

Student Information Sheet: Forged Iron Ferramentas

African traditions and technological techniques of metal working were transferred to the Americas with the captive Africans who knew how to smelt iron in the 1600s. The city of Recife had a rich tradition of producing ferramentas or sacred iron symbols of the orixas, but the most famous city for ferramentas is Salvador, Bahia.



The ferramenta on the left represents an orixa, Ogum, the god of war and iron. The ferramenta on the right represents Exu. At the top of both structures is the three pronged trident of Exu, a messenger, and one who can open or close a path or door for believers of Candomblé. Exu is the gatekeeper. The iron worker's tools are suspended below from a bow in the Ogum ferramenta.

The artist, Jose Adario dos Santos, has lived all his life in Salvador, Bahia. He was born in 1947. At the age of seven, he began learning his trade from an uncle, a blacksmith and Candomblé practitioner.

Adario has turned scrap metal into sacred art pieces since the 1960s; his work is included in major museums in Brazil.