

# MEGALITHS, CONSTRUCTING DOLMENS, GOA-20

In prehistoric times a large amount of thought and effort was put into treatment of the dead and their departure from among the living. The fact that the community expended tremendous amount of time and energy to lug the huge stones over long distances, suggest that they considered it important to honor their dead leaders even in death. It also indicates their belief in the afterlife and the possibility of communication with the spiritual world. The structures are usually burial markers of reverence for people of importance, but also sometimes places of ritual and worship. Construction of large stone monuments during the Neolithic/Megalithic era was not an easy task.<sup>1</sup>

The four dolmens along the Three King's Way aligned along an ancient trail extending from Arossim to Cuelim, reported earlier,<sup>2</sup> may have been constructed as shown below. Over time, when they were not maintained periodically after the monsoons, and the dirt mound having eroded, left only the stone skeletal structure, as dolmens.<sup>3</sup> Quarried rectangular stone wells seen in proximity of the trail, at the foothills of Cuelim, most likely provided the large stones transported over logs (and assembled on site) along the specifically raised mud trail that extends from Cuelim to Arossim (the King's Trail) and further south. This technique of moving heavy objects is still practiced by local fishermen to land their boats ashore.

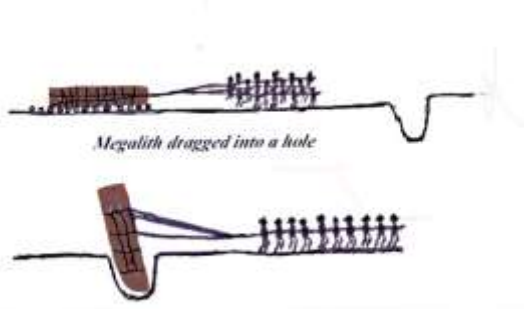


Fig. 1 Megalith being dragged by several people over tree logs  
(Source: adapted from Wikipedia)<sup>4</sup>

Fig. 2 The capping megalith raised by pulling along an inclined plane and covered as a mound



Fig.3 Dolmen at Cuelim when it was partially excavated to expose the buttressing stones

Unlike the reinforced foundation of the dolmen in Cuelim (shown above), the one in partial ruins in Arossim, when excavated, was found to be without any buttressing, suggesting that it may have been erected for a different purpose, possibly as a place for rituals and worship. There is a figure of a snake inlaid (only the head now left as seen in fig.5) in quartz on the northern face of this 6ft megalith and a hole on the opposite face. The S-shaped groove extending from the quartz is clearly apparent on the stone. Prior to excavation a few coins were also found in the vicinity, likely offered by devotees. In this case the mound may have looked like a termite/anthill with holes representing a deity as the guardian of the fields.



Fig. 4 The foundation of Arossim dolmen (in ruins) is not buttressed.



Fig. 5 Inlaid quartz-head of a snake extended by S-shaped groove.



Fig. 6 Hole on the opposite face

Mounds, also known as tumulus or kurgans, which are raised memorials over graves, are seen throughout the world, from Americas, Europe to Korea. Two such mounds are shown below.



Fig. 7 Tumulus at Outeiro de Gregos, Baião, Portugal (5<sup>th</sup>/4th millennium BC)<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 8 Burial mounds of the Silla kings in Korea<sup>6</sup>

#### References:

1. Another argument can be advanced to eliminate the possibility that these structures were erected for resting baskets.
2. <https://goaprehistory.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/megaliths-dolmens-goal.pdf>
3. <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Dolmen>
4. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megalith>
5. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulus#Portugal>
6. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tumulus#/media/File:Burial-Mounds-at-GyeongJu.jpg>