

# THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF VIRTUE: ISLAM, CONVERSION AND THE MATERIALITY OF DISCIPLINE



**MUDIT TRIVEDI**  
**PHD CANDIDATE**  
**UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO**

How does a convert learn her new faith? Beyond the materiality of the body what role does material culture play in converts' projects of forging a new way of life, of acknowledging new truths and submitting to new disciplines? Responding to recent debates over pious subjectivity, this talk presents a case study of the unique contributions archaeology can make to the historical anthropology of religious conversion, discipline and virtue. This talk draws upon the results of an archaeological project focused on a city built by converts to Islam in North India and comparative data from reanalyzed assemblages from the wider medieval Islamic world.

This case study asks: What is the "Islamic glass bangle"? Combining typological, technological and compositional studies it demonstrates that these carefully crafted objects served as disciplinary aids, as gendered means to a virtuous self. Shifts in the chemistry, form and idea of this ornament reveal an archive of debates over mineral possibility and human striving. Following these material arguments discloses the entanglements of the social and the material good in the pursuit of virtue. Such archaeologies of virtue enable us to rethink the craft of faith and material belonging as well as question the closures of secular historicism.

**MONDAY, FEBRUARY 3<sup>RD</sup>, 2020, 3:30PM**  
**BUILDING 50, 51A**

**ANTHROPOLOGY COLLOQUIUM**