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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Obsession for domination and the inevitability of imperial cruelty: Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi* duology in focus

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ABSTRACT
Many existing studies have broadly interrogated the spread of the Oyo Empire across large territories. Other works have explored the English rule in which Scotland was annexed. The current study attempts to juxtapose the Oyo empire domination of Egba land and the English occupation of Scotland, analyzing how obsession for power and imperial cruelty of Alaafin of Oyo and Edward I of England are resisted across Egba and Scottish cultures. Particularly, the study attempts to interrogate how domination and resistance are framed in filmic narratives. The study is purposively approached through a close viewing of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995) and Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi: The Uprising* and *Lisabi: A Legend is Born* (2024-2025). The paper argues that in light of Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi* duology, imperial cruelty as depicted in Edward I and Alaafin of Oyo, is instigated by the two Kings' obsession with domination. The study reveals that across cultures, violent resistance remains a vital option for the oppressed communities in exercising their human dignity and the sovereignty of their territories. By inference, the paper posits that the postcolonial government officials' obsession with power (particularly in Nigeria), which is often justified as an administrative necessity, would keep attracting violent reactions from the public in its long-term effects.

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1. Introduction

Whether in the past or in the present moment, the quest for expansion and cravings to push boundaries, even if it has to do with occupying other people's territories, are innate in man. This desire for occupation is not necessarily driven by an individual's pressing need and irrepressible striving to survive. Still, in some cases, this is done as a demonstration of power

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to suppress and oppress weaker entities or territories. The aggressive nature of such expansion in territories and the conquest of other communities, which is often justified by paternalistic dominance, usually attracts corresponding reactions from the people who feel that their world is being suppressed. In retrospect, this mirrors the Oyo Empire occupation of Egba land and England's subjugation of Scotland. Oyo is a strong Yoruba state that reigned from the 14th to the 19th century, and that had the Egbas as tributaries (Law, 1977). By the early 19th century, and with the rise of Lisabi, Oyo's authoritarian reign on the Egba people had begun to wane, and this eventually culminated in the freedom of Egba land (Law, 1977). In a similar vein, King Edward I of England invaded Scotland in 1296, and he was resisted by the army of Scotsmen that was led by William Wallace (William Wallace: Who Was the Scottish Rebel). This conveniently suggests that Oyo and England have some similarities in the way the Egba land and Scotland are subjugated or occupied, respectively. While many existing studies have broadly interrogated the Oyo empire, and the annexing of Scotland by the English, though in separate discussion, the current study attempts to juxtapose the Oyo empire domination of Egba land and the English occupation of Scotland as depicted in selected films, illustrating how obsession for power as well as imperial cruelty of both Alaafin of Oyo and King Edward I are portrayed, and how resistance by victims of Alaafin and King Edward I's political aggression across Egba land and Scotland are framed or constructed through filmic narrative. Meanwhile in the work, an attempt is made to attribute the excessive use of power of both Alaafin and Edward I to symptoms of their underlying mental health issues. Also, the study underscores the remarkable similarities between the Egba people and Scotland in their experiences of subjugation from Oyo and England, respectively, validating the reality of common grounds across cultures in human existence. The art of filmmaking has played a significant role in depicting shared values among people across geographical locations.

Films remain effective tools that shape the public's views on any subject matter owing to some measures of manipulations enjoyed by the film producers, or the artistic directors (who, by the jurisdiction of their duty craft the artistry in filmmaking) as some popular authorities would like to argue. The artistic director enjoys some measure of control over the eye of the camera through which she or he determines what the viewers see in films. Fundamentally, the control s/he has in determining what is visible to the audience is dictated by his or her mind-frame. While camera framing is influenced by some variables, largely, the ideology of the artistic director is a major influence. As it were, framing is the key changer that alters every narrative and brings fresh perspectives to the subject matter or discourse in the cinema. Beginning from the handling of the casting of characters (for a movie) to the setting for the shoot, to the choice of the shots, to the preference of language engaged in voicing the script, the gesticulations of the actors and other non-verbal language employs, to costumes and make-up of the characters, to music and sound tracks deplored

in establishing the mood and to the film postproduction stage where attention is concentrated on editing, the artistic director is saddled with the responsibility of setting the work in frames. The frames he or she works towards achieving are subject to his or her interpretation. Hence, if the artistic director is regarded as the author (as in auteur film theory dialectics) or principal creative of a film (in a literal sense), it is because he or she frames the story through the manipulations enabled by his/her control of eye of camera (as earlier mentioned) and other orchestrations he or she effects in the postproduction of a film.

