



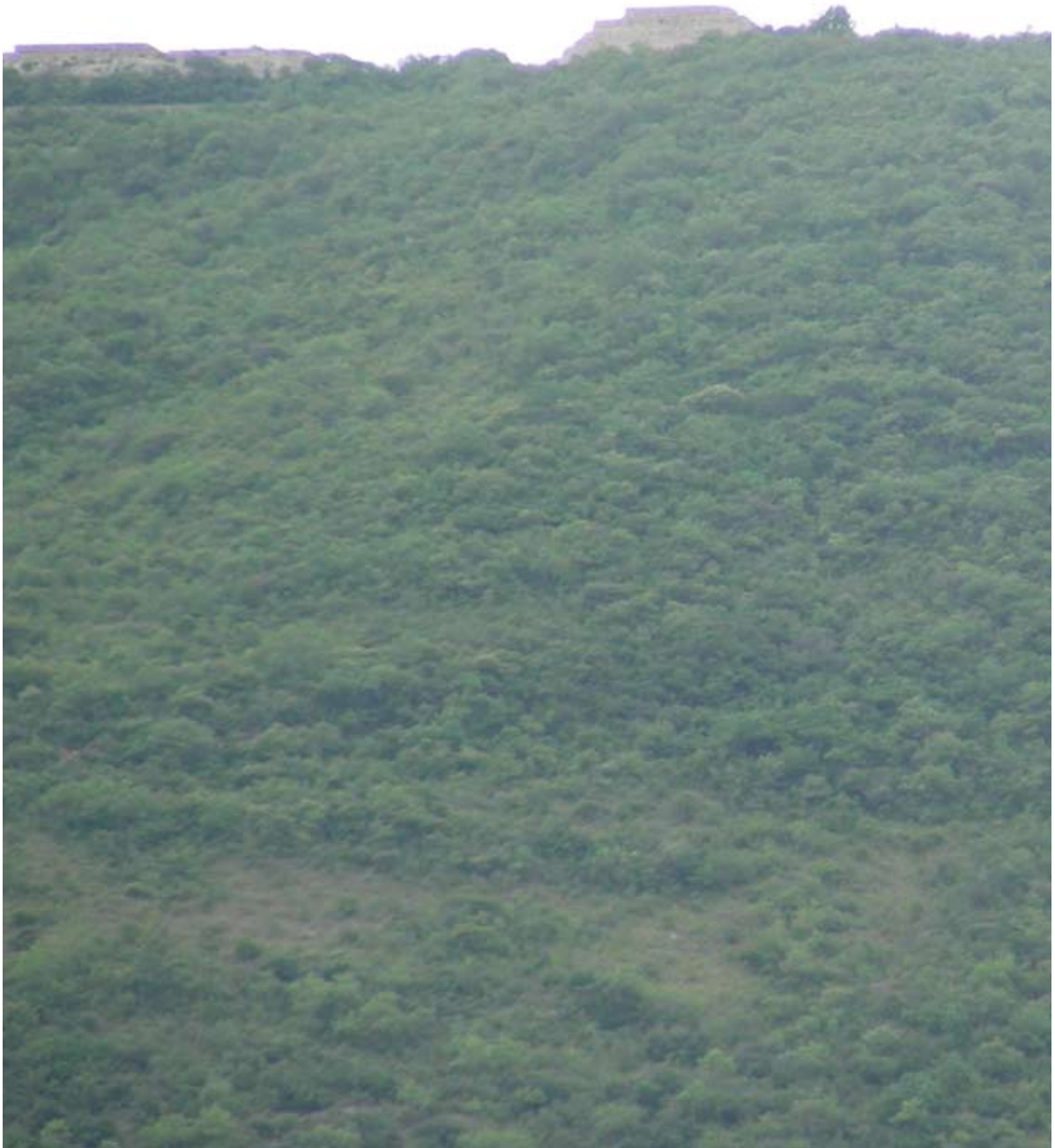
People in Oaxaca, Mexico have carved wood to make household items and toys for centuries. In the late 1950s, shepherd Manuel Jimenez began making wooden animals. The pieces were bought by a folk art store owner in Oaxaca City. When the creatures were quickly purchased by tourists, Manuel was asked to make more. Seeing Manuel's success, other artisans began to imitate his work.



Today over eighty families in the pueblo of Arrazola make their living from carving wood.



The town lies below the archeological ruins of Monte Alban.



Many tourists, after a visit to the ruins, come to Arrazola to buy wooden figures.



Carvers use the copal tree which grows plentifully in the mountains around their town.



They make all sorts of things from the wood.



To begin the process of making a figure, Moises and Armando first carefully look through their wood pile. They say they can see the creature inside of each log.



Next they carve the figure with a large knife called a machete. When it's completed, the figure must dry for several days.





Everyone in the family helps out in some way to make the pieces. Moises' children, Nancy and Eduardo, and Armando's son Alex sand the pieces.



Then their wives Antonia and Oralia paint each figure.



Each animal in *AbeCedarios* took about a week to make. Preparing each piece was a lot of work for the Jimenez family. They were very happy when they saw the first completed copy of *AbeCedarios* —



But they enjoyed the book party even more!



Authors Cindy Weill and K.B. Basseches first met in 1986 when they were graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania. K.B. was working toward her MFA in Fine Arts and Cindy was studying to become a teacher. The two friends traveled over four summers to Oaxaca to obtain the figures for *AbeCedarios*. They endured torrential rains, scorpions and an encounter with a poisonous snake to complete the collection. Both agree they would not exchange the experience for anything.