



# Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture

مرکز مطالعات ایران‌شناسی سمونل جردن  
دانشگاه کالیفرنیا، ارواین

## SAMUEL JORDAN CENTER IN THE NEWS

### Becoming a Campus Center

On January 1, 2009 the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture became a campus center. The new designation provides links to all Schools at UCI. As part of the application, the Center's past performance and proposed research project were reviewed by four external referees who provided enthusiastic and unanimous support for the creation of a campus center. As a result, the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture has received three years of research funding from the Office of Vice-Chancellor Research for a project dedicated to the study of the function and impact of the sciences on the articulation of modern Iranian cultural identity.

This project will work across the boundaries of disciplines to be able to engage the range of ideas that have shaped modern Iranian cultural identity. While the role of language, literature, and the arts has been most frequently examined, little research has been devoted to how the turn to modern sciences has affected the conceptualization of both history and culture.

### Voice of America Coverage

In the month of May, Voice of America television program ran a two part series on the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture. The programs can be seen by visiting these links:

Part 1:

[www.youtube.com/watchv=YD081Mmw3i0&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watchv=YD081Mmw3i0&feature=channel_page)

Part 2:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0nVovQS3JQ&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0nVovQS3JQ&feature=channel_page)



Volume 1—Spring 2009

## LECTURES, CONFERENCES and WORKSHOPS

### LECTURES

#### Shahnameh: The Book of Kings Lectures

The Center began Fall 2008 with an exciting lectures series by one of the most renowned scholars in the field of Persian epic. The lectures were entitled *Shahnameh: Lectures on Iran's National Epic* by Dr. Mahmoud Omidshahar (JFK Memorial Library, CSULA). The lectures began on October 7<sup>th</sup> and ended on December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2008. These talks were sponsored by Mr. Farhad Shah-Hosseini. The lectures were as follows:

October 7th: An Epic's Journey: *Shahnameh* Through the Ages

October 14th: The Man in the Myths

October 28th: *Shahnameh* and the Presumptive Authority of the West

November 4th: An Epic Unity: The Case Against Under-analysis

November 18th: Oedipus in Mazandaran

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## ***LECTURES Continued***

November 25th: Siblings Rivalry: The Hero Pattern and the Life of the Kaykhosrow

December 2nd: Killing and Demons, Deposing Kings

December 9th: Of Lusting and Ousting: Capture of Women as Castration Metaphor

### **Mohamad Ali Forughi and Iranian Liberalism**

On January 25, 2009 the Samuel Jordan Center in collaboration with the UCI Center for Ethnography invited Dr. Ramin Jahanbegloo, the well-known Iranian-Canadian philosopher to deliver a lecture on one of the cultural architects of the early twentieth-century Iran, Mohamad Ali Forughi.

### **At Home in Persepolis: The Politics of Archeology**

On March 31, 2009 Professor Lindsay Allen of King's College, London presented a fascinating talk entitled "At Home in Persepolis: Occupying an Archaeological Site Place." The talk revolved around the history of those who excavated at the ancient Persian capital and the politics of archeology and Orientalism in Iran.

### **Iranian Wall Paintings in Ancient Khawarazmia**

On May 4, 2009 Dr. Fiona Kidd, from the University of Sydney, gave a presentation entitled "The Kazakly-yatkan Wall paintings: colour, display and the visual construction of authority in an elite pre-Islamic Iranian context Place." She discussed the recent archeological work she has undertaken in Uzbekistan where a large number of wall paintings were discovered.



## ***CONFERENCES***

### **Apocalypse as History in Iran and Beyond**

On October 29, 2008 the Center co-sponsored a roundtable with the UC Irvine History Department entitled: "Apocalypse as History: the Near East and Beyond A One-Day Conference on Eschatological Tradition in Ancient Cultures". The speakers included: Tom Sizgorich (UC Irvine) "The History of the Future: Narrative, Community and the End of All Things in the Late Ancient Near East;" Ra'anan Boustan (UCLA); "The Temple Vessels in Early Byzantine Apocalyptic: Jewish Counter-Geography in a Christianizing Empire;" Maged Mikhail (CSUF) "Reclaiming Coptic and Copto-Arabic Apocalyptic Texts as Historical Narratives;" Touraj Daryaee (UC Irvine) "The Zoroastrian Apocalypse as History," and Rachel Sarah O'Toole (UC Irvine), "Colonial Sins, Disastrous Floods, and Mythic Accounts in 16th Century Coastal Peru." The discussant for the panel was: James Given (UC Irvine).

