

# LIBRARY OF NATIONS



**ARABIAN PENINSULA**

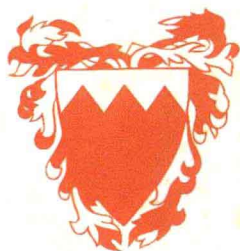
# ARABIAN PENINSULA



SAUDI ARABIA



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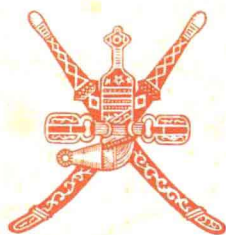
BAHRAIN



QATAR



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



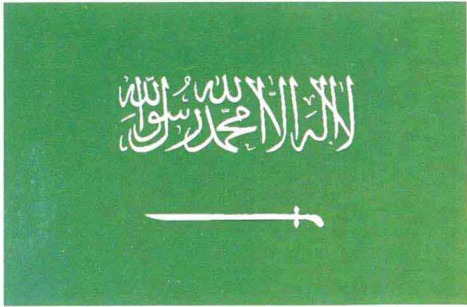
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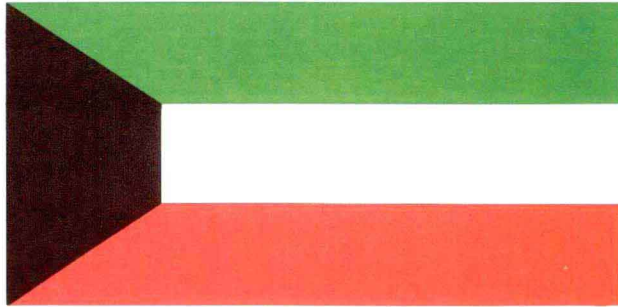
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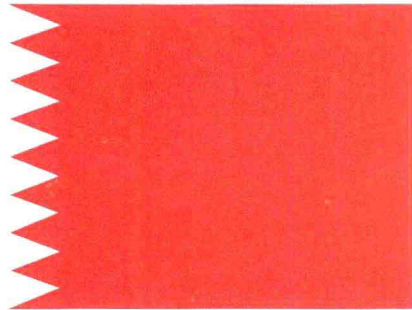
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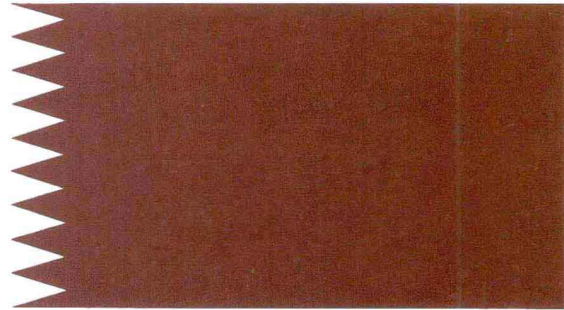
SAUDI ARABIA



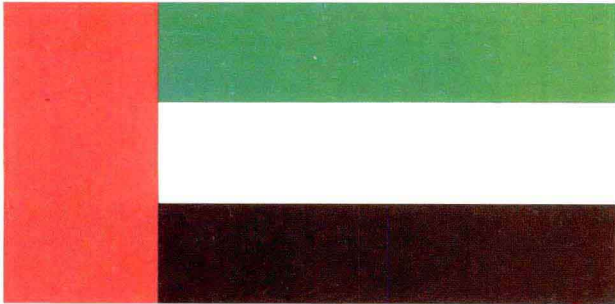
KUWAIT



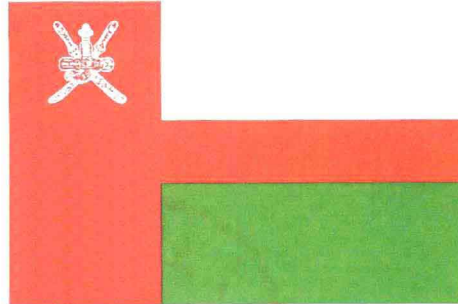
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QATAR



UNITED ARAB EMIRATES



OMAN



NORTH YEMEN



SOUTH YEMEN

# ARABIAN PENINSULA

*By the Editors of Time-Life Books*

*With photographs by Pascal and Maria Maréchaux*

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*Special Contributors:* The chapter texts were written by: Ron Bailey, Anne Horan, John Neary, Milton Orshesky and Bryce Walker.  
*Other Contributor:* Rosemary George.

