

Beheiren: An Early Example of Transcultural Dynamics in Japan 1965-1974

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1. Introduction

April 30, 2015, the 40-year anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, came very quietly in the United States (US). This is in stark contrast with America's love of World War II (WWII). While the anniversary of the Battle of Normandy, known as D-Day, or the Attack on Pearl Harbor are annual events with elaborate ceremonies and a wide variety of nationalistic media coverage, the Vietnam War is largely marginalized in the US. In fact, the Vietnam War remains one of the most uncomfortable narrative in America to this day. *"No one wants to listen, everybody wants to forget, and the denial continues"* (MacPherson, 1984, p. 377). Why is that? During the Vietnam War, the scale of antiwar movements was unprecedented, nationally and globally. Having hundreds of US bases and facilities across the nation, serving as a launching pad for American military, Japan was directly affected. The Vietnam War was not just America's war for the postwar Japanese citizens.

When the US started bombing North Vietnam on February 1965, Japanese citizens took to the street. Beheiren (Betonamu ni heiwa wo shimin rengō [Citizen's League for Peace-in-Vietnam]), aimed solely against the war in Vietnam, was launched. Unlike other social movements in the turbulent postwar Japan, such as ANPO Tōsō (conflict opposing the Japan-US Security Treaty, the so-called ANPO) and radical sect-student movements, Beheiren employed nonviolent direct action, and gained popular support. The movement placed emphasis on individual action rather than relying on the collective actions of organizations such as labor unions (Hirano, 2015). There was no 'membership' system to join in Beheiren. Anyone, who agreed with its three principles, 1) peace in Vietnam; 2) self-determination for the Vietnamese people; and 3) end Japan's complicity in the war, could join or create their own Beheiren groups (Beheiren Nyūsu. No. 32, 1968; Havens,

1987, p. 55; Yoshikawa, 1969, p.18). Soon, hundreds of loosely connected Beheiren groups emerged on campuses, in towns and cities across Japan. Having diverse groups of innovative individuals, Beheiren exerted their quirky originality.

Peace in Vietnam! The slogan looked simple at first glance, but in practice, Beheiren connoted complex political reality of postwar Japan. Protesting America's war in Vietnam during the Cold War and under the contradiction and dilemma involving Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution and ANPO, the central issue of Beheiren movement was fundamentally transnational. The movement involved Japan's complicity in the US war in Vietnam, which was in direct protest against the foreign policies of both Japan and the US. The widespread presence of US bases throughout Japan allowed the American soldiers to carry out missions from Okinawa and Japan to kill Vietnamese people. Huge numbers of American soldiers were also transported to and from Vietnam and Japan. It was then the emergence of real, live deserters that transformed the Beheiren movement into a transnational operation both in terms of sheltering deserters, and getting them out of Japan to third countries. By 1970, when GI movement erupted in the US bases across the world, American activists, including civil rights lawyers, started coming to Japan to work with Beheiren to help American GIs in-and-out of the US bases. Why was Beheiren capable of engaging in an extensive transnational operation during an era when there were no cell phones nor Internet? One of the factors is that the key figures who decided to start the movement were postwar intellectuals, including its philosophical mentor Tsurumi Shunsuke and the representative Oda Makoto who already had broad foreign experiences and transnational network before they launched Beheiren in 1965. This is noteworthy because, until 1964, travel overseas for Japanese individuals was limited to students, emigrants, or sailors (Imamura, 2007; Maekawa, 2003).

In this paper, however, rather than focusing on individual activists, I will focus on the operational aspects of Beheiren movement to show that Beheiren is an early example of transcultural dynamics that emerged in the ground swell of the 1960s to the early 1970s Japan. In doing so, I would also like to see why the Beheiren movement could sustain for a decade. I will start with methods, followed by a brief theoretical background of Beheiren movement—nonviolent direct action—because it is a critical aspect to understand Beheiren. I will then address how Beheiren's transnational activism was developed, along with messages that American deserters and antiwar GIs entrusted to Beheiren.

2. Methods

Beheiren was a special phenomenon (Seraphim, 2006, p. 223), yet, little research has been done. In order to understand the Beheiren movement that has been hidden in history, I utilize multiple-methods that includes archive analysis, qualitative content analysis, along with interviews with former Beheiren activists who are still with us. Multiple-methods requires time and resources, but it creates the opportunity to put texts or people in contexts, thus providing a richer and far more accurate interpretation (Reinharz, 1992).

