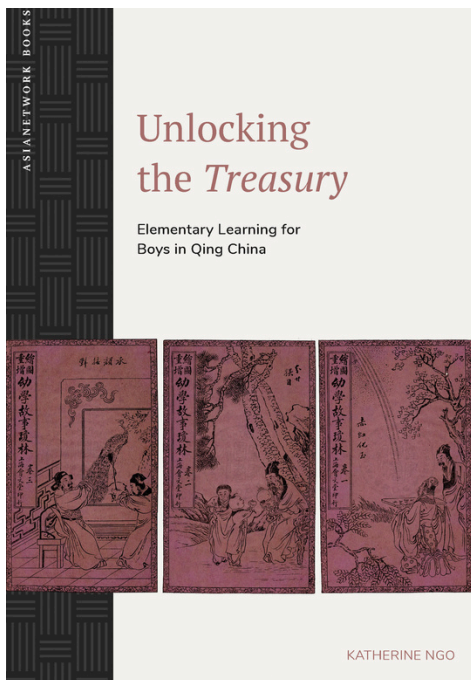




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UNLOCKING THE TREASURY

Elementary Learning for Boys in Qing China

By Katherine Ngo

In recent years, the renewed interest in traditional Chinese elementary educational material has led to an increased use of these texts as teaching materials in Chinese schools, as well as popular literature and in academic research. *Unlocking the Treasury: Elementary Learning for Boys in Qing China* seeks to address the existing gap in Western scholarship regarding pre-modern Chinese primary education, its theories, and textbooks. With a focus on the Qing dynasty textbook, *Treasury of Elementary Learning* (*Youxue qionglin* 幼學瓊林), this volume is the first major study of the *Treasury* in English and reveals a rich tradition of education through close and critical readings of the text.

Unlocking the Treasury grounds its study of primary education in the intellectual history of the period. Using the concept of interpretive communities, Katherine Ngo explores the impact of socio-political influences and differences in Qing schools of thought, including the school of principle, the school of heart-mind, and practical learning. As such, this volume examines the *Treasury* through three critical readings of the text: as a handbook for practical learning, a child-oriented reading of the school of heart-mind, and the instrumental perspective of education as examination training.

Ngo reframes the curricular content, skills, learning approaches, and teaching strategies of Chinese pre-modern elementary education with the goal of facilitating a broader transcultural dialogue in contemporary education. Far from the notion of traditional Chinese elementary education being monolithic and "rote learning," *Unlocking the Treasury* reveals that elementary learning in the Qing dynasty offered a sophisticated and complex educational agenda with diverse learning goals of examination, preparation, moral development, and textual scholarship training that were shaped by intellectual trends of the time. An engaging text for scholars of Qing China and historians of education alike, Katherine Ngo's *Unlocking the Treasury* is essential to understanding the philosophical, historical, literary, and psychological dimensions of education and educational theory in the Qing era.