[page 9**]**

**FOREWORD**

This issue of the Royal Asiatic Society Transactions, going beyond its usual area of interest in Korea’s history, language and culture, will take a look at mass communications.

Korea rightly takes pride in her early achievements in the field of written communication. The thirteenth-century publication of the Koryo Tripitaka alone, whose original 81,137 printing blocks are preserved today, together with 4,745 blocks of earlier date, is a singular reminder that the Koreans had attained a high degree of social communication at an early time. Their invention of movable type in 1234, well in advance of Gutenberg, and the creation of hangul, the Korean alphabet, in 1446 are other monuments erected by Koreans in the history of the printed word.

However, the modern press is a late arrival in Korea. So Chae-pil’s Independent came as the first modern newspaper in 1896, declaring: “It is at this moment when Korean society is in a plastic state that we deem it opportune to put out this sheet as an expression at least of our desire to do what can be done in a journalistic way to give Koreans a reliable account of the events that are transpiring, to give reasons for things that often seem to them unreasonable, to bring the capital and the provinces into greater harmony through a mutual understanding of each other’s needs, especially the need that each has of the other.”

The Independent became not merely Korea’s first modern paper; it also spelled out a sound theory of the press which is still relevant today and continues to inspire the contemporary [page 10**]** press world. What is called for is essentially “a free and responsible press.”

In Korea as elsewhere, we can observe the rapid growth of mechanisms of social communication. The newspaper, fullfilling the mass media’s primary criteria, that is expres-siveness, permanence of record, plus swift and wide diffusion, constitutes the main force in the field in Korea. Radio is rapidly growing as a main carrier of information, and the recent moon landing initiated the entire world into a new era of electronic journalism. Books continue to play an unrivalled role in depth communication of ideas and knowledge. The film has become and will gain as a powerful vehicle of mass culture. Korea today has developed a system of mass communications commensurate with the level of her national development.

Thus mass communication is a formidable fact of life. Creature of the modern world, it is engaged in a unique manner in the creative process of the modern world. The field may be approached from diverse ways opened up by practical needs. These range from study of propaganda, opinion and communication to audience research, opinion polling, study of communication effect, public opinion, etc. However, as the Lasswell formulation has it, mass communication boils down to “who says what to whom, with what effect?” Research is just beginning on mass communications in Korea.

One thing the Korean media acutely need is a proper theory of mass social communication which is in tune with the times. The Korean media have spawned all sorts of communication theories… from reform press to nationalistic press, independence movement press, liberation press, wartime press, anti-communist press, anti-dictatorship press, [page 11**]** free press, libertarian press, democratic press, modernization press, etc.

With variations, it can be summed up, communication theory has swung in a pendulum between freedom and responsibility. The modernization press gave the media a constructive schooling in a sense of responsibility. But it was not without its own sin; it degenerated into a sterile political weapon in the course of the politics of modernization. New calls are presently being heard louder and louder for press freedom, and it appears now that the time requires a new school of free communication.

However, exercise in systematic formulation of mass communication theory is outside the limit of this presentation.

In this number, essays are collected which survey newspapers, radio and television, books, and films in Korea. This is by no means an attempt to build a theoretical picture of Korean mass media; instead, they relate a different viewpoint toward each medium. The approach is each author’s individual choice. Material on this subject is scarce, all the more so in English.

It it hoped, therefore, that the present collection will add not insignificantly to the knowledge and understanding of Korea’s mass communications.

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November 10, 1969