

Reflections on the Easternisation¹⁾ of the Red Cross Movement: The Role of the Japanese Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, 1907–1926

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Introduction

This paper focuses on three distinct moments in the history of the Japanese Red Cross between 1907 and 1926 in order to explore the relationship of this national Red Cross society and the broader Red Cross Movement. Specifically, the paper seeks to explore to what extent did the Japanese Red Cross use the ‘soft power’ of humanitarian diplomacy as the leading Red Cross society in the ‘Far East’ to influence the direction and scope of the Red Cross Movement? At this time, the Japanese Red Cross was one of the largest in the world; part of the Japanese modernization and democratization processes of the Meiji period with the Hakuaisha Society (or Philanthropic Society), the precursor of the Japanese Red Cross established in 1877. The three ‘moments’ explored in the paper concern, firstly, the publication of an English language journal, *The Red Cross in the Far East*, between 1907 and 1915 to disseminate the work and progress of the Japanese Red Cross to a global audience. The second ‘moment’ focuses on the creation of the Empress Shōken Fund in 1912 (not executed until 1921), the oldest and largest philanthropic fund of the Red Cross Movement. It still exists today with grant allocations announced on 11 April each year, the anniversary of the Empress’ death. The fund has been periodically topped up by the Imperial family, the Japanese government, and private benefactors.²⁾ The third ‘moment’ is the Second Conference of the Oriental Red Cross Societies, held in Tokyo in November 1926. Under the auspices of the League of Red Cross

¹⁾ I use this term as a counterpoint where it is claimed that ‘easternisation’ is the defining trend of our age with the shift to the East shaping the world today. Although these concepts of East/West encounters; the language and terminology used such as ‘Oriental,’ ‘the East’ and ‘Eastern’ are often problematic and imply notions of ‘the other,’ cultural superiority of the ‘West’ etc, these were terms widely used in the interwar period as a way of celebrating the global expanse of international organisations (not only the Red Cross), their concepts and ideas. Therefore I use the phrase, “the ‘Easternisation’ of the Red Cross Movement” as a humanitarian turn to the East; an incorporate of Eastern traditions as well as European roots. I would like to thank Professor Hiroshi Higashiura; staff from the Japanese Red Cross Information Plaza including Ms Tomoko Onishi; and Dr Michiko Suzuki who helped me with research assistance and translation work for this paper.

²⁾ In 1934, the Empress Kōjun and Dowager Empress Teimei increased the fund to 200,000 yen and the League of Red Cross Societies at that point became involved in the Fund. In 1963, a gift of 3.6 million yen was donated by the Empress on the centenary of the International Red Cross. Since then the Japanese government, the JRCS and Meiji Jingū Shrine have made further donations. To 2011, the fund has allocated around \$US21 million to national Red Cross societies around the globe.

Societies (LRCS) and organized by the Japanese Red Cross, the conference coincided with the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Japanese Red Cross and was only the second meeting of the Red Cross Movement to be held in Asia.

It is within this twenty-year period where positive attempts of humanitarian diplomacy within the Red Cross Movement was enacted by the Japanese Red Cross in association with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS). It is argued that these three examples were attempts where the East led or influenced the West. It was all too brief, but it is argued they did have an impact on the Red Cross Movement especially in terms of diversity and developing peacetime programmes after World War One. The establishment of the Empress Shōken Fund and the hosting of the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, for example, occurred before the ‘militaristic turn’ and global uncertainty of the 1930s, the Manchurian Incident of 1931 with Japan leaving the League of Nations in 1933 and so on. By focusing on international voluntary organisations such as the Japanese Red Cross, this paper aims to reassess the interwar period and the Japanese Red Cross as a vehicle for internationalisation during the first decades of the twentieth century and its role in the all too brief period of Japanese ‘liberalism’ in the 1920s. It allows us to explore in more depth the roles of non-state actors in international relations discourse and to follow Akira Iriye’s lead in order to demonstrate how the Japanese Red Cross has ‘contributed to the making of the contemporary world.’³⁾

The Japanese Red Cross Society and the Red Cross Movement

The Red Cross Movement includes the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Swiss based body founded by Henri Dunant and four others in Geneva in 1863 as a volunteer organisation to care for the wounded on both sides in war. The International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent (IFRC) was formed in 1919 as the League of Red Cross Societies by the national societies of the United States, France, Britain, Italy and Japan. Lastly, there are the 192 at last count (Bhutan the most recent addition), national societies of the Red Cross—of which Japan is one.⁴⁾ Today in Japan, the Red Cross is a highly visible and recognisable symbol for health care and compassion. It provides public medical care and

³⁾ Akira Iriye, *Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002).

⁴⁾ There are many studies of various aspects of Red Cross history. One of the most accessible is Caroline Moorehead, *Dunant's Dream: War, Switzerland and the History of the Red Cross* (London: HarperCollins, 1998). For a history of the ICRC, see David Forsythe, *The Humanitarians: The International Committee of the Red Cross* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). For a history of the LRCS, see C. E. Buckingham, *For Humanities Sake. The Story of the Early Development of the League of Red Cross Societies* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1964) and Daphne A. Reid and Patrick F. Gilbo, *Beyond Conflict: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 1919–1994* (Geneva: IFRC, 1997).

training through its Red Cross Hospitals, nursing training schools and other public health initiatives including the blood service in urban, rural and remote Japan. The Japanese Red Cross plays a major role in natural disasters including tsunamis and earthquakes. Japanese scholars work on a range of aspects of Japanese Red Cross history especially in the areas of public health, nursing and medicine as well as humanitarianism, international relations and broader non-government (NGO) networks.⁵⁾ Much of this work, however, is written in Japanese and has not been translated into English or other languages. Unfortunately this limits its academic reach to the broader global community of scholars interested in this research area.