**Cover:** The television broadcasting building of the Ministry of Information in Riyadh symbolizes the new Saudi Arabia, a kingdom that developed in just half a century from a poor desert tribal society into one of the world's wealthiest nations. The building was designed by a French architect.

**Front and back endpapers:** Bounded on the east by the Arabian Gulf, on the south by the Arabian Sea and on the west by the Red Sea, the Arabian Peninsula encompasses more than 2 million square kilometres of mountains and desert. A land without rivers, it has wadis instead—dried streambeds that flow with water only after rare rainstorms.

This volume is one in a series of books describing countries of the world—their natural resources, peoples, histories, economies and governments.



## CONTENTS

- 1** <sup>17</sup>  
Oil-Rich Lands of Destiny  
30 Picture Essay: A Forgotten World
- 2** <sup>39</sup>  
The Spiritual Core  
53 Picture Essay: Act of Mass Devotion
- 3** <sup>61</sup>  
Wanderers of the Desert  
77 Picture Essay: Life Among the Nomads
- 4** <sup>91</sup>  
Buried Treasure in Hills of Sand  
104 Picture Essay: Haven in a Wasteland
- 5** <sup>117</sup>  
The Rise of the Saudis
- 6** <sup>137</sup>  
Miracles on the Arabian Gulf

**156 Acknowledgements**

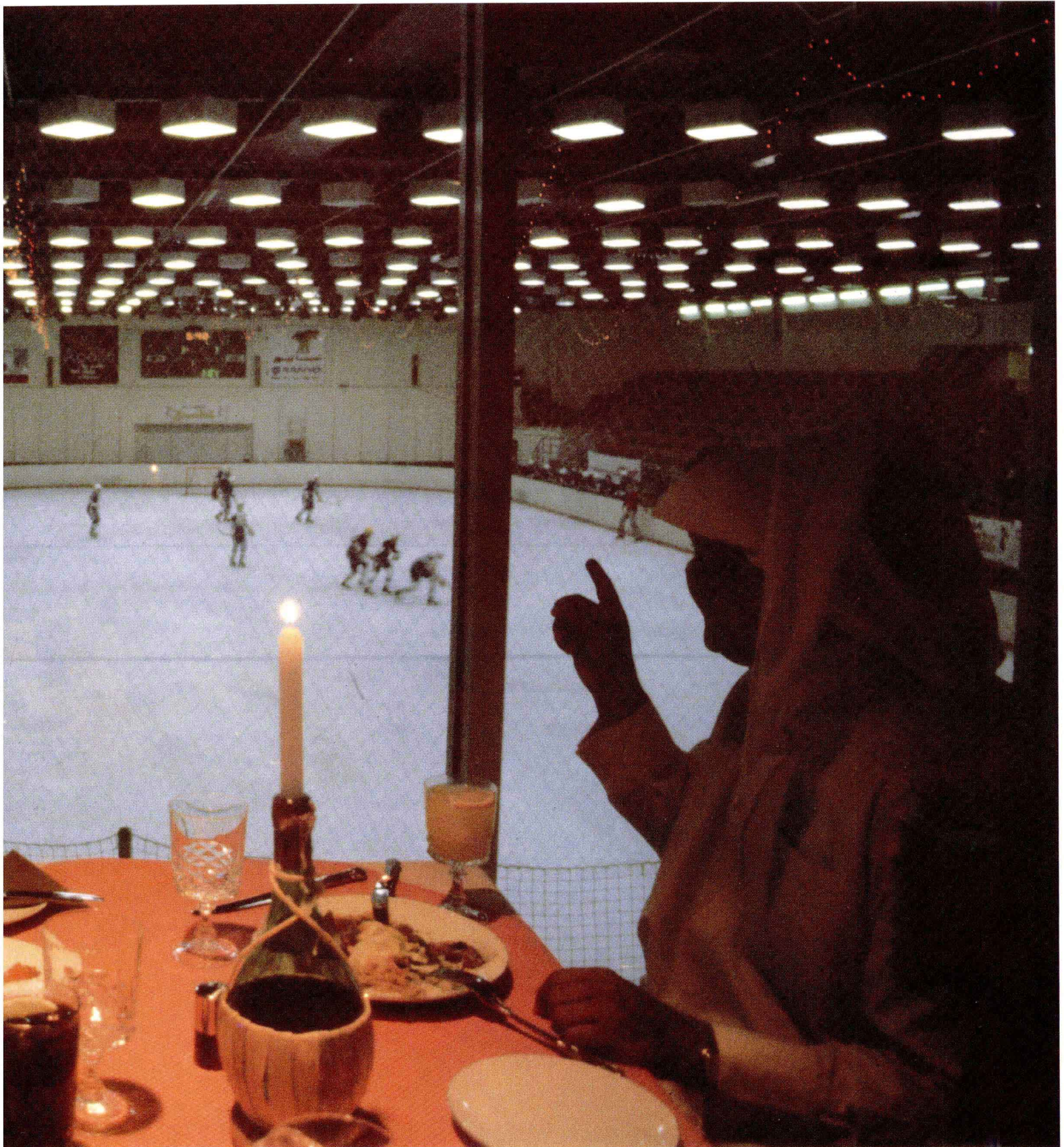
**156 Picture Credits**

**156 Bibliography**

**158 Index**



Two citizens of Dubai eat while watching ice hockey at a local 1,500-seat rink. Throughout the Arabian Peninsula, oil-rich businessmen, eager to

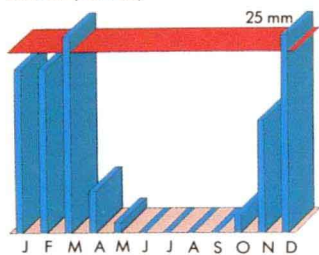


modernize their countries, are pouring billions of dollars into lavish sports facilities. Their ultimate goal: to host the Olympic Games.

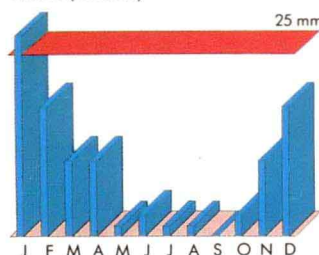


## REALMS OF SAND

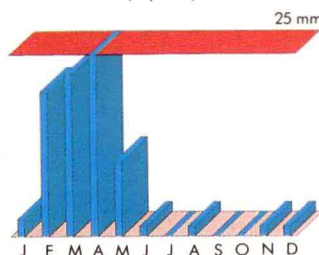
Kuwait (Kuwait)



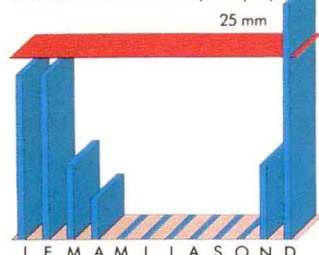
Oman (Muscat)



Saudi Arabia (Riyadh)



United Arab Emirates (Sharjah)



North Yemen (San'a)