Fundamentally, the significance of the art of framing in a film production cannot be overemphasized. This becomes more imperative when considering the input or impact of an artistic director, for instance, in influencing the portrayal of Yoruba culture, aesthetics, and historical context, and shaping the narrative authenticity in Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi*. The director owes the credit for visualizing and imparting in personal style the history of any epic work. The depiction or the replay of history heavily relies on his or her ingenuity. And this is not without a cost since his or her intentionality and some intuitive unconsciousness in his or her workings would naturally fuse or blend in generating the overall perspectives that his or her work eventually spells out (at least) to the viewing public. The interactions that come up in the course of production are sometimes beyond the director's control. In the so-called deliberate framing, some interplays in their fluidity do reflect or become visible in the last stage of the work, which the director may be careful enough to observe. As it were, framing is significantly appropriate and relevant in exploring Mel Gibson's artistic direction that emphasizes the themes of patriotism, rebellion, and freedom in an epic narrative that *Braveheart* is. In the two works, the artistic directors frame the visual language and remain the major forces that influence how the narratives are perceived by the viewers. The impression of the viewers on the works is shaped by the artistic choices of the directors through which the narratives are framed.

2. Theoretical Framework

Bateson (1972) has defined the concept of framing as "spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages"; this is further developed by Goffman (1974) as a way by which people interpret their world, drawing on a primary framework. Goffman explains that the primary framework is the experience an individual has taken cognizance of, the same which is established in his or her mind(frame) through which a scenario is processed, interpreted, and conveyed. This implies that people subject scenarios they newly come across to earlier or previous experiences they have, and then, take an informed decision on their present situation. In a more robust contribution, Entman (1993) asserts that in framing, "some aspects of a perceived reality" are made "more salient in communicating text". Entman contribution in the discourse highlights the role of media in framing, shaping, or influencing the perception of the public on a message. Kahneman and Tversky (1979) stress that the way

information is framed, which can either be positive or negative, ultimately influences the opinion of the recipients of the message. By implication, the analysis in this study is based on the impression the researcher draws from the aspects of imperialism and resistance as highlighted or framed in the films. Thus, it is just appropriate that framing theory is applied as a theoretical guide for the study.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative research method. Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* (1995) and Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi: The Uprising* and *Lisabi: A Legend is Born* (2024-2025) are purposively approached through a close viewing. Framing theory, as developed by Erving Goffman (1974) and refined by Entman (1993), provides a theoretical guide through which the films are analysed in examining how cinematic elements influence the interpretation of the portrayal of imperial cruelty, domination, and resistance in the works. Framing theory explains the process by which messages or scenarios in films are projected, emphasized, or highlighted in constructing meaning. Rather than anchoring the study through historical accuracy, fundamentally, prioritizing framing theory as a guide in the study would help to: examine how the stories are constructed in the two works; explore the salient issues highlighted in the works and determine the areas or issues in the projected narratives that share common grounds in both Gibson's *Braveheart* and Akinmolayan's *Lisabi* duology. The study sheds light on the significance of film in framing narratives. It equally underscores how media intersect cultures, identifying and projecting the similarities in the way of life of people living in different geographical locations.

4. Obsession for Domination

The urge to dominate or encroach privacies of other people in interpersonal relationships provides an interesting area of study. This focus that has attracted increasing scholarly attention underscores the extreme orientation some individuals have in controlling or out-powering other people. Dominance in this case sheds light on the excessive workings of the human mind and the underlying abnormalities in not taking cognizance of the healthy boundaries and mutual respect that exist in human relationships. It draws attention to the complexities that human mental health entails when it is engaged in outrightly committing itself to subduing other people indiscriminately. To dominate in this context means to coerce others or to threaten them in manners that weaken their self-defenses and appropriate control to external influence. The extreme desire to dominate others is personality-driven. Paulhus and Williams (2002) explain this to be the Dark Triad (narcissism, machiavellianism, and psychopathy) traits that engross individuals by which they exhibit callousness, manipulativeness, and a sense of entitlement. These traits are further linked to an extreme

sense of having the right and authoritarian attitudes that manifest in political offerings of dictators (Moss & O'Connor, 2020). These authoritarian attitudes could be triggered by societal instability, insecurity, and threat (Schnelle 2021). In furtherance, Hirsch (2022) explains that in a state of crisis, people often give support to authoritarian domination when it appears to provide greater good to society. Filsinger & Freitag (2022) are more specific on this by citing how in Europe, crisis-driven /situation (such as pandemic-related threat) tends to make the public embrace dominance ethos. This underscores how domination gains legitimacy in society.

Dominance (that relies on threats and coercion of other people), along with prestige (which draws attention to individuals and makes these individuals to be respected based on their skills), are the two prominent pathways to social status (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001). To be obsessed with dominance refers to the individual's over-investment in the dominance pathway. The veritable instrument of dominance is power. And power, once attained excessively, creates in people moral decline (Tobore, 2023). Obsession naturally occurs if there are no checks to regulate the use of power and, generally, human interference in society. Cheng asserts that the mechanism that checkmates dominance in the society is cultural "leveling" where cultural differences are deliberately minimized and dominant cultural values are spread among cultures in such a way that they appear as universal practices that identify with different cultural groups in the society; in doing this, Cheng argues that it would be harder for a particular group to claim dominance on others since they all have most practices in common (Cheng, 2020). In addition, he remarks that society uses punishment such as ostracism to curb an individual's excesses in dominating others (Cheng, 2020). Despite its social risks, dominance remains a viable route to attaining status (Zeng, Cheng & Henrich, 2022); though its social costs accumulate over time (McClanahan et al., 2021) and it can be tragic.

