

## GEOGRAPHICAL RECORD

### CLARET AND COUSCOUS: THE SYMBOLIC TOWNSCAPE OF A MOROCCAN MOUNTAIN RESORT\*

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Ifrane, a small mountain resort in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco, was constructed by the French colonial administration in the late 1920s. In summer, the surrounding open pastures are lush and green, and the landscape is dotted with stands of cypress. In winter, enough snow falls to give Ifrane the air of a small Alpine ski resort. Ifrane is no ordinary Moroccan town, however. The presence of royal palaces, Morocco's only private university, Al Akhawayn, and houses for the rich built in the style of Alpine chalets set it apart from the surrounding Berber villages. Ifrane symbolizes power, Otherness and dominance that was typical of urban planning during the French Protectorate (1912–1956) and is still echoed today.

The little town of Ifrane, nestling high up in the mountains 60 kilometers from Fez, the historically significant center of Arab learning, is more than just pretty: It is an oddity. Visitors can be fooled into thinking they are somewhere in the foothills of the French Alps. The peaked, red-tiled roofs of the imposing villas look Alpine. Gardens are bedecked with flowering shrubs and ornamental trees reminiscent of Provence. But Ifrane is also a complex bundle of power relations, a window into the dynamics of colonial landscapes. Mediterranean cities in general have long formed a pastiche of Eastern and Western urbanity, blends of European and Islamic economies, values, and lifestyles (Ehlers 2001). Ifrane's intriguing townscape reflects the imprint of French colonial urban planning seventy years ago. The material and discursive inequalities erected then are still present.

The town's geography is further complicated by the gulf between Arabs and Berbers in contemporary Moroccan society: The elite are no longer French colonials, they are Moroccan Arabs. Berbers, who constitute one-third of Morocco's population, have a long history of subjugation and resistance. Their marginalized status complicates the cultural decoding of Ifrane's landscape, revealing that in this case the formerly colonized—the Arabs—have been only too happy to take over the roles abandoned by their French foreign masters.

In this essay we decode Ifrane's complex landscapes in light of contemporary postcolonial theory. We open with comments on the postcolonial turn, noting its Anglocentric bias, then turn to the historical context that underpins Ifrane's distinctive social segmentation, including Arab and French rule. Finally, we focus on

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