

Preface and Acknowledgements

Healing is a contested field, and talking about healing from the perspective of the Study of Religion involves many risks. In our experience, studying traditional, complementary, and alternative medicines inevitably leads to accusations of partiality: one is blamed either for taking sides in favor of biomedicine and against alternative healing systems, or for advocating alternative healing systems without pointing out the alleged risks they imply. In presenting papers on the topic, we have often felt that our audience tended to prick up their ears on hearing what they feared, expecting us to take sides in either promoting or condemning biomedicine or alternative medicine. This experience, which reinforced our desire to approach this topic from an unbiased perspective, is one reason why this publication is so important to us.

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Dorothea Lüddeckens and Monika Schrimpf, Zurich / Tuebingen, July 2018

