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A civilized nation: Japan and the Red Cross 1877–1900

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ABSTRACT

The history of both the Red Cross and the Japanese Red Cross is based on a teleological and eurocentric narrative which is strongly shaped by national histories and focused on persons. To assume 1863 as the founding date of the Red Cross is highly debatable, considering that most national relief organisations were renamed 'Red Cross Societies' only in the 1880s. In this Japan is no exception, since first a Haku-Ai-Sha (Philanthropic Society) was founded in 1877 and then turned into the Japanese Red Cross Society in 1887. Japanese actors must be regarded as intrinsically motivated and active participants in the Red Cross movement who saw an ideal and a model in the Euro-American 'way of civilisation' and humanity. It has taken about 30 years to turn the Haku-Ai-Sha in Japan into a humanitarian society which is accepted both at home and abroad and, with its 728,507 members in 1900, which constituted the largest Red Cross Society in the world.

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The Red Cross movement

The Red Cross is a humanitarian organisation operating worldwide. Under the aspect of humanity it claims for itself a successful story of humanity – universal, neutral, non-denominational and apolitical, only committed to the person in need. This history of humanity is mostly focused on individuals – predominantly male – who have worked for the movement and are virtually idealized as heroes. Legal, social, political and national as well as global structures have been of minor concern. The original region of humanity under the sign of a red cross is Europe, and from there the Red Cross idea, as the better concept, made its way into the world according to the principles of diffusion, and to this day has proved its worth. The aspect of Eurocentrism has contributed to neglecting structures and underestimating regional conditions (for example, in Japan). Concerning its founding phase, the Red Cross narrative is a target-oriented narrative without alternatives and hardly any deviations or breaks and rightfully classified as teleological. Though the Red Cross and the Red Crescent movements have been described as 'global movements' in relevant literature, the history of the Red Cross is strongly shaped by national histories, with the nation being both actor and place of action. The foundation of a national Red Cross society is understood as the gauge of the humanity, modernity and civilized condition of a nation and

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is communicated accordingly. Even research published between 2009 and 2013 has not transcended the narrative patterns described above and thus perpetuates these aspects of the history of the Red Cross.¹ Writings on the Red Cross in Japan can be roughly divided into three categories. First, the Japanese Red Cross itself and those working for it have seen to their own history. Writings from this side were produced on specific occasions such as jubilees or conferences. The history of the Japanese Red Cross 'Jindō Sono Ayumi' (The Course of Humanity),² published in 1978 on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Japanese Red Cross Society, may serve as an example. Writings of this kind focus predominantly on event history and are highly informative. They are, however, tendentious in that they relate an internal story of success, are bound to a memory culture, and are orientated towards the master narrative of the Red Cross. In this the genesis of the Japanese Red Cross fits right in with the narrative of the Red Cross as such with only slight divergences. On the other hand there is a range of specialist literature concerned with the relationship between the Japanese Red Cross and the international Red Cross and Red Crescent movements. Authors such as Masui Takashi,³ Koike Masayuki⁴ and Inoue Tadao⁵ are closely associated with the Japanese Red Cross as its employees, as is also the case with Ryūko Yoshikawa⁶, the biographer of the founder of the Japanese Red Cross, Sano Tsunetami. A third category finally comprises academic writings. As far as I know, the following texts have come in Western languages: *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan* by Olive Checkland⁷ as well as several articles by the Swiss author, Roger Mottini,⁸ who also touches on the Red Cross in his 1998 dissertation in political science. In 2013 a PhD thesis was written by Gregory John DePies⁹ on 'Humanitarian Empire: The Red Cross in Japan, 1877–1945', which I could not consult, however, as it has not yet been published; recently an article by Sho Konishi¹⁰ has come out on 'The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organization in Japan'. While Olive Checkland not only deals with the Japanese Red Cross in her book but also with aspects of humanity and medicine in a military context, Roger Mottini in his articles has looked into Swiss-Japanese relations. Sho Konishi, for his part, points to precursors of humanity as well as to personal and institutional continuities in nineteenth-century Japan preceding the emergence of the Japanese Red Cross. For example, he regards Juntendō as an important institution where diverse and hybrid forms of humanity were practised even before the foundation of the Japanese Red Cross. At present the only academic historical work in Japanese dealing with the history of the Japanese Red Cross is, as far as I know, the anthology *Nihon Sekijūjūjūshū to Jindō Enjo* (The Japanese Red Cross and Humanitarian Aid), edited by Kurosawa and Kawai¹¹ in 2009.

In explaining the introduction and successful implementation of the Red Cross idea in Japan, relevant literature to date has mainly made use of the diffusion model, which, according to Sebastian Conrad, can be characterized as a 'one-way' model: 'Boundary crossing processes and the development of the modern world cannot simply be seen as results of diffusion, although this view has been common practice for a long time.'¹² In a paper on the Salvation Army as 'one of the most successful global philanthropic movements', Harald Fischer-Tiné¹³ has demonstrated the close interaction between the head office and the periphery and has highlighted rhetorical patterns that show how the periphery influenced concepts of the head office.

Over and above this, with regard to Japan and both in Japanese and Western relevant literature, the successful introduction of the Red Cross idea has so far been accounted for by referring to the concept of universalism: since humanitarianism is a human activity found in

all societies, the Red Cross could also meet with success in Japan. 'One of the characteristics of internationalism is universalism,' says Masayuki Koike¹⁴ with reference to the Red Cross. Closer examination, however, reveals that Koike refers to Western humanitarianism, so that universalism here means latent Eurocentrism. A clearer judgement is pronounced by Olive Checkland, who in her book *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan*, published in 1992, wrote: 'What is remarkable is that Japan should embrace Western humanitarianism, based as it was on Western ethics and Christian values, in defiance of the old samurai code of battlefield behavior'¹⁵; in the subsequent chapter she refers to theorists of humanitarian ethics such as J.J. Rousseau, Hugo Grotius and Francis Lieber. On the other hand, Yukiko Nishikawa names four principles that constituted Japan's humanitarianism around 1900: Shintōism, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Bushidō. 'Ethical ideas in the *Bushidō* demonstrate benevolence to other people as an important moral conduct.'¹⁶ In claiming this, however, Nishikawa neglects that 'Bushidō' itself is a modern construct. It had been designed at the turn of the century by the Japanese Quaker, Nitobe Inazō (1862–1933), under the influence of the West in order to counter Western ideas by an independent system of values. Last but not least, for Gisela and Dieter Riesenberger 'it was not by chance that the foundation of this international relief organization came from the European-Christian area, in which the idea of humanity was alive and closely connected with the concepts of civilization and progress.'¹⁷

These attempts at explaining the successful implementation of the Red Cross idea from universalistic and diffusionistic approaches fail, however, in giving sufficient reasons why it was just the Red Cross that was established in Japan. For this it is necessary to also include the actors' point of view, as will be done later with reference to Sano and Ishiguro.

