ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is not just the compilation of one person’s arguments, stories, and notes but instead relies heavily on extensive support networks that directly and indirectly have shaped it. I am reversing the usual order of thanking my loved ones last, especially my beloved wife, Hồng Anh, because she has played multiple, key roles in this project since I first imagined it. Since we met one enchanted June evening long ago, two Americans in Hà Nội, she has been my most ardent champion, tireless critic, best friend, and creative muse. She supplied me with a unique Vietnamese American perspective as I hashed out ideas, and through her globally extended family around the United States and Vietnam, I found a new role as chú rể David (groom, son-in-law) or jokingly as rể Vit. Huế in particular and Vietnam in general is a familiar society; building trust and one’s identity often begins by identifying to whom and to where one “belongs.” From our first honeymoon trip to visit relatives in Huế and tiny Trung Đơn Village in Quảng Trị, members of this extended family received us with unprecedented kindness and frequently offered places to sleep, delicious meals, and sometimes tips for research or feedback as individuals who lived through many events described in this book. Because Hồng Anh, like me, chose to work and live in Vietnam for a spell after growing up in the United States, we had the terrific good fortune to spend much of my research time in Vietnam together and with our children. We led four study abroad trips with California students to Huế University from 2006 to 2015, and on these trips and other research stints, our children accompanied us in guesthouses, at dinners with relatives and in homes nestled on back alleys in Huế. I feel incredibly fortunate to have been able to share this time with them.

Through my in-laws, especially my parents-in-law, Lý Tô and Hồng Thị Như Nhu Nguyên, I gained a glimpse, too, of the incredibly transnational nature of Vietnamese experiences, especially of those who migrated from Vietnam
but have since returned. Tô and Như Nguyên were students in the United States; they married in Boston in 1972 and nine months later took their infant baby Hồng Anh to visit parents in Huế and Quảng Trị during the 1973 cease-fire. That was Hồng Anh’s first overseas trip to Vietnam. Then the war resumed and the bottom fell out; Tô and Như Nguyên, like many others, were cut off from family for some years. Through their stories and those of Uncle Nghiên, Auntie Lạc, and the relatives whom we stayed with, I was able to follow in the most personal terms the struggles of a large Vietnamese family where some relatives migrated to the United States and others stayed. As a father of three children, I still cannot fathom how Tô managed to house anywhere from three to twenty-three relatives in his three-bedroom, split-level home in suburban Boston. He also sent money to Vietnam and sponsored the immigration of his parents, siblings, and father-in-law while holding down a stressful full-time job. While I have done my best to master the Huế dialect and “follow house rules” (nhaps gia tùy tục), my success and insights are built in no small part from the love and support of my amazing, transnational family. While not a very successful Buddhist, I nevertheless believe in karma and suspect that the goodwill they have generated over the years opened doors and improved my standing by association. I hope to pay it forward.

The research and writing of this book took place in several stages and at many places. The first stop was a postdoctoral fellowship in the History of East Asian Science and Technology at Harvard University in 2009–10. Thanks to this fellowship, I had the good fortune to start research with an amazing cast of characters at American academe’s Hogwarts. I owe special thanks to Professor Huệ Tâm Hồ-Tài, who introduced me to visiting celebrities there, wrote letters of recommendation, and warmly welcomed me into her home. Professor Huệ Tâm has helped many Vietnamese and Vietnamese studies scholars over the years, and I especially benefited from her attention in this amazing academic environment. Thanks to my colleagues at the Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, especially Professors Shigehisa Kuriyama, Michael Szonyi, James Robson, and Tomoko Kitagawa for their camaraderie and support. Harvard’s Center for Geographic Analysis helped me in the initial applied study with support for acquiring satellite imagery pro bono from the GeoEye Foundation and Planet Action. While the imagery only appears in backdrops in this book, it was
crucial in helping identify potentially toxic hotspots around Huế in the applied research project.

