

## VOLUME 10, NO. 1 Spring 1992

### The Good Fortune of Bats

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Chinese art is rich with images of bats. Bats fly joyously across fabrics and tapestries, jewelry and porcelain, and are carved into jade and ivory, and adorn the columns and facades of palaces and the thrones of emperors. As symbols of good luck and happiness, bats have few rivals in Chinese culture, and their admiration for bats is ancient. The Chinese word for bat is 'fu,' pronounced the same as the word for good fortune.

This detail from a Qing Dynasty silk brocade emperor's robe shows bats with peaches. Bats, thought to embody the male principle, were often depicted with peaches, a popular female fertility symbol. Such designs also hint at acknowledgement of an ecological relationship. Peaches were first cultivated in China some 5,000 years ago, but their wild ancestors relied on bats to disperse their seeds.

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