

Today maintenance is with rare exceptions careless, but a pot of *dikh* suspended from each pirogue is still used to ensure that the underbody and skids remain protected at all times (Fig. 22).



Figure 22. Pot of *dikh* ready to anoint the skids at the moment of contact when beaching. Velsao Dando. P. O'Beirnes.

The build-up of these repeated applications preserves the wood within a black oxidized crust, whilst at the same time it solidifies the padded seams until they resemble wooden battens, the individual imprisoned stitches becoming no longer easy to distinguish. *Dikh* was originally made by the fishermen themselves; the highly caustic oil protects craft from termites, marine borers and bacteria. The parts of the craft with which the fishermen's feet and hands necessarily come in contact are not treated. These are the thwart beams, the sheer strakes, the booms and the stem-caps - and in some old canoes the sheer strake preserves traces of a coat of paint. It was noticed that the master working inboard took care to prevent his feet from coming into direct contact with the hull.