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"An Environmental History of Nacre and Pearls: Fisheries, Cultivation and Commerce"

Cariño, Micheline, and Mario Monteforte

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In this essay the authors highlight the role played by capitalism in the intensification of pearls and nacre harvesting that brought the resource to speedy exhaustion. They also illustrate the positive results of the application of scientific research based on sustainability principles to production. An historical approach to pearling leads Cariño and Monteforte to two fundamental conclusions: 1. It is possible to aim at sustainability in the profitable use of renewable natural resources, and 2. Environmental history can reveal the conditions under which this has been possible. It is also their intention to show that environmental history is an approach allowing historical syntheses, the incorporation of vast comparative analyses, and the fleshing out of explanations of economic and social processes with an understanding of the natural resources that sustain these processes. Finally, this work looks to filling up the great gap in knowledge that afflicts the history of the sea. (Text adapted from the authors' abstract .)

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