



The Afghan Bulletin

No. 14 December 2023



Contents

Amanullah's Journey into Exile.....	95
The "Official" postal stationery envelope of 1917	97
A returned letter from 1938	98
Happy Christmas from Kabul!.....	100

Amanullah's Journey into Exile

The photograph on the next page shows the R.M.S. Mooltan, the ship on which Amanullah and his family sailed into exile. It has been autographed by King Amanullah at top left. It is attached to a piece of card which seems to have been signed by many of his fellow passengers. This souvenir of the trip was apparently collected by J. H. Morris W.O. – the name at the bottom left of the photograph – a manuscript notation on the back of the picture reads:

King Amanullah of Afghanistan passenger on P.O. R.M.S. Mooltan (Royal Suite) (22,500 tons) sailing from Bombay 22.6.28 to Tilbury London. His Majesty disembarked Marseilles approx 14 days after signature obtained 1 o'clock the afternoon of the 29th. Ship at the time abeam(?) of "Centre Peak" Red Sea.

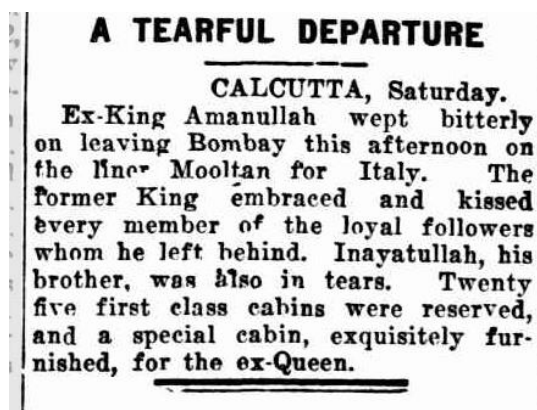
King Amanullah was heavily guarded by his personal bodyguard.

JH Morris

Wireless Officer

P.O. R.M.S Mooltan 1928.

Centre Peak Island is one of the Zubayr Islands in the southern Red Sea, and belongs to Yemen. Wireless Officer Morris seems to have his dates wrong as Amanullah's journey into exile was in June 1929 and the ship sailed on the 23rd June. His departure made the newspapers around the world – this extract is from the *Northern Star* from Lismore, New South Wales, Australia:



The “Official” postal stationery envelope of 1917

In footnote 58 on page 70 of *Afghanistan – 1901-1933* (2nd Edition) there is a brief mention of this envelope as follows:

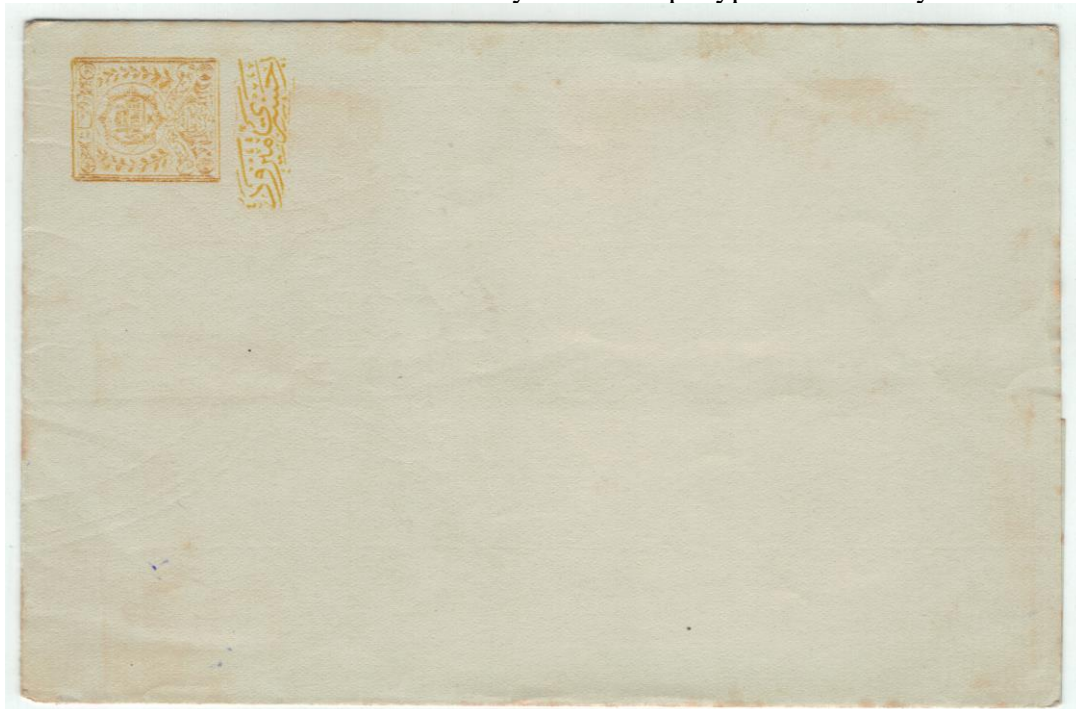
“58 Patterson . . . also records manila and greyish laid paper envelopes, approximately 95 x 160mm, in the Afghan Post Office Collection with a golden yellow imprint of a 1909 2 abasi postage stamp, either in the top right corner or horizontally at left, together with an inscription in the same colour reading “Special Bureau of His Majesty, the King”. These have not been recorded outside the Post Office Collection.”

