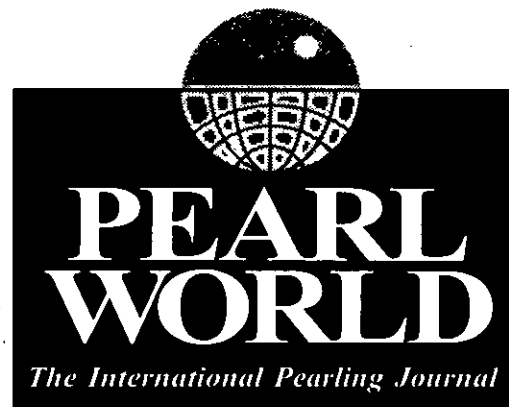


## Contents:

- Renée Newman writes: *Should we abandon the term "black pearl"?*
- A major U.S. jewelry magazine looks at the availability of cultured pearls, and its impact on the U.S. market
- Pearl export statistics review
- 1999 Tucson Show report (Part I)



Is it correct? Should it be discontinued?

## USE OF THE TERM "BLACK PEARL"

by Renée Newman, GG

*Editor: A longtime friend of Pearl World, Renée Newman, recently wrote us: "I've noticed that there's a great deal of confusion regarding pearl grading and color terminology... which I think should be dealt with sometime in your newsletter. But one thing that really surprised me is the recent campaign to replace the term "black pearl" with "Tahitian South Sea Cultured Pearl." I think both terms should be considered acceptable. and here-with submit the following considerations."*

Nowadays, if you use the term "black pearl," you may be regarded in the trade as a little behind-the-times and not well-informed. Many dealers prefer the terms "Tahitian South Sea cultured pearl" or "dark-colored South Sea pearl." They offer valid reasons for this preference.

For one thing, black pearls are not normally black; the term "black" is usually associated with death; and "black pearl" does not have the same connotation of wealth and value as "South Sea pearl."

To me personally, the term "black pearl" refers to a unique and valuable pearl which is distinctly different from an

Australian or Indonesian pearl.

Black pearls come from a different oyster, their color is evaluated differently, they have a higher luster potential, and the oyster which produces them, the black-lipped *Pinctada margaritifera*, is found in different areas such as French Polynesia, the Cook Islands, Baja California, Panama, the Red Sea, Okinawa and the Philippines.

I first learned about black pearls in Tahiti in the early 80's. I accompanied groups there on tours of the South Pacific. At that time, the pearls were either called Polynesian pearls or black

pearls. Prior knowledge about the pearls is what determined whether my passengers bought pearls in Tahiti; terminology did not seem to affect their decision.

If the tour originated in Tahiti, usually nobody bought any pearls. They assumed that the pearls were grossly overpriced, like almost everything else in Tahiti. When the tour ended in Tahiti, someone always bought a pearl, and when I ended up there with my last group in 1989, 27 out of 40 passengers bought Tahitian pearls. That's

*"Black Pearl" to page 3*

A Jewelers Circular Keystone magazine report

### **AN OVERVIEW OF PEARL AVAILABILITIES**

You don't need to ask around much to learn that pearls are hot. Sales of all types of cultured pearls are climbing, and even freshwater pearls are selling well, say wholesalers.

Nor does the trend seem to be slowing. Pearls are, after all, a luxury item, and as long as the economy continues to do well, so will pearls.

Sales of multicolored strands, in particular, have been skyrocketing. They're as popular as any other pearl jewelry now.

Appearing in golden, white, pink, gray, and numerous overtones of black, pearls are giving fashion-conscious consumers all the necessary colors from which to choose.

Besides the fact that pearls are very fashionable, there's a set of unusual circumstances that are helping boost pearl sales: increased production, increased competition from the Chinese, and favorable currency exchange rates.

*"Overview" to page 6*

## PEARL STATISTICS: GOOD, BAD OR INDIFFERENT?

Not long ago, an academic introduced himself and asked the following:

Dear Pearl World,

I am a business development specialist with XXX University and I am trying to understand the world pearl market. I have been able to gather bits and pieces of information from such sources as Perles de Tahiti, etc., but have not succeeded in finding a reliable base source for this information. My question to you is, where do you acquire this information from and can I get access to the data sources you use? Often, the data I am able to acquire elicits other questions in my mind that could only be answered by seeing a comprehensive data base. Please help me understand how I may acquire (and then build) a complete data base of information pertaining to the world production and value of cultured pearls.

