

Centre for the Humanities and Medicine  
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Convergence and Collisions: Disease, Religion, and Healing in Asia

**Ways of Thinking about Healing**

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Medical anthropologists have developed a number of theories about the effectiveness of cultural healing practices, many of which are applicable to traditional Asian medicine and ritual healing. The well-worn biomedical understanding of the placebo effect as due to a patient's "belief" that they are receiving therapy has recently been expanded to include a range of "contextual" factors that overlap features of the healing performance which are cited in anthropological theories. These ways of thinking about healing will be illustrated by examples from Tibetan medicine and ritual healing, and by clinical studies of the placebo effect in acupuncture.