2-1. Materials

While there are few resources on Beheiren movement in English, the Hamilton Library in the University of Hawai'i at Manoa has the Takazawa Collection, an extensive collection of resource materials on postwar Japan social movements, including Beheiren's newsletters, leaflets, and flyers. The following newsletters published by Beheiren are used as primary materials for this study.

- Beheiren Nyūsu, Issue 1 – 101 (1965 – 1974)
- Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue 1 – 16 (1969 – 1971)
- JATEC Tsūshin, Issue 0 – 7 (1971-1973)

I created a relational database from all the newsletter Issued above using Microsoft Access for qualitative content analysis. Access accepts any language and it has ability to relate records in multiple tables, which is a powerful tool when analyzing the complicated and sometimes confusing data like Beheiren's newsletters that contain a variety of different contents randomly in one page. As secondary materials, beginning late 1990s, a handful of former Beheiren activists started publishing their experiences after decades of silence. What unable to be revealed in the real time was beginning to be unearthed in those books.

3. Theoretical Background behind Beheiren Movement: Nonviolent Direct Action

The 20th century observed various forms of resistance where 'ordinary people' did extraordinary things to change the course of history by nonviolent direct action. The anti-Vietnam War movement came after the stream of nonviolent direct action such as India's struggle for Independence and the Résistance movement in Europe, followed by the US Civil Rights Movement and the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa. Yet,

historians and social scientists have been paying little attention to the striking phenomenon of nonviolent direct action, and it was mostly marginalized in the intellectual landscape (Bedau, 1969; Bilgrami, 2002; Boulding, 1999; Satha-Anand, 1991; Zunes & Kurtz, 1999). This is in sharp contrast to the amount of attention, enthusiasm, and funding paid for studies of war and militaries.

Entering the 21st century, however, a handful of scholars started to take a new look at nonviolent direct action/civil resistance, because civil resistance has become an increasingly salient feature of international politics over the last half century (Roberts & Ash, 2009). Particularly, debates on nonviolent direct action from the perspectives of strategic logic, long-term effectiveness, and sustainability have become popular among security study scholars. Thus, this is an exciting time for nonviolent researchers, given the new energy, enthusiasm, and interest that this area of study has generated recently (Nepstad, 2015, p. 423). In terms of long-term effectiveness, Beheiren was a sustainable movement, which involved series of transformative processes in response to the changing socio-political environments. Even after the disbandment of Beheiren in 1974, many former Beheiren activists continued/continue to take part in civic engagement by their own unique ways. Also, in response to the reactionary nature of the current politics of Japan, young activists and scholars appeared to start finding the significance of Beheiren (Hirano, 2015). Nonviolent direct action has its own transcultural history when the term ‘transcultural’ was not yet emerged. Thus, looking into the theoretical backbone of Beheiren is important to understand the transcultural nature of Beheiren.

3-1. Nonviolent Direct Action

What is nonviolent direct action? It is an effective and deliberate means to bring about social and political changes (Ackerman and DuVall, 2000; Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Cortright, 2006 & 2008; Roberts & Ash, 2009; Sharp, 1973; Zunes & Kurtz, 1999). In thoroughly analyzing hundreds of cases of nonviolent direct actions, Gene Sharp (1973) pointed out how power was used from the bottom up rather than the top down. Sharp (1973) then developed his theory of power:

‘Obedience’ is at the heart of political power but it is voluntary. Political power disintegrates when the people withdraw their obedience and support.

This is exactly what Oda Makoto, a best-seller author and the fiercely independent representative of Beheiren, suggested before Sharp developed his theory of power. Oda pointed out, “*If soldiers leave one by one, the military system will not survive*” (Kuno & Oda, 1998, p. 488). In fact, the core of the military system is ‘obedience.’ Refusing orders is unthinkable, but countless American soldiers performed this unthinkable act during the Vietnam War despite the consequences they would face. Renowned nonviolent actors—Henry David Thoreau, Mohandas Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela—all spent some time in jail. Many American deserters and GIs also spent time in stockade and jail. After all, willingness to suffer is an integral part of nonviolent direct action (Sharp, 1973). Although Beheiren was often criticized as “intellectual’s game” or “petit-bourgeois radicalism or elitism” by Japan’s Old-Left (Hanazaki, 1969, p. 179; Yoshikawa, 1969, pp. 9-10), history shows that Beheiren movement was not without risk and struggle. Among many tactics of nonviolent direct action, civil disobedience is the most powerful and well-practiced theory.