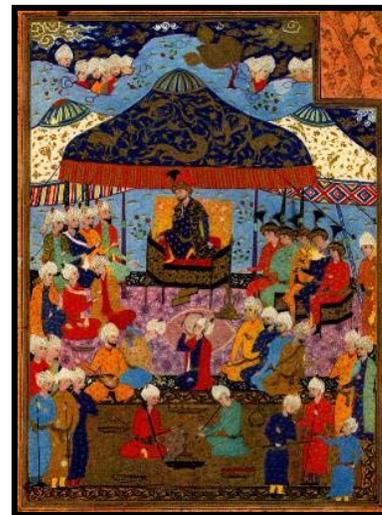
### **Exploring Iran: Emerging Scholarship in Iranian Studies**

On February 14<sup>th</sup>, the Center hosted a one-day conference entitled: Exploring Iran: Emerging Scholarship in Iranian Studies. More than twenty participants presented their work in five panels on various aspects of Iranian Studies, from modern Persian literature to anthropological work to ancient and modern history and religious tradition. This multidisciplinary conference provided an occasion for Iranian Studies scholars to become familiar with each other's work and to discuss new ways of studying the Iranian world.

The program began with introductory remarks by Nasrin Rahimieh (UC Irvine)

PANEL 1 -

Literature, Self and the Nation: Chair: Jasmin Rostam-Kolayi (CSUF History); Discussant: Fariba Taghavi (Long Beach State Political



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Political Science); Amy Tahani-Bidmeshki (UCLA Comparative Literature) “Birth of a New Nation: The Emergence of the ‘New Man’ in Six Post-WWII African American and Iranian Novels”; Shervin Emami (UCLA Near Eastern Languages and Cultures) “The Idea of Secularism in Persian Literature: From Hedayat to Al-e Ahamad”; Sharareh Frouzesh Bennett (UCI Comparative Literature) “Imagining Resistance: Guilt in the Literature of the Iranian Revolution”; Leila Pazargadi (UCLA Comparative Literature) “The Womb of the Universe: Figuring Woman as the Nation in Goli Taraghi’s *Khaneyī dar Āsemān*”.

PANEL 2 - The Cleric, the Intellectual, and Modern Life: Chair: Arash Khazeni (Claremont McKenna College History); Discussant: Afshin Matin-Asgari (CSULA History & Religious Studies); Philip Grant (UCI Anthropology) “Intellectuals as Translators: the Travails of the New Age”; Ali M. Meghdadi (UCI Comparative Literature) “Persistent Threshold: Iran’s Traumatized Stasis”; Janet A. Alexanian (UCI Anthropology) “Contested visions: Iranian cultural production in transnational fields”; Mateo Farzaneh (UCSB History) “Akhund Khorasani and the Turning Point in Shi’ite Jurisprudence.”

PANEL 3 - Economy, Archaeology in Late Antique Iran: Chair: Touraj Daryaee (UCI History); Discussant: Ali Mousavi (Los Angeles County Museum of Art); Reza Yeganeh (UCI History); “Environmental Decline in Mesopotamia and Khuzistan & the Muslim Conquest”; Alan Farahani (UCB Archaeology); “Rethinking Agricultural Intensification in Early Sasanian Iran”; Khodadad Rezakhani (UCLA History); “Economy and Archaeology of Southwestern Iran, AD 500-700.”

PANEL 4 - Psychoanalysis, Genealogy and of Gender: Chair: Martin Schwartz (UCB Near Eastern Studies); Discussant: Yuhan Vevaina (Harvard Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations); Warren Soward (UCI History Department) “Psychoanalytic Insights into Scatological Creation Myths in the Iranian Tradition”; Haleh Emrani (UCLA History Department) “Challenges facing the historians of Women in Late Sasanian Empire.”

