

ON HOLD: THE TALE OF TAIWANESE FACTORY SUPERVISORS ABROAD

停工待料：台廠人

This humorously sharp-witted non-fiction novel depicts Taiwanese supervisors on the front lines of globalization, working at overseas subsidiaries. In a style that brings to mind a transnational workplace reality show, the author interweaves fascinating observations on language, culture, and class, delivering dramatic tension that outdoes fiction.

At a time when globalization and division of labor were taking off, Taiwanese companies naturally followed the trend, moving their factories to countries with cheaper wages and becoming multinational corporations. Close behind were the “Tai gan” – Taiwanese in the role of overseas supervisors. Author Fei Geng draws on many years of experience as one of these expat supervisors, documenting her experience in this first-person narrative of daily life inside and outside the foreign factories, along with all of that life’s absurdities.

Divided into five sections, the book covers the narrator’s adjustment period after leaving their comfort zone to work in another country, as well as distinctive scenes of monsoon season and labor strikes, the undefined nature of interpersonal relationships and romance in the transnational workplace, lockdowns and work stoppages caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the post-pandemic situation. Detailed observations from the field and snappy dialogue are interspersed with dramatic scenes of intercultural conflict, offering a singular eye-witness account of the realities found at the bottom of the global industrial chain. Both by blurring any specifics that would identify the narrator’s gender and role as well as by blending together her experiences in different factories, the author makes it easy for readers to slip into the strange yet familiar shoes of the Tai gan.

Featuring both the factuality of a news report and the narrative



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tension of a novel, the book's detailed observations and clear writing style help readers to understand the realities of a globalizing manufacturing industry, and to reflect on how multinational corporations and workers have played a role in that process.

Fei Geng 飛梗

Fei Geng, a native of Taiwan, worked for several years in China and Vietnam as a lower-level manager in Taiwanese companies. Her first book, *On Hold: Taiwanese Factory Supervisors Abroad*, offers humorous insights on language, class, and culture clashes in the workplace.