

From Race to Nation:
The Institute of Pacific Relations,
Asian Americans, and George Blakeslee,
from 1908 to 1929

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INTRODUCTION

The history of exclusion of Asian Americans from U.S. citizenship, and political and social rights is a familiar story. We know much about the historical events and the process leading to the exclusion of Asian Americans from the broader “mainstream” of American society from the works of Yuji Ichioka, Sucheng Chan, Ron Takaki, Roger Daniels, and others. We can see, to use T. H. Marshall’s classic formulation of “citizenship,” how prior to World War II Asian American immigrants were denied civil rights by a prohibition against their naturalization, limitation of the political rights of their American-born offspring by politicians and labor leaders, and exclusion from social rights by the broader American public. But we can also see how important changes in citizenship rights for Asian Americans came with World War II: Chinese exclusion was ended; Chinese and Asian Indians were given naturalization rights; and, after the war, Korean and Japanese Americans were also given naturalization rights, while anti-alien land laws, aimed at the latter, were ruled unconstitutional. While social rights were still denied—

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the presence of “Asian” towns dotting the American urban landscape points to this unfulfilled dimension of U.S. citizenship—undeniable changes in the civil and social rights dimension clearly took place.¹

But why did these changes occur? To be sure, changes in the international order affected the disbursement of civil, political, and social rights to Asian Americans. Moreover, the rise of Asian American political pressure groups in the 1960s no doubt contributed to the post–World War II widening of citizenship rights. But could the bestowal of naturalization rights on Asian American immigrants be attributable solely to these two factors? Were other factors involved?

Nongovernmental organizations, especially those dealing extensively with Asia and Asian Americans prior to World War II, may have contributed to this seemingly rapid change in the citizenship regime. The Institute of Pacific Relations (IPR) was one of the largest of these organizations numerically, and it had a very geographically diverse membership for a nongovernmental organization; these two elements bestowed on it the possibility of effecting ideological changes. Founded in 1927 by Hawaiian businessman Frank Atherton (1877–1945), Stanford University president Ray Wilbur Lyman (1875–1949), Clark University professor George Blakeslee (1871–1954), and others, the Institute quickly opened chapters in Australia, Britain, Canada, China, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, with its headquarters in Honolulu before moving to New York City in 1934. During its active pre–World War II era life, the Institute sponsored a number of important studies on Asian Americans, such as Roderick McKenzie’s *Oriental Exclusion*, Eliot Mears’s *Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast*, and Carey McWilliams’s *Prejudice: Japanese Americans, Symbol of Racial Intolerance* until it met its demise in 1961.²

Yet much work remains to uncover how those in the IPR understood the people of the region now known as the Pacific Rim. Tomoko Akami finds that these individuals were “post-League [of Nations] internationalists,” while Izumi Hirobe finds that some were concerned with modifying the Immigration Act of 1924, which says much about how they understood the international order but far less about their racial outlook. No doubt part of the reason for the mystery is because the Institute’s documents and the personal papers of many of its key academicians are scattered across the globe in Australia, Japan, Hawaii, British Columbia,

New York City, and other locations, making it difficult to piece the story together. This article, therefore, begins the task with a narrow focus on a single founder, George H. Blakeslee, professor of History and International Relations at Clark University. I utilize the papers he left behind to bring to light some of the ideas that fueled the Institute's concern for Asians and Asian Americans. Blakeslee, in particular, is a good choice since he has many important connections with Asian American studies. From 1910 to 1919, he co-edited the *Journal of Race Development*, which published some of the earliest scholarly essays on Asian Americans. He lobbied publicly and privately for the revision of the 1924 Immigration Act that discriminated against Asians and Asian Americans. His papers, while incomplete, shed light on some of the thinking behind the Institute.³

What emerges from these sources is that Blakeslee both challenged and upheld the status quo on issues of "race." On the one hand, the Clark University scholar proved quite liberal for his time by defining "race" not as a permanent determinative factor of human behavior, but something far more malleable; thus he believed in, and even preached, that "superior civilizations" should take on responsibility for the development of so-called inferior peoples rather than simply ignoring them or exploiting them, as many social Darwinists of his day recommended. Moreover, the historian maintained a high view of Chinese and Japanese "civilization," which, when linked to his idea of development, meant Chinese and Japanese, both in Asia and America, merited being treated with equality. Once World War I broke out, Blakeslee, like many Wilsonian internationalist liberals, accepted the nation-state as the entity that would bring peace to the world. By 1919, he shifted the journal away from the race-based notion of human behavior supported by psychologist and president of Clark University, G. Stuart Hall, changing the journal's name to *International Affairs*, which reflected the importance he attached to the nation-state. He believed nation-states deserve acknowledgment of their territorial integrity and protection of their citizens from discriminatory legislation, such as those pushed by the Japanese exclusion movement, and in this regard Blakeslee's advocacy of a fair immigration quota for Japanese immigrants appeared liberal. Yet his willingness to accept limited quotas for the Japanese while leaving unchallenged the much larger quotas for Europeans was in line with maintaining the racial compositional status quo of pre-World War II America.

