# Luqa site-specific topic: Religion

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[Male leader of traditional religion 1](#_Toc440534837)

[Male leader of Kale Hiwot religion 3](#_Toc440534838)

[FGD with elderly followers of the customary religion 4](#_Toc440534839)

[FGD with male youth followers of Kale Hiwot religion 6](#_Toc440534840)

[FGD with Female youth followers of Kale Hiwot religion 7](#_Toc440534841)

**Male leader of traditional religion**

The role of religion in development intervention is a positive one, in that religious leaders give every possible support to the government development interventions. The biggest customary religious practice among the Tsemay community is the what is known as ‘the generation meeting’ where as people from every age group and yoke of life gather in Shala Kebel (formerly one kebele with Luqa and the people of Luqa know that their origin is from Shala and they have strong traditional ties and the clan burial places of every clan in Luqa is found in Shala. The people of the two kebele believe that they are still the same except for the administrative purpose). During the generation meeting prayer will be carried out [the prayer is mostly about peace in the community and the country, about rain, and health among the people] and traditional leadership is passed from one generation to the other in a ritual manner. The newly elected leaders then after, are considered clan elders and leaders who take over the administrative activities of the community. This ritual of passing [the ritual is a way of passing leadership responsibility to the next generation. The community carry on this ritual and on the way they ask their creator to give patience and knowledge to the new community leaders, willingness of the people to be submissive to the traditional rules and regulations, to respect each other and they also praise and thanks the ex-community leaders for their work. The leadership passage from the former rulers to the new one takes time. The replacing of the old leaders group and assigning of the new leaders of the community takes three days to be accomplished. People who gather for this ceremony will come with food and drinks that lasts for three days. At the end of power transfer to the next generation the elders’ council drink from the milk brought for the ceremony and spit on the ground. Then those who take over the leadership are allowed to drink from the milk. Then prayer takes place and the new leaders are asked to lead the community without bias and everyone wish them a peaceful administrative period. After this the women kindle fire and those who brought the milk will be blessed and on the third day the ritual comes to an end and participants go back to their homes.

The other linked belief and practice of the customary religion is the *gore* ritual.[if *gore is not carried on it is believed that the boy will be unstable in his life. It is said that his mind and body will not have peace].*  *Gore* is a ritual ceremony through which boys are shifted from boyhood to manhood. In this ritual the skin of a monkey killed only by a club could be tied on the joints of the boy and is blessed by the fellow that carries on the ritual. After his ritual the boy is considered to be transformed into manhood and is able to marry a wife. Boys who are against the *gore* ritual are considered as radicals to the community customary institutions and are cursed. It is believed that the young who oppose this ritual practices couldn’t succeed in life.

The other traditional religious belief among the Tsemay community is the obligation of Conducting *Gilo* (*teskar*). The community believe that if *gilo* is not carried on the next generation could not live in spiritual peace. The *gilo* could be carried on any time in life when the living boy/ brother’s economy is viable. Carrying out of *gilo* is an obligatory customary accomplishment that is expected in one’s life time. If this obligatory ritual is not carried on it is believed that the deceased person could not rest at peace.

The last customary religious belief and practice is the ritual in which elders with their leader known as *Ajamito*, carry on prayer and ritual to overcome the recurrent drought and to beg for rain to fall. Here the person who carries on the ritual will strike together two pieces of small hide known as *marsha* (*chama* in Amharic)while the elders slaughter a goat and disperse the *ferse* on the ground. The elders holding grasses in their hands will pray with the ajamito who is supposed to communicatewiththe creator of the people. They believe that within short days the rain will fall down. None of the above beliefs and practices has any particular areas of practice except the generation administrative power hand over. They could be carried anywhere.

The first new religion to be introduced in the community is the Kale Hiwot Church sector of the Protestant religion. It was introduced in the community in 1994. The first missionaries came from Kucha in Wolayita. The missionaries met Ato BB the first convert from Luqa kebele.[ No more info. on this]. When B started to teach the gospel in Luqa the reaction of the community was furious. He was flogged several times. The opponents were the leaders and followers of the customary religious institutions, especially those who were connected with the ritual of *gore* and *gilo*. The acceptors were from the middle class and the youth. The customary religion is the dominant one and has followers from the elders, the female, male and youth. They are mostly not educated and are among the kebele officials. Concerning the economic status, most of the traditional religion followers are the economically well off. Of course the middle class and the poor are also included. There are also members from the vulnerable group as religion doesn’t have a cross cut class distinction.

