Local resistance against the Derg in Ethiopia: The case of Admasu Belay rebellion

Solomon Ashagrie1*

Abstract: As it is known war and rebellion are very common in Ethiopia due to internal and external factors. Since the ancient times governments and leaders in the country faced a variety of rebellions. Among the recent rebellions one is the rebellion led by Gerazmach Admasu Belay, who was from Gayint Awrajja (an administrative unit equivalent to sub province, which was under the former Gondar province). The rebellion of Grazmach Admasu was not well investigated by researchers, which became one of the reasons for this investigation. Descriptive research design was employed and snowball sampling tool was used to gather oral information. Both written and oral sources are collected including many archives. One of the major reasons for the rebellion was the fear of Admasu Belay due to the Derg's new land policy which was against the nobilities of Imperial regime, which Grazmach Admasu was part of it. As a result of this rebellion many people from the combatants and civilians lost their life and huge amount of property was destroyed.

Subjects: Military & Strategic Studies; Government; Education - Social Sciences; History

Keywords: Rebellion; resistance; oppression

1. Theoretical framework
According to definition of English dictionary the word “Rebellion” is an attempt to overthrow a government or other authority by the use of violence. There are many perspectives to deal with the issue of rebellion. Frustration aggression, rational choice and relative deprivation are some of the perspectives about the causes of rebellion (Brush, 1996, p. 527; Neff & Tierney, 1982, 2022. The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.
p. 35; Weede & Muller, 1998, p. 43). According to frustration aggression perspective, people will be more aggressive when they feel more frustration (Maile et al., 2010, p. 35). Frustration could also be resulted from deprivation which means the contradiction between people's expectation and reality (Brush, 1996, p. 527). Here I argue that the rebellion of Admasu Belay can be categorized under the frustration aggression perspective. Since he was one of the important office holders of the previous regime, the coming to power of the Derg would possibly create frustration on Admasu Belay that he could lose his huge land ownership right and other privileged rights.

2. Literature review
There are very few research works which emphasize on the local rebellion in Ethiopia, though rebellion itself is one part of the history of Ethiopia since it repeatedly occurred throughout the history of Ethiopia. Temesgen Gebeyehu’s “Rural Unrest and Resistance in Ethiopia…” tried to assess how the peasants of Wollo and Showa resisted the Derg regime in support of the imperial regime. Here though the cause of the rebellion seems similar, the scope of this article is limited Wollo and Showa which doesn’t include territory of Admasu Belay’s rebellion (Gebeyehu, 2012, pp. 1–8). Gildas Nicholas wrote about “Protest in Ethiopia” which covered large period of time. He started by over viewing during the Axumite period, go through the Zagwe and then the Solomonic Dynasty up to the reign of Emperor Hailsellassie. This article could not include the Admasu Belay’s rebellion because it was written before the event happened (Nicholas, 1972). Sergef Hable Selassie, Tadesse Tamrat, Bahru Zewde and other writers tried to include some rebellions which occurred in different times and places of Ethiopia. But while some of them are dictated by their respective time limit, others focus on wider issues than local rebellions. Therefore this research aimed to fill the gap on literature about local rebellions in Ethiopia generally and the rebellion of Admasu Belay particularly.

3. Research questions
The researcher has tried to answer the following questions by finding archives, secondary sources and oral sources.

(1) Who was Admasu Belay?
(2) What were his roles before, during and after the rebellion?
(3) What factors caused the rebellion?
(4) What were the major consequences of this rebellion?

4. Methodology
The study area of this research is the current South Gondar Administrative Zone. The area incorporated the former administrative sub-provinces of Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo, which were the major battlegrounds of Admasu Belay’s rebellion.

It is qualitative research with descriptive research design. The data about the biography of Admasu Belay, as well as the causes and consequences of the rebellion were collected through interview and searching primary and secondary written materials.

In order to interview the participants of the rebellion as well as those individuals who have adequate information about the event, snowball sampling has been employed.

4.1. Rebellion in Ethiopia
In Ethiopia rebellion is not a new event rather since the ancient time people rebelled against their rulers. In most cases these rebellion were suppressed by the powerful armies of governments, though at the same time there are cases in which the rebellious group either captured powers for themselves or caused for the downfall of the ruling government and governor. During the reign of King Ezana, the people of Beija revolted and the king sent his brothers to suppress the rebellion (Hable Selassie, 1972, p. 94). Similarly, after the “restoration” of the Solomonic dynasty there was serious instability due to power struggle among the members of the royal families (Tamrat, 1972, p. 69). During the Zemene Mesafint,
Kassa Hailu of Quara was the leader of rebellion against the dominant Yeju Dynasty (Bahiru, 2001, pp. 28–29).