It is only recently that Julia F. Irwin in her book on the Red Cross in the United States, *Making the World Safe*¹⁸, has made it clear that the enormous development of this humanitarian society before and during the First World War was linked to deliberate measures taken by the government. The US government had realized the additional value of a humanitarian policy and used this as a political and diplomatic instrument. The instrument chosen was the national Red Cross Society. Julia F. Irwin has pointed out that developing the US Red Cross into the largest national relief organisation took the span of one generation after its foundation (from 1881 to 1911). A similar development can be studied in the example of the Japanese Red Cross. Thus Japan can serve here as a model to question the conventional history of the Red Cross and to open up an alternative perspective.

The Red Cross movement: its beginnings and structures

The founder of the Japanese Red Cross, Sano Tsunetami (1822–1902), has always been purported to have learned about the Red Cross at the World's Fair in Paris and, inspired by this humanitarian organisation, to have brought into being a corresponding Japanese relief organisation in 1877, which was transformed into the Japanese Red Cross in 1887.¹⁹ In keeping with this version Sano Tsunetami has often been called the 'Japanese Dunant', which says something about Eurocentric tendencies in relevant Japanese literature. Although the two never met and their careers took completely different courses, their biographies are seen as running parallel: both were born in the 1820s, both died after 1900. What Solférino stands for in Henri Dunant's life is equalled for Sano Tsunetami by the battle of Tabaruzaka, which is regarded as the 'Japanese Solférino'.²⁰ Moreover, in his humanitarian activities Sano Tsunetami is supposed to have put into practice medical principles written

down by the German physician C.W. Hufeland (1762–1836) in the chapter on ‘The situation of the physician’ in his late book *Enchiridion Medicum*.²¹ Fumitaka Kurosawa writes: ‘It is probably because he had received such teachings that he could develop such a deep liking for the Red Cross idea in such a short time.’²² Although I do not want to question these facts nor their chronological sequence, this account neglects alternatives, processes of inculturation and original Japanese contributions to the emergence of a humanitarian organisation. On the basis of my research I would like to highlight the argument that the Red Cross had by no means been sufficiently established at the World’s Fair in Paris in 1867 for Sano to be prompted solely by the Red Cross to a similar humanitarian project in Japan. My argument is rather that the Red Cross idea was something new both in the West and in Japan. What Sano Tsunetami met with in Paris was therefore not *the* Red Cross but the variety of a ‘humanitarian emergence’ in Europe. In his book *The Birth of the Modern World*,²³ Christopher A. Bayly has demonstrated that the world of the nineteenth century has to be seen as much more complex and plural than has been suggested by common ‘world histories.’ Quite in accordance with Christopher A. Bayly’s concept of diversity the humanitarian movement under a red cross was also in Europe a diverse matter, which formed gradually into a Red Cross.

This is likely to apply to the World’s Fair in Vienna in 1873, where Sano Tsunetami is said to have met again with the Red Cross. *The* Red Cross did not exist as a well-structured organisation. The ‘Comité international et permanent de secours aux militaires blessés’ (Geneva) is known to have transformed its name into ‘Comité international de la Croix Rouge’²⁴ only in 1875, and the ‘Internationale Privat-Conferenz’ negotiating improved care for soldiers wounded and diseased in warfare, which was organized by Theodor Billroth and J. v. Mundy, was not held in a Red Cross pavilion but in a so-called ambulance pavilion.²⁵

The red cross was initially used merely as a sign and not as a name. A proof of this can be found in the earliest foundation of a relief society according to the Geneva Agreements of October 1863. The Württembergische Sanitätsverein (Württemberg Ambulance Society) was founded on 12 November 1863 by Dr Hahn, supported by the Kingdom of Württemberg, and thus followed the Geneva Appeal. But it was only after 1887, and officially only after 1896, that the Württembergische Sanitätsverein, meantime renamed ‘Württembergisches Freiwilliges Sanitätscorps’ in 1881, called itself ‘Württembergischer Landesverein vom Roten Kreuz’. A similar development can be observed in the example of the ‘Centralkomitee der deutschen Vereine zur Pflege im Felde verwundeter und erkrankter Krieger’, which was an umbrella organisation of the relief and rescue societies in the German area founded in 1869. As late as from 1879 did this German central committee call itself ‘Centralkomitee der Deutschen Vereine vom Roten Kreuz’.²⁶ Smaller relief societies, too, integrated the ‘Red Cross’ as a sign into the title of their organisation, for example the ‘Hilfsschwestern-Verein’ (Assistant Nurses’ Society) founded in 1875 by Hedwig von Rittberg (1836–96). After the Countess’ death the society was first renamed ‘Gräfin Rittbergscher Hilfsschwestern-Verein’ and later ‘Gräfin Rittberg Schwestern-Verein vom Roten Kreuz’.²⁷ The orders of knights, on the other hand, can be observed to have used the red cross as a sign, but did not adopt it as part of the names of their organisations. The Badische Frauenverein, which came into being as a reaction to the war in Northern Italy in 1859, was an institution that took overall charge of the relief work, as had been stipulated in Geneva in 1863; in 1889 it was transformed into a Baden Red Cross Society under the name of ‘Badischer Landesverein vom Roten Kreuz’.²⁸

As a result three forms of relief societies can be distinguished at present. Those whose governments had acceded to the Geneva Convention of 1864 bore the red cross as a sign

of identification and protection, but not necessarily as the title 'Red Cross' for their organisations. Examples of this are the Württembergische Sanitätsverein, the Centralkomitee des Preußischen Vereins zur Pflege im Felde verwundeter und erkrankter Krieger and other national societies. Secondly, relief societies whose governments had not yet acceded to the Geneva Convention bore a red cross neither in their titles nor as a sign. This is the case with the Japanese relief society, which we will deal with below. And finally, relief societies which existed as alternatives to the Red Cross movement, such as the Hilfsschwestern-Verein founded by Rittberg and the Teutonic Order of Knights. While a relief society like the Rittberg Society adopted the 'Red Cross' as part of their organisation's name, the orders of knights did not.