The roles that the customary religion plays in development interventions are very important. For example concerning the education intervention the customary religion leaders are in favour of the programme and coordinate their followers on this issue. The health, water, livelihood interventions are all supported by the customary religion leaders[the leaders convince and make their followers supporter to the development interventions]. They also aspire to see a better and improved community, through the above mentioned interventions. The customary religious leaders are committed to the social protection and infrastructure interventions.

The kind of relation between the traditionalists and the new converted people at this moment in time is smooth. The conflict was back in the 1980th when the new religion came to the area. People don’t inter-marry each other often. In rare cases a male of the new religion may fall in love with a traditional girl and they may marry each other. In this case it is obvious that the girl will be converted to the new religion. Earlier in time family members with different religion used not to live under the same roof. But nowadays newly converted youth are witnessed living with their traditional religion follower family members which show us that there is tolerance these days. It is also observed that the youth openly ask their family to embrace the new religion arguing that the new religion is better that the traditional one and parent allowing their children to follow whatever religion they like. If any conflict arises and if it is among family members, what we usually observe is that the newly converted youth live the house and start to live with friends. If it is between the community members the matter is dealt with the government intervention. People from the traditional religion and the new religion do participate together in public activities and meetings. They invite each other in social gatherings except that the kale Hiwot church followers don’t eat and drink foods and drinks prepared for rituals.

In order to get acceptance in the community the leaders of the new religion, build the houses of the destitute members, take the sick ones to medical centres, assist the poor children with educational materials and they prepare food in the Church in remembrance of all members. Easter feast is dedicated after the men, while Christmas is dedicated for the women and New Year is dedicated to the youth members of the church. The new leaders don’t give any water service as they don’t have one for themselves.

Earlier, when the new religion came to the area converting from the customary religion to Kale Hiwot had affected the family relation as well as the social relationships in the community. If a boy/girl is converted he could be sent out of the house until he detested and repent. The main problem was between older and younger generations. Relations between a customary religious fellow and a convert who are living as neighbours were as edgy as that of the above mentioned ones. Concerning the social relations between a convert to a new religion and a customary relative is tense.

## Male leader of Kale Hiwot religion

Kale Hiwot protestant religion has only one church in the centre of Luqa for praying and works outreach activities through the preachers. Kale Hiwot church believers believe in Jesus Christ and work towards expanding the religion through outreach work. Kale Hiwot church has religious practices like feasts during New Year, Christmas and Easter. Each feast is dedicated to Women, Men and Youth members. During these holy days a small amount of contribution is made by the church members and those who cannot afford are not compelled to make contribution. Besides the members contribution the church also make its own contribution to make the holidays enjoyable. The basic ritual of the Kale Hiwot church is praising God for making this world sweet to live on. This could be done through singing and witnessing Christ’s endless gifts.

The Kale Hiwot first missionary was Aba Q who began his teachings in Olo Kebele. While teaching in Olo he met me ( BB) and I was converted. Then I was assigned to work in Bako Gazer and finally brought the religion to 1992 in Luqa. The first convert was NB, a mother of 60 years of age. The reactions of the community were hateful and have beaten me to death. The opponents were the *Bilbiko* generation (the customary leading generation at the time). In 1992 when I came back being a convert, I was flogged by an angry group of the community and told to denounce the new religion and to return to the traditional religion. Again in 1993 my hands were tied and dragged between the two lines of youth *evangadi* singers being beaten because I saved and took away a girl of seven years who was supposed to be thrown away because of *mingi*. The girl is now grown up and is working in Mekane Yesus church clinic in Gisma Kebele. In 1994 we started to preach in Luka openly. We built a small house and started to pray there. The customary religion has followers from youth, male female and elders while the Kale Hiwot church has more Youth male members and still female and elders, though not as elderly as the customary religion. Kale Hiwot church has more educated members. The customary religion has more official members of the kebele than Kale Hiwot church. Most of the rich people in the kebele are followers of the customary religion while there are only few rich followers of the Protestant church. Middle poor and vulnerable people are dominantly members of the Kale Hiwot church.