Throughout the modern history of Ethiopia a number of spontaneous rebellions occurred against the ruling emperors. For instance, during the reign of Emperor Tewodras II Tedia Gualu of Gojjam, Tessu Gobezie of Wolqayit, Wag Shum Gobezie of Lasta and from Shewa Seyfu Sahle Selassie and Bezabh all revolted against him and facilitated his downfall (Bahiru, 2001, pp. 28–29). Similarly, at the beginning and end of Emperor Yohannes IV reign, there were plots to rebellion by the rulers of Shewa and Gojjam (Bahiru, 2001, pp. 28–29). After the death of Emperor Yohannes IV at the battle of Mattama, Negus Menelik of Shewa succeeded as Emperor of Ethiopia. But, he faced local rebellion from the Northern princes particularly by Ras Mengesha Yohannes until he submitted to the court of the Emperor on the eve of the battle of Adwa (Daba, 2017, p. 37).

On his move to Imperial throne Ras Tefferi Mekonnen faced many rebellious groups due to their respective interests like Dejjach Balcha Safo, Dejjach Aba Weqaw Berru and Ras Gugsa Wale (Daba, 2017, pp. 37–38).

During the Italian occupation (1936–1941) the Ethiopian patriots Abraha Deboch and Moges Asegdom and the people of Ethiopia denied the colonial rule and tried to resist the colonial rule or administration until the country became completely independent from the Italians (Bahiru, 1998, pp. 193–195).

After the restoration of the government of Emperor Haile Selassie, opposition against him continued secretly and openly. The 1960 coup ‘diet, the Ethiopian student movements, the peasant uprising in different provinces and urban strikes are examples of opposition against Emperor Haile Selassie (Andargachew, 1990, p. 64).

The Derg Government also faced a number of opposition in different directions. Some of these groups demanded to establish an independent country separated from Ethiopia, others opposed the military rule and tried to establish civil administration and some groups favored the Imperial government and tried to restore that administration (Gebeyehu, 2012, pp. 2–3).

Generally, throughout the country’s history there were a number of rebellions. But the objective of some rebellions was broader than the others since they tried to control political powers. Others’ demand may be a request for reform.

Therefore, the rebellion of Gerazmach Admasu Bellay was taken place in three former Awrajjas, namely Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo Awrajjas. It was taken place from 1975 to 1980. The rebellion was called by the local people as ይልታመታ መወልን Ye Admasu Tornet (Literary the war of Admasu) (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin).

### 4.2. Early history of Admasu Belay

Admasu Belay was born at the former Gayint Awrajja (one of the Awrajjas found in Begimeder and Semien Teklay Gizat during the imperial regime) Lay Gayint Woreda Gedeba Marqorious in 1917. His father Gerazmach Belay Engedashet, was from Tinafa (a village in Lay Gayint Woreda) while his mother, Wayizero Yeshi was said to be from Tigray. Admasu started spiritual education at Gedeba Mergorious and completed it with success. During his educational career his food supply was completely came from his father carried by mules. As it is known students who pursued their spiritual learning (in Ethiopian Orthodox Church) are expected to collect their food from the community. But unlike other students, Admasu Belay, as it is said, was not able to eat food from other people except from his parents. Admasu was trained how to operate armament (rifle) under the guidance of his father Gerazmach Belay Engedashet (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin).

After completing his church education, since Admasu was excellent in spiritual knowledge and operating rifles, he was appointed as secretary of Gayint Awrajja. Similarly, though the time of his
appointment is not known to informants, he had been working as secretary of Chilga Awrajja and Debre Tabor Awrajja successively before the government of Haile Selassie was deposed (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin).

He got the title Gerazmach (commander of the left) in 1960 when Emperor Haile Selassie was presented at Debre Tabor. It was given by the Emperor due to his efficiency as government official (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin).

4.3. Causes of the rebellion
After the 1974 revolution, though many officials of the former regime were deposed by the Derg, Gerazmach Admasu Belay was able to remain in his position as the secretary of Debre Tabor Awrajja. However, this did not deter him to oppose the Derg government through armed struggle (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin).