Having a strong, vibrant national Red Cross society was part of the complex processes of Japanese modernization and democratization in the Meiji period. As Olive Checkland noted, it was “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 behaviour.”⁶⁾ However, as Sho Konishi suggested, the “global history of humanitarianism” cannot be “written without incorporating the JRCS [Japanese Red Cross],” given the size and influence of the Japanese Red Cross, built up at a time, in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Japan lacked ‘a Christian missionary base, tens of thousands of wealthy industrialists’ and ‘a spirit of volunteerism’?⁷⁾ The answer, he suggests, lies in the origins of the Japanese Red Cross and the late Tokugawa period (1603–1868). A group of medical practitioners, especially those from the Juntendō School of Medical Studies in Sakura (founded in 1843), with their ethics and practice of ‘saving the people’ provides us with a humanitarian bridge to the origins of what became the Japanese Red Cross.⁸⁾ The founder of the Hakuaisha Society (or Philanthropic Society) was Sano Tsunetami, who had been a student at Tekijuku in Osaka.⁹⁾ He established the organisation in 1877 during the Satsuma Rebellion to assist

⁵⁾ See, for example, Associate Professor Yukari Kawahara from the JRC College of Nursing who wrote the beautifully illustrated coffee table book, *Nihonsekijijikangodaigaku 125 nenshi* [Japanese Red Cross College of Nursing 1890–2015] (Tokyo: Japanese Red Cross College of Nursing, 2017); and Japanese scholars who are working on the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) such as Hazuki Tate. See also Frank Käser, “A Civilized Nation: Japan and the Red Cross, 1877–1900,” *European Review of History: Revue européenne d’histoire* 23, nos 1–2 (2016): especially page 17 for a good overview of the state of writing on the Red Cross in Japan.

⁶⁾ Olive Checkland, *Humanitarianism and the Emperor’s Japan* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1992): 6.

⁷⁾ Sho Konishi, “The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organisation in Japan: The Tokugawa Origins of the Japanese Red Cross,” *American Historical Review* 119, no. 4 (October 2014): 1130. He also mentions the adherence of the Japanese Red Cross to “humanitarian policies, the quality of its work, particularly by women, and its reliance on the latest advances in medical knowledge to treat its patients,” and states that in 2014 Japan had the highest number of recipients of the Florence Nightingale Medal awarded by the ICRC to outstanding nurses worldwide. See footnote 4, 1130. This does exclude, of course, the period of World War Two and Japan’s treatment of Prisoners of War.

⁸⁾ See Konishi, “The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organisation in Japan,” for a detailed discussion of these early connections.

⁹⁾ Konishi, “The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organisation in Japan”: 1142.

physicians treat casualties (soldiers and civilians) on both sides of the battlefield.¹⁰⁾ This organisation linked the philanthropic practices of medical care with the Japanese term and meaning of humanitarianism, *'jindō'* ('human way'), and the physician's practice of *'jinjutsu'* as 'humanitarian' practice. Individuals across Japan donated money and gave in-kind support to the new society, an organisation not connected in any way with Western philanthropy and humanitarianism. It was this organisation that, after Japan signed the Geneva Convention in 1886, became the Japanese Red Cross in 1887, and joined the ICRC that same year. The Japanese Red Cross was always closely connected with the upper classes and was an auxiliary to the Army, with members of the imperial family serving as representatives of the national society. Its president was the Emperor and the Empress, its patron.¹¹⁾

These early connections with Tokugawa physicians help us to understand the close connections of the Japanese Red Cross with civilian medical care.¹²⁾ The first Red Cross Hospital was built in 1886 after an official tour of Europe by Dr Viscount Hashimoto, Surgeon-General of the Army Medical Service and member of Japan Red Cross, who investigated the European Red Cross societies with a view to joining the ICRC. On his return, he advocated for nursing training and preparing personnel for relief work in war, and suggested a hospital be built to train the nurses. A nursing school commenced in 1890 and by 1909 had trained over 3,227 nurses. The Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and later Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 all helped to propel the Japanese Red Cross forward as a major medical and humanitarian institution that was recognised both nationally and internationally.¹³⁾ For example, the British monarch, King Edward VII, despatched a head surgeon to travel to Japan in order to study its medical methods after the debacle of the South African War (1899–1902). The enormously successful British Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) scheme, established in 1909, was based on observations of the Japanese Red Cross.¹⁴⁾ The Americans, too, were

¹⁰⁾ The emblem of Hakuaiha doctors was a red single horizontal line, 'the Red One' (or *ichi*) on a white background.

¹¹⁾ The Ladies' Voluntary Nursing Association, founded in 1887 by Princess Taruhito, catered mainly to women from upper echelons of Japanese society. It was reported at the Oriental Red Cross Conference in Bangkok (1922), that the Japanese Red Cross was established as a foundation according to the provisions of the Civil Code of Japan with a Prince as its Hon President, a President and Vice President appointed by imperial ordinance, ten Directors elected by a Standing Council (30 members); there were 48 local branches with committees in Korea (Saghalien & Manchuria) and special committees in Shanghai, Hankow, Tientsin, Hawaii, San Francisco, LA and Vladivostok. In December 1921, the Japanese Red Cross boasted over two million members.

¹²⁾ Although medical doctors were active in other national Red Cross societies, such as Britain and Australia, their national societies were never involved in the establishment and running of hospitals.

¹³⁾ Not all national Red Cross societies embarked on nursing training and fewer still ran hospitals. See "Pioneers in Public Health Nursing: The League of Red Cross Societies in the Interwar Period," unpublished paper delivered by Melanie Oppenheimer at the Histories of the Red Cross Movement since 1919 conference, Geneva, 12–14 June 2019.