In the main the relevant Japanese literature on the emergence of the Red Cross movement also follows the historiography written in Western languages. Deviations are so scarce that the views can be regarded as congruent.²⁹ At this point it is of historiographic interest that the relevant Japanese literature on the Red Cross in general and on the Japanese Red Cross in particular is also based on teleology and Eurocentrism. Moreover, here and there a heroic story is told, focused on Henri Dunant as the spiritual founder of the Red Cross.³⁰ In his narrower social and wider political sphere he was surrounded by sensible and competent men – be it in Geneva or elsewhere in Europe – who could not help but translate Dunant's humanitarian ideas into practice in the spiritual climate of the Europe of their times and thus bring about the successful outcome of the humanitarian project.³¹ This story, however, neglects the structures which constituted essential conditions for a red cross to make its way finally initially as a sign and later as a Red Cross organisation.

First it must be said here that the humanitarian idea and its implementation was – at least on an international level – a matter of the aristocratic and upper classes, which makes it a phenomenon of the elites. In Japan, too, the supporters of this humanitarian idea were members of the upper class. Here as also there a major part was played by the medical profession, particularly by medical officers. For Japan it must be emphasized that these doctors had studied Western medicine and through their studies had a good command of English, French and German. This made it possible, in the first place, for this section to interact on a global level with persons in Europe. They possessed both the necessary prerequisites of education and the financial means as well as the means of communication and the necessary access and contact to governments and administrations. Secondly, the ability of the Red Cross to assert itself depended largely on the nation-state. The representatives at the conferences between 1863 and 1914, which were dedicated to exchange and to the continuation and development of the Red Cross, were almost completely sent by their nation-states, except for the representatives of the orders of knights. Moreover, the national Red Cross societies emerged exclusively in communities providing the structures of nation-states, as was also the case in Japan. In any case the Red Cross movement cannot be regarded as universal in its founding phase in the nineteenth century; it was rather highly selective in social, national and political respects.

Japan and the Red Cross movement

From quite an early stage Japan and its representatives took an interest in the Red Cross movement. Japan's relations to the Red Cross movement can be dated back to 1867, which provides a key event for the Red Cross in Japan inasmuch as the founder of the Japanese

Red Cross, Sano Tsunetami, is said to have got to know the Red Cross at the World's Fair in Paris in 1867.

Moreover, the official foreign mission led by Iwakura Tomomi, which Meiji Japan sent abroad in 1871, is reported to have visited Switzerland in 1873. Their first stop was in Zurich, followed by a stay in Bern, which included an audience with the Swiss Federal President, Peter Cérésole. From 30 June 1873 to 15 July 1873 they visited Geneva. The Japanese delegation is reported to have visited Villa Bartholini on 1 July 1873 when they were received by Gustave Moynier, the chairman of the Geneva Committee. This reception is due to an invitation by the Comité international de secours aux blessés.³²

It is quite true, on the one hand, that the humanitarian society brought into being in 1877 by Sano Tsunetami and Ogyū Yuzuru (1839–1910) under the name of 'Haku-Ai-Sha' during the Japanese civil war (Seinan War) was transformed into a Japanese Red Cross in 1887, but on the other hand, teleologising the events obscures one's view of the historical circumstances – for the actors, Sano and Ogyū, deliberately refrained from founding a Red Cross society. Furthermore, in my view it is highly doubtful whether it is really the Red Cross that prompted Sano to found a humanitarian society. Information on this issue can be gained from the diary of Alexander von Siebold (1846–1911). According to his diary Alexander von Siebold in his capacity as a diplomat and adviser to the Japanese government met Sano Tsunetami six times altogether between 3 April and 11 April 1877 and advised him on founding a humanitarian society: '[Sano] has been charged with forming an ambulance corps modeled on the Marian Society. [...]', Alexander von Siebold finished his report on 11 April 1877 about his meetings and advisory talks with Sano.³³ This indicates that Sano was not inspired by the Red Cross but shared alternative ideas. If one considers moreover that Sano was descended from the lower ranks of the aristocracy, an order of knights like the Teutonic Order of Knights and their Marian Society as embodied by Alexander von Siebold must have appeared attractive to him. The Teutonic Order of Knights could look back on a history of many centuries, dating back to the twelfth century. This may also have attracted Sano in his considerations.

There are other circumstances that speak against the foundation of a Red Cross in the Japan of 1877: it was not long after the last persecutions of Christians had ended and freedom of religion had been announced in 1873. A sign of the cross in the 1870s in Japan would not have been interpreted as a sign of humanity. In addition the red cross was already in use. Under international law the red cross was protected by the Geneva Convention. Japan would have had to reckon with resistance from abroad if it had used a red cross without being authorized to do so.³⁴ Furthermore an accidental factor made it impossible to introduce a red cross on the battlefields of the Seinan War, for the sign of the cross was not unknown in Japan. It can be traced back to two sources: first to the *kutsuwa*, the Japanese word for bit ring, and secondly it had developed from the Sino-Japanese numeral for ten (十; jū). Even the form of the cross known as St Andrew's Cross in Europe existed in Japan: the Niwa family as Daimyō in Nihonmatsu in the province of Hitachi bore two rods arranged crosswise, the so-called Niwa-chigai-bō as a *Mon* (coat of arms). In our context of the Seinan War, however, it is most decisive that the House of Shimadzu, which ruled the province of Satsuma as Daimyō in Kagoshima, bore the Sino-Japanese numeral 'ten' (十) in red as family arms (*Mon*), whereas the younger line of this House of Shimadzu as Daimyō of Sadowara in the province of Hyūga bore the same *Mon* in light blue. Later the Sino-Japanese numeral for 10 (十) was enveloped by a ring. As field banners the *Mon* were black on a white ground.³⁵

