

COLONIAL ITINERARIES: MUHAMMADU DIKKO'S METROPOLITAN ADVENTURES

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Abstract

In 1921 and 1924 Muhammadu Dikko, the emir of Katsina, traveled to Britain on a sightseeing trip, becoming the first emir or chief from Northern Nigeria to visit the British imperial metropole. This article analyzes the colonial relationship that put Dikko in the colonizers' orbit and favor and paved the way for him to embark on the trips, the colonial logistics and networks that facilitated the journeys, Dikko's experiences and adventures in Britain, and, most importantly, his perspectives on British society, institutions, goods, and forms of leisure. I argue that Dikko, though constrained by serving as a prop in a colonial performance of power, used travel to Britain as a platform to advance metropolitan modernity as an aspirational if distant model of socioeconomic advancement and to give his peers and subjects in Northern Nigeria a textual reference for navigating colonial culture in relation to their own natal Islamo-Hausa cultural norms.

Key Words

West Africa, Nigeria, accommodation to colonialism, African modernities, colonial intermediaries, African diaspora.

This article analyzes two trips that Muhammadu Dikko, the emir of Katsina from 1906 to 1944, took to Britain in 1921 and 1924. These were sightseeing touristic adventures, but British colonizers clearly saw them as part of a broader, longstanding project of exhibiting British metropolitan civilization to allegedly impressionable African colonial subjects. Dikko, a wealthy Muslim king and colonial intermediary, paid for the trips but received permission and extensive logistical support from British colonial and metropolitan authorities. Emir Dikko paired the first trip in 1921 with a detour to Mecca to perform the *hajj*, thus combining a religious pilgrimage with a political one. He undertook the second trip in 1924 to attend the British Empire Exhibition in Wembley.

Relying on Dikko's travel journal entries, his official sightseeing itinerary in Britain, metropolitan newspaper accounts, and colonial correspondence and reports, this article reconstructs the story of Dikko's metropolitan adventures, framing it as a compelling iteration of how mobility in the form of transnational travel was imbricated in Northern Nigeria's emergent colonial modernity and, more crucially, was part of a broader performance of British colonial authority. British colonizers inducted emirs in Northern Nigeria into the role of partners in colonial business, and some emirs regarded British officials as benefactors and Britain as an aspirational modernist and developmental example for their emirates. Moreover, the aristocrats were arbiters of negotiations between local identities and cultures and colonial modernity. Muslim Northern Nigerian colonial subjects

took cues from the emirs on how to best engage the cultures of colonialism without compromising their Muslim devotions. Travel to the metropole was an integral aspect of the emirs' mediatory repertoire.

Far from being an anomaly, subaltern travel to the metropole was well within the norm of mobility occurring between the colonial center and the periphery. Travel to the imperial center had as its cognate the itineraries and archives of British imperial travel to and writings on the societies of the colonized. When African subalterns, aristocrats, or commoners traveled to Britain and penned their impressions of British society, they were flipping the traditional gaze of metropolitan actors on the peoples and cultures of Africa. The difference, of course, was that the Africans regarded Britain as an aspirational center of colonial modernity and had no power to represent the metropole in ways that were as paradigmatic as European travel texts on Africa.

More crucially, and this is the central premise of the article's argument, Dikko, along with other Nigerian aristocratic tourists in Britain, was participating in a familiar ritual of British colonial authority: the deliberate, strategic exposure of Africans to colonial spectacles, technologies, infrastructures, symbols, and material artifacts. Exposure to these repositories of British modernity had the capacity, colonizers believed, to awe African subjects, reinforce the alleged colonial civilizational binary, and reinscribe Britain as a cultural model for the colonized.¹

Dikko's trips were memorialized in political and scribal artifacts such as stories in the Northern Nigerian colonial newssheet, Dikko's own diary, and detailed pre- and post-trip official correspondences that circulated within local and metropolitan colonial circles. The formal and informal circulation of these artifacts underscores the importance of the trips as projects for reaffirming British authority and Dikko's place in it. These processes point to the ways in which colonially-scripted travel to the imperial metropole was a cultural and political strategy of performing authority to colonial subjects, the political and cultural economy of awe and wonder being integral to this endeavor.

The question that arises from this framing is whether privileged African travelers to the metropole had their own agenda and expectations for these trips, and if so to what extent they succeeded in constructing their own meanings and impressions of Britain, which may have differed from those intended by colonial planners, minders, and guides. The literature on imperial spectacle and royal tours in Africa as theaters of authority and the emerging historiography of imperial loyalism posit a rather passive position for African participants, seeing these rituals largely as events to which Africans were merely invited as spectators to be impressed and perhaps terrified.²

1 See B. Larkin, *Signal and Noise: Media, Infrastructure, and Urban Culture in Nigeria* (Durham, NC, 2008), 16–47, for the range of cultural propaganda and awe-inspiring performances of power that British colonizers implemented in colonial Northern Nigeria.

2 A. Apter, 'On imperial spectacle: the dialectics of seeing in Colonial Nigeria', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 44:3 (2002), 564–96, esp. 584–8; T. Ranger, 'The invention of tradition in colonial Africa', in T. Ranger and E. Hobsbawn (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), 211–62; H. Sapire, 'African loyalism and its discontent: the royal tour of South Africa, 1947', *The Historical Journal* 54:1 (2011), 215–40; C. V. Reed, *Royal Tourists, Colonial Subjects, and the Making of a British World, 1860–1911* (Manchester, 2017); P. Buckner, 'The royal tour of 1901 and the construction of imperial identity in

It is clear from both colonial sources and Dikko's own travel narratives that he was impressed by the visual, sonic, material, and infrastructural symbols of metropolitan modernity. In this way, this article reinforces and extends the idea of spectacle as British colonial showmanship and an exhibition of authority. However, the emir was no starry-eyed colonial tourist in Britain who could consistently be used as a prop in imperial exhibitions or relied on to be an unquestioning consumer of British metropolitan cultures. Dikko was an active agent, if inconsistently so, in these trips, and his contribution to the planning of the trips helped shape the itinerary while his preferences inflected the metropolitan tours. Furthermore, he carefully curated his experiences and perspectives on the metropole in his diary, stamping his discursive imprimatur on representations of the trip. Dikko rendered the metropole in language and rhetoric filtered through his own ideological and political leanings, and in a vernacular that privileged the idioms and comparative semiotics of his natal Hausa society. I contend that these trips should thus be considered in this dual frame as both a scripted performance of colonial authority and imperial modernity and an excursion animated and shaped in part by Dikko's own predilections and interests.

THE IMPERIAL GAZE

Dikko's exploration of Britain, his travel journal entries on British cultures, peoples, and society, and his keen ethnographic observation of the metropole represented a symbolic reversal of the observational and scribal practices associated with and emanating from European imperial travel to Africa.³ Given the discursive ubiquity of this European travel corpus and the way it foregrounds Dikko's commentary on Britain, it is important to survey it in order to understand the ways in which Dikko's adventure both upends and contrapuntally replicates it.

Scholars have approached the European traveler corpus on Africa through multiple methodological and theoretical lenses. The multidisciplinary literature divides into two broad categories: examinations of travel, travel writing, and polyvalent representations of other lands and peoples in Britain's early empire in the Americas and the Caribbean, and new postcolonial critiques of the intertwinement of European travel writing and representations of the Other.⁴ The latter approach focuses largely but not exclusively on the late

South Africa', *South African Historical Journal*, 41:1 (1999), 324–48; C. J. Lee, *Unreasonable Histories: Nativism, Multicultural Lives, and the Genealogical Imagination in British Africa* (Durham, NC, 2014).