RACE DEVELOPMENT

Blakeslee's malleable conception of race was readily apparent in the very first issue of the *Journal of Race Development*. In explaining the purpose of the journal, he wrote that it aimed for discussions of "the problems which relate to the progress of races and states generally considered backward in their standards of civilization." Promising academic freedom in the discussion, Blakeslee guaranteed his journal was not wedded to any particular school of thought and that its authors were free to express their views as long as they conformed to the intent of assisting the development of so-called inferior races. Blakeslee said of his journal:

It is not the organ of any particular school of thought; it does not even hold itself responsible for all of the statements of its contributors; but it aims to present, by the pen of men who can write with authority, the important facts which bear upon race progress, and the different theories as to the methods by which developed peoples may most effectively aid the progress of the undeveloped.

He reiterated his point again by saying the journal "seeks to discover, not how weaker races may best be exploited, but how they may best be helped by the stronger." He then stipulated the kinds of authors he wanted for the journal—intellectually well-informed and with a matching social conscience: "It is to provide a means for the discussion of these problems, by those who really have the interests of the native peoples at heart, as well as for a presentation of the facts bearing upon racial development."⁴

He promised readers that that the journal would cover a large range of topics, including eugenics, since discoveries in this field might help the "inferior races" to do better in the future. Blakeslee said: "Superior vitality may make the backward races of to-day the world leaders tomorrow."⁵

REPRESENTATIONS OF CHINA AND KOREA IN 1908

Unlike those who supported the Chinese exclusion movement, Blakeslee held considerable respect for Chinese cultural achievements. In 1910, in his university course lectures he pointed to the Mongol dynasty as the greatest empire in the history of mankind in terms of geographic spread, the Great Wall as an engineering marvel, and the institution of the civil

service examination system as a great administrative achievement. As well, he had high praise for Confucius, whom he called “the Ben Franklin of China,” since the two men were both “distinguished gentlemen” who emphasized “moral precepts for conduct of affairs of this life.” In fact, he held Chinese civilization in such high esteem that he claimed that that from 2000 BC “the Chinese were very well advanced on the road to civilization.” He added: “At the time when pre-historic man in Europe and America was rubbing his back against the trees of primeval forests, the Chinese student was working out his mind to six places of the decimals.”⁶

Yet, in 1908, Blakeslee said that contemporary China had its share of weaknesses as well. While admitting that most Chinese were law-abiding and physically strong, he found them “selfish” and “self-centered,” lacking a sense of public virtue and even heedless of those suffering right in front of them. Moreover, he found them wanting in government and overall “civilization.” “Their government,” Blakeslee declared, “is without honesty, their civilization is without science, and their religion is largely without God. You may smell China before you land. And when you once have gone ashore, you see that the Chinese people have absolutely no conception of the rules of hygiene.”⁷

While Blakeslee did not directly blame Western imperialism for China’s contemporary impoverishment, he certainly was critical of it. Though he portioned out blame to both sides for the Opium Wars, he clearly viewed favorably the Boxer Rebellion. “The Boxer movement,” the young historian claimed, “was a great patriotic protest against the robbery of Chinese territory,” which thus made him willingly to excuse the antifeign “excesses” of the participants by saying that “the horrors which were perpetuated on the whites by the Chinese in China have more than ten times been paid by the horrors which the whites have perpetuated upon the Chinese.” Blakeslee did not excuse the Western imperialist nations carving up China. He compared their actions to a hypothetical situation in which Russia seized Governor’s Island (New York), England grabbed Fort Monroe (Virginia), Germany occupied Charleston (South Carolina), and France took Galveston (Texas)—in other words, many coastal ports of the eastern United States. He summarized his analysis of Western imperialism in China:

As a matter of policy, the system of spoliation was all wrong. It has accomplished and will accomplish no benefit to China or her oppressors. . . . What I contended . . . for still is that China should remain the mistress of her own

destiny, that mechanical progress should come, but under her own auspices, and that her autonomy in the common interest of all nations should be preserved.⁸

Hence, in 1913, Blakeslee called the Chinese “a gifted race which is struggling to compress the natural evolution of centuries into a span of a few years and whose national future, as a growing Pacific power, will be closely associated with our own.”⁹

Despite Blakeslee’s disparaging remarks about contemporary Chinese culture, his condemnation of Western imperialism found a responsive chord among Chinese Americans in San Francisco. When his *China and the Far East* came out in 1910, the San Francisco Chinese Chamber of Commerce recommended it for wide circulation on the West Coast. As one enthusiastic reader said: “I have given a copy to a representative of the Chinese Chamber of Commerce of San Francisco who has just called upon me, with the recommendation that he should see that it secures purchasers among the Chinese of the Coast.”¹⁰

Blakeslee’s representation of Korea, however, was a different matter. He saw the country as initially similar to China, but then his line of thinking changes.

