

A Geographical Study on Migration of Working-Age to Resort
Areas Located in and around Metropolitan Areas:
Focusing on the Viewpoint of Lifestyle Migration

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Abstract

Population migration research in Europe and the United States is increasingly concerned with non-economic migration by relatively affluent people to improve their quality of life. This type of population movement occurs in various countries and regions worldwide, especially in developed countries, and is being studied using the concept of lifestyle migration. The concept of lifestyle migration is important in that it can develop existing population movement and regional studies. However, the concept of lifestyle migration is rather ambiguous given the wide variety of population movements included in the concept. Therefore, it is necessary to carefully organize the concept of lifestyle migration to clarify the issues, focus points, and challenges. Afterward, it is necessary to examine the actual situation depending on the form of population movement, the destination of migration, and the country or region under study.

This study examines this issue by focusing on the domestic population movement in Japan. Despite the belief that migration for non-economic reasons is rare in Japan, recent years have seen migration by people who prefer a favorable environment. This trend is spreading to the working-age population, which had been considered to migrate mostly for economic reasons. Notably the working-age population is concentrated especially in the Tokyo area, but the migration of the working-age population from the Tokyo area is also spreading. Those who prefer a favorable environment are moving to the Tokyo metropolitan area and its surrounding resort areas. However, the significance of the migration of working-age residents of the Tokyo metropolitan area to these areas has not been fully clarified. Therefore, this study clarifies the factors behind the migration of working-age people to the Tokyo metropolitan area and surrounding resort areas from the perspective of lifestyle migration research. Hence we discussed new developments in domestic population migration in Japan. Karuizawa Town and Kamakura City were selected as the study areas.

In Karuizawa, the number of working-age residents from the Tokyo area has been increasing since the opening of the Karuizawa station of the Hokuriku Shinkansen line in 1997. Population growth was particularly significant in the Oiwake area, a newly developed villa district in the western part of the town. Some of the study subjects who moved to Oiwake were engaged in white-collar jobs and commuted to work by Shinkansen or telecommuted. They chose Karuizawa Town and its surrounding areas for its convenient transportation and good living environment. They also selected the Oiwake area for its good natural environment, proximity to schools and train stations, low land prices, and convenience of living. After moving to Oiwake, they improved their quality of life by skillfully utilizing the various conditions of the residential environment in Karuizawa and the surrounding area. In Kamakura City, the number of working-age immigrants has been increasing since the late 2000s, especially in the former Kamakura area in the southern part of the city. The study subjects who moved there were mainly engaged in white-collar jobs, and some of them teleworked. They decided to change their lifestyles due to anxiety and impatience about their careers and family life in the Tokyo area. The sea in Kamakura was seen as a particular factor that could change their lifestyles, leading them to choose the place to move to. Their daily life after moving to the city created proximity to the natural environment and a connection with the community of Kamakura. This improved their quality of life and eliminated the sense of exhaustion they had felt in their former home.

The findings of this study are as follows. Many of the subjects in this study were employed in relatively high occupational classes. The reason for the migration of working-age Japanese to the Tokyo metropolitan area and

its surrounding resort areas was doubt about their life in the Tokyo metropolitan area. This suspicion was thought to be due to resistance to and avoidance of the unique values and lifestyles of working-age residents of relatively high occupational classes living in the central cities. The reasons for moving to resort areas as a solution to this problem included a favorable image of resort areas and the influence of hobbies such as leisure and outdoor recreation. More important, however, was the fact that the survey subjects valued the Tokyo area as a place of employment. This led them to choose the Tokyo area and its surrounding resort areas as their destination. In addition, many of the subjects were from the Tokyo area, and the Tokyo area was positioned as a possible place to which they might return someday. This suggests that the subjects did not migrate because they lost their attachment to the Tokyo area, but because they were suspicious of the unique values and lifestyle that they were forced to follow in the Tokyo area. Factors that made such migration possible included the existence of systems that enabled the subjects to continue working and the existence of labor markets in the resort areas that increased the likelihood of job change. In both regions, the land price decline since the collapse of the bubble economy has led to a liquidation of land and properties, making it easier for the working-age population to acquire housing.

The results of this study can be reinterpreted from the perspective of lifestyle migration research, and the migration behavior of the subjects can be positioned as a process of "continuous practice in pursuit of a better way of life. The subjects' practices were based on their own aspirations projected onto the various local conditions in Karuizawa and Kamakura. One of the practices identified in both areas was the practice of constructing a new lifestyle by approaching the natural environment. The practice of approaching the natural environment can also be interpreted as a practice of investing in children's education. In the case of the Karuizawa case, it can be interpreted by some as a practice aimed at controlling the quality of work. In the case of Kamakura, it can be interpreted by some as a practice to authenticate their own authenticity. It can be pointed out that the subjects sought to improve their quality of life by skillfully utilizing the favorable environment of the resort area. The case studies in this study can be positioned as a subsystem of the regional population movement system surrounding the Tokyo metropolitan area. In the future, it will be necessary to examine the entire population movement system of the Tokyo metropolitan area from the perspective of the population outflow of the working-age population from the central city, based on the social background of the relative growth of the Tokyo metropolitan area in Japan and the increase in the number of higher-income groups.

Existing studies in Japan have rarely addressed the migration of people who prefer a favorable environment. The findings of this study indicate that the perspective of lifestyle migration research is effective in geographical studies of migration phenomena that cannot be captured by existing frameworks. Population migration research in Japanese geography tends to focus on behavioral discussions, but it is difficult to understand the essence of lifestyle migration in contemporary Japan without understanding the actual situation of migrants. In such cases, the results of lifestyle migration studies can provide important insights. The findings of this study are important for the future development of resort areas based on their favorable natural environment and culture, and can contribute to the discussion on the new development of domestic population migration in Japan after the COVID-19 epidemic.

Keywords: Lifestyle Migration, Migration, Japan, Resort, Karuizawa Town, Kamakura City, Working-Age, Geography