- 3 By 'reverse' ethnography I do not mean that Dikko's narrative challenged or discursively reversed the racist, demeaning representations in European travel narratives on Africa. Rather, I am merely signaling that Dikko's travel to Britain, even though done under the auspices of colonial domination, and his commentary on Britain flipped the paradigmatic trajectory of imperial travel and thus amounted to a returning or reversal of the European imperial travel gaze on Africa.
- 4 For scholarly analysis of British travel writing on Britain's early empire in the Americas and the Caribbean, see S. Clark (ed.), *Travel Writing and Empire: Post Colonial Theory in Transit* (London, 1999). Several chapters in this volume look at the British colonial gaze on the so-called old empire and dominions. See also A. Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545–1625* (Oxford, 2007). For a postcolonial critical commentary on Britain's modern empire, see P. Crowley, 'Introduction: travel, colonialism and encounters with the Maghreb: Algeria', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 21:3 (2017), 231–42; L. Franey, *Victorian Travel Writing and Imperial Violence: British Writing on Africa, 1855–1902* (London, 2003); G. Griffiths, 'Postcolonialism and travel and travel writing', in A. Quayson (ed.), *The*

British Empire in Africa and Asia. In this perspective the traveler is often European while his constructed Other is a non-European colonial subject. This literature has exploded the laudatory, self-congratulatory (self-)portrayals of European explorers as purveyors and pioneers of commerce, civilization, and Christianity in a supposedly benighted Africa. It has also helped situate them as handmaidens of colonization whose African adventures were heavily facilitated by unacknowledged African interlocutors.⁵ However, such critical rereadings of European travels in and writings on Africa have blind spots, one of which is that they leave out the politics and instrumentalities of colonial mobility, as well as the cultural and symbolic utility of imperial travel to both colonizer and colonized. Also elided in this critical evaluation is what Juan Cole, in a different geographical context, calls Occidentalism.⁶ This genre of representations includes the textual corpuses produced by non-Western travelers to Europe. These texts comment on the cultures, societies, and artifacts of the West and comprise documents that engage in the same textual reinforcement of difference that European imperial travelers' writings on African societies perfected.

AFRICANS TRAVELING AND WRITING THE METROPOLE

Several scholars have produced insightful profiles of a diverse cast of Africans who lived permanently or quasi-permanently in imperial Britain. Hakim Adi and David Killingray have written African migrant subjectivities and engagements into the historiography of Victorian, Edwardian, and Elizabethan England in ways that recognize the African migrants' catalytic humanity in the vortex of metropolitan colonial racism.⁷ However, a major oversight characterizes these works: the absence of an African comparative frame or foil for understanding the metropolitan struggles and perspectives of the African immigrants. Like this article, one recent work focuses on the imperial adventures of African aristocratic tourists and sightseers in Britain, visitors to the imperial metropole who had a finite, temporary business to transact and spent no more than weeks or months there at a time. Neil Parsons' *King Khama* is a rich narrative of the visit of three Tswana kings to Britain in 1895. The work tries to remedy the aforementioned African voice deficit by reproducing some of the daily itineraries of the kings while analytically contextualizing them in metropolitan imperial politics.⁸ Although this approach humanizes the kings and enables readers to see the monarchs acting on and being acted upon by imperial

Cambridge History of Postcolonial Literature, Volume I (Cambridge, 2012), 58–80; J. Edwards and R. Graulund (eds.), *Postcolonial Travel Writings: Critical Explorations* (London, 2011); M. L. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 2007); C. Gualtieri, *Representations of West Africa as Exotic in British Colonial Travel Writing* (Lewiston, NY, 2002).

- 5 See R. Pearce, 'Missionary education in colonial Africa: a critique of Mary Kingsley', *History of Education*, 17:4 (1988), 283–94; L. Schumaker, *Africanizing Anthropology: Fieldwork, Networks, and the Making of Cultural Knowledge in Central Africa* (Durham, NC, 2001).
- 6 J. Cole, 'Invisible Occidentalism: eighteenth-century Indo-Persian constructions of the West', *Iranian Studies*, 25:3/4 (1992), 3–16.
- 7 H. Adi, *West Africans in Britain 1900–1960: Nationalism, Pan-Africanism and Communism* (London, 1998); D. Killingray (ed.), *Africans in Britain* (London, 1994).
- 8 N. Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes* (Chicago, 1998).

spaces, institutions, and personalities, the voices of the kings are heavily redacted through the archived recollections of metropolitan interlocutors.

Arguably, the most notable African narrative on the British imperial metropole is Ham Mukasa's *Uganda's Katikiro in England*, which was first published in English in 1904.⁹ There is no evidence that Dikko read or even knew about this book, yet there is no escaping the disarming similarity between the *katikiro's* itinerary in Britain and his own, and between Mukasa's account of Britain and Dikko's. Mukasa's work can be seen as having pioneered a genre of African aristocratic commentary on the British imperial center that, consciously or not, Dikko replicated. Despite these similarities, there are marked differences and divergences in Mukasa's textual practice and that of Dikko, the most obvious of which is religion. Mukasa and his subject, the *katikiro*, were proud Protestant Christians who identified with metropolitan Anglicanism. As a result, they sought to establish and consolidate a religious and cultural affinity with the metropole. Much of Mukasa's book 'strenuously refuses to provide a critique of Englishness' and stresses aspirational sameness over difference.¹⁰ Dikko, on the other hand, was a proud Muslim, and his travel notebook unabashedly demarcated metropolitan culture from a Northern Hausa Islamic one.

My approach here combines the biographical narrative approach of previous works with the analytical contextualization Parsons brings to bear on African aristocratic travel to the metropole. However, unlike these works that deal with Christian and traditionalist Africans, my analysis highlights an African Muslim perspective on Britain, using Dikko as an example. This article extends the insights of previous work in another way. It analyzes the evolving imperial networks, discourses, and logistical infrastructures that facilitated and shaped Dikko's two trips, taking travel not as an event but as an entire universe of bureaucratic and political practices linking vast temporal and spatial formations. I begin this analysis of Dikko's metropolitan adventures by mapping the transition from the precolonial setting in Katsina emirate to the British colonial conquest in 1903, a process in which Dikko featured prominently. This foundational moment of the colonial encounter in Katsina was crucial for the relationship that developed between Dikko and British colonizers, who saw in him the ideals of indirect rule administrative and cultural partnership between British colonizers and Northern Nigeria's Muslim rulers.

The first section explores Dikko's precolonial and early colonial political biography, particularly his journey into colonial interpersonal networks that would confer on him privileges, favors, and the biggest prize of all — the emirship of Katsina. The article then discusses how Dikko, as emir, dexterously built a reputation in Nigeria and Britain as a trusted and exemplary African aristocratic intermediary. Without these initial relational investments, Dikko's trips to Britain might not have happened, and if they did they might not have had the political and social valence that I attribute to them. The next two sections analyze Dikko's two metropolitan trips. This analysis frames the trips as part of Britain's colonial exhibitions of power, grandeur, and imperial glory, but I also

9 H. Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England: Being the Official Account of His Visit to the Coronation of His Majesty King Edward VII* (London, 1904).

10 S. Gikandi, 'Introduction', in H. Mukasa, *Uganda's Katikiro in England* (Manchester, 1998), 28.

signal Dikko's observational and discursive agency in a set of touristic rituals that were far from politically neutral.

The Dikko-British colonial courtship

Travel to Britain from Nigeria required the involvement of colonial institutions and personnel. As a result, only aristocrats deemed deserving of colonial courtship or reciprocal loyalty were accorded this imperial transnational logistical machine for their travels. Dikko was one who enjoyed colonial support on his way to Britain and within Britain. Why was Dikko so favored? In the Sokoto caliphate hierarchy, Katsina Emirate did not possess the clout or prestige of Sokoto, Gwandu, Kano, or even Zazzau. The mid-level emirate was considered by some to be an autonomous extension of the powerful emirate of Kano. To understand why Dikko would become Britain's favorite chief in Nigeria, an exploration of his entry into the orbit of colonialism and his subsequent relationship with British colonizers is necessary. We learn the facts of Dikko's precolonial life from his Hausa-language biography, which he dictated to his scribe, Malam Barmo. Barmo then retold it to Bello Kagara, who in turn was recorded as the memoir's author at its publication in 1951.¹¹ We must thus necessarily conclude that the material is probably a selective retelling by Dikko, enhanced by an equally selective favorable mediation by Kagara, Dikko's trusted friend and confidant.

