

To “not wait for the archive” is to enter the river of time sideways, a bit unannounced, much like the digital itself did, not so long ago. ⁽¹⁾

BY SHAINA ANAND & ASHOK SUKUMARAN, FAIZA AHMAD KHAN, MARIAM GHANI

In 1996 the Taliban set fire to Afghan Film, the National Film Archives founded in 1968 that contained a fine collection of independently produced films and works from the Soviet Union, Iran and many Western countries. A small group of courageous employees managed to save about 6,000 reels of film. Today, thanks to the operation of restoration and digital transfer led by Mariam Ghani, Faiza Ahmad Khan and Pad.ma, this heritage can once again be fully accessed and appreciated.

STILLS / ANNOTATIONS

— 1960s

Afghanistan: Land of Hospitality & Beauty
DOCUMENTARY SHORT



This film was made in the early 1960s (before the official launch of Afghan Films) to promote tourism to Afghanistan, and features most of the famous beauty spots and historical landmarks in the country. The narration was written and performed by the poet Suleyman Layeq, who was the Director of Information & Culture at the time, and later became the Minister of Radio and TV. In what would become the ‘house style’ of mixing fact and fiction, the two ‘American tourists’ in the film (shown visiting markets, flying on Ariana Airlines, going on picnics in Paghman, and taking photographs) are actually played by the anthropologists Louis and Nancy Dupree, who by that time were already fixtures on the Afghan scene. The little joke played by the film hinges on the fact that Louis Dupree’s book *Afghanistan* was the default reference for historians and social scientists new to the region, while Nancy Hatch Dupree’s guidebook was used by most actual tourists visiting Afghanistan.

— 1961

Locust Control
NEWSREEL

It is a common pastime in Afghanistan to blame ‘the neighbours’ for evils small and large. For example, in this early newsreel, an infestation of locusts in the fields of southern Afghanistan is blamed on winds blowing the pests north from Pakistan. Two



contrasting solutions are displayed in the film: one traditional, the beating of the fields by farmers with sticks, brooms, rakes and their own feet; and one modern, the spraying of pesticide from crop-dusting planes. No comment is offered as to which method ultimately proved most effective, though the first certainly looks more fun than the second.

— 1965

Manand Woqab (Like the Eagle)
FICTION FEATURE



Like the Eagle, directed by Fayz Muhammad Kheirzada, was the first feature film made entirely in Afghanistan. It also can be pinpointed as the source of the Afghan Films ‘house style’ of wrapping a fictional story around a core of documentary footage. In this case, the narrative follows the adventures of a young girl who runs away from her village in Paghman because she wants to see the *jeshn* (independence day) celebrations in the city of Kabul. The second act of the film is taken up by footage of a real *jeshn*, including sightings of King Zahir and Sardar Daoud Khan, while the first and third are concerned with the invented journey of

the girl to and from the celebration. The child’s-eye-view of the world offered by Manand Woqab is unsentimental, but always alive to the unexpected beauty and wonder of the everyday made strange.

— Between 1968 and 1972

Fashion show
NEWSREEL



This newsreel is not dated, but we can guess that it was filmed between 1968 and 1972 because both Prince Ahmad Shah, King Zahir’s son, and Nur Ahmad Etemadi, Prime Minister from 1968-72, are shown in the audience. The fashion show was a charity event that took place at the Kabul Hotel, which was located in those days where the Serena Hotel now sits. The wives and daughters of prominent Kabulis participated as models in the show, and the fashions were meant to display the range of traditional and modern textiles and designs common in Afghanistan at that time. In this particular image, the model is wearing a suit made of *karakul*, the wool of unborn lambs, which was for many years Afghanistan’s most prized export, and whose international trade (spearheaded by financial mastermind Abdul Magid Zabuli) served as the foundation of Afghanistan’s modern economy.