3-2. Civil Disobedience

A major transformation occurs when ordinarily docile masses become ‘defiant’ (Piven & Fox, 1977). Civil disobedience, however, is not just becoming defiant. It is determined act of protest. Cohen (1971) provides a concise definition for civil disobedience:

Civil disobedience is an act of protest, deliberately unlawful, conscientiously and publicly performed. The spirit of civil disobedience is one of sacrificial service to the community, and that spirit is more central to it than is the technical form of the protest, for the form may vary with the circumstances, but the aim of community service does not” (p. 40).

During the Vietnam War, individuals who followed orders on the basis of conscience, which was Nuremberg, were the government’s worst nightmare (Lynd & Lynd, 1995; Friedland, 1998). Chomsky (1967), who supported the disobedient GIs during the Vietnam War also argued in the same context:

After the lessons of Dachau and Auschwitz, no person of conscience can believe that authority must always be obeyed, and that a line must be drawn somewhere. Beyond that line lies civil disobedience (p. 202).

While working closely with American deserters and GIs, dynamics pertaining the fundamental tension inherent between ‘individual’ and ‘state’ naturally arose in the mind of Beheiren activists. After all, war narrative was still fresh in their minds in 1960s Japan. While the original idea of the practice of nonviolent action can be

traced back to at least ancient Rome (Sharp, 1973), organized nonviolence is a 20th century development, beginning with Gandhi (Boulding, 1999; Carter, 2009; Chatfield, 2004; Cortright, 2006). There were two pre-Gandhi nonviolent actors who deeply influenced Gandhi and King—Henry David Thoreau and Leo Tolstoy.

Gandhi drew inspiration from Henry David Thoreau's 1849 essay, *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* as well as Tolstoy's writings on 'non-resistance' while he was in the Volksrust prison in Transvaal, South Africa, (Carter, 2009; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005). Gandhi even translated a portion of Thoreau's essay and later introduced it to Indian people. What Indian readers learned from Thoreau was that unfair and unjust laws should be resisted—that was the key. Clear and simple. Gandhi and Tolstoy had letter correspondence that lasted until Tolstoy's death (Ackerman, & DuVall, 2000; Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005). Gandhi developed nonviolent resistance into a political force by fusing Western pacifist tradition such as Thoreau, Tolstoy, the Quakers, and Jesus, along with the Buddhist, Jain and Vedic Hindu philosophies, to exert political pressure (Brown, 1994). In a sense, Gandhi was a transcultural actor rather than a nationalist as often described. Paige (1993) pointed out, Gandhi contributed to a nonviolent global 'awakening.' This is an important notion because in the cases of the American deserters and GIs that Beheiren assisted, conscientious awakening often came before transformation occurred.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., another well-known actor of nonviolent direct action, was also influenced by Thoreau, and Gandhi. King revealed that Thoreau's *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* was his first intellectual contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance (Hendrick & Hendrick, 2005, p. 192-193). Just like Gandhi, King developed a profound understanding of nonviolence through his actual nonviolent struggle during his years in the Civil Rights Movement. King took on an intensive interest in Gandhi's life and message, which carried throughout his activism (Cortright, 2006, p. 54).

Nonviolent struggle by Gandhi and King attracted international audience, as they presented an inconvenient hypocrisy of Western democracy—Great Britain forced oppression on a colony while enjoying democracy at home; US segregated its own people based on the color of their skin. This was becoming embarrassing as diplomats from the newly formed African nations could not eat in certain restaurants or sleep in certain hotels in the segregated part of the US (Harrison, 1996). Eventually, both Gandhi and King drew enormous support from the international community, which worked as political pressure on the governments

of Britain and the US. Likewise, during the Vietnam War, growing global opposition against the US policy in Vietnam worked as enormous political pressure on the US government. Oda Makoto, who had witnessed the brutal reality of American democracy during the Civil Rights Movement as a Fulbright student in the US in 1959, was fully aware of the power of publicity before he launched Beheiren.

4. Beheiren and Transnational Activism

We are ordinary citizens. Ordinary citizens mean, there may be office workers, elementary school teachers, carpenters, housewives, newspaper reporters, florists, people who write novels, and children who study English. In other words, it's you who are reading this leaflet. All we want to say is "Peace in Vietnam!" (Beheiren News No.1, 1965).

This is the flyer that Oda Mokoto wrote when he called for a demonstration on April 24, 1965.

Ordinary citizens joined the group as they walked. Beheiren was launched. Since then, the situation surrounding the Vietnam War constantly changed and became unpredictable. Beheiren adapted to the changing socio-political environment accordingly. This section discuss how Beheiren movement transformed by focusing on its transculturality by four phases: 1) Publicity, 2) Assisting American Deserters, 3) Specialized Committee: JATEC, and 4) GI Movement: Assisting Antiwar-GIs.

