

**From:** jcdidier <jcdidier@lamar.colostate.edu>  
**Subject:** RE: Ancient China Manuscript  
**Date:** August 18, 2004 3:39:03 PM EDT  
**To:** dwp0@lehigh.edu

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Dear David,

Thanks so much for sending me your three fine articles. All three are very relevant to my own work, and they are naturally then highly informative and useful. Particularly your forthcoming article on Beiji/Di will be helpful to me as I revise my manuscript (but the others are also very relevant, instructive, helpful, and delightful reads themselves). I am very happy that I may cite for support a scholar of your stature working along parallel lines. While we overlap to some degree, I think our somewhat distinct approaches will complement each other's work nicely. I should tell you that your work has been tremendously inspirational to me, and throughout the writing of my ms I have relied on your earlier articles as bases of sound theoretical and evidential orientations.

I am in the process now of scratching in oracle-bone characters on the pages of the manuscript. I expect to complete this and also copying the illustrations sometime tomorrow, so I look forward to sending the entire ms to you on Friday. Sorry it's taken me this long to get the ms out to you, but I'm just back in town and we are gearing up this week to start classes next week already, and as you know the many requisite meetings that are called prior to the beginning of a semester consume an enormous amount of time.

Thanks again for sending your wonderful articles. There's plenty of time before publication to work them in to my ms, for which I'm very grateful. The inclusion of their findings and also your comments on the ms are certain to make the book far

more solid  
and convincing.

Best wishes,

John

===== Original Message From [dwp0@lehigh.edu](mailto:dwp0@lehigh.edu) =====

John,

Yesterday I placed in the mail to you a copy of my forthcoming article

“A Brief History of Beiji ?? (Northern Culmen), with an Excursus on  
the Origin of the Character di ?

Abstract:

In ancient Chinese astral lore, the imperial nomenclature associated with the circumpolar stars in the Purple Tenuity Enclosure ???points to the crucial importance of the north-pole in astrological, calendrical, and spiritual contexts. But preoccupation with this numinous region has a history dating back far earlier than the Qin and Han dynasties. This paper briefly surveys what is known about the pre-imperial history of the region of the ‘Northern Culmen,’ with particular reference to spiritual and metaphysical conceptions concerning the Northern Dipper, and to the void at the pivot of the heavens, where there was no prominent pole star throughout much of the formative period of classical Chinese civilization. The discussion concludes with a hypothesis about possible astral origins of the ancient form of the character used to denote the High God di ?.

which I suspect you will find of interest. Your comments are, of course, welcome.

I also located offprints of two other recent articles: a review of Sun & Kistemaker's THE CHINESE SKY DURING THE HAN, and "Popular Astrology and Border Affairs in Early China: an Archaeological Confirmation," from SINO-PLATONIC PAPERS 104 (July, 2000).

Please send the copy of your ms to my office address:

Lehigh University  
Dept. MLL  
9 W. Packer Ave.  
Bethlehem, PA 18015

Best regards,

David Pankenier

John Didier wrote:

Dear Professor Pankenier,

I am an Assistant Professor of Chinese/East Asian History at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. I earned my MA and PhD from the East Asian Studies Department at Princeton (1998) under the direction of Ying-shih Yu, Denis Twitchett, Willard Peterson, and Andy Plaks. I write to you presently not only simply to make contact but also because I have written a book manuscript on ancient China, covering the period of roughly 4500 to 100 BC, and would like to ask you if you would be interested in reading and criticizing it. The manuscript is entitled "In and Outside the Square: The Sky and the Power of Belief in Ancient China and the World, ca. 4500-100 BC." It is all but accepted for publication at the University of Hawaii Press, needing at this point only my response to the reviewers' helpful suggestions for revisions.

In the book-in-progress I make significant use of your excellent work on planetary conjunctions and dynastic turnover (particularly your remarkable paper published in *EC* in 1995) and plan to continue to search your published work for additional help with particularly archaeoastronomical matters pertaining to the 2nd millennium BC. I have learned a great deal from your fine work. But I believe that you would be able to offer much to help to improve the manuscript were you to read it critically before it is published. Would you be interested and have the time to read it, please? It is about 350 manuscript pages long and includes just over 100 illustrations. If you would like, I could email you as an attachment in MS Word or Nisus Writer my Table of Contents for the manuscript, perhaps allowing you to decide from that overview whether or not you would like to read the entire work.

Thank you for kindly considering my request. I have long thought to introduce myself to you but only lacked an appropriate venue. I am happy now to have the opportunity to make contact.

Best wishes,

John Didier  
Department of History  
Colorado State University