— 1968

Talabgar (The Suitor)
FICTION FEATURE

Talabgar was produced in 1968 and released in 1970 as part of the three-part, three-director anthology film Rozgaran (Daily Lives). *Talabgar* (directed by Khaleq Halil) translates loosely as ‘the one who

asks' and in the case of this 40-minute film the one who asks is specifically the man who asks a girl's parents for their permission to court their daughter. Most of the film is a daffy comedy (with the appropriate, if somewhat tacked-on, moral ending) about a gambler trying to cheat his way into the good graces of a wealthy family whose daughter he wishes to marry. But tucked into the middle of comedy and morality play is a quite serious and revolutionary little piece of dialogue. In the scene from which this image is taken, the daughter being courted, Sima, has just returned from being informed by her father that he will allow the *talabgar* to pursue his suit. She is furious because her father had promised to allow her to finish her education before marrying. Her sister asks what is wrong, and then gently suggests that it might be better to submit to their parents' will. Sima protests bitterly that her father is "only thinking about money and property," and they have the following conversation:

HUMA: What is your idea of happiness?

SIMA: Learning, and making my own way.

HUMA: Yes, but money also has a role in happiness, doesn't it?

SIMA: You're wrong. Knowledge is the most important thing. You can't buy knowledge with money, but you can make money from knowledge.

HUMA: Okay, but we can't refuse our parents' decisions.

SIMA: Sister, we have to stand up for what we know to be right. If we believe that money can't bring us happiness, it is our responsibility to defend our rights against old traditions.



This kind of conversation was, if not entirely commonplace, also not very unusual in Kabul in 1968; but seeing it on film, forty years later, feels like a record of something long forgotten, and only recently brought back to mind.

— 1973

Triple Wedding

NEWSREEL



According to the editing staff at Afghan Films, this newsreel footage was filmed at a triple wedding sponsored by either the Ministry of Culture or Afghan Radio & TV (RTA), or perhaps both. The lucky couples whose weddings were underwritten by the state had won some sort of radio contest;

in return, their ceremonies were joined together into one mega-wedding, and broadcast live over the radio. Professional announcers from RTA sat at the head table and provided commentary on the evening; additional games and contests, like the one where a blindfolded guest had to guess who or what she was hearing from a short sound sample, were also facilitated. From the film, the guests all seem to be having a good time, and the grooms, at least, seem happy to have escaped the often crushing costs of a more traditional wedding ceremony.

— 1975

Bhutto visits Daoud

NEWSREEL

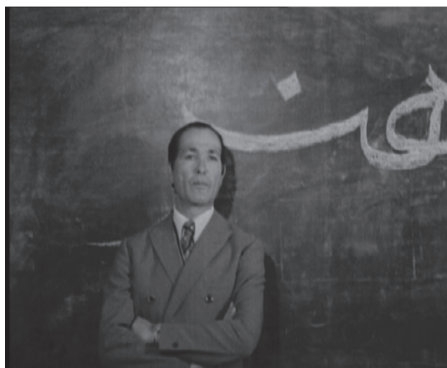


This newsreel from 1975 documents a meeting between Pakistani leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Afghan leader Daoud Khan. The meeting represented a historic rapprochement between the two countries, but this move towards friendship was never pursued, because both leaders were killed shortly thereafter. As the image shows, the Pakistani delegation was taken to visit the Buddhas of Bamiyan, giving us a glimpse of another face that would soon vanish into memory and legend.

— 1976

Mujasemaha Mekhandan (The Statues are Laughing)

FICTION FEATURE



In the opening shot of this film, a professor writes the word *hunar* (art) on the blackboard. He turns around to face the class and says: "art is the salt of life." Everybody needs art, but only a few can make art. He expounds on the qualities one needs in order to be an artist. Among the qualities he lists: an artist has to be ahead of his time.

This scene was filmed in an art classroom at the Kabul Polytechnic Institute, and leads into a film with an artist as protagonist. The film was directed by Toryalai Shafaq, who had studied direction at the Film and Television Institute in India, but the screenplay and cinematography are by Engineer Latif, and represent the first full-length effort from this prolific Afghan filmmaker. Latif was a student at the Polytechnic, who had a thirst for cinema. He asked for private lessons with Sunaram Talwar, the Indian cinematographer who at that time was

head of the camera department at Afghan Films. Latif would spend every evening as an apprentice in Talwar's house. This schooling continued for three years, after which Talwar told him that he had acquired the *hunar* needed to enter the profession of cinema.

