



## DREYFUS-BARNEY

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**DREYFUS-BARNEY**, joint surname adopted by two leading Bahai figures of the 20th century.

*i. Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney.*

*ii. Laura Clifford Dreyfus-Barney.*

### i. HIPPOLYTE DREYFUS-BARNEY

Hippolyte Dreyfus (b. Paris, 12 April 1873, d. Paris, 20 December 1928), son of a prominent French Jewish family, became a leading Bahai scholar, translator, and religious teacher. He received a degree in law from the Institut des Sciences Politiques in Paris and practiced before the Paris court of appeals. He was converted to the Bahai faith in about 1900 by May Ellis Bolles (later Maxwell), a Canadian living in Paris. In 1903 he was able to visit the Bahai leader 'Abd-al-Bahā' in 'Akkā' in Palestine. At about the same time he gave up his legal career to devote himself to oriental studies, enrolling in the religious-studies section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris, where he studied Arabic and Persian with Hartwig Derenbourg and Clément Huart, intending to translate Bahai scripture into French. He was the only Western Bahai of his generation who received such formal training.

In 1904 Dreyfus went to India and Burma to visit Bahai communities there. In



the following year he met Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (1313-24/1896-1907) in Paris and urged him to intervene to protect the Persian Bahais. Also in 1904 he visited Bahais in many Persian cities, as well as in the Caucasus and Turkestan, where he visited the large community in [Ashkhabad](#).

Dreyfus' first major translation was Bahā'-Allāh's *Ketāb-e īqān* (Book of certitude; Paris, 1904). He also published *Le babisme et le béhaïsme* (Paris, 1904), a lecture that he had delivered on 1 March 1904 at the École des Hautes Études Sociales. More influential was his later publication *Essai sur le béhaïsme* (Paris, 1909; 3rd ed. published as *Bahaïsme*), the first "handbook" on the faith, in which he dealt with the the history of the Babi and Bahai religions and such questions as religion and the state, universal peace, Bahaism and society, the house of justice, Bahaism and the individual, and the Bahai faith and patriotism. In 1905-06 he and Ḥabīb-Allāh Šīrāzī published a collection of Bahā'-Allāh's writings entitled *Les préceptes du Béhaïsme* (2 vols., Paris, 1905-06), which included *Haft wādī* (The seven valleys), *Kalemat-e maknūna* (The hidden words), *Lawḥ-e ḥekmat* (Tablet of wisdom), *Lawḥ-e aqdas* (The most holy tablet), and several other works. In 1907-09 Dreyfus collaborated with the American Bahai Laura Clifford Barney (see ii, below) on the publication of Persian, French, and English editions of the answers of 'Abd-al-Bahā' to philosophical and theological questions that she had put to him (published as *Mofāwāzāt-e mobāraka*, *Les leçons de Saint Jean d'Acre*, and *Some Answered Questions* respectively). In later years he translated several more of Bahā'-Allāh's books: *al-Ketāb al-aqdas* and *So'āl o jawāb* (both unpublished), *Lawḥ-e Šayk* (Paris, 1913), and a three-volume collection of Bahā'-Allāh's works containing his own earlier translations and some new ones (Paris, 1923-28). He also published a number of books and scholarly articles on Bahai topics.

In 1911 he married Barney, and both took the surname Dreyfus-Barney. In the same year he served as translator when 'Abd-al-Bahā' visited Paris. The Dreyfus-Barneys continued their travels, visiting China and French Indochina in 1914. During World War I Hippolyte worked as a postal censor in Marseilles. In 1920 the couple once again visited Southeast Asia.

Dreyfus-Barney was greatly respected by 'Abd-al-Bahā', who encouraged him in his travels and relied on him in various delicate matters. When 'Abd-al-Bahā' died in November 1921 the Dreyfus-Barneys were among those summoned to Haifa by the new leader, Shoghi Effendi Rabbānī. Hippolyte made use of his legal and linguistic skills to represent the Bahais in conflicts



involving the status of the Bahai shrines in Palestine, the seizure of Bahā'-Allāh's house in Baghdad, and the persecution of the Bahais of Egypt (1925-27).

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### ii. LAURA CLIFFORD DREYFUS-BARNEY

Laura Clifford Barney (b. Cincinnati, O., 30 November 1879, d. Paris, 18 August 1974) became a leading American Bahai teacher and philanthropist. The daughter of Albert and Alice Pike Barney, a socially prominent artist from Washington, D.C., she was educated by private tutors. While continuing her studies in Paris Laura met May Ellis Bolles (later Maxwell), a Canadian Bahai, and was converted to the faith in about 1900. Her mother was converted soon afterward.

Laura Barney financed the visit of the Persian Bahai scholar Mīrzā [Abu'l-Faḥr Golpāyagānī](#) to the United States in 1901-04, in order to propagate the faith



there, and helped to publish the translation of his *Ḥojaj al-bahīya* (Cairo, 1342/1925; tr. Ali-Kuli Khan as *The Bahá'í Proofs*, New York, 1902; 2nd ed., ed. J. R. I. Cole, Wilmette, Ill., 1983). In 1904 she visited 'Abd-al-Bahā' in 'Akkā', Palestine, where she remained about two years, acquiring a working knowledge of Persian and becoming an intimate of his household. During that time she arranged to have 'Abd-al-Bahā's answers to her questions, mainly on philosophy and Christian theology, recorded by his secretaries. She collaborated with her future husband, Hippolyte Dreyfus (see i, above), on the editing and translation of this work (*al-Nūr al-abhā fīmofāwazāt 'Abd-al-Bahā'*, Leiden, 1908; tr. L. C. Barney and H. Dreyfus as *Some Answered Questions*, London, 1908; tr. H. Dreyfus as *Les leçons de Saint Jean d'Acre*, Paris, 1909). In 1905-06 she visited Persia, the Caucasus, and Russia with Dreyfus. After their marriage in April 1911, when they both adopted the surname Dreyfus-Barney, she traveled extensively with him.

During World War I Laura Dreyfus-Barney served in the American Ambulance Corps (1914-15) and the American Red Cross (1916-18) in France and helped to establish the first children's hospital in Avignon (1918). The remainder of her life was devoted to international humanitarian and philanthropic activities, most connected with the League of Nations and the United Nations. For her services she was named *chevalier* (1925) and *officier* (1937) of the French Légion d'Honneur. There is a copy of her unpublished memoirs in the Bahai national archives in France.

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