4-1. Publicity

Besides the frequent demonstrations, Beheiren outreached global communities and maximized publicity from early on. In a full-page ad on *The New York Times* on October 1965, they asked, "*Bring peace in Vietnam, but, with bombs? From our own past experience*" (Beheiren Nyūsu, No. 2, 1965). This was a very characteristic of Beheiren in terms of reversing the postwar Japan-US relation by giving money to the American press to express 'our' idea, instead of 'we' receive money and the 'right' idea from America. (Tsurumi, Y, 1969, p.85). It appears that their ad resonated with American citizens, and Beheiren received positive comments and even donations from the American readers (Beheiren Nyūsu, No. 3, 1965).

Between 1966 and 1968, Beheiren held numerous events, inviting guests from abroad. The 1966 Lecture Tour with Howard Zinn, then a young professor of Boston University, and Ralph Featherstone, a field secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was one of them. Zinn and Featherstone

made a lasting theoretical impact on Beheiren as they kept talking about civil disobedience from the first-hand experience of nonviolent struggle in the Civil Right Movement (Yoshikawa, 2009). Meanwhile, the 1966 teach-in with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir generated megawatts of press coverage (Beheiren Nyūsu, No. 13 & 14, 1966; Havens, 1998, p. 66). Around the time, Canadian border had already been witnessing an exodus—America’s first boat people (Cortright, 1975; MacPherson, 1984). Beginning December 1966, Beheiren started outreaching American GIs by handing the flyers out directly to them around the US bases. The flyer, “*Message from Japan to American Soldiers,*” encouraged GIs to think and desert:

In 1931, our Government launched an undeclared war against China, disguising it under the name of the Manchurian Incident. Few people realized then that it was the beginning of World War II. Now in 1966, we feel that another undeclared war going on in Asia, may turn out to be the beginning of World War III... (Beheiren Nyūsu No. 16, 1967).

Despite distributing these flyers, Beheiren at the time did not expect that the emergence of deserters was coming.

4-2. Assisting American Deserters

On October 28, 1967, Beheiren was surprised when four American sailors deserted from the Carrier Intrepid and contacted them (Oda, 1995, p.160; Sekiya, 1998, p.20). The matter being what it was, the direct interactions had to begin immediately. Writers, farmers, professors, film/TV producers, photographers, mathematicians, students, and countless ordinary citizens secretly sheltered American deserters in their homes. The four sailors called themselves “patriotic deserters” who opposed the ‘unjust’ war (Beheiren Nyūsu, No. 27, 1967). Beheiren had the four sailors board on the Baikal, a ship belonging to the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from Yokohama to Nakhodka, which is very close to Japan. Around the time the ship entered international waters, Beheiren held a press conference to release the statements written by four deserters:

In our opinion, it is a crime that a technologically developed country systematically bombs an agricultural, poverty stricken country, and needlessly massacre civilians. We ask that US stop the bombing, withdraw from Vietnam, and let the Vietnamese people make self-determination. (Beheiren Nyūsu, 27, 1967).

One week later, the four deserters also held an international press conference at Moscow, then safely arrived in Sweden, one of few countries who accepted deserters, on December 29, 1967 (Sekiya, 1989, pp.28-29;

Beheiren Nyūsu. No. 27, 1967& No. 29, 1968). The four deserters were later called as the “Intrepid Four.” This drama occurred during the Prime Minister Sato’s visit to Washington DC to support President Lyndon Johnson for his war in Vietnam. It turned out that the US media coverage of the Intrepid Four was greater than Sato’s visit (Sekiya, 1989, p. 30). The whole process brought great publicity to Beheiren (Haven, 1987, p. 130).

4-3. Birth of the Specialized Committee: JATEC

The Intrepid Four was just the beginning. American deserters kept contacting Beheiren. To adapt to this newly emerged situation that required immediate attention with daunting tasks, Beheiren created an undercover operational group called Japan Technical Committee for Assistance to Antiwar U.S. Deserters (JATEC) in 1968. Their role was exclusively to assist American deserters getting out of Japan. While deserting is illegal under American martial law and deserters were target of inquiry, sheltering deserters in Japan was not illegal for Japanese citizen because there were no laws to control over those who supported deserters in Japan (Dassōhei Tsushin No. 8, 1970). However, due to ANPO, Japanese authorities would assist the American military authorities if asked. Nevertheless, JATEC achieved getting more deserters out of Japan until it was disrupted when one deserter was arrested in November 1968 in Hokkaido, the second largest Island of northernmost of Japan, because of a US agent, on his way to boarding a fishing boat to the USSR. This incident was given prominent coverage as a ‘spy’ incident, and shook Japan. Beheiren’s struggle deepened. To seek new routes and options, the representative of JATEC traveled to Europe, where he was contacted by the underground network of Europe’s Résistance movement and that of Algeria (Takahashi, 2007).