¹⁴⁾ See Sho Konishi, "The Emergence of an International Humanitarian Organisation in Japan": 1129.

interested in the Japanese medical programmes including its nursing corps. As part of the reorganisation of the American Red Cross, Mabel Boardman was invited as part of the US Taft Mission to Asia in 1905. This 80 plus person strong delegation led by American Secretary of War and American Red Cross President, William H. Taft (1857–1930), was not only engaged in diplomatic efforts to end the Russo-Japanese War but from the Red Cross perspective was an information gathering exercise. The observations of the Japanese Red Cross helped to redefine American Red Cross methods regarding a nursing corps and disaster relief, both of which were put into effect the following year with the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.¹⁵⁾

During World War One, the Japanese Red Cross supported its Allies by sending medical teams including nurses to Britain and France. It was also a key supporter of American banker and Chairman of the American Red Cross War Council, Henry Pomeroy Davison, and his bold idea to create a new international Red Cross organisation that focused on peace as well as war. The Japan Red Cross joined the national societies of the United States, France, Britain and Italy to form the League of Red Cross Societies (LRCS) in May 1919.¹⁶⁾

The Red Cross in the Far East Bulletin

It has been established that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the Japanese Red Cross was an important national society and one that western national societies viewed with interest. But how influential was it on the international stage of the Red Cross Movement itself? The Japanese Red Cross sought further influence within the Red Cross Movement and did so, it is argued in this paper, in a number of ways. The first of three examples is the publication, in English, of *The Red Cross in the Far East Bulletin*. Common with other national societies, the Japanese Red Cross already produced a domestically orientated journal, *The Hakuai*, published in Japanese.¹⁷⁾ One way to assert their dominance outside of Japan, however, and to push for specific ideas such as the role of the Red Cross in peace as well as in war, was to produce a journal in the English language. Between April 1907 and April 1915, the Japanese Red Cross published five issues of *The Red Cross in the Far East* in English, to assist in the dissemination of information about the Japanese Red Cross and its activities to other national societies, all of whom were European or Western based (with the exception of the Ottoman Red Crescent Society). The Japanese Red Cross wanted to demonstrate their

¹⁵⁾ The Taft Mission to Asia set out from San Francisco on 8 July 1905, sailing on the *SS Manchuria*. The journey included visits to Hawaii, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Beijing, Korea as well as Japan.

¹⁶⁾ For a history of the origins of the LRCS, see Buckingham, *For Humanities Sake*.

¹⁷⁾ The first issue of the Bulletin was written in English by Masatake Tōgō. In the third issue, it states the Bulletin was compiled by the Editor of 'the Red Cross of Japan' or *The Hakuai*, the official Organ of the Red Cross Society of Japan. Copies of the Bulletin can be found in the Japanese Red Cross Society Information Plaza in Tokyo.

adherence to the ‘broad principles of Humanity’ as represented by the ‘western’ Red Cross movement as well as influence the direction and development of the Red Cross Movement.¹⁸⁾ The publication of the first issue of the Bulletin coincided with the Eighth International Red Cross Conference, held in London in July 1907. This was the first time the conference had been held in an English speaking country and the first time that the Proceedings were conducted/published in English (normally the practice was for the ICRC to publish in French).¹⁹⁾

In order to attract the attention of their Western counterparts, the Japanese Red Cross had published a number of pamphlets in English as well as in French. However, the Bulletin was a new approach. Its five volumes, produced between 1907–1915, provide us with a greater understanding of the Japanese Red Cross, how it emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century and importantly, how it wanted to be perceived internationally. The articles focus on the roles played by the government, the army and the imperial family; how the Society responded to war and natural disasters (of which there were plenty); its participation in the International Red Cross Conferences; the multiple visits to other western Red Cross societies in Europe and the United States, and the importance and role played by the Japanese Red Cross in the development of health programs, hospitals, and nursing training in Japan outside of war.

A reading of the five issues indicate that from the Russo-Japanese War to the outbreak of World War One, the Japanese Red Cross appears a very outward looking national society, focused on joining, participating and attempting to show leadership within the Red Cross world. As Vice-President of the Japanese Red Cross, Baron Takewo Ozawa, wrote in 1908, publishing the Bulletin in English was one way for the Society to focus outwards rather than internally:

Being related as we are to the Red Cross Societies of the world we must take them into consideration and not confine our attention to ourselves alone . . . Originally, our Society was established for the sole benefit of our own nation. But the Institute was based from the first upon the broad principles of Humanity and we shall all most enthusiastically take up the idea of carrying out these principles to their widest extent.

Secondly, and no less importantly, it was because the Japanese Red Cross firmly believed that the Movement should not only operate during war but also play a role in peacetime. As Ozawa continued,

Therefore, I think, it is our duty to study and adopt better methods of relief work both in time of war and in time of peace co-operating, at the same time, with other Societies for

¹⁸⁾ The Red Cross Society of Japan, *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 2 (1908): 67.

¹⁹⁾ The 1st International Conference of the Red Cross was held in Paris, 1867; 2nd (Berlin, 1869); 3rd (Geneva, 1884); 4th (Karlsruhe, 1887); 5th (Rome, 1892); 6th (Vienna, 1897); and 7th (St Petersburg, 1902). The 9th Conference was held for the first time in the United States in Washington, DC in 1912.

the sake of mutual help in this good work.²⁰⁾

The Japanese Red Cross developed a ‘Ten Year Scheme’ that included how the Red Cross Movement could operate in peacetime especially in disaster management. There were plenty of examples in recent Japanese history to warrant such an approach and the Society was keen to show leadership within the Red Cross Movement. Baron Ozawa had repeatedly spoken about this topic in Red Cross forums, with both United States President Theodore Roosevelt, who was also the President of the American Red Cross and Gustave Moynier, co-founder of the ICRC and its President from 1864 until his death in 1910, that “charity works should be done by Red Cross Societies in times of peace.” Although like other national Societies, the Japanese Red Cross was originally limited to tending the sick and wounded in war, under the Army, Baron Ozawa believed the scope of the Red Cross “should be widened and enlarged so as to keep pace with the needs of civilisation, and to furnish a medium for satisfying the philanthropic desires of the people. In short, the Society must extend its service to various kinds of charity work in time of peace, while maintaining its readiness to do relief service in time of war.” Baron Ozawa had discussed this with others at the London Conference and “discovered the same tendency in other Red Cross Societies.”²¹⁾ This idea of extending Red Cross work to times of peace is directly linked with the second ‘moment.’

