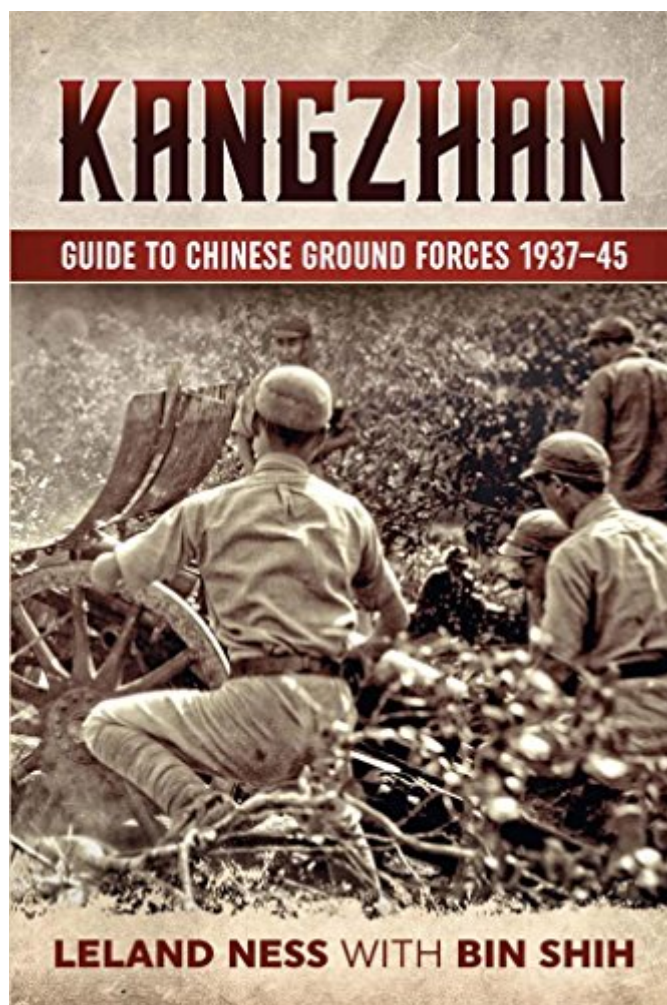


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Kangzhan: Guide To Chinese Ground Forces 1937-45



Synopsis

Kangzhan: Guide to Chinese Ground Forces 1937-45 is the first ready reference to the organization and armament of Chinese ground forces during the Sino-Japanese War of 1937-45. The work integrates Chinese, Japanese and Western sources to examine the details of the structure and weapons of the period. Recent scholarship has contributed greatly to our understanding of China's role in the war, but this is the first book to deal with the bottom-level underpinnings of this massive army, crucial to an understanding of its tactical and operational utility. An introductory chapter discusses the military operations in China, often given short shrift in World War II histories. The work then traces the evolution of the national army's organizational structure from the end of the Northern Expedition to the conclusion of World War II. Included are tables of organization and strength reports for the wartime period. The armament section illustrates and details not only the characteristics of the many and varied weapons used in China, many seen nowhere else, but also their acquisition and such local production as was undertaken. This is complemented by a chapter on the arsenals and their evolution and production programs. The Chinese army was one of the largest of the war and it, and Japan's, fought longer than any other. It faced unique challenges, including fragmented loyalties, huge expanses of territory, poor logistics networks, inadequate arms supplies, and, often, incompetence and corruption. Nevertheless, they fought bravely in major battles through 1941 and were able to counterpunch effectively in important regions through the rest of the war. Aimed at both military historians and wargamers, this work fills an important gap in our understanding of this, the most under-appreciated army of the war.

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Customer Reviews

After reading the description, it's all I hoped for & very likely more information than I'll ever need on the subject. Even in the smaller 6x9" size it's a hefty book. The paper is even good quality. The only thing I might wish to change is the overall size so many of the pictures could be printed larger & hard covers.

Impossible to praise this work too highly. Impossible to over state its importance for the subject matter. Ness is well organized and complete. We students of history have nothing in this subject to compare Kangzhan with. A great service to those interested in a little known or studied subject.

Book came in just in time for Christmas. New as described - nice thick paperback. Very pleased.

ok book.scope could have widden more

The book on Chinese Nationalist armies in WW 2 A must read indeed

This book represents a very substantial addition to our knowledge of the most neglected aspect of World War II military history, the Chinese army. This book is a single volume encyclopedia on the Chinese armed forces. It starts with a very useful summary of the major campaigns in China and then turns to a detailed examination of the organization and equipment of the Chinese army including order of battle, tables of organization and equipment. The equipment and weapons section is fascinating since the Chinese army used such an exotic mixture of imported and domestic/license-produced weapons. This section also includes a description of the Chinese arsenals that manufactured many of the weapons. The book contains numerous charts, as well as a good photo selection. In a review last year on Ness' previous Japanese army volume in this series, I complained about the photo reproduction. Since then, Helion has switched to glossy paper so the photo reproduction is better. Overall, this book an essential reference work for anyone seriously

interested in the War in the Pacific. Especially useful to war-gamers and military enthusiasts interested in army organization and in WWII weapons.

