

The tradition

For ethnographers an important point is that the actual hulls of Goan craft do not require to be periodically dismantled and resewn, a widespread practice that is recorded elsewhere in the sub-continent (Kentley 1985; Hornell 1946: 236). What appears to distinguish sewn boat technology on India's Konkan Coast is that the stitching is intended to last as long as the wood it fastens and there is abundant confirmation of this in surviving derelict craft.

The investment in time and labour to build a new boat was considerable. A large seine-fishing pirogue for its construction required:

- in excess of 4km of hand-made two-strand coir cord;
- some 1700 hand-drilled stitch-holes;
- some 1700 handmade wooden wedges to lock the stitches;
- some 1687 countersunk channels.

The wedges served to make each stitch mechanically independent of its neighbour; thus localised damage did not loosen adjacent stitches, much less did it affect a *dikh*-impregnated seam.

With the exception of the thwart-beams and sacrificial members, the new boat inside and out was carefully treated and every three-months thereafter, resulting in a build-up (Fig. 21).



Figure 21. Fracture shows encrusted surfaces and wedges in stitch-holes impregnated with *dikh*. Benaulim. Author.