

## **BOOK REVIEW**

by Todd Shugart, published on 9 February, at 15:37

**Title:** Chinese Airpower in the 20th Century | Rise of the Red Dragon

**Author:** Andreas Rupprecht

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There are very few definitive sources on Chinese Military Aviation in the publishing world. And Andreas Rupprecht has a proven track record of detailed and unrivalled knowledge on the subject. After writing his Modern Chinese Warplanes series and Flashpoint China, Andreas was inspired to write a detailed and well-illustrated history of the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF). This was a daunting task with the ever present secrecy surrounding most attempts at detailed information concerning the PLAAF. Andreas's previous books focused on the current organisation and aircraft in the PLAAF inventory. And they are lavishly illustrated with maps, current structure charts, and hundreds of colour photos. This latest book is also of the same high standard when it comes to the above mentioned items. And the level of detail in all of the chapters is astounding.

First, Andreas begins with a chronological history of the PLAAF as an entire force from its humble beginnings in 1911 through the Second World War and on into the Communist period that brings it all the way up to modern times. The amount of research and detail in this section is commendable and is further enhanced by showing the myriad of markings and insignia portrayed down the sides of many of the pages to show how much change there was based on applicable regimes of the times. Never before has this been shown in such a colourful and easy to understand method. He also tackles some of the myths and falsehoods that have been used mistakenly when trying to unravel the mysteries of the PLAAF. The perceived failure of the PLAAF to present a credible foe to Western Air Forces in the Korean War is a particular myth that Andreas challenges and he further asserts that this myth was largely responsible for the dismissal of the PLAAF as a credible threat during and after the Korean War and all the way up to modern times.

Short but detailed histories of all the aircraft ever flown by the PLAAF along with the histories of units at all levels in the PLAAF are included over several chapters and are enhanced by some incredible artwork by Bai Wei and Ugo Crisponi from Aviation Graphic. All photos are captioned well and accredited appropriately. Each chapter ends with a list of the references used and shows the level of research utilised by Andreas and the Harpia team. The chapters as mentioned earlier are based on chronologically significant periods of PLAAF history and are followed by three detailed Appendices that discuss the history of the final seven military region air forces, the air divisions, and a history of the PLAAF serial number system. This final appendix tackles what is a complex subject that is frequently misunderstood. Andreas rises to the challenge and explains it in a very easy to understand way that unlocks what most intelligence agencies have failed to explain in many official guides.

Lastly Andreas concludes with a comprehensive index that is easy to use and very thorough. This is an outstanding volume that only further adds to the reputation of both Andreas Rupprecht and Harpia Publishing. It is one of the most comprehensive and readable summaries of PLAAF history on the market. Furthermore, it is also a great companion to Andreas's previous works and should be on the shelves of not only aviation enthusiasts but also professional military organisations such as staff colleges, military units, and higher headquarters.