When our ancestors, the Angles and Saxons, were half-naked barbarians, wandering about in the damp, foggy villages of Germany, at that time the Koreans were civilized people. It was from the hands of China that they received the torch of civilization. And after they had lighted the fires of learning in their own land, they reached across the waters and handed the torch to Japan. Then Korea fell asleep. To-day it is Japan . . . who is waking her up vigorously from her long, Rip Van Winkle sleep of hundreds of years.¹¹

Blakeslee saw Koreans in a very different light than the Chinese or Japanese. He believed Koreans and Japanese were “essentially the same general [racial] stock,” though he thought there was a “frightful abyss” between the two peoples. While the Japanese were “quick, lively, [and] energetic,” the Koreans were nice but the opposite:

They lack energy, they lack vigor, they lack the get-up qualities which have made other nations what they are. Now, since they do lack these qualities, there is [a] danger on the other hand of under-estimating the Koreans. When you come to know them, you find they are really a kind-hearted, lovable people.¹²

But unlike the imperialist situation in China, Blakeslee supported Japanese imperialism's nasty awakening of the Korean Rip Van Winkle. He noted in his 1908 lecture that Queen Min was murdered by a "a gang of ruffians and cut-throats" rather than Imperial Japanese troops and their Korean collaborators and acknowledged that many individual Koreans have "suffered greatly" under Japanese rule, but he pointed to the "wonderful reforms" the Japanese brought to Korea in the area of infrastructure building (railroads, roads, bridges, water systems), sanitation and health, and public education. But the greatest benefit, the history professor pointed out, was the termination of the "abuses of Korean [governmental] administration." His assessment of the previous Korean government under Emperor Kojong was harsh. He said:

The Korean government has been unbelievably corrupt. The Court at Seoul has been control[led] by soothsayers, eunuchs and sorcerers. Corrupt factions there have contested control, using as means midnight assassination[s] and street riots. The officials have lived off the peasants, and the peasants have starved, and the people as a whole have no initiative. They have been trodden down for centuries, and they have no push, no energy, no life.¹³

Furthermore, he invoked an unnamed "immutable law," perhaps from social Darwinism applied to international relations, to justify Japanese imperialism:

There is danger in wasting altogether too much sympathy over the loss of Korean independence. It is a law of history that if a state or a society will not make progress, it must be destroyed, and if it will not make reforms, then those must be made from without. There are no international asylums for feeble-minded states. There are no retreats for imbecile governments. And the Korean government was not fit to live: the Korean nation, independent, did not have the moral power to reform itself, and Japan was carrying out an immutable law when it smashed independence in Korea.¹⁴

Did Blakeslee condemn Koreans to a colonial status in perpetuity? Probably not. While he never stated explicitly what he thought the future of Korea held, in general, he maintained that all countries of the Asia-Pacific region were headed for some form of self-governance, since the whole Asian Continent was headed toward a "constitution-securing epoch," as Europe had entered its own little more than a century earlier. Noting on the eve of the Chinese Revolution of 1911 that the empress

dowager had promised a constitution, Blakeslee declared that the future of Asia included some form of constitutional government and that to fight against this trend was senseless: "To attempt to rule over a dependent Oriental people forever is simply hopeless; the recent history of Japan has made laughing-stock of the old idea of inferiority of all Asiatics and their incapacity for modern self-rule."¹⁵

REPRESENTATIONS OF JAPAN IN 1912

While Blakeslee left behind no lecture notes on Japan, the journal he cofounded at Clark University provides us with further clues as to how he constructed the Japanese. The *Journal of Race Development* had as a goal counteracting the "international slander" the founders perceived to be circulating among the American public as a result of the Japanese exclusion movement's rise after the 1907 "Gentlemen's agreement," whereby Japan would voluntarily restrict labor emigration to the United States and in return the United States would make no formal restrictive immigration law targeting the Japanese. Although, on paper, he and Hall were co-editors, in reality Blakeslee ran the journal, as his editorial assistant Mary Treudley later recalled.¹⁶

Under Blakeslee, the journal took a decidedly liberal stance for its times. It was founded at the same time as the annual conferences on the Far East at Clark University. Blakeslee held a similar concept of "race" as the exclusionists, but he inserted the key word "development" to the journal's title to indicate that the journal's authors did not seek the exploitation of allegedly inferior races nor view their racial characteristics as immutably fixed but, rather, as malleable. As he stated in the introduction to the first issue:

The *Journal of Race Development* offers itself as a forum for the discussion of the problems which relate to the progress of races and states generally considered backward in their standards of civilization. It is not the organ of any particular school of thought; it does not even hold itself responsible for all of the statements of its contributors; but it aims to present, by the pen of men who can write with authority, the important facts which bear upon race progress, and the different theories as to the methods by which developed peoples may most effectively aid the progress of the undeveloped. It seeks to discover, not how weaker races may best be exploited, but how they may best be helped by the stronger. . . . We trust that the *Journal of Race*

Development may aid, in some degree, at least, in so educating public opinion, that it shall secure for the peoples of weaker civilizations a treatment marked by continually greater justice and wisdom and sympathy.¹⁷

To ensure the journal's aims were carried out, Blakeslee formed a board of contributing editors. Consistent with his liberal stance, the neo-progressive academic secured scholars of considerable stature for the board who shared his outlook. Hence, Blakeslee welcomed to his board progressives of his day such as W. E. B. Du Bois, then president of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; Franz Boas, anthropologist at Columbia University; and Alfred Kroeber, anthropologist at the University of California (Berkeley). Although the latter dropped out after a year, Blakeslee added more to his board, including A. F. Griffiths, president of Oahu College, who argued at the "China and the Far East" Conference in 1910 that the Chinese in Hawaii had already successfully assimilated.¹⁸