We are a group that related to Third World issues. We heard that you wanted to get American deserters out of your country. In our view, forging passports is the only way. We can teach you certain techniques for that purpose. (Takahashi, 2007, p. 84).

The techniques crossed the border, and later carried on in Japan (Takahashi, 2007). Two forged former passports from Europe returned to Europe carried by two American deserters from Japan. This was the moment that the transnational underground culture of civil resistance in Europe and Algeria succeeded in Japan. ‘State’ had no meaning in the context. A few years later, JATEC’s representative found that the anonymous person who taught him the technique was Henri Curiel, activist devoted to Algerian National

Liberation who was assassinated in Paris in 1978 (Takahashi, 2007). Like other precursors such as Gandhi and King, Curiel was killed for taking risk for the sacrificial service to the world at large.

4-4. GI Movement: Assisting Antiwar-GIs

By 1970, the Vietnam War had turned into a swamp. Japan was deeply integrated into the Nixon doctrine. Jieitai (the Self-Defense Forces of Japan) was forced to take some responsibility to help the US military. American soldiers were repeatedly sent to Vietnam from Japan and Okinawa, which was still under the US occupation. GI revolt were rampant across the US bases. Every major stockade erupted in some sort of rebellion, often resulting in serious property damage or personal injury, but the results of combat refusals ended not in punishment but in 'negotiation' (Cortright, 1975). There were too many such GIs and punishment backfired.

Who were those GIs? Unlike today, draft was a reality for every young man in the US although there were draft dodgers who avoided being drafted in various ways. Most soldiers who were sent to Vietnam came from working-class, lower-income families who had an average education level that was slightly below a high-school graduate, and had no ideas what war, military, or the state entailed before being enlisted. The number of black men drafted almost doubled, and they would die on the front lines in much greater numbers (Cortright, 1975; Harrison, 1993 & 1996; MacPherson, 1984; Zaroulis & Sullivan, 1984). A statement published in *Dassōhei Tsūshin*, one of the newsletters of Beheiren, reflects this demographical description.

I'm black. All I did in high-school was sports. I was not prepared for college, so I applied to Army. In military, we don't get the information we need. I started to wonder what was going on. In Germany, I gradually understood the truth about the military. I made the decision to refuse the orders, and to fight against the pigs (officers) instead. They did not tell me anything about underground papers like "Black Panther" but I found it and read them. Eventually a revolution that I never knew about occurred, a black revolution. (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 4, 1969).

When GIs erupted in Japan around 1970, American antiwar activists and lawyers started coming to work with Beheiren. Through working with them, Beheiren learned that counseling for legal discharge, such as Conscientious Objection (CO), was the most effective strategy because that was what the GIs wanted the most, and that was also what the American military authorities hated the most (Dassōhei Tsushin No. 11, 1970).

With this newly acquired knowledge and mindset, Beheiren changed the direction from getting the deserters

out of Japan to legally assist and support them in their fight against the military system within bases. After years of struggles with sheltering deserters and getting them out of Japan, which came with countless challenges, it was a transformational shift for Beheiren and JATEC. During this transformational phase of Beheiren movement, antiwar 'Coffeehouse' and underground newspapers played significant roles. For example, the *Semper Fi*, one of the hundreds of underground papers published during the Vietnam War, was created and circulated by GIs in the US Marine Corp Air Base (MCAB) in Iwakuni, the southeastern tip of Japan. In 1972, young students from Kyoto Beheiren opened a legendary Coffeehouse called "Hobbit" in Iwakuni. They helped in printing the *Semper Fi*, and distributing it by the MCAB or the nearby street, daily.

The turmoil in the MCAB in Iwakuni went beyond the region when the existence of nuclear in the base was revealed. The American civil rights lawyer I interviewed in Honolulu, who had lived in the upstairs of Hobbit between 1971 and 1972, who also traveled other US bases, recalled about Iwakuni and the Hobbit:

Iwakuni was the center of turmoil in early 1970s....it was actually one of the most insurgent bases in the world. There were very tightly organized black GIs...all of us were constantly watched and harassed by Japanese Security Police...but I fully enjoyed working with Beheiren folks. Inside the Hobbit, they had a nice little library with a lot of black liberation books...and we had music from 60s. In the Hobbit, we sit and talk what they are reading, and what is going on. Then, that nuclear news emerged. It went viral. The evidence of the nuclear was delivered with a map to a politician of Japan Socialist Party from the MCAB (S, E. personal interview, 2016).

