



Death of Hometown: One Man's Effort to Recalibrate Locality in Modern China

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COLLECTION
Asian Studies

EDITION
1st edition

MARKET
College/higher education
and Professional and
scholarly

This course reading...

- Draws on the lived experiences of Zhang Jinjian (1902–1989), an Anyang native and American-trained political scientist.
- Explores the history and politics of China in the twentieth century to provide comparative perspectives for the study of democracy, democratization, and Europe.
- Is ideal reading for students of Politics, History, Asian Studies, Cultural Geography, Europe, Democracy, Democratization, and Cultural Anthropology.

Why did China become a single country unlike Europe? Can birthplace still be called home anymore in the twenty-first century?

One man's story from Anyang may provide answers to these intractable conundrums. For centuries China was, just like Europe, a patchwork of ancestral homes and familial roots that rallied people's lives and careers around local gentry elites. The political and intellectual revolutions of the twentieth century shattered the lifeworld of "old" China such as Anyang on the Central Plain.

Unlike their forefathers, most men of letters began to pursue diverse careers, loosened their links with their ancestral origins, and, if at all, only returned there late in life. Zhang Jinjian (1902–1989), our protagonist, an Anyang native and American-trained political scientist, fought to remodel the age-old gentry localism, and carried it into the young Republic of China founded in 1912. The effort eventually failed during the Communist revolution. Under the totalitarian regime, Anyang was reduced to little more than an administrative entity devoid of its cultural uniqueness. In the failure, however, both the place and Zhang's experiences pointed to the road not taken in modern China—an alternative to the rootless People's Republic.

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