

AN EARLY REFERENCE TO THE 3rd MILLENNIUM GRAVES AT OMAN. QUESTIONS ON A SPANISH MANUSCRIPT OF THE 17th CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

In the account of his voyage to Iran at the beginning of the 17th century, García de Silva y Figueroa wrote a paragraph that appears to be the first-known mention of the funeral constructions of the 3rd Millennium in the Oman Peninsula. This interesting reference once again shows how valuable the information found in maps, navigation logs and travel books of the past is for the modern historical and archaeological investigations being made about the Near East.

RESUMEN

En el relato de su viaje a Irán a comienzos del siglo XVII, García de Silva y Figueroa escribió un párrafo que parece ser la primera mención conocida de las construcciones funerarias del III milenio en la Península de Omán. Tan interesante referencia muestra una vez más el valor informativo que la cartografía, los derroteros de navegación y los libros de viaje del pasado prestan a la moderna investigación arqueológica e histórica sobre el Oriente Próximo.

KEYWORDS

Ancient Arabia, Archaeology of the Oman Peninsula, Hafit/Beehive Graves, Silva y Figueroa, travellers and archaeology in the Near East.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Arabia antigua, Arqueología de la Península de Omán, tumbas Hafit/Colmena, Silva y Figueroa, viajeros y arqueología en Oriente Próximo.

We are convinced that ancient cartography and travel books are an invaluable source of information for the archaeologist and the historian. Although this idea has not always been accepted in the past, today it is evident that by making use of the extensive information contained, for instance, in excavation reports, travel stories and maps of the 19th century, more and more studies are being published that give us information of an unexpected value¹. We even believe that those testimonies prior to the Orientalist boom preserve decisive information that can help solve secular enigmas and open up unexpected avenues for the resolution of problems latent in the scientific debate². But not all regions in the Near East have been given the same attention. If we consider the Arabic and Oman

¹ B. Ooghe.- “Felix Jones and the Land Behind Baghdad: Site-Centered Study of the 19th Century Narrative”, *Akkadica* 127 (2007), 137-154.

² For instance, thanks to a better knowledge of the travel literature of the 17th century, the debate about who was the first person to identify Chilmínara as Persepolis and the cuneiform signs as true writing, has been correctly solved. See A. Intervenizzi.- *Il Genio Vagante. Viaggatori alla scoperta dell’antico Oriente (sec. XII- XVIII)*. Edizioni dell’Orso, Alessandria 2005, 204-221; J. M^a Córdoba.- “Don García de Silva y Figueroa and the Rediscovery of Iran” in J. M^a Córdoba and M^a Carmen Pérez (ed.).- *The Spanish Near Eastern Adventure (1166-2006)*, Ministerio de Cultura, Madrid 2006, 51-56.