

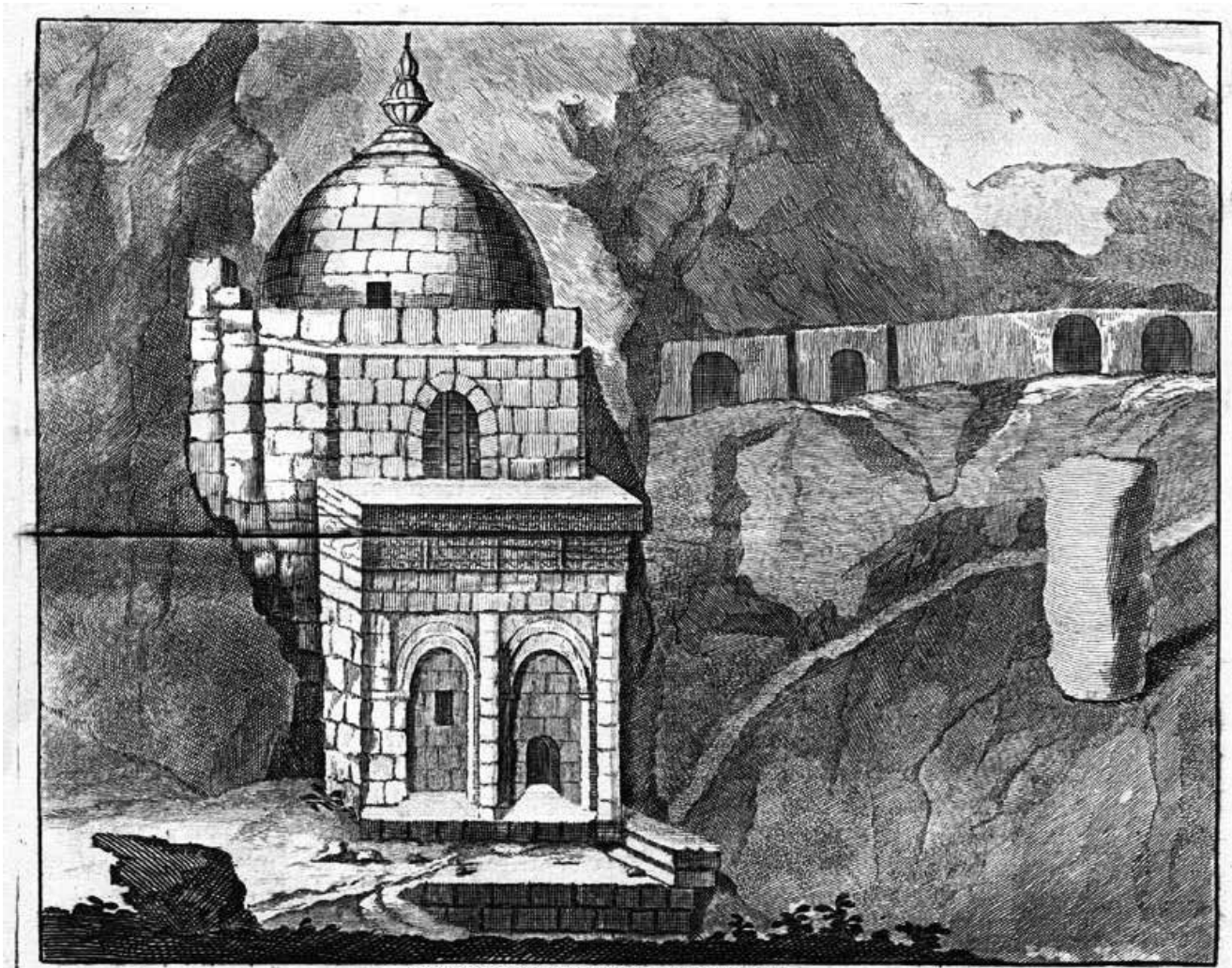


Discovering Azerbaijan

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Miracle in the Rocks. DIRI BABA MAUSOLEUM