Blakeslee recruited other top-level scholars for his journal, including academics from Harvard, Yale, and Columbia and nonacademics with considerable knowledge of a specific country such as India, the Philippines, Korea, China, and Japan. Although the nonacademics were often missionaries, the one expert in Tokyo was the editor of the *Oriental Review*, Masajirō Honda. It should be pointed out, however, that he had no other Asians or Asian Americans on his board until long after the journal became *International Affairs* in 1919.¹⁹

While it is not known how closely Blakeslee selected the journal's articles to match his own political perspective, it is clear that most of the authors shared a similar belief in the progress of mankind and the obligation of the stronger to help the weaker. Blakeslee's journal published an article by Alexander Chamberlain, professor of Anthropology, at Clark University, who began his essay on the Japanese "race" by discussing how nineteenth-century scholars observing the Japanese found them the weakest physically of the Mongoloid race, which they partially attributed to their diet of rice, fish, and vegetables. These scholars, he wrote, had considerable doubts that the Japanese "will be able to stand the stress and incident to the acceptance of Occidental civilization and competition with the white race." But once the Japanese defeated the Russians in the 1904–5 war, Chamberlain observed, scholars reassessed upwardly the Japanese's allegedly weak racial origins by claiming the Japanese had tropical origins or were "thin-skinned Tartars." The current

consensus, Chamberlain argued, was that the Japanese were a “mixed” Mongolian “race,” whose future—and this was what was most stunning of Chamberlain’s conclusions—lay in equality with whites. Chamberlain said: “And they are a race with whom, at some future time, the white race may happily contract a lasting physical and intellectual union.”²⁰

BLAKESLEE ON ASIAN AMERICAN IMMIGRANTS

When it came to the question of Japanese immigration, the journal under Blakeslee’s leadership gave voice only to those who contradicted the claims of V. S. McClatchy and the Japanese exclusion movement leaders. As early as 1912, Blakeslee got Jōkichi Takamine, president of the Nippon Club of New York, to write about the Japanese in the United States. Trained in the physical sciences, Takamine had no formal education in social sciences. Yet he wrote as if he did, and in his defense of the Japanese in the United States, he twisted the “facts” to suit his “emotional” stance against the exclusionists’ claims that the Japanese were unassimilable. In contrasting Japanese with European immigrants, the former chemist for the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture made an astounding claim—that the Japanese immigrated to the United States for educational, not economic, reasons. Takamine wrote:

Herein is the decided difference between the Japanese and European immigrants. The European immigrants are in the main attracted here by stories of huge fortunes made and to be made in America. The jingle of the dollar is in their ears all the way across the Atlantic. The Japanese do not know much about American millionaires. Their dreams are not of money but of books and colleges.

Takamine further asserted that when the Gentlemen’s agreement was arrived at in 1907, Japanese immigrants were disappointed because they could no longer work while pursuing an education in America. He wrote:

A few years ago the Japanese government prohibited at the request of American authorities, the coming of Japanese laborers to America, a vital blow was dealt to the young men who were not rich enough to come to America as regular college students, but who still wanted to come, not really to work, but to learn.

Given their educational aspirations, and their willingness to settle permanently in the United States, Takamine recommended these immigrants for U.S. citizenship: “They have peculiar characteristics that education alone can impart to a man. They have a sense of honor, of duty and of pride. They have weaknesses, too, but I do not hesitate to assert upon their behalf, that when they become citizens of America they will be worthy citizens.”²¹

Blakeslee’s journal also gave voice to others who spoke out in support of the Japanese in America. A. F. Griffiths, president of Oahu College in Honolulu, pointed out in his essay that the Japanese were assimilated into white-dominated Hawaiian society, even though they outnumbered whites 80,000 to 15,000, making it clear that if assimilation is simply a matter of numbers, then other areas of the United States can easily absorb the Japanese.²²

Charles Hicks of Los Gatos, California, and a former instructor at the First Commercial Middle School in Kyoto, was blunt in discussing the alleged Japanese “problem” in the United States: “Speaking solely for this immediate section of this state, it is safe to say that there is no Japanese problem except in men’s minds. But some minds are very active in this respect.” Hicks thought the very worst “offense” the Japanese committed, which was not worthy of the label “problem,” was taking up residence in Santa Clara County, similar to Jews vacationing in the Catskill Mountains or moving into gentile sections of New York City. The real “problem,” as he saw it, was for the United States to fix its immigration laws so that all were treated fairly. He wrote:

In brief, there is justice in the outcry against the Japanese and there is justice in the outcry of the Japanese. In our wisdom, as an experienced democratic nation, we should be able to transcend pettiness to such an extent as would allow us, in the stead of insults and discriminatory legislation, to frame a set of immigration laws that, to say the least, would treat all immigrants on the same basis—so far as race is concerned, shutting out all undesirables and holding down the rates of desirables to a minimum to satisfy even California.²³