The Empress Shōken Fund

At the Eighth International Red Cross Conference held in London in June 1907, Baron Takewo Ozawa observed and commented on the number of women delegates in attendance—up to one third he estimated—which was an indication that “the number of women who are engaging in pursuits formerly engaged in by men . . . [was] yearly increasing the world over.”²²⁾ The origins of the Shōken Fund can be found here in Baron Ozawa’s positive impression with the demonstration of ‘woman power,’ his desire to ensure that Japan was not falling behind with this shift in gender relations, and as a way for the Japanese Red Cross to show leadership within the Red Cross Movement. Historians of the Red Cross have underplayed the significance of this Fund.²³⁾ The one exception is a centenary publication published in English by the ICRC/IFRC and Japanese Red Cross in 2012.²⁴⁾

During the first decade of the twentieth century, a number of national Red Cross societies

²⁰⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 2 (1908): 67.

²¹⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 2 (1908): 56–57.

²²⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 2 (1908): 56.

²³⁾ For example, Caroline Moorehead, in one of the first studies of the Red Cross Movement, *Dunant’s Dream* (1996), does not mention the Shōken Fund.

²⁴⁾ ICRC/IFRC, *The Empress Shōken Fund. A Century of Japanese Beneficence* (Switzerland: Geneva, 2012).

were working during peacetime in response to a series of natural disasters. Societies across the Red Cross Movement contributed directly with fundraising and donations of money.²⁵⁾ Since the Mount Bandai eruption in 1888 in the Fukushima prefecture, the Japanese Red Cross was active in disasters. The question of extending Red Cross work in peacetime (not just for preparedness for war) had been brought up at International Red Cross Conferences over the years. In 1907, the Japanese Red Cross submitted a report to the International Conference in London outlining the range of natural disasters it had assisted with such as fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, shipwrecks and mine explosions in order to support its view of the validity and importance of Red Cross work in peacetime.²⁶⁾ The Swiss based ICRC, however, managed to deflect and defer any agreement or detailed discussion on the topic.

On his return to Japan, Baron Ozawa reported back to the Empress and members of the Japanese Red Cross, explaining his observations of how Western women were becoming more active in the public sphere with their philanthropy. He informed them about the Prussian Empress Augusta (whose national society had established a fund in her name in 1890) and the Russian Empress Marie Feodorovna who did likewise in 1902. It was within this context that the Japanese government, on behalf of the Empress, made an offer of 100,000 gold yen as a fund for the “encouragement of relief work in time of peace to the International Red Cross Federation.”²⁷⁾

This generous offer by the Japanese Red Cross was made at the Ninth International Red Cross Conference held in Washington, DC, in May 1912.²⁸⁾ The conference unanimously adopted a resolution put forward by the American Red Cross Central Committee, that

With the weighty appreciation for the generous thought and act of Her Gracious Majesty, the Empress of Japan, in creating an international foundation to be devoted to the encouragement of the relief work in time of peace, and with the certainty that we but voice the sentiment of the societies of the Red Cross of all the world, the Central Committee of the American National Red Cross has the honor of presenting for the consideration of the Ninth Red Cross International Conference the following resolution:

The announcement that Her Gracious Majesty, the Empress of Japan, inspired by motives of the highest benevolence, has established a foundation whose income shall forever be devoted to the encouragement among all nations of the world in time of

²⁵⁾ See, for example, the 1906 San Francisco earthquake in the United States and the Messina eruption in Italy in 1908.

²⁶⁾ ICRC/IFRC, *The Empress Shōken Fund*: 17.

²⁷⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 5 (April 1915): 46–47.

²⁸⁾ According to Professor Hiroshi Higashiura (Japanese Red Cross), the Japanese delegation to Washington only received confirmation from the Japanese government regarding the monies by cable on their arrival in San Francisco. Conversation held with Professor Higashiura, 12 July 2019, University of Tokyo.

peace, arouses the strongest sentiments of gratitude and admiration on the part of the delegates from all the governments and Red Cross Societies now assembled in the Ninth International Red Cross Conference.

In this generous and significant act, the Conference sees a powerful demonstration of that brotherhood among all peoples of the earth in which suffering recognises no differences of race or station, but only sympathy and a universal spirit of helpfulness. The donation thus generously bestowed upon the Conference by her Majesty, the Empress, is accepted in the spirit in which given, and will be administered with the utmost effort to realise all the wishes of the Royal Donor.²⁹⁾

The Japanese Red Cross proposed that a statute of the Fund for the Encouragement of Relief Work in Time of Peace would be formalized at the Tenth International Conference of the Red Cross to be held in 1917. The Japanese Red Cross would take charge of the Fund (or guardianship at compound interest of 4 per cent per year) until a resolution of the statute; and that the Society would either form an International Committee for the administration of the Fund as in the case of the Empress Marie Feodrovna Fund or to entrust it permanently to the International Committee of Geneva, as in the case of the Empress Augusta Fund.