Kale Hiwot church support the development interventions of education in creating awareness among its members and the community to send their children to school. Concerning health intervention Kale Hiwot does awareness activities among its members to adopt the health packages in their day-to-life. The Kale Hiwot church does nothing concerning the intervention in the water sector as the intervention in this field is very expensive. To improve the livelihood of the community Kale Hiwot is encouraging its members to involve in different livelihood activities to overcome poverty. Kale Hiwot works towards raising the aspiration of the community and believe that as long as a person work hard it is possible to achieve one’s dream. Concerning the social protection of the community Kale Hiwot give every possible support to kebele officials. Kale Hiwot church instructs its members to participate in the internal roads and paths maintenance works. The relations between the traditionalists and the new converted people at present are good. Before 2008 there was conflict and the customary believers used to attack the newly converted ones. At this moment in time the absence of conflict between the customary and the convert affects the kebele development positively. People of the two religions are inter-marrying each other. There are certain family members with different religion live together, while in certain cases the new converts are observed going out of their houses. If any conflict happens the government will intervene. People of the two religions do participate in public activities or meeting together. We invite each other in social gatherings except that, we don’t go to social gatherings related to customary beliefs.

The leaders of Kale Hiwot church don’t do anything different from the people to get acceptance. What we do is to set a good example to our followers and the community. We don’t provide food aid, and when there is drought we also receive one along with the other community members. We don’t give health service as we don’t have health centre. We don’t give water service as we share the water service provided by the government with the other community members. we provide educational materials to vulnerable children of our members to show our concern towards education. Formerly converting from the customary religion to Kale Hiwot had affected the social relationships in the community. Nowadays the social relationships are more of tolerant type. At present we don’t observe fighting families over religious issues. Sometimes there is problem between the older and younger generations. Relations between neighbours nowadays improved. In the same way relations between relatives is getting better.

## FGD with elderly followers of the customary religion

There are no such religious institutions which can be sighted in the customary religion. But there are believes and related practices. The first practice is the handing over of responsibilities from generation to generation which is carried on during the generation meeting. The generation meeting takes place through prayer. The traditional leadership is passed from one generation to the other in a ritual manner. The newly elected leaders then become leaders who are involved in the administrative activities of the community. This ritual of passing on of the community leadership takes three days to be accomplished. People who gather for this ceremony will come with food and drinks. At the end of power transfer to the next generation the elders’ council drink from the milk brought for the ceremony and spit on the ground. Then those who take over the leadership are allowed to sip from the milk. Then prayer takes place and the new leaders are asked to lead the community without bias and everyone wish them a peaceful administrative period. After this the women kindle fire and those who brought the milk will be blessed, and on the third day the ritual comes to an end and participants go back to their homes.

The other linked belief and practice of the customary religion is the *gore* ritual. *Gore* is a ritual ceremony through which boys transform from boyhood to manhood. In this ritual the skin of a monkey killed only by a club could be tied on the joints of the boy and is blessed by the fellow that carries on the ritual. After the ritual the boy is considered to be transformed into manhood and is able to marry a wife. Boys who are against the *gore* ritual are outcast and cursed. It is believed that the young who oppose this ritual practices couldn’t succeed in life.

The other traditional religious belief among the Tsemay community is the obligation of Conducting *Gilo* (*teskar*). The community believe that if *gilo* is not carried on the immediate family members of the deceased could not get spiritual peace. The *gilo* could be carried on any time in life when the economic condition is viable. Carrying out of *gilo* is an obligatory customary accomplishment that is expected in one’s life time. If this obligatory ritual is not carried on it is believed that the deceased person could not rest at peace.