Keeping nuclear in Japan is an outright violation against Japan's three non-nuclear principles. On top of that, Iwakuni is only a one-hour driving distance to Hiroshima. One can only imagine how this news enraged the nuclear-sensitive postwar Japanese citizens, and shook the governments of both Japan and the US. After all, this revelation was possible because of the close communication between active-duty GIs in the base and those involved in Beheiren.

While spending time in an open space like the Hobbit where GIs could speak freely and get a lot of information was a transformative opportunity, especially for young black GIs, the presence of the antiwar Coffeehouse in a small rural town of Iwakuni also attracted Japanese security police and the US military authority. Soon, the US Marine Corp formally ordered the Hobbit off-limits to GIs because the Hobbit is 'harmful' to the US security (Nakagawa, 2009). This repression was done by cooperation with Japanese authority. The off-limits notice displayed the indisputable nature of 'individual vs. state' narrative to all who involved in the movement. While American and Japanese activists worked tirelessly to end the war in

solidarity, American and Japanese authorities worked equally hard in liaison to oppress people who opposed their questionable policies. At the same time, this incident showed that the antiwar Coffeehouse turned to be effective. How was it seriously possible for a small Coffeehouse like the Hobbit in Iwakuni became a threat to the US Marine Corp authorities? In such political environment, American deserters and GIs left a variety of messages to Beheiren while they were in Japan. Their voices summarize the epitome of the Vietnam War, if not any war.

5. GI Messages Left to Beheiren

GI movement was both regional and global movement. It connected GIs with local citizens and went beyond. As direct interactions with deserters and American GIs increased, soldiers willingly expressed their true feelings, thinking, and opinions about war, military, and government to Beheiren and JATEC activists in casual conversations, in the form of interviews, statements, or letters to their families. I have so far analyzed a total of 157 such messages out of the database I created. For this paper, I will report three central themes that emerged from them: 1) antagonistic to US military or/and government; 2) Vietnam War is wrong; and 3) solidarity.

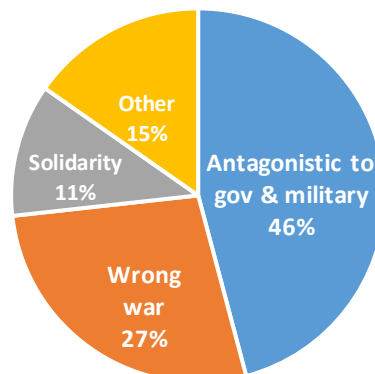
5-1. Table1 and Figure 1

Table 1. Themes of Messages

Emerging Themes from Messages	n (%)
Antagonistic to US military & Government	72 (46)
Vietnam War is wrong	43 (27)
Solidarity to end the war	18 (11)
Other	24 (15)
	157
Total	(99*)

*not 100% due to rounding

Figure 1. Themes of Messages



5-2. Antagonistic to US Military and Government

The most frequently expressed voice was antagonistic feelings and attitudes against the military and the US government as Table 1 & Figure 1. American soldiers were profoundly angry at their military officers and their government. Almost half the messages involved strong condemnation and rejection against the authority. They felt that they would rather kill the officers than kill the Vietnamese people.

- *There are so many problems in the base lately, and the stockade is always full. My friend punched an officer the other day, and he was lucky to go to court-martial. There is a rush for court-martial, so it is common to wait for 6 months (GI) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 1, 1969).*
- *Ever since I joined the Marine, I have been anti-military. Now, I am also an anti-American. (GI) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 14, 1970).*
- *In Vietnam, I realized that wrong ideas were imposed upon me...the US government occupies Vietnam and destroys the country for its own interests...the US military does not respect Vietnamese people. They use chemical weapons, and kill humans, livestock and crops, and remain unruffled. The military forfeited my dignity as a human being, and changed me into a killing machine. I started to feel ashamed that I have such a homeland. I left the military because I needed time and a new environment to crystallize the change that happened to me. (Deserter) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 16, 1971).*

5-3. Wrong War

The second most raised opinion was the “Vietnam war was wrong” or “unjust” or “shameless.” Active-duty GIs bluntly expressed that they could no longer participate in such a wrong war. Many were tormented by overwhelming feeling of guilt. Those GIs preferred going to jail to killing people in Vietnam.