At the time that the British declared a protectorate over Northern Nigeria in January 1900, Dikko was the *durbi* of Katsina, just one of several aristocratic titleholders in the emirate of Katsina. He had obtained the title not by personal distinction but by inheritance on the death of his father, who had held the title before him. His ascendance from *durbi* to the emirship was riddled with intrigues and fortuitous convergences of different factors and needs, the most important being the British desire for loyal allies among the local aristocrats. A colonial report from several decades later makes it clear that '[Dikko] was appointed [emir] for courageous loyalty at a time when the political situation was critical owing to British troops suffering a serious reverse'.¹² He was at the center of the transition from precolonial sovereignty to British colonization. As *durbi*, Dikko was an important court official, performing royal duties assigned to him by the then emir of Katsina, Abubakar. Dikko served as a merchant and warrior who bought weapons from traveling arms suppliers on behalf of the emir's army. He was also a charismatic man with a large following and influence. Wary of Dikko's growing power, Emir Abubakar sent him to command Katsina's troops guarding the frontier. Dikko knew that Abubakar perceived him as a rival and was sending him away from the arena of court politics.

11 See B. Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina Muhammadu Dikko, C.B.E., 1865-1944* (Zaria, Nigeria, 1951), 1-3. In the preface the author, Malam Bello Kagara, states that Emir Dikko dictated the context of the book to him over several sessions. He was a diligent scribe, at times inhabiting the authorial voice of the third-person narrator and at other times allowing Dikko's own voice as a first-person self-narrator. Moreover, the idea of writing the biography had been Dikko's, who had probably been convinced to do it by his British interlocutors. It was Dikko who persuaded a reluctant Kagara to write down the emir's narrative of his own life story.

12 The National Archives, London, United Kingdom (TNA) Colonial Office (CO) 583/187/11, Nigeria Original Correspondence, 'Proposed pilgrimage to Mecca and visit to England by emir of Katsina'.

Dikko's inadvertent journey into the inner circles of British imperial politics began in 1903, when news filtered in that British colonial troops were approaching Katsina after defeating Sokoto. When the noblemen of Katsina and their followers panicked upon hearing stories of how the 'Europeans had captured several cities and snatched wives and gave them to their soldiers to sleep with, they turned to Dikko for counsel on how to respond'.¹³ As a trader Dikko was well traveled, had had dealings with foreigners of different national origins, and was considered more attuned to events in the outside world than other members of the Katsina aristocracy. This is how Dikko recounts the noblemen's plea:

You are the exposed one among us. Do you have any idea as to how we will escape from these Europeans by using procedures devised by some people, or do you suggest that we run to the hills and hide in caves and holes?¹⁴

Dikko counseled that running away was not a wise decision. Instead, he advised that all should remain calm and await direction from Emir Abubakar: 'If the Emir says we run so be it; if he says we fight, fighting is what we will do'.¹⁵ Thus even before British troops arrived in Katsina we see Dikko emerge as a voice of circumspection and rapprochement, opening the door to colonial accommodation. This temperament of pragmatism and deference to higher authority would soon endear him to the British.

In June 1903 Frederick Lugard, the commander of British troops in the emerging protectorate of Northern Nigeria, sent a letter to the emir of Katsina demanding to be hosted in Katsina town on his way back from his military expedition to Sokoto. The emir huddled with his titleholders, including Dikko, and a decision was reached to seek peace with the British. The emir then announced at Friday's congregational prayers that 'whoever had made preparations to run should not do so because we are not going anywhere'.¹⁶ The next event in Dikko's fateful initial encounter with the British was the arrival of an advance party of British forces led by a Mr. Kemball, followed by the arrival of Lugard and the main party. Having decided to make peace with the British, the emir personally hosted Kemball at Kofar Yandaka, one of the gates of Katsina's walled city, and then instructed that thatched-roof homes be built for the British colonial troops at their encampment.¹⁷ When Lugard arrived the next day the emir, accompanied by Dikko, met him and his army at their encampment. Dikko recalls being in the front row as these encounters unfolded.¹⁸ With initial pleasantries exchanged and the emir having made perfunctory offers of peace and hospitality to Lugard, Emir Abubakar and Lugard, accompanied by their lieutenants and aides, walked to the city gate, discussing the outlines of an occupation arrangement.

The emir then called Dikko aside and assigned him a role that, unknown to either of them at the time, would embed Dikko with the colonizers for the next several years and culminate in his appointment as emir:

13 *Ibid.* 15.

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Ibid.* 17.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

The Emir told Durbi [Dikko], ‘Here are your guests, their feeding and other needs are your responsibilities; you are going to be my link between the people of Katsina and the Europeans’. Durbi took a bow and said to the Emir, ‘Thank you, your highness’.¹⁹

One explanation of this gesture that now seems dominant emanates indirectly from Dikko’s memoir and is corroborated by historian Mohammed Sani Umar.²⁰ In this interpretation, Emir Abubakar saw accommodation with the British and the need for an official emissary to the colonizers as an opportunity to both rid his court of a powerful, charismatic rival and discredit the same rival in the eyes of Katsina people by tainting him as a protégé of *Nasara* (British Christians). For his part, Dikko may have viewed his new assignment as a welcome escape from the cloud of court suspicion and ostracism that plagued him.

Additionally, the ambitious, calculating aristocrat in him may have seen the assignment as a gateway into a new, higher order of power that promised both protection from Abubakar’s intrigues and preeminence over the emir in the emerging colonial order. Umar argues correctly that ‘Dikko seems to have sought a different power base by cultivating the confidence of the first British officials in Katsina’.²¹ The courtship between Dikko and the early British officials was mutual since they depended on each other for the fulfillment of their desires — for Dikko a political desire, for the British officials a search for logistical certainty.

Dikko was assigned two important, interrelated duties in the unfolding colonial order in Katsina: he served as the liaison between the emir and the British occupying forces, and he was also tasked with meeting the logistical needs of the British colonizers, which required him to interact with them daily. As a result, he practically relocated his official duties to the British military encampment outside the city limits. Proximity produced friendships, loyalties, and mutual confidence. Dikko insinuated himself intimately into the early British colonial system by going beyond his assigned diplomatic and logistical remit to satisfy the needs of the British. At Lugard’s request, Dikko located a site for a permanent army barracks and mobilized labor to build new homes and offices on the new barracks site. Also, at the request of British officials, Dikko provided the British troops with a Hausa-language teacher, Mallam Haruna. Dikko then assigned another man, Dogo Abubakar, to the task of replenishing the food supplies of the barracks and meeting other quotidian needs.²²

Dikko as a model colonial mediator

As the early colonial administration in Katsina began to take discernible shape, Dikko came to symbolize the possibilities of indirect rule. This reputation was magnified by what the British regarded as Emir Abubakar’s crude opposition to British efforts to

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ M. S. Umar, *Islam and Colonialism: Intellectual Responses of Muslims of Northern Nigeria to British Colonial Rule* (Leiden, 2006), 145.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.* 18.

establish infrastructures and effect reforms deemed necessary for the takeoff of the colonial administration. Some of these reforms, such as the effort to set up a treasury and a colonial court system subject to British oversight, were threats to the emir's revenue and income streams, the very instruments that gave him the ability to mobilize resources, revenue, and patronage, or to allocate and withhold the same as a strategy of exercising power. In comparison, Dikko's quiescent, even enthusiastic, support for these organs of colonial administration deepened his reputation as a model colonial partner.

