It is well known that consecrated pillars are of considerable antiquity; they have been erected by almost every nation of renown, to mark some striking phenomenon in the history of the world, or to transmit some interesting information to posterity.

Samuel Drew, *History of Cornwall*...

Several sources date these stones to the early Neolithic period (4000 B.C.E. to 3000 B.C.E., or in some regions to the Iron Age). Initially, these may have been covered with earth or smaller stones to form a mound, resembling a “womb”, and that covering may have weathered away, leaving only the “stone skeleton” intact, later to be called dolmen.

Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain the existence of dolmens and menhirs (single standing stones). According to Joseph Campbell, the people on the Melanesian island of Malekula, in the New Hebrides, during the first phase of an extended *Maki* ceremony, the focal center is a dolmen – a table of stone formed of a great slab supported by upright stones - a dolmen - symbolizing a stone grave, the cave through which the dead pass to the other world, and the womb through which the living may achieve rebirth. At these ceremonials boars must be sacrificed, to honor life-effort of the voyager.

In parts of South India dolmens are known to be funerary edifices, where the dead are generally buried in earthen jars. (Gokhle)

Dolmens are concrete evidence that early cultures had the desire to honor their leaders and heroes with grave markers and, as a community, had the ability to transport these enormous stones over great distances.

Vestiges of these rituals are still being observed in Goa on the day of Epiphany – a festive day celebrated jointly by the three villages - at the four megalithic sites along the “Three King’s Way”, an ancient trail through the rice fields, which extends from the villages of Arossim and Cansaulim to the foothills of Cuelim and up the hill to the Chapel. Flagmen leading each of the three processions momentarily pause in front of the dolmens along the route to pay homage to the stones by waving the flag. This tradition has been maintained for several generations by members of a tribal family from Cuelim, as their inherited responsibility.

The orthostats (upright stones) above ground measured 46”x16”x12”, with the gaps in between of 9-11” and the topping stone 82” long. This is the only one in the area with the topping stone in place. The total height 83” of the orthostats was determined by digging around one corner, so as not to disturb the integrity of the structure. Thus, the weight of each laterite stone, all of the same dimensions, was calculated to be about 1.5 tons, based on the average density of 3.015 g/cm3* from two samples.
As can be seen from figs. 3 and 4, the orthostats are well anchored with buttressing stones all around, and the longest of these, seen in fig.4, is 63.5” long.

In this limited study, fifteen megalithic stones located in three districts have been documented with photographs and coordinates, (to be published later), eight of which in various stages of ruins, are in the general vicinity of the one in Cuelim, around the tributaries and source of River Sal, in the District of Mormugao, as shown in fig.5. Only one other is also intact with a toping stone, in the District of Quepem.

The four megaliths aligned along the N-S axis are adjacent to the traditional “King’s Way”. The carved-out, “quarried” wells at the foothills, at the northern end of the trail, may possibly have been the source of the stones, which were dragged along the especially built-up trail. In 2015, after thousands of years of its existence, the northern end was widened and paved, as seen in figs. 2 and 3. At this time one of the fallen dolmen, closest to the foothills, was covered permanently by the newly-built road.

References

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