5. Imperial Cruelty

The reckless quest to retain dominance at the expense of its social costs is arguably the major drive that instils cruelty in an autocratic ruling class and in particular, among the ruthless royalty in some territories across the globe. The maltreatment of the ruling class is often resisted once it gets to a point where the oppressed people feel they can no longer bear it. Apparently, a violent approach to administration has remained the manifestation of such imperial cruelty. Elkins (2022) attests to the imperial cruelty that is rather concealed through bureaucracy and euphemism in British imperial structures and legal frameworks in normalizing violence across British colonies. Sanghera (2024) interrogates the narratives created to sanitize British imperial cruelty. These narratives present the structural violence as a necessity and a civilizing ethos (Riley, 2023). Elkins & Anderson (2020) reminisce on how administrative file systems are made to mask perpetuated impunity and systematic human

abuses by imperial government. In the post-colonial context, structural cruelties as seen through poverty, militarized government, and many forms of slow violence inflicted on the masses in socio-economic structures in some parts of the world are traceable to the past imperial formations (Thakur, 2022). Sajed (2024) categorically expresses that largely state institutionalized systems are fashioned to perpetually silence the masses by making cruelty appear as natural. Even when the State claims to be civilizing its people in modern times, it sometimes uses methods that make it appear as though cruelty is a criterion in achieving civilization (Rejali, 2011). Imperial cruelty has sustained intergenerational psychological trauma due to its long-term mental health side effects that generate prejudices and vulnerability in society (Rana, 2024). While in cinematic narratives such as *Braveheart* and *Lisabi*, attempts are made to relate the experience and psychological trauma colonized communities have gone through in different parts of the world to the viewers, the depth of these sufferings remains untold.

6. Niyi Akinmolayan's Lisabi Duology

In a historical epic, *Lisabi: The Uprising* depicts a resourceful Egba farmer, Lisabi, who leads resistance against the tyrannical Alaafin of Oyo, who terrorizes the Egba community. Leveraging on the ruthlessness of Alaafin, who earlier brutally killed King Olodan as a warning to other Egba people in an attempt to crush any possible rebellion, Sangodeyi and his men violently take tributes disproportionately from the Egba people. They kill the young men who show any sign of dissatisfaction with the maltreatment, and they rape the young Egba women despite the compliance of the people with the tributes' remittances. The vicious rape of Abebi (Oshokenu's bride) and the murder of Oshokenu, who is Lisabi's intimate friend are the catalyst that prompts Lisabi's fight for justice. Lisabi courageously and strategically rallies his fellow farmers in Aaro society in a covert rebellion. Aaro is the practice of communal work among the farmers (in a Yoruba traditional society) that is an alternative to paid or hired labour. The farmers' communal labour eventually turns into a full-scale rebellion where Sangodeyi and his men are overthrown. This brings a new dawn of much-awaited freedom to the Egba people. *Lisabi: A Legend is Born* continues the narrative in intense battles between Oyo forces and the rebellion led by Lisabi. The Egba warriors have delivered the head of Sangodeyi to Alaafin in a chilling message. Through the guidance and protection of the four spirits – Akilapa, Eye, Olo Olori Ilari, and Jogbo, Lisabi moves his men in a fight with Aronimoja, a general who has the command of Alaafin, to avenge the death of six hundred tribute collectors with six thousand Egba people. And in a twist again, the Egba people win. With the aid of magical power, Lisabi kills Aronimoja, securing total freedom for the Egba land. At the climax of the victory, Bejide and Odunbamitefa accuse Lisabi of taking all the credit they collectively work to earn. At the height of this, Ikeola, who is loyal to Lisabi, is murdered by Lisabi's traitorous friends. When offered the title of warlord by his traitorous

friends and conspirators, Lisabi chooses to vanish mysteriously to the realm of the spirit leaving behind his Egba land. His triumphant exit further reinforces his heroic deeds.