The last customary religious belief and practice is the ritual in which the *Ajamito (*a person who carries on the ritual), carries on prayer and ritual to overcome the recurrent drought and to beg for rain to fall. Here the person who carries on the ritual will strike together two pieces of small hide known as *marsha* (*chama* in Amharic) while the elders slaughter a goat and disperse the *ferse* on the ground. The elders holding grasses in their hands will pray with the *ajamito* who is supposed to communicatewiththe creator of the people. They believe that within short days the rain will fall down. None of the above beliefs and practices have particular areas of practice except the generation administrative power hand over. They could be carried out anywhere. [I think we approached these people with the same issues irrespective of their position in the community.]we raised the same questions to the different people; the leaders and the followers of the religion. They equally know the procedure though few are leaders and the rest are followers.

Women and especially the elderly women have certain roles in the customary power transition between two generations. Other than that the women don’t have any significant role in prayers. All the blessing and cursing works are done by the male. Dispute resolution is carried on by the male elders. The Tsemay community is a male dominant one in which our role is very minimal.

The first new religion to be introduced in the community is the Kale Hiwot Church sector of the Protestant religion that was introduced in 1994 in the kebele. The first missionaries came from Kucha in Wolayita. The missionaries met BB the first convert from Luqa kebele in 1992 in Olo kebele. The reaction of the community was furious. The opponents were the leaders and followers of the customary religious institutions, especially those who were advocates of the rituals of *gore* and *gilo*. The acceptors were from the middle class and the youth. As soon as the new religion was introduced there was conflict and the new religion followers were not accepted; through time the conditions have improved. People from customary and the new religion inter-marry each other. At the beginning parents used to drive out their children from home because of being converts to the new religion. Nowadays if any conflict arises the kebele will intervene. The followers of both religions do participate in public activities and hold meetings together. We invite each other in social gatherings except that the Kale Hiwot church followers don’t appear on ritual gatherings.

The customary religion is the dominant one and has followers from the elders, the female, male and youth. They are mostly not educated and are among the kebele officials. Concerning the economic status, most of the traditional religion followers are the economically well off. Of course the middle class and the poor are also included. There are also members from the vulnerable group as religion doesn’t have a cross cut class distinction.

The roles that the customary religion plays in development interventions are very important. For example concerning the education intervention the customary religion leaders are in favour of the programme and coordinate their followers on this issue. The health, water, livelihood interventions are all supported by the customary religion leaders. They also aspire to see a better and improved community, through the above mentioned interventions. The customary religious leaders are committed to the social protection and infrastructure interventions. All in all the customary religion fully support the government intervention in the area. [As mentioned above we have asked these people the same issue and I don’t see the problem with coming up with similar answers for the same questions.]

The kind of relation between the traditionalists and the new converted people at this moment in time is smooth. The conflict was back in the 1990s when the new religion came to the area. People don’t inter-marry each other often. In rare cases a male of the new religion may fall in love with a traditional girl and they may marry each other. In this case it is obvious that the girl will be converted to the new religion. Earlier in time family members with different religion used not to live under the same roof. But nowadays newly converted youth are witnessed living with their traditional religion follower family members which show us that there is tolerance these days. It is also observed that the youth openly ask their family to embrace the new religion arguing that the new religion is better that the traditional one and parent allowing their children to follow whatever religion they like. If any conflict arises and if it is among family members, what we usually observe is that the newly converted youth live the house and start to live with friends. If it is between the community members the matter is dealt with the government intervention. People from the traditional religion and the new religion do participate together in public activities and meetings. They invite each other in social gatherings except that the kale Hiwot church followers don’t eat and drink foods and drinks prepared for rituals. [This society/ community is very close and share the same value, knowledge and understanding of what is going on in and around the community. So, irrespective of their age and community responsibility they have almost equal information on matters that concern the community.]

In order to get acceptance in the community the leaders of the new religion, take the sick ones to medical centres, assist on farm work of the destitute, build the houses of the destitute members and assist the poor children with educational materials. The leaders of the new religion don’t provide food aid, health service, water service or educational materials to get acceptance. What they do is be exemplary to the community in their farm work, in their practical activities of the health packages, in their water point usage and supporting the vulnerable children in education materials to encourage them.

