

# pearls of the pacific

Long before the illustrious black pearl bejeweled the décolletages of Queen Elizabeth's wardrobe of 3,000 gowns, the venerated gem spawned a celestial mythopoeia within Tahitian culture. Polynesian myth depicts black pearls as illuminating the kingdom of heaven—their circular shape and dreamy glow inspiring the Creator to form stars. Highly praised as the first instances of light, black pearls were initially awarded by the Creator to Tane, the God of beauty and harmony. Tane then presented black pearls to Rua Hatu, the God of the ocean, to cast light unto the sea. Oro, tutelary divinity of war and peace, working for Tane, entrusted human women whom he coveted to conceive his descendants with the first black pearls as a token of love. Symbolizing the achievement of his work, he gave "Te uhi" (pearl oyster) to the humans in memory of his voyage on earth. The legend of the black pearl, eulogized by the ethos of Polynesians, found a place in the lustful hearts of royalty and it wasn't long until the treasure hunt began.

The black pearl craze of yore originated when Spanish explorers first discovered the rainbow-tipped oyster in the Pacific Ocean. During an expedition

