

## Epistemologies of Healing

General Editors: **David Parkin**, *Fellow of All Souls College, University of Oxford*  
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This series publishes monographs and edited volumes on indigenous (so-called traditional) medical knowledge and practice, alternative and complementary medicine, and ethnobiological studies that relate to health and illness. The emphasis of the series is on the way indigenous epistemologies inform healing, against a background of comparison with other practices, and in recognition of the fluidity between them.

Volume 14

# ASYMMETRICAL CONVERSATIONS

Contestations, Circumventions, and the Blurring of Therapeutic Boundaries

Edited by **Harish Naraindas**, **Johannes Quack**, and **William S. Sax**

*This is a compelling and intellectually satisfying volume that offers important new ethnographic work which, I would argue, revitalizes studies of medical pluralism... an important project by some of the most outstanding and well-known scholars in these areas of study.*

**Murphy Halliburton**, City University of New York

*An excellent volume, useful for teaching at undergrad and postgrad level in anthropology, medical anthropology, religious studies, and South Asian studies.*

**Caroline Osella**, SOAS

*The chapters display a uniformly high level of intellectual skill and provide a good combination of methodological expertise, basic research, and cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary acumen. I am very impressed.*

**Frederick M. Smith**, University of Iowa

Ideas about health are reinforced by institutions and their corresponding practices, such as donning a patient's gown in a hospital or prostrating before a healing shrine. Even though we are socialized into regarding such ideologies as "natural" and unproblematic, we sometimes seek to bypass, circumvent, or even transcend the dominant ideologies of our cultures as they are manifested in the institutions of health care. The contributors to this volume describe such contestations and circumventions of health ideologies—and the blurring of therapeutic boundaries—on the basis of case studies from India, the South Asian Diaspora, and Europe, focusing on relations between body, mind, and spirit in a variety of situations. The result is not always the "live and let live" medical pluralism that is described in the literature.

**Harish Naraindas** is currently Associate Professor in the School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Iowa.

**Johannes Quack** is principal investigator of the Emmy Noether-Project "The Diversity of Nonreligion" at Goethe-University, Frankfurt.

**William S. Sax** has taught at Harvard, Christchurch, Paris, and Heidelberg, where he is Chair of Ethnology at the South Asia Institute.

Cover image: *The senior healer with Hari Kumar Bhaskaran Nair near the ritual enclosure at Ponkudil Mana, 2009. Photo by William S. Sax.*

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