Thank you for your assistance regarding this matter.

Our response was that, generally speaking, there was no comprehensive database on this subject available, but that certain segments of the industry have pretty good assessments of their and others' production.. Saying this, we reprise what official statistics are available to date.

### AUSTRALIA

#### AUSTRALIA'S EXPORTS OF PEARLS 1996 AND 1997

CATEGORY	1996		1997		Percent Trend Pearls	Percent Trend US\$
	Pearls	US\$	Pearls	US\$		
Cultured pearls, unworked 7101.2101	421,114	60,930,449	621,958	100,968,429	+47.6	+65.7
Cultured pearls, worked 7101.2201	175,757	22,614,021	384,895	39,234,440	+118.9	+73.5
Natural pearls 7101.1000	61,698	2,091,222	162,279	13,226,498	+163	+532.4
Articles of natural or cultured pearls 7116.1001	1,969	809,708	7,061	2,729,361	+258.6	+237
Total	660,538	86,445,400	1,176,193	156,158,428	+78	+80.6

A significant growth in exports was registered for all kinds of pearls in 1997 in Australia, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in Canberra. Total exports of pearls in 1997 – natural, cultured, and articles of pearls – were US\$156.15 million, an 80.6% increase compared with US\$86.44 million in 1996. The leading category in value and quantity was unworked cultured pearls. The total value of exports



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"Statistics" to page 9

**"Black Pearl" from page 1**

because I had had a chance to develop a rapport with the group, and I had worn a black pearl and discussed its value before we even arrived in Tahiti.

I don't think we should stop calling pearls from the black-lip oyster "black pearls." We should continue to use this as one of several valid terms for the following reasons:

- The trade needs a generic term to refer to black pearls which are not from Tahiti or the South Seas. Why not use "black pearl," the term used in all the major gemological books that have been written on pearls? Even books published in Tahiti have used "black pearl" in their titles, e.g. *The Magic of the Black*

**Pearl and Black Pearls of Tahiti.**

The most accurate generic term would be "gray pearl" but nobody would want to change to this. Everyone has come to accept that black pearls are not necessarily black, just as black people are not really black. Likewise, Polynesian pearls are now identified as Tahitian even though they're not cultivated in Tahiti. They're marketed in Tahiti and Tahiti is part of French Polynesia.

One thing for certain, the term "Tahitian pearl" should not be used by sellers, appraisers, or gem labs to refer to pearls which are not from French Polynesia.

Therefore, an alternate term is required. "Dark-colored" is not as good of a gener-

ic term as "black." It's wordy and can be used to refer to any colored pearl that has a dark tone. In addition, some Tahitian pearls are light-, not dark-colored.

- "Black pearl" is an ideal verbal selling term. It's short and easy to remember and use. A salesperson can easily say to a customer "Have a look at this gorgeous black-pearl necklace."

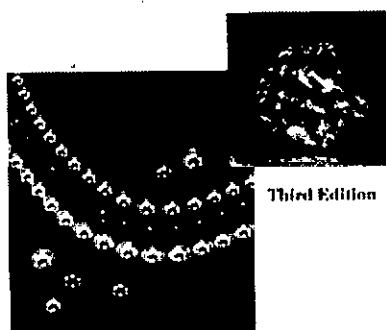
It would be wordy and unnatural to say "Have a look at this gorgeous Tahitian South Sea pearl necklace." Many people in the U.S. don't know where Tahiti is, and some don't even know it's a geographical name. Saying

**"Black Pearl" to page 4**

# PEARL BUYING GUIDE

HOW TO EVALUATE, IDENTIFY, WEAR & CARE FOR PEARLS

## Pearl BUYING GUIDE



Renée Newman, GG

## NEW Third Edition

Updated with 78 new photos which now accompany the relevant text. A separate chapter on treatments has also been added.

By Renée Newman, GG

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**"Black Pearl" from page 3**

"Tahitian" orally to such customers might distract their attention. It's best for sales associates to use simple short-syllable words and explanations when discussing gems.

- "Black" has many positive connotations. Black apparel is generally regarded as sleek, elegant, daring, dashing, macho and glamorous. It's dressy yet basic.

When a woman looks at a man in a black tux, she doesn't think to herself, "Oh there must have been a death in his

family." She's more likely to think, "Wow, what a classy looking hunk!"