The researcher has no clear information about the reason for the revolt of Admasu. According to informants Admasu opposed the Derg to be loyal to Emperor Haile Selassie. Accordingly … …… “ወንዞ የሆን ከስር ከአሸና ከሰር ያሆኑው መካከል ይገባውን ያሆኑ ከልችው” (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin) (I don’t accept this [Derg] government; I can’t betray the government of Haile Selassie, the government which I was benefited).

This may be quite true reason. Because as it is known, the government officials of Emperor Haile Selassie had many benefits which were mainly attached to land. And the Derg action on land to be distributed to the tiller may frustrate Gerazmach Admasu Belay to lose his major source of income. Therefore he may decide to maintain the status quo through armed struggle (Informants: Melaku Tesemma, Habtu Mesfin). This is clearly in line with frustration aggression theory described by Miller as “frustration produces instigations to a number of different types of response, one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression”.

In 1975, Admasu Belay started his rebellion after looting the armament store of Debre Tabor Awrajja and Bank. He started the rebellion at the age of 58. Then he unified 76 noblemen and made an oath not betray each other at Lay Gayint. The first battle took place at Kimir Dingay against Fitawrari Tegegne Mengestu in August 1975. After the battle, the rebels were able to get the acceptance of Fitawrari Tegegne to join them, though later betrayed them (Gondar Archive: File number 3151/27/2, 26/4/1970,E.C, pp. 2–3).

The next battle was at Gassay, Farta woreda, on 12 December 1975. At the battle of Amora Gedel, one of the fighters from the side of Grazmach Admasu, Ameshe Terfie was attacked by bullet and died (Gondar Archive: File number 3151/27/2, 26/4/1970,E.C. pp. 2–3).

A man named Gugsa Ambaw was responsible for the decline of the rebellion. This was because after getting promise to get appointment by the Derg government, he secretly informed the movement of Admasu to the government (Informants: Kassaw Defersha, Melaku Tessema).

4.4. Soldiers in the rebellion
Very huge number of people was supporting Admasu at the beginning of the rebellion. People from Gayint Awrajja and some from Debre Tabor Awrajja were on the side of Admasu. But no one knows the actual number of soldiers from both sides, the government and the rebel group. What is known is just the number was very high at the beginning and it was declined gradually particularly after the government took harsh measures against anybody who was suspected to have direct or indirect relation with Admasu. Ultimately even those who previously promised an oath not to betray, later requested forgiveness from the government and stopped their opposition. In the latter battles like Este, the number of fighters was declined to 43 (Gondar Archive, File number 22/12/40; 2/02/1970.E.C).
4.5. Ammunition

The rebellion fighter used FN armament. This armament was introduced to the area during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie via Sudan. Probably this was what Gerazmach Admasu looted at the beginning of the rebellion. Since, the number of FN armament owned by the rebellion was only four; it was taken by prominent leaders like Gerazmach Admasu Belay. In addition to FN, there were armaments known as Gym 3, Chikoz, Belgij and others (Gondar Archive File number 2415/12; 5/10/1970E.C).

4.6. Collaboration in the rebellion

After looting the armament store of Debre Tabor Awrajja, Gerazmach Admasu tried to find many supporters from different areas. He allied with Fitawrari Terfie Reto of Gojjam, Gerazmach Hailu Berentu, Tassew Wolde of Borena and others (Gondar Archive File number 07/357/40; August 27, 1969E.C).

In addition to the notable former nobilities of different provinces, he also tried to get support by local people and lower officer of Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo Awrajjas (Gondar Archive File number 5/530/70). For example, in Libo Awrajja, Ebenat Woreda, Dega Meqetewa Meketel Woreda, in an area which boarder the three Awrajjas he allied with Asfaw Biders, Kassa Alemie and Teferrri Demssie for his purpose (Gondar Archive File number 5/530/70).

In addition to warriors, Gerazmach Admasu Belay needed supporters who served as intelligence and armament suppliers. The intelligence provided information about the preparation of the government against the rebellion and recommended either to escape or to hide themselves (Gondar Archive File number 5/1635/70; June 11, 1970E.C).

Sometimes his alliance includes with organized political parties like Ethiopian Peoples Revolutionary Party (EPRP) and Ethiopian Democratic Union (EDU). The following letter written by Shaleka Melaku Teferra (Governor of Gondar province) to Gayint Awrajja Administrator can be an example.

The bandit Admasu Belay together with Gugsa Amtaw in Negela Meketel Woreda are expanding EPRP’s anti revolutionary objective and we received their plan to endanger Este Town suddenly. Therefore we announce to follow and destroy anti-revolutionists.