Against this domestic Japanese background, too, a red cross would have easily been misinterpreted in the Seinan War. The relief society called Haku-Ai bore as its sign a red dot with a red bar underneath on a white ground. This sign was called 'Beni-Ichi-Maru' [beni: Jap. for 'red'; ichi: Jap. for 'one'; maru: Jap. for 'dot'] and was composed of two parts, the red dot and the red bar. While the red bar was the badge which the Japanese military ambulance service had borne since its foundation in 1871/2, the red dot is by no means to be identified with the red solar orb. The sources just call it a red dot, so an association with the red solar orb might be a later interpretation.

Finally, the name of the humanitarian society was also chosen by Sano and Ogyū with utmost care. If one takes into account the situation of their contemporaries, nobody in Japan would have associated a red cross or sekijūji (Jap. for 'red cross') with humanity. In the Meiji era 'Haku -Ai' can be found in the context of relief activities and social institutions. The origin of 'Haku-Ai', however, is much older; it refers to the central Buddhist value of 'all-embracing' or 'universal love'. In Confucianism the term is the equivalent of the cardinal virtue of shared humanity, 'Jin'. By choosing Haku-Ai for a humanitarian society the actors could take up the spirit of Buddhist and Confucian moral concepts in order to make an organized form of assistance socially acceptable in the Japan of the 1870s. By referring to Han Yü³⁶ (768–824), who had equated the Buddhist value of 'Haku-Ai' with the Confucian virtue of shared humanity, 'Jin', in his work 'Gendō'³⁷ in the ninth century, competing world views could also be neutralized. For Western Christianity, on the other hand, reference to 'all-embracing love' could allude to the concepts of love of mankind and compassion. Thus Sano and Ogyū had found a name for their humanitarian society which was permeable and flexible both outwards and inwards. In this way 'Haku-Ai' became the central term for humanity in the Meiji era and equivalent to English 'humanity' and French 'humanité'. 'Haku-Ai', however, is not a newly invented word, as it can be traced back beyond the Tang era (618–907). But Haku-Ai was given a new meaning in the Meiji era, as it was first associated with humanity under the sign of the red cross and then came to stand also for humanity beyond the battlefield.

Summing up the circumstances explained above, it is consistent that in the founding document of the Haku-Ai Society³⁸ in 1877 'red cross' is neither a point of reference nor is it mentioned by the founders, Sano and Ogyū. The document rather refers to a 'custom in Europe and the USA' (kanshū [sic]) according to which, in case of war, the individual states support each other in a humanitarian way by sending material and staff through corresponding forms of organisation. On the other hand the text mentions European-American civilisation (Ō-bei-bunmei no kuni), which stands for the exemplary nature of Europe and the United States in situations of war. From this we can gather that in actors like Sano and Ogyū Eurocentrism was already inherent, but that at the same time *the* Red Cross did not play a dominant part in their decision to found the Haku-Ai Society. The examples above may suffice to show that the historiography of the Red Cross, because of its obligation to the memory culture of this organisation, smoothes out historical circumstances towards a consistent narrative.

Between 1884 and 1912 Japan sent representatives to all Red Cross conferences. Thus it is less universal principles that were at work also to establish the Red Cross in Japan than intrinsically motivated measures on the Japanese side which led to the formation of the first Asian Red Cross society just in the Japan of the Meiji era. Together with the Ottoman Empire and the United States Japan was the first non-European country in the 1880s where

a humanitarian society in the spirit of the Red Cross movement came into being.³⁹ Japan could participate in this humanitarian movement because it met the so-called ‘Geneva Criteria’, which were required for a successful participation in the Red Cross movement. These criteria first turned up in talks between representatives from Japan and the Geneva Committee. After a relief society had first been constituted in 1877 Japan took part for the first time, as an observer state, in a Red Cross conference in Geneva in 1884, where it was represented by Dr Hashimoto Tsunatsune (1845–1909) and Alexander von Siebold. In their talks the President of the Geneva Committee, Gustave Moynier, Hashimoto Tsunatsune and Alexander von Siebold discussed among other things issues that concerned Japan’s relation to the humanitarian movement around the sign of the red cross. The Japanese side was able to allay the doubts of the Geneva Committee in those issues that concerned its accession to the Geneva Convention. There were essentially four issues that needed to be discussed and complied with as preconditions for accession to the Red Cross movement: morals; law; Western medicine; and acknowledgement of the Red Cross emblem. The Japanese representative Hashimoto could affirm that Japan would comply with the criteria in all four issues.⁴⁰ In Japan the act concerning the Japanese accession to the Geneva Convention was approved on 16 November 1886, and consequently Japan acceded to the Geneva Convention. The Haku-Ai Society was transformed into a Japanese Red Cross Society in 1887. After that Japan was officially represented at the Red Cross Conference in Karlsruhe and proved an active participant not only here but in all other following Red Cross conferences. The fact, however, that Japan was able to send national representatives to this conference is therefore less due to universal principles but to the following circumstances: first that Japan had become a signatory of the Geneva Convention and that the national relief society had been acknowledged by the authorities in Geneva, secondly that Japan and its representatives had shown an interest in the humanitarian project from the beginning, thirdly that they were intrinsically motivated to play an active part in the movement, and fourthly were ready to comply with the criteria demanded for participation. Also from the movement’s practice of invitations one can tell that it was not universal principles that were at work but that the Red Cross movement worked selectively and that only communities constituted as national states and complying with the principle of ‘being civilized’ could participate. Keeping in mind that the Red Cross conferences in the years from 1867 to 1912 were hosted by the Great Powers of the time, in Switzerland (Geneva), and in Baden (Karlsruhe) universality was also out of the question in this respect.

