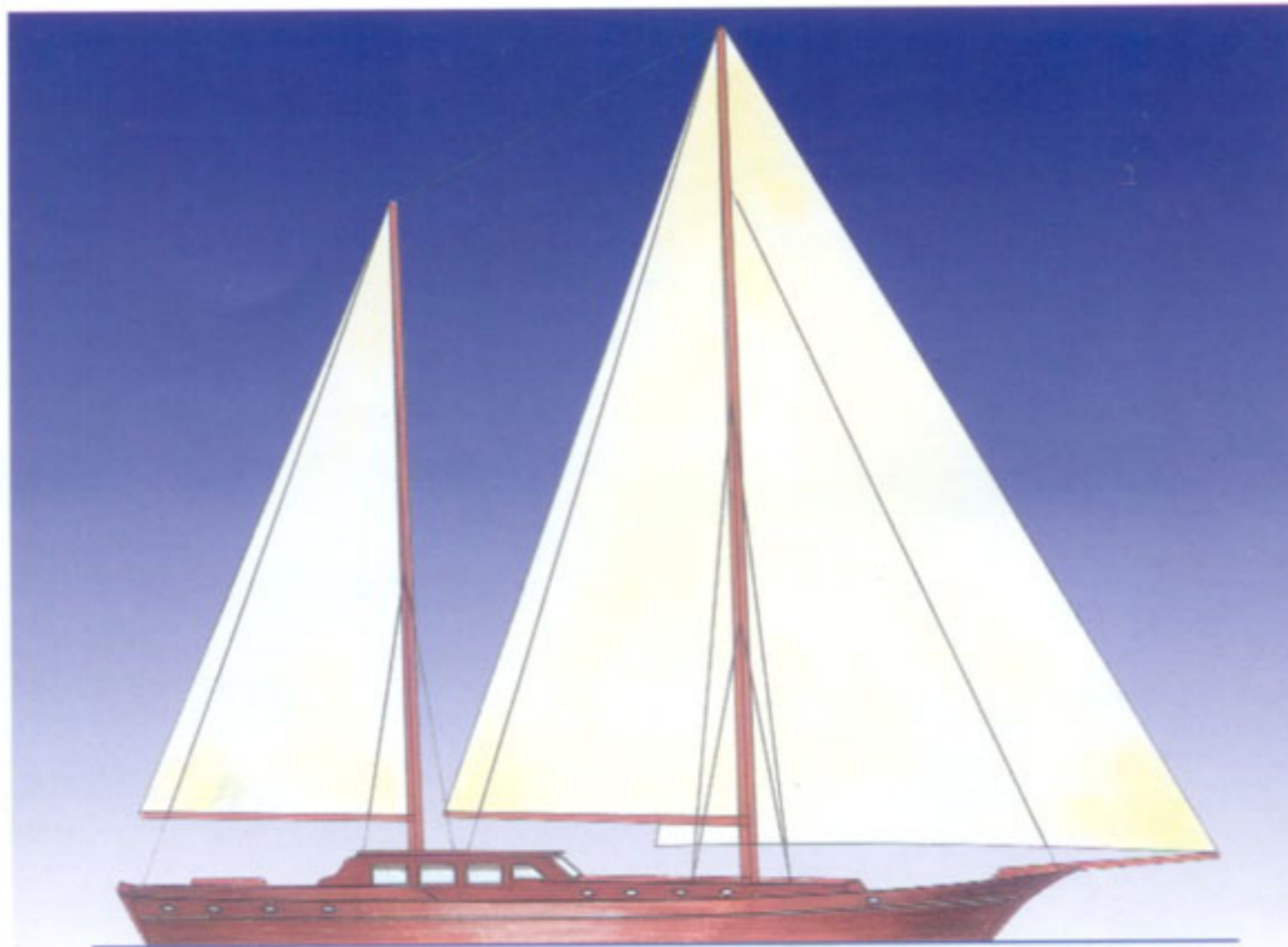


Building a Bodrum Gulet

by Dina Street

The procedure of building boats today has changed very little over the centuries. The changes to the basic plank-on-frame method are superficial: electrical tools now allow craftsman to sand and shape wood faster and with more precision than they used to be able to by hand, and laminated epoxy allows for increased design options. Inside the boat, design changes over the years have increasingly opted for larger dining and lounging facilities, well-designed cabin layout, including air conditioning, and even on-board jacuzzis. And in the cargo hold below deck where amphoras of wine were once neatly stacked in the ancient vessels of the Aegean, a shiny engine awaits to deliver 350 horsepower to the helm.



