The magnificent palace complex at Persepolis was founded by Darius the Great around 518 B.C., although more than a century passed before it was finally completed. Conceived to be the seat of government for the Achaemenian kings and a center for receptions and ceremonial festivities, the wealth of the Persian empire was evident in all aspects of its construction. The splendor of Persepolis, however, was short-lived; the palaces were looted and burned by Alexander the Great in 331-330 B.C. The ruins were not excavated until the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago sponsored an archaeological expedition to Persepolis and its environs under the supervision of Professor Ernst Herzfeld from 1931 to 1934, and Erich F. Schmidt from 1934 to 1939.

The magnificent ruins of Persepolis lie at the foot of Kuh-i-Rahmat, or "Mountain of Mercy," in the plain of Marv Dasht about 400 miles south of the present capital city of Teheran.

The exact date of the founding of Persepolis is not known. It is assumed that Darius I began work on the platform and its structures between 518 and 516 B.C., visualizing Persepolis as a show place and the seat of his vast Achaemenian Empire. He proudly proclaimed his achievement; there is an
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