

# SPECIAL REPORT

Pearl Commission



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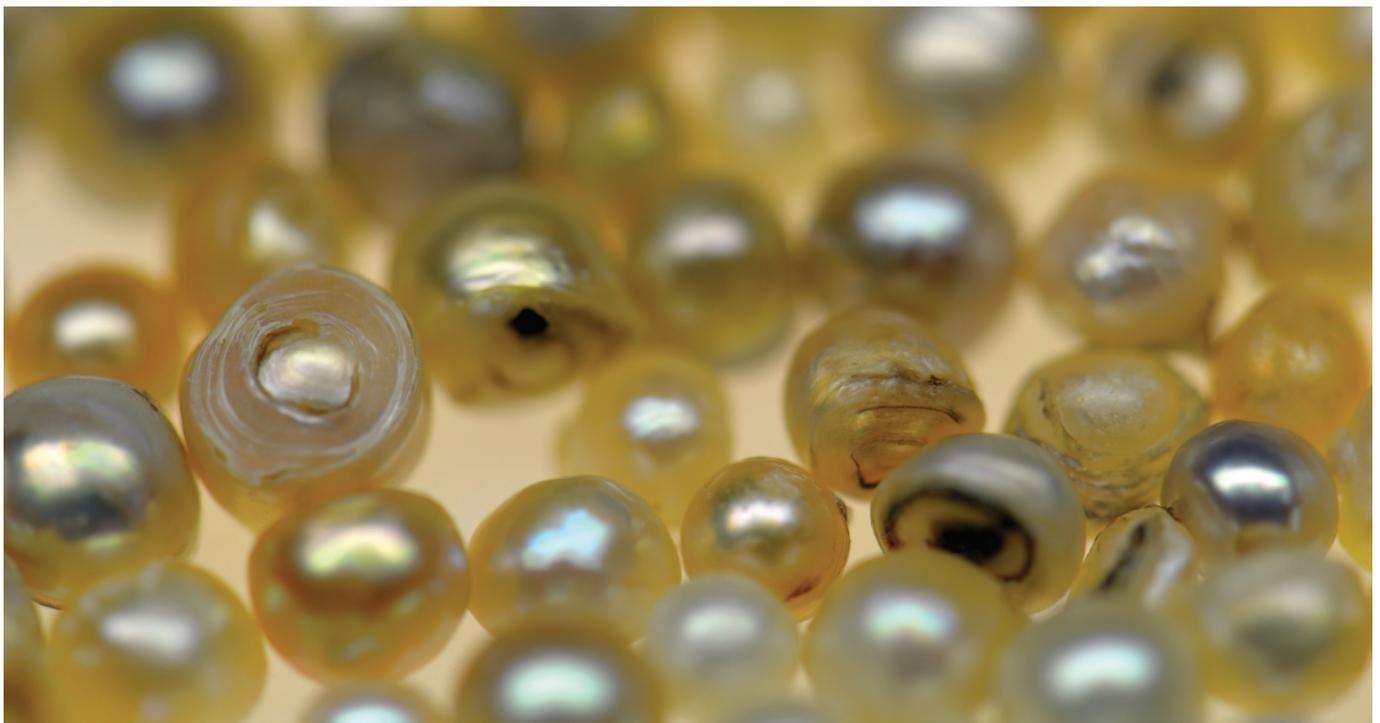
## CIBJO Pearl Commission upgrades Pearl Blue Book, while working on comprehensive pearl guide for industry

**By Kenneth Scarratt, President  
CIBJO Pearl Commission**

In opening this report, CIBJO must gratefully acknowledge the amazing generosity of 28 pearl industry professionals from around the world, who have dedicated much of their time over the past year as active members of the Pearl Commission Steering Committee. Their

input has been crucial to the successful planning of draft resolutions for changes to clauses and definitions in the Pearl Book, as well as the development of the *CIBJO Guide for Classifying Natural Pearls and Cultured Pearls*.

This body of work will be reviewed again in Yerevan, Armenia, in October by the steering committee prior to being placed before the Pearl Commission during the CIBJO Congress.





*Kenneth Scarratt, President of the CIBJO Pearl Commission.*

Thereafter, the updated version of the Pearl Book will provide an unequalled source of relevant trade and consumer information on all forms of natural and cultured pearls.

