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## BOOK REVIEW

**BOOK TITLE:** *SKIP'S DETAILS IN GOVERNMENT*  
**AUTHOR:** *ANIEFIOK A. ISONG*  
**PUBLISHERS:** *WUSEN PRESS LTD, CALABAR*  
**YEAR:** *2002*  
**REVIEWER:** *NTUFAM (DR.) PARTICK A. ASIBONG*  
**PAGES:** *240 + X*  
**PRICE:** *₦500.00*

The book, *SKIP'S DETAILS IN GOVERNMENT* can be rightly described as Mr. Aniefiok A. Isong's Magnum Opus" because from the preface to the end of the index on page 240, one sees a budding scholar from Obbrong, Nkari in Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State bringing to sharp focus all what the New policy on Education 6-3-3-4 system has to offer for Government at the Senior Secondary Level.

In chapter one, the author did not only show that Homo sapiens are gregarious, he went further to give a series of definitions of Government and the scope of the subject matter. Government, according to the author, could be "defined as an institution or machinery set up within the state to manage the affairs of the state" (Isong,2002:1). He quoted Thomas Hobbes to drive home the importance of government in any society thus: "Man's life without government is nasty, poor, brutish and short".

In chapter two, the functions of three organs of government – the Executive, Legislature and Judiciary were treated with the seriousness they deserve. Other important adjuncts of the judiciary like the dependence of the judiciary and appointment of judges in Nigeria were included to broaden the scope of the chapter.

The Basic concepts of Government like: the State or Nation, legal and Political , Sovereignty, power, Authority, Legitimacy, Constitutionalism, political Culture, Political Socialization, Political Participation, Communalism or the African mode of production, Theocracy, Monarchy and Autocracy, Oligarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy; The "isms" which include – Totalitarianisms, Fascism Nazism, Republicanism, Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism, Communism and Marxism were properly addressed in Chapter three.

In the above Chapter, the author did not only identify the different types of ideologies, he went further to present in very clean, clear and graphic manner, the main tenets, advantages and disadvantages of all the "isms" in the best tradition of scholarship. That is, Mr. Isong is not bias in presenting the focus of contemporary political ideologies to the students and ordinary readers, as would have been the case in the 1960s where the mere mention of the word "Communism" will earn one a jail sentence in Africa. The author is fully aware that Nigeria was robbed of the privilege of having one of our illustrious sons, Chief Obafemi Awolowo as the President of the country because of his "flirtations" with the Socialist cum Communist ideology.

The story was the same in far away Ghana where via an operation code named by the CIA as " cold cat" (AC 1967), Socialist inclined President Kwame Nkrumah was removed from office in operation "Rump Punch" (AC 1967), the CIA again supervised the cold-blooded murder of Patrice Lumumba one hundred kilometers from Kinshasha. Andre Marie-Mbida of the Cameroons and Tom Boya of Kenya all suffered because of being identified in the 60's with Socialism or Communism.

The author did not only demystify the communist project by presenting the facts as they are, he went further to state that "Communism is still existing in theory because it is not yet practiced by any country in the world" (Isong, 2002:33).

In chapter four, the author defined a constitution "as the body of basic or fundamental rules and principles which determines how government must rule the state" (Isong, 2002:34). He went a step further by highlighting the features, functions, types and sources of a constitution.

The typologies and characteristics of Government (Unitary, Federal, Confederal, Parliamentary and Presidential Systems ) were didactically presented between pages 40-51 and the student of government and the general reader is left to select the "best system" of his choice.

In chapter six, the basic principles of government like principles of:

(i) The Separation of Powers(ii) Checks and balances(iii) Rule of Law (iv) Delegated Legislation (v) Centralization, (iv) Decentralization, and the most dreaded (vii) Accountability are stated and the epistemic underpinnings revealed via very good prose.

In chapter seven, the author traced the rights of man from the Magne Carta of 1215 via the Bill of Right in 1648 to the present Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. Also included in this chapter, were the duties of the citizens and their obligations to the state.

A political party is defined by the author in Chapter Eight as "... A group of people publicly organized under certain fundamental principles and ideology with the intention to form the government of a country and exercise political parties, Types of party organization, party Systems starting with Uniterism via Two party system, Multiparty to zero – party system is properly addressed in the same chapter.

In most ordinary level Government textbooks, what naturally follows the chapter on political parties is the presentation of facts about Pressure Group and Public Opinion. Hence, the topics are religiously treated in chapters 9 and 10 of Mr. Isong's book.

The Electoral process where suffrage or franchise, Elections, Constituencies, the Electoral Commission and Electoral System is treated in detail is found on pages 83 to 94.

Chapter 12 deals with the civil service structure, Functions, Principles, Reforms, Control including her problems.

The "raison d' être" of Public Enterprises or Public Corporations, characteristics, control mechanisms, organizational structure, Privation and Commercialization is exhaustively treated by the author in chapter 13.

Chapter 14 is entirely devoted to Local Government Administration where her Functions, Sources of Finance, control as well as the 1976 Reforms and the 1986-92 Reforms are accommodated.

For those interested in the African Mode of Production, the author treated the Yoruba Hausa and Igbo pre-colonial system as a point of departure in chapter 15 pointing out that existed before colonial. This shows that Africans had organized government before the age of imperialism.

