One of the striking features of Japanese geography is the quantity and quality of excellent materials published by geographical societies. The Human Geographical Society of Japan's journal The Human Geography (Jimbun Chiri) Vol. 52 (2000) is an impressive volume of six issues containing contributions by over 30 scholars. In the words of the 18th century English poet and literary critic Samuel Johnson, "great source of pleasure is variety." From this point of view volume 52 of Jimbun Chiri must have brought pleasure to all its readers during the year. Each of the six issues presents a balanced diet, seasoned with timeliness, spiced with variety, and leavened with maps; and each reader should find something to his/her particular taste in human geography. The principal focus of all the contributions in this volume is with the distribution of various human elements of geography, and with unraveling of the causes and consequences of inequalities in their distribution.

Topically, the contents varied widely to include such disparate subjects as global uneven development, return migration, cadastral maps, children's geography, conservation of old warehouses, tourism and regional development, locational behavior of electronic firms, agar industry, social discrimination, time-space paths, men's studies, beef industry, and sake breweries. Spatially, the articles ranged from the mountain village of Nagano Prefecture to Okinawa, from the Kanto plain's Kawagoe to Wellington County in Southern Ontario, Canada, from Korea to the United Kingdom, and there were a number of way stations in between. Not only did the contents cover ground; so did the authors. Of the twenty-seven major articles published in 2000, authors were drawn from Kyoto, Tokyo, Osaka, Okayama, Nara, Miyazaki and other places in Japan, one was written by a contributor from abroad.

Japanese geographers' great interest in historical and urban-economic geography echoes throughout this volume. Shinobu Iwasaki has a most valuable article on the context of Saidaiji cadastral maps. Using satellite photos Noboru Ogata's imaginative paper analyzes the city planning system of Bohai kingdom in China. Aki Yamamura's article brilliantly reconstructs the morphology and functions of kokufu in the 14th century and analyzes the social relationships among the people. Of great interest, too, is Honami Kageyama's paper on gendered spaces in 1930s in which the housing for working women who had left their families to work are explored. Kageyama presents a fascinating discussion of long-term experiences of the Otsuka joshi apartment house and the dominating state perpetuated patriarchal system.

Three papers focus on important problems in population geography of Japan. Doo-Chul Kim discusses the depopulation in the remote Namiai village in Nagano Prefecture and the process of dependency on government programs in rural Japan. Shusaku Nakamura analyzes the migration behavior of seasonal migrant workers in Hamasaka Town, Hyogo Prefecture. Yuji Esaki, Yoshio Arai, and Taro Kawaguchi examine the return migration phenomena in Japan. It is pointed out that the birthplace of the wife and younger age were important factors in return migration. The authors identify the important geographical parameters relevant to return migration.

The worldwide truth that new times demand new measures is demonstrated in many phases.
of geographical research, most particularly, perhaps, in the broadened concept of geographer's role in understanding human condition, secondarily in the development of new techniques of investigation. An excellent case in point is evident in the review article on GIS and human geography. Geographers and for others as well, there is food for thought in the review papers on GIS, area studies and regional geography. Alertness to trends and changes — economic, cultural, physical and technological — is an admirable quality in any one; in the geographer it is essential. This report describing several trends is of interest to all.

Akinori Nakayama, in “Tourism and Regional Development,” discusses one of the most significant problems of the day — the tourism development and promotion of farm villages in Japan. Economic influences are basic in the attempts to achieve stability in the rural areas of Japan and Nakayama’s analysis of the possibilities of regional promotion makes this abundantly clear.

The long standing dispute between Japan and Russia over what is known as the Northern Territories is so rarely brought to the public attention both in Japan and overseas that it is all but forgotten. Nakamura Naohiro provides an interesting study of the weakening of the movement for restoration of the Northern Territories among the former inhabitants of the disputed islands.

An unusual opportunity to observe agricultural changes wrought by time and circumstance, nature and society, in Okinawa has resulted in Akio Kano’s discussion of the revival of a traditional millet crop in the island. Koji Ohnishi’s review of children’s geography from various viewpoints puts an appropriate embellishment to the major contents of this volume, since it deals with a subject of permanent and lasting concern. The paper recognizes the need for cautious investigation and intelligent planning as a basis for development of children’s geography. This article with extensive documentation is a substantial fare. Ohnishi is widely known for his research on children geography, and his interest in theoretical approaches in conceptualizing children geography is of long standing. In a related article Koshiro Suzuki summarizes the debate on mapping abilities of young children. But Ohnishi’s paper breaks new intellectual ground, winning wider scholarly and scientific interest in the area of children’s geography in general, and particularly in Japan.

To many of us who view cultural heritage of Japan with affection, the old style warehouses is a source of infinite refreshment and pleasure. Yoshitaka Mizoo and Yumiko Sugawara in their paper on commercial development and conservation of old style warehouses in Kawagoe examine their origin and preservation in the context of a chain of events that lie behind time and place relationships. They write engagingly of their past and sympathetically of their present.

For those who savor rural social geography, Akira Imamoto’s paper on the formation of small groups in a village in Shiga Prefecture will have special appeal. But still more important, perhaps, is the fact that a greater knowledge of social group formation in this one small area will enable us better to interpret the background for social developments throughout rural Japan. Akira Imamoto writes about Kawanami with the authority of first hand observation.

The search for fresh fields is not exclusively concerned with the present or even with the immediate future; often an examination into the past may cast new light on old problems. Such an examination is Takahiro Aoki’s evaluation of the organization and expansion of association of sake breweries in Saitama Prefecture. Hidekazu Aoki discusses locational
factors which have influenced Sony’s plant sites in Japan. Two major factors, according to the author, have led to the need for decentralization of the highly concentrated electronic industry: the need for new factories to be near market or consumer, and the need to disperse to avoid complete production stoppage in case of natural disaster at a single location.

Among the papers devoted to areas outside Japan, one each deals with the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, and Korea. Shin Kajita provides an excellent discussion of the concept of rural deprivation as employed in the United Kingdom. He concludes that social structure is among the principal causes of rural deprivation. Sachiho Arai and Yoko Iijima offer geographical perspectives on local administrative reforms in Europe. Planning and development of Elora village in the 19th century Canada forms the subject of a very interesting study in historical geography. Koji Kitada discusses the urban systems in Korea. Research by Japanese geographers on Korea has contributed greatly to our understanding of Korea.

Timeliness and significance are the keynotes to several articles: social discrimination of female laborers at spinning factories in Amagasaki, time-space geography, beef industry in Shimane Prefecture and agar industry in Gifu Prefecture.

It is impossible in a short review to do justice to all the contributors. The Human Geographical Society of Japan, and Akihiro Kinda and Tetsuya Hisatake, chief editors of Jimbun Chiri must be congratulated on having produced the 52nd volume of the journal with articles on wide-ranging topics of great interest to geographers. The pursuit of pure learning is still the highest adventure of which the human spirit is capable and the Human Geographical Society of Japan has manifested a vital inquisitive concern for various social, economic, cultural, political, and historical aspects of geography building a broader bridge among the humanities and social sciences, and between research in the field and archives and teaching in the classroom. This volume is a distinct contribution to the geographical literature.

In view of the foregoing, it might seem that age (52 years of publication) has not withheld Jimbun Chiri variety. Indeed, if it is true that “the best prophet of the future is the past,” we should feel justified in looking forward to the “confident tomorrows.” The needs for geographical understanding are too urgent, and the Human Geographical Society of Japan’s record of achievement in meeting these needs is impressive, and the Society’s journal Jimbun Chiri continues to extend its hospitality to the well informed of all nations.