The Building Process: A Closer Look

The building process begins with the laying of the keel, usually iron. The keel is made in several sections and welded together in the yard. Traditionally it was then filled with extremely heavy crushed stone with a thin layer of concrete on top. This forms a strong backbone for the addition of ribs and bowsprit and provides several tons of necessary ballast. Three or four main ribs are then firmly bolted to the keel, midway between bow and stern. These ribs will be the determining factor for the rest of the hull shape. With the completion of the main ribs, bowsprit and transom support, the shape of the toe-rail and sheer-line are determined by eye and roughly laid out on surrounding scaffolding. The remaining ribs and supports are then hand fitted to conform to this rough outline. Once all interior bracing and supports are fitted, work begins on interior cabins and hull planking.

The Baklava Tradition

When the hull is almost completed a customary ceremony takes place: the insertion of the baklava wood. The baklava wood is the last piece to be inserted. It is called baklava wood because its insertion signifies that an important phase of construction is now finished, and a joyful event

accompanied by a small celebration featuring baklava (a popular Turkish sweet pastry) ensues. After this minor milestone, work then continues on interior and topside construction.

Most boats are built by knowledgeable craftsmen without the aid of specific plans. Construction requires working on several tasks and attending to numerous details at once. Vessels built to RINA or Lloyd's standards have a strict adherence to scheduled visits by surveyors to verify each stage of the building process. Many of Bodrum's

native boat builders learned their skill as apprentices to the late Ziya Güvendiren, Bodrum's master boat builder who lived and worked here all of his life. Today's boat builders pass on those same skills to their young apprentices who may one day start yards of their own.

When boats were built for purposes other than pleasure, one man or team did all the woodwork. Now, as quality and appearance become more important in the construction of luxury yachts, specialization frequently occurs, demanding fine interior and exterior craftsmen. For some yachts special cabinet makers have been employed to ensure joinery of the highest standards.

Finishing

In addition to all woodwork, all metalwork is also done in the yard or by special fitters in Bodrum, usually in stainless steel. Raw pieces are shaped to fit the required applications, be it spar, stern rail or fuel tank. Rigging is constructed by the yard or local specialists, custom designed and fitted to each yacht individually. With the exception of mechanical parts such as engines or electronics which are bought elsewhere and installed by the builder, the entire craft is supplied and constructed by local craftsmen in Bodrum.

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Larger boats will take approximately nine months to complete, employing a permanent work force of five to eight men perboat. Prior to launching, one of the last jobs is the reinsertion of a piece of lower hull planking that was previously removed, forming a trap door for the removal of rubbish, wood scraps and sawdust accumulated during construction.

Launch

Launching can sometimes be a Herculean task. Many boatyards are located well away from the sea and often huge boats must be brought several kilometers for launching. Smaller boats can be transported by trucks or pulled on trailers. With the bigger boats (sometimes over 30 meters), a sledge is placed under the keel and used to transport the boat to shore and employed for launching. Well greased wooden blocks are placed on the road and continually moved, back to front, as the sledge progresses. It is not unusual to turn the corner on to a Bodrum street only to find the way blocked by a huge yacht slowly making its way to the sea. (The sledge method of moving ships on land was employed at least as early as 1453 by the Turks during the conquest of Istanbul.) The grease used to oil these sledges and blocks of wood is that of sheep fat. A large cauldron is made from an empty steel barrel, and packed with salted fat which is solid until heated with a fire below the barrel. The liquid fat is then amply used for lubrication, and most builders claim that nothing synthetic works better than this timeless method.

At the shore before launching, boats undergo a christening ceremony, but instead of a bottle of champagne smashed against the bow, a sheep or steer is sacrificed in accordance with Muslim custom, and the blood smeared on the bow to ensure good luck and safe voyages. Another custom during launching is "tel kisti", a mild difficulty encountered in the launch and a good humored refusal to get on with the job until presents and gratuities are presented by the boat owner to the construction crew.

A properly maintained boat can last over thirty years. Each winter most boats are taken out of the water and the hulls scrubbed and given a thick coat of paint in addition to other routine maintenance.

