

دانات

DANAT



معهد البحرين للؤلؤ والأحجار الكريمة
BAHRAIN INSTITUTE FOR PEARLS & GEMSTONES



THE HISTORY OF
PEARL FISHING
IN BAHRAIN AND THE GULF

ABOUT THE COURSE

The course examines the deep history of pearl fishing and pearl trading in Bahrain and the Gulf, in global context. It will explore the fishery from the origins of pearl fishing in the stone age, more than 8000 years ago, through to the end of Bahrain's ancient pearl fishery in the 1950s. Highlights include Bahrain's involvement in the great Roman pearl trade, its subsequent importance in Islamic times, and the peak of the fishery in the 18th-20th c. AD. As well as historical and archaeological evidence for pearls and the pearling industry, the course will also focus on traditional methods of fishing for pearls, and the ways in which pearls were described, graded and traded in historical times. The major pearl markets of the Gulf and the world will be discussed, as well as the reasons for the rapid collapse of the pearling industry in the early-mid 10th century AD. The course will also explore the long-term impact of the pearl fishery on the societies of Bahrain and the Gulf and demonstrate its enduring legacy in the towns and people of Bahrain and the Gulf today.

At the end of the course the students will have a good knowledge of the deep history of pearl fishing in Bahrain and the region; awareness of how pearls were collected, evaluated and sold in historical times; an understanding of the importance of the fishery to local history, economics, society and heritage; and an appreciation of the global significance of the pearl fisheries of Bahrain and the Gulf.

Key Features

Date:	20th May & 23rd June 2021
Duration:	One day
Language:	English
Total Price:	BHD 150
Instructor:	Dr. Robert Carter

Course Structure

The history of pearl fishing course will include three sessions of teaching and discussion, each session is 1.5 hours duration (with a short break mid-way through each session), and a final fourth session involving a trip to the Bahrain National Museum, to examine and discuss the displays there relating to pearls and pearl fishing.

LESSON PLAN

Session 1: Ancient Pearl Fisheries (8000 BC - 1700 AD)

- Global distribution of major pearl-bearing species, and location of historical fisheries
- Prehistoric and early historic pearl fishing (8000 BC – 300 BC): the oldest archaeological pearls and deep history of pearling in Bahrain, the Gulf and the world
- Pearling boom in the Tylos Period and the Roman to Sasanian trade in pearls. Early global demand
- Early Islamic pearl fishing: pearls and pearl fishing according in the early Arabic scientific and geographical texts, especially Al-Mas'udi, Al-Biruni and Al-Idrisi
- Medieval, Hormuzi-Portuguese and Safavid pearl fisheries
- Competition from the New World fisheries in the Americas
- Famous pearls in the Early Islamic to Early Modern world

Session 2: Diving Techniques and Traditional Pearl Classification and Sale

- Early depictions and descriptions of pearl diving techniques
- Diving seasons and diving routine
- Pearl diver's equipment
- Financial organisation of the dive: loans and debt
- Origins of the divers
- The music of the pearl divers
- Merchants and merchant equipment
- Evaluation: size, quality, shape and the chau
- Pearl names and specialist terminology
- Pearl merchants and their networks
- Examination of pearls from the DANAT collection

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Session 3: History and Impact of the Pearl Fishery at its Peak, (18th - 20th c. AD)

- Development of the independent 'Arab pearl fisheries and foundation of the Gulf towns, 1700-1850
- The peak of the fishery, ca. 1890-1924: global demand and conspicuous consumption in India, Europe and the USA
- International pearl merchants: Cartier, Rosenthal, Pack and others
- Regional and global pearl markets: Bahrain, Lengeh, Dubai, Bombay and the world
- Impact of the pearling boom on local life: consumption and architecture
- Urbanism and pearl fishing towns: Muharraq, Zubara and others
- The collapse of the fishery: the Great Depression, cultured pearls and the coming of oil

Session 4: Museum Visit

- Visit to Bahrain National Museum to examine displays relating to pearls and pearl fishing

INDICATIVE READING LIST

Reading is not compulsory but if they desire further information students are recommended:

Key Books

سيف مرزوق الشمعان 1986 تاريخ الغوص على اللؤلؤ في الكويت والخليج العربي

Carter, R.A. 2012 *Sea of Pearls*. Arabian Publishing.

Additional Reference books

Bari, H. and Lam, D. 2009. *Pearls*. Turin, Skira, for the Qatar Museums Authority.

Donkin, R. A. 1998. *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-fishing: Origins to the Age of Discoveries*. Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society.

Kunz, G. F. and Stevenson, C. H. 1908. *The Book of the Pearl*. New York, The Century Co. (reprinted 2002 by Dover Publications Inc.).

Landman, N. H., Mikkelson, P. M., Bieler, R. and Bronson, B. 2001. *Pearls: A Natural History*. New York, Harry N. Abrams Inc.

Machado, P., Mullins, S. & Christensen, J. (eds.) 2019. *Pearls, People, and Power: Pearling and Indian Ocean Worlds*. Athens, Ohio University Press.

Useful Articles

Carter, R.A. 2005. The History and Prehistory of Pearling in The Gulf, 5000 BC-1950 AD. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48/2: 139-209.

Carter, R.A. 2019. Pearl Fishing, Migration and Globalization in the Persian Gulf, 18th-20th centuries AD. In (eds.) Machado, Mullins & Christensen 2019: 232-262.

Miran, J. 2019. Pearling Fortunes: Recovering 'Ali al-Nahari, a Legendary Red Sea Magnate in the Early Twentieth Century. In (eds.) Machado, Mullins & Christensen 2019: 313-343.

Penziner Hightower, V. 2012. "We were never weak in the old days": Gender and Pearling in the Southern Gulf Emirates, 1870-1950. *Liwa* 4.8: 5-17.

Perri, M. 2009. 'Ruined and Lost': Spanish Destruction of the Pearl Coast in the Early Sixteenth Century. *Environment and History* 15: 129-61.

Original Sources

For Al-Biruni's *معرفة الجواهر*: كتاب الجماهير في معرفة البيروني: ابو الريحان محمد البيروني: – see original Arabic or translation by Hakim Mohammad Said, *Al-Biruni: The book Most Comprehensive in Knowledge on Precious Stones*. Islamabad, 1989.

Lorimer J.G. 1915. Appendix C: The Pearl and Mother of Pearl Fisheries of the Persian Gulf, in *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia. Volume 1: Historical*. Calcutta, pp. 2220-2293. (An Omani reprint with Arabic translation is available, and the whole original is available online for download at the Qatar Digital Library).



+973 38000428 ✉ education@danat.bh

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