It should be noted that none of these advances in information would be possible were it not for the contributions of these 28 individuals.

**Diagrams added to definitions in Blue Book**

Sometimes words alone are inefficient vehicles for conveying a message accurately. This is particularly the case where representatives of multiple nations are setting standards.

The above became evident when one member of



*Figure 1: Two natural blister pearls (left) adhering to the inner surface of a Pinctada radiata shell and microradiograph (right) showing that these two have the natural radial structures that indicate they grew originally as 'cyst pearls' within a natural pearl sac. Images courtesy of the Gem and Pearl Testing Laboratory of Bahrain.*

the steering committee questioned the meanings of the terms “blister” and “blister pearl,” when referring to natural nacreous formations that, when discovered, adhere to the shell rather than being held within the body of the mollusc.

Knowledgeable individuals may use these terms correctly, with the former being the result of an intrusion of a foreign object that is trapped between the mantle and the inner lining of the shell, and the latter being the result of a “cyst pearl” perforating the natural pearl sac and becoming lodged between the mantle and inner lining of the shell. However, those with less knowledge often use the term “blister pearl” to cover both scenarios.

To promote clarity in instances such as this, for the first time the new drafts of the Pearl Book will include images, such as those seen in Figure 1 and Figure 2, and also line drawings. It is hoped that this method will provide help in clarifying understanding of the definitions, and in particular assist when translations from English into other languages are required.

If our experience is anything to go by, the use of image and line drawings during the deliberations of the steering committee aided the discussion considerably.

**Work on comprehensive pearl guide progresses**

The draft of the presently-titled *CIBJO Guide for Classifying Natural Pearls and Cultured Pearls* progresses well, with an advanced version of the document scheduled to be presented during the congress in Yerevan in October.



*Figure 2: A natural blister, the lower portion being the shell, the material in the centre being various forms of debris that became trapped between the mantle and the inner surface of the shell, and the upper portion being composed of nacre secreted by the mantle to entomb the debris and for a natural blister.*



Figure 3: The shell of a gold lipped *Pinctada maxima* along with the various shapes of cultured pearls produced by this large and well known mollusc – the producer of the well-known South Sea cultured pearls.



Figure 4: The Fijian pearl oyster (*Pinctada margaritifera typica*) and some of the cultured pearls produced (right) from this lesser known mollusc.

The guide is an effort to place descriptions of all types of natural and cultured pearls, from the well-known to the less well-known, into a well-illustrated document, which also provides information on how to assess such things as lustre, colour, surface appearance, shape and size.

Pearls are presented relative to the species of producing mollusc, with images of the shells and pearls playing an important role in the presentations (see Figure 3 and 4).

### Technological advances in pearl identification

With the growing sophistication being employed by some to create “pearls” that challenge the various identification techniques used in gem laboratories, it is always good to read reports about

the increasing sophistication of the identification techniques themselves.

The Gemological Institute of America (GIA) recently demonstrated its impressive capability with the introduction of powerful 3-D software that is unequivocally able to identify the cause of a particular natural pearl’s formation. Those interested may view images and videos associated with this development at <http://www.gia.edu/gia-news-research/3d-software-expands-pearl-identification-capabilities>.

X-ray Phase Contrast and Scattering, as well as Neutron Imaging of pearls as a technique that is complementary to the use of X-rays, is being experimented with by the Swiss Gemmological Institute SSEF in Switzerland (*Facette*, Issue 22, February, 2016). Both may prove to be useful in combatting fraudulent practice, but may also assist in understanding the more unusual situations that arise. These include the recently discovered opals that were declared as opalised pearls by the South Australian Museum following Neutron Imaging (See: <http://www.samuseum.sa.gov.au/media/53865/sa-museum-identifies-worlds-first-opalised-pearls>).