PANEL 5 - Translating Middle Persian Texts: How can we Learn from other Traditions? (Round Table Discussion) Mathew W. Stolper (University of Chicago, the Oriental Institute); Touraj Daryaee (UCI History); Martin Schwartz (UCB Near Eastern Studies); Nasrin Rahimieh (UCI Comparative Literature); Yuhan Vevaina (Harvard Near Eastern Languages and Civilization); Hossein Ziai (UCLA Near Eastern Language & Cultures); Closing Remarks by Touraj Daryaee.

## **WORKSHOPS**

On May 8th, 2009 a workshop entitled *The Politics and Ethics of Translation* was held in conjunction with the Maseeh Chair Endowment, the International Center for Writing and Translation, and the Department of Comparative Literature at UCI. The program began with welcomes offered by Nasrin Rahimieh, Director of the Samuel Jordan Center, followed by a brief presentation, “Translation in the History of Ideas”, by Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, Director of the International Center for Writing and Translation.

### PANEL 1 - Poetics of Cultural Translation in the Arab World

Moderator: Jeffrey Sacks, Comparative Literature and Foreign Languages, UC Riverside; Nahrain Al-Mousawi, Comparative Literature, UCLA “Translational Tactics in ‘Arab’ Literature”; Awad Awad, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, UCLA “On Translating Arabic: Cultural Considerations”; David Bennett, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, UCLA “Fragments”; Gaelle Raphael, Comparative Literature, UCI; “Translating Works published in the Arab World: in the absence of editors editing imposes itself.”

PANEL 2 - Respecting Rumi: The Impossible Translation? Moderator: Jane Newman, Comparative Literature, UCI; Kristen Anthony, Comparative Literature, UCI; “West African Hybridity in Translation”; Anna Guercio, Comparative Literature, UCI “Getting our Bearings: The Perpetual Binaries of Literary Translation”; Ali Meghdadi, Comparative Literature, UCI “Transposing Translation”; Mark Pangilinan, Comparative Literature, UCI “Translating Babel: Reading Survival in Borges’ *La Biblioteca de Babel*.”

PANEL 3 - Translation as Performance: Iran in Question: Moderator: Touraj Daryaee, History, UCI; Sharareh Frouzesh Bennett, Comparative Literature, UCI; “Staging Authenticity in the ‘Translation’ of Culture: A Few Thoughts on Iranian Diasporic Memoir Production”; Philip Grant, Anthropology, UCI “Language Deformed and Transformed”; Mohammad Marandi, English Literature and Department of North American Studies, University of Tehran; “Translating Iran”: Nasrin Rahimieh, Comparative Literature, UCI “Translating Literature, Translating the Self”; Closing Remarks by Nasrin Rahimieh.



## SCREENING

### *Rumi Returning: The Triumph of Divine Passion*



In May 2009 there was a screening of a film entitled *Rumi Returning: The Triumph of Divine Passion*. This documentary was made by two American filmmakers, Cynthia Lukas and Kell Kearns. After the screening the filmmakers took questions and discussed their next project on Iranian culture and poetry and their hope to be able to show *Rumi Returning* in Iran.

The screening was sponsored by the Center and Nasrin Rahimieh received credit in the film. This is another example of collaboration between documentary filmmaking industry and scholars affiliated with the Center.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH



*Dr. Nasrin Rahimieh*

Professor Nasrin Rahimieh, Maseeh Chair and Director of the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture, taught a four-week course at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute this spring on Forugh Farrokhzad's poetry and documentary film.

Professor Touraj Daryaei, Howard C. Baskerville Professor and Associate Director of the Center, gave a talk at the Newport Beach Rotary Club on Persian Studies and the Samuel Jordan Center in April, 2009.



