Towards population aging in the ASEAN Community
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Religions and religious movements in nation-making in ASEAN
Udomporn Teeraviriyakul

ASEAN's weak role in bilateral dispute settlement:
The case of Preah Vihear (Phra Wihan)
Gabriela Steinemann

Introduction

Theera Nuchpiam

Featuring articles dealing with issues ranging from rocket festivals to bilateral dispute settlement, this volume of *Asian Review* does not seem, at first glance, to have a particular thematic focus. With a closer look, however, we see that five of the seven articles published in the volume share a common interest in ASEAN: each of these five articles highlights what can be regarded as a dominant regional issue, and four of them explore those belonging to the socio-cultural rubric.

The fact that four articles in this volume focus on socio-cultural issues in ASEAN is worthy of note here. Not only are all the issues explored—higher education, human capital in the form of migrant workers, population aging, and religions and religious movements in nation-making—very important in and of themselves, but they relate to the socio-cultural aspect of ASEAN that has been formalized in the formation of a socio-cultural community as one of the three pillars of the ASEAN Community, which will officially come into being in 2015. Unfortunately, since the ASEAN Community project was proposed more than a decade ago, attention has been mostly directed to its economic pillar, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). In Thailand, the general understanding seems to be that the “ASEAN Community” is the AEC; hence, AEC has often been used to refer to the whole community. This understanding is prevalent even in the academic circle. The pillar which has enjoyed only scant interest, if any interest at all, is the socio-cultural one, even though this pillar is the real foundation of ASEAN as a community. It is thus hoped that the exploration of a number of crucial socio-cultural issues in this volume of *Asian Review* would help to drive home the importance of the ASEAN Socio-cultural Community.

The other ASEAN-related article, which looks at the grouping's

weak role in bilateral dispute settlement, highlights another important aspect of the ASEAN Community. It has been theorized that the development of ASEAN has followed the path towards a security community, a theoretical concept proposed by the late political scientist Karl W. Deutsch. A characteristic of this type of community is its capacity to settle disputes by peaceful, institutionalized means. The article is thus a reminder for ASEAN to further develop such mechanisms which would make a resort to force increasingly unthinkable. The recent border skirmishes between Thailand and Cambodia are clear testimony to the insufficiency of relying only on the "ASEAN way" for this purpose.

The two articles that are not directly related to ASEAN are incidentally related to the country that has been perhaps most closely associated with this regional grouping, that is, Japan. One article is a comparative study of rocket festivals in Thailand and Japan, and the other considers the anti-Japanese movement in Thailand from the domestic and international perspectives. In all, then, both cultural and politico-economic dimensions of ASEAN-Japan relations are covered in this volume.

Contents

Introduction	1
<i>Theera Nuchpiam</i>	
A comparative study between Japanese and Thai rocket festivals: Yoshida <i>Ryusei</i> festival and Ban Pa-Aw <i>Bang-fai</i> rocket festival	3
<i>Chomnard Seisarn</i>	
The anti-Japanese movement in Thailand in the 1970s in international and domestic perspective	17
<i>Saikaew Thipakorn</i>	
Higher Education in ASEAN with special reference to Thailand	27
<i>Chantal Herberholz and Pataporn Sukontamarn</i>	
Improving the human capital of migrant workers in ASEAN: A case study of Thailand and CLM countries	57
<i>Montakarn Chimmamee and Patcharawalai Wongboonsin</i>	
Towards population aging in the ASEAN Community	69
<i>Vipan Prachuabmoh</i>	
Religions and religious movements in nation-making in ASEAN	93
<i>Udomporn Teeraviriyakul</i>	
ASEAN's weak role in bilateral dispute settlement: The case of Preah Vihear (Phra Wihan)	111
<i>Gabriela Steinemann</i>	
Contributors	127
Notes for contributors	129