The University of California, especially my home campus UC–Riverside and my split homes in the Department of History and the School of Public Policy, played a key role in supporting this research. I was fortunate to receive a University of California Office of the President Faculty Development Grant (2010–13) that provided the funds for me to travel over three years to archives in Paris, Vietnam, and Washington, DC. While most universities struggled during the Great Recession, I was extremely fortunate to have these funds to hire research assistants in the French archives and get help in Huế with interviews. In Paris, thanks especially to Dr. Nguyễn Quốc Thanh for her assistance at the Service Historique de la Défense in Vincennes and with French air photography at Fort de l’Est. Even if I could speak French well, I could never have managed the bureaucratic hoops that she did effortlessly to locate archival records and build relationships with French institutions. In Huế I was especially fortunate to work with Dr. Đỗ Nam and Dr. Hồ Đình Duẩn as well as Hoàng Thị Bình Minh, beginning in 2011 and continuing over the years to 2017. Dr. Nam’s Office of Science and Technology helped sponsor my field research, while Dr. Duẩn’s geographic information system (GIS) research office helped me in producing reference and historical layers in the GIS. Bình Minh assisted me in developing ties with village authorities in Đạ Lè and Phú Bài Villages, which facilitated gathering oral histories. With her help I was able to visit families in those villages and make less awkward return visits. At home at UC–Riverside, members of the Rivera Library interlibrary loan staff have been my perennial heroes! They helped me tap the vast collections of UC’s maps and texts at all campuses, getting materials to me efficiently and at no personal cost. Most of the maps featured in the book come from these collections, thanks to additional help from UC’s map librarians to obtain scans. Thanks to my department chairs and colleagues, too, for making it possible to arrange leaves and sabbaticals to make time for archives and motorcycle trips in the Vietnamese backcountry.

In 2011 a Fulbright Scholar Fellowship enabled me and my family to live in Huế for five months to carry out much of the local site-based research. Because of my research topic, I was both surprised and grateful to receive a fellowship supported by the US Department of State with additional approvals given by the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the People’s Committee.
of Thừa Thiên–Huế Province. Fulbright scholars are relatively high profile foreign researchers, and they frequently use this temporary position to contribute to local policy debates. I spoke about the problem of toxic waste left behind at former American bases, and I demonstrated how one could use American historical materials to find some of them. Staff at the US Embassy in Hà Nội with the US Agency for International Development and the US Department of Defense attended my talk and graciously hosted me even if my arguments may have run counter to US positions on war waste in Vietnam. I recognized the great potential for more scholarly engagement with government agencies on this topic, and I hope that this book might in some ways advance environmental dialogues.

I began writing this book in 2013 and continued developing it between teaching, university activities, and family life until mid-2017. A National Endowment for Humanities Fellowship in 2013–14 provided me a critical year to begin the book-writing process. The first part of this book, a dive into early modern and colonial history as well as a grappling with historical GIS data, owes a lot to this fellowship and the time it bought me. Thanks to generous support and leave from UCR’s College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences and a writing fellowship from the Rachel Carson Center in Munich, I was able to wrap up the writing in 2016–17. Colleagues in UCR’s Southeast Asia Program supported local endeavors and talks on campus; I owe Hendrik Maier special thanks for his constant friendship and his detailed reading of a first rough draft with incisive comments. During this period, many other universities welcomed me and entertained (or endured) guest talks. Thanks to many colleagues and friends who supported me from such glorious venues as the University of Washington (my alma mater!), the Yale Agrarian Studies Program, the University of Wisconsin, Cornell University, UCLA, UC–Berkeley, and Cal State–Fullerton as well as international workshops at Göttingen, New Delhi, and Takamatsu. Scholarly associations, especially the American Society for Environmental History and the Association for Asian Studies, provided me opportunities to share bits of the research at annual meetings, and I appreciate many friends and colleagues in these societies for their enthusiastic support, especially my historian “comrade” and occasional coauthor Edward Miller. The Vietnam Studies Group, in particular, has been an especially supportive group within AAS, and I thank the many who responded privately to my odd queries on the group’s list-serv with insightful responses, pdfs of their work, and primary source materials.
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Finally, as this book heads into press, my last round of thanks goes to the dedicated staff of the University of Washington Press, especially Catherine Cocks and series editor Paul Sutter. The Weyerhaeuser Environmental Books Endowment has allowed UW Press to continue making truly beautiful books. In my case, it afforded the inclusion of many images and a color inset. In an era when academic presses struggle to break even, having a say in everything from color or not to cover design and title is a luxury. To the anonymous reviewers, I thank you for your enthusiastic comments and constructive criticisms. I of course accept all responsibility for mistranslations, missed accent marks, and more substantial errors. Many more individuals are thanked for their contributions in the book’s notes, and to any I have missed in total, I hope to make it up at a later meeting.
FOOTPRINTS OF WAR