On the highly contentious and vexing issue of Colonial Administration in Africa. West Africa and Nigeria in particular, Mr Isong had this to say. "Colonial rule of colonialism refers to the establishment and maintenance of a foreign system of administration over an indigenous people who are regarded as subordinates to the ruling power" (Isong, 2002: 117): The British Indirect Rule Policy as well as the French Policies of Assimilation and Association were also Pedagogically treated in chapter 16.

The factors which influenced the rise and spread of Nationalism in West Africa and Nigeria in particular and why it was also to penetrate in French West Africa are adequately addressed in chapter 17, while in chapter 18, the author elaborated on the constitutional Development of Nigeria from 1922 via Sir, James Roberson's in 1954 to the 1999 Federal Constitution of Nigeria. In so doing, he revisited the constitutions of Clifford, Richard, Macpherson, Lytteleton, 1960, 1963 and 1979 constitutions. He went further to treat the evolution, structure and problems of the

Nigerian Federal System in chapter 19 followed by the issues creation and Revenue Allocation.

In chapter 20, the history of the development of political parties in Nigeria was traced back to the 1922 Clifford Constitution, which introduced the elective principal and Herbert Macaulay forming the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP) in 1923. In 1944, the National council of Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC) was formed with Macaulay as the President. In 1948 Chief Obafemi Awolowo formed the Action Group (AG) in the West while the Northern People's Congress was formed in 1951 by Ahmadu Bello and Tafawa Belewa in the northern part of Nigeria. Other parties which emerged, were the Northern Element Progressive Union (NEPU), United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), Nigeria's People Party (NPP), United Party of Nigeria (UPN), National Party of Nigeria (NPN) etc, while we now have the People's Democratic Party (PDP), The Alliance for Democracy (AD) and the All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) and 27 more mushroom political Parties with no manifestoes deposited in INEC Headquarters in the states and Abuja.

The Major Political Crises, which had almost brought Nigeria to her knees, are exhaustively treated in chapter 21. Among those highlighted, were the Eastern Nigeria Regional Crises of 1951; the Kanu Riots of 1953; The Census Crises of 1962; the Action group/Western Regional Crises of 1962; Federal Election Crises of 1964; The Western Nigeria Election Crises of 1965; The Civil War; The Electoral Crises of 1983 and the 1981 Kaduna State Executive/legislative Crises which exposed the capitalist project in that government Balarabe Musa ran the government of Kaduna State for 11 months without Commissioners.

Chapter 22 was exclusively devoted to the place of the military in politics, hence the features of military government, causes of military intervention in politics, merits and demerits, its structure, achievement and weaknesses of the military, processes of transition from military to civil rule and how to prevent military rule in Nigeria are extensively treated in that chapter.

Under the rubric of "Nigeria and the World" in chapter twenty-three, Nigeria's foreign Policy, Nigeria and her relations with other African Countries and Nigeria's membership of the Non-aligned Movement were properly explained even to the understanding to the layman.

In chapter 24, the erudite scholar traced the history of International Organizations from the League of Nations in 1920 to the present day-United Nations Organization (UNO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU); now the African Union (AU); The Commonwealth of Nations; The organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), etc. In the above chapter, the author also religiously treated the aims, problems and prospects of all the above International Organization.



## CAVE THE DRAGON (CRITICISMS)

Since every coin has two sides, let us now try to identify some limitations, which author would use to correct the first edition for a possible reprint in the future.

From page one to the end, there were no maps tables graphs and even plates for the students to see the faces of the gurus (like Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Aminu kanu, Obafemi Awolowo, etc) who shaped the political history of Nigeria.

The author neglected the most current political issue in Akwa Ibom State and indeed the Niger-Delta region – *Resource Control*- which he would have treated under the subheading “the Politics of Revenue Allocation in Nigeria” in chapter 19. This would have spared our indefatigable Governor, Obong Architect Victor Attah, enough breath because the message would have sank in every village via the Senior Secondary Students and teachers of Government who would have read *SKIP'S DETAILS IN GOVERNMENT*.

The “WAZOBIA” Syndrome controlled the author’s pen while writing about the pre-colonial systems as if that of the minorities –Ibiobio, Annang, Oron, Efik, Ejagjam, Tiv, Ijaw, etc. do not exist. Despite the fact that only the above big ethnic groups systems are recommended in the syllabus, he was supposed to ignore the hegemony of the big three and promote the minorities.

One would have expected the author to have added that just as communism has never been practiced anywhere in the world (p.33), Christianity and the Moslem religion have never been practiced as recorded in the Holy Bible and the Quoran. For how can Bin Laden and President Georgy Bush justify what they did in the World Trade Centre in New York and Iraq respectively? Both intentionally and mischievously decided to “forget” the sixth commandment. “Thou shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Some chapters were too sketchy and others like chapter 9 and 10 treating Pressure Groups and Public Opinion would have been fused to one chapter. Summarizes and study questions were not included.

## CONCLUSION

Despite the above negligible criticisms/limitations, Mr. Isong’s Magnum Opus can aptly be described as his greatest achievement after over ten years of service as a classroom teacher in both Cross River and Akwa Ibom States. The book, *SKIP'S DETAILS IN GOVERNMENT* is a classical, compact, intelligent, worthy, informative, well-designed, highly readable and one of the most important modern books on Senior Secondary Government we have today in Nigeria. Commissioners for Education, Government teachers, undergraduates in Nigerian Universities, Senior Secondary Students and the general readers would find the book very useful. The book is a model of a well-planned, informative academic exposition, authoritatively presented devoid of any academic polemics.