

president of the Khaldūniyya School. His presidency saw the introduction of important reforms aimed at modernising Arabic-language education. During this period, Ibn 'Āshūr grew increasingly close to nationalist circles. He was especially supportive of Salah Ben Youssef (Ṣāliḥ b. Yūsuf, d. 1961), a leader of the Tunisian national movement with whom he shared a commitment to pan-Arabism. In 1946, he took part in the so-called Congress of Laylat al-Qadr (thus known because it met on 27 Ramaḍān, which Muslims referred to as "*laylat al-qadr*"), during which anti-colonialists of various ideological stripes signed a document calling for total independence from France. Despite his activism, Habib Bourguiba (al-Ḥabīb Bū Raqība, d. 2000), the main leader of the Neo-Destour nationalist party at the time, remained distrustful of Ibn 'Āshūr, whose promotion of Tunisia's Arab-Islamic identity and his public support of the pan-Arab cause set him apart from the Neo-Destour.

Following the country's independence in 1956, Ibn 'Āshūr was largely co-opted by the Tunisian government. In 1957, in his capacities as Mālikī *mufī* (1953–62), he came out in support of the Personal Status Code introduced by Bourguiba and criticised by the religious elite. In 1961, following a state-led Zaytūna reform that greatly weakened the institution, Ibn 'Āshūr was appointed rector of its new faculty of theology. In 1962 Bourguiba named him *mufī* of the Republic of Tunisia.

As an author, Ibn 'Āshūr's most notable work is his book *al-Ḥaraka al-adabiyya wa-l-fikriyya fi Tūnis* ("The literary and intellectual movement in Tunisia"), considered one of the most important first-hand accounts of intellectual life in colonial Tunisia. Ibn 'Āshūr died in Tunis.

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YOUSSEF BEN ISMAIL

Ibn 'Āshūr, al-Ṭāhir

Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Āshūr (1879–1973) was an Islamic scholar and reformer, Mālikī jurist, Qur'ān exegete, and professor at the Zaytūna University and the Ṣādiqiyya school in Tunis. He held the positions of Mālikī *mufī* (1923–32) and later Mālikī *shaykh al-Islām* (1932–48) of the Regency of Tunis. He is widely considered to be a leading voice of Islamic reform in the first half of the twentieth century. A prolific writer, Ibn 'Āshūr wrote several works on Islamic law, Qur'ānic exegesis, Arabic grammar, and educational reform. He is best known for his influential Qur'ān exegesis, *Tafsīr al-tahṭīr wa-l-tanwīr* ("The exegesis of verification and enlightenment"), as well as for his treatise on Islamic law entitled *Maqāṣid al-sharī'a al-islāmīyya* ("The purposes of Islamic law"). The latter paved the way for a revival of the study of *maqāṣid* in modern Islamic thought.

Ibn 'Āshūr was born in La Marsa, on the outskirts of Tunis, to a prominent Tunisian family of Andalusī descent. He