The Chairman of the ICRC, Mr Ador then proposed (and was unanimously agreed on) that:

1. The Fund shall bear the name of the Empress of Japan;
2. That until 1917 the guardianship of the fund shall be entrusted to Japan;
3. That Japan shall propose regulations concerning this fund at the next International Red Cross Conference.³⁰⁾

Ador and the ICRC did not like the idea of the Red Cross Movement branching out beyond its wartime role and was keen to put his stamp on the proceedings. In his brief resolution, there is no mention of what the Fund would do and it is very vague when compared to the more detailed resolution of the American Red Cross Central Committee.

The Empress Shōken Fund is evidence of a move within the Red Cross Movement to focus on peacetime activities and to formalize it at a global level. The national societies of the United States and Japan were already working in the field and keen to push this agenda. However, the shift did not rest well with those in Geneva who, as custodians of the Geneva Conventions and relief in times of war, had quite a different focus. When specific issues such as the prevention of tuberculosis in peacetime, for example, were discussed at the International Conferences, it was always within the context of creating superior soldiers and the

²⁹⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 5 (April 1915): 49–50.

³⁰⁾ *The Red Cross in the Far East*, Bulletin 5 (April 1915): 50.

militarization of the civilian population in readiness for war. The emergence of the Empress Shōken Fund clearly demonstrates that the Red Cross Movement wanted to move beyond this strictly wartime role. However, in 1912, Ador carefully and skillfully batted away any direct engagement with the issue.

World War One interrupted all these plans. The war had a huge impact on the Red Cross Movement with new societies established, such as the Australian and New Zealand Red Cross Societies (as branches of the British Red Cross Society). In 1919, the national societies of the United States, Britain, France, Italy and Japan came together to form the League of Red Cross Societies, a new internationally federated body that threatened the ICRC to its core.³¹⁾

It was not until 1921 that the International Red Cross Movement met in Geneva for its delayed Tenth Conference. So much had changed. With the creation of the League of Red Cross Societies and uncertainty around what that would mean for the wholly Swiss institution, the ICRC was much more enthusiastic about the Japanese Shōken Fund, its peacetime mission, and its monies. Notwithstanding the fact that the Japanese Red Cross had to write to the ICRC in late 1919 to remind them of the 1914 agreements and the draft statutes of the Shōken Fund.³²⁾ The monies, carefully preserved by the Japanese from 1912 to 1920, and with a sizeable interest of 59,710 yen, were transferred to the ICRC in Geneva. The total amount—159,710 yen or 407,262 in Swiss Francs—was transferred from the Tokyo Yokohama Bank to the Banque Fédérale de Geneve.³³⁾

In 1921 the first disbursement of Shōken Funds were made with grants worth 140,000 Swiss Francs allocated to five national societies. The Bulgarian Red Cross and Polish Red Cross received 10,000 and 20,000 SF respectively for a tuberculosis programme; and the Greek Red Cross 20,000 SF for a child tuberculosis programme. The Danish Red Cross received 10,000 SF for first aid; and the French Red Cross 20,000 SF for aid as part of the immense reconstruction project underway in the devastated areas of northern France. The ICRC itself received 70,000 SF for the vaguely described “International Missions” or as articulated in its Circular, for “peace work . . . particularly for the many missions it is called upon to undertake

³¹⁾ For an analysis of the origins of the League of Red Cross Societies, see Melanie Oppenheimer, “‘A Golden Moment’?: The League of Red Cross Societies, the League of Nations and Contested Spaces of Internationalism and Humanitarianism, 1919–22,” in Joy Damousi and Patricia O’Brien (eds), *League of Nations: Histories, Legacies and Impact* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2018): 8–27. See also Buckingham, *For Humanity’s Sake*.

³²⁾ See letter from Baron Ishigure, President, JRCS to President of the ICRC, 10 October 1919, Shōken Fund Archives, CR 74/00, ICRC Archives, Geneva.

³³⁾ CIRC, Circular, No 189, ICRC Archives, Geneva. In the early 1920s, the Swiss Franc was considerably more stable than any other European currency with the exception of Sweden. During the war it was above parity with the US\$ but fell after the war. After reaching a low in mid 1920 (20% below), the SF rose to around 95% parity by 1923. See *Federal Reserve Bulletin*, February 1924, https://fraser.stlouisfed.org/files/docs/publications/FRB/pages/1920-1924/25530_1920-1924.pdf.

Accessed 12 December 2019.

at the request of the Red Cross of various countries.”³⁴⁾ Half the Shōken Funds distributed in 1921 went directly to the ICRC. It remains unclear where the monies were spent and there is no indication of expenditure in the Shōken Fund files held by the ICRC archives. It was reported that some of the monies went towards victims of an earthquake in Chile in 1922 (5,000 SF) and the Turkish Red Crescent received 6,000 Swiss francs in 1923 to provide medical relief to Russian refugees in Constantinople.³⁵⁾ It has been noted, too, that the 70,000 SF was one third of the ICRC’s annual budget for 1921.³⁶⁾

The ICRC received another allocation of 13,000 Swiss francs from the Fund in 1927, because, apparently, there were no other applications apart from two requests from Austria and Bulgaria. Apart from the largesse to the ICRC, for the period 1921–1934 (when the Japanese topped up the fund on the condition that the League of Red Cross Societies became involved), 85 allocations were made to national Red Cross societies around the world—from Costa Rica in Latin America and Thailand in Asia to the new nations of Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as many more well established national societies with suffering post-war populations such as France, Belgium, Austria and Germany. In line with the aims of the fund, there was assistance to relief organizations in peacetime for the training of nurses (15); first aid (4), children’s services (7) public or social services (11); dissemination of technical knowledge about prevention and cure of TB and other infectious diseases (45), and direct relief to disaster victims in Russia (3).³⁷⁾

Second Conference of the Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo, 15–25 November 1926.

