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EARTH: Isotopes Could Reveal Ancient American Turquoise Trade

Alexandria, VA - A new study from geoscience researchers has important implications for studies of Mesoamerica and North America prior to the arrival of European settlers. Using isotope geochemistry, scientists at Pennsylvania's Dickenson College and the University of Arizona are trying to identify if turquoise mineral specimens record the signature of their parent ore deposits.

Turquoise is a copper aluminum phosphate mineral that forms from water percolating through bedrock near copper ore deposits. Scientists thought that they should see signatures of the ore body where a specimen formed reflected in lead and strontium isotopes in the turquoise, and initial results suggest that they do. Learn what these chemical fingerprints say about where turquoise originates, and how this could improve our understanding of ancient trade routes in North America in EARTH Magazine: <http://bit.ly/1N5Rohm>.

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