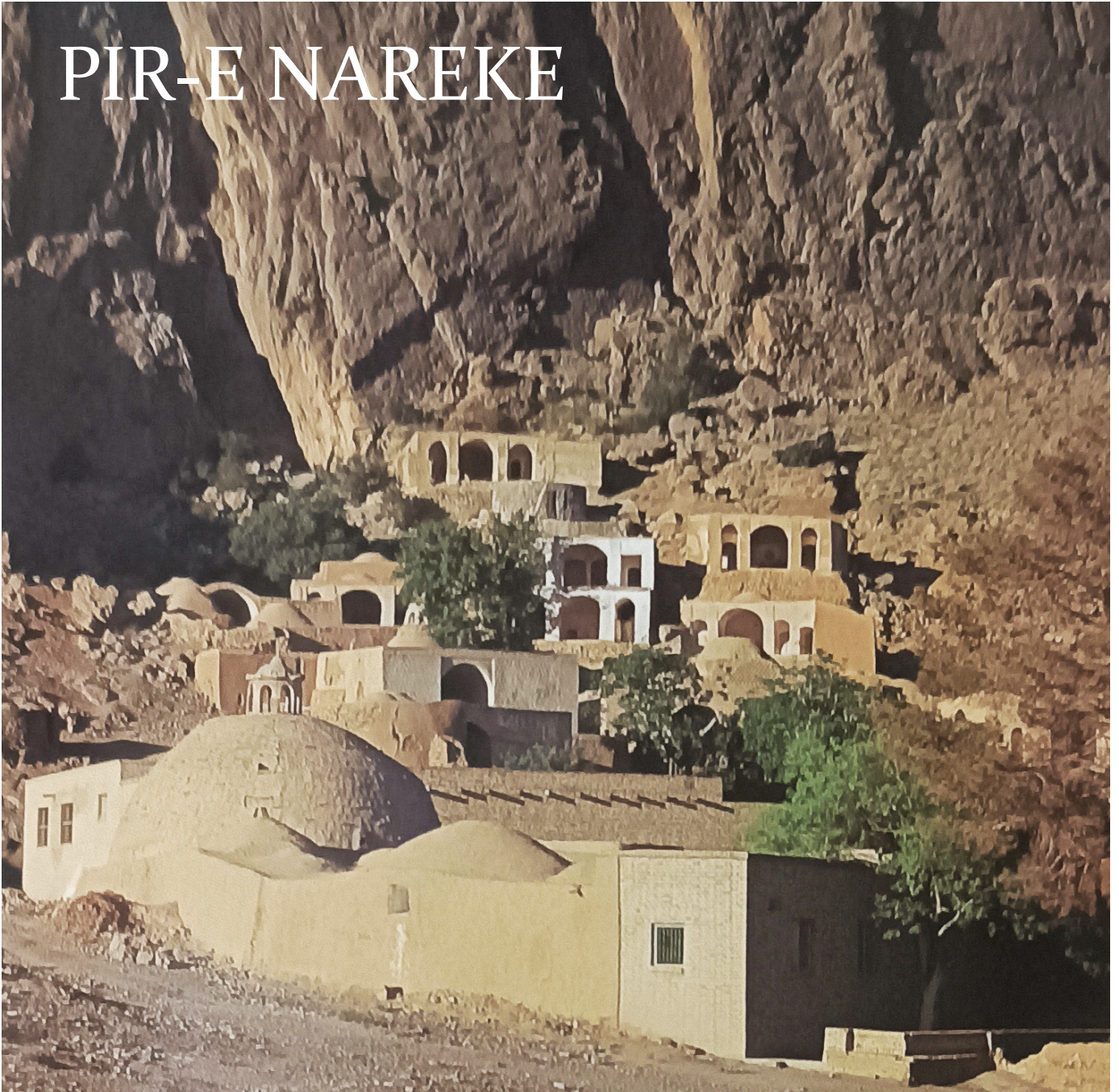


PIR-E NAREKE



Pir-E Nareke is a sacred mountain shrine dedicated to Princess Nazbanoo, the daughter of Yazdegerd III, the last king of the Sasanian Empire.

Isolated and sheltered against the stark, desert mountain ridges of Mehriz in the Yazd province, Pir-e Nareke stands as a sanctuary born from the collapse of the Sasanian Empire, and represents other Zoroastrian shrines, the religious resilience of its people, and the profound grief they suffered and internalised. This sacred mountain shrine is dedicated to Princess Nazbanoo, the daughter of Emperor Yazdegerd III, the last Zoroastrian king of the Sasanian Empire.

The legend associated with the shrine of Pir-e-Nareke is deeply intertwined with the final days of the Sasanian empire. As the invading Arab armies advanced across the Iranian plateau, the royal family of King Yazdegerd III was forced to flee eastward in search of refuge. The young king's family scattered across the central deserts of Yazd fleeing the bedouin Arabs. Hunted by the Arab army, Princess Nazbanoo fled into the barren mountains of Yazd, seeking sanctuary in the rugged valley of Gaigun and the surrounding mountain of Nareke.

Exhausted and terrified, Nazbanoo and her royal courtiers came up



Pir-E Nareke, an aerial view.

against the sheer, impassable cliffs of Mount Nerake. With no way to escape her faith, in her final moments of despair, she wept and prayed to Ahura Mazda (The Lord of Wisdom) to shield her and protect her from her pursuers. The legend states that, the rock face opened and she walked into the hollowed fracture with her courtiers never to be seen again

At the place where she vanished into the rock, a fresh-water spring began to cascade from the barren mountain face, symbolizing her tears and a legend was born.

Centuries later, a weary traveller exhausted by the overpowering desert heat, rested at the foot of the mountain. While asleep the Princess Nazbanoo appeared to him in a dream, instructing him to build a shrine for her at the very spot the mountain opened for her; as a place of perpetual remembrance.

For the Zoroastrian community of Iran, Pir-e Nareke is a place of pilgrimage where they come to offer prayers, light a fire, and make food offerings to keep alive the bittersweet memory of a tragic young king, his royal family and the enduring spirit of their fallen empire