



**INDONESIAN
GRAINARY DOOR**

Toraja People, Sulawesi Island, Indonesia

wood

42 x 20 x 2

106.68 x 50.8 x 5.08 cm

1062,as807

PROVENANCE:

Private Collection

Heather James Fine Art, Palm Desert

EXHIBITION:

UCLA, Frederick S. Wright Gallery, 1985

LITERATURE:

Feldman, "The Eloquent Dead", 1985, p.138, illustration 168.

The water buffalo symbolizes virility and suggests wealth and status for the Toraja. Water buffalo motifs appear commonly on houses and granaries suggesting the link between extensive landholding and the ability to build and lavishly decorate traditional Toraja village structures.

South Sulawesi is home to the Toraja people, who live in a picturesque, mountainous region called Tana Toraja, or Toraja Land. At the center of Toraja culture is a fascinating and complex belief system surrounding death and the afterlife. Death is an elaborate affair, and the prolonged funerals are a major interest to visitors, who can attend the ceremonies but should show the same respect that they would for their own. The funerals typically involve feasting, buffalo sacrifice, dancing and martial arts, culminating with a procession that carries the coffin to its final resting place in one of the many caves on the surrounding cliffs, which are guarded by rock statues.

The Torajas are equally famous for their houses, which are called Tongkonan, or Family Houses. The houses are built on stilts, and each end rises like the horns of a buffalo, with the points always facing north and south.

Cylindrical offering posts, ai tos, are erected as offerings to distant ancestors. This post has two faces and represents the first ancestral pair. The people of Belu, also called Tetum, recognize three types of offering pole; ai tos, for distant progenitors, sometimes described as gods; foho, for intermediary beings; and lor, for the recently departed.

Many offerings are brought to the ai tos. When a carving is first finished, rice and a pig are sacrificed. Later, to inaugurate the post there are massive offerings from the village. At regular intervals the post is dressed in fine clothing, even an artificial beard, and food is brought to the ancestor, bei.