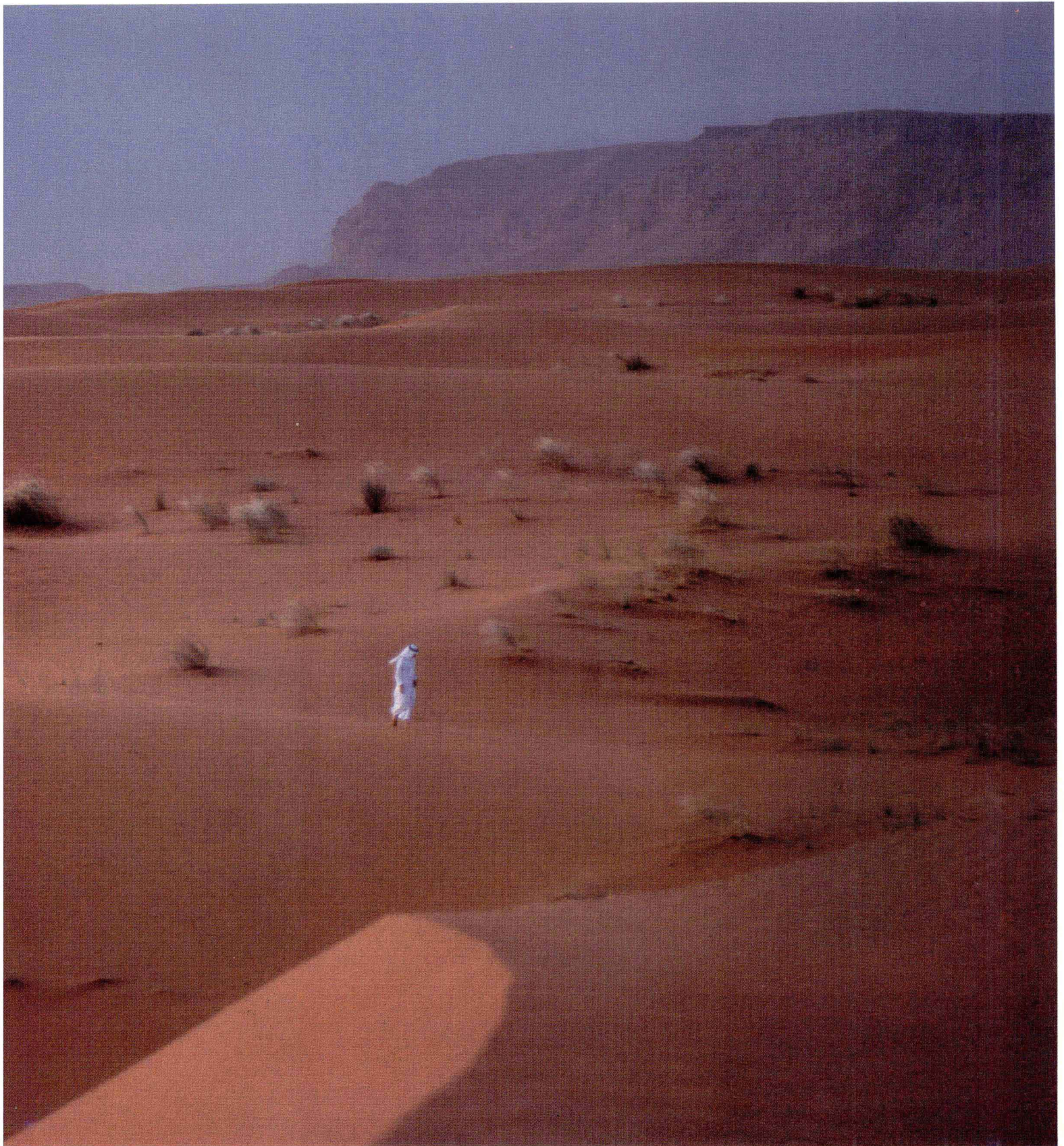


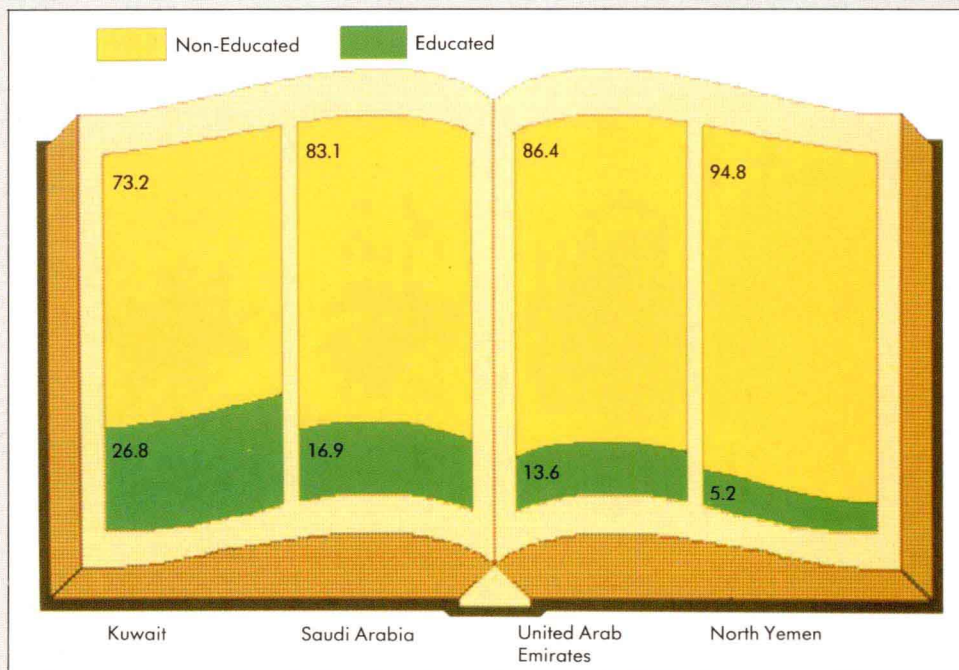
One of the world's most arid regions, the Arabian Peninsula contains three major deserts—the Great Nafud, the Dahna and the Rub'al-Khali, or Empty Quarter. The Great Nafud in the north encompasses 65,000 square kilometres and is made up of longitudinal dunes that extend many kilometres and soar to heights of 90 metres. Stretching south from the Great Nafud is the 640-kilometre-long Dahna, a narrow strip of sand dunes. The Dahna's southern tip joins with the Rub'al-Khali, which blankets more than 650,000 square kilometres. Here, sand mountains climb as high as 300 metres.