— Late 1970s

Kocha-e-Kharabat

NEWSREEL RUSHES



This image is taken from a batch of unedited newsreel rushes, filmed during the Khalq period of the Communist regime, between late 1977 and early 1979. Here you see *Kocha-e-Kharabat*, an alley in the old city of Kabul. Kharabat has traditionally been home to some of the most legendary musicians in Kabul. Ustad Rahim Baksh, Ustad Sarahang, Ustad Shaida, and Ustad Hamahang were all part of a close-knit community of musicians who lived in Kharabat. Once, these musicians performed classical music and ghazals in darbars. Now most people go to Kharabat to choose musicians for their weddings and other celebrations. Engineer Latif, the director of *Epic of Love* and other beloved Afghan films, also lived in Kharabat as a child. A number of his films have scenes set here. Most recently, he returned to shoot a film called *Risha*, which is about a man who fled to Canada during the Sawr Revolution and who returns to Kharabat 40 years later to see his father's house. Back in Canada, the meaninglessness of his life provokes him to leave his family and move back to Kabul.

— 1977 or 1978

Land redistribution

NEWSREEL



The Afghan Communist party, the PDPA, has the odd distinction of enacting one of the only land redistribution projects where the peasant-beneficiaries actually gave the land back to their landlord-exploiters. One could spend hours, if not days, parsing out the reasons why this land reform failed, but our concern at the moment is with the visual record. The newsreels produced by the Khalq faction of the PDPA, in power during the land reform of 1977-78, are meant to function as propaganda for the great good

being brought to the people of rural Afghanistan. The footage of the land redistribution ceremonies, however, betrays the currents of doubt and embarrassment that ran through those exercises, as the camera lights on stoic or skeptical spectators and tracks through the dancing of half-hearted Atans (the Pash-tun dance adopted during the monarchy as a national sign of celebration).

— 1978 or 1979

PDPA Demonstration

NEWSREEL RUSHES



Marches, rallies and demonstrations were a common feature of life during the regime of the PDPA (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the Afghan Communist Party). From the poster of Nur Mohammed Taraki, the leader of the Khalq faction of the PDPA, we know that this image dates from the Khalq period of the regime; from its size, we can guess that this dates from the later period of the regime, when Taraki's deputy Hafizullah Amin was subtly undermining Taraki by building up his cult in grand Soviet style, as 'our benevolent leader' and 'great father of the party.' Mr Hussaini, a cameraman at Afghan Films, notes that "this was a terrible time for us. People couldn't even talk in their own houses. Anyone who was not part of the PDPA did not feel safe. Sons would go to the police if their fathers complained about the PDPA. People were usually arrested on the pretext of sympathizing with the opposition. No one was allowed to even listen to BBC Radio or Voice of America." Mr Hussaini recalls that he was asked to accompany President Taraki on an official tour. The Party members insisted he become a member before leaving. When he refused, they banned him from shooting any PDPA event.

— 1978 or 1979

Taraki and Amin with Soviet Ambassador

NEWSREEL RUSHES



In this image, again taken from unedited, silent newsreel rushes from 1978, you see Hafizullah Amin, sometimes referred to as 'the student who killed his teacher.' In the newsreel, President Taraki, his deputy Amin, the Commander of the

Guard and the Soviet ambassador are meeting, though we do not know exactly when or for what reason. The Soviets considered Amin a threat to their ever-increasing influence, mostly because of his extensive support in the army and police, and partly because he seemed to be agitating for more independence for Afghanistan. Some months later, Amin would seize power from his mentor, friend and leader in a palace coup, spurred by information that Taraki was plotting with the Soviets to assassinate Amin. Engineer Latif, who was commissioned by Amin to make a film about the Sawr Revolution (never finished, but later partially recycled into the docudrama *Farar*) says of him, "How Amin killed Taraki! He had him smothered with a pillow. It was of course never made public officially. Maybe some secret documents exist, but it was never made official. He (Amin) was a very dangerous man. But very sweet. He was always laughing. All the time."

