

From this it can be seen that, in the event of an accident in the surf, the booms can shatter or wrench off the lightly attached sheer strakes without affecting the integrity of the hull below them. As important is the speed with which the crew can detach a damaged outrigger if it threatens the safety of the craft.

The apparent simplicity of the hull is remarkable. Even the largest pirogue is unsupported by frames or by other internal stiffening. A mere seven elements form its shell (Fig. 6). There is no deck. Dowels are not used to fasten planks edge-to-edge, nor are diagonal treenails employed. Such a form of stiffening would be compatible with the degree of flexibility which is a notable feature of the minimalist construction.

Repairs

As new craft are no longer built my observations were necessarily made on craft which are being repaired or rebuilt in the open air, either on the upper beach or in the dunes. A marked difference exists between the tools and skill of local craftsmen who repair craft and of the few surviving master boatbuilders (*mestri*) who may have to commute from a distance. It was instructive to watch how differently they worked. Since commissioning an expert is expensive, the owner and the assisting crew are more attentive to providing him with everything that is needed. A long cable run from the nearest shack usually enables an electric drill to make stitch-holes along the edge of a replacement plank. The holes are used initially to position the new plank by means of ropes and cords so that fine adjustments can be made. Grooves are chiselled to house countersunk stitches (Fig 12a). Although there are few components each is fitted without measurement using eye and trial.