About the Chinese and Koreans, Blakeslee said little. He briefly mentioned how he thought discrimination against the Chinese in the United States stemmed largely from “social” (class) issues—the average American might not want to dine with a Chinese coolie but would not hesitate to accept a dinner invitation from the emperor of China. However, his

journal's publication of an article on the Chinese in Hawaii was revealing of where Blakeslee stood in a broad sense with respect to the acceptability of Chinese Americans. His board member A. R. Griffiths published "The Chinese in Hawaii: An Example of Successful Assimilation," in which he argued that the eighteen thousand Chinese in the Islands had successfully adapted to "Occidental civilization." Through an analysis of a half-century of Chinese experience in Hawaii, Griffiths found that Chinese American youth had "completely adopted American ideals and ways," while the older generation rapidly shed their cultural "conservatism of ages" to adapt to their new environment. Hence, Griffiths concluded, "Hawaii has demonstrated that in the proper political, social and educational environment the Chinese will become American citizens whose stability, patriotism and obedience to law will give them an honored place under the Stars and Stripes."²⁴

What Blakeslee added to the debate came not in the journal itself but in his lectures, speeches, and correspondence. He wrote to the Foreign Policy Association in 1929, advocating serious consideration of revising the 1924 immigration act after the Japanese delegation at the IPR's Kyoto conference vociferously protested the law's discriminatory nature. At the Mid-West Institute of International Relations at Northwestern University, he publicly advocated granting Japan an immigration quota, saying, "The United States can and should place Japan on the quota basis."²⁵

BLAKESLEE'S INTEREST IN ASIA AND ASIAN AMERICANS

Blakeslee's background was probably partially responsible for his interest in Asians and Asian Americans. He was born after the Civil War in New England in a region known for its support of radical reconstruction of the South that would do away with the planter class. Moreover, the region he was raised in took a strong interest in U.S. trade with China through the Open Door Policy. His surrounding environment of radical governmental reform and commerce, therefore, possibly explain why he supported China's territorial sovereignty while denying the same for Korea. His father introduced young Blakeslee to the educational world of New England that that was rapidly expanding its influence across the nation and the Pacific Ocean to places as far away as China. His father was the principal of the old East Greenwich Academy, where young Blakeslee prepared for college as a boarding student. After earning his

college degree at Wesleyan University in 1893, he returned to the Academy and taught there for a year. Blakeslee's subsequent travel and education abroad may have shaped some of his attitudes toward the people of the region. Although he rarely mentioned it, he went to China in some capacity with the State Department from 1894 until he entered the University of Leipzig in Berlin in 1898. He stayed there until 1901, and then spent a couple of years at Oxford. In 1903, Blakeslee went to Harvard where he earned both his master's and doctorate degrees in that same year. Once his education was completed, he joined the History Department at Clark University as an instructor. He had climbed to the rank of full professor by 1909.²⁶

Blakeslee's epistemological outlook, too, contributed to his interest in Asian Americans. Like so many of his educated generation, Blakeslee was a progressive and thus believed in taking action once the "facts" were known. Worshipping at the shrine of logical empiricism, Blakeslee saw the university as the best place to begin the search for the "real truth." Thus, he found it particularly galling that the "international slander" of the Japanese exclusion movement had fueled tension between the United States and Japan. International relations was a domain that he thought best left to those who were well-informed and thus able to make decisions about foreign policy. For him, the best counter against these diplomatic intruders was to bring to light the facts of the situation: "To bring this about, no agency is better fitted than the university whose purpose in every field of knowledge is first to search for the real truth with an impartial mind; and second, to do its part in disseminating this truth in the community at large."²⁷

Yet, he differed from his colleagues in that he also believed it was important for scholars to grasp the "emotions" behind the "facts" to arrive at a true understanding of a given situation, especially as it applied to international relations. In a university lecture, he stated: "Knowledge is what we all need most of all—knowledge not merely of the cold facts, but of the emotions these facts arouse in the minds and hearts of the peoples of the Pacific." That understanding of how the "emotions" related to the "facts" may have been why Blakeslee, a young scholar growing up in detached academic environment, was willing to wade into the public arena and "educate" the American public on issues as they pertained to Asia and the Pacific at a time when the Japanese exclusion movement was at its peak.²⁸

There were two additional reasons why Blakeslee was a racial liberal.

The first, which I call the “China syndrome,” was his belief in the progress of the twentieth century toward a bipolar Asia-Pacific world with the United States and China as the major powers. Blakeslee had already recognized Japan as a world power when the island nation successfully negotiated the end of its unequal treaties with the West, entered into an alliance with Great Britain, and defeated Russia in the 1904–5 war. But he was also aware of that nation’s physical limitations, particularly in the area of natural resources and its growing dependence on world trade—especially machinery imports from the United States. China, however, was a different story. As Blakeslee wrote: “The strength of our own western coast as well as that of the British Pacific possessions may be measured with reasonable certainty; while both the power and the limitations of Japan are now understood; but the possibilities of China, when thoroughly awakened and organized on a modern basis, are beyond computation.” He explained further why China might surpass the West in the future. He observed that the chief of U.S. Forest Service, Gifford Pinchot; steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie; and Swedish geology professor, Alfred Tornebohm, forecast that Europe and the United States might exhaust their workable deposits of coal and iron before the end of the twentieth century, while China alone had enough coal and iron—“the vitals of civilization”—to possibly surge past the West. While he still believed the United States would remain a “superpower” in the Pacific, this meant that China and the United States would be the major powers of the Asia-Pacific region in the foreseeable future. Moreover, Blakeslee saw China modernizing, especially after the 1911 revolution. He wrote:

They have already left the ruts of their centuries-old civilization and begun to adopt the new customs and institutions of the West and of Japan; this is especially noticeable in their new system of scientific education. The revolution itself, considering the forces opposing it and the immensity of the country, has been carried out, notwithstanding the recent reaction, with a success which has surprised the closest student of Chinese conditions.