Measures to implement the Red Cross in Japan

The history of the Red Cross begins, so to speak, with ‘A Memory of Solférino’. Memory and remembrance within the Red Cross are by no means phenomena of our time. The founding generation of the Red Cross already worked at establishing a homogenous memory culture which can be regarded as transcultural since it is found worldwide, beyond limitations of countries and cultures, with only scarce deviations due to national features. Japan was involved in the memory culture of the Red Cross from the very beginning. When the 25th anniversary of the Red Cross was to be celebrated with a big ceremony in Geneva in 1888, the Japanese actors planned a parallel event in Tokyo, which took place in Ueno Park.⁴¹ Moreover even in Meiji year 30 (1897) Japan began to think about celebrations for the 25th anniversary of its own Red Cross Society in 1902 (Meiji 35), as is evident from a letter written

by Sano to Foreign Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu on 14 August 1897.⁴² Even at this early date it is clear that the Japanese national Red Cross Society was to be put down to the foundation of the so-called Haku-Ai Society in 1877, which is said to have been brought into being by Sano Tsunetami (1822–1902) in the spirit of the Red Cross concept. For the diffusion of the Red Cross idea in Japan actors like Sano Tsunetami and the Japanese medical officer, Ishiguro Tadanori (1845–1941), used the traditional narrative of the Red Cross. The Red Cross Conference in Karlsruhe had, among other things, dealt with the question of which

‘measures [are to be] taken to spread the knowledge of the Geneva Convention in the army, in associations particularly interested in its application, and in the public at large.’⁴³

Ishiguro Tadanori as a member of the delegation at the conference in Karlsruhe tells us about his answer to this appeal in his memoirs. On returning from Europe Ishiguro developed a concept for an ‘event with tableaux’. This was a slideshow which was to serve both to recruit members and to generate funds. Relevant literature mentions this means of advertising but ignores the aspect that with this slideshow Ishiguro also founded the memory culture of the Japanese Red Cross. For in this slideshow a story is told which up to now has been part of the basic tradition of the Japanese Red Cross. The following account is based on Ishiguro’s summary of the slide show in year Meiji 24 (1891).⁴⁴

Ishiguro starts his slideshow with an introduction into the field for which the Red Cross is responsible. Since warfare is inevitable but causes a great deal of suffering for the population, there must be help for those that go to war. This is the task to which the Red Cross attends:

‘The responsibility of the Red Cross is to honour those diseased and injured in warfare and to support them with loving care.’⁴⁵

Ishiguro sees the beginning of a humanitarian movement in the Crimean War where Florence Nightingale worked as a nurse. As the starting point for the Red Cross movement, on the other hand, he assumes the Battle of Solferino. Here he talks about Dunant’s commitment, about the publication of his recollections, about the conclusion of the Geneva Convention, which 11 countries acceded to. Ishiguro makes it clear that a red cross was introduced as the sign of the relief societies, which must, however, not be misinterpreted as a religious sign but has to be interpreted as the reversal of the Swiss national colours.⁴⁶

In the following section Ishiguro explains Japan’s motivation for acceding to the Geneva Convention and for establishing a Japanese Red Cross Society. Here he appeals to the audience’s emotions by outlining the situation after a battle in vivid words assisted by the photos. In order to grant the relief also brought about by Red Cross helpers to Japanese soldiers and with the Tennō’s consent Japan has acceded to the Geneva Convention. The Geneva Convention is based on the principle of mutuality, that is, Japan could hope in all future wars it might wage against a signatory of the Geneva Convention that its own soldiers would be given treatment.⁴⁷

As concerns humanity in Japan, Ishiguro in his lecture refers to the age-old tradition of humanitarian principles governing action in Japan. As evidence of this he names Empress Jingū in early Japanese history and the Taiwan Campaign in 1874, when Japan proved its humanity. The Japanese Red Cross in turn has its origin in the Seinan War of 1877. Ishiguro names Sano Tsunetami and Ogyū Yuzuru as major actors, whose request to found a relief society was approved by the commander-in-chief of the Imperial Army, Arisugawa no Miya Taruhito (1835–95). Supported by the imperial court Japan had then acceded to the Geneva Convention and had founded a Japanese Red Cross Society. The Japanese Red Cross at present had a hospital at its disposal which would be used as a civilian institution in time of peace and as a military hospital in war. Hitherto the Japanese Red Cross had gone

into action at the eruption of the Bandaisan Volcano (1888) and at the wreck of a Turkish battleship (1890).⁴⁸

In Ishiguro's text several issues are made clear. First, the slideshow is an event designed to inform people about the Red Cross and its activities. But beyond their informative character his words indicate that Japan's accession to the Geneva Convention and the establishment of a Japanese Red Cross Society not only needed explaining but also have to be justified for his audience by the principle of mutuality. Thirdly, Ishiguro tells us which criteria Japan had to meet to take part in the Red Cross movement. Ishiguro names four criteria: first, religious conditions; second, medical conditions; third a tradition of dealing with persons wounded in warfare; and fourth, a moral attitude towards these persons. In all four respects Ishiguro can confirm that the criteria have been complied with. In Japan such religions are practised – Buddhism, Shintoism and Confucianism – as are focused on humanity. The medical system has been reformed and has become more and more like Western medicine. Persons wounded in warfare have been cared for from time immemorial.

Supported by his wife, Ishiguro toured Japan and held these slideshows in public buildings – mostly schoolhouses – both in towns and in the country. The shows were very popular and successful. First, new members could be recruited; second local newspapers reported about the event; and third, the Empress showed an interest, which in turn increased press coverage. Gradually demand rose to such an extent that Ishiguro was no longer able to hold the shows himself but had to delegate the job.⁴⁹ Over the years the show was adapted to historical conditions. The series of photos preserved until today contains 42 transparencies, completed by episodes from Japanese Red Cross actions during the wars of the Meiji era.