In 1904, when Emir Abubakar was removed for obstructing British schemes and was replaced by Yero Dan Musa, the British colonial government appointed Dikko *ma'aji*, or treasurer, of the entire Katsina Province. Although Emir Yero was unhappy with Dikko's appointment,²³ he had no choice but to grudgingly accept it, while remaining wary of the latter's rising profile as a speculated rival to the throne. Like Abubakar before him, Emir Yero continued to passively oppose the British administration's bureaucratic reforms.²⁴ Supervising British officials subsequently accused Yero of 'continuing the extortion and oppression of his people for which he had always been noted'.²⁵ By the time Yero fell out of favor with the British, Dikko had become perfectly positioned to succeed him.

Even as he indicted Yero for disloyalty, Lugard praised the 'chiefs and people' of Katsina as 'more loyal and well-disposed' to the colonial government and as having isolated the emir in his 'obstruction' while 'reduc[ing] his position'.²⁶ As British disaffection with Emir Yero intensified, another event occurred that deepened colonial frustration with the emir and accelerated the quest for a worthy successor: Herbert Palmer became the resident of Katsina Province in 1906 and immediately cultivated a strong working and personal relationship with Dikko. This relationship proved critical to both Dikko's ascension to the position of emir and his unique favor in the British imperial system.

In 1906 while Dikko was away on a camel-buying mission, Lugard, following the recommendation of Resident Palmer, approved the removal of Emir Yero, exiling him to Lokoja in today's Central Nigeria. Lugard also approved the appointment of Dikko as emir on Palmer's recommendation.²⁷ On 2 January 1907, amid a festive ceremonial atmosphere complete with a military band and parade, Lugard formally installed Dikko as the emir of Katsina.²⁸

23 K. Imam and D. Coomasie, *Usman Nagogo: A Biography of the Emir of Katsina, Sir Usman Nagogo* (Kaduna, Nigeria, 1995), 10.

24 See D. Rabe, 'The British colonial occupation and the Christian missionary activities in Katsina Emirate c. 1903–1936' (seminar paper, History Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria 2011), 3. Rabe suggests that passive resistance was a strategic anticolonial stance adopted by the rulers of Katsina that reflected the fact that the decision to submit to the British had not been unanimous among the titleholders, and that anti-British suspicions lingered.

25 F. Lugard, *Collected Annual Reports of Northern Nigeria, 1904* (Lagos, 1905), 33.

26 *Ibid.* 376.

27 Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 19.

28 A. Saeed, 'Sir Herbert Richmond Palmer and the establishment of colonial rule, 1904–1930', in A. M. Yakubu, I. M. Jumare, and A. G. Saeed (eds.), *Northern Nigeria: A Century of Transformation, 1903–2003* (Kaduna, Nigeria, 2005), 143.

BRITAIN'S FAVORITE EMIR

Dikko's appointment as emir represented a radical political shift. In some ways Dikko was a carefully nurtured pedagogical, cultural, and political project of British colonizers. His emergence as emir thus represented a fulfilling end to a project that began in 1903 with Dikko's appointment as Emir Abubakar's liaison to the British. The failure of other British attempts at aristocratic recruitment magnified the symbolic import of Dikko's ascension to the position of emir. In Dikko the British saw a rare example of an ally who was not merely going through the pragmatic routines of colonial loyalty for the purpose of personal political survival but who seemed genuinely curious about British ways.

The fact that Resident Palmer was instrumental to Dikko becoming emir of Katsina became part of Katsina royal lore.²⁹ Palmer is regarded as the principal benefactor who gave Dikko access to an expansive imperial world stretching from Nigeria to Britain. The friendship between Dikko and Palmer was unusually deep, even in a protectorate in which aristocratic fraternities flourished across the colonial color line and in which British officials admired the aristocratic mien of Hausa-Fulani political middlemen.³⁰ Dikko's reputation as a reliable colonial partner spread in Nigerian colonial circles, and eventually made its way to Britain. This reputation made it possible for British colonizers to select him as the first Northern Nigerian emir to visit Britain.

The voyage of 1921

Dikko's first visit to Britain occurred in 1921, a visit that was combined with the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Dikko left Katsina on 29 May with a party of ten, seven men and three women. The emir traveled with his son Usman Nagogo, his brother Nuhu Kankiya, his scribe Malam Barmo, one of his wives, Kankiya's wife, and others. The party made their way to Lagos, where they boarded the England-bound ship *Appam*, accompanied by Mr. Webster, the resident of Sokoto Province, whom Governor Hugh Clifford had designated as the official guide for Dikko and his contingent.³¹ The party arrived in Liverpool on 27 June, where arrangements had been made for cars, accommodations, and sightseeing in the city before their departure for London.

With the help of his scribe Malam Barmo, Dikko kept a detailed journal of the things he saw and did in Britain. This journal allows historians to retrace his itinerary and get an illuminating glimpse into Dikko's perspectives on what he experienced. Relying on these journal entries and metropolitan newspaper accounts and coverage, I reconstruct below Dikko's reactions to the sights, sounds, and cultures of the British imperial metropole, unearthing the unique perspective of an African Muslim aristocratic visitor to imperial Britain.

Accessing a subaltern ethnographic notebook

Dikko's travel narrative was peppered with a great number of details, some central and others tangential to his accounts of life in Britain. Nonetheless, even seemingly digressive

29 Interview with Alhaji Idris, Katsina, 29 Dec. 2014.

30 F. Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa* (Edinburgh, 1922), 64–93.

31 Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 26.

details helped to make the metropole more concrete for those who read Dikko's accounts and sought to reify their fantasies about Britain. If Dikko was a subaltern colonial ethnographer exploring and observing the metropole, his initial descriptions both confirm and confound that appellation. In Dikko's first few journal entries, he describes in glamorous but mundane details his hotel suite. He depicts the seven-story hotel as 'house on top of a house', a vernacular rendering of multistory buildings that would have been the only way to make this architecture intelligible to his Hausa readers. Dikko then describes his first encounter with an elevator, its workings, and its wonderful mobility. As for his suite, he declares that it could comfortably accommodate fifty guests and discusses in great detail the decor, bedding, bathrooms, and other features.³²

During his first two days in Liverpool Dikko followed an eclectic itinerary. On 28 June he toured the Tropical School of Medicine and described seeing different therapeutic products as well as a demonstration of the workings of the human body.³³ The following day Dikko and his entourage visited the offices of the *Echo* newspaper, where they watched as the 'the evening edition [was] set up and printed with the photograph of the Emir'.³⁴ On 2 July Dikko, Webster, Nuhu Kankia, and Usman Nagogo traveled by car to the town of Derby, where they toured the Derby Cattle Show and saw a variety of breeds:

We saw very big cattle and very fat. Each one of them was as large as four of those in our country. We saw the milk of a single cow, as much as that of ten of ours. We saw sheep with horns, without, and horses, very fat and exceedingly large, far more so than in our country. ... We saw many different breeds. Some were like horses of our land. Others were three times the size of ours in height and size altogether. ... We saw horses only six months old like our six-year-old horses. ... Each single bird was ten times the size of one of ours.³⁵

Like other accounts of the metropole, Dikko's narrative thrives on hyperbole and exaggerative similitude to underscore the wonders of Britain. The notion that a British cow was as large as four Northern Nigerian ones or produced ten times the amount of milk was a strategic narrative idiom. Dikko wanted his readers to imagine metropolitan animals and the methods used to breed and nurture them as vastly superior to and different from Northern Nigerian techniques. This rhetorical maneuver is similar to his portrayal of metropolitan technologies, which he advanced as infinitely wondrous aspects of imperial modernity that had no equivalent in Northern Nigerian society.

We learn from Dikko's recorded observations that as he and his entourage toured the show they themselves became objects of amazement, attracting a crowd of curious English people even as the emir and his group expressed their own curiosity about what they were observing. Dikko's articulation of this layered metropolitan gaze is instructive: 'We gazed at the animals. ... [T]he people there followed and gazed at us. We marveled at what we saw, while they marveled at seeing us — they gazed at our *rigas*, our colour,

32 *Ibid.* 28.

