

On the Beginnings of Media and Communication Studies:

Theories of the Press and Its Social Function in Prewar Japan



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As early as prewar Japan, thinkers of various intellectual proveniences had begun discussing the most important topics of contemporary media and communication studies (such as ways to define the social function of the press, journalism and the formation of public opinion). In this talk, light is particularly shed on press scholar Ono Hideo, his disciple the sociologist and propaganda researcher Koyama Eizo, Marxist philosopher Tosaka Jun and sociologist and postwar intellectual Shimizu Ikutaro. Besides introducing the different approaches of these four figures, this essay also contextualizes the early discursive space of Japanese media and communication studies within international tendencies in Germany from three perspectives of transnational intellectual history.

Fabian Schäfer, PhD, is senior researcher at URPP Asia and Europe, University of Zurich. He is the author of *Public Opinion, Propaganda, Ideology: Theories on the Press and its Social Function in Interwar Japan, 1918-1937* (Brill, 2012) and the editor of *Tosaka Jun: Ideology, Media, Everydayness* (in German; Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2011). His current research interests include Japanese cultural studies, media and cultural theory and transnational intellectual history.