Wilkins and Divall also make a brief mention of one of these covers but give no details¹. Patterson gives the size as being 95 x 160mm and states that they “had been found in the Ministry archives”. I had thought that these envelopes with the golden yellow stamp imprint had probably been lost forever during the turmoil of the 1980s and '90s. However it is exciting to discover that there is an example of at least one of them outside of the Afghan Post Office Collection. Thomas Löbbbering has kindly sent the following scans of an envelope which has been in Germany since the 1950s.

Thomas reports the envelope as—

- 1917 Registered Stationery, 2 Abasi , brownish yellow
- 112x175 mm
- watermarked greyish white paper of 0.1 mm thickness
- watermark: vertical lines at 25 mm distance
- sheet watermark: sitting Britannia with shield, crowned
- red inlay presumably added by collector to avoid adhesion of gummed flap

It could be that the ‘golden yellow’ reported by Patterson has faded over the years. The watermark sounds as if it is the same as that for PS7. The size differs from that reported by Patterson, but the unusual horizontal stamp imprint at top right with text beneath it means that this is undoubtedly the envelope type described by him.



¹ Wilkins and Divall, *Afghanistan Revisited*, p.18.

Much reduced sized illustrations of the back of the envelope and the envelope unfolded:



A returned letter from 1938

Illustrated is a registered letter sent from Liverpool to Kabul in March 1938, but returned undelivered. During its journey it managed to accumulate no less than 19 different postal markings – some of them struck several times.

The outward journey is fairly straightforward–

1. **School Lane B.O. L'pool** violet oval registration cancel (x 3 on front + x 2 on reverse) + Registration label No. 7796
2. LANDIKOTAL cds: date unclear
3. KABUL receiver 9 April 38
4. Boxed **RETOUR** on front and on reverse

PARTI
LEFT



The return journey is rather more complicated—

5. LANDIKOTAL cds: date unclear
6. BOMBAY GPO 26 April 38
7. BOMBAY DLO 26 April 38
8. First DLO label attached with another BOMBAY DLO 26 April 38 strike + manuscript '**Kabul (Afghanistan) for consignment through local DLO**'
That instruction seems to have been a mistake which results in the cover being sent back towards Afghanistan:
9. PESHAWAR cds 29 April 38
At Peshawar the mistake is recognised and the DLO label has the manuscript added: '**DLO Lahore**'. To be doubly sure:
10. Manuscript added on front top left and reverse top (upside down): '**D.L.O. Lahore for disposal 29/4**' + address crossed out and Lahore added.
11. LAHORE DLO 2 May 38
The cover then sits at the DLO Lahore for a month.
12. LAHORE DLO 2 June 38
13. Second DLO label added and addressed to DLO Bombay
14. DLO BOMBAY 4 June 38 (x 2)
15. Second DLO label crossed out and re-addressed in manuscript '**DLO London**' and '**7796 Liverpool**' (being the original registration number)
16. BOMBAY GPO 4 June 38
17. Violet oval **REGISTERED RETD LTR SECTION 11 June 38** (x 2)
18. Violet cachet:

UNDELIVERED FOR REASON STATED
RETURN TO SENDER
19. **PTO Liverpool** added on front and return address on reverse ringed in red

The rate is 7½d. That should be 3d registration + postage to 2oz of 4d with ½d overpaid, but as there is a ½d stamp that seems unlikely. It could be a philatelic overfranking (5 different stamps used), but it appears to be a commercial letter.

Another explanation is that Afghanistan was mistakenly considered to be 'India' and that the rate was actually 3d registration + 'All-up' Empire airmail of 4½d for a 1½ oz letter (i.e., 1½d per half oz). As it was an 'all-up' service there was no need for an airmail etiquette. The transit times seems to fit with this explanation:

Liverpool-Kabul 12 days: surface mail would be expected to be around three weeks; the return Bombay-London in 7 days has to be airmail.



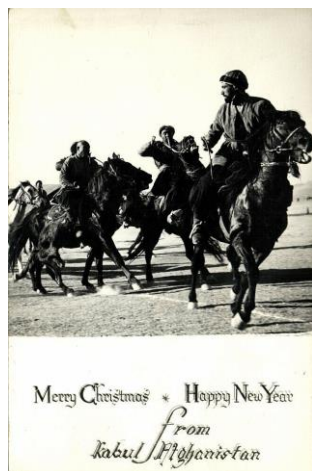
Happy Christmas from Kabul!

