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"If the 'new' medium is digital, what is the message?" (p. 2). This question, recalling Marshall McLuhan's famous quote "the medium is the message," is at the core of Ross Tapsell's 2017 *Media power in Indonesia: oligarchs, citizens and the digital revolution*. While similar questions have been addressed in an emerging body of academic work about digital culture in predominantly Western contexts, Tapsell rightly argues the issue is particularly relevant in light of the historical connections between information and communication media and major social and historical developments in Indonesia.

In Chapter 1, Tapsell succinctly sums up the links between print culture and the emergence of the nationalist movement in the Dutch East Indies; the importance of radio broadcasting in the struggle for independence; and television's role as a medium of propaganda and economic development under President Suharto's totalitarian New Order regime (1965-1998). The links between these media and their social surroundings have always been intricate and never univocal, but the multiplicity and volatility of the digital and the social, cultural and political phenomena it is interconnected with, arguably provides the new medium with an additional layer of complexity. Tapsell's work is to be commended for its critical and insightful analysis of some of the key aspects of this complexity.

One of these aspects is the very notion of the media company in the digital age. As illuminated by the author, today's media companies are not limited to

providing news and entertainment as such, but have integrated information and communication technology and expertise in the provision of a wide array of services, ranging from banking and gaming to transport and food delivery (p. 26). Another aspect addressed in detail is the convergence of ‘traditional’ media such as newspapers, radio and television in a variety of digital platforms. One of Tapsell’s main arguments is that this type of convergence has to be considered in direct relation to the emergence and strengthening of media oligarchies in post-Reformasi, or post-1998 democratic reform, Indonesia (p. 19).

Chapters 2 and 3 present extensive detail about the contemporary Indonesian digital conglomerates and media oligarchs, respectively. Tapsell prefers to talk in terms of a multi-oligarchy instead of oligarchy, as the Indonesian media landscape is dominated by a limited number of media owners, who ‘push their own interest rather than the interests of a broader cartel’ (pp. 60-61). This includes the owners’ use of their media companies to pursue their own political ambitions or to explicitly support the interests of political figures or parties they are affiliated with. Several of these owners, who are among the wealthiest citizens with investments in sectors including and far beyond the media, have tried to run for the Indonesian presidency. The combination of media convergence, cost efficiency in news production, a multi-oligarchic system, and the entanglements between politics and businesses has failed to promote and even threatened the diversity of information and communication in democratic Indonesia (p. 51).

Tapsell account has been enriched and enlivened by personal interviews with media owners and other media professionals as well as his extensive first-hand experiences in media news rooms. His journalistic style of writing makes the book a joy to read and enhances its accessibility to a broader audience beyond the academic community. Moreover, he complicates existing studies and theories about the oligarchy by also analysing how digital platforms have facilitated the emergence of *counter-oligarchic* movements in Indonesia (Chapter 4). Tapsell presents the oligarchy and the counter-oligarchy not simply as opposing forces, or contrasting examples of utopia and dystopia, but also identifies mutual overlaps as well as internal contradictions. This comprehensiveness and criticality attests to the balanced and nuanced approach of the author.

The main case-study of a counter-oligarchic initiative facilitated by digital media platforms is the 2014 Kawal Pemilu (“Guard the Elections”), “an initiative of civilian internet users to crowdsource voting tabulation around the country” (pp. 114-115). This initiative contributed to safeguarding Indonesia’s new and still vulnerable democracy in various ways. The digital infrastructure enabled ordinary citizens to participate in public communication and information provision. It also gave the public the opportunity to directly monitor the voting results of the elections, one of the key tools for democratic citizen participation in the political process. What is more, it countered the

disturbingly conflicting messages issued by the media of the multi-oligarchy. On the night of the presidential election, TVOne declared Prabowo Sugianto the winner, while Indonesia's other major news channel, MetroTV, announced Joko Widodo as Indonesia's new president (pp. 77-80). The campaigns of both candidates themselves relied heavily on mass mobilisation through the social media, marking the rise of a different type of political communication and politician-voter interaction. Tapsell acknowledges the grassroots participation in and coverage of Jokowi's campaign as an important factor in the victory of this relative outsider to the Jakarta-based media multi-oligarchy (p. 113).

While Tapsell's book covers the political economy of the contemporary Indonesian media in detail, the counter-oligarchic discussion is limited to one chapter and one major case-study. The author also seems to narrow down the notions of the political, political agency, power and empowerment in contemporary Indonesia to practices that are directly related to politics and business, such as the elections and the business structures and political affiliations of media organisations.

However, both mainstream and social media also play key roles in shaping, representing, strengthening or undermining other forms of agency and empowerment, such as those related to the politics of class, gender and ethnicity. This other, often more personalised type of politics is also not limited to news content, but plays out particularly in the narratives and audio-visual presentations and explorations in more artistic or entertainment-oriented genres. While studies into those other areas are necessary for further exploring and complicating answers to the question of "what is the message of the digital?," they are not to ignore Tapsell's groundbreaking work on the ever evolving and excitingly difficult-to-grasp digital realities of Indonesia and beyond.

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Singapour

Samuel Ling Wei Chan. *Aristocracy of Armed Talent. The Military Elite in Singapore*. Singapore: NUS Press, 2019, XXVII + 495 p., ISBN 978-981-3250-07-9

Rares sont les travaux académiques contemporains concernant Singapour qui ne cherchent pas à démontrer l'exceptionnalité de la Cité-État. Cela n'est guère surprenant lorsque l'on sait à quel point, depuis sa fondation en 1965 à titre de république pleinement indépendante, ses dirigeants et même