Black is beautiful. As a result, Afro-Americans want to be identified as blacks, not as dark-colored people.

- Classifying Tahitian pearls as "black pearls" has made them more special and has brought them increased publicity. Books and articles have been written just about black pearls because they've been promoted as a unique pearl category.

Photographs of black pearl pieces by themselves have focused attention on the

black pearl instead of dispersing it among other South Sea Pearl varieties.

If dealers now abandon the name "black pearl" and classify it only as a dark South Sea pearl, they risk making it appear to be just another South Sea pearl—but smaller, darker and less expensive (due to size) than the average Australian pearl.

I think it's fine to also refer to pearls from French Polynesia as Tahitian South Sea pearls. I do so in my book the *Pearl Buying Guide*. But the chapter on pearls from the black-lip oyster is still entitled "Black Pearls" in the new full-color third edition. For one thing, not all black pearls are from French Polynesia. But more importantly, they merit special attention in a separate chapter.

To me, black pearls have a beauty of their own and they deserve to be recognized as a distinct class of pearls. ♦

## THE 1999 TUCSON SHOW

Pearls seemed just about as prevalent at the 1999 Tucson Gem Show as colored gemstones... and certainly more abundant than buyers. In past years, crowds crammed the AGTA, GLDA and GJX venues. But this year attendance seemed down. Even the drivers of the shuttle buses between varying locales were surprised at the paucity of attendees. Why? Is this because of Orlando? Or the many, spread-out locations throughout Tucson? Or buyer ennui? Nobody seemed to know, yet everyone seemed to have a reason. One of the more intriguing was that the high performance stock market here in the U.S. has more people putting their money into stocks, with less left over for baubles. We'll just have to wait for the official attendance statistics to really see if these impressions were correct or not.

The overall number of cultured pearl exhibitors (especially designers) seemed to be somewhat less, also. But the goods being offered more than made up for any shortcomings in bodies or booths. Many East Coast and West Coast SSP and Akoya dealers still come to Tucson to renew ties with their traditional buyers, and to kick off the new year in a relaxed, informal setting. And this year, their offerings were no less spectacular. High quality Japanese Akoya, Australian and Tahitian goods are available... and still command premium prices. But an influx of Chinese origin Akoya and Tahitian pearls have seen price drops: many commercial quality Tahitian goods, in particular, have dropped 30-50% over the past year, and one can easily buy more or better goods this year for the same investment as last year... a buyer's market.

The big news at Tucson '99 was in FWPs. The new Chinese freshwaters are spectacular: round, large, lustrous, all nacre, and naturally colored. Gold, bronze, apricot, mauve... just name your color. And with a wide array of applications, from same coloration in graduated sizes, to same size in graduated colors, to mixed-color strands priced up to \$10,000 or more.

We saw other interesting goods, too. Such as (are you ready for this?): pearls from scallops (in the same price range as conch pearls, valued at up to US\$1,00 per gram). Then there was the unveiling of the first pre-harvested round *Pteria sterna* pearls from our friends in Guaymas, Mexico. A colorful array of samples from the first harvest of *P. margaritifera* in Majuro, Marshall Islands. And more and prettier faceted pearls which glitter like diamonds even in subdued light.

We'll report in more detail on these goods in our next issue, and what the implications are for the future. But suffice it to say: Tucson was a blast! ♦

*Editor: We thank Renée for her thoughtful evaluation of current cultured pearl terminology, and recommend her Pearl Buying Guide to anyone who wishes to add an extremely well-written book to their pearl library collection... or to augment their knowledge of this gem. The third edition of Renée's Pearl Buying Guide covers a wide scope of subjects starting with Chapter One (delightfully entitled "Why Read a Whole Book Just To Buy Some Pearls?") to chapters on judging luster and nacre, color, surface perfection, size, weight & length, make, various types of cultured pearls, imitation or natural pearls, choosing a clasp, how to wear strands, pearl care, finding a good buy... and even a quiz (with answers) near the end. An ad for her Pearl Buying Guide appears on the preceding page.*

## **FACES FROM THE 1999 TUCSON GEM SHOW**



Betty Sue King of King's Ransom (Sausalito, CA) holds her premier black SSP strand over which many buyers gawked.



David Katz of Luna Pearl (Fairfield, Iowa) surprised us with his sample of the first harvest from the Marshall Islands.



