metaphor for this flux of free associations springing from the images of the book and the words written on the blackboard that opens the film. Initially clear of Majidi’s handwriting, the blackboard bears witness to the work of culture. As Tylor, one of the founders of the discipline of anthropology, defined it, the word culture derives from the act of cultivating the soil, suggesting, therefore, the physical and emotive labour by which Sanaz regains possession of the Iran of her parents.

References

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In the Name of the Innovator of the Times and the Places. Dir. Mahmoud Rahmani. 25 mns. 2006.
Recognition (Sheasayi). Dir. Ephraim Asgharzadeh. 3 mns. 2001.
In the Name of God. The Independent Group of Ahwaz Filmmakers. 19 mns. 2006.

The Iran-Iraq War (1980–8) got some press in the West when it was happening, but not much, in part due to accessibility and in part due to a lack of interest. Moreover, as Graeme Wood points out in his review of Pierre Razoux’s book, The Iran-Iraq War (New York Times Sunday Book Review, 29 December 2015), the Western media and scholars from the West have pretty much ignored it ever since. But this is not the case in the two protagonist countries. Both Iran and Iraq suffered stupendous casualties in this long and bitter struggle, and it is still the defining event for those who lived through it.

Pedram Khosronejad, an Iranian born and educated ethnographic filmmaker who has held academic positions in Europe and the United States, posted these and other videos about Iran on the internet and has thus rendered a valuable service both to his compatriots and others who view these works.

The three films under review here all deal with some of the consequences of this conflict, albeit from the very personal perspectives of several survivors. None of the productions try to address the war in a large sense; rather, each profiles a few individuals and the impact of the war on their lives. All focus on people living in Iran near the Iran-Iraq border, a desolate and ravished place: a desert area, now almost completely devastated as a consequence of the fighting that took place there in the 1980s, with hundreds, if not thousands, of date palms reduced to dry rotting trunks.
after fires burned away their crowns; villagers in ruined houses gutted and pock-marked by bullets and artillery shells; families grieving their dead and maimed. It is an ugly picture.

In the Name of the Innovator of the Times and the Places profiles a man whose life circumstances are almost too much to bear. In fact, it is hard to comprehend how he continues to function at all. His eldest son went off to the war and never returned; the father knows nothing of the circumstances surrounding his death/disappearance. A second son went to Teheran and became a drug addict and was never heard from again. His wife and daughter were slain by the man himself, when their house was surrounded by Iraqi soldiers whom he feared would rape or otherwise harm the women. Allegedly, the wife demanded that he kill them, and there is a horrific sequence of the murder in the film that must be a re-enactment, but which is disturbingly realistic. So, the man is left with one son who was seven or eight during the war and who witnessed his father shooting his mother and sister. He appears to be autistic, perhaps as a result of seeing the murders. His father has dedicated his life to caring for his only surviving relative and there are poignant scenes of him carrying the boy (now a man) on his back for miles in the desert to a *zaar*, a musical healing ceremony. In other scenes he tenderly dresses the son and prepares food for him in the ruinous house where they live. The old man used to work in the palm forest and as a fisherman. Now the palm forest is gone, but he still goes out on the fishing boat with several other men and sometimes brings along his son. He bears a stigma for the murders and some of his fellow villagers shun him.

Recognition (*Sheasayi*) is a very short production that shows a man in a hospital bed who is a veteran of the Iran-Iraq War, and who suffered serious damage from the chemical weapons used by the Iraqis. He is very close to death and his wife and various hospital personnel hover over him, trying to communicate, but with little success. He is slightly responsive and struggles to speak, but is clearly losing ground. Interspersed with these images are real-action shots of war combat, presumably included to show what the war was like. A subtitle says that he died on camera, but he still seems to be alive in the final scene.

The setting for In the Name of God is a sort of refugee camp inhabited by Iraqis, who fought on the side of Iran during the war because they hated Saddam Hussein and the ruling Ba‘th Party. Iran ordered their expulsion years ago, but they are unable to return to Iraq, where they are considered traitors and thus live in Iran as outcasts. They derive no benefits for their service opposing their own country and their children are not even able to enrol in school. Although it had been almost 20 years since the end of the war, when this footage was shot the people were living in flimsy pre-fab temporary housing in appalling poverty, all of it chronicled in this production.

All three of these films deal with victims of the Iran-Iraq war who are marginalized and suffering badly. They provide insight into some of the kinds of
damage that war can inflict, both on innocent civilians and combatants, as well as the physical environment. This is not a pretty picture and some of the scenes are very hard to watch. These, and many other films like them, are clear proof that the war, now more than 30 years in the past, is still alive in the minds and memories of many of those who lived through it.

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The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq impacted many lives. About a million died from both sides, millions were displaced, and the economic and social impacts have been immeasurable and will continue to be so for years to come. Many veterans of war are forgotten and still cope with illnesses due to chemical weapon and psychological trauma. Lullaby of War was released in 2012, more than 20 years after the Iran/Iraq war (1981–8). The film’s contribution is to tell the story of people who lived in the war zone. People around the city of Bostān were the first to experience the devastation of the war.

In the Iran/Iraq war the border villages of the Azadegan (dasht-e azadegan) area (in Khuzestan province of Iran) were caught between Iranian and Iraqi fire. The villages and the city of Bostān were under the Iraqi occupation. They were liberated after a year and a month. These operations were called the Path of Qods and Liberation of Bostān.

The story is told in Persian pedagogical language, narrated by a woman as if she is telling her children what happened to the lives of two lovers. Ra’d (thunder), as a young man, falls in love with Samireh just before the war starts. Their respective families live near marshland (Hor in Persian or al-Ahwār in Arabic). Many villagers hid their young sons in the marshland to protect them from conscription or simply being killed by the Ba’thists. How these two were separated and how the man – an Iranian Arab – was killed by the Ba’thist’s army (the film is careful the call the Iraq army Ba’thists not Iraqi) becomes an allegory for experiences of many Iranian Arabs in the border area.

The opening shots show, first, a close-up of two ants carrying a date pit, then a long shot of camels moving across the desert, reminding us of the state of nature and the survival of species. Other long shots of the marshland, along with these of the opening scenes, are especially beautiful. In between these scenically magnificent and mood-setting images are interviews with family members of Ra’d and Samireh. Interviews are conducted in Arabic with Persian subtitles.

The challenges for the filmmaker are pedagogical and ethnographic. First, the film was produced by the documentary group of the IRTV (Sima 1), which has an