As a matter of course Sano Tsunetami was also involved in the implementation of the Red Cross in Japan. He also promoted the cause of the Red Cross by lecture tours. From a lecture he gave in his home prefecture of Saga on May 14 in year Meiji 26 (1893) it is evident that humanity had meantime been embedded in an increasingly nationalistic concept.⁵⁰ The central term in this context is *Chū-Ai*, composed of the characters for 'loyalty' and 'love', with 'loyalty' being equated with loyalty to the nation. Sano, too, regards wars as inevitable, since the armed forces are needed to defend the country in a defensive war to avoid occupation. Sano conceives the world as a competitive party of diverse countries protecting themselves by means of their armed forces. The Red Cross is the society which comes to the aid of those that have been wounded in these wars. For some years Japan had also had its Red Cross Society, which supported the ambulance service. Sano sees the historical origin of the formation of the Red Cross in the Crimean War and in Solférino, where the official ambulance service had been stretched too far and had been complemented by voluntary services. The Japanese Red Cross came into being during the Seinan War and cared for the wounded according to the *Haku-Ai* principle, and to this day this has been the task of the Red Cross, that is, to help impartially. According to Sano this principle results from '*Nin-Jō no Tōzen*', which means something like 'self-evident human nature', and in order to comply with the principle of '*Jin-Ai*' (humanity and love) the Japanese Red Cross prepares itself in time of peace for an emergency. The Geneva Convention under the terms of its contract protects the red cross as a sign of identification. To this contract Japan has acceded. In Sano's comment on the Geneva Convention a strategy of dissociation is evident as well. In contrast to Japan China has not yet acceded to the Geneva Convention. The reason for this is that a signatory must have attained a certain level, which depends on the scale of its civilized condition (*Bunmei no teido*). Japan has complied with the relevant criteria as it had also rescued the wounded on the enemy side in the Taiwan Campaign.

Sano's intention in his lecture is, similar to Ishiguro Tadanori's, to bring the Red Cross home to his audience. In 1893 the membership stood at just 45,317. In his lecture Sano promotes the Red Cross using national motives by conjuring up the possibility of warfare. In this context one has to keep in mind that one year later Japan entered the war against China. But on the other hand, Sano depicts a dismal scenario by referring to the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway and the Panama Canal and thus anticipates growing trouble for Asia and for Japan in particular. The text of the lecture makes it clear that Chū-Ai has moved up to the same status as Haku-Ai.

Taking into account that the membership of the Japanese Red Cross nearly doubled from 23,569 to 45,317 in the years between 1890 and 1893, one must attribute a major part of the credit for this to the means of advertising and information as carried out, for example, by Sano and Ishiguro. But no other event caused such a tremendous increase in membership in the 1890s as the war between China and Japan in 1894/5. In 1894 71,705 new members joined the Japanese Red Cross; in 1895 65,392 persons joined. (The overall membership in 1895 was 182,414). If one includes the two post-war years 1896/7 in the development, the result shows that membership of the Japanese Red Cross between 1890 (23,569 persons) and 1897 (455,638 persons) increased almost twentyfold.⁵¹

But it is not only the measures taken by the head office in Tokyo to which such a significant development of the membership is due. From as early as 1887 preconditions were created gradually to embed the Japanese Red Cross socially in the regions as well. On the recommendation of Arisugawa no Miya Taruhito, the governors of the prefectures were obliged, by virtue of their office, to found Red Cross Societies in their prefectures and act as their presidents. The regional section of Kumamoto, which was established by Governor Tomioka in 1889, may serve as an example.⁵² At the same time local sections were also founded, chaired by the respective mayors. The presidents' wives took on tasks in the women's sections. In this way, until 1903/4 a total of 48 regional sections came into being. Considering that Japan had (and still has) 47 prefectures (43 prefectures plus Tokyo-to, Kyoto- and Osaka-fu and Hokkaidō) all administrative districts on Japanese territory including Taiwan had their regional sections.⁵³ The attraction of the Japanese Red Cross may thus have its roots less in a Western concept of humanitarian activities and more in the fact that the Japanese leadership of the Japanese Red Cross succeeded in promoting the national cause via humanitarian issues and in convincing members that humanitarian commitment also benefitted the nation and its reputation in the world. In Ishiguro's and Sano's lectures it is evident that they regarded warfare as inevitable, that warfare is regarded as a legitimate means of defending one's country, and that the armed forces take on this defence. In this context the Red Cross is conceived of as that organisation which lessens the suffering of soldiers on both sides. At the same time the Red Cross movement is always communicated as a progress in civilisation – with regard to and dissociated from China and Taiwan –, with the Western powers as models. And because of the reciprocity offered by the Geneva Convention, it is consistent that Japan takes its part in the movement.

Conclusion

In her book on the American Red Cross Julia F. Irwin has characterized the development of American humanity as 'an international humanitarian awakening'.⁵⁴ She quite clearly attributes the 'meteoric growth'⁵⁵ of the American Red Cross to the political initiatives

of the US government, which had kept decidedly a low profile at the beginning of the American Red Cross movement in the 1880s. At the turn of the century, however, the US government began to reconsider its attitude and to realize that humanity might serve as a political and diplomatic instrument. Its motivation in this was by no means altruistic but 'driven by self-interest'.⁵⁶ By the turn of the century, an unprecedented number of Americans believed in the need to engage in world affairs and demonstrate their nation's benevolent internationalism.⁵⁷ Irwin writes and thus demonstrates the function of humanity as an ambassador which the American Red Cross was meant to take on. Just as in Japan members of the imperial family assumed representative positions in the national Red Cross Society, William H. Taft with his election as US President also became President of the American Red Cross, thereby enhancing its political and social status. Thus it is not without reason that Irwin regards Taft's presidency as the beginning of a humanitarian policy in foreign affairs. Evidence of this may be that it was during his term of office that the last International Red Cross Conference before the First World War, and the first to be organized outside Europe, was held in Washington in 1912. On the other hand, Japan had endeavoured in vain to organize an International Red Cross Conference in her capital; the First World War then, for the time being, put an end to her applications. In the period between 1895 and 1918 the membership of the Red Cross Society in Japan increased tenfold due to a humanitarian atmosphere in the country, which can be attributed to, among others, the wars of 1894/5 and 1904/5 and the First World War.⁵⁸ In the United States, for its part, the years from 1914 to 1918 were the most prosperous for the American Red Cross: according to Irwin, in 1919 one third of the population had joined the national Red Cross Society.⁵⁹ It was particularly in the First World War that, by means of their Red Cross, the United States developed a policy-orientated humanity which aimed at 'making Europe a better place'.⁶⁰ The political motivation can also be gathered from the fact that even after the war had ended, the United States refrained from extending humanitarian support to the former Central Powers and also refused to help Bolshevik Russia.⁶¹ Quite in accordance with Irwin it can thus be proved that the Japanese Red Cross also did not grow naturally in the years from 1877 to 1905, but was closely linked to the government and was developed by political measures.