33 TNA FO 141/699/5, H. E. the Governor of the Sudan, despatch no. 69, 18 Mar. 1933, 'Pilgrimage of the Emir of Katsina (of Nigeria) via Sudan'; extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina's visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

34 *Ibid.*

35 National Archives, Kaduna (NAK) KatProf 1951, diary of journey to England and Mecca 1921, hereafter *Dikko's Journal*, entry for 2 July 1921.

and our turbans and shoes'.³⁶ Even as Dikko and his entourage inverted the traditional colonial ethnological scrutiny by conducting a reverse ethnography of the metropole, their presence in Britain and their exotic alterity reproduced the colonial gaze they were inadvertently reversing. The result was a complex landscape of colonial ethnography in which Dikko and metropolitan colonial actors sought to satiate mutual curiosities whetted by decades of imperial contact.

Dikko described a tour at a car manufacturing plant, where they saw 'different parts' of the car being assembled to produce a car 'all in one building'.³⁷ Next, Dikko's journal records a visit to a newspaper publishing company. To his amazement, the emir saw published news of his arrival in Liverpool, which included information on 'my colour and the type of clothes I was wearing'.³⁸ This encounter further heightened his awareness of his exposure to metropolitan curiosity.

Dikko and his fellow tourists visited a telephone exchange where they were allowed to make mock telephone calls to one another, a system of communication Dikko describes as 'a marvelous thing'. The visitors then toured a museum where they saw many statues of 'great men of old and many different kinds ... some soldiers, some men who had done something wonderful ... all carved in stone'.³⁹ The party then went to a cinema in the basement of their hotel and viewed a movie of the Duke of Connaught's tour of India.⁴⁰ Dikko recounts the experience thus:

We saw the land of India, all of it, what it was like and what its inhabitants were like — the kings and the soldiers of India, and some games of that country. All of this we saw without understanding the magic. We saw also the great seas. ... We saw many great ships and we saw some unloading their cargoes and passengers and others loading; after this we saw horses and soldiers on them, many of them, they were galloping, raising the dust as they went. All this we saw without understanding how it came about. We saw many horses and horsemen about a thousand in number. They were making play in their gathering as if on a journey of the king and his chiefs in India. We saw also camelmen loading their camels as though ... just about to start. We saw monkeys fighting each other — all of them magnificent animals. We saw charcoal humans and smiths in iron and copper and silver.⁴¹

Dikko's journal included even more detailed description of the film, as though he was trying to recall the entire audiovisual experience for his readers. Dikko and his entourage also saw the movie *A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur*, which was specially released for a private viewing at the Liverpool cinema.⁴²

It is no narrative accident that Dikko describes the cinematographic display as 'magic'. Magic is the ultimate denotation of mystery, elusiveness, and indescribability. Magic titillates and mystifies the senses precisely because one does not understand its workings.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *Ibid.* Entry for July 4.

³⁸ Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 28–9.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina's visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

⁴¹ NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko's Journal*, entry for 4 July.

⁴² 'The emir at King Arthur's Court', *The Diss Express and Norfolk and Suffolk Journal*, 12 Aug. 1921. See also TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina's visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

When Dikko states that they saw the moving pictures ‘without understanding how it came about’, this was a textual gesture of surrender to the seductive power of mystery and magic. Dikko’s invocation of magic is a culmination of his repeated expression of wonderment and marvel to describe his party’s emotive reactions to the sights they saw across Britain. The trope of magic and whiteness dates back to West Africans’ first encounters with Portuguese sailors in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the ‘strange visitors’ were regarded as ‘great wizards ... whose marvelous [technological] possessions came through the use of evil magic’ and who possessed ‘diabolical powers and magical properties’.⁴³ In colonial times, as Africans struggled to understand and master colonial practices and goods they considered mysterious, the idea that the white man was a bearer of magic was projected onto imperial machines whose workings Africans could not explain within their own knowledge traditions. Moreover, circulating rumors attributed magical and supernatural powers to white colonial officials.⁴⁴ As a Muslim, Dikko’s invocation of magic as a descriptive and semiotic trope is revealing considering the fact that unambiguous condemnation of all types of magic pervades ‘normative branches of Islamic law and theology’.⁴⁵

Later in the journal Dikko reiterates this sense that one could never quite capture the wonders on display: ‘All the things that we saw in this wonderful house of pictures, without understanding the marvelous magic ... [are] very difficult to describe to one who has not seen it [the house] by the very reason of its wonders’.⁴⁶ Dikko sought to make two interrelated points: the impossibility of full textual narrative accounting of an audiovisual experience, and the necessity and uniqueness of personal observation. In saying this, Dikko granted himself the discretion to invoke mystery and magic to describe unfathomable aspects of British life.

In his journal, Dikko often returns to the ‘difficult to describe’ narrative motif. Earlier, Dikko concludes his description of the tour of domestic animals by stating that ‘we cannot adequately describe [the animals’] quality [and] size’. Similarly, in his description of a car factory he writes about ‘wonderful things that we cannot describe’.⁴⁷ The hook of a travel narrative designed to evoke wonder in readers was to leave the readers wishing they had witnessed the object of the narrative for themselves. There had to be a zone of knowing that only physical proximity and seeing could achieve, so that the traveler himself retained his authority as the one who had truly seen and who truly knew what he was trying, with modest success, to describe. The phrase ‘difficult to describe’ put Dikko and his fellow travelers above his readers in the hierarchy of metropolitan knowledge.

43 D. Northrup, *Africa’s Discovery of Europe, 1450–1850* (Oxford, 2002), 11–13; M. Tymowski, ‘African perceptions of Europeans in the early period of Portuguese expeditions to West Africa’, *Itinerario*, 39:2 (2015), 221–46, 227.

44 See L. White, ‘Cars out of place: vampires, technology, and labor in East and Central Africa’, *Representations*, 43 (1993), 27–50.

45 T. Zadeh, ‘Magic, marvel, and miracle in early Islamic thought’, in D. J. Collins (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Magic and Witchcraft in the West: From Antiquity to the Present* (Cambridge, 2015), 235–67.

46 NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 4 July.

47 *Ibid.*

The allure of London

On 5 July Dikko and his party, accompanied by another guide, Mr. Gowers, traveled to London, with Dikko noting that the roads of Britain were ‘as smooth as the floors of their own houses’ in Katsina.⁴⁸ Dikko and his team marveled at the size of London, remarking that although they had ‘read it was the city of cities’ they ‘had no idea it was like this’.⁴⁹ The next day, they paid a visit to the home of the governor of Nigeria, Sir Hugh Clifford. Governor Clifford told Dikko that he was delighted that the emir was enjoying his trip, and then said to Dikko, ‘When I come to Katsina, you must gather your people together and get them to make play before me there — the wrestlers, boxers, and camel races and foot races too’.⁵⁰ The governor then offered to personally take Dikko and his party to see any sport they wanted to see in Britain. Dikko and his entourage then headed to the Colonial Office, the most powerful citadel of British colonial policymaking, where officials received them.⁵¹ Later that day the visitors were given a tour of horse race-tracks, a sight Dikko describes as ‘magnificent’.⁵²

The next few days were packed with tours. The group visited the London Zoological Gardens (Fig. 1), where the visitors likened the rhinoceros to the *kakanda*, a legendary beast of Hausa folklore.⁵³ Dikko and his entourage swooned over the peacocks and were told a pair would be given to them as a gift.⁵⁴ The visitors attended a reception organized in their honor by the lord mayor of London at his home. In his journal, Dikko goes to great lengths to describe the decor of the mayor’s residence: ‘We saw . . . very beautiful rugs and carpets everywhere in the house, and many chairs worked in gold and silken coverings’.⁵⁵ At one point during the tour the emir sat ‘dignified and stately in the Lord Mayor’s chair in the Guest Hall’.⁵⁶ Dikko was photographed seated there surrounded by members of his entourage and the mayor, an iconic photograph that was printed in Dikko’s published memoir (Fig. 2).⁵⁷

Later that day Dikko and his entourage proceeded to the Lingfield horse race where the emir, a horse breeder and an avid fan and promoter of traditional horse racing in Northern Nigeria, enjoyed several races and watched as bettors picked horses prior to each race.⁵⁸ In the fifth race Dikko joined in the betting, choosing ‘a lay mare’ that won and netted him a modest, undisclosed amount. Dikko’s scribe reports that ‘the Europeans were astonished at the emir’s knowledge of horses though he was a stranger [to the sport]’.⁵⁹ Dikko and his party attended the interregimental polo match at Hurlingham and a horse racing event at

48 TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina’s visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.* Entry for 6 July.

