

It produces a homogenized history and makes following up and fact-checking difficult. Use of a wider group of sources would give a less-biased result. All titles are shown as published in the UK. It excludes Cunningham's memoir, *Sailor's Odyssey*, while quoting from it in summing up the battle. Konstam includes three Norman Friedman titles, on radar, British cruisers, and big ship gunnery, but excluding his (much more germane) *Naval Anti-Aircraft Guns and Gunnery* (Seaforth, 2009). At thirty-three dollars Canadian, the book is pricey. The physical product of the paperback volume is close to a magazine format, with high gloss, kaolin paper in a rugged "perfect" binding, which makes it durable. The book is part of Osprey Publishing's integrated website that presents and markets the Campaign and other series. On the back cover there are three miniature photographs. The top one is of Cunningham. The accompanying text makes me wonder whether the person who wrote it had actually read the book: "world-leading maritime historian Angus Konstam tells the fascinating story of how Allied ships failed to repulse Axis convoys," when it is the story of how troop convoys successfully driven off during the period covered.

The book would hold more general interest with more detail on the *Regia Marina* and *Regia Aeronautica* structure and well as RN Fleet Air Arm and RAF participation. Along with more information on Italian ships and aircraft would provide more balance as would graphics, like a cutaway diagram of a MAS Boat and torpedo boat as is done for Dido class and J/K/L destroyers.

Ian Dew

Thunder Bay, Ontario

Mark Lardas. *South China Sea 1945: Task Force 38's bold carrier rampage in Formosa, Luzon, and Indochina*. Oxford, UK: Osprey Publishing, www.bloomsbury.org, 2023. 96 pp., illustrations, maps, bibliography. CDN \$33.00, paper; ISBN 978-1-4728-5311-0.

In *South China Sea 1945*, Mark Lardas explores the carrier campaign led by United States Navy Admiral William Halsey and Task Force 38 in 1945. TF 38's objective was to destroy Japanese military installations and shipping in the South China Sea by disrupting supply lines, severing Japan's access to vital resources, and isolating the majority of the Japanese Army deployed in China. Halsey's campaign proved the versatility of carrier operations, neutralizing both seaborne and land-based opposition. While the author of numerous Osprey publications, Lardas is not a trained historian. Nor does the strict format of the series allow for much historical analysis. This has led to many flaws within the text such as a disreputable bibliography, the absence of citations, inconsistent nomenclature, and copious amounts of superfluous information without

adequate context.

The most serious problem plaguing this text is the ineffective bibliography (93). Why the author feels the need to justify certain sources is unclear. He describes having to go on a scavenger hunt to find missing details but fails to mention the sources he claims to have found on websites and in print. He does not identify the websites properly, making it difficult for the reader to validate his information. Finally, there are no citations, making it impossible to confirm the material, for example a quote attributed to Admiral William Halsey (7). Footnotes and other academic tools may not be part of the Osprey format, but their absence decreases the credibility of this text.

Even in a small book like this, consistency is important, especially when dealing with what would be a good introduction to the Second World War in the Pacific. Regrettably, the text is full of conflicting and confusing nomenclature. While it is understandable that certain terms change over time, it is important to refer to those terms and names by what was historically accurate at the time of the event, in this case, the island of Formosa.

At the beginning of the text in a small paragraph on the back of the title page, Lardas states that he would be using historically accurate terms, especially regarding locations. Then, instead of calling the island of Taiwan Formosa, as promised, he constantly refers to Formosa as Taiwan, as well as calling the Formosa Strait the Taiwan Strait. When speaking to the land surrounding the South China Sea he describes “the island of Borneo to the south, and the Philippines and Taiwan (Formosa) to the east.” (42) Similarly he writes, “The most vital convoy routes crossed the South China Sea, converging on the Taiwan Straits before crossing the East China Sea to Japan.” (27). The author seems unaware that the country of Taiwan did not exist in 1945. I found this geographical confusion most annoying.

Lardas claims that the waters and harbours throughout the South China Sea were shallow enough to protect Japanese shipping lanes from submarine attacks. As most naval specialists know, submarines did operate in the South China Sea. In fact, by 1945, their impact on Japanese shipping was so significant that they were running out of targets.

He is also consistently inconsistent when it comes to units of measurement. For example, after several references to depth in feet, he states “While merchant ships could comfortably travel in waters as shallow as 10 fathoms, it took a bold submariner to penetrate the 20-fathom line” (28). Nor does he explain what a fathom is. A reader unfamiliar with this old naval terminology could be confused by such niche vocabulary.

Another example of the author’s erratic use of measurement involves his descriptions of armament used by both the Americans and the Japanese.

Lardas breaks down the weapons used by the Japanese to defend against TF38, firing a barrage of information regarding guns, their calibre, the ammunition used, and how they compared to American weapons (28-30). On the same page, he refers to Japanese guns, cannons, and shore-based artillery pieces in millimetres. Halfway down the page, he switches to Japanese anti-aircraft artillery measured in centimetres, and then again in inches, all in one paragraph. The confusion and irritation caused by this issue was enough to make me put the text down and walk away from it several times in frustration.

I had two other concerns with this text. The first is the overwhelming amount of information regarding aircraft and their weapons as well as shore-based installations, such as anti-aircraft guns. Lardas goes into unnecessary detail when describing the technical aspects. Why it was important to know that the “5in./38cal gun ... had a shell weighing 55lbs of which 7.1-8.5lbs was the bursting charge. It could fire 15 rounds per minute and had a 37,200 ft ceiling and had a distance of roughly 8.5 miles” (19). Information such as this is strewn throughout so much of the text that it becomes less about TF 38 and instead, has become a quick but unnecessary reference of the military capabilities for both the American and Japanese forces. In such a short book, the amount of information is overwhelming, especially without any historical analysis.

Task Force 38's contribution to ending the war in the Pacific is a history that has extraordinarily little written about it and Lardas should be applauded for writing such a text where sources are extremely limited. Unfortunately, his fixation on technical minutia has severely restricted his examination of the true impact of TF38's efforts to retake the South China Sea.

Among the drawbacks to this text are the absence of a bibliography, the omission of citations, inconsistent nomenclature, and too much extraneous information that has no bearing on the study of TF38 and its importance to the war effort. Moreover, it lacks the kind of in-depth historical analysis that would be considered valuable to an academic study of TF38. I feel that Lardas' *South China Sea 1945* has missed the mark on what could have been a great resource for academics and general readers alike.

Emily Golden
Belle River, Ontario

Jean Leclerc. *Le Saint-Laurent et ses pilotes 1805-1860*. Ottawa, ON: Leméac, www.lemeac.com, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1990. 232 pp. illustrations, maps, tables, appendices. CDN \$32.95 paper; ISBN 2-7609-1934-x.

At more than 13,000 kilometers, Quebec has the third longest coastline,