The third example where the Japanese Red Cross sought to impress and influence the Red Cross Movement was the Second Conference of the Oriental Red Cross Societies, held in the autumnal splendour of Tokyo for ten days between 15–25 November 1926.³⁸⁾ The

³⁴⁾ CIRC, Attribution des revenus du Fonds de l’Imperatrice Shōken, 207th Circular, Geneva, 11 November 1921, ICRC Archives, Geneva.

³⁵⁾ See XIth International Conference of the Red Cross, Geneva, August 28, 1923, Report on Funds of Empress Shōken, Shōken Fund Archives, CR 74/00, ICRC Archives, Geneva. On 6 January 1922, the Empress Shōken Fund had 289,441.40 Swiss Francs; the Nightingale Fund had 28,500.80 SF and the Augusta Fund had 73,534.40 Swiss Francs.

³⁶⁾ ICRC/IFRC, *The Empress Shōken Fund*: 31.

³⁷⁾ ICRC/IFRC, *The Empress Shōken Fund*: 32. The valuation of the fund in May 1935 was SF 369,232.

³⁸⁾ The Second Oriental Conference originally was scheduled to be held in Manila in 1924, hosted by the Philippine Chapter of the American Red Cross Society who had “offered” to host it. However when it was discovered that it would clash with the Third Meeting of the General Council of the League (April 1924), it was deferred to a later date. The Japanese Red Cross was then invited to host the conference in 1926, in recognition of its major role in establishing the LRCS, an acknowledgement that it was the largest and most well organized national society in the “Far East” and independent, that is not a Western colonial offshoot as was the Philippines Chapter or the Dutch Netherland East Indies Society. The Conference also coincided with its 50th anniversary.

concept of Regional Conferences was an innovation of the newly created League of Red Cross Societies, viewed as “essential to an adequate realization of the ideal for which the League was founded.”³⁹⁾ The LRCS established Oriental Conferences (Bangkok, 1922; Tokyo, 1926); Pan-American Conferences (Buenos Aires, 1923; Washington, 1926); Central and Eastern Europe Conferences (Warsaw, 1923; Vienna, 1925) to assist in the facilitation of its mandate and to allow for the difficulties of “distance and time.” The Regional Conferences were based on the view that a key to the League’s success was “the development of active co-operative relations between the national Societies themselves,” and that this was only possible if there was “fairly frequent and regular contact” between national societies. Apart from facilitating a publishing network of ideas, innovations, programmes and outcomes from across the Red Cross network, the League Secretariat saw itself as a ‘clearing house of Red Cross information’ as well as assisting national Societies to equip themselves technically, and to assist with growing this aspect of their work.⁴⁰⁾ In light of feedback from the conferences, the League’s constitution was revised by the Board of Governors so that each national society belonging to the League could have a ‘permanent share’ in its governance. From 1 January 1926, its Articles of Association were revised, with each national society entitled to having a representative on the Board of Governors; the Board was to meet annually and appoint an Executive Committee who met in Paris four times a year and was responsible for the Secretariat and running of the League.

The Tokyo Conference was a much larger event than the previous one held in Bangkok, Siam (Thailand). That first conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies was held from 29 November to 7 December 1922 with seven Red Cross Societies in attendance as well as representatives from the LRCS, the ICRC, the League of Nations and other voluntary organisations. The programme was organised and run largely by colonial powers (for example, by Europeans who headed up the national Societies of the Netherland East Indies and the Philippines Chapter of the American Red Cross). As Ninagawa Arata (international lawyer and former member of the Japanese Red Cross Delegation to the Cannes Conference and Japanese signatory to the LRCS in 1919), who headed the Japan delegation complained, “Most participants were whites and the conference language was English . . . Except for the Japanese

³⁹⁾ General Report of the Secretariat of the LRCS to the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, Tokyo, LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo, 15–26 November 1926* (LRCS: Paris, 1927): 131.

⁴⁰⁾ General Report of the Secretariat of the LRCS to the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, Tokyo, LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies*: 133–135. The relocation to Paris from Geneva also resulted in lower costs for the LRCS which enabled it to institute a system of ‘study visits’ for national societies to LRCS headquarters. Geneva was considered too much of a backwater. The LRCS could also collaborate more closely with health organisations and associated networks based in Paris. As well as *The World’s Health*, from 1925 the LRCS published a fortnightly *Information Bulletin* that included information from national Red Cross societies about new programmes. The LRCS published its own studies of special problems to meet the requirements of national societies and collected a range of materials such as pamphlets, posters, photographs, and films to disseminate to national Red Cross societies around the world.

and Siamese societies, the Red Cross agencies in the Orient counted for nothing. That the Orient still lags behind the Occident is the grim reality.”⁴¹⁾

It was a different story when the Japanese Red Cross hosted the Second Oriental Conference. Only three years after the catastrophic Great Kantō Earthquake on 1 September 1923, where the earthquake and damaging fires resulted in the destruction of 44 per cent of Tokyo, including hundreds of thousands of houses; with the death of over 100,000 people and 43,000 missing; over three million hurt and over one million made homeless. There was also a breakdown of social order with violence and massacres of Korean residents.⁴²⁾ The Japanese Red Cross headquarters on the edge of Shiba Park as well as its depots and storehouses with emergency relief materials was destroyed, severely affecting its relief work. Over US\$11 million in funds and in kind support was donated through the American Red Cross to the Japanese Red Cross to assist in the aftermath of this devastating natural disaster.

