

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

According to the Oxford Dictionary, hegemony means “leadership or dominance, especially by one country or social group over others.” It comes from military threats, ideological dominance, or economic influence. For example, when a country imports goods from other countries, the exporter tries to prevent other country’s production of the same thing by using agreements or contracts. If this is done smoothly, then the importer will always rely on the exporter. Eventually, the importer economy is indirectly dominated by the exporter country. Or simply when a country threatens to use military power to dominate other countries. Such an example can be called hegemony.

Oliver Bowden, a pen-name of Anton Gill, was born in Ilford, Great Britain on 22nd October 1946. He has been a full-time personal writer since 1984 and has published over 40 books. Gill won the H. H. Wingate Award in the non-fiction category for *The Journey Back from Hell*, an account of the living survivors of the Nazi concentration camp. Although Gill is not directly related to the issue of hegemony, he wrote a novel adapted from a video game titled *Assassin’s Creed: Renaissance* that is filled with hegemony cases, since the time setting can be traced back into the renaissance era in Italy and at that time is where power is above all else.

In 2009, Oliver Bowden’s *Assassin’s Creed: Renaissance*, a video game-based novel is published. He adapted the novel from a game titled *Assassins’s Creed II*. It is a 2009 action-adventure video game developed by Ubisoft Montreal and published by Ubisoft (Miller, 2009). It is the second major installment in the *Assassin’s Creed* series, a sequel to 2007’s *Assassin’s Creed*. The story itself is not far apart from the game. It tells about a young assassin

who seeks revenge for the death of his family to the Templars, the sworn archenemy of the assassins for centuries in a secret war between the two entities.

The story began when young Ezio Auditore –the protagonist- caught his family was betrayed by other ruling families in his city of Florence, fortunately, he could escape from being arrested. Ezio's father and brothers who were captured were executed the next day. This series of incidents forced Ezio, along with his mother and sister, to leave the city to his uncle's villa in Monteriggioni. There, he is briefly informed why the ruling families in Florence betray his family. Turns out, Ezio's family is an assassin family, to bring freedom to the people. And those who betray Ezio's family are a templar family, to bring order by suppression.

Alongside his uncle, Ezio is trained to be an assassin. Although at first, Ezio didn't seem to be willing to do it. Eventually, moved by his anger and thirst for revenge, he began to search for the family who betrayed his family. He assassinates his targets one by one bringing chaos to the templars order. During his journey to assassinate his targets, he meets several people who are none other than his allies, secretly sent by his uncle to aid Ezio. With his allies, Ezio brings the templars to the brink of desperation until the grand master of the templar order, Rodrigo Borgia—also known as Pope Alexander VI—to take the action himself.

Rodrigo Borgia became Pope Alexander VI to gain control over the Vatican where a vault of Gods is believed beneath there. It is believed that whoever enters the vault; he/she will have the unlimited knowledge in the universe and eventually, rule the world. To stop Rodrigo's action, Ezio went to Vatican to assassinate his last target. After a long exhausting fight, Ezio assassinate Rodrigo, and then he enters the vault. To his surprise, no gods is actually there, only an artifact left by an advanced ancient civilization known as those who came before. In there, he meets a woman appeared as a hologram that speaks to Ezio through centuries apart, only to inform that the end is near.

Commentary about the work was varying. Some say that it is good work, and the rest, not so much. The overall rating from [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com) (2009) is 3.75 out of 5 stars. Some of the good ratings are, first, from Mimi who said: *“The novel is not bad, or rather not what I had been expecting. It’s okay overall but could have been better”*. Then there is Hasham Rasool that he really enjoyed reading this book. And last but not least, Beatriz Lins said: *“It’s a good way of learning Ezio Auditore’s story, and reading an action-packed book”*.

While there are some good commentaries, there are also some bad commentaries –or rather, critics- about the novel. For example, Bcvs said: *“In my opinion, there is no character growth, no emotional involvement and the various Italian words woven into the story are quite unnecessary”*. Then Dorin who said: *“The book is just the scenarios of the AC games, with absolutely no input creativity, or depth from the author”*. Lastly, Roxana Chirila stated: *“Each artistic medium has its own specific ways of catching your attention, engaging you and transmitting its information. For video games, that’s a lot of action. For books, it’s the little details and insights”*. Works would never far from critics as it is published for the society, either it is positive or negative.

Templars, also known as the Knights Templar or the Order of Solomon’s Temple, were a Catholic military order recognized in 1139 by the papal bull *omne datum optimum* (Barber, 1994) The order was founded in 1119 and was active until 1312 when it was perpetually suppressed by Pope Clement V (Barber, 1995) Their role were mainly to protect Christian pilgrimage. The Templars became a favored charity throughout Christendom and grew rapidly in membership and power. They were prominent in Christian finance. Templar knights, in their distinctive white mantles with a red cross, were among the most skilled fighting units of the Crusades. Non-combatant members of the order, who formed as much as 90% of the order’s members (Burman, 1990), managed a large economic infrastructure throughout Christendom (Selwood 2002), developing innovative financial techniques that were an early form of banking (Martin, 2005), building its own network of nearly 1,000 commandery and

fortifications across Europe and the Holy Land, and arguably forming the world's first multinational corporation (Ralls, 2007). But in the novel, the Templars were still secretly active in the renaissance era and their purpose turned into pursuing order over mankind.

Generally, according to Oxford dictionary, hegemony is the political, economic, or military predominance or control of one state over others. In ancient Greece (8th century BC – 6th century AD), hegemony denoted the politico-military dominance of a city-state over other city-states (Chernow, 1994). The dominant state is known as the *hegemon*. The Marxist theory of cultural hegemony, associated particularly with Antonio Gramsci, is the idea that the ruling class can manipulate the value system and mores of a society, so that their view becomes the world view. Eagleton (1991) stated, “Gramsci normally uses the word hegemony to mean the ways in which a governing power wins consent to its rule from those it subjugates”. Thus, we can say that hegemony is not only comes from a state over other state, but also from a group of a class of people who have power over other class.

What highly make researcher interested is how the Grand Master, the highest rank of the Templar, Rodrigo Borgia gain control over The Vatican as Pope Alexander VI. It is highly assuring that the Grand Master is using hegemony to pursue the Templar's purpose. This greatly influence researcher to choose THE TEMPLARS' STRATEGY TO OBTAIN POWER IN *ASSASSIN'S CREED: RENAISSANCE* NOVEL BY OLIVER BOWDEN: A HEGEMONIC STUDY as the title of this research.

## **B. Problem Statement**

From the background of the study, the researcher tries to answer the following questions:

1. What actions do the Templars take to obtain power?

2. Why did the Templars need to obtain power?

### **C. Problem Limitation**

Since the terms are overly broad for the researcher to cover, the analysis is limited to the villains of the novel, the templar and also limited on the actions they take.

### **D. Research Purpose**

The purpose of the research is to:

1. To identify the actions of the Templars in *Assassin's Creed: Renaissance* novel,
2. To answer why does the Templars need to obtain power.

### **E. Research Benefits**

1. Practical Benefits

This research provides a new perspective in reading novels, especially, *Assassin's Creed: Renaissance* by Oliver Bowden.

2. Theoretical Benefits

The researcher hopes that this paper gives other scholars a view regarding hegemony in literary studies and also can be a reference in further studies.