- *The Vietnam War is wrong! If we don't protest now, we must forever hold ourselves accountable for murder and destruction. It is our responsibility to end this war (Deserter) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 8, 1970).*
- *With one shot of my 105 milligrams, I can easily destroy a small house in Vietnam...and kill 10-20 people...I was terrified when I realized they all had families like I do...I spoke to my superior, I sabotaged...nothing worked! There were nowhere to flee...if I'm asked to choose between going back to Vietnam, or going to jail, I will go to jail. No question about it! (Deserter) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue 11, 1970).*
- *I'm a criminal. I wanted to cry loudly. I wished I would have gone real crazy. Many of my fellow soldiers spoke of their actions...I cried. I did the same things. I was not the only one who was crazy in Vietnam... (GI) (JATEC Tsūshin, Issue 2, 1971).*

Most of GIs who were sent to Vietnam were very young—teenagers to around 20-years-old. Letters to their families at home were often soul-wrenching. At the age of 20 or younger, some deserters determined not to return to the US and expected not to see their families again as they knew that deserting was a serious ‘crime’ in the military system. While deserters had done the same as draft dodgers in refusing to participate in war,

they had to learn the truth slowly and by hard way through actual experiences (Cortright, 1975). Those are exactly the kind of young Americans whom Beheiren assisted.

5-4. Solidarity

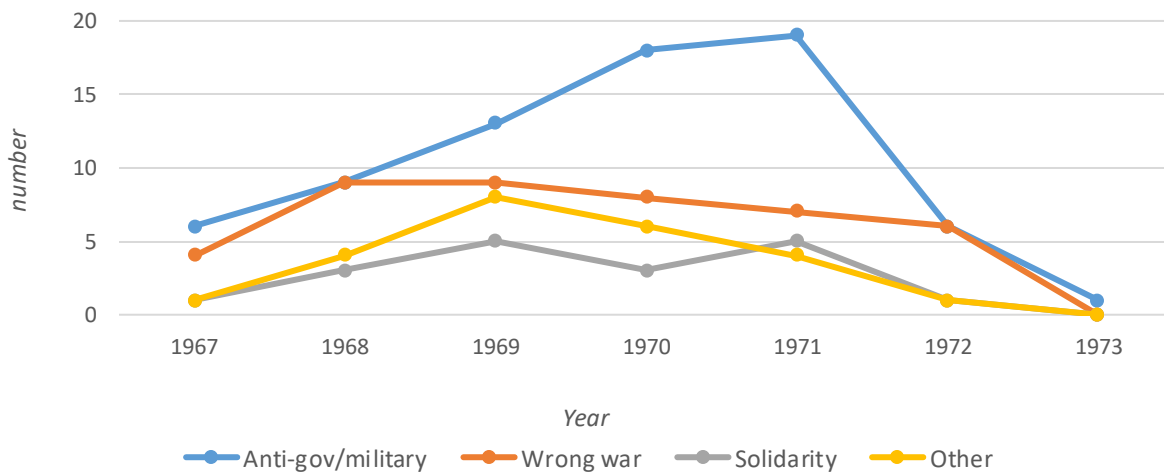
Active-duty GIs who chose to stand up within the base struggled collectively. They work closely with Beheiren activists in times of court-martial and direct negotiation. There were strong feelings of solidarity although the term ‘solidarity’ was not yet used much at the time.

- *To all the brothers and sisters in Okinawa. Your fight (against US oppression) is our fight. Your enemy is our enemy...I have to warn you. American racism and the military system deceive and threaten GIs...I want you to be careful.* (GI) (JATEC Tsūshin, Issue, 2, 1971).
- *The only way to end the war is solidarity. Capitalists are our enemy. They don't care about others' lives* (GI) (Dassōhei Tsūshin, Issue, 16, 1971).

Diani (2004) points out that networks provide the structure of social movements “free space,” that is areas of social interaction in which holders of specific worldviews reinforce mutual solidarity and experiment with alternative lifestyles (p. 348). Young American GIs who stood up within the base might have realized that alternative lifestyle was possible.

5-5. Figure 2

Figure 2 shows that GI’s hostility against the US authority peaked in 1971, the year when Iwakuni was in turmoil. The GI uprising rapidly declined in 1972 as the Paris Peace Talks moved forward.



In addition, included in the category “Other” include some confused or reluctant GI’s voice such as “*I heard the Intrepid Four guys are happy. Isn’t it communist’s propaganda? Tell me the truth*” (Beheiren Nyūsu, Issue 29, 1968). Fewer messages from deserters might be due to semi-clandestine nature of hiding deserters that involved sensitive issues.

