In this ancestral portrait of an official of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the first-rank civil official is wearing a red robe with long voluminous sleeves and on the badge a pair of cranes, symbols of longevity and highest official rank.

In the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), the court attire of flowing, voluminous Chinese Ming dynasty (1368–1644) robes and flamboyant slippers was replaced with boots, trousers and coats modelled on the Manchu riding habit.

The Manchu tight-fitting costumes (e.g. Emperor’s semi-formal court robe), which were suited to an active lifestyle of hunting and riding, replaced the loose-fitting Chinese garments, designed for a more sedentary life.

An ancestral portrait was painted after a person’s death. It was placed on the ancestral altar in the home, to be commemorated and to also present sacrifice on important occasions such as the Chinese New Year.
The sun is represented by a red disc on which is found the legendary three-legged crow.

The moon is represented by a light blue or green disc enclosing the legendary hare pounding the elixir of immortality.

The phœnix is the symbol of spiritual immortality. The symbols of the dragon and the phœnix represent the animal and bird kingdoms, and hence the whole natural world.

Mountains are symbols of stability and the earth.

Dragons are symbolic of adaptability because of the transformations of which they are capable.

The pheasant is symbolic of literary refinement. The symbols of the dragon and the phœnix represent the animal and bird kingdoms, and hence the whole natural world.

Fire represents intellectual brilliance. The last four symbols, together with the mountain, represent the five elements of the universe: earth (mountains), metal (the bronze cups), water (the waterweed), wood (grain) and fire (flame).

The waterweed represents purity.

Grain represents the country’s capacity to feed its people.

The axe represents the power to punish.

The swastika. Originally the swastika was a mystic symbol of Buddha’s heart. It was a Sanskrit term, an ancient language of India, and was adopted into the Chinese language to mean ‘ten thousand’ and also longevity.

The peach, Buddha's hand Citron (or alternatively of flowers) of Pan Chai. The peach, Buddha’s hand Citron, meaning ‘ten thousand’. Originally the peach was used as an ornament to mean longevity.

The four symbols represent the four elements of the universe: earth (mountains), metal (the bronze cups), water (the waterweed), wood (grain) and fire (flame). These symbols of imperial authority assumed a cosmic significance and represented the emperor as the ruler of the universe.

The peach is a symbol of longevity. It has long been a symbol of enlightenment, heaven and the cosmic universe.

A constellation of three stars. The sun, the moon and the constellation of three stars are symbols of enlightenment, heaven and the cosmic universe.

The sun is represented by a red disc on which is found the legendary three-legged crow.

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**THE EIGHT BUDDHIST EMBLEMS OF GOOD FORTUNE**

- **The canopy** is a symbol of a monarch, who shelters all living things.
- **The conch shell** symbolises the call to worship.
- **The sacred vase** holds the water of life. The vase (pronounced ‘yung’) is a rebus for peace (also pronounced ‘yung’). (As mentioned, a rebus is an image that speaks for an object or idea with the same or similar verbal pronunciation).
- **The royal umbrella** is a symbol of the incorruptible official.
- **The wheel of the law**, the ever-turning cycle of the transmigration of souls. A bell is occasionally substituted for the wheel.
- **The endless knot** or ‘intestines’, represents the everlasting love of Buddha and is a symbol of long life. ‘Cheng’ meaning ‘intestine’ is a visual pun on chang, meaning ‘long and continuous’, hence a long life.
- **The lotus flower** is a symbol of purity, rises unblemished and unsullied through muddy water.
- **The pair of fish** are symbols of abundance. Fish (yu) is a rebus for abundance (yu).

**FLOWERS OF THE FOUR SEASONS**

**Spring:** Peony (Tree peony)
**Summer:** Lotus
**Autumn:** Chrysanthemum
**Winter:** Prunus

- **Prunus**:
  - The prunus symbolises winter and the first month of the year. It is a symbol of perseverance and purity, because it blossoms at a time when cold and bleakness prevail, and when the branches of this tree are flecked with ice and snow.
- **Peony**:
  - The peony symbolises spring and the sixth month of the year. It also symbolises wealth and advancement in life.
- **Chrysanthemum**:
  - The chrysanthemum symbolises autumn and the tenth month. As the only notable flower of late autumn, when few flowers are in bloom, the chrysanthemum is symbolic of the reclus.
- **Lotus**:
  - The lotus represents summer and the seventh month of the year. The lotus is a symbol of purity and nobility, as it emerges from muddy water unstained and radiantly beautiful.