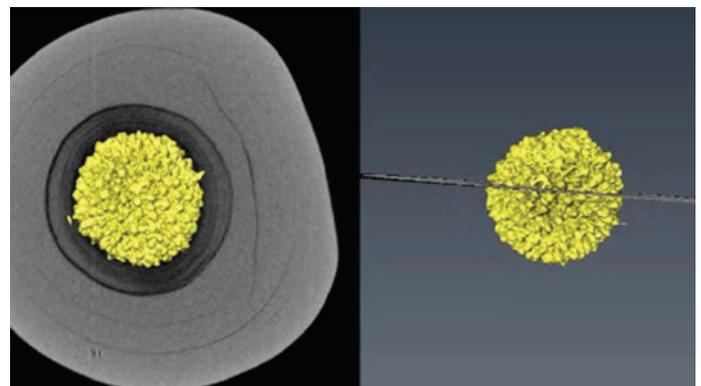


Figure 5: A graphic video link from the GIA website that take the reader to a video that shows the 3-D imaging of a foraminifera structure in a pearl.

### Responsible environmental strategies for pearls

The championing of responsible environmental practices throughout the gemstone and jewellery industry has been a focus of CIBJO for some years and in March 2016 the coral and pearl sectors were the subject of a CIBJO/Italian Trade Commission seminar in Hong Kong (See: <http://www.cibjo.org/responsible-environmental-practices-in-coral-and-pearl-sectors-focus-of-cibjo-seminar-in-hong-kong/>).

During the seminar Jacques Christophe Branellec,



*Figure 6: An image of the high-tide markers on a Jewelmer farm, showing the increasing high-water levels from November 1999 to December 2009 that testify to changing oceanic conditions in the region.*

Vice President of the CIBJO Pearl Commission and Executive Vice President of Jewelmer Joaillerie, described environmental and CSR aspects of pearl farming in the Philippines, an area of the world that is continually challenged by changes in the weather cycles and increasingly higher tides, as well as some dramatic tropical storms. There is an ongoing commitment to sustainability and the engagement of the local fishing communities in embracing this commitment, he said.

Dr. Laurent Cartier, Project Manager at the Swiss Gemmological Institute SSEF, who has specialized in this area, provided an overview of Corporate Social Responsibility and sustainable marine practices in the pearl industry. The research project that he has been involved in has examined how the marine cultured pearl chain and consumers could support positive environmental and socio-economic benefits, as well as promote responsible pearl farming. More information on this project can be found at: <http://www.sustainablepearls.org/sustainability-principles/sustainability-principles/> and <https://www.thesolutionsjournal.com/article/pearl-farming-as-a-sustainable-development-path/>.

Dr. Cartier listed the important elements in sustainable marine practices in the pearl industry as: (1) the protection of the biosphere, (2) the sustainable use of natural resources, (3) production transparency and product disclosure (4) the development and operation of farms in a socially and culturally responsible manner, and (5) committed management and compliance with local laws.

Russell Hanigan, from the Paspaley Pearl Farming

Company, described pearl farming practices off the north-western coast of Australia, which presents different challenges to those in the waters of the Philippines. It is an area that is characterised by similar severe weather patterns, but they occur over a vast area of the ocean. Sustainability is a focus of the cultured pearl business in this area, with the government's strict controls of quotas on the fishing of wild *Pinctada maxima* being observed.

CIBJO President Gaetano Cavaliere spoke to the long-term viability of the pearl sector, stating that the industry is dependent on the development and implementation of responsible practices that both protect and facilitate the renewal of a bio-diverse marine environment, and promote higher quality and more sustainable resources. CIBJO's efforts in this respect are part of a comprehensive programme to educate the industry about sustainable environmental policies in the sector, and they includes the CIBJO Jewellery Industry Greenhouse Gas Measurement Initiative, promoting carbon foot-printing and offsetting, through the purchase of carbon credits.



*Figure 7: A Paspaley Pearl Farming Company vessel out searching for wild *Pinctada maxima* off the Australia's North Western coast.*

### **New Japanese Pearl Promotion Law**

During the upcoming congress, Pearl Commission Vice President Shigeru Akamatsu will introduce Japan's new 'Pearl Promotion Law'.

The law recognizes Japan's historic global position in the cultured pearl industry, while acknowledging the need to strengthen competitiveness. It also acknowledges the very important general role pearls play nationally.

Various ministries are involved in the implementation of the law, which has an extensive list of goals, covering farming, quality control, the marketing and promotion of exports, the promotion of a national pearl jewellery culture, the hosting of a pearl exposition, research and development, human resource development, the improvement of pearl farming through better management, research and development, and the improvement of processing methods and distribution.

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