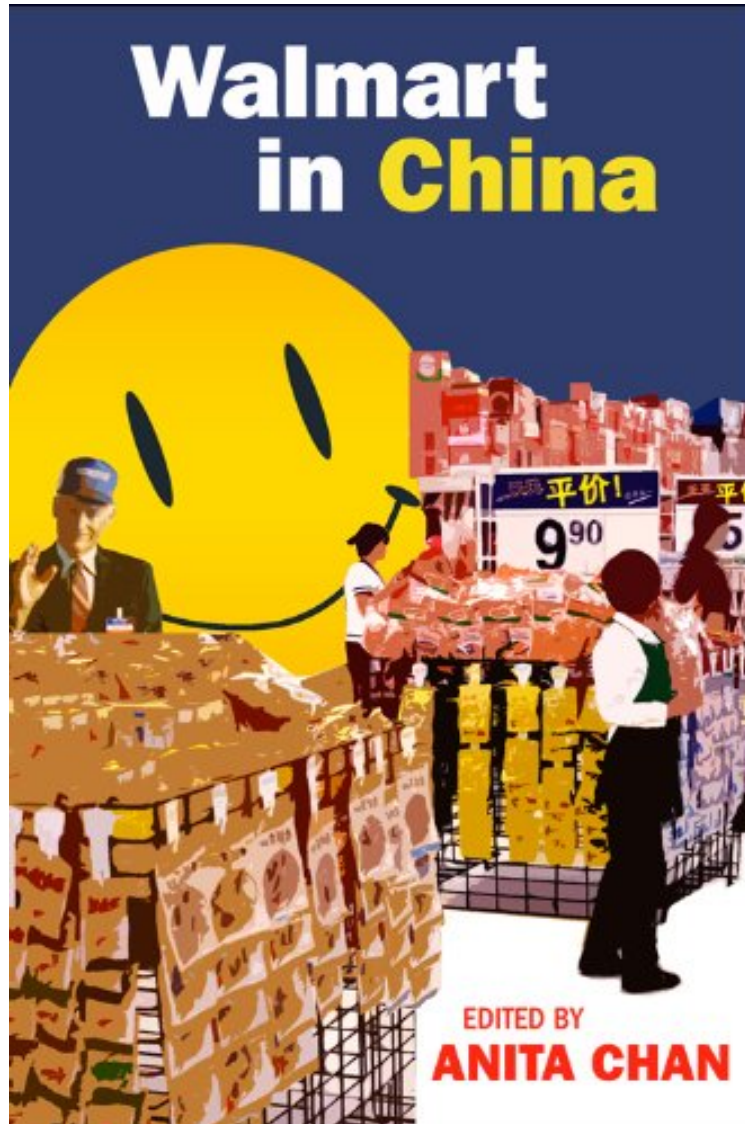


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Walmart in China

Anita Chan

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Anita Chan : Walmart in China before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Walmart in China:

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Turns out Walmart is Walmart - WorldwideBy Loyd EskildsonThirteen experts from several disciplines examine the relationship between these two giants. Particularly appealing is the fact that these writers collaborated, referencing each other's work.China is the source of most (70%) of the merchandise Walmart sells. China also has become one of Walmart's largest and fastest growing retail markets - nearly two hundred megastores there already. Thus, one concern of the authors is whether Walmart's employment policies in China positively or negatively affected the nation's retail workers, and has it succeeded in keeping Chinese

unions at arm's length? Turns out that the greater the number of tiers and the longer the production chain, the lower the wages in the bottom rung in these companies. Not surprisingly, Walmart in the U.S. is also seen as less vulnerable to customer concerns over 'sweatshop' conditions than higher-image firms such as Nike. Walmart is now hedging its bets by diversifying procurement - eg. Bangladesh. Within its Chinese stores, high turnover dominates, the Walmart cheer notwithstanding. Sam's Club warehouse outlets in Beijing and Shenzhen didn't do well because most Chinese homes don't have enough storage area for bulk supplies. In 2006, a Chinese trade union established a union branch in a Walmart store, surprising management ten years after its initial foray into China. Today, all Walmart stores in China have union employees - though it did succeed in obtaining provisions to do so with limitations. Nonetheless, recognition of unions is required by law in China, and about 70% of its employees are members of the All China Federation of Trade Unions. Not surprisingly, union leaders complain about Walmart interference with their activities. Neither the Walmart nor China's overall culture are comfortable with dissent. Walmart's China headquarters are in Guangdong, and its world buying headquarter are in Shenzhen, China. Cutting out jobbers, emphasizing computerized ordering, and ending kickbacks have followed Walmart into China. China, for its part, has not simply rolled over for Walmart. Chongqing municipality shut down ten Walmart stores accused of fraudulently selling ordinary pork as organic pork over a two-year period. They were also fined for doing so - one of 21 times since 2006, and some were arrested. Ultimately the CEO of Walmart China resigned. To be fair, however, China has had a problem with food safety - eg. milk being the most notable. Walmart has the opportunity to become a refuge for consumers looking for food safety. Its green and organic products are not designated with special labels naming the province and region where they came from. Walmart has also made an effort to reduce pollution from its suppliers. The central government sees this as an addition source of public education, control and regulation - without cost to it. Walmart employees wear yuan bills pinned to their name tags so that customers who feel they did not get adequate service can take the bill. An Economist article (5/19/2011) described a competitor Wumart store thusly, the 'store front as dirty, the decor shabby, and the goods inside displayed without the slightest attention to aesthetics. But the prices are wonderfully low.' Walmart is considered fancier, well-lit, spotless, and a bit more expensive. Three chapters separately detail the lives of a store manager, a lower-level supervisor, and a cashier. Another chapter focuses on employee wages, 'voluntary' overtime, and its strict discipline. Turnover is in the teens, far lower than the U.S. where it is typically around 50%.

