PAPER TITLE: Pearls, Politics, and the Challenges of Debt  
NAME: Ivan Rosales Montes  
PANEL: 15. Pearling in the Mid-20th Century  
POSITION: Graduate  
INSTITUTION: American University in Cairo  
COUNTRY: USA  
EMAIL: ivan.rosales.montes@gmail.com  
ABSTRACT:  
The Great Depression shattered the livelihood of many families involved in the luxury trade of pearls. Drawing on local oral historiography, this paper introduces the story of Yousuf Saad al-Jumairi, a Muharraq native, and puts forth a narrative on a significant turning point in the history of pearling in Bahrain. By piecing together Yousuf’s experiences as a diver and the experiences of his father, a nūkhīdhaḥ, this paper highlights the challenges the Jumairi family faced during this period of global economic change. By the 1930s, Yousuf’s father was no longer able to repay the loans he received from Sulman bin Mattar. This paper sheds light on the changing economic and political relationships between pearl workers, merchants, and the ruling elite.