*Dr. Touraj Daryaei*



## CENTER PUBLICATIONS

### Persian Translation Series & Sasanian Iran Series

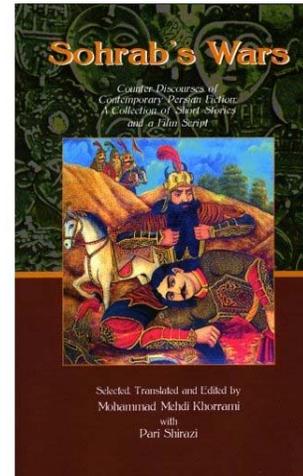
The Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture and the Mazda Publishers have begun a collaboration to publish two new book series. The first is a Translation Series under the direction of Nasrin Rahimieh and the second is Sasanika under the direction of Touraj Daryaee.

#### Translation Series

The first volume in this series is by Mohammad Mehdi Khorrami.

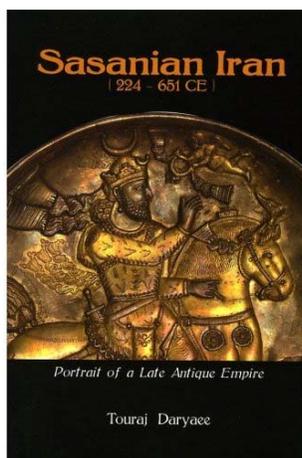
*Sohrab's Wars Counter-Discourses of Contemporary Persian Fiction: A Collection of Short Stories and a Film Script*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, 2008.

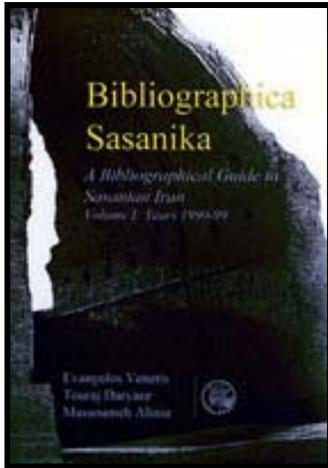
Iran's literary production of the past century presents unprecedented riches, especially in works of fiction. Through their construction of extremely personal and individual narratives, many of these works have led to the puncturing of the grand narratives of the official discourse and have effectively succeeded in defining different times and spaces according to their own image. The stories in this collection are among the best literary productions of contemporary Persian fiction. The authors, all of whom are quite established, skillfully use literary devices to create new realities which do not conform to any regulations and limitations imposed by prevalent discourses. These literary realities embody signs and codes which challenge the calcified narratives and definitions of subjective and objective territories. The authors included Reza Julai, Farkhondeh Hajizadeh, Marjan Riahi, Mohammad Asef Soltanzadeh, Shahriar Mandanipour, Bijan Najdi, Bahram Sadeqi, and Bahram Beyzai.



#### Sasanian Iran Series: Sasanika

The first volume in the Sasanika series was published by Touraj Daryaee and is entitled: *Sasanian Iran (224-651 CE): The Portrait of a Late Antique Empire*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, 2008. The Sasanian era (224-651 CE) is an important period in the history of the Near East, the Caucuses and Central Asian history. Some of the basic institutions and ideas that developed in the ancient Near East passed to the Sasanian Iran and through the Sasanians it became the foundation of later Islamic civilization. Interestingly, the importance and contribution of Sasanian civilization to Near Eastern and Islamic history is underestimated and little attention is paid to it. This volume provides detailed survey of Sasanian political history in the context of Near Eastern history, taking into consideration its relation with Rome and surrounding world.

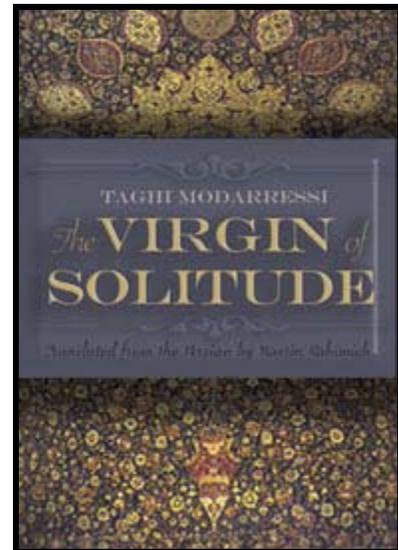




The second volume of the Sasanika series is a collaborative effort to publish a comprehensive bibliography of the Sasanian Empire. The book is entitled: *Bibliographica Sasanika: A Bibliographical Guide to Sasanian Iran. Volume I: Years 1990-99*, Mazda Publishers, Costa Mesa, 2009, by Evangelos Venetis, Touraj Daryaee and Massoumeh Alinia.

