

Origins of Correlative Thinking and A Chinese Aesthetic:  
Divination in *Book of Changes* and Symbolism in *Book of Songs*  
Gu Mingdong, University of Texas at Dallas

This article enquires into the genesis, evolution, and nature of a key Chinese aesthetic, *bixing* (correlative comparison) and its logic, correlative thinking. By examining it within its earliest provenance, the *Zhouyi*(Book of Changes) and *Shijing*(Book of Songs) in relation to divination, symbolization, and poetic creation, it argues that correlative thinking arose from omen readings in divination, went through symbolization in linguistic representation in high antiquity, and became the foremost aesthetic principle in Chinese thought. It started with hexagram and line statements in the *Zhouyi*, was enriched by poetic symbolization in the *Shijing*, and reached its completion in *Shijing* hermeneutics. An inquiry into its evolution and inner mechanism may not only furnish us with insights into the origin and nature of the aesthetic itself but also help us understand better why correlative thinking is a major methodological approach to knowledge production and conceptualization in traditional thought across cultures.