



---

*Address by*  
*His Excellency*  
**Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON**  
*Governor, Ekiti State, Nigeria*  
on the occasion of the

**21<sup>ST</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF MAMBAYYA HOUSE**

with the topic:

***DEMOCRACY, GOOD GOVERNANCE AND THE QUESTION OF  
NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN NIGERIA***

*at*

Sa'adu Zungur Auditorium Complex, Mambayya House, Kano State.  
Saturday, *December 04, 2021*

---

## **Protocols**

1. First and foremost, let me say just how delighted I am to be back in this historic and colourful city of Kano, one of the most vibrant centres of commerce, manufacturing, learning, culture, and governance in the entire African continent with a long historical pedigree. Indeed, this city easily ranks among the oldest continuous political communities in Africa, serving over the years as a meeting point of various peoples from near and far, and a veritable melting pot of the different cultures they carried with them as they settled within its precincts. It is little wonder that amidst its history of continuity, fusion, and change, Kano has been a centre of memory, experimentation, innovation, and transformation.
-



- 
2. Successive rulers of the different state systems that have been established in the Kano area over the centuries have not only learnt to manage diverse groups of peoples, they have also had to steer the constantly evolving dynamic of state-society relations. The ethno-cultural diversity that has characterised this city, the dexterity of various rulers in managing the diversity, and the resultant benefits for the city in economic prosperity have added up to build a strong and unique sense of patriotic identity and pride in the average Kanawa. This is despite the fact that many of its residents are the products of various migratory flows.
  3. Let me also state, as part of my preliminary remarks, that the immense pleasure and honour with which I stand before you today to deliver this lecture to commemorate the 21st anniversary of Mambayya House is directly connected to the person whose memory and legacy it partly serves to preserve and keep alive. As we all know, this is a house that is packed with significance and symbolism. It was the abode of the late Mallam Aminu Kano which, after his death, was taken over and converted initially to the Kano office of the Centre for Democratic Studies (CDS) before becoming the seat of the Aminu Kano Centre for Democratic Research and Training. Indeed, I want to thank the Vice Chancellor and the Director of Mambayya House for the honour of this invitation. I would also like to pay tribute to all the Directors of Mambayya House, right from its founding Director, Professor Attahiru Jega to the current Director, for the excellent work done over the years in maintaining this edifice as the one stop shop for the Study and memorialisation of Mallam Aminu Kano.
  4. As a site and in its uses after the passing of its occupant, Mambayya House serves the important purpose of celebrating that inimitable champion of the working poor, the late Mallam Aminu Kano. The popular name by which the place is known, namely Mambayya House, is derived from the nickname of his late mother. The Sa'adu Zungur Auditorium in which this lecture is taking place is named after one of the close political associates and faithful fellow travellers of Mallam Aminu Kano. Mambayya House, therefore, brims with multiple



---

symbolisms centered on all that the late Mallam Aminu Kano meant to us and our country. You will understand, therefore, that as we mark the 21st anniversary of the House, it is appropriate to remember the life and times of Mallam Aminu and pay justified tribute to his memory.

5. Born on the 9th of August 1930, and as an early beneficiary of both Quaranic and Western education, Mallam as he came to be known affectionately very quickly carved a niche for himself as the pre-eminent voice and champion of the talakawa - that mass of peasants, the urban working poor, and the déclassé. His emergence and growth into this role emanated from a deep-seated set of values that he embraced and honed at an early stage in his political career, and held on to tenaciously for the rest of his life.
6. Concerned by the reported excesses that were built into the colonially-licensed native authority system and convinced that the system needed to be overturned in order for the talakawa to be able to have a fighting chance to lead a decent and dignified life free of oppression, he committed himself to organising the mass of the people to exercise their agency to imagine and create an alternative political order. The principal agency through which he did this was the movement which he helped to found in 1950 and which was named the Northern Elements Progressive Union (NEPU). The establishment of NEPU was to mark a significant milestone in the history of political radicalism in Nigeria. The tradition of radicalism which it represented was carried over into the late 1970s and beyond by the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP) which Mallam Aminu Kano also led.
7. Much of the history of the early political life and exploits of Mallam and the NEPU will be familiar to this audience and has been amply documented and dissected by at least two generations of scholars. Easily among the most thorough and illuminating is the book by the frontline political scientist Professor A.D. Yahaya who transited into eternity a few weeks ago but whose legacy lives on through



---

his writings - such as *The Native Authority System in Northern Nigeria 1950 - 1970*- and the two generations of students he mentored and inspired.