### Other Publications by Jordan Persian Center Affiliates

Taghi Modarressi and Nasrin Rahimieh, *The Virgin of Solitude*, Modern Middle East Literature in Translation Series, Syracuse University Press, 2008. The novel is set in Iran on the eve of revolution, Modarressi's posthumously published final novel is a closely observed study of estrangement, telling the parallel stories of teenage Nuri, a blond, blue-eyed Iranian, and his Austrian grandmother, who has lived in Tehran for decades. Feeling like a stranger wherever he goes, Nuri envies his grandmother's capacity for, as he describes it, "finding a sense of familiarity in the face of alienation." His dream is to join his mother in New York, where she has been living since the death of her husband and where his indulgent grandmother feels he belongs. His grandfather, a prominent senator, is not so sure. But revolution is in the air, and dramatic changes are in store for Nuri and his family. Modarressi, an Iranian American who died in 1997, was married to novelist Anne Tyler, who oversaw the translation of this ambitious novel.



**Touraj Daryaee**, *Sasanian Persia, The Rise and Fall of an Empire*, [International Library of Iranian Studies](#), IB Tauris, London, 2009. The Sasanians were the last of the ancient Persian dynasties, and the largest empire to espouse Zoroastrianism, before the encounter with the Arabs swept away the pre-Islamic institutions. Daryaee attempts to provide a portrait of the empire's often neglected social history, exploring the development of political and administrative institutions from foundation by Ardashir I to the last king, Yazdegerd III, and the attempts of his descendants to re-establish a second state for almost a century after.



## GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

**Sharareh Frouzesh Bennett** is a third year Comparative Literature student at the University of California, Irvine. She works primarily on modern Persian and apartheid South African literatures, with an emphasis on continental philosophy and critical theory. Her dissertation project has to do with theories of culpability and guilt and their relationship to the rhetoric and representation of resistance.

**Philip Grant** is a Ph.D. student in anthropology. He is currently conducting ethnographic fieldwork with Iranian women's activists in southern California. His work focuses on the possibility of new, secular forms of ethics emerging in the practices of these activists. He seeks to understand the character of these new forms of ethical life, and what relation they bear to the activists' upbringing in the Islamic Republic, and more generally to the changing nature of political and social agency in the history of modern Iran, including the way in which this agency has been gendered. In this regard he is also exploring the issue of translation as both an important practice of Iranian activists and intellectuals, and as a metaphor for understanding the transnational power dynamics within which they operate.

**Conrad Harter** is a first year graduate student in the History Department Ph.D. program, and is interested in *Shahnama* and the historical context of its composition in the reigns of the Samanid and Ghaznavid dynasties. He has lately been attempting to study the *Shahnama* from the perspective of intellectual history and hopes to delve deeper into some of the Middle Persian sources of information on pre-Islamic Iran, as well as learn more about the influence of Ferdowsi's epic on later periods.

**Ali Maghdadi** passed his M.A. review in the Department of Comparative Literature. Much of his work explores the relationship between American expatriate writing and works by Iranian exiles. Maghdadi's aim is the study and advancement of communication technologies between the East and the West with a particular focus on the theology that informs these cultures.

**Sara Mashayekh** is currently an MA student of Ancient Iranian History at the UCI, working on the genealogy of the founder of the Sasanian dynasty and Middle Persian epic. She plans to compare and contrast the Middle Persian material with that of the later Arabic and Persian historiographical to better understand the construction of genealogy in the Iranian world.

**Warren Soward** is a Ph.D. student in history working on pre-modern Iranian history and literature. His interest is in the interaction between texts and history in the Sasanian and the early Islamic period and the literary trappings and topos in those texts.

**Hamid Reza Yeganeh** is working on his Ph.D. in Environmental History of the Iran in Late Antiquity and Medieval period, as well as World History. His particular interest is the issue of hydrology, plague and land use in pre-modern Iran. He is attempting to use scientific and historical methodology and information to study the seventh century collapse of the Sasanian Empire.



