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**Paper proposal for the International Association of Mission Studies' 15th Assembly in 2020:
"Powers, Inequalities, and Vulnerabilities: Mission in a Wounded World"**

Working Title: The eye, jinn spirits, and the dynamics of the interpersonal realm : exploring a
Biblical idiom in an African Muslim context

Study Group: Interreligious Studies and Mission

In Somaliland, East Africa, many people are wounded by possession from evil spirits, and the lack of power by local healers to bring about lasting relief and healing. In this paper, I loosely follow Tiéno and Hiebert's (2006) sequence of missional theological analysis: I start from an anthropological perspective and describe the contexts in which possession occurs – namely relational tensions and violations – as well as the healing approaches that are practised, which have shifted significantly over the past 30 years from animistic appeasement of spirits to, what is considered to be, 'purely Islamic' methods of exorcism (Tiilikainen 2010). I focus specifically on the primary idiom that is used for explaining the dynamics of possession, namely 'the eye'. I suggest that this idiom fundamentally illustrates the ability of human beings to affect each other, which in the Somali context is conceptualised as the possession of an offending person by the spirit of the offended party. Various anthropological writers have suggested that we can think of spirit possession as phenomena that occur in the interpersonal realm, rather than within a bounded individual's psychology (see, eg., Ram 2013; Van Heekeren 2015). I offer a perspective from Christian theology and missiology. The evil eye has been described in various mission contexts (Musk 1989). Tilford (2015) notes the occurrence of the idiom in the Bible (Prov 23:6 and 28:22; Deut 15:9 and 28:54; Matt 6:22f; Gal 3:1), and suggested that "perception was commonly understood in ancient Israel as a means of positively and negatively affecting the environment" (2015:207). This paper argues that ethnographic material can contribute to a Biblical understanding of 'the eye', and begins to offer a Christian response for those who minister to people who suffer from 'the eye'.

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Aaron M works with Operation Mobilisation and Pioneers Australia in a Muslim context in East Africa. He studied Theology at the Australian College of Theology (2007-2014), as well as Cultural Anthropology and Religious Experience at the University of Sydney, NSW, Australia, Macquarie University, NSW, Australia and the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK (2012-2019). Since January 2013, he has worked for a university in East Africa. His Masters dissertation for the MRes (Religious Experience) was a phenomenological investigation of spirit possession experiences and their relationship to the interpersonal space. The thesis was submitted to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David in September 2019.