The temperature in all three deserts averages 44°C in the summer and often rises to 54°C. The little rain that falls (*graphs, left*) is quickly absorbed by the parched sand of the deserts and the gravelly areas found throughout most of the rest of the peninsula.



In south-western Saudi Arabia, a lone Bedouin strides a bleak desert track near the border with North Yemen.





### EDUCATING THE MASSES

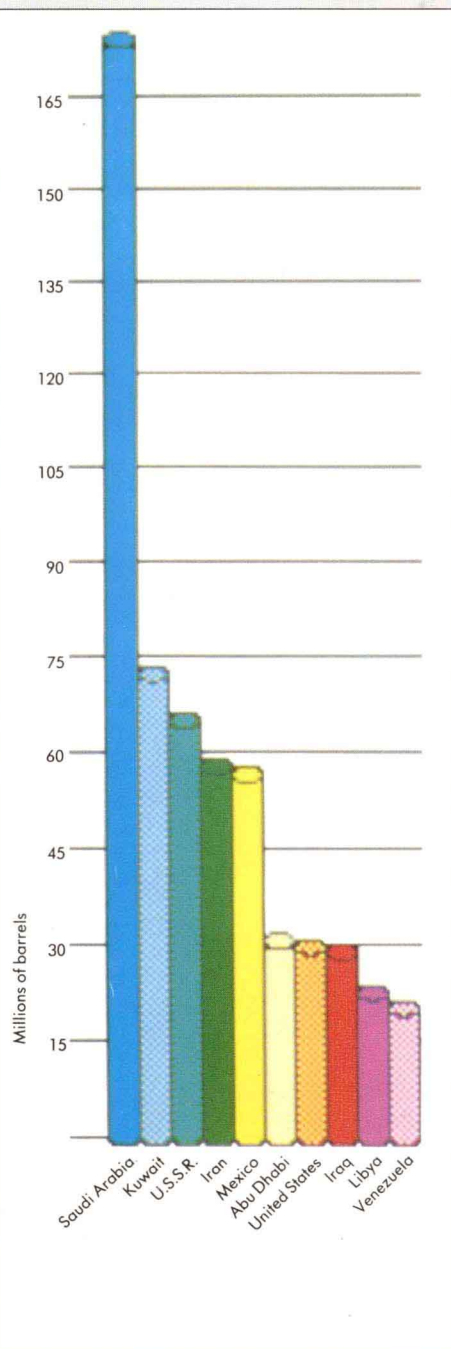
Among the countries of the Arabian Peninsula, tiny Kuwait—with a population of only 1,373,000—stands out for having the greatest percentage of its citizens in school.

Not surprisingly, its literacy rate is also high: 61 per cent of its people can read, compared with 10 per cent in North Yemen and between 5 and 15 per cent in Saudi Arabia.

A school-age youngster, his eyes rimmed with kohl to guard against ophthalmia, a fly-borne disease, minds the family fabric shop in Saafan, North



Yemen. More than 400,000 of the country's children now attend primary schools, but the student-teacher ratio is close to 40 to 1.

