

**Paper for the 14th Assembly of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MISSION STUDIES**

**Conversions and Transformations: Missiological Approaches to Religious Change**

Study groups in which this paper best belongs to: Theology of Mission, Interreligious Issues

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**How Does Ksenos, The Stranger, Transform One's Theology?  
Reflections from a journey into two postcolonial theologians' writings**

**Some background for the paper:**

In my PhD dissertation I study in a comparative manner two postcolonial theologians' theologies regarding "ksenos": the stranger, the *not-us*, other, visitor. I analyze the variations of theology of the stranger/ksenos in Mitri Raheb's and George E. Tinker's theologies of sovereignty. The former, a Palestinian theologian and pastor, and the latter, a Native North American (wazhazhe, Osage Nation) professor and pastor, in their writings, share similarities - in context, sociohistory and power structures -, as well as differences - in spiritual background, culture and dialogue partners.

**In this paper:**

Postcolonial theologies are not (only) theologies of a certain geographical location or a certain context, but also theologies of a specific, shared theoretical and epistemological approach. According to that approach, I too, as a researcher, am always very much involved. There is no bird perspective to view anything from: I am invited to take part, join the dialogue, share the responsibility. Theory itself becomes practice. In the fields of postcolonial theologies, theology is understood as something that is never (only) written or read, but lived, acted upon. Participation, experience and praxis are its essential elements.

What does this ask from the researcher in the case of postcolonial theology of the *stranger*, and how does it alter and impact the research process? What sort of a methodological and research epistemological challenge is it? How does one listen to the sources and accept the invitation of not (only) read and write, but also live the theology while in the research process?

My journey is a story of a PhD dissertation research, which started as a study of *two* postcolonial theologians' understanding of *ksenos* in theology, but it became a research of *three* theologians and pastors, one being the researcher herself.

In this paper I share the struggle and joy of "being involved" and bringing the issues of center and margin, power and social domination, hierarchies, displacement and dialogue from "reading and writing" into "living and doing".