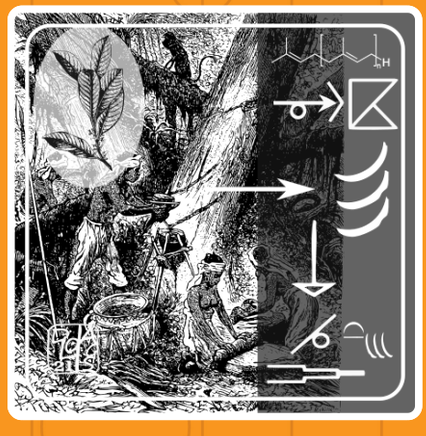


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gutta-percha

Gutta-percha (from Malay) is a natural substance derived from several trees native to Southeast Asia. In the 19th century, it enjoyed immense success thanks to its insulating properties. At a time when long-distance communications were developing rapidly, it became indispensable for coating undersea telegraph cables. Without it, the establishment of the first global telecommunications networks would have been much more difficult. Gutta-percha thus illustrates a different history of rubber, distinct from that of the tire. It demonstrates that flexible materials played a major role in the technical unification of the planet. However, its intensive exploitation places significant pressure on natural resources. Like many other raw materials, it highlights the tensions between innovation, commerce, and the environment. Although less well-known today than natural rubber, gutta-percha remains a valuable testament to the dawn of global communications.

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