

Aviva Wei Xue and Kate Rose, **Weibo Feminism: Expression, Activism, and Social Media in China**, London, UK: Bloomsbury, 2022, 224 pp., \$30.95 (paperback).

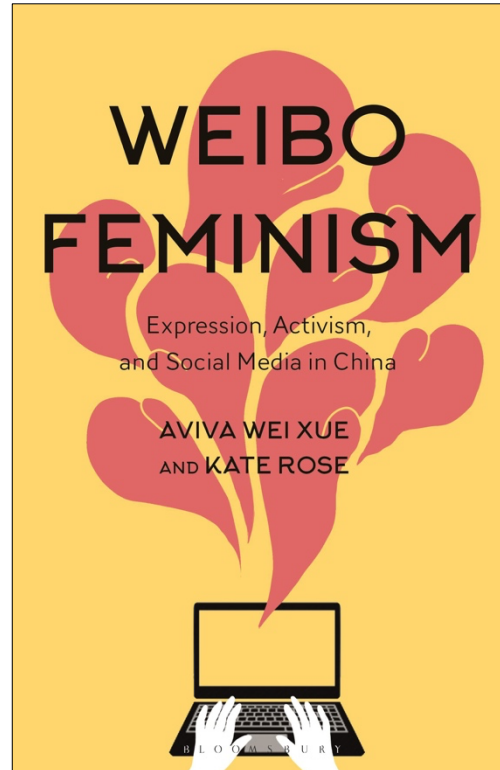
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Published in 2022, ***Weibo Feminism: Expression, Activism, and Social Media in China*** by Aviva Wei Xue and Kate Rose documents the digital feminist movements on Weibo, a popular Chinese social platform. The book focuses on the years from 2016 to 2021, a period that witnessed the global peak of the #MeToo movement, China's transition from the one-child policy, and the global pandemic of COVID-19. By situating Chinese feminist activism within this critical period, the authors shed light on the unique social and political challenges faced by Chinese feminists and how Weibo was used as their nexus.

Weibo, China's most prominent online platform, has been discussed in various scholarly fields such as China studies, media studies, and platform studies. *Weibo Feminism* contributes to these discussions by examining how Weibo functions as a mobilization space for Chinese feminists. In the book, the authors demonstrate how feminists constructed counter-state narratives, restored women's voices, mobilized resources for women during the COVID-19 pandemic, resisted marriage and filial obligations, and organized anti-sexual harassment campaigns. While analyzing Weibo feminists through their grounding in the material realities of Chinese women's lives and their opposition to state narratives and censorship, this book provides insights into the unique positions of Chinese feminist activists and Chinese women in general.

Weibo Feminism is structured in five chapters, each focusing on distinct aspects of Chinese feminist activism. Chapter 1 examines the surge of feminist voices in the digital world, featuring Weibo feminists' responses and activism during the COVID-19 pandemic and the counter-narratives they constructed in opposition to the state narrative. The chapter highlights the efforts of frontline medical workers like Ai Fen, who shared early warnings about COVID-19 and was censored by authorities, and Fang Fang, who documented Wuhan's lockdown through her online diary. These two figures became symbols of resistance and truth-telling for Weibo feminists. The chapter also examines feminist responses to the state-created female cartoon figure "Jiangshan Jiao" ("江山娇" translated as "Beautiful Land"). Weibo feminists posted questions to Jiangshan Jiao, asking whether she faced issues like period shame, workplace discrimination, and unrealistic beauty standards. Through this digital campaign, feminists transformed a state propaganda symbol into a platform for exposing everyday gendered injustices and asserting women's lived realities.

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Chapter 2 explores how Weibo feminists use digital space to reclaim women's voices and rewrite dominant narratives. The chapter uses the case of Lin Maomao to illustrate the risks feminist voices face under China's digital surveillance. Weibo feminists reclaim women's voices by restoring lost narratives, challenging male-dominated history, and reshaping the memory of Chinese feminism. They resist oppressive structures by rejecting marriage as a patriarchal institution, opposing Confucian filial obligations, and embracing personal choices like remaining unmarried or childfree as acts of resistance. The authors emphasize these individual deviations as a form of political resistance. Through storytelling, reinterpretation, and online engagement, Weibo feminists build a collective identity that challenges both state and societal control over women's lives.