To assist the Japanese with the organisation of the Second Oriental Conference, the LRCS Secretariat despatched Lewis Gielgud, Assistant to the Director General. However, his was not a big role. Before he left for the “Far East” Gielgud asked a Japanese diplomat in Paris about the “code of manners of his countrymen” as he knew they were “rigid” and that they differed from “ours” [British]. Gielgud later wrote: “He assured me that there are differences in detail only.” “The principle on which our national manners are based,” he said, “is simply this: we seek always to give pleasure to each individual with whom we come in contact, subject only to the superior interest of the group of which we happen at the moment to form part.”⁴³⁾

Japan invited delegates from the following national Red Cross Societies—the American Red Cross (Philippine Section); the Australian Red Cross (although until 1927 technically still a branch of the BRCS); the Chinese Red Cross; the French Red Cross (Indo-China Section); the Indian Red Cross; the Netherlands East Indies Red Cross; the New Zealand Red Cross (also still a branch of the BRCS); and the Siamese Red Cross. These national societies were listed as “Oriental national Red Cross Societies, Members of League, attending in an official capacity” under the List of Delegates in the published proceedings.⁴⁴⁾ Representatives from

⁴¹⁾ Yoshiya Makita, “The Alchemy of Humanitarianism: the First World War, the Japanese Red Cross and the Creation of an International Public Health Order,” *First World War Studies* 5, no. 1 (2014): 124.

⁴²⁾ The earthquake occurred just before 12 noon when everyone was cooking lunch. The weather was also windy which helped the firestorms to develop. See Gregory Smits, *When the Earth Roars: Lessons from the History of Earthquakes in Japan* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), especially chapter 3. The 1923 earthquake has been covered extensively in English texts, see, for example, Joshua Hammer, *Yokohama Burning: The Deadly 1923 Earthquake and Fire That Helped Forge the Path to World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2006); and Charles J. Schenking, *The Great Kantō Earthquake and the Chimera of National Reconstruction in Japan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

⁴³⁾ Diary of a delegate [L. E. Gielgud], *The World's Health* ix, no. 4 (April 1928): 131. See also L. E. Gielgud, *About it and About. Leaves from a Diary of Travel* (Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1928).

⁴⁴⁾ LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo, 15–26 November 1926*: 13–14.

other national Red Cross Societies who were members of the LRCS attended in an advisory capacity. These were, with a couple of exceptions, representatives from government embassies and legations of the various countries.⁴⁵⁾ The ICRC sent Henri Cuenod to represent its interests and there were attendees from the League of Nations, International Labour Office, International Union Against Tuberculosis, International Council of Nurses; China International Famine Relief Commission; Pan-Pacific Union; World Federation of Education Associations; and the International Federation of Secondary Teachers. In a world first for the Red Cross Movement, over eighty people were in attendance at the conference, almost half of them Asian.

The meeting was chaired by two men, Baron Shigenobu Hirayama (Privy Counsellor and President of the Japanese Red Cross Society) and American Judge John Barton Payne (Chairman, League of Red Cross Societies Board of Governors) both of whom were unable to communicate with each other without an interpreter. According to Gielgud, this was a demonstration of “an eagerness to find fields in which the Red Cross Societies of different countries can usefully co-operate.”⁴⁶⁾ The conference programme included five Commissions that matched the five principal planks of the League’s platform. Chaired by delegates from India, the Philippines, the Netherland East Indies, China and Siam respectively, the first Commission dealt with membership and organisation; the second focussed on relief and debates around the ‘Ciraolo Plan’;⁴⁷⁾ the third dealt with the health programme; the fourth on nursing; with the fifth Commission focussing on the Junior Red Cross.

Lewis Gielgud wrote of the significance of the meeting and especially its ‘spirit,’ of the conference bringing East and West together in the East, something that had only been accomplished once before. The First Oriental Conference in Siam, however, was largely organised and facilitated by the West—but here in Tokyo in 1926, it was very much Japan Red Cross’s show. It was a significant moment for both the LRCS and for the Japanese Red Cross. As Judge Payne said in his closing address, the “conference is a signal fire. It is a means of communication between 54 nations [who had national Red Cross Societies]” and that “the influence of such a Conference as this is very far-reaching. It is impossible,” he continued, “to

⁴⁵⁾ For example, Professor Dr F Hartel (Mrs) from Kobe representing the German Red Cross Society and Professor Ed Jos Blockhuys from the Tokyo Imperial University. The national societies of the United States (who sent five delegates), Belgium, Britain, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Poland, Spain and Sweden.

⁴⁶⁾ Diary of a delegate, *The World’s Health* ix, no. 6 (August 1928): 251. The Secretariat of the LRCS included Lewis E. Gielgud, Assistant to the Director General; Viscount Bonabes de Rouge, Director, Disaster Relief Division; Dr Frederick Humbert, Director, Health Division; and Alice Fitzgerald, Former Director, Nursing Division.

⁴⁷⁾ Another new initiative was the formation of a Relief Division in 1924, to both study relief preparedness and to improve the co-ordination of foreign relief in international efforts, and to collaborate with the new International Relief Union (inspired by Italian Senator Ciraolo). In 1925, the Board of Governors decided to form an Emigration Division to help Red Cross activity with the health and welfare of emigrants and immigrants.

over-estimate its significance.”⁴⁸⁾ The Red Cross ideal especially facilitated through the LRCS and national societies enabled the restrictions of “language and distance” to be overcome and only the ideas of “who may best serve humanity” are the focus.⁴⁹⁾

Conclusion

This paper has focused on three examples of activities of the Japanese Red Cross from the first quarter of the twentieth century as one way to explore its influence on the broader Red Cross Movement in attempts to move the Red Cross away from its Western power base in Geneva, Europe and the United States, and towards the East. In addition, the paper explores to what extent did the Japanese Red Cross, along with other national societies such as the United States, help to shift the focus of the Red Cross Movement towards a peacetime role through the newly formed League of Red Cross Societies? Do these examples provide us with a counterpoint to the standard narrative of the Red Cross being a wholly ‘western’ idea and of the lack of influence of an ‘Eastern’ Society such as the Japanese Red Cross? Or despite their best efforts, did the Red Cross agencies in the Orient, especially Japan, count for nothing as Ninagawa glumly suggested.