Earlier, when the new religion came to the area converting from the customary religion to Kale Hiwot had affected the family relation as well as the social relationships in the community. If a boy/girl is converted he could be sent out of the house until he desisted and repented. The main problem was between older and younger generations. Relations between a customary religious fellow and a convert who are living as neighbours were as edgy as that of the above mentioned ones. Concerning the social relations between a convert to a new religion and a customary relative is tense.

We feel that we are losing the younger generation, particularly young women, to the new religion because the new religion leaders are more principled and set good examples to the youth. The new religion does not provide resources. It is teaching through songs and delegate feasts in the name of the youth, women and men and more responsibility is provided for the youth. It is teaching in a more entertaining way than the customary religion. We don’t see any religious differences made by the government. The government is said to be secular. Though the customary religion is less well viewed by the government in certain ways in which the community is exposed to unnecessary expenses.

## FGD with male youth followers of Kale Hiwot religion

This FGD was conducted with 8 male youth followers of Kale Hiwot Church whose age range is between 16-18. Three of the FGD participants have joined the church 2 years back while three of them became members 18 months ago. The other two have joined the religion in 2010. It is not dislike of the customary religion that forced the youth to shift from the customary religion to the new religion in the area. It rather the teaching of the preachers, the way they present the teaching of the bible, and discipline of the leaders and the members. On the other hand the customary religion leaders don’t take any time in teaching the younger generation about the customary religion, why things are done the way they are done to pass on the beliefs so that the youth could be an informed believer. So, this difference in approach and the way the protestant church preachers teach followers have attracted us to accept the new religion. If you see the customary religion followers, they give more freedom to the youth than the Kale Hiwot Church leaders. But the freedom that is given to the youth by the customary religious parents and/or the community does not teach anything concerning the religion from its roots. The customary religious leaders have less relevant programmes than the Kale Hiwot church that are concerning the youth.

Every programme of the Kale Hiwot Church is attractive. The prayer services are interesting and attractive. There are no recreation activities to attract the youth. On the other hand all members including the youth recreate equally on New Year, Christmas or Easter days. For this reason New Year is dedicated to youth and on that particular day we do the church service we entertain the church members. All programmes that are carried on, on that particular holy day are for the youth to entertain the church members. Christmas is devoted to mothers and Easter is committed to fathers so that they run the church services on those particular days. This way the youth is recreated and at the same time discharge their duties. There is youth programme in the church service which is only for the youth and the teaching itself is around “how the youth could serve Christ”. The youth is given more responsibilities to grow up as responsible citizens. We definitely believe that Kale Hiwot church is more progressive than the customary religion. When there are two or more things to compare it is definite that everybody goes for the better one and detests the customary activities which are done through tradition.

Kale Hiwot plays a pivotal role in development activities of education in supporting the programme and encouraging its members to send their children to school whenever they have the access. The Kale Hiwot church leaders teach its members to implement the health packages and are supporting the programme. The kale Hiwot church supports the plan of the government that the community gets clean drinking water and it executes its share to realize this. The church encourages its members to work hard to improve their livelihood and contribute to the community livelihood improvement in general. The church inspires its members to strive for the best things in life. The Kale Hiwot church supports the development intervention concerning the social protection and scale up the idea in every possible ways. The church plays a positive role in the infrastructure development intervention in the area through contribution, labour work and scaling up the idea.

As youth members of the Kale Hiwot religion, we would like to talk on the existing relations between the customary religion and Kale Hiwot church. As we were told time and again, when the first converts appeared in Luqa the relationship between the customary religion and the new converted followers of the Kale Hiwot was that of hateful on the side of the customary religion followers. The traditionalists had gone to the extent of flogging the first converted protestant. But nowadays there is no conflict between the customary and Kale Hiwot church followers. People of both religions inter-marry each other. Initially the traditional religious family members used to drive out their children out of their houses whenever they heard that their children were converted to Protestant religion. But nowadays family members with different religion live together. Some customary parents have gone to the extents of allowing their children to follow whatever religion they liked. If any conflict arises, we think that the government would intervene. The members of both religions participate in public activities and meet together as never before. The followers of both the customary and the Kale Hiwot church invite each other in social gatherings, except that the Kale Hiwot Church members don’t participate in ritual festive that is prepared by the other religion followers.