Admasu and his followers even tried to shift their alliance from EDU to EPRP when situation are not conductive to them. The following letter written from Yigzaw Taye, Administrator of Simada Woreda to Shaleqa Melaku Teferra supports this idea:

The major bandit Admasu Belay, after staying as member of EDU, understanding the lose he faced now changed his stand and joined the camp of young nobles team, EPRP ……

This indicates that both EDU and EPRP used local resistances like Admasu Belay in order to expand their ideology throughout the country and to weaken the power of the Derg.

To get support from local minor administrators in Gayint and Debre Tabor Awrajjas, Admasu and his followers used both persuasion and intimidation. Many minor administrators were quite
confused to decide since the intimidation was also from the government side. (Informant: Melaku Tessema; Gonder Archive Personal letter written from Fitawrari Abreha Meshesha).

4.7. Tactics of Gerazmach Admasu to challenge the government

After having many supporters in the three Awrajjas, Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo, he fought the Derg government through guerilla warfare and open fighting. In order to enforce local administrators to his side Gerazmach Admasu Belay targeted to kill administrators who had already determined to eliminate him. The following letter written from Alemayehu Azeze to Gonder Kifle Hager Astedadar Tsifet Bet is related with the point: “..........የወን የወን ጥበር በተጠቀም ያሸፈል። በተጨማሪ ከላሸነ ተብል ያለት የሰበ ያሸፈል። ያለን የማለት ያለን የሚገባ የሚገባ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያለን ከላሸኑ ያለን ዯግሞ ከላሸኑ ያገለፋ። (Gonder Archive File number 5159/27/2; 15/7/1970E.C)

Admasu and his supporters choose a strategically conducive place for defense against attacks from the government forces. In one of the government campaigns against the rebellion organized by Gayint Awrajja administrator and Debre Tabor Awrajja administrator together with Territorial Army met at a place called Guna Mikael to kill the ardent supporter of Gerazmach Admasu Belay. The objective of this campaign was to burn the house in which the rebels reside. But since the construction of that house known as yajib gedel nas (traditional way of house construction which can resist burning for long time), it took too long time to burn it. Ultimately though the report written by Workneh Takele, head of Gonder province police office, to Gonder province Administrative office has general message about the demolition of the rebels, the number of casualties on the side of the government was higher than the rebels. In this campaign only three members of the rebel were killed while seven were killed from the government’s side. In addition to those who lost their lives, there were more individual from the government side who were wounded (Gonder Archive; File number 3151/27/2; 26/4/1970E.C).

Open fighting and killing of prominent local administrators was the tactic of the rebel group in Nefas Mewcha, Gassay and Kimir Dengay towns. A report written from Gonder province police office to Gonder province Administrative office as follows:

Shortly the crimes committed by the bandits before this time 1st, August 26, 1967 E.C they destruct the capital of Gayint Awrajja, 2nd in a place known as Gassay they organized the people and demolished Meleyo Lebash and administrator of Gonder Kifle Hager, 3rd In Debre Tabor town they loot the government offices and then in Kimir Dingay they killed many Meleyo Lebash,4th in August 18 they killed Shaleqa Dires Taye in Aqabit Maryam kebele and took his army (Gonder Archive; File number 3151/27/2; 26/4/1970E.C)

According to the above quotation Admasu and his supporters openly fought the government and killed Meleyo Lebash (Literally uniform dressers). The other point from the quotation is Admasu had popular support. His movement from one Awrajja to the other would be blocked by the people if he had no support.

5. The response of Derg government against Gerazmach Admasu’s rebellion

5.1. Coordination

In order to control the movement or the rebellion of Admasu and his followers from one place to the other, the government tried to coordinate its different organs. Therefore, each Meketel Woreda in the three Awrajjas (Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo) was responsible to organize the people and
take orders from the woreda about the issue. They take orders to follow up the movement and activity of Admasu (Gondar Archive File number 2352/28; 14/09/1970 E. C). Each woreda was responsible to organize armed group like guards, police officers, armed peasants and others (Gondar Archive File number 2284/12; May 18/1970 E.C).

At the Awrajja level, there was flow of information and organized campaign between the three Awrajjas. Similarly, sometimes there were misunderstanding and complains among woredas due to lack of cooperation. For instance, in September 1977 there was an order to organize soldiers of Farta and Este Woredas from Debre Tabor Awrajja. But the administrator of Semada Woreda had complain on the administrator of Este Woreda Administrator for being careless on the issue of Admasu and lack of cooperation (Gondar Archive File number 5952; 02/13/1969 E.C).