From the literature published by the Red Cross we can learn about its efforts to embed the foundation of a Japanese humanitarian society – founded in 1877 and renamed and transformed 10 years later into a Japanese Red Cross Society – in the history of the Red Cross. I put this down to several causes. First, the Red Cross had established a tradition whose narrative has not been challenged so far and has also been adopted by expert historians. The effectiveness of the memory culture of the Red Cross is so pronounced that alternative perspectives on the history of the formation and on the diffusion of the Red Cross are hard to find and have rarely made their way into academic historical publications. Moreover, the history of the Red Cross has always been embedded in a national historical narrative. The consequence of this is that the formation of a Red Cross society in the country concerned is regarded as a criterion for a nation's being 'civilized' or modern. In the case of Japan this motive can be discerned everywhere. These factors seem to me the reasons why the foundation of the Japanese Red Cross was brought forward to 1877, although historical circumstances speak against the assumption that the Red Cross in Japan was founded in 1877. The consequence of this for academic historians has been so far to explain the formation of a Japanese Red Cross Society from aspects of teleology and national history. From a point of view based on global history, however, it has turned out for me that until the 1870s hardly

any of the relief societies in Europe called themselves 'Red Cross'. According to my studies a red cross was a red cross, that is, it was used as a sign of identification and protection according to the Geneva Convention. Only from about the middle of the 1870s did the sign become part of the names of most national societies. The extensive use of the sign as a title for the national societies began only in the 1880s. Certainly the red cross did exist – I would never dispute this. But against the background described above I would like to argue that the red cross functioned first as a sign and that this must not obscure the fact that the individual societies had first to grow together to a regular organisation before one can speak of a 'Red Cross'. If one rids the genesis of the Japanese Red Cross of its teleology and puts it in a global context, the result is that Japan's humanitarian society, founded in 1877, turns out to be no exception from the societies on the rest of this planet but is in keeping with the rule. The vast majority of relief societies had borne alternative names before they gradually renamed themselves 'Red Cross Societies'. From aspects of global history it is therefore easy to explain and to understand why in the Japan of 1877 a *Red Cross Society* was not founded: there were no Red Cross Societies that might have served as a model. Rather the reverse is true: the Red Cross movement was a novelty worldwide and just coming into being. And Japan was one of the countries involved in this movement.

Notes

1. *Nihon Sekijūjisha to Jindō Enjo*; Koike, "Sekijūji to wa nanika". *Jindō to Seiji; Schlachtschrecken, Konventionen. Das Rote Kreuz und die Erfindung der Menschlichkeit im Kriege*; Mottini, *Die Rotkreuz-Idee in Japan*; idem, "The Red Cross Idea in Japan," Khan, *Das Rote Kreuz. Geschichte einer humanitären Weltbewegung*; Schomann, *Im Zeichen der Menschlichkeit. Geschichte und Gegenwart des Deutschen Roten Kreuzes*.
2. *Jindō sono ayumi*.
3. Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*.
4. Koike, "Sekijūji to wa nanika."
5. Inoue, *Sensō to Kyūsai no Bunmei-Shi*.
6. Yoshikawa, *Nisseki no sōshisha Sano Tsunetami*.
7. Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan, 1877–1977*.
8. Mottini, *Die Schweiz und Japan während der Meiji-Zeit (1868–1912)*, 135–44; idem, *Die Rotkreuz-Idee in Japan*, 25–37; idem, *Tell in Tōkyō. Schweizerisch-Japanische Begegnungen von den Anfängen bis 1914*, 119–28; idem, "The Red Cross Idea in Japan," 401–3; idem, *Iwakura-Mission of 1873*, 309–11.
9. DePies, *Humanitarian Empire: The Red Cross in Japan, 1877–1945*.
10. Konishi, *The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organization in Japan*, 1129–53.
11. *Nihon Sekijūjisha to Jindō Enjo*.
12. Conrad, *Globalgeschichte. Eine Einführung*, 22: "Anders als lange Zeit üblich können grenzüberschreitende Prozesse und die Herausbildung der modernen Welt nicht einfach als Ergebnis von Diffusion begriffen werden."
13. Fischer-Tiné, "Global Civil Society and the Forces of Empire," 29–67.
14. Koike, "Sekijūji to wa nanika." *Jindō to Seiji*, 18.
15. Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor's Japan, 1877–1977*, 6.
16. Nishikawa, *Japan's Changing Role in Humanitarian Crisis*, 38.
17. Riesenberger, *Rotes Kreuz und weiße Fahne*, 280: "Gleichwohl war es kein Zufall, dass die Gründung des internationalen Hilfswerks vom europäisch-christlichen Raum ausging, in dem der Gedanke der Humanität lebendig war, der sich im 19. Jahrhundert eng mit den Begriffen der Zivilisation und des Fortschritts verband."
18. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*.