Walmart and "Made in China" are practically synonymous; Walmart imports some 70 percent of its merchandise from China. Walmart is now also rapidly becoming a major retail presence there, with close to two hundred Walmarts in more than a hundred Chinese cities. What happens when the world's biggest retailer and the world's biggest country do business with each other? In this book, a group of thirteen experts from several disciplines examine the symbiotic but strained relationship between these giants. The book shows how Walmart began cutting costs by bypassing its American suppliers and sourcing directly from Asia and how Walmart's sheer size has trumped all other multinationals in squeezing procurement prices and, as a by-product, driving down Chinese workers' wages. China is also an inviting frontier for Walmart's global superstore expansion. As China's middle class grows, the chain's Western image and affordable goods have become popular. Walmart's Arkansas headquarters exports to the Chinese stores a unique corporate culture and management ideology, which oddly enough are reminiscent of Mao-era Chinese techniques for promoting loyalty. Three chapters separately detail the lives of a Walmart store manager, a lower-level store supervisor, and a cashier. Another chapter focuses on employees' wages, "voluntary" overtime, and the stores' strict labor discipline. In 2006, the official Chinese trade union targeted Walmart, which is antilabor in its home country, and succeeded in setting up union branches in all the stores. Walmart in China reveals the surprising outcome

"The book's contributors used cloak-and-dagger fieldwork skills to provide a sharp picture of labor conditions at Walmart's suppliers and in its Chinese stores. They show that the company's Ethical Standards Program has done little to prevent sweatshop-like abuses among its suppliers. On the other hand, its store employees have taken easily to the corporate culture, whose Christian- and rural-inflected ethos meshes with Chinese traditions of moral exhortation, mutual surveillance, and the pursuit of personal ambition through collective service." Andrew J. Nathan, *Foreign Affairs* (May/June 2012) "The authors demonstrate how the sheer scale of Walmart intimidates suppliers into accepting tight lead times, leading to illegally long working hours, an increase in outsourcing, and an atmosphere of insecurity and powerlessness at almost all levels in the supply chain. . . . Chan and her fellow contributors provide labour activists with considerable food for thought, and who knows maybe even a few sleepless nights for some of the most committed antitrade union executives on the planet." Tim Pringle, *British Journal of Industrial Relations* (March 2013) "Anita Chan's newly edited book, *Walmart in China*, is one of the best academic works on Chinese labor in recent years. . . . As one of the finest scholarly works generated from international cooperation, this book opens at least two important areas for further exploration. First, labor relations in Walmart stores are worth further ethnographic exploration. Second, it would be interesting to study the evolving role of trade unions since the CCP-led state has emphasized trade union reform and wage bargaining from 2010." Chris King-Chi Chan, *The China Journal* (July 2013) "The book provides a multidimensional analysis of Walmartization in China. . . . The essays show some optimism

for the future of Walmart's labour movement, with critical suggestions provided for key parties."Xuebing Cao, Work, Employment Society (2013)"This is a skillfully crafted account of the phenomenon known as the Walmartization of China. All the chapters are nicely woven together in a cohesive whole, a rare feat and noteworthy achievement. It is informative, insightful, and so very timely. I would strongly recommend it to anyone who wants to understand the global supply chain and how the growing dominance of retailing over manufacturing is shaping the world we live in. It will appeal to a wide audience, ranging from academics, managers, and businesspeople to anyone that has ever come into contact with Walmart."Maria N. DaCosta, China International (2012)"The secrets of Walmart's success lie in Bentonville, but also in Guangdong. In this groundbreaking book, Anita Chan and others pull back the curtain on the Chinese side of the world-shaping retail model and spotlight its huge implications for the U.S. economy."Chris Tilly, UCLA About the Author Anita Chan is Research Professor at the China Research Centre of the University of Technology, Sydney. She is the editor of Walmart in China and Chinese Workers in Comparative Perspective, both from Cornell, author of China's Workers under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy and Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation, and coauthor of Chen Village: Revolution to Globalization.