— 1979

Babrak Karmal's press conference

NEWSREEL



This legendarily disastrous press conference was held at the Chilsutun Palace, built by Zahir Shah for the visits of foreign dignitaries, and later destroyed during the civil war. According to Mohammed Kassem Karimi, who was the official Afghan Films press representative at this press conference, this "was the first press conference for Karmal, it had only been five days since the coup d'etat and his return. He was a bit thrown by the questions posed by foreign journalists, he responded too quickly, without thinking first. He was a bit nervy and he was smoking cigarettes"—though in the footage, you see the ashtray next to him in the long shots, but never a shot of him actually smoking—"and an American or BBC journalist asked him, if you are against America, why are you smoking LM cigarettes, which are an American brand? Karmal very quickly replied, 'I smoke them because I like to light my American cigarettes with a Russian match.' Of course, in those days all the matches in Afghanistan were Russian."

— 1979

Fatiha

NEWSREEL

This newsreel from 1979 records a curious moment in Afghan history: when a new administration decreed a week of official national mourning for the victims of the previous administration. This week of *fatiha*, the mourning marked by recitation of suras from the Quran, for those killed during the reign of Hafizullah Amin was declared by the government of Babrak Karmal (newly installed by a Soviet coup) and marked at all of the state mosques. Family members of the dead and

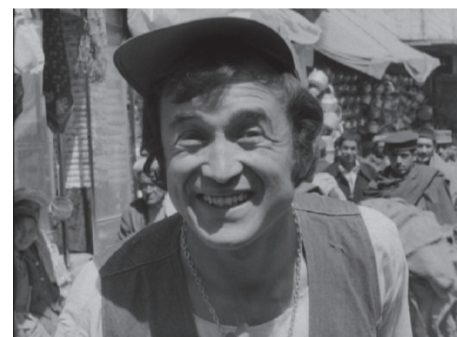


disappeared came to mark their absences; party members and foreign diplomats formally registered their presences. Amnesty had been granted to most of the remaining political prisoners in the infamous Pul-e-Charkhi prison, whose courtyard was now criss-crossed by shallow trenches; some of those who walked out of the prison gates found their own names on the lists of the dead that had been posted there. In the footage most of the women at the *fatiha* cover their faces when approached by the camera, and some appear to be shouting imprecations at the cameramen, but since the sync sound archive has gone missing, we have no way of knowing what they may have been saying.

— 1980

Akhtar Maskara (Akhtar the Joker)

FICTION FEATURE



Akhtar Maskara was made in 1980 by Engineer Latif Ahmadi, now director of Afghan Films, and stars Faqir Nabi (an alumnus of the Film and Television Institute of India) as Akhtar, with Bas-eera Khaterra and Nasir Aziz in supporting roles. The story behind its production is that Eng. Latif had already started work on his first feature film, *Gunah*, when he received an order from the government (at that time, the Parcham faction of the PDPA) to stop all production on the feature. Instead, they commissioned him to make a *film onari* (art film) based on the novel *Akhtar Maskara* by Azam Rahaward Zariab, a well-known writer of contemporary Afghan fiction, who adapted his own work for the screenplay. The film was shot in 18 days, using locations in the old city (Kochae-Bala, which is used for Akhtar's family house) and a property attached to the Presidential Palace, which stands in for the house of Akhtar's rich friends. Its opening sequence, from which this still is taken, is a self-portrait of Akhtar. He addresses the audience directly, while walking through Pul-e-Baghemomi, the old second-hand clothing market of Kabul. There is a strange and literary quality to the monologue, perhaps stemming from the source material. Akhtar is portrayed as sharp-tongued, with a dry, acerbic wit, and yet he says he's the joker, present here just to make people laugh. The divergence between how he wishes to see himself and his world, and how his world really sees him, expands through the narrative of the film, a stinging social critique

of the gap between rich and poor, old and new Kabulis at the end of the 1970s.