19. Yoshikawa, *Nisseki no sōshisha Sano Tsunetami*; Kitano, *Sekijūji no Furusato. Junēbu Jōyaku wo megutte*, 69 et seqq.; Kuni, *Sano Tsunetami 1822–1902*.
20. Yoshikawa, *Nisseki no sōshisha*, 79; Kitano, *Sekijū-Ji no Furusato*, 20; Mottini, *Tell in Tōkyō*, 123.
21. Hufeland, *Enchiridion Medicum oder Anleitung zur medicinischen Praxis*, 893; Yoshikawa, *Nisseki no sōshisha*, 12, 13; Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 21; *Seinan-Sensō to Haku-Ai-Sha*, 278.
22. Kurosawa, “Kindai Nihon to Sekijūji,” 6.
23. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World: 1780–1914. Global Connections and Comparisons*.
24. The official report paper 1869–85 was called *Bulletin International des Sociétés de Secours aux Militaires Blessés* and was only later renamed *Bulletin international des sociétés de la Croix Rouge*.
25. Billroth and Mundy, *Ueber den Transport der im Felde Verwundeten und Kranken nebst den Verhandlungen der auf Einladung der Herren Dr. Dr. Billroth, v. Mundy und Wittelshöfer im Sanitäts-Pavillon der Wiener Weltausstellung 1873 vom 6.-9. October versammelten internationalen Privat-Conferenz über Verbesserung der Pflege der im Felde Verwundeten und Kranken*; Hutchinson, *Champions of Charity*, 133.
26. Khan, *Das Rote Kreuz*, 23, 31; Sudahl, *Das Rote Kreuz im Königreich Württemberg*, 138; Riesenberger, *Das Deutsche Rote Kreuz. Eine Geschichte*, 40, 106.
27. *100 Jahre Kliniken Westend 1904–2004*, 74–5; *Leben nützlich für andere*, 15–47.
28. Lutzer, *Der Badische Frauenverein 1859–1918*, 137–50.
29. Kitano, *Sekijūji no Furusato*, 14–18; Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 1–18; Koike, *Kokusai Jindōhō*, 42–5; idem, “*Sekijūji to wa nanika*,” 15–40; *Jindō sono ayumi*, 10–11; Kamino, *Sensō to Jindō-Shien*, 99–115.
30. Kitano, *Sekijūji no Furusato*, 18–9; Palmieri, *Post Tenebras Lux*, 17–26.
31. Inoue, *Sensō to Kyūsai no Bunmei-Shi*, 45–54.
32. *Die Iwakura-Mission*, 350–442; Mottini, *Die Schweiz und Japan während der Meiji-Zeit*, 64–80, 135–7; idem, *Iwakura-Mission of 1873*, 309–12; Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 27–30; idem, “*Iwakura Shisetsudan no Sekijūji Hōmon*,” 1–13.
33. “[Sano] ist mit der Formierung eines Ambulance Corps nach dem Muster der Marianner betraut. [...]” Alexander von Siebold: *Die Tagebücher A 1866–1892*, 73.
34. Tonga, for instance, had to give up its national flag with a red cross in 1866 and move the red cross to the jack. Hesmer, *Flaggen und Wappen der Welt*, 259.
35. Ettig, *Gerhard Hugo Ströhl: Japanisches Wappenbuch*, 78, 179, 378, 104, 172, 223; the Sino-Japanese numeral 十 occurred in other varieties in the Shimadzu family and can also be found as family arms with the Daimyōs Mori, Ōkubo, Katō and Naitō. Cf. *Nihon Monshō Jiten*, 181–2, 198–201, 274, 289, 345.
36. Manley, *A Conservative Reformer in T’ang China*.
37. Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 32; for the *Gendō* see Satō, *Tō-Sō-Hakka-Bun*, 103–14.
38. Sano Tsunetami and Ogyū Yuzuru to Arisugawa no Miya Taruhito, 3 May 1877. *Haku-Ai-Sha Setsuritsu Gansho*.
39. Ottoman Empire: signing the Geneva Convention in 1865 and founding a Red Crescent Society in 1877; USA: accession to the Geneva Convention in 1882 and foundation of a Red Cross Society in 1881.
40. Mottini, *Tell in Tōkyō*, 124–5; Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 40–3.
41. Masui, *Sekai to Nihon no Sekijūji*, 45; Yoshikawa, *Nisseki no sōshisha Sano Tsunetami*, 145; Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor’s Japan, 1877–1977*, 79–85.
42. Sano Tsunetami to Foreign Minister Ōkuma Shigenobu 14 Aug. Meiji 30 (1897), Sano-Tsunetami-Kinenkan (Sano Memorial Hall), Saga (City), File Group B, Nr. 1-80 *Nihon Sekijūjisha 25 Nenkishukutenkankei*.
43. *Verhandlungen der vierten internationalen Conferenz der Gesellschaften vom rothen Kreuz, abgehalten zu Karlsruhe vom 22. bis 27. September 1887*, 4–5.
44. Ishiguro, *Sekijūji Gentō Enjutsu no Tai-I*. Tokyo: *Nihon Sekijūjisha*, Meiji 24 (1891). In Estate of Ishiguro Tadanori II at Keiō-Gijuku Daigaku Toshokan Tokyo, 1-Se-2 *Sekijū Gentō Enjutsu Tai-I*.

45. Ibidem, 1: “Sekijūji to wa sensō no toki ni ate shōsha byōsha wo keiai suru jigyō nari.”
46. Ibid., 2–6.
47. Ibid., 6–10.
48. Ibid., 11, 14–17.
49. Ishiguro, *Kaikyū Jū Kyū Nen*, 274–8.
50. Lecture by Sano Tsunetami held in Saga on 14 May (Meiji 26), 1893. (Sano Shachō no Saga ni okeru Kōen Hikki), in Sano-Tsunetami-Kinenkan (Sano Memorial Hall), Saga (City), File Groupe B, Nr. 1-139.
51. For membership see Kawaguchi and Kurokawa, *Jūgun Kangofu to Nihon Sekijūji*, 36–7.
52. *Seinan-Sensō to Haku-Ai-Sha*, 16–17.
53. Ariga, *The Red Cross Society of Japan. Its Organization and Activity in Time of Peace and War*.
54. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 208.
55. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 10.
56. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 12.
57. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 25.
58. Kawaguchi and Kurokawa, *Jūgun Kangofu to Nihon Sekijūji*, 37.
59. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 67.
60. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 107.
61. Irwin, *Making the World Safe. The American Red Cross and a Nation's Humanitarian Awakening*, 153–4.

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