## ALBORZ AUDITORIUM CHALLENGE NEWS!

We are excited to announce the creation of the "**Alborz Auditorium**" at the University of California, Irvine. Inspired by the legacy of Alborz High School as a model of modern education in Iran, the Alborz Auditorium will be housed adjacent to the Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture in the new state-of-the-art Humanities Gateway building, to be opened in September 2009. The cost of this naming opportunity is \$150,000 and donations to the auditorium will support scholarships and fellowships for students with interests in Persian Studies as well as programs and operations of the Center.

To support and kick-start this campaign the Massiah Foundation launched a challenge grant to raise \$50,000 in the initial campaign month (by May 19, 2009) with the promise to match all donations of \$1,000 or more one-to-one. **We are thrilled to announce this challenge was met and matched!** (With the match we are \$100,000 closer to our goal.)

All of this was achieved within a month. To recognize contributors, the Alborz Challenge campaign planned 10 recognition plaques for \$5,000 donors and 50 for \$1,000 donors to be permanently displayed on a wall of Alborz Auditorium. Donors at the \$500+ level will be listed on the Samuel Jordan Center web site. Most of the \$5,000 plaques are committed as are a number of \$1,000 plaques.

**Our initial goal is accomplished and the momentum continues.** Now UCI and the Massiah Foundation propose to finish raising the final \$50,000 by June 19, 2009.

The Alborz Auditorium is named after the Alborz high school in Tehran, Iran, which is named after a mountain range in northern Iran. The school was founded as an elementary school in 1873 by a group of American missionaries. In 1898, under the presidency of Dr. Samuel M. Jordan, the school grew from an elementary school to a famous and respected high school and became known as the American College of Tehran. Its graduates are known to take on roles of power and influence in universities, corporations and government.

Donations may be made in the following categories:

**\$5,000 Donor:** Donor name on wall plaque of auditorium (availability is limited), website recognition and calendar of events of Jordan Center for Persian Studies.

**\$1,000 Donor:** Donor name on wall plaque of auditorium (availability is limited) website recognition and calendar of events of Jordan Center for Persian Studies.

**\$500 Donor:** Website recognition and calendar of events of Jordan Center for Persian Studies.

**Donations at all levels are appreciated!** Be sure to check for corporate matching and remember all donations are tax deductible.

Donations in support of the auditorium may be made:

1. **By check** payable to:

"The UCI Foundation" (Please write Alborz Auditorium Challenge in the memo).

Please mail your check to:

Humanities Development Office

c/o University of California, Irvine

Attn: Jennifer Smith

Irvine, CA 92697-3376

(949) 824-2923

2. **Online** by visiting [www.persianstudies.uci.edu](http://www.persianstudies.uci.edu)



## Upcoming Conference

Alborz : An International Conference  
Saturday, October 10, 2009  
Crystal Cove Auditorium  
University of California, Irvine  
Sponsored by Samuel Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture



This conference will mark the first scholarly gathering devoted to the history and the cultural legacy of the American/Alborz College. Founded in 1899 by Dr. Jordan as part of a missionary enterprise, the College became the training ground for generations of Iranian intellectuals, scientists, and men of letters. Honoring this founding vision and rich legacy, Dr. Mojtahedi, Jordan's successor, ensured the continued success of the College under his leadership (1944-1979).

Bringing together scholars from across the globe, the conference will explore the history and impact of the American/Alborz College and situate it within Iranian cultural history. It will focus on the fundamental roles of Jordan and Mojtahedi as able and dedicated educators and administrators, the school and society, teaching and teachers, and students and alumni.

Speakers at the conference include: Bahram Bayani, Dr. Houchang Chehabi (Boston College), Dr. Ali Gheissari (University of San Diego), Dr. Homa Katouzian (University of Oxford), Dr. John Lorentz (Shawnee State University), Dr. Thomas M Ricks (Independent Scholar), Kamran Safamanesh, Dr. Farzin Vahdat (Vassar College), Dr. Mehdi S. Zarghamee, and Dr. Michael Zirinski (Boise State University).

The conference will be jointly convened by Homa Katouzian and Nasrin Rahimieh.