7. Mel Gibson's Braveheart

Braveheart is equally a historical epic. It blends drama, romance and action in weaving an inspiring narrative that centres on William Wallace (Mel Gibson), a courageous Scottish commoner who leads a rebellion against the oppressive rule of King Edward I (Patrick McGoohan) of England. Having lost his father and brother in a fight against England, Wallace is raised by his uncle Argyle Wallace, a Catholic and a man of valour. In addition to educating William, Argyle teaches him warfare. When William returns to his village, he falls in love with Murron MacClannough and, in a bid to escape *prima nocta* – a decree by King Edward I that allows the English lords to have sex with the Scottish brides on their first night of wedding, William secretly weds his bride. The attempt by English soldiers to assault Murron enrages Williams, who fights back to defend his wife. The scenario erupts into crisis with the English sheriff executing Murron as deterrence to other Scots who may want to rebel. William, in the company of other rebels, retaliates by killing the sheriff and sacking the garrison. The fight spirals into a full-scale war between England and Scotland. Williams's passion for freedom at first attracts the Scottish nobles, who unanimously join hands with him and affirm their support by knighting him a defender of Scotland. England eventually thrives on political division among the Scottish nobles. William, who has previously demonstrated his tactical brilliance in the battle of Stirling Bridge, where he defeats the large army of England, eventually gets betrayed by one of the Scottish nobles. Edward captures him and has him executed in London in a most gruesome way. In the spirit of William Wallace and of freedom, Robert de Bruce continues to lead Scotland in a war campaign against England.

8. Framing Obsession with Domination, Imperial Cruelty, and Resistance in *Braveheart*

Longshanks, who is also known as King Edward I aptly frames obsession with domination and imperial cruelty in *Braveheart*. Drawing on Entman's (1993) assertion on framing logic in which he argues that "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text" (p. 52), the film has depicted obsession for domination as a perceived sense of reality, projecting it as the root cause for imperial cruelty. Rather than being an administrator in governance, Longshanks is framed as a dictator who is pathologically obsessed with domination. In line with Elkins (2022) position that imperial cruelty frequently transcends the realm of coercion and enters into the realm of public display of violence, Mel Gibson in a voice over projects some traits that highlight narcissistic personality disorder (NPD) in Edward's exhibition of grandiosity, and in his

display of sense of entitlement and pride: “The king of Scotland had died without a son but Longshanks the king of England, a cruel pagan known as Edward the Longshanks claimed the throne of Scotland for himself…” (02:05 – 2:57:41). Edward literally refers to Scotland as his land – “Scotland …my land” (17:37). He outrightly affirms Scotland as his land as though the Scots who are the rightful owners are ignorant of their sovereignty. This is beyond being desperate; it is a case of someone being delusional. In furtherance, Gibson frames Edward’s drive to acquire power and recognition through the instruction Edward gives his men when he says, “the French will grovel to anyone with strength, but how will they believe our strength when we cannot rule the whole of our own Island” (17:44 – 17:48). Also in this utterance, Edward admits Scotland as his land. In his recklessness to take over Scotland, Edward tells his officers “nobles are the key to the door of Scotland. Grant our nobles lands in the north, give their nobles estates here in England and make them too greedy to oppose us” (18:29 – 18:41). Overtly an extreme case in Edward’s framing of ruthlessness is his decree that allows English lords to sleep with Scottish brides in the first night of their wedding which aligns with what Rejali (2011) described as performative dimension of state ruthlessness. Rejali describes this as a measure from maximum rulers not just to punish their victims but to project power and instill fear in them. The *prima nocta* frames the extent to which Edward is obsessed with power; it portrays his disregard for human sanctity, resoluteness and recklessness in infiltrating and dominating Scottish culture, as the Scots put up some measures of resistance to his bizarre behaviour. He is presented as a cruel king who sees Scots as less than humans and as things to be toyed with at will. This behaviour underscores sadistic personality traits in Edward in that he takes delight in inflicting pain and suffering on the Scots. His conversation with the nobles highlights the disregard Edward has for the Scots; in the narrative he remarks: “the trouble with Scotland is that it’s full of Scots… If we can’t get them out, we’ll breed them out” (19:16 – 19:50).

In framing Henry as a tyrannical ruler, he is depicted as expressing dissatisfaction with the Princess of France when, in her initiative, she donates the king’s treasure to the orphanage at the instance of Wallace's rejection of the King’s bribe:

> Princess of France- Forgive me, sire. I thought that generosity might demonstrate your greatness to those you mean to rule.
> Henry- My greatness will be better demonstrated when Wallace returns to Scotland and finds his country in ashes. (1:53:37 – 1:53:56)

Wallace turns the gift of the King down bluntly – “A lordship of titles…gold…that I should become Judas? …you tell your king…that William Wallace will not be ruled…and nor will any Scot while I live” (1:49:15 – 1:50:56). Wallace resists the offer of the King because from the antecedence he is aware that Edward I is never sincere with any proposal for a truce. As a

child, Wallace had witnessed how Edward I massacred some Scots and burned their community under the guise of organizing a meeting for a truce. Also in this new case, while using an emissary – Princess of France, Edward I appears to be initiating a dialogue. In contrast, he has secretly advanced troops to attack Scotland. Therefore, the instinct of Wallace in doubting the sincerity of Edward I's proposal for a truce, and in putting up resistance, is timely. This resonates with Goffman's (1974) argument on experiential framing, in which he states that an individual gets to ask the question of "what is it that's going on here?" in drawing meaning through his social encounter; and in this case, Wallace can define "what is ...going on" in Edward's repeated and deliberate fail in keeping promises (p. 8). Wallace's resistance is a function of Edward's persistent oppression. Resistance is framed as inevitable and not as optional.