David Katz and Fuji Voll of Pacific Pearls (Mill Valley, CA) look at SSPs from the Majuro harvest outside the GJX tent.



Jim Peach of United States Pearl Co. was doing brisk FWP business all during the show



The indefatigable Fred Ward camped out at his jadeite booth in the GJX tent, but visited many pearl sites during the show run.

Avi Raz of A&Z Pearls (Los Angeles) and his son, Ari, displayed some of their many fine Akoya and FWP strands at their popular booth location.



Michael Randall of Gem Reflections of California (San Anselmo, CA) displayed some astounding Chinese FWPs.



Sergio Farrell and Enrique Arizmendi of Perlas de Guaymas were delighted to show off their first samples of round pearls.



Mr. Mahee of A&P Trading Inc. (Los Angeles) had some 20 tons of FWPs on hand at several Tucson locations... and wasn't the largest FWP exhibitor.

**"Overview" from page 1****INCREASED PRODUCTION**

Cultured, freshwater, and saltwater pearl production has increased dramatically over the past few years, all in response to growing demand. This includes Chinese Akoyas (salt-water bead-nucleated), Chinese freshwater (mantle-tissue- as well as bead-nucleated), Japanese freshwater, North American and New Zealand abalone, American freshwater, and South Seas cultured, encompassing Tahitian blacks and yellows as well as Australian and Indonesian whites and goldens.

Even though it's increasing, the production of high-quality Tahitian blacks still lags behind demand. On the other hand, increased production of medium- and lower quality blacks has saturated the retail market, causing dramatically weak prices, especially in lower-quality pearls.

With more product than buyers, Tahitian pearl farmers have been reaching outside the traditional wholesale auction market and going directly to the retailer, creating supply and price fluctuations. The United States has been the target for many of these farm representatives.

All of these products on the market have made Tahitian and

South Seas pearls very affordable, with drop pearl pendants starting at \$250 to \$300 (retail) and up. Finer-quality pearls set with diamonds are within reach of many customers.

Even the goldens have been popular and affordable for at least the last 18 months, much to the surprise of many pearl dealers, reports Armand Asher of Albert Asher South Sea Pearl Co. in New York. Goldens have been fashionable overseas for many years. Strands, of course, are more expensive.

**JAPANESE AKOYAS**

Pearl production has increased with one obvious exception: Japanese akoya salt-water cultured pearls. Akoya production is still very limited in all qualities and sizes, but especially in fine quality from 5 mm to 8 mm and up which remain almost impossible to get, even for wholesalers.

The Japanese pearl industry has been reeling from high Akoya oyster mortality rates, now close to 70%. Little is known about the cause of the devastation, which has been occurring for the past two or three years. Meanwhile, the Chinese Akoyas are improving in quality, and many experts suspect that Japanese exporters have been

importing cheaper Chinese Akoyas to beef up their own stocks. It's difficult to pinpoint how many Akoyas are from China as opposed to Japan, but estimates run as high as 40%. Nonetheless, dealers are simply happy to get any product, Japanese or Chinese.

With the Japanese unsure of the future product, Japanese producers may be investing heavily in Chinese and South Seas pearl farms. It doesn't look as if the Japanese Akoya farms are going to be back in solid production for several years.

Meanwhile, Japanese freshwater cultured pearls, rebounding from the past few years of lower harvests, are still yielding comparatively small production. Lake Biwa has been active again for the past three years, but overall, it accounts for a very small percentage of the freshwater market.

**CHINESE AKOYAS**

There seems to be good supply of Chinese akoyas under 6.5 mm. Prices for these pearls are about 20% to 30% less than prices of comparable Japanese Akoyas, according to the Cultured Pearl Information Center. Since the Chinese seem

**"Overview" to page 8**

**FOR SALE****NUCLEUS MANUFACTURING OPERATION & NUCLEI**

**South Pacific Nucleus**, founded in 1990, operates two shops: a 1,000 square foot cube cutting factory in Tijuana, Mexico (with 6 employees); and a 1,400 square foot finishing, polishing and grading factory in Costa Mesa, California (5 employees). Price: \$150,000 for all equipment and fixtures, on-site training included. Shops can be easily moved, and terms are negotiable. South Pacific Nucleus also has all sizes and grades of nuclei for sale at discounted prices. Contact us for any of your nuclei needs. Principals and serious buyers only: fax (714) 645-7110 for more details.

