



Ambivalence, Ambiguity and Alienation: Making Sense of 'Tension' in North India



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Ashmolean Museum

How can we understand 'tension', the experience of rigidity that often underpins systemic structures of domination, epistemic violence as well as physical aggression in South Asia? Following Zygmunt Bauman, I want to suggest that 'tension' is the outcome of an overzealous pursuit of moral and categorical clarity which alienates us from the ambiguity of lived experience. At some point, alienation becomes so gross and the aspiration for clarity thus so untenable that it breaks down into ambivalence, and then violence. Deviating from Bauman and others, I however propose a heuristic vocabulary that distinguishes more clearly between ambivalence and ambiguity, building on ethnography of religion, gender and aggression in North India.

Raphael Susewind is Lecturer in Social Anthropology and Development at the Department of International Development, King's College London.

Using a distinct mix of ethnographic and Big Data methods grounded in long-term fieldwork, he explores geographies of Muslim belonging, the ambivalence of the sacred and electoral politics in urban India.

All are welcome

Convenors: Matthew McCartney, Mallica Kumbera Landrus and Rosalind O'Hanlon.

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