

**Foundation for Iranian Studies**

**Program of Oral History**

AMIN BANANI

INTERVIEW WITH AMIN BANANI

LOS ANGELES, MAY 1984

INTERVIEWED BY FARZANEH MILANI

COPYRIGHT © 1984 FOUNDATION FOR IRANIAN STUDIES  
All rights reserved. No part of this work may be  
reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means,  
electronic or mechanical, including photocopy and  
recording or by any information storage or retrieval  
system, without permission in writing from the Oral  
History Office, Foundation for Iranian Studies

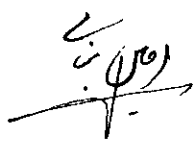
## PREFACE

This manuscript is the product of a series of tape-recorded interviews conducted for the Oral History of Iran Program of Foundation for Iranian Studies by Farzaneh Milani with Amin Banani in Los Angeles, Ca. in May 2, 1984.

Readers of this Oral History memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Foundation for Iranian Studies is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein.

The manuscript may be read, quoted from and cited only by serious research scholars accredited for purposes of research by Foundation for Iranian Studies; and further, this memoir must be read in such place as is made available for purposes of research by Foundation for Iranian Studies. No reproduction of the memoir either in whole or in part may be made by microphoto, typewriter, photostat, or any other device.

اینجانب متن و نوار مصاحبه های انجام شده در ارتباط با برنامه  
" تاریخ شفاهی ایران " را به بنیاد مطالعات ایران هدیه میکنم  
تا در اجرای برنامه های آموزشی و تحقیقاتی بنیاد مورد استفاده قرار  
گیرد.



ملاحظات :

\_\_\_\_\_ مصاحبه شونده

\_\_\_\_\_ مصاحبه کننده

\_\_\_\_\_ تاریخ

موضوع نوار :

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Dr. Amin Banani was born to a Bahaii family in Tehran, Iran in 1926. He received his early education in Iran, first in a Bahaii school and subsequently in a Zoroastrian institution. Upon the completion of his high school education in 1943, Dr. Banani left Iran for the United States. He continued his higher education first in northern California, and later at Columbia University in New York. Dr. banani is a professor at University of California at Los Angeles. He is an authority on Iranian history, politics of the Qajar period, and the Bahaii faith and its followers in Iran.

CONTENTS      INTERVIEW #1      AMIN BANANI

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Biographical background, recollections of the Tarbiyat school and Bahaii education, the closing down of Bahaii schools by the government, first experience of limitations faced as a Bahaii	1-2
Family history, memories of education in a Zoroastrian school, on growing up as a Bahaii, on religion and religious education in the educational system of the time	2-4
Views on the encounter of religions in the classroom, problems of a Bahaii adolescent and the subsequent psychological effects. On Bahaii upbringing and sense of excellence	5-7
Bahaii ethics and the religious education of it to Bahaii children; response to Kasravi et al 's criticisms of Bahaii texts	7-9
Reminiscences of a childhood trip to Qom, and other trips across Iran, observations on Bahaii sense of community and Bahaii consciousness	9-10
Bahaii view of <u>taqiyyah</u> (dissimulation), and problems of confession of faith	10-11
Bahaii belief in ecumenicalism and the faith's practice of exclusionism, and the reason for this practice	12
The Bahaii cemetery	13-14
On his decision to leave Iran for the U.S. Early impressions of racism in America. On the prejudice which Iranians harbor against various religions and especially the Bahaiis	14-18
Implications of the Bahaii faith for Shi'ism. Bahaiism as a world faith and a universal mode of thought and life	18-19
Statistical and demographic characteristics of Bahaiism in Iran	19-20
On the possible effects of the policies of the Islamic Republic on the Bahaii faith and its various organizations	21-23
On Qurat ul-'Ayn, origins of Bahaiism, Kasravi's hypothesis concerning the emergence of Bahaiism	23-24

CONTENTS     INTERVIEW #1     AMIN BANANI

<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
On absence of dialogue between Shi'ism and Bahaiism. On conversion of Shi'ite <u>'Ulema</u> to Bahaiism	25-26
Essential virtues of Bahaiism	26
Future of Bahaiism in Iran	27
The controversy of Mayor Bradley's Nowruz message for Los Angeles Bahais. On the Bahaii contribution to the spread of Persian culture	27-28
Bahaii <u>Mahfels</u> (gatherings), the organizational structure of the Bahaii community, role of women in Bahaiism, election for the <u>Mahfels</u> , various religious-social public functions of the community	29-32
Prince Dalgurki's memoirs' validity and historical significance	32-34
Alleged connection of Bahaiism to international imperialism, and accusations of espionage	34-35
On Bahaii involvement in the politics of the Pahlavi era and its implication for the faith. On charges of Hoveyda, Nasiri, Rohani, Parsa, Sabeti, and Rasekh's connections to the Bahaii community	35-37
On the allegation of communalism in Bahaiism especially with regard to women. Qurat ul-'Ayn and the Bedasht incident	38

BANANI, AMIN

Name	Page
Abbas Effendi ('Abdol-Baha'),	7,8,9
Bab, Mirza 'Ali Mohammad Shirazi,	3,33
Baha'ollah, Mirza Hosein 'Ali Nuri,	7,18,23,25,29,30, 33,39
Boyer Ahmadi Tribe,	20
Bradley,	27-28
Darabi, Seyyed Yahya,	25
Esfahani, Haj Mohammad Reza,	3
Golpayegani, Mirza Abolfazl,	25
Hekmat, 'Ali Asghar,	2
Hoveyda, Amir 'Abbas,	35-37
Kasravi, Ahmad,	23
Mirza Yahya Nuri,	33
Mo'tameddodowleh, Manuchehr,	9,10
Nasiri, General Ne'matollah,	36,37
Occupation of Iran of 1941,	14
Parsa, Farrokhru,	37
Qorratole'yn,	23,38,39
Rasekh, Shapur,	37
Rashti, Seyyed Kazem,	23
Rowhani, Mansur,	37
Sabeti, Parviz,	37
Tadayyon,	4