In the southern part of Mexico, there is a Mexican state called Oaxaca. In Oaxaca, it is common to see wood carvings that are used both as art and for trading for other items. Carvings like this turtle were first created by a person from a small village in Oaxaca called Manuel Jimenez over sixty years ago. Since we began making wooden turtles, they have become very popular in his village. Because people like them so much, they are now popular throughout all of Oaxaca. Many farmers began to make wooden carvings in order to make extra money for their families.

The wooden animal carvings can take as long as one week to make by hand. First, the artist uses a knife to cut the basic shape of an animal. Then the artists uses sandpaper to make the wood smooth before painting it in great detail. Often, the wooden animals have expressions and movement to make them seen alive. Because each carving is made by hand, there are no two carvings that are exactly the same.

The carvings are made from a special tree called a copal tree. The copal tree comes from Mexico and Central America and is prized for the sticky sap it produces.