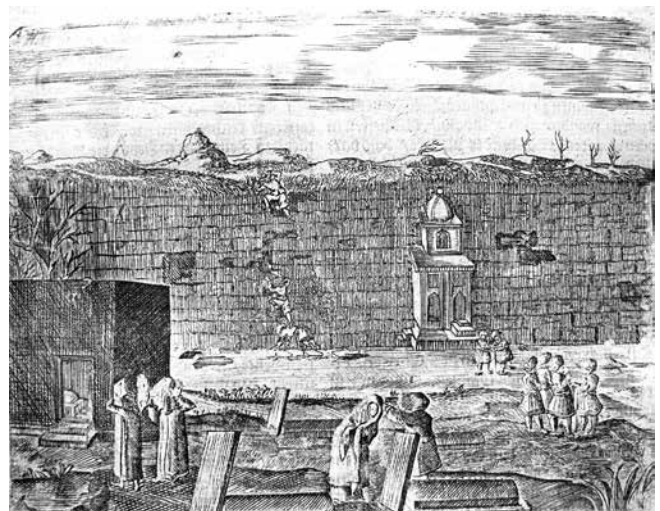


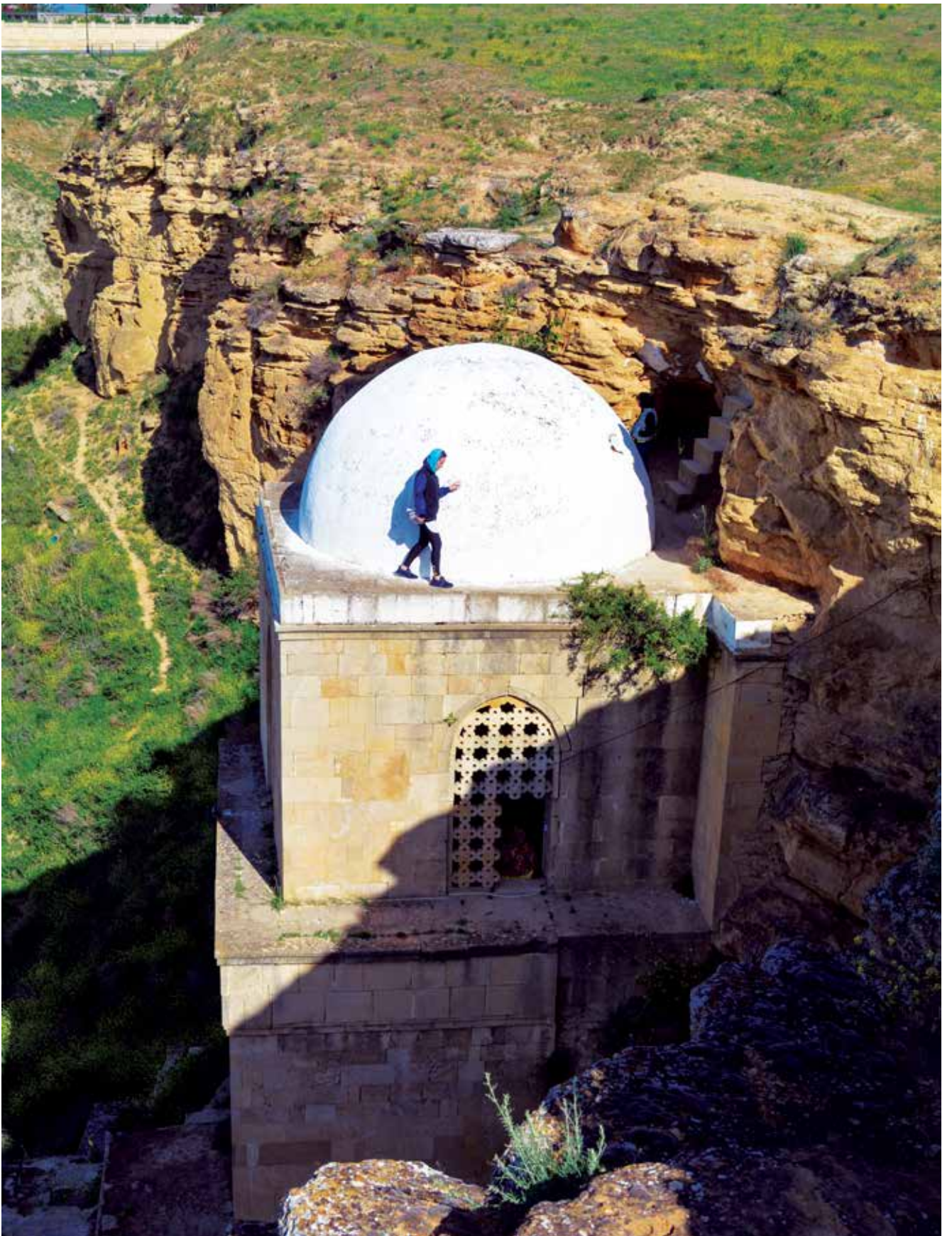


TOMBEAU DE SEID IBRAHIM.