Edward I is projected as not mindful of sacrificing his loyal men, provided that it assures him victory over imminent opposition and resistance. The film frames his callousness when he orders the archers to shoot arrows to kill the Scots, even when his soldiers are already in combat with the same Scots on the battlefield, and they will certainly be killed with the Scots:

> Edward - Achers
> Soldier - I beg pardon, sire. Won't we hit our own troops?
> Edward - Yes...but we'll hit theirs as well. We have reserves. (2:04:23 – 2:04:31)

Something similar to the above event replays in another scenario:

> Noble - MiLord, the princess might be taken hostage or her life be put in jeopardy
> Edward - Uh, but in truth, if she were to be killed, we would soon find the King of France a useful ally against the Scots. (2:18:57 – 2:19:12)

The two separate events frame Edward's character traits. They highlight his grandiose delusion. It portrays how insecure he is in the face of any threat. He is framed to reason oddly. Edward 1's excessive suspicion and mistrust indicate paranoid traits. His overbearing attitude makes it difficult for him to relate as a father to even his son. His absolute resistance to dissenting views drives him to push his son's male partner down the window headlong. Edward's high-handedness demonstrates imperial cruelty even within his inner caucus. In his disposition, he stands in sharp contrast to Wallace's stance and his struggle for freedom.

9. Framing Obsession with Domination, Imperial Cruelty and Resistance in Lisabi Duology

The voice-over opening *Lisabi: The Uprising* narrates thus:

> In the ancient lands of the Yoruba people...A vast empire held sway over towns and villages, its power unyielding. The empire maintained control through a network of tribute collectors. These collectors, feared and resented, were the empire's iron grip on all neighboring villages. The name of the empire became synonymous to power and dominance. (1:47:12 – 1:46:30)

Then appears a vast empire with an array of people colourfully dressed. Above the people is the king, whose elevated seat frames the exaggerated perception he has of himself. The mis-en-scene portrays his delusion and a ruler so distant from the suffering his oppressive decrees inflict on the people. The opening scene is a day of judgment. King Olodan is already captured and would be punished by Alaafin for his revolt. At the appearance of Alaafin, Sangodeyi chants "Oh Iku! Oh Iku! Ikubabayeye the ruler, second only to the deity. Hail the Alaafin!" (1:42:55 – 1:42:48). Iku, which is a Yoruba word for death, is a salutation to Alaafin, and it frames the limitless power that the Alaafin exercises in the dispensation the film depicts. The salutations are in contrast to the dreadfulness of Olodan, who is about to witness the worst. The scenario alludes to psychological domination discussed in contemporary scholarship regarding post-colonial authoritarian governance.

Alaafin ordering that Olodan should be beheaded and that he would delight in threading on his blood as a deterrent to others underscores sadistic personality traits in Alaafin. He delights in inflicting pain and suffering on others. In his antisocial personality disorder, he is framed as not showing regard for the rights of the Egba people. The former head of the tribute collectors is equally executed right in the palace for tolerating Olodan's rebellion. This display of cruelty to Olodan and the execution of the head of tribute collectors is depicted to frame the brutality and tyranny of Alaafin in the opening scenes of the film. This type of oppressive rule foregrounds coloniality-before-colonialism in postcolonial discourse.

The emergence of Lisabi in this first part of the duology frames the agitation and dissatisfaction growing among the Egba people towards the high-handedness and oppressive rule of Alaafin. This resonates with Cheng (2020), and Zeng et al (2022)'s political psychology scholarship that argues that authoritarian dominance always prompts violent backlash. Fanonian postcolonial logic, which states that violence becomes a choice by which the oppressed reclaim agency in the situation where all options have failed in securing freedom, is framed in the rise of Lisabi. He discreetly leads resistance that becomes popular among the Egba people. Leveraging on the command of Alaafin, the tribute collectors under

the leadership of Sangodeyi plunder the Egba people. The gravity of the cruelty of Alaafin is carefully illustrated in the frames of Sangodeyi and his men. The film engages every shot, dialogue, action, and reaction in the encounter between Sangodeyi and Edioke to frame Alaafin's obsession with power. Running into Edioke's shop, Sangodeyi refuses to accept the portion of the money Edioke offers him. He chooses to confiscate the whole amount of money. When he announces that Oyo wants to drink palm wine, and he subsequently orders his men to take the palm wine away frames Alaafin's authoritarian cruelty. Thereafter, Sangodeyi orders his men to consume the bush meat Edioke sells. The tribute collectors proceed to take Edioke's daughter away to their camp to rape her. Edioke, like other Egba people, is left with no choice but to bear all the loss. This progression of terror is employed to frame the callousness in Alaafin and to create a moral justification for the rise of Lisabi.

