

We tend to identify the ethnicity of a boat by its place-of-build, which is not necessarily the same as that of its builder - and therein lies a simplification which can mislead researchers. Inevitably the construction described here is labelled Goan as it is here that it has best survived. However, one has to question how specific it is – or ever was -- to a small state created in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a state which varied in extent both prior to, and during, Portuguese rule (Gomes 2004:1; Mitragotri 1999:14-15). During the time of my fieldwork in the state some pirogues of unquestionably “Goan” construction were located, but they proved upon investigation to have been built outside its borders in Karwar, Karnataka some decades previously, and to have been subsequently purchased by Goan fishermen.

To the north in Maharashtra, crude pirogues of a related design can be found in ports such as Ratnagiri. Perhaps all these craft are indirectly Goan, if they prove to have been constructed by descendants of the Hindu craftsmen who fled to adjacent states in previous centuries in order to escape religious persecution (Mitragotri 1999: 56). However extensive on India's West Coast this type of pirogue may have been in former times, it is clear that the construction has survived longest and best in Goa. The explanation for this would seem to be that the lack of harbours and the long exposed beaches necessitated the continuation of a traditional design that had fully evolved to withstand the unforgiving surf.