He noted further that that the Chinese Revolution was heavily influenced by American ideals and educators, which, he thought boded well for the rise of a democratic China in the future.

Americans have already most profoundly effected [*sic*] conditions in China. The leaders of the present revolution have largely followed American ideas

and ideals, and have taken as their heroes our own national heroes of the past. American schools have laid much of [the] basis upon which the new China has been built. With only a little exaggeration—for the important part played by Japan must not be forgotten—one might write a history of the upheaval of the past two or three years under the title, “The American Revolution in China.”²⁹

A second possible factor in shaping Blakeslee’s racial liberalism was his acceptance of the nation-state over “race” as a way to categorize people. Perhaps it began with Japan. The island nation successfully negotiated its way out of the unequal treaties of the nineteenth century, entered into the “family of nations” as the first non-European civilization-based country, and was victorious over a European power—Russia—all of which were noted by Blakeslee as evidence that “Asiatic” races were not inferior to Europeans. Blakeslee may have further unconsciously attached importance to the nation-state when he began serving as an adviser in the U.S. State Department. He was pressed into service as an academic adviser to the Colonel House Commission of Inquiry, which sought solutions to the world’s problems at the Paris Peace Conference in 1917–18. There Blakeslee prepared papers on the German colonies in the Pacific-territories that that the Japanese government gained control over. In 1921–22, he served as technical adviser to the Washington Conference on the Limitation of Armaments, which allowed for Japanese naval superiority in the western Pacific while restricting U.S. military buildup in the region. And, finally, Blakeslee served as special assistant to the U.S. legation in Peiping (Beijing) in 1931 for the Lytton Commission, at the specific request of Secretary of State Henry Stimson, who called Blakeslee’s service “very valuable in the present crisis.” While Blakeslee scarcely mentioned it, he probably learned at this time how the problem of Japanese expansion was linked to the issue of overpopulation and the need for emigration, less than a decade after the passage of the racially discriminatory 1924 immigration law. Indeed, Blakeslee’s connection with the State Department was so strong that his daughter married a U.S. vice-consul to Canada. All these things led, in 1920, to his renaming his journal *International Affairs*.³⁰

Given the importance of Asia’s two powers and the new analytical tool called “the nation,” Blakeslee sought to disseminate the “facts” in a manner consistent with the concept of the nation-state. Although he was committed to changing the status quo ante in international relations,

he sought to do it through “conventional” diplomatic means. This is especially evident in his work with annual conferences for the Institute of Pacific Relations. Having worked on the mandated Pacific islands issue, Blakeslee was acutely aware of how the League of Nations in general did not adequately cover the Asia-Pacific region.

The IPR’s nondiplomatic, informal, and informed discussion fit well with Blakeslee’s desire to fall in line with U.S. State Department wishes. For example, the Institute sponsored its annual conference October 20–November 9, 1929, in Kyoto. The Institute recruited from Japan a group composed of Japanese House of Peers members, Diet members, heads of major Japanese corporations, Japanese university professors, and top journalists. They also brought out a younger, “intensely nationalistic” group from China, and placed both in roundtable discussions dealing with the Manchurian issue. While no resolutions were adopted—the Institute deliberately avoided such “official” statements in the interest of generating free-flowing talks—Blakeslee took considerable pride in the Institute’s accomplishments. He thought the Japanese delegation learned the “feelings” of the Chinese group while the latter learned the limits of the liberal-minded Japanese in effecting changes in their foreign policy regarding Manchuria. The greatest achievement from Blakeslee’s point of view was: “But, after all, the outstanding result of the Institute of Pacific Relations is the biennial conference as a permanent institution for the peoples of the Far East and the Pacific.”³¹

Blakeslee was enthusiastic about discussions of creating a permanent nongovernmental organization in 1925. From his perspective, the League of Nations was inadequate for dealing with problems in the Pacific Rim region largely because two important powers—the United States and Russia—were not members of the League. A nongovernmental organization such as the Institute of Pacific Relations, Blakeslee reasoned, would provide an important site where informal discussion of problems and solutions could be aired to an extent and fashion not possible within the League of Nations. Moreover, he saw the institute doing two things right. In the first place, the National Council for the United States, at least, was attracting the attention, if not participation, of “educated Americans,” which he thought was necessary in order for the Institute to hold informed discussions. He applauded the fact that the 125-member council would have some of the most important and influential people in the country on board, such as the presidents of Harvard, Williams, and Johns Hopkins; the editors of the *New York Times* and the *Review of Reviews*;

influential businessmen from the Pacific Steamship Lines and the First National Bank of Los Angeles; the former governor-general of the Philippines; key religious leaders such as John R. Mott and Bishop Francis McDonnell; and, finally, financial backing from the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace and Charles Crane, the wealthy industrialist and former U.S. minister to China who was also a member of the World Peace Foundation. Hence, Blakeslee, the Institute's founder, took an optimistic view of its future, given this combination of high-powered intellectual thinking, access to up-to-the-minute information from the field, and close connections with mass media outlets that could disseminate their findings to the public, as well as the likelihood of financial backing from important foundations. He said:

The desire to know at first hand of the problems and the fields of the neighbor[ing] peoples of the Pacific is most hopeful of the future. . . . And to give knowledge of each Pacific people of the facts and the points of view of the others is, it seems to me, the greatest service of our Institute of Pacific Relations.³²

CONCLUSION

If Blakeslee and the *Journal of Race Development* reflected a significant portion of the northeastern intellectuals' thinking on issues of "race," then a couple of conclusions are warranted. In the first place, intellectuals like Blakeslee saw "race" not as a fixed entity that banishes forever those defined as "inferior" to the dustbin of history while privileging for eternity those deemed "superior" (such as Europeans and Americans). Rather, he and those who contributed to the journal believed "race" was a malleable enough category so that races could "improve" and that those who were in the "superior" position had a responsibility, a noblese oblige, to "educate" and "elevate" the "inferior races." Hence, his journal carried articles in which both the Chinese and the Japanese were considered "assimilable," or even "assimilated." Perhaps because of his training as a historian, Blakeslee saw progress and historical development as an important factor in human history, and thus was careful to include in his analysis of those he deemed "inferior races," such as the Koreans, a discussion of their premodern past, which he viewed as "superior" to "Western civilization."

Unlike many nineteenth-century anthropologists, Blakeslee and his

cohorts clearly did not see the Japanese as an inferior race. They were cognizant of Japan's equal status *as a nation* on the world stage prior to World War I. They recognized Japan's success in renegotiating the unequal treaties, its important alliance with Great Britain, and its victory over Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5. Indeed, they defined Japan as a new world power, one that challenged effectively their own ideas of how “races” should “progress” along the path toward “civilization” that Europeans had trod. Given these ideas, it should come as no surprise therefore that Blakeslee and the northeastern intellectuals opposed discrimination against Japanese immigration and immigrants on racial grounds, viewing much of what the exclusionist movement publicly professed as nothing more than “international slander,” even as they accepted (or seemed to accept) another myth in its place—that Japanese immigrants were all students—to represent the Japanese *as a race*, as “assimilable.” Liberals like Blakeslee rejected the notion that the Japanese “race” was inferior, but they still accepted the underlying assumption of the “development” of nations (or, in Japan's case, the “maturity”), which, in the racial hierarchy of nations, meant they were not yet equal.³³

Eventually, Blakeslee and the northeastern intellectuals quietly dropped the concept of “race” in favor of that of the nation-state. Exactly when they switched concepts is difficult to pinpoint, but it was probably after World War I, when the academy and the American public lost confidence in the “progress” of the allegedly “superior” and civilized Europeans. For Blakeslee, his shift was probably a result of his experience serving in the State Department. But other intellectuals, too, took up the concept, so that in 1919, the journal dropped “race” from its title and substituted “nation.”

Their transition from “race” to “nation” had important implications for the study of East Asia and Asian Americans. Blakeslee and the northeastern intellectuals believed in China's potential for becoming a world power in the late twentieth century as Europe declined, which made them view the Chinese Revolution of 1911 in a positive light, believing it to be the first major step toward that country's entry into the “constitution-securing epoch” that Europe, the United States, Japan, and the “family of nations” had already traversed.

But when Japanese imperialists advanced farther into China following World War I, Blakeslee and the northeastern intellectuals saw the Japanese as violating the basic “right” of a nation-state to its own

territorial integrity. This, in turn, meant Japanese could no longer be conflated with Chinese, and the idea of an alliance between them—the Yellow Peril concept became more the work of the imaginative minds of fiction writers than of the rational, “fact”-oriented northeastern intellectuals.³⁴

NOTES

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¹ Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885–1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Suchen Chang, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Woodbridge, CT: Twayne, 1991); Ron Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (New York: Penguin, 1987); and Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press Press, 1988). See also T. H. Marshall and Thomas Bottomore, *Citizenship and Social Class* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1992).

² Roderick D. McKenzie, *Oriental Exclusion: The Effect of American Immigration Laws, Regulations, and Judicial Decisions upon the Chinese and Japanese on the American Pacific Coast* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1928); Eliot G. Mears, *Resident Orientals on the American Pacific Coast: Their Legal and Economic Status* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1928); and Carey McWilliams, *Prejudice: Japanese Americans, Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1944).

For a discussion of George Blakeslee and the IPR, see Paul F. Hooper, “The Institute of Pacific Relations and the Origins of Asian and Pacific Studies,” *Pacific Affairs* 61, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 103, 107, 115. For general overviews of the IPR, see Tomoko Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of the Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919–1945* (London: Routledge, 2002); and John N. Thomas, *The Institute of Pacific Relations: Asian Scholars and American Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974).