At the climax of the oppression, Sangodeyi ambushes and rapes Abebi (the bride of Sokenu) just as the bride is in her procession to her groom's house. The rape is a calculated act. It is a way of dealing with Sokenu for having the effrontery to protest Sangodeyi's excesses at Edioke's shop. In the grief of the dastardly act perpetrated against his bride, Sokenu confronts Sangodeyi and his team. That Sokenu is able to kill ten men among the soldiers of Sangodeyi singlehandedly, demystifies the impression that the forces of the Alaafin are unbeatable. Though Sokenu is killed, Lisabi realises that Alaafin's cruelty can be challenged after all. Through this, the film frames how the weight of cruelty destabilizes government rather than fulfilling its aim of securing power. It illustrates Moss and O'Connor's argument that authoritarian cruelty often suggests a psychological mask that covers up insecurity and the fear of losing dominance (2020).

With the appearance of Portuguese merchants in business deals with Alaafin, the film frames imperial cruelty as an attractive institution that cuts across culture. Shortly before the war, the Portuguese merchants delivered boxes of new guns to the palace. As the Alaafin comes onto the scene, the conversation goes thus:

> Sangodeyi - Iku o! Ikubabayeye, second to the deity. Hail the Alaafin!
> All - Your Highness.
> Alaafin - Sangodeyi.
> Sangodeyi - My Lord.
> Alaafin - What rubbish have you brought to the palace?
> Sangodeyi - My Lord, only the translator knows.
> Translator - These are the new guns that the Portuguese brought for you to try and see how good they are.
> Alaafin - (Getting irritated seeing the effigy structured for the testing of the guns) Are there no longer slaves in the dungeon?

Sangodeyi - My Lord, I told him as much (referring to one of the merchants). But I already prepared the slaves. (44:28 – 43:50)

The King tests the range of the guns by shooting some slaves. After each shooting, Sangodeyi would charge that the King should kill one more, as though in his ' kill one more' he is not referring to human beings. In what ought to be a simple test of the range of the newly acquired guns, three slaves have their lives ended mercilessly while Sangodeyi celebrates the King: "Pakopi. He does as he pleases. Hail the Alaafin – Ogbingbado s'ehinkule elehinkule. Agbado gbo tan elehinkunle o gbodo yaaje" (41:12). The salutation in the Yoruba language here frames the ruthlessness of Alaafin in his excessive use of power. It refers to the King as a cruel person who grows corn in someone else's garden without the consent of the owner of the garden and the owner dares not approach the corn to eat from it. The words are too deep in the Yoruba language, and arguably, no direct English translation would sufficiently convey it. This same mindless act of shedding blood is deliberately repeated in emphasizing cruelty in the scene where Sangodeyi decides to test the range of the newly acquired gun on a young man (Osofinponle) who accidentally runs into Sangodeyi and his men on his way while returning from the farm. Osofiponle has visited the farm to pluck a bunch of plantain for his wife, Orosola. Sangodeyi who expresses desire to eat a rosted plantain orders Osofinponle to release his plantain. The young man who initially complains that Sangodeyi has taken all his plantains the previous day eventually complies out of fear of being harmed. Yet he is killed. After shooting him, Sangodeyi instructs his men to throw the plantain into the bush, that they are not even ripe enough for consumption. All of these acts are scenarios created in the screenplay and carefully directed by the artistic director in a bid to intentionally frame the callousness and superimposition of Alaafin on the Egba people. It equally accentuates the tension in the film, underscoring the unavoidability of resistance from the Egba people to the sustained oppression of Alaafin.

Awakened by his recent discovery that Sangodeyi and his men are not unbeatable after all, Lisabi sets out to lead the Egba youths in an open war that aims to end Oyo tyranny. The group-farming initiative he drives among young Egba men which is framed as a site of collective responsibility, transforms into a full-fledged army. Lisabi confronts Sangodeyi in a fierce battle while other Egba men and women are divided to fight tribute collectors in different locations, signifying that it takes an organized and coordinated team confrontation to defeat imperial hegemony. The first part of the movie ends with this Lisabi-led resistance. The second part of the movie continues in the war in which Lisabi and his team successfully defeat the tribute collectors. Alaafin's order that in place of his fallen six hundred tribute collectors, six thousand Egba people must be killed frames the resoluteness of Alaafin in not granting the Egba people freedom. It underscores the aggressiveness with which maximum rulers hold onto power absolutely. This further frames resistance as moral inevitability. In

fierce resistance, Lisabi and his soldiers fight the army of Oyo led by the dreaded Aranimoja and win again. The second battle completely ended the dominance of the Oyo Empire in Egba land.