Japan’s long held anxiety about its reputation on the international stage was behind the push for the Japanese Red Cross to become a leader, in size, beneficence and influence within the Red Cross Movement, and to prove its standing as a ‘civilized’ nation in the East. As Yoshiya Makita suggests, “Japanese Red Cross leaders endeavoured to project their nation as an exception to the geopolitical dichotomy of the civilized West and the uncivilized East.”⁵⁰⁾ When addressing the ‘society’s indigenous origins’ as Sho Konishi has done, we can see how the Japanese Red Cross evolved and helped to ‘Easternise’ the Red Cross Movement in the first three decades of the twentieth century. When examining the three moments together as outlined earlier, they point to an Eastern national Red Cross society with real influence on the international stage of the Red Cross Movement. By the early 1920s, the Japanese Red Cross had over two million members and was the largest national society in the world. As one of the five national societies who formed the LRCS, it had been closely involved with the biggest shake up of the Red Cross Movement since the formation of the ICRC fifty years earlier. By supporting Henry Davison and the American Red Cross’ desire to create a truly international post-war Red Cross body the Japanese Red Cross was making history. The creation of the LRCS as a federated secretariat for the Red Cross national society network provided the mechanism with which the largest Red Cross national society in the world, one that came not from the West but from the East, could play a larger role within the Western focused Red

⁴⁸⁾ LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo*: 108.

⁴⁹⁾ LRCS, *Second Conference of Oriental Red Cross Societies, Tokyo*: 108.

⁵⁰⁾ Makita, “The Alchemy of Humanitarianism”: 122.

Cross Movement. The arrival of this federated body challenged the Swiss based organisation to its core. It forced the ICRC to rethink its approach towards national societies, to revise their opposition to peacetime roles, and to be more open and inclusive.

Secondly, once the LRCS was formed, its leaders began to look to the East (as well as to Central Europe and Central/South America) to facilitate the growth of the Red Cross Movement. Being the largest and most well established national society in the East, the Japanese Red Cross Society then could play a central role (or hoped to). The first visit of a LRCS official to Japan was in November 1922, when Sir Claude Hill, then Director General of the LRCS was enroute to host the first Oriental Red Cross Conference in Bangkok.⁵¹⁾ This mission to the Far East was as much about shoring up the support of the Japanese Red Cross as it was about anything else. Joined by ICRC's representative M Raymond Schlemmer and Mr Lyman Bryson, the LRCS's Junior Red Cross Director, Hill's visit included an audience with the Empress of Japan.⁵²⁾ The later hosting of the Second Oriental Conference in Tokyo provided an opportunity for the 'East' to host the 'West,' and unlike the conference in Bangkok, the Japanese were always in charge. The successful execution of the conference proceedings, the careful attention to detail by the hosts and the excellent attendant activities including dinners and sightseeing visits to Nikko and other historic temples, made a deep impression on all who attended. The Tokyo conference was evidence of the successful diversity and changes within the Red Cross world in the 1920s.

Thirdly, the establishment of the Empress Shōken Fund was an example of philanthropic largesse from East to West. Not only did Japanese money help to fund post-war reconstruction and assist new national societies with public health programmes and disaster management across the Red Cross world and especially in Europe, it provided crucial funding to support the infrastructure and work of the ICRC through the difficult decade of the 1920s. In spite of its own seismic disaster in 1923 that has been suggested was one of the pivotal factors that pushed Japan away from democracy towards militarism and authoritarianism in the 1930s, the Japanese Red Cross continued to facilitate and extend the largesse of 'Eastern philanthropy' via the Shōken Fund through the interwar period.

In Japanese historiography, the 1920s are perceived as a 'moment of liberalization' squeezed in between the Meiji period and World War I and the Showa period and the Pacific War.⁵³⁾ The Taishō period (30 July 1912–25 December 1926) saw a rise of civil society and political liberalism (for example the founding of the Japanese Communist Party in 1922

⁵¹⁾ This was part of a larger mission that included visits to the Red Cross societies of the United States, Canada, China and French Indo-China as well as Japan.

⁵²⁾ "The Director General's visit to Japan," *The World's Health* III, no. 12 (December 1922): 579–581. Hill congratulated the Japanese on the development of nursing and public health nursing and the Society's support of the establishment of regional Red Cross Conferences in the Far East. *Ibid.*, 580.

⁵³⁾ Ricky Law, "Between the State and the People: Civil Society Organizations in Interwar Japan," *History Compass* 12, no. 3 (2014): 217–225.

and universal manhood suffrage in 1925) as well as social unrest (Rice Riots in 1918), assassinations (the first elected Prime Minister of the Diet, Takashi Hara was shot in November 1921), repressive enactments (the Peace Preservation Law, 1925, and economic depression (1928). This was all framed around the devastation of the Great Kantō Earthquake.

It is within this brief period, however, where positive attempts at humanitarian diplomacy within the Red Cross Movement were enacted through the work of the LRCS and its largest national society, the Japanese Red Cross. It was here where attempts were made for the East to lead or influence the West – or at least meet as equals. It was an all-too-brief moment, but it did have an impact on the Red Cross Movement – especially in terms of diversity and developing peacetime programmes. These initiatives, the Empress Shōken Fund and hosting of the Second Oriental Red Cross Conference, for example, occurred before the ‘militaristic turn’ and global uncertainty of the 1930s, the Manchurian Incident of 1931, Japan leaving the League of Nations in 1933 and so on. By focusing on international voluntary organisations such as the Japanese Red Cross, this paper makes us reassess the complexity of international relations during the interwar period. It allows us to explore in more depth the roles of non-state actors in international relations discourse. Finally, it reveals the importance of the Japanese Red Cross as a vehicle for internationalisation during the first decades of the twentieth century and its role in the all too brief period of Japanese ‘liberalism’ in the 1920s.