8. Given that Mambayya House was mandated and endowed by the authorities of Bayero University to preserve the memory and legacy of the late Mallam Aminu Kano through research and training on democratic governance writ large, you will allow me to draw a few lessons of his life experience and political career which I find to be an enduring part of his contribution to our nation and relevant to our contemporary circumstances as a people.
9. The first point I would like to raise, and one which has found recurring resonance with me, is the life of principles, courage of conviction, enduring commitment to a just cause, and consistency in public service. For much of his life, despite the fickle and slippery terrain of politics, and against various odds, Mallam stood by his principles and convictions. More than that, he organised within the realms of democratic politics to defend his principles and mobilise for his convictions. The courage and consistency he projected at all times won him the respect of his opponents and critics, and the undiluted respect and adulation of the masses. In this, our very own Mallam Aminu Kano stood shoulder to shoulder with the likes of Kwame Nkrumah, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Ahmed Ben Bella, and other icons of African liberation from the shackles of colonial rule. The NEPU he led shared many similar attributes with Nkrumah's Convention Peoples' Party.
10. Flowing out of my first point is a second related one: For all the political influence and power which he came to enjoy once it became clear that his movement was not going to fade out or be destroyed by its rivals, Mallam stood out in our entire post-colonial experience as the very anti-thesis of money politics. The weight of the man across Nigeria generally and northern Nigeria in particular, did not depend on his ability to dole out tons of money to his followers and fellow-travellers but, rather, the trust and the faith they had in him as the honest, indefatigable, and reliable torch bearer of their interests whom they could trust



---

at all times. There is something in this for all of us who are practicing politicians today.

11. The third point I would like to make about the life and legacy of Mallam centers on the important place of ideas and ideology in his entire political engagement. Mallam built his emancipatory politics around a clear set of ideas and an ideology of empowerment for the *talakawa* that left no one in doubt as to what he stood for and represented. In this regard, the *Sawaba Declaration* of December 1950 which he issued marked an historic milestone in his ideological journey, delineating him and his partisans from the more mainstream sections of the rapidly growing nationalist movement for self-rule and independence in Nigeria.
12. At a time when we seem to have increasingly relegated ideas and ideology to the background, the experience and example of Mallam serves as a poignant reminder to us that there once was a time in our national history when ideas drove political choice and affiliation. Those times can still be reinvented if we stand ready to pause for a bit and learn from the likes of Mallam Aminu Kano, especially in these testy and treacherous times in our national history when we are in need of a constant flow of fresh and refreshing ideas for our national rebirth and advancement.
13. A fourth point I have drawn out of the life experience of Mallam Aminu Kano for our edification and re-education in these times is the central place of modesty and moderation in the making of a successful servant-leader. All through his life, from his abode here in Mambayya House and the high density Gwamajja Quarters in which it is located, to his dress code, his offices, and his worldly goods, Mallam was the epitome of modesty, simplicity, and moderation. This, in turn, made him one of the most accessible leaders in our history to date. It also ensured that the masses easily identified with him as one of them.
14. The fifth and last point I would like to bring to our attention centres on the great store which Mallam set by the place and role of education in the making of



---

personal dignity, social advancement, and nation-building. Whether it be by the open encouragement and calls which he made for the education of girls or the assistance he gave to his staff and followers to acquire education, including, if necessary, self-education, he understood the liberating power of learning and the acquisition of knowledge and skills in the empowerment of a people and the making of a nation.

15. For someone who was trained as a teacher and who also practiced the profession for a period of time, his strong interest in the liberating power of education should probably not be surprising. However, for Mallam Aminu Kano, education was also a weapon for emancipation and he encouraged it in the conviction that it was a necessary tool for self-actualisation and societal progress. Little wonder then that he started his political activism with his central role in the formation of the Northern Teachers Association.
16. In his time, as recounted by Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim, one of his young political assistants, Dr. A.U. Jalingo, who later went on to become a Senior Lecturer and role model in the Department of Political Science in this University, told of the experience whereby Mallam invested his time between political meetings to teach some of his personal staff who hadn't been to school to read and write. That was a mark of just how important education was to him. And it is a sector to which we must devote a considerable amount of attention anew in our continued quest for the combination of workable policies that will enable us once and for all to turn the table of underdevelopment in Nigeria.
17. Policies designed to advance agendas of state- and nation-building or strengthening democratic governance demand that we take to heart the kinds of social concerns that were at the centre of the world view and politics of Mallam Aminu Kano. These policies must be premised on the starting point which he knew so well that no political order can endure where majority of its members wallow in abject poverty and exist in a state of disempowerment. And this is why, in the midst of our debates about the National Question and the



---

various options for restructuring the polity, we must remind ourselves that there are underlying social questions that urgently require to be addressed as well. For the crisis of Nigerian nationhood with which we are presently grappling is not simply reducible only to competing ethnicities or religiosities, it is also about a crisis of social livelihoods.