The leaders of the new religion don’t do anything exceptional to get acceptance. They don’t provide food aid, health service or water service at all. They support the children of the poor in educational materials so that they can pursue their education. The money comes from individual members’ contribution on Sundays. The best things that the Kale Hiwot church leaders do to get acceptance is to set a good example to the community.

Converting from one religion to the other had affected social relationships initially. The relationship among family members was a tense one when the new religion was introduced and few years after that. But now the relationships among family members are healthy. At the beginning relationships between older and younger generations was sore. The younger generation was hated because few were converted to the new religion. But at present older and younger generations are in harmony. It was the same with neighbours. The customary religion followers hated their neighbours that were converted to Protestantism. But at present neighbours of different religions live together in concurrence. It was similar for relatives. When the new religion was introduced the followers of it were unloved even by relatives. Currently people no more hate their relatives because they are converted to the new religion.

As for freedom the customary religion followers give more freedom. The only difference in this respect is that the young men in Kale Hiwot are made men of principle and discipline. We go to school on programme, support our families in programme and go to church in programme. We don’t spend our time lavishly. There is no entertainment programme that is carried on by the church. But the prayer itself and the ceremony that is carried on in the church entertain us most. There is no much employment opportunities around the church. But there are educational opportunities for those outstanding students when they reach higher level. The kale Hiwot church leaders give unfailing advice to their members especially the youth which could come through different obstacles. There are opportunities for the young men to meet young women as most marriages are carried on through the church ceremony and the youngsters like to have a spouse from the same religion.

## FGD with Female youth followers of Kale Hiwot religion

The FGD was conducted with 6 female youth whose are ranges from 15-21. They joined the church at different times and four of the six have been members for two and half years. The other two have been members for only one year each.

What attracted us to the Kale Hiwot church is the teaching of the preachers; they make it easy to understand the words of Jesus making the bible attractive. The discipline of the leaders and the members, the way they socialize their children attracts the youth to the church. On the other our traditional religion leaders don’t take any time in teaching the younger generation about the customary religion. We think that the customary religion leaders themselves don’t know why things are done the way they are done. It is an issue of do this or you will be cursed. So, this difference in approach and the way the protestant church preachers teach their followers have attracted us to accept the new religion. If you see the customary religion followers, they give more freedom to the youth than the Kale Hiwot Church leaders. But the freedom that is given to the youth by the customary religion followers, parents and/or the community does not teach anything justification to what they do or why they do it. So, the youth is attracted more and more to the Kale Hiwot church doctrine. The Customary religious leaders have less relevant programmes than the Kale Hiwot church concerning the youth.

Every programme of the Kale Hiwot Church is attractive. The prayer services are interesting and outstanding. Though there are no recreation activities to attract the youth, the youth is treated with respect and on the New Year holy day the youth is in charge of entertaining the church members as Christmas is devoted to mothers and Easter is committed to fathers. This way the youth are recreated besides discharge their duties. There is youth programme in the church service which is only for the youth. The youth is given more responsibilities to grow up as responsible citizens. We definitely believe that Kale Hiwot church is more progressive than the customary religion. When there are two or more things to compare it is definite that everybody goes for the better one and detests the customary activities which are done through tradition. That is how we joined the Kale Hiwot church. Kale Hiwot plays a pivotal role in development activities of education in supporting the programme and encouraging its members to send their children to school whenever they have the access. The Kale Hiwot church leaders teach the members of the church to implement the health packages and are supporting the programme. The kale Hiwot church supports the plan of the government that the community gets clean drinking water and it does its part to realize this in terms of contribution. The church encourages its members to work hard to improve their livelihood and contribute to the community livelihood improvement in general. The church inspires its members to strive for the best things in life. The Kale Hiwot church supports the development intervention concerning the social protection and scale up the idea in every possible ways. The church plays a positive role in the infrastructure development intervention in the area through contribution, labour work and scaling up the idea.