In the early summer of 1941, after nearly four years of isolated struggle against superior Japanese forces, officials of the beleaguered Chinese Nationalist government received from Washington assurances of increased support against the invaders. The passage of the Lend Lease Act the previous March and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's decision to make China eligible for such assistance seemed to signal the beginning of a new phase in American-Chinese relations. In anticipation of a closer relationship between Washington and Chungking, members of the Army general staff recommended sending a military aid mission to China. The distribution of Lend Lease supplies necessitated the creation of an Army team in Chungking to coordinate orders, determine priorities, and evaluate the performance of Chinese forces and American materials. As they prepared for their new role in China, Army officers had occasion to commend their own foresight in planning for just such a moment. "For many years," wrote Edwin Clark, a liaison officer for the Chinese Mission in Washington, "the United States has detailed officers to China to learn the language, study the country and its people, which knowledge presumably was for use when an emergency confronted the United States with which China might have some connection. It is submitted that such an emergency has now arrived."

As Major Clark noted, the United States Army seemed surprisingly well prepared for the new role it was about to play in China. Officers...
for the new military aid mission could be drawn from the Army's Chinese language training program, begun in 1919 by the Military Intelligence Division. Most of the Army's language officers had served as military attachés in the American embassy in Peking and accumulated valuable experience reporting on military activities, politics, and economic and social conditions during the rise of revolutionary nationalism in interwar China. At the same time, an even larger number of officers had received at least some exposure to Chinese life while serving with the 15th Infantry regiment stationed at Tientsin until 1938.3

During the 1920s and 1930s Army officers were among a host of Americans who ventured to China. But unlike the numerous missionaries, educators, technical advisers, and journalists who hoped to remake China in the American image, Army officers in Peking or Tientsin observed but did not participate in the Western reform effort. By 1941, however, rapidly changing international conditions prodded the Army toward active involvement in China. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the initial aid mission evolved into a larger task force with the goal of training and advising a more effective Chinese army. As China's resistance against Japan became more important to U.S. global strategy the Army's secular missionaries crossed the Pacific to help save China for the Nationalists.

To fully appreciate the part Army officers played in the larger American-Chinese relationship it is helpful to recontextualize their role in broader terms. The Army's China Hands shared many of the basic values and assumptions of their civilian counterparts, but they also represented a separate and distinctive group within American society with its own customs and institutions. And unlike their civilian brethren, U.S. Army officers proffered the tools and techniques of modern military power, commodities in great demand in an embattled China. In their capacity as facilitators of Sino-American cooperation the Army's China Hands became interpreters of Chinese military and civil society for the less experienced American officers and enlisted men who came to the China theater.4 This study offers a different perspec-


4. I have chosen the term "cultural interpreters" rather than the more familiar "cultural intermediaries" because, although this study discusses Chinese perceptions of and interaction with American officers, it is mainly concerned with how Army officers ex-