18. Every political system derives its legitimacy and is held together by the investment which is made in the empowerment of the citizenry and the protection of their welfare and wellbeing. Citizen empowerment as articulated by the generation of Mallam Aminu Kano was structured - correctly - around the provision through public policy of the basic tools by which individuals and groups could advance themselves in life. This is why at independence, across Nigeria, there was a significant investment in the educational and health sectors that are at the heart of social policy. Healthy citizens equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge could not only get employment but also create employment. No wonder then that in the first two decades of our independence, in tandem with and flowing from public social policy investments, Nigerians enjoyed a phase of generalised upward mobility in their lives.
19. Following the onset of economic crisis in the period from the early 1980s, and as a direct result of some of the austerity measures that had to be put in place, the social expenditures of governments at all levels of the federal system suffered a broad-ranging retrenchment. The structural adjustment measures that were subsequently introduced exacerbated a worsening social situation that effectively eroded the social contract underpinning the country's governance. This is the background to our slide into ranks of the countries around the world that harbour the highest number of working poor and the outrightly excluded. Massive and long-term unemployment, especially among our youth, growing social inequality in the country, and the overall thinning out of the middle class are among some of the challenges that steer us in the face everyday.



- 
20. It does not take a magician to see that we are confronted with a highly combustible cocktail of mass poverty, mass unemployment, and massive inequalities that are already generating various discontents in insurgencies, criminality, banditry, and various extremisms. I want to submit that taking determined and bold steps to address these social problems head on is as urgent and crucial as the energies we may be required to devote to recalibrating and updating the structures of our federal system. To do so meaningfully, we cannot avoid offering Nigerians a new social bargain around which we can rebuild citizenship, national identity, and the legitimacy of the state. Nigeria and Nigerians need a new Sawaba Declaration that will constitute our collectively-shared national manifesto of emancipation from poverty, unemployment, inequality, marginalisation, and generalised unemployment.
  21. Thinking through what a new social compact for Nigeria might be, we can borrow a leaf from the late Mallam Aminu Kano and resolve that as part and parcel of the bargain of being a citizen of Nigeria, we will strive to design universal social policies that will enable the generality of our people to renew their faith in the country and their government. Universal access to education should be accompanied by a system of universal health care. It should be underpinned with a national strategy that defines employment creation as a priority concern of public policy. Enhanced efforts at boosting domestic resource mobilisation will need to be accompanied by deliberate measures at redistribution designed to reduced wealth, income, gender, and inter-generational inequalities.
  22. Beyond these broad categories of what the new Sawaba Declaration should focus on, I would like to argue that those of us who believe that a new Nigeria is possible must get to work quickly on the comprehensive development of this social compact, one which must elevate the dignity of the human person and promote the principles of common good, solidarity, stewardship, subsidiarity in the functioning of government, active participation of the citizenry, rights and responsibilities, economic justice as well as peace and security. This should be





---

the manifesto that we collectively work on to address the existential threats to the survival and thriving of the Nigerian state.

23. When the generation of the late Mallam Aminu Kano was faced with what the historic Sawaba Declaration described as “the shocking state of social order”, they summoned the courage to organise themselves to proffer alternatives that they felt would allow for a social redress. The new Sawaba Declaration which we must produce in order to tackle the myriad of discords and discontents afflicting us today must, it seems to me, aim at nothing less than the rebuilding of the social policy anchor of the Nigerian state. On this occasion of the 21st anniversary of Mambayya House, we owe ourselves nothing less. We owe the memory of the late Mallam Aminu Kano nothing less. Let us rise up to the call as a people determined, in unity and a shared hope, to take a giant leap forward.

24. In conclusion, please allow me to return to Mallam Aminu Kano's oft quoted saying in Hausa.

***“Najeriya daya ce, amma kowa ya san gidan uban shi.”***

Coming from a top and early nationalist who actively participated in the decolonisation of Nigeria, and, indeed, of Africa, we owe it to ourselves, and to him, to pause and ask what the great sage and inimitable scholar mean by this powerful, short, pithy, and memorable statement? -

It is my firm conviction that these words of wisdom are a clear message of guidance to us Nigerians, on unity in diversity and on national. Integration. But he spoke to an integration that is content laden, not one of empty rhetoric. It is an enduring call reminding all of us that though by God’s design we all come from somewhere, “gidajen ubannin mu” (our various fathers’ houses, our primary areas of extraction), nevertheless, we must, at all times, ensure national cohesion and unity, without which peace and progress will never be achieved.



---

It is my conviction that the best way to honour the memory of this teacher, philosopher, mentor, father, political activist, organizer extraordinary, and patriot par excellence is to continue to organize to successfully achieve national integration on the basis of social justice, fairness and equity.

Happy 21st anniversary to Mambayya House.

I thank you for your attention.

**Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON**  
*Governor*