51 ‘Wives not to be allowed to go shopping; however, he may take them to the zoo’, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 7 July 1921.

52 *Ibid.*

53 TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina’s visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

54 *Ibid.*

55 NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 7 July.

56 ‘The emir’s tour round London’, *Dundee Courier*, 9 July 1921.

57 Kagara, *Muhammadu Dikko*, 16.

58 NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 7 July.

59 *Ibid.*



Fig. 1. Dikko and his entourage at the London Zoological Gardens. Credit: B. Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 21.

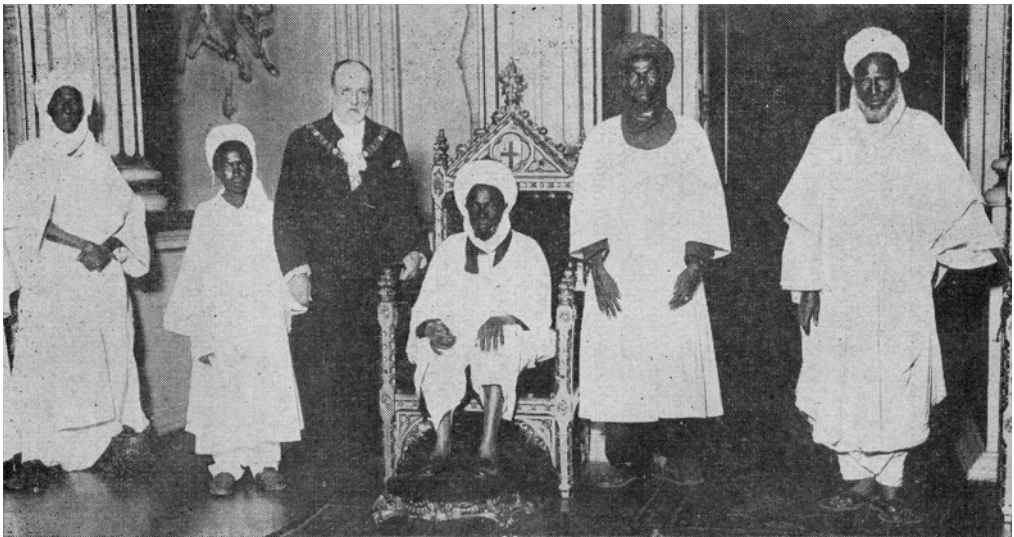


Fig. 2. Dikko (seated) flanked by members of his entourage and the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Baddeley. Credit: B. Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 16.

Newmarket.⁶⁰ The visitors then retired to the serenity of Hyde Park ‘to take in the air’ before returning to their hotel.⁶¹

⁶⁰ TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina’s visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

⁶¹ NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 8 July.

The visitors attended a Russian ballet, where they wondered whether the dancers in the performance of *Les Papillons* ‘were human’. Dikko’s wives attended this show, accompanied by Mrs. Gowers, the guide’s wife. Mrs. Gowers then took the wives to the London Zoological Gardens, but their attempt to take a walk in Regent’s Park ‘proved impossible owing to mobbing’ by members of the press and park users.⁶² On 11 July, Dikko and his group visited a private stock farm owned by one Major Morrison, where the emir purchased a ‘Red Poll Bull and Heifer’ for his farm in Nigeria.⁶³ Visits to a bath club and a squash game preceded a lavish shopping spree at Harrods.⁶⁴

Buckingham Palace

The highpoint of Dikko’s 1921 tour of Britain was a meeting with the king at Buckingham Palace. Accompanied by Mr. Webster, Dikko and his party were ushered into a large reception hall where they saw Governor Hugh Clifford, Lieutenant Governor Gowers, and Lord Hamilton, the guardian of the palace gate, waiting for them. As Malam Barmo recorded:

Mr. Gowers called the Emir; they entered together and he took him into the presence of the King. Then the Emir greeted the mighty King, God give him victory, and rejoiced to see him. They conversed for about twenty minutes — then the King gave him a medal of honor of gold; with his own hand he gave it into the hand of the Emir.⁶⁵

The twenty-minute chat between Dikko and the king was a typical aristocratic conversation and covered aristocratic pastimes. The king is reported to have said, ‘I understand you are a good judge of horses, and at Lingfield races picked out several winners’.⁶⁶ The *Dundee Evening Telegraph* reported that ‘the Emir’s eyes sparkled with pleasure and he enthusiastically explained to His Majesty that Nigerians were magnificent horsemen’, and that if he was shown a parade of horses he could instinctively pick out the winner most of the time.⁶⁷

The king presented Dikko with the King’s Medal for African Chiefs, the highest imperial honor accorded to African chiefs in British Africa. In his journal, Dikko explicitly states that the king personally gave the medal to him ‘with his own hands’, a way to signal to his readers that he made bodily contact with the mystical head of the British Empire. As Dikko chatted with the king in the chamber, Gowers called Prince Nagogo and the rest of the party in to greet the king. The emir’s scribe recorded the group’s collective reaction to meeting the king thus:

We greeted the mighty King and beheld his face with joy; we saw him clearly — we rejoiced to behold him and at the gift which he bestowed on the Emir, and we returned grateful thanks. Then the Emir spoke with the great King of England and Mr. Gowers interpreted what was said.⁶⁸

62 TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina’s visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Ibid.*

66 ‘Emir’s talk with the King: Nigerian ruler’s racing successes, wonderful Buckingham Palace’, *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11 July 1921.

67 *Ibid.*

68 NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 9 July.

Dikko and his party, accompanied by Clifford, Gowers, and Webster, were then taken on an extensive tour of the palace. They saw ‘different reception rooms’ and entered a section with 14 rooms between the north and south walls of the building. Dikko reports that ‘each single room [was] beyond comparison on account of the beauty of its furniture and decoration and the many wonderful things’ it contained. He describes seeing ‘golden chairs’, ‘rugs of beautiful colours’, multicolored beds and pillows, three portraits of Queen Victoria at different stages of her life, and ‘the likeness of beautiful maidens’.⁶⁹ Upon the completion of the tour, newsmen covering the visit asked Dikko what he thought of Buckingham Palace. *The Leeds Mercury* reported the emir to have responded: ‘It is the house of houses. I used to think the Governor’s residence in Lagos was magnificent, but it is a hut compared with the great King’s palace’.⁷⁰

Dikko had made history as the first emir or chief from Northern Nigeria to be awarded the King’s Medal for African Chiefs (First Class), and this honor gave him entry into a network of symbolic prestige reaching from London to all corners of the British Empire. The tradition of awarding medals to chiefs and aristocrats in British colonial domains began, David Cannadine notes, in colonial India and quickly spread to other parts of the British Empire as its use as a tool for rewarding loyal allies became established. The invention of an elaborate honorific system followed, in which medals, awards, and honors of various gradations and nomenclature proliferated across the empire.⁷¹ Gestures of this nature gave subaltern aristocrats a symbolic stake in the exclusive honor system of British metropolitan society.

