

chapters entitled “Ferdowsi and the Art of Tragic Epic” in *Islam and its Cultural Divergence* (1971); “The Conversion of a Self-Conscious Elite” in *Individualism and Conformity in Classical Islam* (1977); “Ahmad Kasravi and Purification of Persian: A Study in Nationalist Motivation” in *Nation and Ideology* (1982); and “Rumi, The Poet” in *Mysticism and Poetry in Islam* (1988). His collaborative translation with Jascha Kessler of the poetry of Forough Farrokhzad was published in 1982 under the title *Bride of Acacias*. The same collaborative effort in 2005 yielded a beautiful volume of translation of the poems of Tahereh, the nineteenth century heroine of the Bábí movement, who sounded the clarion call of emancipation of women and equality of rights of men and women, entitled *Tahereh: A Portrait in Poetry*.

420

Lights of Irfán vol. 15

In the course of more than thirty years of teaching at UCLA he laid the foundation of a broad and integrated program of Iranian Studies culminating in establishment of the first Undergraduate Major in Iranian Studies at any American university.

Amin Banani served on the Board of Directors of the Middle East Studies Association of North America, the Executive Council of the Society for Iranian Studies and as Vice President of the American Association of Iranian Studies.

Unlike some academicians who seek their fulfillment exclusively in their academic career, Amin Banani from the beginning led a rich life of service in the Bahá'í community world-wide. His global-level Bahá'í service began in the 1940s, when he accepted assignments to represent the Bahá'í community at a UN conference of nongovernmental organizations and a human rights commission. In the early 1950s he also served as a member of National Bahá'í Youth Committee in the United States.

In 1953 he and his wife, Sheila Wolcott, responded to the call of Shoghi Effendi to move to countries and territories without Bahá'ís. They moved with their first child to Greece, where they spent five years fostering the beginnings of the Bahá'í community. His first university teaching post was in Athens with the Overseas Program of the University of Maryland. During this time Amin was called by Shoghi Effendi for further work in the United Nations to protect the rights of Bahá'ís in Iran, ultimately being appointed in 1956 to an international committee for defense of the Faith.

After the family's return to the United States in 1958, the National Spiritual Assembly appointed Amin at various times, from the 1960s through the 2000s, to serve on the Community

Development Committee, Publishing Committee, Persian
Reviewing Board and Payam-e-Doost Governing Board. He was
In Memoriam 421

a delegate to the Bahá'í National Convention several times in
the 1950s and 1970s.

Over the years he was elected to Local Spiritual Assemblies
serving Bahá'í communities in California, Greece, Oregon,
Massachusetts and California again. He taught at various
sessions at Bosch, Louhelen and Green Acre Bahá'í schools; of
summer schools in the United States, England, Iran, Ireland,
Italy, Switzerland and Germany; and of the 'Irfán Colloquium.
He was elected to the Bahá'í Assemblies of Palo Alto,
California; Athens, Greece; Portland, Oregon; Cambridge,
Massachusetts; and Santa Monica, California. He made
presentations at the 'Irfán Colloquium sessions held at Bosch
and Louhelen Bahá'í Schools in North America and at Acuto
Center for Bahá'í Studies, Italy, in Europe. He also taught at
the Bahá'í Summer Schools in the United States, England, Iran,
Ireland, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. From 1980 to 2006 he
served as the Deputy Trustee of Huqúqu'lláh, a global Bahá'í
philanthropic fund.

Amin Banani was a passionate lover of music both eastern
and western, and found much of his spiritual fulfillment in
enjoyment of that art.

He passed away on Sunday, July 28, 2013, in Santa Monica
and is buried in the Woodlawn Cemetery, Santa Monica.

The Universal House of Justice in a message of tribute
praising Amin Banani's services says:

Whether in the pioneering or administrative fields, he
served with distinction — a service that was ever
characterized by humility and self-effacement. ... [W]e
recall with heartfelt admiration and gratitude his staunch
and effective defense of the Faith, the signal
contributions he made to the advancement of both
Bahá'í and Iranian studies, and his twenty-six years of
service to the institution of Huqúqu'lláh. In all respects,

422 Lights of Irfán vol. 15

his was a life that exemplified unwavering devotion to
the Cause and abiding commitment to its high ideals.

NOTE

For more information on the life history and academic achievements of
Professor Amin Banani see Professor Ehsan Yarshater's article on Amin
Banani, *Journal of Iranian Studies*, Vol. 47, 2014.