— Early 1980s

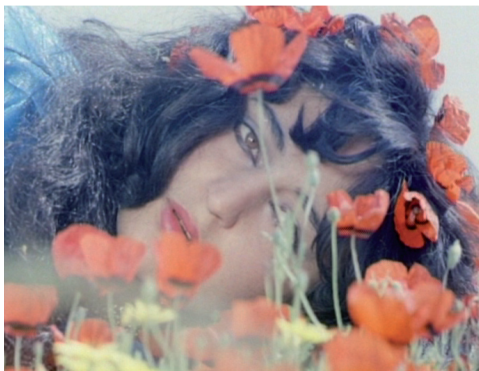
Revolution in Evolution
DOCUMENTARY SHORT



In this propaganda short from the early 1980s, the poisoning of students in a series of Kabul schools and universities (as seen in this image) is attributed by the narrator to new chemical weapons deployed by the “enemies of the revolution.” Hassan Karkar’s eyewitness account of the period suggests a different explanation. He recounts that a series of protests against the regime had broken out spontaneously among students during the months just prior to this incident, stemming from individual acts of rebellion (by students as young as 14 and 15) that took place at many of the same schools where the rash of poisonings occurred. The poison was traced, in some cases, to the school wells, and in other cases the source remained mysterious—perhaps gas canisters had been released and then removed. Regardless, after the students began to die, the protests stopped, and the people of the city drew their own conclusions about the source and motivation of the poison.

— 1984

Hamas-e-Ishq (Epic of Love)
FICTION FEATURE



Epic of Love is a historical epic that follows a two-generation feud between families, played out on the *buṛkashi* field, and two young lovers who defy their families’ expectations and pay a tragic price. The screenplay is by Abdullah Shadaan (who now lives in London and works for the BBC) and the cinematography is by Waheed Raman, who also shot *Akhtar Maskara*. It was directed by Engineer Latif Ahmadi and filmed on location in Mazar-e-Sharif. In this early scene, a girl named Mazari throws herself down in a field of poppies to press her ear to the ground and listen for the sound of approaching horses. Although the boy she loves, Sharif, is in fact riding over the plains, he is too far away for her to hear him, and she sits back up and tells her friend Pari that she was deceived; the sound she heard was her own heart beating. Because these flowers bloom for only a short time in

the month of Sawr—for centuries, there has been a spring fair in Mazar named for the red flowers that bloom once a year—the unit waited a whole year to complete this scene.

According to the actor Raziq Zargar, who played the leader of the bandits who figure in later acts of the film, the filming of *Epic of Love* was an incredible time because Afghan cinema itself was in bloom. Everyone involved in the production was young and energetic; all the actors were so invested in the project that they even carried tripods. Farouq Kadir, who played Mazari’s stern father, was at that time the head of Kabul Nandare, the state-run cinema and theater. Kadir spent a month in Mazar-e-Sharif, hanging out with the *arbabs* and tribal lords, to imbibe some of their characteristics. The film is remembered fondly by cast and crew, who believe it is a work of art; it is also beloved by the younger generation, who grew up watching it on Afghan TV.

— 1985

Farar (Escape)
FICTION FEATURE



The idyllic surface of this image belies the actual circumstances of its production. The shoot of the extended riverside ‘picnic sequence’ in *Farar* was filmed near Jalalabad in 1984, but was meant to be set in that last peaceful year before the Sawr Revolution of 1977. However, while they were filming on the embankment, they were actually being spied upon by *mujahidin* from the hillside. Cinematographer Qader Tahiri, on his first feature shoot, was framing a shot with the mountainside as the backdrop and spotted them through his 300mm telephoto lens. He told the director, “Engineer Latif, do you know some *mujahidin* are coming down the mountain with Kalashnikovs?” Latif recalls that they arrived on the set and wanted to take away the women. One of the actors, Khurshid Mandozai, had brought her month-old infant with her for the shoot. In order to protect the baby girl from the sunlight, the crew had made a small shelter with the reeds and shrubs. When the fighting began, most of the cast ran into the river to cross over to the other side. In the panic and chaos of the moment, the baby was left behind on the island. After an hour of gun-fighting, the soldiers who had accompanied the crew managed to dispel the *mujahidin* and the crew went back, not just to rescue the baby, but also to continue filming. When they were done, the entire 40-person unit was returning to Kabul on a military airplane when the *mujahidin* shot at them. They lost an engine, and flew back to Kabul in a smoking plane with a single engine at the border between life and death. This was all, of course, quite horribly apt, since the purpose of *Farar* (another fictional story wrapped around a core of documentary footage) was to discourage people from fleeing the government-controlled cities by pointing out the dangers that awaited them along the route of escape.

