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## Door, unknown Yoruba artist

**Arnold Lehman:** This elaborately carved door was made by a Yoruba artist in Nigeria for the entrance to the house of a chief or an Ifá priest. Ifá is the elaborate Yoruba system of divination through which numerous deities are consulted for assistance and information. According to Rowland Abiodun, Professor of Fine Arts and Black Studies at Amherst College, this door may have been made as a gift for an Ifá priest.

**Rowland Abiodun:** The first and top register on this door deals with mother and child. The desirability of children in Yoruba society makes the woman not only indispensable but also highly regarded, to the point of venerating them. The second register represents a horse rider with two attendant figures, the one in front holding what looks like the *osu babaláwo*, which is the diviner's staff. The next register with two figures holding what looks like cloth could also be a reference to the diviner's wealth. The fourth register shows six figures holding guns. Some scholars have suggested that this may be a kind of a role-reversal image in which the Yoruba harness the power that threatens them and use it against the aggressor.

**Arnold Lehman:** You may notice that this door seems unusually small. It may have been made this way deliberately, so that anyone entering the house would have had to bend his head down to honor the chief or priest inside.