Experienced travelers know about the ancient settlement of Petra lost among the mountains in the south of Jordan. Something similar, although much more modest in size, exists in Azerbaijan. This is the mausoleum of Diri Baba, which is located on the outskirts of the regional center of Gobustan, 101 km west of Baku. The rock-cut tomb, surrounded by a network of caves, has been attracting pilgrims and travelers for over six hundred years. The mausoleum was erected on the grave of a certain saint in 1402. There is very scanty reliable data about the real identity of the saint. German scientist Adam Olearius, who visited Azerbaijan in 1636, writes in his notes: "... At a distance of two gun shots to the east of the village, inside a rocky mountain, there is a beautifully arranged tomb of another saint named Tiribabba, who was the teacher of Seyid Ibrahim. This saint, as the Persians told us, still remains imperishable, dressed in a gray caftan and kneeling, as if in a prayer. It is as if God had left him in such a position for the sake

of his former scribe, Seyid Ibrahim, so that one could always see the teacher after his death, praying. Every year, another white caftan is put on top of the gray one. The old one is torn apart and divided among the pilgrims





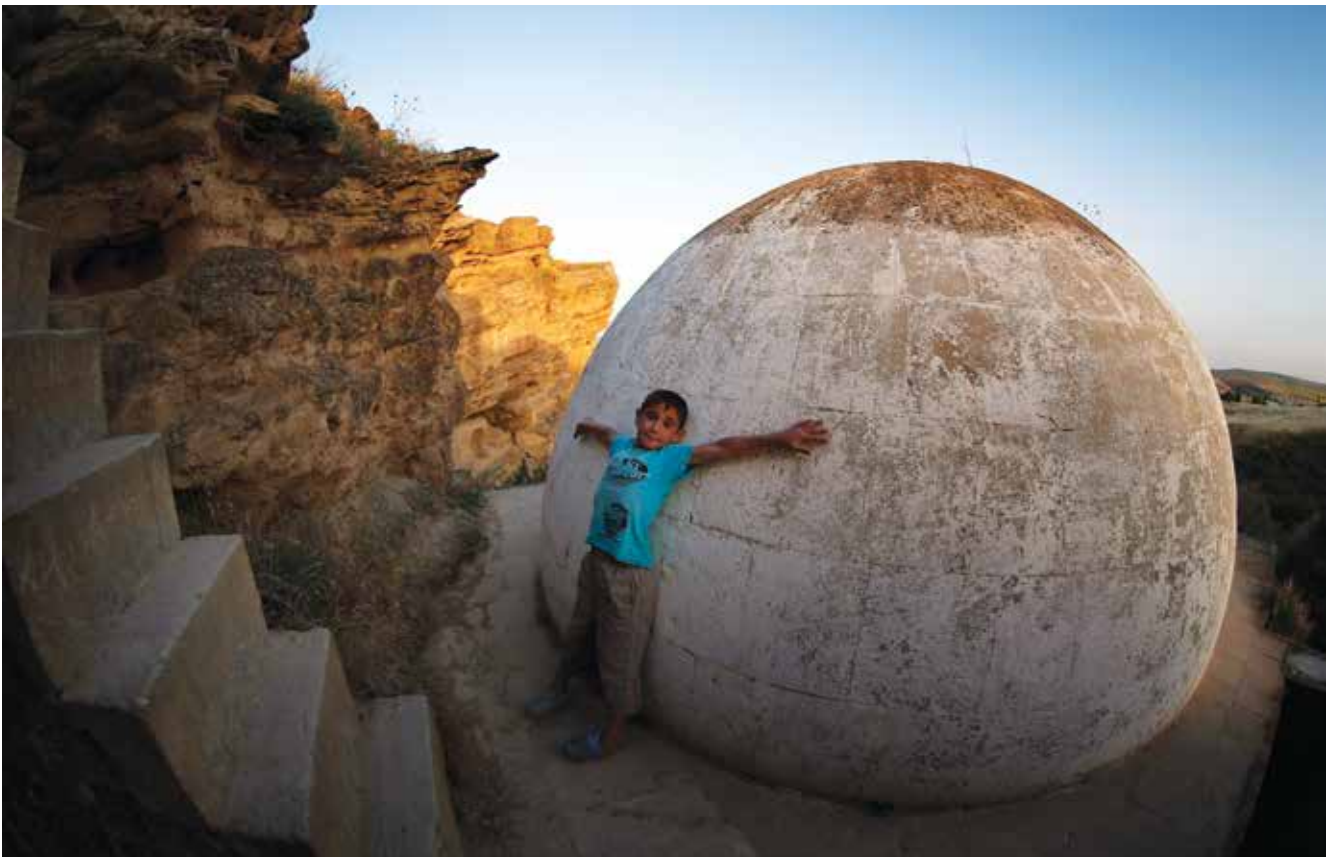


who come here to worship ... Near the tomb of Tiribabba, in the same mountain, many caves and chambers have been carved, in which pilgrims place their offerings and sacrifices. Some of these places were carved into the mountain so high that it is impossible to climb into them without a ladder..."

We also come across the name of Seyid Ibrahim on the engravings of Dutch artist Cornelius de Bruin, who was here in 1703 and 1707. Interestingly, these drawings indicate the mausoleum as the tomb of Seyid Ibrahim himself, not of his teacher. According to Olearius though, Seyid was buried in the ancient cemetery of Maraza: "On the 27th, we covered another five miles to the village of Pirmaras located three miles from Shamakhi, where a Persian saint named Seyid Ibrahim was buried. The Persians said that this was an ancient cemetery left untouched by Tamerlane, who devastated everything around. The

place is surrounded by stone walls and, like a castle, is built and decorated with two courtyards. Although our messengers wanted to look at the tomb, they were not allowed to go further than the front courtyard, where there were many tombstones. It should be noted that the words "Persians" and "Persian" denote Azerbaijanis here.

Despite all the interference, Olearius did enter the tomb of Seyid Ibrahim: "In the front room, there was a high stone coffin with two steps surrounded by bars right across the door. To the left, through the door, one could go into a whitewashed corridor or gallery covered with fine carpets. The sign on the wall in large black letters said: "I entrust my affairs to God, for He helps me in need." From the covered passage on the right side, there was another vaulted chamber, in which there were eight stone-lined graves. From this room, again to the right, you enter the third room, in which Seyid Ibrahim was put to rest. His coffin is elevated more than a cubit and covered with a light damask cover. Wax candles and lanterns stood around in large copper candlesticks, lamps hung on the top of the vault, which I could hardly make out because it was quite dark in the room..."