5-6. Race-Relation in the Military during the Vietnam War

In addition to these three themes, race-relation in the context of the 1960s, was an important aspect of their messages as an overarching theme. Anti-Vietnam War movement started during the heyday of the US Civil Rights Movement, and peaked when the Civil Rights Movement started to decline. Many off-base facilities were still segregated in the US, and black GIs were subjected to excessive harassment, beaten more, and given longer jail sentences (Cortright, 1975, p. 72-75). Thus, the GI revolt in the US bases cannot be discussed without addressing race-relations. No statement could possibly show the inseparable connection of the Civil Rights Movement and the anti-Vietnam War movement more than the leaflet distributed in McComb, Mississippi in 1965, calling for draft resistance:

No Mississippi Negroes should be fighting in Vietnam for the White Man’s freedom, until all the Negro People are free in Mississippi...No one has a right to ask us to risk our lives and kill other Colored People in Santo Doming and Vietnam so that the White American can get richer. We will be perceived as traitors by all the Colored People of the world if the Negro people continue to fight and die without a cause. (Lynd & Lynd, 1995, p. 271).

Racism in military was indeed the continuous issues that Beheiren repeatedly reported in their newsletters. In fact, racism is one of the contributing factors of antagonistic feelings and attitudes against the authority. It was not uncommon for black GIs to feel dilemma in Vietnam for killing other people of color.

While I was laying on bed in the field hospital in Japan to recover from the injure I got in Vietnam, there was one thing that I kept thinking about....one thing that happened to me in Vietnam....Why did the enemy let me escape from the scene when they were killing my fellow white soldiers? I wondered if they knew ‘our’ people (blacks) were suffering like they were. Thinking of that.....I have come to conclude, No! I would never again fight against the Vietnamese people (Deserter) (Beheiren Nyūsu, Issue 33, 1968).

Chabot and Vinthagen (2015) recently re-examined the resistance struggles of Gandhi and Frantz Fanon, who sought ‘human emancipation,’ called this ongoing race-relation and the privileged Western colonialism as the worldwide ‘coloniality’ line. The black GIs in Vietnam might have seen this (then) unnamed ‘coloniality’ line

in fighting against the oppressed people of color in Vietnam, just like themselves in the still socio-politically segregated US. Black GIs were rightfully angry, but it is interesting that they learned about the emerging black power movement while they were stationed in Japan where they started to feel empowered. Those ‘awoken’ black GIs were comfortable enough to openly talk about racism with Beheiren activists.

6. Conclusion

Beheiren launched the anti-Vietnam War movement in 1965 by taking to the street and publishing newsletters. In solidarity with diverse groups of transnational actors, Beheiren posed fundamental questions against the US aggression in Vietnam. The movement shook the US military and the Japanese government up by sticking to its sole purpose of “Peace in Vietnam.”

Today, Beheiren is history. The theory of civil disobedience started in Concord, Massachusetts, traveled to Gandhi’s South Africa and then to colonial India. A century later, it returned to the Deep South in the US amid the Civil Rights Movement. When many civil rights activists drifted toward the anti-Vietnam War movement, the theory of civil disobedience was delivered to Beheiren by Howard Zinn and Featherstone. Beheiren and JATEC applied the theory of civil disobedience into actual practice, and was later reinforced even more by underground transnational resistance group in Europe. Postwar Japanese citizens, who still had fresh memories of the harsh reality of war and its aftermath, were overwhelmingly sick and tired of anything related to ‘war,’ just like many American GIs felt 20 years later amid the Vietnam War.

In a sense, deserters and antiwar GIs during the Vietnam War were messengers, telling the truth about the absurdity of war. With Beheiren, decision to speak/act was made individually. Transformation occurred to those messengers in their awakening processes, followed by emancipation. Their transformational pattern was both conscious and behavioral. While Beheiren placed emphasis on individual/independent thinking and action, they also devoted to collective action. This balance between keeping independence and acting collectively at the same time in the movement might have been the key as to why Beheiren sustained. Meanwhile, because of the timeless nature of transcultural dynamics embedded in nonviolent direct action, war narrative was about to change by early 1970s. Beheiren and transnational actors, who chose to follow the passage of nonviolent struggle, appeared to be connected beyond concepts such as state, nationality, race and

ethnicity, class, religion, gender, age, language and culture. They demonstrated in solidarity that ordinary citizens could challenge authorities, individually and collectively, when authorities were engaging outright injustice. It was quietly powerful. No wonder the Vietnam War is still such an uncomfortable narrative in the US where engaging in war is becoming her tradition. Further study of Beheiren movement could advance what transcultural dynamics may look like, along with its impact on sustainable activism.

7. References

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