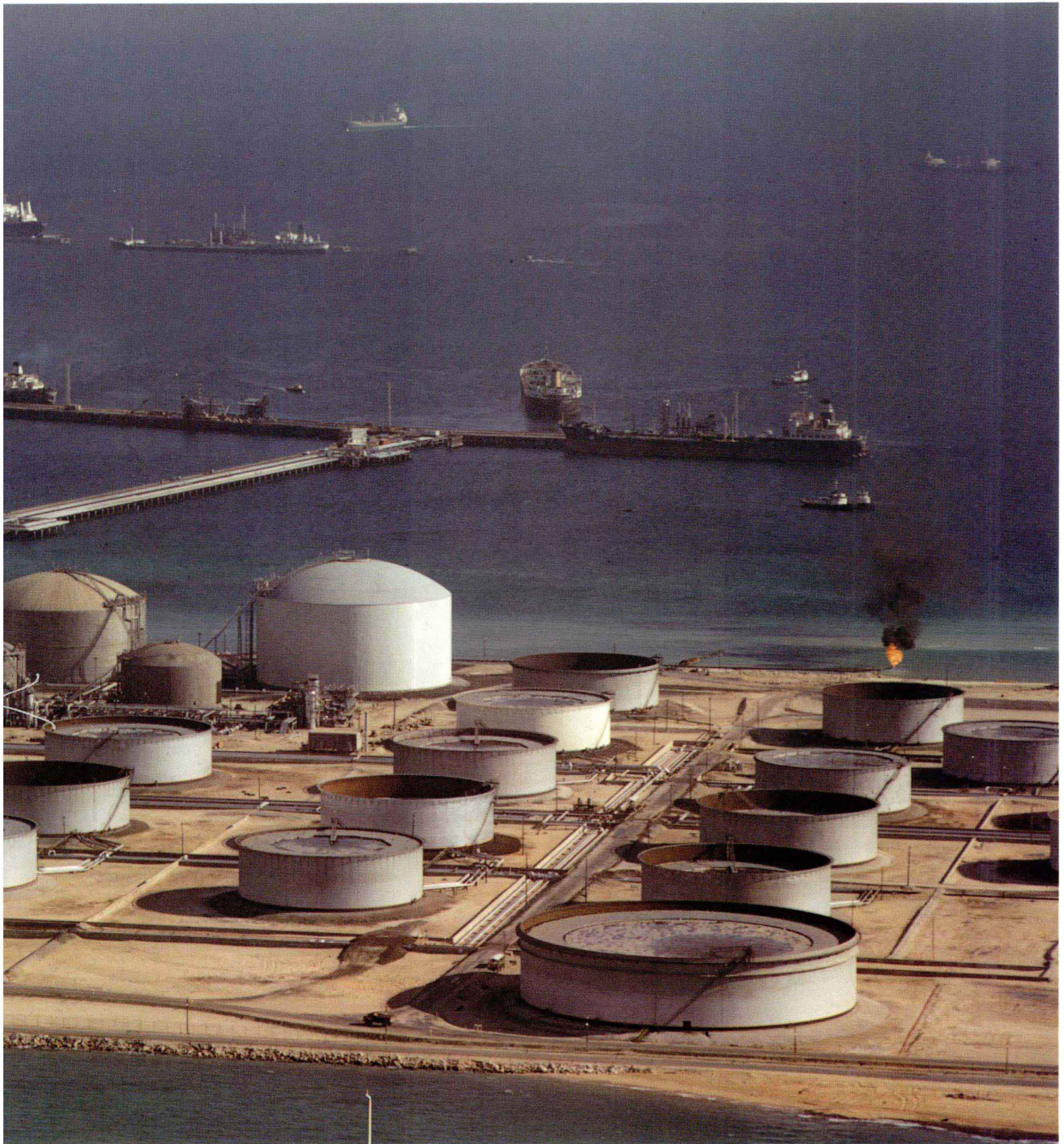


### WHERE THE OIL IS

Of the 10 countries with the largest proven oil reserves, three—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Abu Dhabi—lie on the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia, with 170 billion barrels, accounts for a quarter of the world total.



At Ras Tanura, site of Saudi Arabia's largest refinery, crude oil is processed at a rate exceeding 400,000 barrels a day. In the early 1980s, Saudi Arabia



was exporting more than two billion barrels a year—nearly 98 per cent of its annual production.