On 13 July Dikko and his group embarked on their wildest metropolitan adventure yet, visiting the Hendon Aerodrome where they were entertained by an air display and maneuver by Royal Air Force (RAF) pilots in three Bristol fighter jets (Fig. 3). Air Marshall Sir Hugh Trenchard, who had commanded the British army of conquest in Southern Nigeria, had gone on to help found the Royal Air Force, and was now the Chief of Air Staff, arranged the flight exhibition. The exhibition dazzled Dikko and his party, prompting the remark that the planes were ‘more wonderful than hawks for even a hawk cannot fly upside down’.⁷² When a fourth jet appeared and prepared to take to the skies, Dikko surprised his hosts by asking to get on board, a request that the RAF authorities granted. Dikko then requested that his flight avoid the ‘stunts ... they had just seen’.⁷³ He and Prince Nagogo put on the appropriate gear and climbed aboard the aircraft, sitting behind the pilot.⁷⁴ What happened next was captured in all its marvelous detail by a story in *The Leeds Mercury*:

The Emir had been out at Hendon for an aeroplane flight and the novelty of the outing seems to have impressed him tremendously. When the propeller started ‘roaring’ his first thought was that the engine was ill, and that it might be advisable to wait until it was better. After a ten minute spin, his comment was that it was ‘very pleasant to be a bird’.⁷⁵

69 *Ibid.*

70 ‘Emir at the palace, amazed at the King’s ‘house of houses’, *The Leeds Mercury*, 11 July 1921.

71 See D. Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw their Empire* (Oxford, 2001).

72 TNA FO 141/699/5, extract from the diary of the emir of Katsina’s visit to England and Mecca, 1921.

73 *Ibid.*

74 NAK KatProf 1951, *Dikko’s Journal*, entry for 13 July.

75 ‘Emir’s flying ‘sensation’, *The Leeds Mercury*, 4 July 1921.

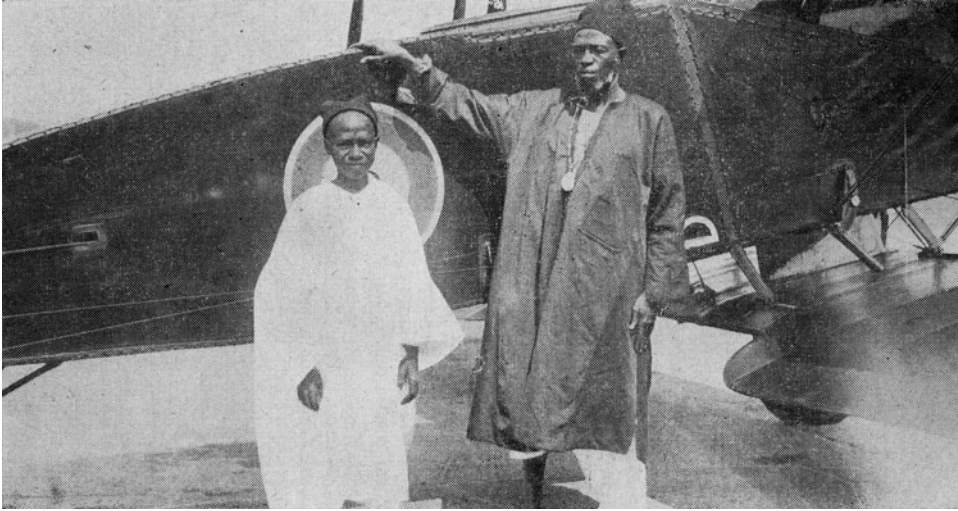


Fig. 3. Dikko and his son Unman Nagogo at the Hendon Aerodrome. Credit: B. Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 10.

Dikko and his group visited the Royal Air Force Station at Kenley and the House of Commons, where the group sat in on debates and observed the House in session.⁷⁶ As he left for Liverpool the press asked about his experiences in and around London. Dikko responded effusively: 'It is a city of cities, and very much bigger than I ever imagined it would be. There is nothing to compare with it. There is no rest here. It is all movement, bustle, and hurry'.⁷⁷

A religious detour

On 16 July, Dikko and his entourage sailed from Liverpool to Jeddah to perform the Muslim pilgrimage. In correspondence preceding the trip, British officials characterized the pilgrimage to Mecca as a detour from the main trip to Britain. Nonetheless, the British consul in Jeddah would certainly have been detailed to provide diplomatic support to Dikko. The British authorities would also have arranged for the issuance of visas and entry permits to Dikko and his entourage.

These logistical realities meant that Dikko and his entourage traveled to Jeddah and then to Mecca on the quasi-diplomatic goodwill of the British government. This is significant in two ways. First, by indicating the geographical reach and political clout of Britain, such imperial processes would have worked to reassure Dikko and his entourage of the might of the empire.

Second, Dikko's reliance on British imperial resources of mobility (shipping) and bureaucratic diplomacy (visa and permit facilitation) deepened his participation and immersion in imperial networks. Given this colonial involvement in the pilgrimage to the Hejaz and its logistical continuities with the trip to Britain, Dikko's relative silence on it in his journal is

⁷⁶ 'Distinguished visitors', *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 15 July 1921.

⁷⁷ 'Emir's impression of London', *The Scotsman*, 16 July 1921.

somewhat odd. Without the scripted formality of a tour, Dikko might not have seen the need to extend his travelogue to the Hejaz. Another possible reason for the relatively few entries on the pilgrimage to the Hejaz is an insightful point made by Muhammed Sani Umar. Umar argues that emirs and Islamic leaders such as Dikko who pragmatically embraced and engaged British colonization were skillful at compartmentalizing their colonial political engagements and their religious obligations into different zones of discourse and praxis.⁷⁸ Dikko may have regarded his visit to the Hejaz as a private spiritual undertaking, separate from his British adventures.

When Dikko completed the pilgrimage, he returned briefly to England, a journey that would have entailed several more weeks at sea. He is reported to have toured a pottery and even descended into the pit at the Fenton Colliery. At a luncheon there Dikko 'was presented with a pair of silver-plated safety lamps suitably described as a souvenir'.⁷⁹ During the same detour, Dikko visited a weapons manufacturing factory at Erith in Kent. After being shown how to fire a machine gun, he remarked, 'It is the most terrible weapon I have ever seen'.⁸⁰ Dikko then sailed to Nigeria.

DIKKO AND THE BRITISH EXHIBITIONARY IMAGINATION

On 25 August 1924, Emir Dikko and a large entourage comprised of his wife and several members of his family, including his brother Nuhu Kankiya, departed Katsina for England to attend the Wembley British Empire Exhibition at the invitation of the Colonial Office. The group visited the Madame Tussaud Wax Museum, where they saw wax statues of royal figures and other prominent men and women. Dikko recalled that the statues 'looked so real as if they would speak', and that they were 'decorated with golden and silver colors' that accentuated their lifelikeness.⁸¹

Dikko and his entourage toured an electricity company and an automobile manufacturing plant, and attended a car-racing event that the emir described as 'very interesting but very risky'.⁸² Dikko and his group toured courthouses as well as one of the palaces of the king of England, where they saw 'the King's horses' and 'the King's carts'.⁸³ The entourage visited the London Zoological Gardens, as Dikko and his retinue had done in 1921.⁸⁴ Dikko donated 'a white Oryx antelope' to the zoo authorities.⁸⁵ Dikko and the men in his entourage also performed what was quickly becoming a ritual of metropolitan visits by the Northern Nigerian aristocracy: a visit to Frederick Lugard's home in Abinger.⁸⁶

78 Umar, *Islam and Colonialism*, 146–52.

79 'Emir down a coal mine', *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 28 Oct. 1921.

80 'The most terrible weapon', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 29 Oct. 1921.

81 Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 55.

82 *Ibid.*

83 *Ibid.* 57.

84 'Ancient visitors to Plymouth', *The Western Morning News and Mercury*, 22 Dec. 1924.

85 'Personalities of the week: people in the public eye', *The Illustrated London News*, 20 Sept. 1924, 27.

86 Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 57.

