If you've been to China, and Beijing in particular, possibly you also went to visit the Temple of Heaven. I can only assume you were amazed at its layout, with numerous squares and circles cleverly combined, vibrant colors, dense and open spaces, exquisite paintings, wonderful architectural components, and so on. However, what you likely saw was just the beauty of the place, but perhaps not its intrinsic significance. Understanding the cosmological symbolism of the Temple of Heaven, will help you see its true value and splendor.

Chen Chunhong

The Temple of Heaven: cosmological symbolism

If you've been to China, and Beijing in particular, possibly you also went to visit the Temple of Heaven. I can only assume you were amazed at its layout, with numerous squares and circles cleverly combined, vibrant colors, dense and open spaces, exquisite paintings, wonderful architectural components, and so on. However, what you likely saw was just the beauty of the place, but perhaps not its intrinsic significance. Understanding the cosmological symbolism of the Temple of Heaven, will help you see its true value and splendor.

Chen Chunhong, School of Architecture of Tianjin University (China); main fields of interest include architectural history, Chinese architectural archaeoastronomy and Chinese architectural heritage, (historychen/126.com)