## ADVERTORIAL

## A new software program unveiled **BETTER PEARL FARMING MANAGEMENT**

The Shell Management System (SMS), is a special software computer program designed for the pearling industry. It is designed to perform many functions and can be used by farm managers and accountants through to farm owners. SMS can be configured to manage companies with a single farm, through to larger companies with multiple farm sites. SMS is built using the latest tools and techniques, and uses a relational database to store and manipulate the data. The system is Microsoft compatible and can run on standard PC's and office networks, and can be translated into Japanese, French, Indonesian, etc.

### **OVERVIEW**

SMS is designed to be a farm manager's aid where it monitors all shell groups on a farm, keeping an accurate count of their number, their location and other history details. Historical data is stored for all shells from the moment they arrive at a farm, up until their eventual death. Once the information is stored in the database, it can then be correlated and cross-checked against other information. The system will monitor the performance of one shell group against another, and compare the results against previous years. The system can detect early fluctuations which may effect survival rates, and pearl quality, which managers can then act on. You could (for example) compare the cleaning cycles and mortality rates for a group of shells to determine if the current losses exceed the average for your farm. Other advantages include access to a large selection of inbuilt reports, some of which may be used for accounting purposes.

### **USER FRIENDLY**

This system is designed to be as easy to use as possible, and is built with the latest tools and techniques to ensure that people can master it quickly. To clean shell on any line, you simply drag and drop the panel icon on the cleaning button; other functions can be started by a mouse click. After a few days of training, people with limited computer skills have found SMS easy to use and to navigate around.

### **MAINTAIN A DEAD AND MISSING SHELL REGISTRY**

One of the jobs a farm manager must do is to keep an accurate count of all the dead and missing shell on a farm. This system will accurately record all losses, and the underlying cause behind it. For shell that go missing, you can define a list of causes that may include Missing Panels, Missing Shell, Broken Line, or Stolen, etc.; for fatality details, you can define a list of diseases that are prevalent in your area, or leave

"SMS" to page 8

# ==PEARLING SOFTWARE==

The Shell Management System is a tailor-made computer system designed to manage pearl farms. It is Microsoft compatible and has the ability to correlate and analyze all information that is stored in the database. The system is currently being used by many pearl farms around the world, and has proven to be reliable and easy to use.

- ◆ The system can be individually configured to any farm's specific requirements.
- ◆ Translations available for Japanese, French, Indonesian, etc.
- ◆ Maintains accurate shell counts for all shell groups.
- ◆ Complete historical data is kept for all shell groups from the moment they arrive at a farm, until their eventual death.
- ◆ Stores cleaning details and fouling densities.
- ◆ Keeps accurate dead and missing shell registries.
- ◆ Records operation details, x-ray results... and can determine technician retention rates.
- ◆ Monitors hatchery survival rates.
- ◆ Runs R & D experiments against different groups of shell.
- ◆ Statistically analyzes historical data, including monitoring the performance of shell groups against each other.
- ◆ Grades pearls and compare harvest results.
- ◆ Identifies ways to increase productivity and profit.
- ◆ Electronic download facility permits transfer data from remote farms sites to anywhere in the world.
- ◆ Managers will be kept better informed by means of instant access to the latest farm details.
- ◆ Comes complete with staff training and a user manual.

To find out more about the Shell Management System and ways it can better manage your pearl farm, please see the details below.



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**"SMS" from page 7**

the cause as unknown. By using this system and accurately recording losses, you will be rewarded with a wealth of local data that can be analyzed over many years.

**OPERATION DETAILS**

When a group of shells are operated on, you can record which technician or group of technicians performed the work. This information is important if you want to build up profiles for different technicians, or calculate the cost of operations. Once operation details are entered, they can be cross-checked against shell turning programs, the fatality rate immediately after operations, x-ray results, and harvest results, etc.

**MONITOR HATCHERY SHELL**

This system has the ability to monitor the growth rate of spat, and measure the survival rates for different hatchery batches. After selecting an appropriate sample size, you simply enter spat measurements and mortality details into the system. The growth rates and mortality details can then be analyzed and graphed to compare different batches, locations, and handling techniques, etc.

**STAYING IN TOUCH**

SMS can provide owners and managers with the ability to download the latest farm details to a notebook computer anywhere in the world. If a telephone line is available, then you can easily stay in touch with that is happening out on the water, be more informed, and stay in greater control of your farming operations.

