Atlas of Hawai‘i (Third Edition)

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Reviewed by
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This third edition of the Atlas of Hawai‘i is substantially revised from the 1994 edition. This edition differs in the topic array, size, and format, but the most significant difference is the quantity and quality of the maps, graphics, and photographs. Thomas R. Paradise, the chief cartographer of the atlas, put to excellent use new production technology. The application of new computer technology allowed the cartographers to enhance the atlas’s graphic presentation with the use of digital reconstruction, better resolution, and color enhancements. The size change to a 10” x 12” format allows for regular shelving as opposed to oversized volume shelving. There are a number of new offerings in this edition, including informative, boxed sidebars; suggestions for further reading in a reference section; a list of graphic sources; sets of statistical tables; and a gazetteer.

The Atlas of Hawai‘i is divided into five sections. The first section presents reference maps of each of the islands. The new size significantly benefits the presentation of the reference maps, as enhanced resolutions allow for clarity of place names and terrain features. The quality of the reference maps is excellent; in fact, they remind one of National Geographic Society fold-out maps. The next four sections display and discuss the complex physical, biotic, cultural, and social environments of the Hawaiian Islands.

Hawai‘i is a state of contrasts and extremes, from wet tropical forests to towering steep sea cliffs, and a seemingly endless variety of coastal environments. Mountain masses descend into isolated valleys that contain species unique to the islands. Few states have an erupting volcano and newly formed volcanic terrain on and off shore. Hawai‘i has a number of well-defined and densely populated urban areas, yet many areas on the islands appear undeveloped and
rural. A hallmark of the Hawaiian Islands is ethnic diversity, which has resulted in a lively cultural heritage. The *Atlas of Hawai‘i* has managed thorough liberal use of photographs and pertinent discussions to capture much of the drama and excitement of the state’s physical and cultural setting.

Given the north Pacific setting of the Hawaiian Islands chain, along with its recent geologic origins and relative isolation, the two sections on the physical and biotic environments make for a fascinating read and provide a visual stimulus. Even a casual peruser of this atlas is bound to be fascinated with the chapter on the geology of the islands. Graphics and photographs are used effectively to illustrate volcanic island growth cycles, volcanic cones, faulting blocks, caldera, and the geology of each island. Hawaiian lavas are discussed in a box format aside from the primary discussion, and several classic photographs depict *pāhoehoe*, *ʻaʻa*, and pillow lavas. The 11-page climatology chapter is a well articulated, informative, and presents excellent diagrams and maps throughout the discussion. Atmospheric change is discussed in a separate chapter, while paleoclimate and geography are combined into one chapter. Natural hazards such as earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and volcanic and coastal hazards are discussed in the atlas. A mix of figures, photographs, satellite imagery, and computer simulations are used to illustrate causes and effects of the various hazards.

The biotic environment of the Hawaiian Islands is presented in a separate section wherein categories of ecosystems found throughout the islands are discussed. The addition of large color photographs has greatly enhanced the chapters on Hawaiian native plants and insects and their kin. The problems associated with the introduction to the islands of alien species and problems of extinction are discussed in two separate chapters. The distribution map of endangered species habitat is particularly informative. Another map shows protected areas. Both the endangered species and the protected area maps are the same scale, which allows the reader to observe, for example, that endangered species habitats and protected areas are not well matched on the island of Hawai‘i.

The unique cultural setting of the state of Hawai‘i is presented in the fourth section titled “Cultural Environment.” The use of
sidebars discussing such topics as Polynesian navigation, ethnobotany, traditional land tenure on Moloka‘i, sandalwood trade, whaling, and the Māhele of 1848 add significant depth to the chapters on archeology and history. Certainly anyone interested in the Polynesian portion of the Pacific will find these chapters informative and entertaining. Various measures of population, mobility, growth, and distribution are used effectively. The chapters on architecture and culture and the arts have been highlighted by color photographs.

The last section in the atlas, titled “Social Environment,” is where much of the standard social economic data found in most atlases is displayed. The land-tenure and land-use maps are interesting, as Hawai‘i has a complex land-tenure situation due to the state’s cultural and economic history. Three of the maps are particularly interesting: “Land Ownership Change”; “Forty Largest Landowners in Hawai‘i, 1996”; and “Ceded Lands.” There are some major landholders in the islands; for example, the total land area of the state is 4,110,976 acres, of which 1,566,037 are privately owned.

The editors employed a wide variety of experts to provide the written commentaries on the various topics contained in the chapters and sidebars. The maps, graphs, and photographs in the atlas are of excellent quality, are well chosen, and illustrate the discussions appropriately. The Atlas of Hawai‘i is a book that should be on the shelf of anyone who is interested in the state of Hawai‘i or the human and physical ecology of a north Pacific island group.