Chapter 3 investigates Weibo feminists' critique of reproductive politics in China, especially the legacy of state intervention in women's bodies. Weibo feminists critique the long legacy of state interference—from the one-child policy to the three-child policy—which has placed unequal burdens on women. They also expose injustices such as inheritance inequality, family caregiving expectations, and the commercialization of women's reproductive labor through surrogacy. They also question the limits of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) alliance when male-centered priorities overshadow feminist concerns. They introduce "womb morality," a feminist ethic that reclaims reproductive autonomy as a moral and political right.

Chapter 4 focuses on Weibo feminists' embrace of intersectionality, elaborating on how feminist activists connect gender struggles with issues faced by marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities and working-class women. Weibo feminists localize global feminist theories, fostering praxes based on China's sociopolitical conditions while rejecting reductive Sino-Western binarism. The chapter discusses Weibo feminists' efforts to include voices from ethnic and religious minority women in China—such as Hui Muslim feminists—and to link gender oppression with class exploitation and labor precarity through a socialist feminist lens. At the same time, Weibo feminists seek solidarity with movements in Korea, Japan, and Latin America, searching for transnational alliances. Ultimately, this chapter illustrates Weibo feminists' integration of critique and praxis by amplifying modes of public supervision and activist-oriented strategies.

Chapter 5 analyzes Weibo feminists' language innovations, where they reclaim cultural narratives and resist material constraints by reshaping language and discourses. Using creative word-play, invented slang, and visual culture to challenge patriarchal discourse, Weibo feminists turn language itself into a site of resistance. They subvert traditional Chinese characters and reframe misogynistic phrases, reviving matrilineal heritage and reclaiming erased women's voices in literature and history. By producing memes, poems, short fiction, and analytical essays on Weibo, they transform the platform into a participatory archive of feminist expression. These literary and linguistic innovations bypass censorship and allow decentralized, anonymous feminist messages to circulate widely, fueling a vibrant digital culture of resistance grounded in shared creativity and collective storytelling.

Xue and Rose coin the term "Weibo feminism" to address "autonomous feminist expression and activism online" (p. 5) in China. This term emphasizes a unique feminist identity formed through digital networks instead of through centralized organizations. Weibo, as a digital platform, facilitates feminist activism by allowing users to disseminate information, building solidarity through viral content quickly, and

parry censorship through humor or fragmented narratives. This discursive structure enables feminists to mobilize and resist patriarchal social structure. Despite the vibrant role of Weibo for activism, the book also addresses the challenges, including censorship and government surveillance. Feminist accounts often face suspension, and feminist terms are censored by Weibo operators under pressure from authorities.

Weibo feminists have actively resisted Confucian values that emphasize traditional gender roles, filial piety, and patriarchal family structures. Weibo feminists challenge these frameworks by rejecting the notion that women must sacrifice personal growth and independence for family obligations. Through digital activism, they confront Confucian ideals by promoting alternative narratives that emphasize self-empowerment, individual choices, and gender equality. On the other hand, Weibo feminists reassess Western liberal feminist frameworks that center individualism and personal empowerment as the primary markers of feminist success. They explore feminist movements in South Korea, Japan, and Latin America, aiming for transnational connections. Weibo feminists prioritize collective identity, social responsibility, and communal resistance to patriarchal structures as a uniquely Chinese form of social activism. This distinctive framework is a key contribution of the book.

A notable strength of the book is its analysis of class struggles within Chinese feminism. By exploring how feminist activists engage with economic inequality, the authors provide a fuller picture of the intersection between class and gender politics. As they describe, Weibo feminism's ability to connect diverse social issues reflects its adaptability and resilience in the face of censorship and authoritarian control. Its emphasis on adapting digital platforms for grassroots mobilization also provides an alternative feminist perspective on localized strategies and practices.

While the book presents a rich exploration of digital feminist tactics, it could have offered more detail on how feminist activists navigate Weibo's censorship mechanisms, as well as how Weibo's digital ecosystem both advances and disadvantages Weibo feminism. Additionally, the book might have benefited from deeper engagement and comparison with other social platforms, such as Douban and DouYin (TikTok), where feminist discourses have also flourished. While Weibo remains central to digital feminism, exploring these parallel platforms could offer a fuller picture of contemporary feminist activism in China.

Weibo Feminism: Expression, Activism, and Social Media in China concludes with a powerful reflection and hopeful vision for the future of feminist activism in China. The authors stress that by embracing decentralized, scattered revolutions, Chinese feminists are finding creative ways to resist patriarchal control. They position their work as a scholarly contribution that supports Chinese localized grassroots feminist movements within the broader framework of transnational feminism. Future work on other feminist issues that demand a more inclusive and equitable society should also be expected to enrich scholarship in this field.