Adventures in Otherness

British newspapers and publications delighted in reporting on the itinerary of Dikko's group, but they especially engaged in the visual Othering common in imperial Britain, taking and publishing photos of them in their newspapers and publications. The 17 September edition of *The Leeds Mercury* displayed a picture of the two women in the delegation. Taken at the exhibition grounds in Wembley, the picture depicts the two women in a blushing, reluctant pose. One of them is said to have 'reluctantly raised her veil for the photographer' while the other 'could not be persuaded' to do likewise.⁸⁷ *The Illustrated London News* similarly photo-profiled the male members of the group, publishing a picture of them taken at the Wembley British Empire Exhibition on its 'Personalities of the Week' page.⁸⁸

Dikko and his delegation began touring the exhibition on 16 September, starting with the 'West African Walled Compound' section of the 'Races in Residence' exhibit. The walls of the compound were a replica of the famous clay walls of Northern Nigeria's largest city, Kano, and a gate 'fashioned in Nigeria . . . and specially made for the walled city' mimicked the gates of Kano city.⁸⁹ Within the larger compound, the Nigerian Pavilion, as it was called, was designed to resemble an emir's palace compound.⁹⁰ The walled city was built to showcase the traditional architectures and cultures of several West African peoples, including the Hausa and Fulani of Northern Nigeria. In all, the West African compound 'housed seventy African men, women, and children in a village setting'.⁹¹ They lived in purportedly authentic West African mud and straw huts, cooked their own meals, conducted their daily affairs, did chores, lounged, and interacted as the exhibition's audience, mainly white Britons, walked by or stopped to gaze voyeuristically at them.⁹²

In his memoir, Dikko recalls that he and his group visited the Nigerian (Hausa and Fulani) pavilion within the West African compound, where 'we saw houses build with mud, like those in Katsina'.⁹³ Several of the houses on display, Dikko writes, were done in the style of Kano.⁹⁴ For Dikko, the point of reference for evaluating the compound and its content was not ideology or polemics but the physical spaces of Northern Nigeria that the organizers sought to replicate. In this contrived metropolitan space, Dikko and his party saw a reenactment of a palace very much like his own. This was an awkward ritual of touring a foreign space purporting to represent your own home, 'an encounter with a representation of their own otherness'.⁹⁵

87 'Shy Wembley visitors', *The Leeds Mercury*, 17 Sept. 1924. The quoted commentary is from the photo caption.

88 'Personalities of the week'.

89 Special Collections Research Center, Henry Madden Library, California State University, Fresno, *The British Empire Exhibition, Official Guide*, 1924, 76.

90 *Ibid.*

91 A. Clendinning, 'On the British Empire Exhibition, 1924-25', (http://www.branchcollective.org/?ps_articles=anne-clendinning-on-the-british-empire-exhibition-1924-25), accessed 15 Oct. 2016.

92 *Ibid.*

93 Kagara, *Sarkin Katsina*, 55.

94 *Ibid.*

95 T. Mitchell, 'Orientalism and the exhibitionary order', in N. B. Dirks (ed.), *Colonialism and Culture* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002), 289-318, 290.

The Dikko party's experience is analogous to that of Egyptian aristocratic visitors to Europe in the nineteenth century, as described by Timothy Mitchell. Egyptian tourists, human curios in European spaces, often 'found themselves something of an exhibit' in an elaborate spectacle of objectification that rendered exotic things as objects to be 'experienced by the dominating European gaze'.⁹⁶ The Northern Nigerian tourists saw familiar items, such as tin, rubber, hides, and skins being exhibited, and witnessed familiar artisanal sights such as the inhabitants of the pavilion 'weaving, making pottery or working in leather and metals'.⁹⁷ This was a staged 'object-world', to use Mitchell's coinage, designed to enable metropolitan exhibition goers to experientially enter the supposedly static world of 'natives' and to feel, touch, smell, hear, and taste the material and quotidian universe of dominated African colonial subjects.⁹⁸ Dikko's presence in that space was meant to authenticate the exhibit. In the process, he and his party became 'a part of the exhibition' or, as one colonial correspondent put it, a 'naturalistic attraction' at the exhibition's so-called West African compound.⁹⁹

It is not clear why Dikko in particular had been invited to this exhibit, other than that he was a valued colonial aristocratic ally in the most populous British colony in Africa. From the British perspective, Dikko's invitation was vindicated since he did not seem to recognize the racial baggage of the West African display, which became magnified when reports of London hoteliers refusing accommodation to African visitors to the exhibition drew protests by black student groups.¹⁰⁰ As a guest of the Colonial Office, Dikko moved in a diplomatic bubble in which the exhibition was portrayed as a glorious celebration of the greatness of the British Empire, its familial solidarity, and its wondrous diversity. Rather than seeing the exhibition in the same light as the radical black student groups who protested its racism, the emir basked in the imperial grandeur of which he and his entourage were now a part.

Even though Dikko's visit to the Wembley exhibition sidestepped the racial atmospherics that haunted and plagued the event, two important points suggest themselves to scholars looking back at his participation. First, it is apparent that, in the thinking of the Colonial Office, the exhibition was the ideal event in which to fete a favored African aristocratic ally. The gathering exhibited peoples, cultures, and materials from all over the British Empire, presenting a unified but diverse image of the work of empire and the 'colonial exhibitionary order' in fostering variegated cultural formations in different parts of the world. Second, there was an awkward spectacle to the reality of Dikko seeing his own culture and people on display in a curated metropolitan space. What we get from Dikko's own written account of his encounter with the exhibition is a sense of pleasant surprise at seeing what he regarded as an accurate architectural depiction of a Hausa village setting. Whether this reaction conceals another one is a matter of conjecture. What appears clear is that Dikko essentially went to London to see himself or, more appropriately, a colonially mediated metropolitan version of himself, on display.

96 *Ibid.* 292–3.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.* 294.

99 *Ibid.* 293. TNA FO 141/699/5, from the Residency in Cairo, 'Visit of the emir of Katsina'.

100 *Ibid.*

CONCLUSION

Dikko's metropolitan adventures were shot through with the politics of imperial courtship and patronage. This was a practice in which colonial intermediaries were carefully cultivated and feted with the contrived hospitality of the imperial capital. In the colonizers' view, Dikko's travels to Britain and his sightseeing there represented the culmination of a long, elaborate process of recruiting an ally and solidifying his loyalty. That process began at the moment of colonial conquest, when Dikko and occupying British forces forged a relationship of mutual if unequal benefits. I argue that this relationship enabled Dikko to enter into a vast imperial network stretching from Nigeria to Britain, to ascend to the emirship of Katsina, and to use that as a platform to build a reputation as a trusted colonial intermediary.

The scripted tours of strategically selected metropolitan sites represented attempts to dazzle Dikko and his entourage and to give them a glimpse into the might and modernity of the empire. The trips instantiate a fairly familiar British colonial practice of performing power through the atmospherics of wonder and awe. For Dikko, on the other hand, the trips to Britain carried the prestige of firstness — the honor of being the first traditional ruler from Northern Nigeria to visit Britain. Additionally, the trips enhanced Dikko's mediatory repertoire and enabled him to carve out a position of exclusive local knowledge and expertise on British metropolitan society among his peers and subjects. Moreover, Dikko satiated his metropolitan curiosity by both observing and consuming metropolitan goods and symbols. The colonial political economy of wonder merged the realms of emotion and consumption.

Dikko's travel journal reveals a descriptive flourish animated by self-referential commentary, as well as an ethnographic discourse steeped in hyperbole, similitude, and references to the magic and mysteries of metropolitan goods, technologies, cultures, and forms of leisure. Dikko used this narrative to underscore his membership in the British imperial system, to observe the differences between Muslim-Hausa and British cultural practices, and to underline the cultural distance between Britain and Northern Nigeria even as he tried to bridge that distance for his audience. Dikko's travels to Britain and his activities and experiences there illustrate the imbrication of mobility and modernity since the crux of Dikko's discourse on Britain is the claim that the metropole was the cradle of modernity and the aspirational standard for Northern Nigerian emirates such as his own.