

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

Vietnamese is a tonal language written in an adapted version of the Latin alphabet with additional diacritical marks to signify tones and vowel qualities. Without these diacritics, the meaning of a Vietnamese word is ambiguous. For this reason I have chosen to include diacritical marks in this book to most accurately represent terms, locations, and people's names. However, at the same time, I recognize that diacritics may prove distracting to those unfamiliar with the conventions of the language. Taking into concern both specialists and generalists who may read this book, I opted to keep all Vietnamese diacritical marks except in widely known geographical names such as Vietnam, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Saigon. Vietnamese who have migrated to other countries often drop the diacritics from their proper names. I thus refer to individuals according to their own practice and according to their choice in name order (in Vietnam, family names are placed first). While I recognize potential inconsistencies in my own practice here (for example, Ho Chi Minh City versus Hồ Chí Minh Trail), I feel this is the most reliable solution to make the text accessible to all audiences. All translations from German and Vietnamese primary sources are my own, unless otherwise indicated.