

# Let the Gate of Utopia Open Wide! Literary Reconstruction of Grotto-heavens in the Song Dynasty

*With Guest Speaker Wanmeng Li*

*March 1, 2022 at 2:00 - 3:30PM, Room HG 1010*



*Photo credit Jin Tao, Architect at Architectural Design and Research Institute of Tsinghua University*



*Guest Speaker Wanmeng Li*

The sacred space of the grotto-heavens is a key theme in premodern Chinese literature and culture. Initially imagined as mysterious caves reserved for the transcendent in religious Daoism, the illusory grotto-heavens in time turned into accessible landscapes that attracted the mundane literati scholars in the Song dynasty (960–1279). In this talk, Li focuses on the Grand Cleanse Grotto-heaven to discuss how the literati reinterpreted the traditional motifs in response to the changing perception of sacred Daoist mountains. Their literary portrayal of approachable grotto-heaven mountains offers a rare window into the ways that the Daoist spatial knowledge was internalized and the sacred landscape deeply influenced literati poetic expressions and self-fashioning.

*Wanmeng Li is a Ph.D. candidate from the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research probes the mutual influence between the elite class and Daoist society reflected by the works of scholar-officials during the transitional period of the Song and Yuan dynasties. Specifically, she examines the means by which the literary representations of the Daoist places and spaces, especially the Daoist sacred landscape known as the grotto-heavens, empowered such cultural exchange.*

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