— 1994

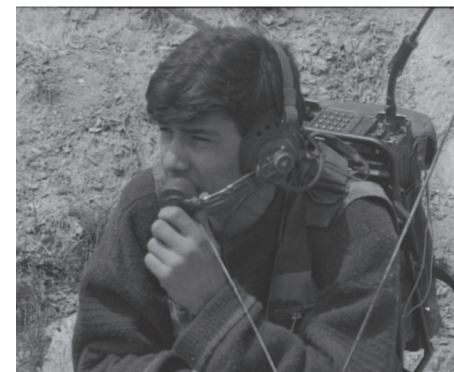
Ouruji (Ascension)
FICTION FEATURE



One of the actors from *Ouruji* relayed the following information: “*Ouruji* was the only film made during the *mujahidin* years. The film was supported by Ahmad Shah Massoud [a famous commander from the Jamiat al-Islami faction], who had a keen interest in cinema. The film was about the defeat of the Russians by the *mujahidin*. All the equipment—the tanks, the guns, everything—was provided by Massoud. At one point, Massoud came to the location where we were shooting a battle sequence. We didn’t have enough people, so Massoud asked his men to join in. The original plan was to make a series of five films, but then the Taliban took over and *Ouruji* was the only film we finished.” *Ouruji* was written by Siddiq Barmak and Humayun Pais, who also acted in the film, and was directed by Noor Hashim Kabir. Kabir now lives in Canada. Barmak, who was the director of Afghan Films at that time, went on to make the acclaimed film *Osama*.

— 1995

Mujahidin plan attack on Taliban
NEWSREEL RUSHES



This footage, meant for newsreel but never edited, was shot in Kabul sometime around 1995 by Mr. Sarwaruddin for Afghan Films. According to him, its context can be described as follows. At the time of filming, the *mujahidin* coalition government had control of Kabul, but the Taliban had control over the area just outside of Kabul, behind Tapa-e-Rishkhor (the Rish Khor Hills) which are called the ‘Gateway to Kabul.’ The *mujahidin* were planning an attack on the Taliban to regain control. This is the 7th Corps of the *Mujahidin* Army. General Taj Mohammed, the Intelligence Director for the *mujahidin* government in Kabul, was leading them in this attack. There were 500-600 boys serving under him, who had mostly been recruited from Northern Afghanistan and belonged to the Jamiat-al-Islami party. They didn’t have enough vehicles, so a vehicle with room for 20 people had 60 people crammed into it. Most of the fighters had to walk. The attacks usually took place at night. The Afghan Films crew spent an entire day with the *mujahidin* but were not allowed to go to the

front lines. After a week of fighting, the mujahidin were defeated by the Taliban. A year later, the Taliban walked into Kabul.

— 1996

Khan-e-Tarikh (The House of History)

DOCUMENTARY SHORT



The House of History is a 20-minute essay film directed by Qader Taheri, a longtime cameraman at Afghan Films, with narration written by Sher Mohammed Khara. Six or seven cameramen from Afghan Films are credited on *House of History*, because Taheri sourced much of his raw footage from the Afghan Film archives of the civil war years (1992-96). He then filmed some specific shots for the film, notably the aerial shots. The narration was written to fit the finished film. This is the only documentary film produced by Afghan Film during that time, and one of the most personal films to be found anywhere in the archive. Khoja Ahmad Shah Sediqi, who did the negative cutting and timing, says that he had to cut the original negatives as there were no resources or money to make dupe negatives. “A very bad thing to do, but such were those times. And yet, Afghan Films never shut down. We came to work whenever we could.” In the first image, taken from footage shot by Sarwaruddin (a cameraman who still works at Afghan Films), you see the Wazir Akbar Khan hospital. The wounded would be taken there, but there were too many to be taken care of. Khoja is among the wounded in this scene. “I was on my way to Afghan Films on my bicycle. This happened near Pul-e-Artan [the Harten bridge]. I felt something hit me, I fell down unconscious. I don't know who took me to the hospital.”