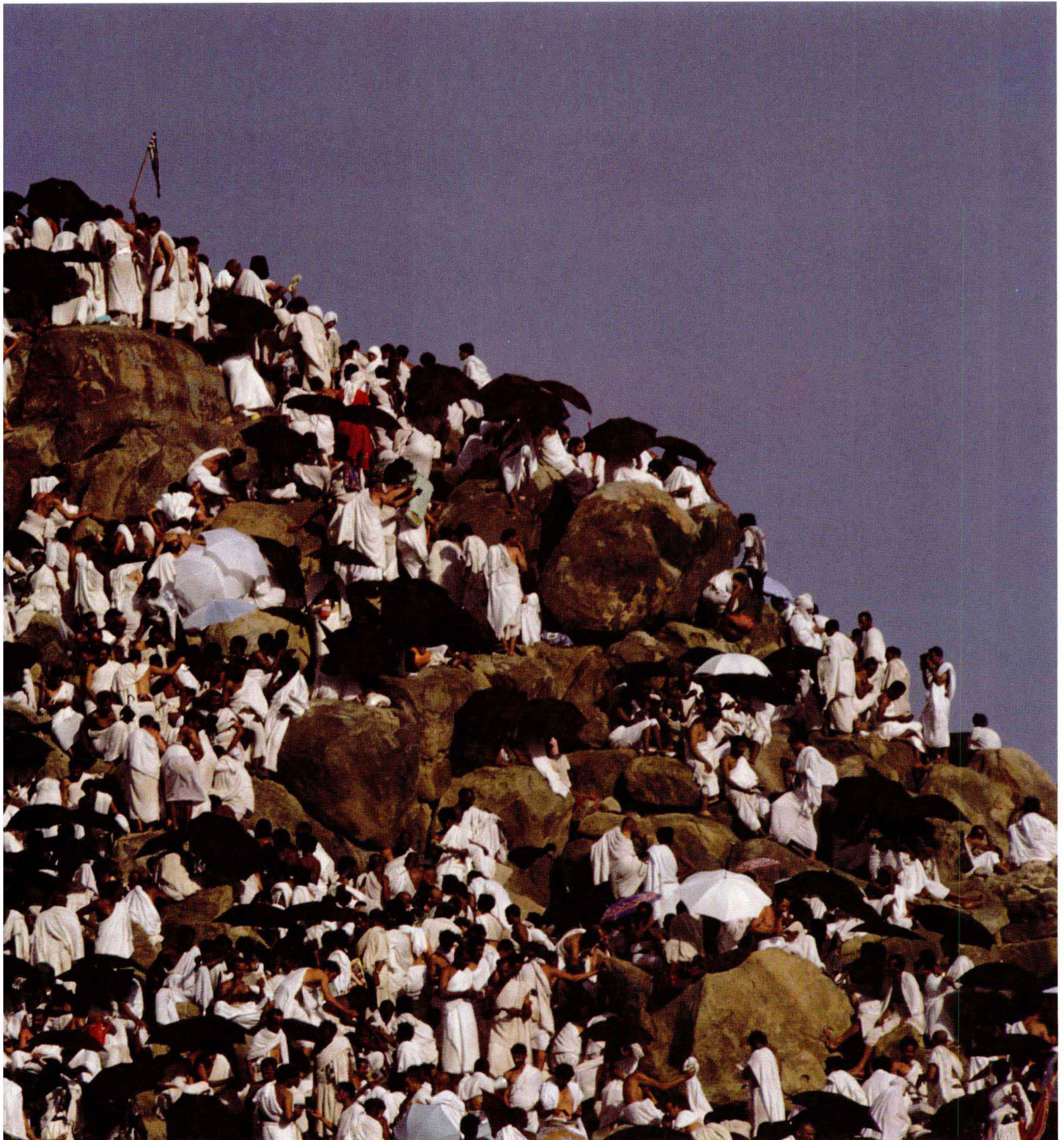


## OBJECT OF THE PILGRIMS' DESIRE

The world's largest religious gathering takes place annually in the ancient Saudi Arabian city of Mecca. Here, hundreds of thousands of pilgrims assemble from as far away as Afghanistan and Uganda, India and Malaysia to complete the *hajj* or Great Pilgrimage. Three quarters of the foreign visitors arrive by air; 20 years ago only 18 per cent did.

In the early years of the Saudi kingdom, taxes levied on the faithful were a major source of government revenue. But with the advent of new riches based on oil, the tax was abolished. By the mid-1970s, the Saudi government was instead spending the equivalent of \$50 million a year to accommodate the influx of pilgrims, receiving only a fraction in return.

