

even so have to be renewed fairly frequently. The faying surfaces of the basal log and of each strake need to be smoothed to an exact fit with a curved, finely sharpened blade and offered up numerous times, until, as an old boatbuilder indicated, not a hair of his head could be inserted (Fig. 14). Finally the lower surface is luted with diluted *chandrus* and whisks of cotton to impede its flow. Then the plank is positioned. It is compressed by the gradually applied pressure of numerous Spanish windlasses inboard and out, the cords of which pass through some of the holes pre- drilled for the stitching. With creaking noises the plank assumes the desired curvature (Fig. 15).



Figure 14 Repair to the underbody of a pirogue involves offering up new work numerous times: a) Siridau; b) Benaulim. Author.

To achieve an even tighter fit repeated blows of the hammer are required before a component is deemed ready to be sewn.

Whenever sewing is taking place, the sound heard is of continuous hammering. The owner and the crew of a pirogue act as assistants to the boatbuilder (Fig 16). They supply the materials required for the work, erect an awning and undertake any basic tasks supervised by him. Gathered coconut husks have to be hammered on a suitable baulk to crack the outer coating. Then they are ripped into