In the opposite the administrator of Este Woreda also had complain on other Woreda heads for their lack of cooperation. The following letter written from Shaleqa Basha Mekonnen, Este woreda administrator, to Debre Tabor Awrajja administrator:

\[\ldots\text{According to our agreement to organize the four woredas administrators to meet at Gossay town in 1977 and agreed to continue our work. However, though I arrived in the mentioned place by organizing my army, the three woreda administrators didn’t arrive ….. .} \]

Gondar province administrative office had also strong follow up to eliminate the rebellion. In addition to transferring orders and receiving reports from different Awrajjas, there was communication with other provinces concerning Admasu and other individuals (Gondar Archive File number 2357/40; August 27/1969 E.C). In the process of information exchange between Woreda, Awrajja and province, the government used secret codes. These codes were translated to words by trained individuals. Sometimes, if critical messages are sent without code, provincial administrator would criticize the one who sent that message and warned not to repeat (Gondar Archive File number 5/2028/70; 17/12/1970 E.C).

In the communication between provincial administrator and Awrajja administrators, the provincial administrator clearly informed its suspicion to local administrator of having secret support to Admasu Belay. In a letter to Gayint and Debre Tabor Awrajja administrators, the then administrator of Gondar province, Melaku Teferra wrote the following:

\[\ldots\text{The bandit Admasu Belay, when he moved from place to place within the people of the two Awrajjas and practicing anti revolutionary and anti people activities, while from meketel woreda to Awrajja administrators know where they [Admasu and his follower] passed the day and night the inability to control it clearly indicates that he is getting internal support or aid. ….. When Admasu and his relatives were wounded and trying to recover in different villages it was possible to capture or killed. That is why we want to inform that there is support or aid from different directions.} \]
Actually the letter written by Melaku Teferra was correct. There were many individuals who were on the side of Admasu Belay from the three Awrajjas. In addition to those who openly participated in the fighting against the Derg, there were peasants who provided food, shelter and information secretly. Similarly there were government officials secretly supporting Admasu Belay. It was this support to Admasu that helped his rebellion to continue for relatively long time (Informants: Melaku Tessema; Kassaw Defersha).

6. The Derg military campaigns

Many campaigns were conducted by the government to calm Admasu’s rebellion. Before applying campaigns in most cases the government tried to get information about the place in which the rebels found, the number of fighters, the plan of rebel group (Gondar Archive File number 5952/12/69; 02/13/1969 E.C; 3573/1970; August 27/1969 E.C.).

In December 1977 based on the orders from Gondar province police director, Gayint and Debre Tabor Awrajja Administrative offices campaigned to demolish the rebellion. This campaign took place at Guna Mikael where the government lost five fighters while the rebel lost three including one of the former nobleman and supporter of Admasu Belay, Gerazmach Mekunannent Engedashet (Gondar Archive File number 27/1970 E.C).

Two months before the skirmish of Guna, Admasu’ s force suddenly attacked Este town in September 1977. In this fighting, two police officers and three prisoners were killed by Admasu’ s forces while the government killed four rebel fighters (Gondar Archive File number 27/2/1970 E.C). 

Though the letters written about this incident did not mention about the reason for the killing of prisoners, probably Admasu Belay attempted to break the prison. On the other hand, the local administrators probably forced the prisoners against Admasu’ s force. To retaliate Admasu’ s attack on Este town, Debre Tabor Awrajja vice administrator and Police head organized territorial army and moved to Este two days after the incident (Gondar Archive File number 27/2/534; September 24/1970 E.C).

The action of the government was to attack Admasu Belay since he could go too far with in two days. That is why though Admasu Belay and five other fighters were wounded, they moved to Gayint Awrajja, Semada woreda, together with 26 identified supporters of Admasu. On his way to Semada, Admasu had warm reception by the former noblemen who provided food and traditional transport to him and his followers. The following letter was written from Debre Tabor Awrajja vice administrator to Fitawrari Atnafu Ayu, to Gayint Awrajja administrator:

… (Gondar Archive File number 22/12/40; October 2/1970 E.C)