Turkish traveler Evliya Chelebi wrote that Dirî Baba, or the Maraza sheikh who held the position of azanchi, or the muezzin at the court of Shirvanshah Ibrahim I (1382-1417), was buried here.

Today, centuries later, it is difficult to figure out where the tombs are. It is only clear that both the ancient cemetery and the grotto with the mausoleum itself are considered sacred and are shrouded in many mysteries. Tamerlane himself visited here, while later the envoys of the Russian Tsar were looking for the relics of holy martyr Simeon here. For a long time, the area around the mausoleum was a haven for Sufis who retreated to meditation cells. Hence the legend that Dirî Baba, a famous Sufi teacher, plunged into a trance and remained in a prayer position for 300 long years. This version is supported by the current state of the mausoleum – stone bars were broken out by supporters of orthodox Islam, which rejects Sufism and sanctuaries (feasts).

The flow of pilgrims to Dirî Baba does not seem to fade even today. It is always crowded here – some are eager to pray, others make a wish. They believe that one should climb the steep steps to the roof of the dome and go around it seven times, and then the wish will definitely come true. This task is not easy, the passages

in the mausoleum are very narrow, the steps are high and the edge on the side of the dome is only one foot wide. For those who are afraid of heights, it is not recommended to climb the dome, it can make you dizzy. At the same time, a very interesting panorama opens up from there: a sacred cemetery opposite the mausoleum, hermit caves and paths leading to them. It is not advised to climb into the caves, because there may be snakes inside. Some daredevils have looked into all available dungeons, including the lower grotto, which leads to an old dilapidated staircase to the left of the main one. The main sanctuary is located on the second floor of the mausoleum. This is a small cave, inside which there are immured passages to the cells, where the “imperishable old man” was buried. There is a place for prayers in it and in the room on the floor below now.

Every time you visit the mausoleum, you can discover something new, whether it is the details of the interior or the special mood that this place evokes. Many shy away from everything related to burials, but the tomb of Dirî Baba is an exception both mentally and physically. The unique architecture combined with the halo of mysticism leaves no-one indifferent. After all, everyone wants to believe in a miracle... ✨