**SATISFIED CLIENTS**

"Provides a critical information base to manage our pearling business." (Broome Pearls)

"SMS has been found to be reliable, versatile, easy to use and the support provided by Aquafarm Management Systems has proven to be both prompt and professional." (Arrow Pearls Co.)

Part II of this advertorial appears in the next issue. ♦

**"Overview" from page 6**

to be competing very well in these smaller sizes, the Japanese are focusing their attention on growing 6.5-mm pearls and larger.

Chinese freshwater pearls are still king, especially in the rice to "nuggety" shapes. The fresh-water mantle-tissue-nucleated rounds, while still not perfectly round or as lustrous as the Japanese Akoyas, are being promoted as being better than the Japanese, since they're "actually nacre throughout."

Rounds of 7 mm to 8mm are available, and we will see larger rounds, even 10 mm to 11.5 mm, in production soon, according to Michael Randall at Gem Reflections of California, San Anselmo, wholesalers of fine gems and Chinese freshwater pearls.

**MONETARY DEVALUATION**

With Japanese production low, pearl prices have increased dramatically... in yen. The dollar's strength, however, has effectively countered a good percentage of the increase. So U.S. buyers have been spared the sticker shock of Japanese product... when the supply is available.

In "first-level" wholesale pricing, in relation to last year, there's been a 10% to 15% increase for 5-mm to 6.5-mm pearls in medium quality, and up to a 30% increase for 6-mm to 9-mm fine-quality akoyas, according to the Cultured Pearl Information Center.

The effect of the Asian monetary crisis shows up in other ways as well, according to Tahitian government statistics reported by G.I.E. Perles de Tahiti. Japan, still the No. 1 importer of black Tahitian

pearls, showed yet another increase in the volume of imports for this year compared to last. But with fewer high-quality pearls in the mix, their overall value has dropped considerably almost 50% during the first half of 1998. During the same period, the volume of imports to the United States climbed more than 130%, including more high-quality pearls, with an increase in value of almost 60%. Hong Kong increased its imports by more than 80% during the first half of 1998, with a value exceeding 70% of the country's 1997 imports.

**OTHER PEARL SOURCES**

Abalone natural as well as abalone cultured pearls are still very limited in supply. However, with a small number of developing farms both on the North American west coast and in New Zealand, more are on the way.

The American Pearl Co. in Nashville, Tenn., continues to grow and develop new shapes of freshwater cultured pearls to enhance the lines for designer jewelers.

In the natural pearl harvest in Texas this year, quantities were fairly limited, but they have been for several years. This year's harvest brought in about 1,500 to 2,000 pearls, few by normal standards, more commonly between 4,000 and 5,000. This year, because of extreme weather conditions, harvested pearls from the area - known for its pink semi-round pearls - have a green metallic color.

Texas has been in the throes of a drought for the past two to three years. With water levels down dramatically, it will be some time before the shell population returns to more typical

**"Overview" to page 9**



**"Overview" from page 8**

numbers. The dry conditions have also made harvesting more difficult because of the concentrated populations of water moccasins and rattlesnakes.

**ENHANCEMENTS**

While it is commonly known that most "white" pearls are bleached, irradiation is the biggest concern right now, especially among Chinese freshwater pearls, enhanced to look like Tahitian grays. Modern irradiation techniques produce more subtle color changes than in the past, making detection almost impossible, particularly when

the pearls are undrilled or already set in jewelry.

Irradiation changes the color of the freshwater nucleus. Thin-nacred Akoya cultured pearls irradiate well, since the color-changed freshwater bead nucleus can be seen beneath the nacre. If the pearl is drilled, you can easily identify it as irradiated by noting the unusual color of the freshwater bead.

When Chinese freshwater pearls are irradiated, on the other hand, the whole pearl is essentially changed throughout. And because the Chinese freshwater pearls overlap in size

ranges of South Seas pearls, identification is very important. As radical as it may seem, in some instances, the only way to determine color origin is to actually saw the pearl in half. If it's a Chinese irradiated freshwater pearl, there will be no mother-of-pearl bead. If it's a naturally colored Tahitian cultured pearl, there will be a nucleus. South Sea and Tahitian pearls do not irradiate well because the irradiated bead would not be visible beneath the thick nacreous outer growth. ♦

Source: *Jewelers Circular Keystone*

**"STATISTICS" from page 2**

was US\$100.96 million in 1997, a 65.7% increase over US\$60.93 million in 1996. A total of 621,958 unworked cultured pearls were exported in 1997, a 47.6% rise over 421,114 in 1996. To add value to its pearls, Australia increased exports of finished items with pearls; their value increased 237% to US\$2.72 million in 1997.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australia, and *Jewellery News Asia*.

