

The *Sword Scripture*: Recovering and Interpreting a Lost 4th-Century Daoist Method for Cheating Death*

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Abstract

This article undertakes a new interpretation of the Shangqing text known as the *Sword Scripture*, which has survived in fragments. It argues that the scripture prescribed a classic sort of method of *shijie* or “escape by means of a simulated corpse.” It also presents a theory as to why such a method would have been recommended to the earliest recipients of the Shangqing revelations despite the fact that the scripture does not promise that the practice it teaches would lead to Perfected status for practitioners.

Keywords: Daoism, *Sword Scripture*, Shangqing, *shijie*, performance

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