… … The bandit in September 20 1970 came to Este to endanger the town in the class Awrajja, Semada Woreda Sedie Mekelt Woreda, Guza Medhaniamem Church in the house of Ato Ayalew Tigabu, 1 Goat slaughter for him, during he came to this place criminales came together with him at the time name list mentioned 1st/Gelaye Tadesse place Lay Gayint Woreda Shitan Abo 2nd/Alemu Mersha “ “ “ “ . 3rd/Damtie Bitew place Semada ……”
Sometimes the government force faced modern armament that could match the firearms of the rebel group. A letter written from Fitawerari Atnafu Ayu to Gonder province administrative office as follows:

\[\ldots\ldots\text{As the bandits owned automatic rifles and the presented idea is with strong plan to demolish the criminals, better rifles from they already hold, or if it is not available at the time similar automatic rifles with enough bullet shall be given to the woreda administrator.}\ldots\ldots\]

As described above Gerazmach Admasu Belay started his rebellion after looting Debre Tabor Awrajja armament store. Therefore his ownership of modern armaments some times better than the government is not surprising. Around twenty-three police officer from Debre Tabor Awrajja and more than the mentioned number from Gayint Awrajja campaigned to Este to retaliate Admasu Belay (Gonder Archive File number 27/2/1970; 03/02/1970 E.C.).

In the opposite Gerazmach Admasu Belay himself was preparing himself to retaliate the government since one of the casualties in Este from the rebel side was the death of his son, Araya Admasu. Thus after staying in Semada Woreda he moved to Tach Gayint and organized the people against the government. Information about his preparation for retaliation reached to Debre Tabor Awrajja Administration and the Awrajja wrote a letter to Gonder province administration requesting additional force urgently, radio for communication and additional armaments (Gonder Archive File number 778/ls/06/11; October 11/1970 E.C). This indicate the moral superiority of Admasu Belay over the government.

A month after Admasu’s attack on Este town, Debre Tabor Awrajja police and the main ally of Admasu Belay, Mekuannent Engedashet fought at a place known as Goloye, a border between Farta and Lay Gayint Woredas. In this fighting the head of Farta Woreda police office and four other civilian were killed by the rebel group. From the rebel’s side Mekuannent Engidashet and his three supporters were totally killed (Gonder Archive File number 2350/27/2; November 28/1970 E.C).

Though Gerazmach Mekuannent Engidashet was reportedly killed at this time, another report indicates that he was dead two days later at a place called Guna (Gonder Archive File number 778/ls/06/11; 27/3/1970 E.C). Deliberately, or unknowingly there was transfer of false reports which probably helped for the persistence of the rebellion.

In January 1978, Admasu was reportedly escaped to Tigray province. For this, Este woreda administration tried to get confirmation from Meketel Woredas under it and they informed the woreda about the absence of Admasu in their respective administrative units. They also informed about mercy request by the wife of Gerazmach Admasu, Emnet Abebu Aligaz, to Semada Woreda administration (Gonder Archive File number 28/70; January 09/1970 E.C).

However, the idea of Admasu’s movement to Tigray province was not fully accepted by Gondar Province Administration. Rather it was suspected to be the plan of Admasu Belay to buy time (Gonder Archive File number 5/950/70; 24/05/1970 E.C).

Therefore it stressed to continue following the footsteps of Admasu and find the exact place as follows a letter written from Fitawrari Seyoum Ejigu to Debre Tabor Awrajja Administrative office.
Basically we have got the idea obtained from the woreda administrator as susceptible; it is believed not to stop the follow up of the bandit. Therefore the movement of the bandit and the exact place where he is found shall be inspected by collaborating with Gayint Awrajja administrator and we stressed to inform the result within a short period of time.

While on the one side they suspect the idea, on the other hand feared Admasu’s movement to Tigray province for his expected unity with other “antirevolutionary” groups and continued to be threat of security. Therefore it was recommended to inform other neighboring provinces to cut the unity of Admasu with other anti-government groups (Gondar Archive File number 2833/6; 06/11; January 16/1970 E.C).

In March 1978, it was reported that Admasu Belay was found in Gayint Awrajja Tach Gayint Woreda, and Debre Tabor Awrajja Este Woreda moving from one place to the other. But here whether Admasu stay there and miss informed the government by informing as he moved to Tigray, or exactly he moved to Tigray and returned back, the researcher was not able to get source. At this time Admasu was preparing to attack the administrator of Este Woreda, Shaleq Basha Mekonnen Tikune. It was reported at this time the force of Admasu was growing from time to time (Gondar Archive File number 5159/27/2; 15/07/1970 E.C).