³ Akami, *Internationalizing the Pacific*, 44; and Izumi Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice: Modifying the Exclusion Clause of the 1924 Immigration Act* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 13, 93, 114, 126. The latter discusses Blakeslee but does not utilize fully the materials deposited at the Robert Goddard Library, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

⁴ George H. Blakeslee, Introduction, *Journal of Race Development* 1 (1910–11): 1, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶ China Lecture, March 17, 1908, 4, 2, 1, George H. Blakeslee Papers, Special Collections, Robert Goddard Library, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts (hereafter cited as GHBP/CU).

⁷ China Lecture, March 17, 1908, 18–20, GHBP/CU.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7, 15, 11, 12, GHBP/CU.

⁹ George H. Blakeslee, ed. *Recent Developments in China* (New York: G. E. Stechert, 1913), xi, GHBP/CU.

¹⁰ John Ford to Prof. George H. Blakeslee, March 28, 1910, folder 7: Correspondence Concerning Addresses, Books, Teaching, 1910–1949, box C BLAK 2–1 General Correspondence, GHBP/CU.

¹¹ Lecture by Dr. George H. Blakeslee, Clark University, February 25, 1908, 1, box C BLAK 3–1, GHBP/CU.

¹² Korea-2 Lecture by Dr. George H. Blakeslee, Clark University, March 3, 1908, 13, 12, box C BLAK 3–1, GHBP/CU.

¹³ Lecture by Dr. George H. Blakeslee, Clark University, February 25, 1908, 4–5, 14, 7–13, box C BLAK 3–1, GHBP/CU.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13–14, box C BLAK 3–1, GHBP/CU.

¹⁵ Blakeslee, *China and the Far East* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1910), xviii.

¹⁶ William A. Koelsch, *Clark University, 1887–1987: A Narrative History* (Worcester, MA: Clark University Press, 1987), 14, 15; Anon., “Interview with Dr. Mary Bosworth Treudley, Winter Park, Florida, March 14, 1972,” n.d. ca. 1972, folder 1972; Interview with Dr. Mary Bosworth Treudley (PhD 1916), box U1–2, University History Records, Series: Histories and Memoirs, Robert Goddard Library, Clark University, Worcester, Massachusetts.

¹⁷ *Journal of Race Development* 1 (1910–11): 1, 4.

¹⁸ See A. F. Griffiths, “The Chinese in Hawaii: An Example of Successful Assimilation,” in Blakeslee, ed., *China and the Far East*, 295–316.

¹⁹ George H. Blakeslee, ed., *Japan and Japanese-American Relations* (Baltimore: Waverly Press, 1913), x.

²⁰ Alexander Francis Chamberlain, “The Japanese Race,” *Journal of Race Development* 3 (1912–13): 177, 186, 187.

²¹ Jōkichi Takamine, “The Japanese in America,” *Journal of Race Development* 2 (1911–12): 238–39.

²² A. F. Griffiths, “The Japanese Race Question in Hawaii,” *Journal of Race Development* 6 (1915–16): 424, 440.

²³ Charles Roger Hicks, “The Japanese Problem in California,” *International Affairs* 11, no. 4 (April 1921): 606, 616–20.

²⁴ China Lecture, March 17, 1908, 18–20; A. R. Griffiths, “The Chinese in Hawaii: An Example of Successful Assimilation,” in *China and the Far East*, 315.

²⁵ Hirobe, *Japanese Pride, American Prejudice*, 126, 206.

²⁶ Vita, p1., box C- BLAK 3–1; GHB to Mr. Gren O. Pierrel, July 1, 1949, folder 15: “Letters from George Hubbard Blakeslee re: testimonial, commencement, 5/49,” box C BLAK 2–1 General Correspondence; G. H. Blakeslee to Conrad C. Parker, December 2, 1913, folder 4: Correspondence concerning Conferences, 1913, box C BLAK 2–1, General Correspondence, GHBP/CU.

²⁷ Blakeslee, *Japan and Japanese-American Relations*, x, GHBP/CU.

²⁸ George Blakeslee, “To the Members of the Institute of Pacific Relations,” January 1, 1925, 4, GHBP/CU.

²⁹ George H. Blakeslee, ed., *Recent Developments in China* (New York: G. E. Stetchert, 1913), ix, x.

³⁰ Department of State to Wallace W. Atwood, Western Union telegram, February 9, 1932, folder “Blakeslee, Dr. George H., Feb 1930–May 1932,” box B4–18–1, W. W. Atwood Papers, and [GHB] to Dr. Clara E. Schieber, June 16, 1941, folder 11: Correspondence concerning Honorary Degree, 1941, box C BLAK 2–1, General Correspondence, GHBP/CU.

³¹ Blakeslee, “What the Kyoto Conference Means,” 1929, box C Blak 3–1, GHBP/CU.

³² George Blakeslee, "To the Members of the Institute of Pacific Relations," January 1, 1925, 2-4, GHBP/CU.

³³ Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 5-6.

³⁴ The State Department adopted the nation-state approach to its geographical division of the world in 1907, recognizing China and Japan as separate nations. See Richard Hume Werking, *The Master Architects: Building the United States Foreign Service, 1890-1913* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1977), 115-16, 247.