Ex-pats in Afghanistan in the 1960s probably found Christmas cards hard to source, however a series of Christmas themed postcards was available. A listing of those currently known is given below. The series generally has no writing on the reverse, although some cards have 'Leonar' which is a German brand name for photographic material and probably relates to the glossy card used for these postcards. KX 23 has the brand name 'Gaevert' – another photographic paper, produced by L. Gevaert & Cie (the predecessor of Agfa-Gevaert).

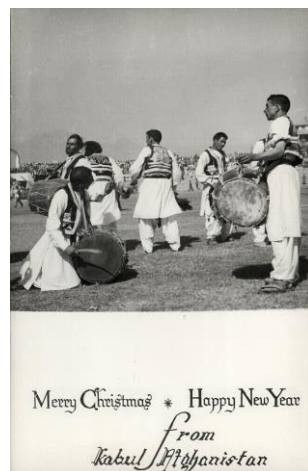
They all have a Christmas message on the front such as '*Season's Greetings from Kabul, Afghanistan*', some accompanied by a drawing of a candle, wreath or stained glass window. Only the last two cards, which don't seem to belong to the set, have any description. KX 20 looks as if it has been personalised by including the family sending it in the picture, and has been amended in manuscript for use at Eid.

The earliest use seen (KX 23) is Christmas 1962, the latest date seen used is 1984.

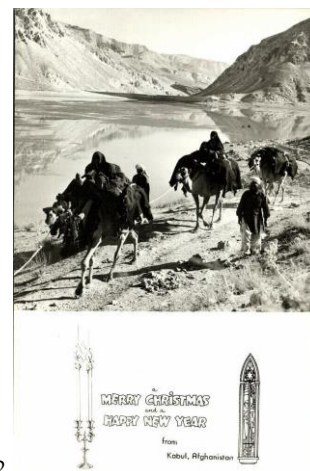
	Title	Horiz or Vert
KX 1	Buzkashi	vert
KX 2	Drummers	vert
KX 3	Kuchi Caravan by Lake	vert
KX 4	Kuchi Caravan	vert
KX 5	Girl with pot	vert
KX 6	Carpet weavers	vert
KX 7	Spinner	vert
KX 8	Winter Landscape	vert
KX 9	Buzkashi group	vert
KX 10	Couple with Camel	vert
KX 11	Big Buddah at Bamyan	vert
KX 12	Bagh-e-Bala	vert
KX 13	Band-i-Amir	vert
KX 14	Bamyan Valley	vert
KX 15	Man sitting	vert
KX 16	Ruined Mosque at Balkh	vert
KX 17	Citadel	vert
KX 18	Buzkashi (horse heading left)	vert
KX 19	Great Mosque at Herat	vert
KX 20	Noon Canon, Kabul	vert
KX 21	Skyline at sunset	horiz
KX 22	Kabul, Afghanistan (Maiwand Monument)	horiz
KX 23	Camel train ('Afghanistan' at bottom left)	horiz



KX1



KX2



KX3



Merry Christmas * Happy New Year
from
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX4



Merry Christmas * Happy New Year
from
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX5



Season's Greetings

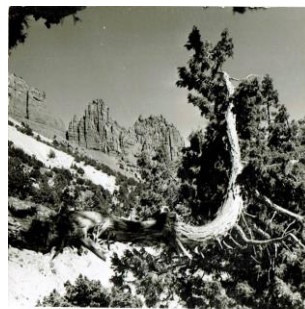
from:
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX6



MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR
from
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX7



Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year

from
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX8



Season's Greetings

from:
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX9



MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR

KX10



MERRY CHRISTMAS
and a
HAPPY NEW YEAR

from
Kabul, Afghanistan

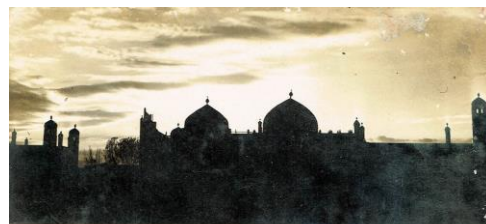
KX11



Season's Greetings

from:
Kabul, Afghanistan

KX12



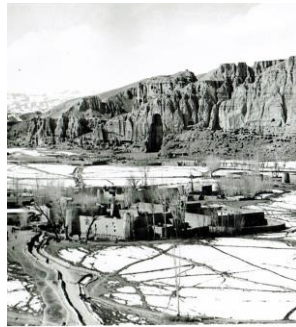
Season's Greetings

from: Kabul, Afghanistan

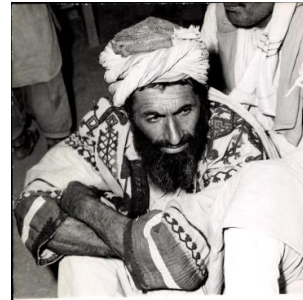
KX21



KX13



KX14



KX15



KX16



KX17



KX18



KX19



KX20



KX22



KX23