To prevent Admasu’s plan to attack the administrator of Este Woreda, the woreda administrator and police head made campaign in the early April 1978 by organizing many armed individuals. However they only took the properties of Admasu and failed to defeat him as he escaped before they reached to him. (Gondar Archive File number 5811/27/2; 19/08/1970 E.C).

Ultimately, the repeated campaigns made by the different levels of government were not successful to eliminate Gerazmach Admasu’s rebellion. The achievements of government was expressed by taking different properties including rifles, capturing individual and destroying the houses and properties of collaborators of Admasu (Informant; Damtie Bitew).

7. The government effort to minimize Admasu’s supporters
Generally it is possible to divide the government’s attempt to minimize Admasu’s influence in to two. These were penalty against the followers of Admasu and giving mercy to those who betrayed Admasu. Penalty was from killing individuals to looting and burning their properties. In the campaign to retaliate Admasu’s attack of Este town, Gayint Awrajja administrator tried to find collaborators of Admasu and burnt the houses of individuals suspected to be supporters of Admasu (Gondar Archive File number 634/12/70; 10/02/1970 E.C).

Similarly the reason for Admasu’s escape from government control after Este attack was said to be the support of Mehal Este and Tinafa Meketel woreda. As a result the whole people of Tinafa Meketel woreda was penalized to pay 15,000 Birr to the government for giving food and water to Admasu (Gondar Archive File number 16/22/1097; 12/02/1970 E.C).

Among those who lost their lives, a person named Aragaw Guangul and his two other friends were the case. In February 1978, Aragaw Guangul, Kokeb Ferede and Endalew Beze were killed in front of many people due to their collaboration with Admasu Belay (Gondar Archive File number 3162/8; 06/11; February 2/1970 E.C). The government did this probably to threaten other people not to participate on the side of Admasu. When the government took the properties of the rebel group, all properties easy for transport were taken and the remaining would be burnt (Gondar Archive File number 2487/12/70; February 13, 1970 E.C).
In different areas the government took what was said to be the property of Admasu and his supporters. In Este woreda, for instance, huge amount of grain was taken by the government in April/1978. The following letter written from Gondar province police director to Gondar province Administrative office supports this idea:

The property of Admasu Belay 1st/35 Madega (unit of grain measurement roughly equivalent to 50 k.g) bean 2nd/67 Madega barley was found buried in the house of Mekbeb Alemu and Tadesse Alemu and sent to Este ... (Gondar Archive File number 5811/27/2; 19/08/1970 E.C)

As we have seen above the people of Tinafa and Mehal Este payed money to the government. Similarly, from Gayint Awoajja Libanos Got were ordered to pay 1000 Birr since Admasu was said to get shelter in this Got. When Admasu moved from one place to the other people who did not oppose that from Mekrie Meketel woreda, Kuskuam, Alamata Giyorgis and Selamoouch Got, together ordered to pay 16,000 Birr (Gondar Archive File number 5811/27/2; 19/08/1970 E.C).

In May 1978 the administrator of Semada woreda assess areas expected to be the shelter of Admasu and captured some of his supporters. Moreover, they took 7 cattle, 2 Donkey, 6 Goats and 24 aqmada (unit of grain measurement roughly equivalent to 50 k.g) grains to Nefas Mewcha town (Gondar Archive File number 2352/28; 14/09/1970 E.C). In Tach Gayint woreda a person named Melese Abera who was suspected as the supporter of Admasu was identified by a group of government forces. Though the group was unable to capture him they burnt three houses which were reported as his properties. In Tach Gayint woreda the house of many suspected supporters of Admasu were burnt. Achnef Abera, Eneyaw Zewdie, Sisay Bisechu, Debalkie Tekalign and many others were the victims whom houses were burnt by the government forces (Gondar Archive File number 2284/2; May 18/1970 E.C).

The government gives mercy to those former members of Admasu army if they regret for their activities. In May 1978, a person named Yimam Tessaema requested for mercy and received by the government. Then he announced what he did with Admasu by showing everything village by village (Gondar Archive File number 3957/12/70; June 9/1970 E.C).

7.1. The role of local people during the rebellion
During Gerazmach Admasu’s rebellion local people had provide great contribution for Admasu and his followers. Especially, at the beginning of the rebellion local people completely supported the rebel group. They support the rebel group by providing food, water, shelter and good treatment by preparing festive meal for Admasu and his followers. In addition to this, the local people help the rebel group by participating in the war they had gone within them (Gondar Archive File number 5/134/70; 21/1/1970 E.C).

