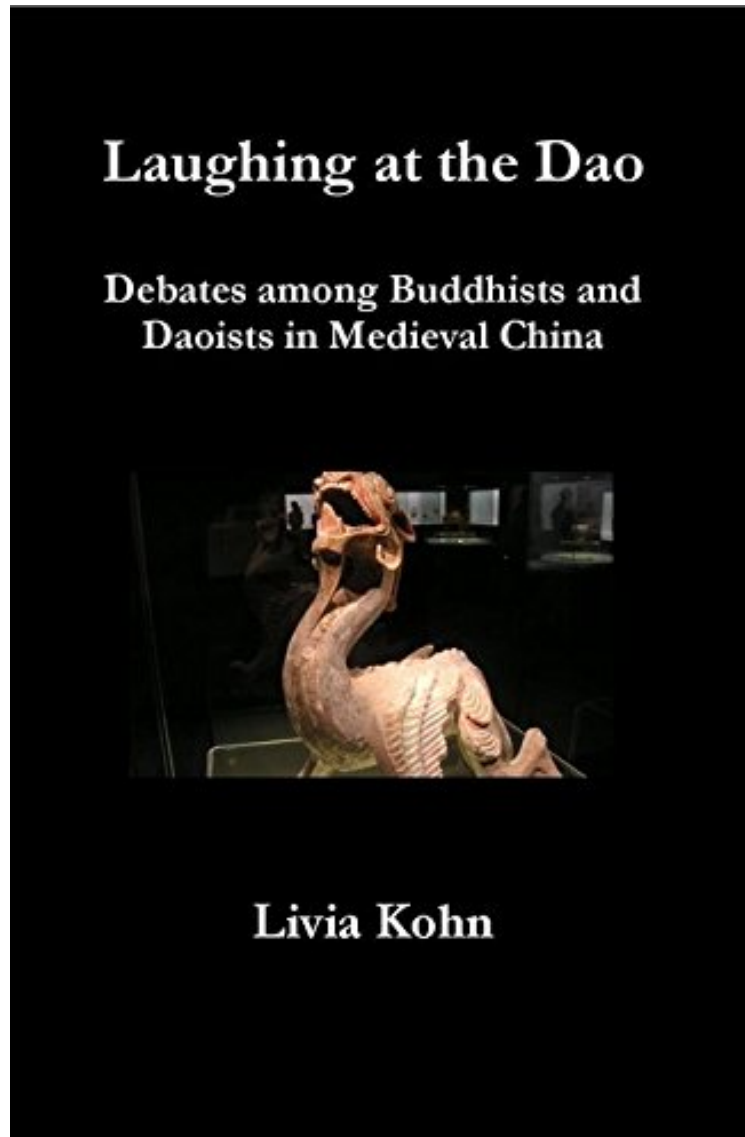


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Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China

Livia Kohn

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Livia Kohn : Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China:

The Xiaodao lun (Laughing at the Dao) is an important document of the debates among Buddhists and Daoists in sixth-century China. These debates contributed to the process of cultural adaptation of Buddhism, which had to accommodate itself to the worldview of the Confucian elite, the Chinese sense of ethnic superiority, and China's indigenous religion of Daoism. Written by the Daoist renegade Zhen Luan in the year 570, the text aims to expose inconsistencies in Daoist doctrine, cosmology, ritual, and religious practice. In this effort it presents many aspects of Daoist doctrine and practice, providing ample citations from numerous Daoist sources often otherwise lost. In a complete and fully annotated translation of the Xiaodao lun based closely on the work of Japanese scholars, Livia Kohn places the work within the context of the debates and exposes the political schemes behind the apparently religious disputes. The translation is carefully framed by a thorough introduction on the history of the debates as well as by two appendixes: one summarizes materials of both earlier and later debates; the other analyzes the Daoist sources cited in the Xiaodao lun. Richly informed and highly relevant to an understanding of medieval China, Kohn's work greatly enhances the study of medieval Buddhist and Daoist myth, rhetoric, and ideology.

The book makes available a very important and intrinsically interesting episode in Chinese intellectual history to both academic and general audiences. This book goes a long way toward filling a considerable gap in English-language studies of this field. --Robert Sharf, University of California at Berkeley
About the Author
Livia Kohn is professor emerita of religion and East Asian studies at Boston University and now lives in Florida. Her specialty is medieval Daoism and the study of Chinese longevity practices. She has written and edited numerous books and is a long-term practitioner of taiji quan, qigong, yoga, and meditation.