Kangzhan: Guide to Chinese Ground Forces 1937-1945 is a rare but excellent book on the many Chinese armies that have fought from the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War to the end of World War II. It offers a rare but detailed glimpse into how China's armed forces were organized at the ground level. For the reader new to this aspect of military history, Kangzhan is the Chinese word for War of Resistance, that the war of resistance against Japanese aggression. It is unique amongst military history books in that it combines a historical narrative with detailed information on the organization and equipment of the many military forces of China. Not only does this work focus on the main army of the Nationalist Chinese Army of Chiang Kai Shek, but it also covers the military organizations of provincial warlords and the communist forces as well. Beginning with the historical narrative, this book offers a clear and concise description of the many battles of the Second Sino-Japanese War. However, this work is not limited to this period alone, for it also includes background information about the many military campaigns that took place in China before the infamous Marco Polo Bridge incident of 1937. From the Five Extermination Campaigns of the Nationalist Revolutionary Army (to eliminate the Communists) to the Manchurian Incident of 1931 are also described in detail. What was best about this part of the book was the way the events in a well organized, chronological sequence. For example it covered the covered the events of the China, Burma, India Campaign as a separate chapter. In that chapter, it clearly showed how different the China forces of the Burma theater were different from the rest of theater. It describes in detail how differently these formations were organized and led under American military sponsorship. That was, of course, under the leadership of American General Joseph Stilwell. However, even these units had face the same frustrating limitations that plagued the rest of the Chinese military. One example was the lack of trained artillery units for each division. The most common artillery piece mentioned in the book was the American 75mm Pack Howitzer, and yet these were not available in sufficient numbers to fully equip a Chinese division to modern standards. In addition, the Army had a hodgepodge of various artillery pieces from countries to include Germany, the Soviet Union, and even Japan! Although more powerful howitzers were available at the time, there were used effectively due to the following reasons. One was the lack of available trucks required to tow all that artillery. The most common means of transporting the pack howitzers (for example) was using mules. Another was the lack of trained personnel to operate and maintained these weapons. Up until the arrival of the American Military Mission in China, much of the artillery was used in the direct

fire mode. Techniques of using indirect fire were not mastered until early 1945, and by then it was only for a handful of battalions. Tanks are another example of weapons in short supply. The few tanks that were available were old tanks of British, French, or Russian origin. Like their artillery counterparts, these weapons were only used sparingly, and the results were very disappointing. Standardization was hard to come by due to a lack of a logistical infrastructure. China was at an early stage of economic development at that time, and to expect such a nation to create a modern army out of nothing while fighting a modern equipped enemy like Japan would have been unrealistic at best. In spite of the logistical challenges, there were steps taken by the Chinese government to remedy the situation. There is an entire chapter devoted to the various arsenals devoted to making modern weapons for their army. Again, because of the weak economic infrastructure at the time, the best these arsenals could do was make simple weapons from small arms to light artillery. Although some would argue that China was not helpless in that arena. Some critics would assert the Allies of World War II provided China with some modern weapons. However true this may be, it also obscures the fact that these weapons were hard to deliver to China at the time. With the loss of Burma during WWII, the only way to deliver modern military hardware was to fly them in American cargo planes over a dangerous route through the Himalaya from India. This route, known as "the Hump" was difficult for pilots to navigate, and despite their best efforts, the flow of weapons and supplies into China was barely a trickle. As mentioned before, the lack of standardization was not only limited to weapons. From the Extermination Campaigns of the 1920s to the end of the Second World War, the Chinese army had to contend with a variety of military organizations. For example, their division force structure had evolved from one originally designed by the Germans to one sponsored by the Americans. The variety of force structures was largely due to a trial and error method of adapting the Chinese military to the reality they were facing at the time. In other words, a division force structure that may work in Europe may not be appropriate in China given the lack of resources in men and equipment. In addition, much of this force structure was hampered by a lack of radios and other communication equipment. This alone made command and control of a modern army fighting a battle very difficult indeed. Instead, allowances were made to use messengers in lieu of radios. Although this book gives excellent insight into the workings of the KMT Army during the war, it also gives equally excellent insight to the other "armies" that were fighting in China at the time. There may not be any other work known that would give more than a brief description of the various Chinese Warlords that were also considered part of the overall KMT military. One must consider that the Chinese Army was really a mosaic of different, semi-independent military formations controlled by mostly self-serving governors

like the infamous Han Fujū, governor of Shandong Province in 1938. Instead of actively leading the fight against the Japanese, Han instead tried to negotiate a separate peace with them. This act of high treason was one of the risks of employing private armies at the time. There was no guarantee that a Chinese Warlord would not switch sides (in fact this was what happened to many KMT units during the Chinese Civil war of 1946 to 1950). Another example of the "other armies" were units of the Chinese Communist Party. Although their most famous unit was the Eight Route Army, most of the Chinese Communist military were organized for guerrilla warfare. The early setbacks in China from 1937 to 1940 left a power vacuum in the northern part of that country. The communist simply sent their agents to organize and manage the various villages and towns to a point where they became the de facto government of that region. This was an important factor in their history, for it helped the Communist gain the advantage in the Civil War that were to follow. In addition to the rich detail of historical narrative, as well as the excellent information about their army organization, the reader will also find an informative weapons guide included. This guide covers weapons from small arms to light artillery. The best part of this book is that it includes a vast array of photographs as well as tabled information about these weapons. In fact, the weapons portion alone dominates the latter half of the book. In summary, Kangzhan would be an excellent addition to any military book collection. Wargame enthusiast would be the best beneficiaries of this work, for it allows them an easy reference guide for re-creating table top war game scenarios. Military professionals as well as military historians would also enjoy reading this book. It is a very well organized reference guide that contains excellent tables of information, pictures, and maps. Overall it was well written, and the fact that it was printed on glossy paper makes this book more likely to be picked up and read often.

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