**HARMONY WITH NATURE: THE ZOOLOGICAL WORLD; ANIMALS, BIRDS, INSECTS**

- **Butterfly**:
  - Butterfly (he) is a rebus for ‘life’, meaning seventy or eighty years of age or a long life. The butterfly is also a symbol of summer and of happiness in marriage.
- **Bat**:
  - The word ‘bat’ (ju) is a visual pun for the word happiness (also ju). When a bat is depicted with peaches, which are symbols of longevity, the rebus means ‘May you live long and be happy’. When a bat is depicted with a swastika, meaning use or ‘ten thousand’, the rebus means ‘May you have the greatest joy’.
- **Mandarin ducks**:
  - Mandarin ducks were thought to mate for life and thus symbolised faithfulness and happiness in marriage. As an extension of this idea, all pairs of motifs came to symbolise marital happiness.

**THE EIGHT BUDDHIST EMBLEMS OF GOOD FORTUNE**

- **A pair of rectangular gold ornaments**.
- **A pair of circular gold ornaments**.
- **A pearl or jewel**.
- **A pair of scrolls**.
- **A musical stone**.
- **A pair of rhinoceros horns**.
- **Coral**.
- **An ingot**.

**PREGIOUS OBJECTS OR TREASURES, SYMBOLS OF WEALTH AND FORTUNE**

- **The Ruyi sceptre**
  - Ruyi means ‘as you wish’. The head of this sceptre resembles the inscript of ‘longevity fungus’.
  - The Ruyi sceptre with swastika. As already noted, the swastika stands for use, or ‘ten thousand’, and combined with the Ruyi sceptre this forms the rebus: ‘May you have everything you wish’.
- **The cloud**, a symbol of peace and good fortune.
- **The scroll motif**
  - This motif, in the shape of the head of the Ruyi Sceptre, conveys ‘good wishes for a long life as all you desire’.

**PRINCESS OF THE ZODIAC**

- **Lion**:
  - The lion is a symbol of the first month of the year. It also represents the sun, the sun being next to the first month in the Chinese calendar.
- **Ox**:
  - The ox is a symbol of the second month of the year. It symbolises hard work and endurance.
- **Tiger**:
  - The tiger symbolises the third month of the year. The tiger is powerful and strong, yet uses its strength only when necessary.
- **Rabbit**:
  - The rabbit symbolises the fourth month of the year. The rabbit is gentle and kind, and is a symbol of fertility and abundance.
- **Dragon**:
  - The dragon symbolises the fifth month of the year. The dragon is powerful and fearsome, and is a symbol of power and strength.
- **Snake**:
  - The snake symbolises the sixth month of the year. The snake is cunning and clever, and is a symbol of beauty and subtlety.
- **Horse**:
  - The horse symbolises the seventh month of the year. The horse is strong and powerful, and is a symbol of strength and power.
- **Sheep**:
  - The sheep symbolises the eighth month of the year. The sheep is gentle and kind, and is a symbol of peace and tranquility.

**HARMONY WITH NATURE: THE ZOOLOGICAL WORLD; ANIMALS, BIRDS, INSECTS**

- **The peacock** among birds is just like that of the peony among flowers. It has long been a symbol of splendour for the Chinese. Peacocks and peonies are thus frequently seen together in the pictoral and decorative arts.
- **The crane** is the most venerated bird in China, supposed to live to an age of six thousand years. Long considered a symbol of longevity in Chinese legend, the crane is said to mate for life and thus symbolised happiness in marriage.
- **The goat** is a symbol of the eighth month of the year. It is also a symbol of summer and of happiness in marriage.
- **The bat** (ju) is a rebus for ‘life’, meaning seventy or eighty years of age or a long life. The bat is also a symbol of summer and of happiness in marriage.
- **The monkey** (zi) is a rebus for ‘long’ and combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you have a long life’.
- **The rabbit** (yu) is a rebus for ‘moon’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you have a long life’.
- **The snake** (xi) is a rebus for ‘nine’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘Long life’.
- **The rooster** (gou) is a rebus for ‘five’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for five years’.
- **The horse** (ma) is a rebus for ‘ten’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for ten years’.
- **The dog** (yi) is a rebus for ‘one’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for one year’.
- **The ox** (gan) is a rebus for ‘two’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for two years’.
- **The tiger** (wu) is a rebus for ‘three’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for three years’.
- **The lion** (wu) is a rebus for ‘four’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for four years’.
- **The dragon** (lee) is a rebus for ‘six’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for six years’.
- **The serpent** (yi) is a rebus for ‘seven’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for seven years’.
- **The goat** (zi) is a rebus for ‘eight’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for eight years’.
- **The monkey** (zi) is a rebus for ‘nine’, and when combined with the word ‘year’, it means ‘May you live for nine years’.

**THE EIGHT BUDDHIST EMBLEMS OF GOOD FORTUNE**

- **The lotus flower** is a symbol of purity, rises unblemished and unsullied through muddy water.
- **The peacock** symbolises summer and the sixth month of the year. The peacock is noted not only for its exquisite delicacy, but also for their sweet and pleasant fragrance.
- **The butterfly** is the mystic isles of the Zoological world; harmony with nature: the zoological world; animals, insects.
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