

ca 515–450 B.C.

persepolis

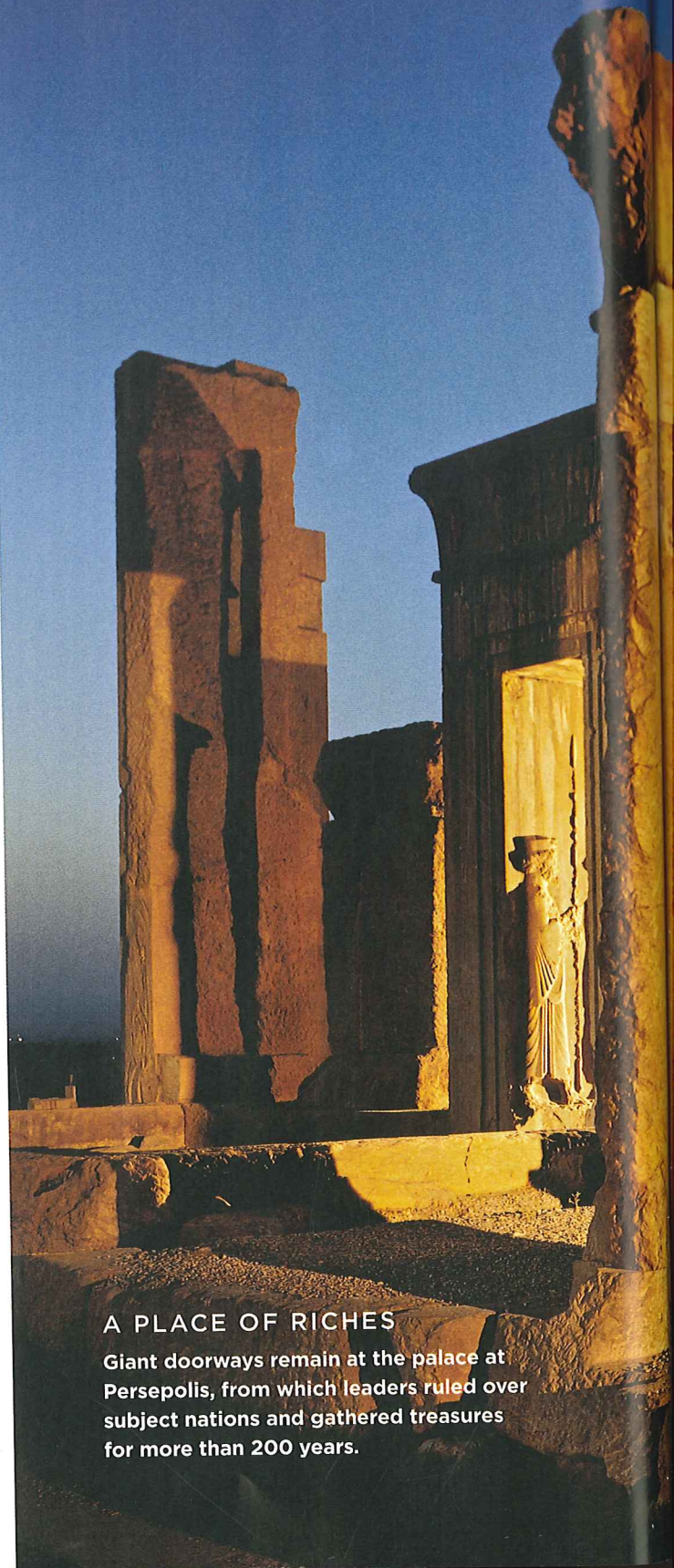
Depository for Persia's wealth and fine temples

THE FIRST PERSIAN Empire blossomed between the sixth and fourth centuries B.C., stretching its influence from the Nile to the Indus. At the heart of it all lay the city of Persepolis in present-day Iran. Today, the most visible ruins are a stonewalled terrace supporting stone doorways and columns backed by distant mountains. In its heyday, this foundation supported an empire's ceremonial capital and the site of some of the most splendid palaces ever built.

Most of the buildings were constructed over a 60- or 70-year period by Darius I, who was part of the Achaemenid dynasty. He harbored dreams of conquering Greece, and he worked hard to expand the Persian Empire and to centralize it by creating a grand city center of architectural grandeur that would echo his empire's prosperity.

» FACTS AND STATS A City Preserved in Ashes

- THE ATHENIAN who suggested they burn the city down is responsible most likely, and ironically, for preserving the city's foundation.
- MOST OF THE main buildings were built in a short span, between 515 and 450 B.C.
- IT WAS ONCE thought that they built the stairs wide to accommodate the elite's horses.



A PLACE OF RICHES

Giant doorways remain at the palace at Persepolis, from which leaders ruled over subject nations and gathered treasures for more than 200 years.