10. *Braveheart* and *Lisabi* Duology Interrelatedness

William Wallace has King Edward I to contend with in his struggle to secure freedom for Scotland in *Braveheart*. His perseverance and insistence on the emancipation of Scotland frame the cruciality of courage in the drive for freedom campaign. This value replays in the *Lisabi* duology when Lisabi must spearhead unavoidable aggression at the grassroots among Egba people in securing the liberation of the Egba land from the inhuman treatment of the Alaafin. The two films, both from Eurocentric and Afrocentric prisms frame the engagement of conscious efforts and audacity put up from ordinary individuals as against superior imperial domination. It also underscores the necessity of human unity in the pursuit of common course. The two works clearly depict the wide gap between the two contrast worlds – at one end is cruel royalty with fierce drive in a continued subjugation of another nation, and at the other end is the decisive and passionate patriotic rebel pushing for self-determination and national identity. Longshank's ideology of leadership is dictatorial; likewise, Alaafin's. In their sense of entitlement and extreme abnormal behaviour, the two kings exhibit grandiosity which frames the underlying mental health challenges of many dictatorial leaders in the modern society that citizens are forced to cope with. As it is, such mental health issues would not necessarily disqualify rulers from occupying the positions of authority. In the world system, what is common is the ruled adjusting to the styles of the maximum rulers or if they would not adjust, bear the consequences of their insistence on fairness and justice.

In framing the cross-cultural implication of imperial cruelty, both films reveal the privacies of the two Kings: the wives of Alaafin tremble whenever they want to speak to him; and Edward's son is dreadful of conversing with Edward. That the kings do not let down their guards in their privacies frames their sense of insecurity, obsession with domination, their perpetual display of power and much difficulty the choice of imperial cruelty has subjected them to. While Longshanks appears to be in a deliberation with his nobles in few occasions in the film, what he does cannot pass for a mutual dialogue. He converses with his noble authoritatively and they choose their responses carefully. Alaafin is not shown to be having conversation with his Chiefs – not even once. Alaafin is regarded as death personified and as such, he converses with no mortal; he rather dictates or instructs. He would not need to devise a strategy of bribing the leaders of Egba people with parcels of land in attractive location like Longshank would do. The two Kings are framed to have zero tolerance to the admittance of level-playing in relating with other people whether folks or foes. This representation of dictatorial kings further heightens the tension in the

films. In line with Entman's assertion on framing paradigm, imperial authority is consistently framed as a cruel pursuit of domination caused by the two kings' pathological attachment to excessive power (1993).

The murder of Wallace's wife springs him into leading a resistance movement against the English rule. But for the execution of his wife by an English army commander, he has resolved to living a quiet life. He returns to Scotland to grow crops and to raise family. Also, the catalyst for Lisabi's revolt is the death of Abebi and Sokenu; other than this, Lisabi would have remained a farmer and possibly raise family with Ikeola. Also, in the two films, tragedies happen during what should have been wedding ceremonies. The contradiction of having the brides dead in what ordinarily should be celebration seasons across both Western and African cultures sufficiently frame imperial cruelty of Edward I and Alaafin of Oyo not as system of government that enhances social order. It projects the fluidity of unchecked human overbearing attitude across race and culture. It also suggests that violent reactions to such attitude is ubiquitous. Perhaps, the sympathy of the viewers to the inhuman treatment melted at the Scots and Egba people gets to the peak when Abebi is raped by Sangodeyi and an English sherif struggles to rape Wallace's wife. In the modern society, rape is a serious crime. Framing the atrocities of England and Oyo Empire around crime such as rape (that the viewers can make sense of) only describes the gravity of psychological torture the Scots and Egba people must endure until resistance is no longer an option for them. It also suggests similar torture and emotional breakdown that victims of authoritarian government bears across the globe until resistance is inevitable.

In framing resistance as moral inevitability, Wallace sends the severed head of the commander of the English garrison to Edward after successfully sacking the garrison. The decapitated head of Sangodeyi is equally sent to Alaafin by Lisabi after sacking the camp of the tribute collectors. The leaders of resistance in Scottish and Egba cultures received both commendation and condemnation from their constituencies in framing the complexities of societal responses to such liberating efforts. Wallace is first knighted for his heroic deed. This is followed by betrayal from the people he defends. The backstabbing eventually leads to his capture and his eventual martyrdom. Lisabi initially enjoys the support of his Egba youths. However, like in the case of Wallace, Bejide and other youths find fault in Lisabi. When it is glaring to Lisabi that his erstwhile friends are plotting his downfall, he ends his visible existence by magically entering the earth. Though he has transited to the world of immortality, it is believed in traditional Yoruba society that such being(s) still exist and can be communed with by mortals especially in the time of war where there is a need for supernatural intervention in fighting the enemies. Lisabi's exit underscores some mysteries and complexities in the context of traditional African society that would not have to be scientifically proven.