**TAHITI**
**FRENCH POLYNESIA'S EXPORTS OF PEARLS  
JANUARY TO JUNE 1997 AND 1998**

CATEGORY	January to June 1997		January to June 1998		Percent trend	
	Grams	US\$	Grams	US\$	Grams	US\$
Unworked pearls 7101.2190	1,437,397	36,996,382	2,042,731	40,527,238	+42.1	+9.5
Keshi pearls, unworked 7101.2120	55,513	602,561	56,594	619,852	+1.9	+2.8
Mabé pearls, unworked 7101.2140	21,078	76,156	9,632	86,553	-54.3	+13.6
Worked pearls 7101.2201	54	2,500	1,869	107,571	+3,361.1	+4,202.8
Total	1,514,042	37,677,599	2,110,826	41,341,214	+39.4	+9.7

**"STATISTICS" to page 10**

"STATISTICS" from page 9

### FRENCH POLYNESIA'S EXPORTS OF UNWORKED PEARLS TO MAJOR MARKETS JANUARY TO JUNE 1997 AND 1998

COUNTRY	January to June 1997		January to June 1998		Percent trend	
	Grams	US\$	Grams	US\$	Grams	US\$
Japan	770,340	17,035,301	1,336,338	23,260,843	+73.4	+36.5
United States	180,577	6,391,284	334,699	7,925,349	+85.3	+24
Hong Kong	100,436	2,766,097	187,915	4,273,113	+87	+54.4

The world's leading producer of black South Sea pearls, French Polynesia, reported increased pearl exports in the first half of 1998. A total of 2,042.73 kilograms of unworked Tahitian pearls valued at US\$40.52 million were exported in the January to June period, according to GIE Perles de Tahiti in Papeete. This increase in volume was 42.1% compared with the 1,437.39 kilograms of unworked pearls exported in the first half of 1997. In value, unworked pearls registered an increase of 9.5% from US\$36.99 million. Total exports in the first half of 1998 – unworked pearls, worked pearls, keshi and mabé pearls – totalled 2,110.82 kilograms, an export value of US\$41.34 million. The three leading export markets for Tahitian pearls in this period remained Japan, United States and Hong Kong. In volume, Japan had a 65.4% share of French Polynesia's 1998 half-year exports; the United States had a 16.3% share; and Hong Kong had a 9.2% share. In value, Japan accounted for 57.4%, the United States 19.5%, and Hong Kong 10.5%.

Source: GIE Perles de Tahiti, French Polynesia, and *Jewellery News Asia*

### CHINA

Although a major producer of freshwater and Akoya pearls, China has become one of the emerging markets of imported pearls. Statistics from the Customs General Administration in Beijing, China, show total imports in 1997 increased 119.5% to US\$4.54 million from US\$2.07 million in 1996. Worked cultured pearls, valued at US\$2.36 million, took up 52% of total imports. Although total exports registered an increase of 46.8% to US\$57.39 million, the increase was from worked cultured pearls. Exports of both natural pearls and unworked cultured pearls decreased.

Source: Customs General Administration, China, and *Jewellery News Asia*

### CHINA'S IMPORTS OF PEARLS 1996 AND 1997

CATEGORY	1996 US\$	1997 US\$	Percent trend
Cultured pearls, worked 7101.2210 and 7101.2290	1,218,617	2,368,821	+94.3
Cultured pearls, unworked 7101.2110 and 7101.2190	469,638	1,121,302	+138.7
Natural pearls 7101.1010 and 7101.1090	383,353	1,058,231	+176
Total	2,071,608	4,548,354	+119.5

### CHINA'S EXPORTS OF PEARLS 1996 AND 1997

CATEGORY	1996 US\$	1997 US\$	Percent trend
Cultured pearls, worked 7101.2210 and 7101.2290	29,463,448	52,840,398	+79.3
Cultured pearls, unworked 7101.2110 and 7101.2190	9,358,533	4,419,349	-52.7
Natural pearls 7101.1010 and 7101.1090	265,477	138,483	-47.8
Total	39,087,458	57,398,230	+46.8