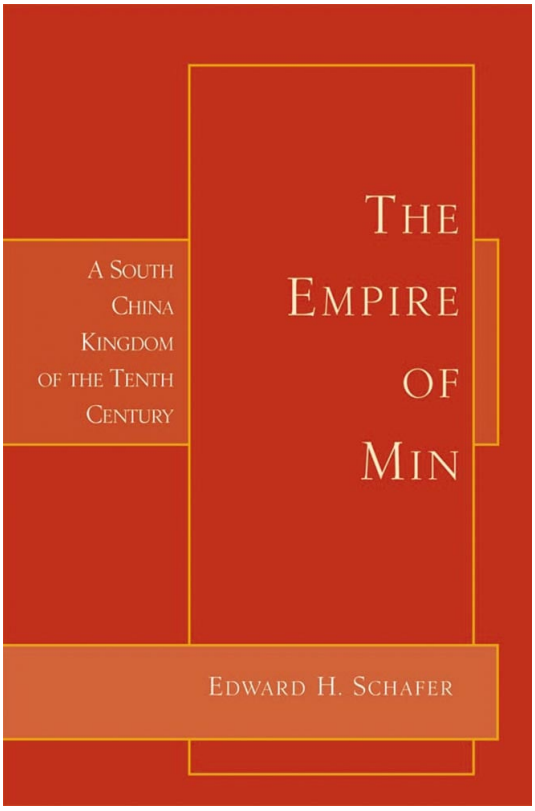
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Empire of Min

A South China Kingdom of the Tenth Century

Edward Schafer

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- This engaging study by the eminent Sinologist Edward H. Schafer examines one of those kingdoms, the so-called Empire of Min

The period between the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907 and the establishment of the Song in 960 has not been treated kindly by historians. Called the period of Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms, after the five successive but short-lived dynasties of the north and ten dominant smaller kingdoms in the south, it is often dismissed as a bleak chapter in Chinese history, a half-century of national disunity and anarchy. However, while it is true that the north during this time was continually ravaged by attacks from Khitans and Turks, its roads and canals falling into disrepair, the south enjoyed a time of peace, economic prosperity, and cultural growth. This engaging study by the eminent Sinologist Edward H. Schafer examines one of those kingdoms, the so-called Empire of Min, centered in the coastal and semitropical present-day province of Fujian. Schafer describes the geography, government, and political structure of Min, as well as its economy, arts, literature, and religion. As those familiar with the work of Schafer might expect, this is far more than a compilation of dry translated excerpts from dynastic histories; rather the interesting economic and political issues of the day are made clear, and its colorful characters and their various machinations come alive. We see how the Empire of Min, although it survived for just a half century, nevertheless played a pivotal role in the transition between the Tang and Song dynasties, the two great cultural peaks of medieval China.

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