In both narratives, the freedom Scotland and Egba people eventually attain are by the resilience of Wallace and Lisabi respectively. Wallace's dream of freedom for Scotland is realised after his martyrdom. Wallace's death unifies the Scots in fighting for their freedom. While Wallace is no longer visible with them, Scotland soldiers confront the English army in trust that Wallace spirit/legacy is leading the fight on the battle field. To this effect, Wallace's sword is thrown ahead of the Scotland army while Wallace's post death war begins. This intersects with the part of the film in *Lisabi* where Lisabi sinks into the earth and assume immortality to live in the memory of the Egba people as a symbol of freedom. Invariably, both narratives underscore the reality of martyrdom resistance leaders embrace in the pursuit of national identity. But above the punitive measures of the cruel imperial government, resistance is framed as an ideology that is beyond the existential limitation of the revolutionaries.

It is pertinent to note that, Lisabi fights gallantly in his first battle with the Oyo tribute collectors while in the second confrontation he has with Alaafin forces, it takes the sacrifices of his friends who defend him with their lives to outlive the battle. This reality contradicts his posture postwar where he appears to be taking all the credit of the emancipation to himself through his gestures. By implication, this attribute of Lisabi frames the materialistic tendencies of freedom fighters. Apparently, many onetime comrades around the world who in some moments of struggles and self-determination pioneer revolution eventually turn dictators themselves in their misuse of power and poor management of fame. Niyi Akinmolayan may not be conscious of this negative impression framed in Lisabi. Wallace is not portrayed to have desired any title, privileged position, materials or wealth. At the risk of losing the knighthood, he charges in what may appear as impolite and undiplomatic manner at the Scottish nobles in his insistence of taking the battle to the English soil. These attributes noticeable in Wallace and Lisabi indicate individual differences in resistance leaders.

These striking similarities between Lisabi and Edward I (in crushing opposition) among others, bring the two works in thematic parallels. However, what is crucial in these framings is, it is only in the case of the young Egba people who are portrayed as callous when they conspired and betrayed Lisabi that Akinmolayan is apologetic in the narrative. In relating this, towards the end of the film, Lisabi is made to express that it is only the young Egba men who choose to be black sheep and that it is unusual of Egba people to exhibit cruel character. Arguably, there would not be any need for these apologies since whatever is portrayed in the film revolves around individuals/characters who do not represent the whole race or clan in its entirety. Notably, apology is not tendered regarding the representation of Alaafin (and the people of Oyo) who are framed as cruel throughout *Lisabi* duology. It appears convenient for Akinmolayan to cautiously and exclusively represent the Egba people in the narrative. Perhaps, Akinmolayan tries to prevent standing the popular slogan

of the Egba nation on its head in the saying – egba meji o kin jarawon niyan (meaning, two Egba people don't nurture resentment) through the films. In his own case, Gibson sustains the projection of Edward I as cruel and Scotland nobles as corrupt and divided people, with no apologies throughout the film.

11. Conclusion

The paper argues that considering Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* and Niyi Akinmolayan's *Lisabi* duology, obsession for domination is framed as a factor that necessitates imperial cruelty and the binary is not culture specific but a cross-cultural and transhistorical formation. Likewise, across cultures imperial cruelty attracts resistance which though may appear violent, but as an ethical response to the incessant dehumanization of authoritarian leaders. The mise-en-scène in the works are deployed to frame this notion. The study further uncovers that, certain belief, such as the belief in the existence of supernatural apparitions such as ghosts, suffices not only in African spirituality but also in Western rationalism. It enables the viewers to notice where certain notion transcends cultures, and the authenticity of universal values. At the execution of Wallace, his wife's ghost appears to him among the crowd, so is Lisabi, whose wife's ghost appears to him at the point where she attributes the cause of her death to Lisabi. In addition, the study reveals that patriotic leaders' frailties are universal in the sense that Wallace kills two Scottish nobles in retaliating his betrayal and in hope of winning back the support of the other nobles. Lisabi also kills Bejide though unintentionally and at the point of provocation. The work further highlights that agitation for emancipation can spring from the file and ranks (where Wallace and Lisabi are just commoners and farmers) and not necessarily from highly placed individuals in the society. Ultimately, the study reveals that across cultures, violent resistance remains a vital option for the oppressed communities in asserting their human dignity and exercising the sovereignty of their territories. It implies that, where freedom is not given freely, the party that consider themselves worthy of emancipation will have to take it by force. By inference, the paper posits that the postcolonial government officials' obsession to power which is often justified as administrative necessities (where it exists in some climes across the globe particularly in Nigeria) would keep attracting (possible violent) resistance from the public in its long-term effects.

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