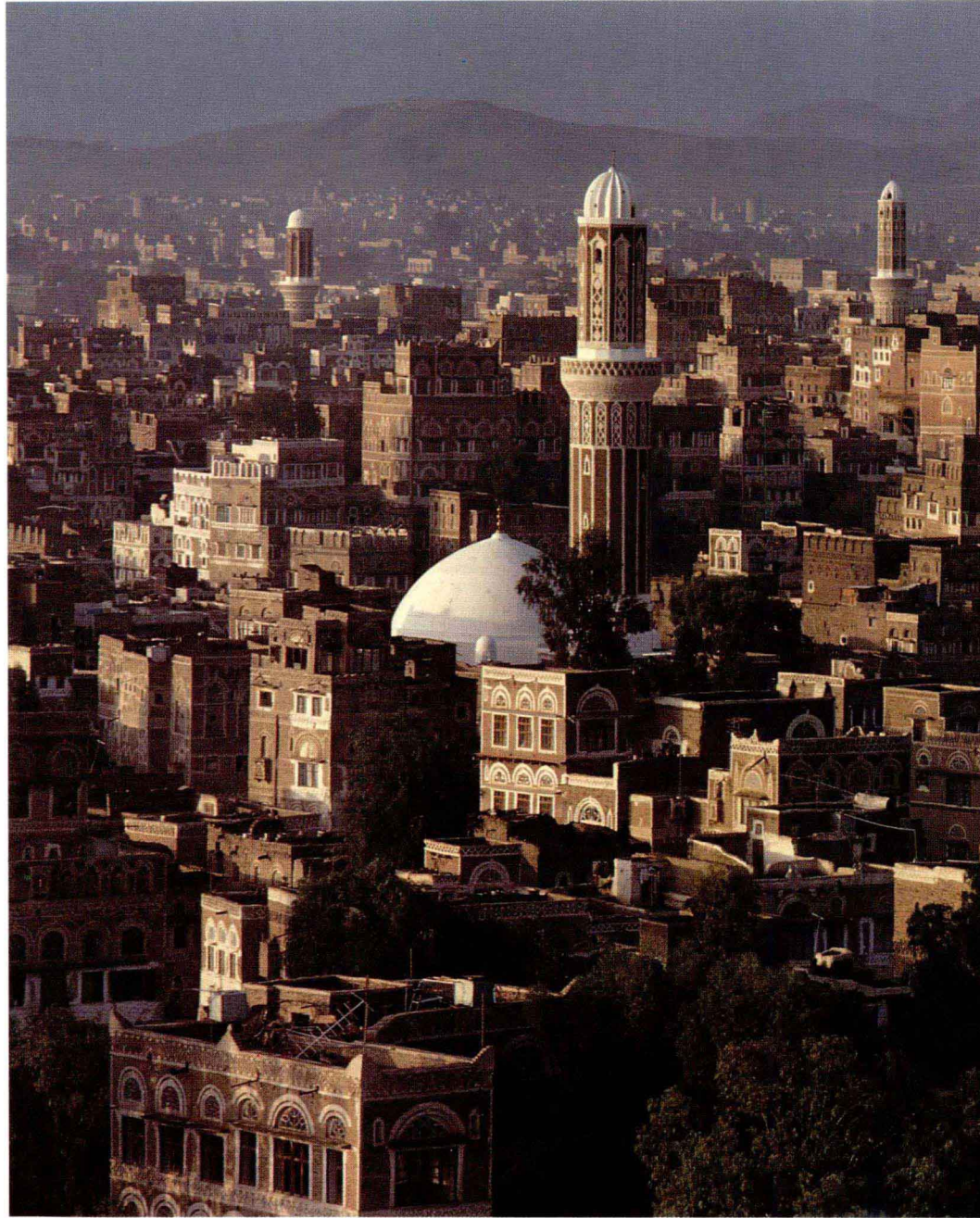
Muslims from all over the world converge on the slopes of Mount Arafat as the climax to the annual Great Pilgrimage to Mecca. Many of them carry umbrellas



for protection against the intense heat.



# 1



Towers of stone and brick rise above the streets of old San'a, capital of North Yemen. The city—whose name means “beautifully built”—is sited on a 2,300-metre-high plain.