The second part of *House of History* is an extended meditation on the ruins of the Kabul Museum, whose collections stretched from the Bronze Age up to present times. All the previous civilizations that passed through or inhabited the territory of Afghanistan were represented in the museum. The building was destroyed in 1991, in the first clashes between the mujahidin factions, but the museum workers preserved the remnants of the collections and stored them until the day when the fragments could be reassembled again. The image here, part of a 2nd-5th century statue, was actually filmed (uncredited) in Jalalabad in the early 70s by Sunaram Talwar, the Indian cinematographer who came to Afghan Films in its early years to train its future cameramen and directors. By the time *House of History* was made, nothing remained of the archaeological site where this statue was once discovered; no record but the images, no trace but dust and ashes.

Afghan Films, the national film institute of Afghanistan, opened in 1968. In March/April 2012, we held a workshop there called “Archive Practicum” that engaged with the Afghan Films archive, the peculiar forms of history present in it, and its possible futures. The emphasis was not only on physical preservation of films, but on asking what kinds of memory lives in these images, and in the people working with them for the past few decades.

The negatives archive of Afghan Films is intact, protected and preserved by a long-term staff who also produced and screened these films, through the vagaries of political upheaval. The positives archive is less intact, but more accessible; it is marked by gaps, most famously the missing reels burned by the Taliban in the 1990s, and the surviving films show the signs of use, the scratches and splices that come from a film print being run through one projector after another, again and again. To watch these reels is to see an often violently changing ideological landscape through the filter of, and contrasted against, the continuous effort and precariousness of making films under such conditions. But these images traveling now from film to pixels also showed us rich, surprising and joyful things, everyday moments and festivals and feasts, all the forgotten textures of times past and places lost or since remade in some other image. Both of these aspects of the archive suggest its potential power, if it is able to reach a broader audience. It will need both concrete work and special charms to bring this promise to fruition. Our workshop attempted in tactical ways to build the first steps: towards leaving behind the idea of the archive as a fortress, and entering more fertile and open territories.

It began with a bit of time-travel: Vijay Chavan, a Bombay film technician adept with older Spirit telecine machines, arrived in Kabul. He repaired the FDL90 telecine machine and editing Steenbeck owned by Afghan Films, and trained four staff members to use and troubleshoot them. Shortly afterward, a local database was set up using an offline instance of Pad.ma. Pad.ma is a web-based video platform, run by a group of groups, including CAMP in Mumbai, 0x2620 in Berlin and the Alternative Law Forum in Bangalore. Unlike YouTube, Pad.ma's focus is on deep annotation and metadata, i.e. both written and automated analysis of video material, which is often footage rather than finished films. The software platform is built around the idea that digitised film can be indexed and enhanced with rich metadata, including time-coded transcriptions, translations and annotations (which can range from historical context, to interviews with cast and crew, to critical essays by film scholars).

To introduce these dimensions into the database built during the workshop, the digitising of reels was accompanied by a process of talking to people who are part of the community around Afghan Films. The 90 or so films digitised during the workshop range from the 1920s to the early 1990s, and cut across many genres, including newsreel, documentary shorts, and fiction features. Several of the current Afghan Films staff have worked there since the 1970s and have been part of these films as directors, cameramen or actors. Our conversations with them, and with former staff and actors, translated into a rich set of annotations for the digital film material. Those annotations are an inspiration for the piece that follows.

The workshop ended with an outdoor screening of excerpts from the archive in Shar-e-Naw Park, Kabul. In June, when the growing database makes its public debut both in Kassel and Kabul, much of this material will be seen for the first time in decades. The voices of communities around the films, and our own voices as artists, filmmakers and enthusiasts, will hopefully provide an accompanying score.

(1) *Ten Theses on the Archive*, no. 1 (Don't Wait for the Archive). Pad.ma 2010

Shaina Anand and Ashok Sukumaran are artists and co-initiators of CAMP and Pad.ma.

Faiza Ahmad Khan is a documentary film-maker based in Mumbai.

Mariam Ghani is an artist and writer based in New York, who has been working in Kabul since 2002.

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