The local people helps not only by giving food for the rebels but, they also treated the wounded warriors by tied up their harm legs and they take them in their house and they treat them properly (Informant Alemu Mersha).

During this time, the government convinces the local people the one who see Admasu and his followers to oppose him and inform to the government. In addition, the government teaches the local people he was not important person, not a good aim to them and if they supported Admasu that cloud led them to conflict and endanger them socially, economically and politically. But the local people did not accept the government conviction rather they continue to support the rebel group (Gondar Archive File number 5811/27/2; 19/08/1970 E.C; Informant: Melaku Tessema).
Due to their support for rebel group people of different community ordered to pay different penalty. The following letter written from Gondar Province Police Director to Gondar province Administrative office support this idea:

...አንሁም ከአበባ ማስረጆቸው 5 ከወረዳ ያሆን እርምጃ ብር ላይ እንወሩ በጠቅላላ አሠራል ከእነ በተወጥ ያሆኑ የአበባ በጠቅላላ ብር 15000/አስረ ከአበባ ብር ቁጥር ወስደር ይታበ... 

...ወረዳ ያስረጆቸው እርምጃ ከአበሉ ያስረጆቸው ከወረዳ ታህሳስ ያስረጆቸው ብር 15/አስረ ብር ከአበሉ ያስረጆቸው ብር 3ወን/አስረ ብር ብር ዋወና 1600/አስረ እንወሩ ያስረጆቸው ብር ቁጥር ወስደር ይታበ... (Gondar Archive File number #16/22/1097; 12/2/1970 E.C)

...5 Persons who gave food and water for the rebel group were captured by the government and the people of Mehāl Este and Tīnafa Meketl. Woreda who see Admasu but not opposed him ordered to pay 15,000 Birr....

...The bandit moved from one place to the other people who did not opposed him 1st/ Kuskuam 2nd/ Alamata Geyorgis 3rd/ Selamoch Gote, together ordered to pay 1600 Birr....

Gradually, the support of local people for Admasu declined because of penalty and they had not bring use from the rebellion. The government gave mercy to different former supporters of Admasu. Since Admasu lost many of his supporters, he retreated to North Gondar and died in April 1980 in North Gondar (Informant Damtie Bitew). Here whether Admasu died because of health problem or killed by the government, the researcher has no information.

7.2. Consequences of the rebellion
During Gerazmach Admasu Belay rebellion many participants of the war lost their life from both the rebel group and the government. Especially at the battle of Gassay town many people lost their life. At the war which was taken place in Este town, Admasu lost his son (File number 298/70; 21/3/1970 E.C).

Around those places where the war takes place the society displaced from their community and their material suffered damage. During the rebellion any suspected person to be supporter of Admasu were captured by the government, would be killed ruthlessly, and the government would took their properties and their properties were burnt (Informants: Damtie Bitew; Alemu Mersha).

7.3. Conclusion
In Ethiopia rebellion is not a new event, throughout the country’s history there were number of rebellions. But the objective of those rebellions was broader than the other. Therefore, the attempt of Gerazmach Admasu Belay can be defined as rebellion since he prevented any government orders and even tried to topple government officials from their position by using force. The rebellion takes place in three former Awrajjas Gayint, Debre Tabor and Libo Awrajjas from 1975 to 1980. The rebellion was called by local people ከጠቅላላ ከስራወናወን Ye Admasu Tornet.

Gerazmach Admasu started his rebellion by looting the armament store of Debre Tabor Awrajja. Then he allied with notable former nobilities of different provinces, with local people and sometimes he allied with organized political parties like EPRP and EDU. He fought the government through guerilla warfare and open fighting.

In order to investigate the movement of Admasu and his followers, to capture him alive or to kill him and control the rebellion, the government tried to coordinate its different organs. Many campaigns were made by Derg government to demolish Gerazmach Admasu’s rebellion. But the repeated campaign made by government was not successful to eliminate the rebellion. During this rebellion, many people lost their life as warriors on the opposite sides and as civilian casualties.
Ashagrie, Cogent Social Sciences (2022), 8: 2023972
https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2021.2023972

Funding
The author received no direct funding for this research.

Author details
Solomon Ashagrie1
E-mail: solashag@gmail.com
1 Department of History and Heritage Management, Bahir Dar University, Shanghai University, Global Studies, Bahir Dar, Ethiopia.

Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Citation information
Cite this article as: Local resistance against the Derg in Ethiopia: The case of Admasu Belay rebellion, Solomon Ashagrie, Cogent Social Sciences (2022), 8: 2023972.

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