

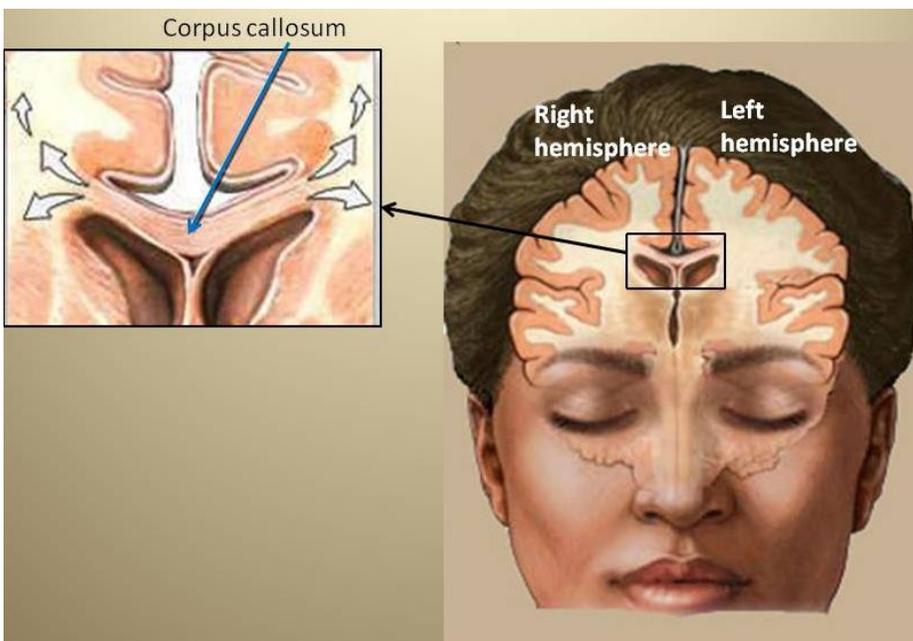


INDEPENDENT STUDY: Module1, Class 10

Please note: The pictures and comments in the transcript and recording below have been gathered over many years and where possible, I attribute them to their original source. If anyone connected with these photographs or comments would like them removed, please notify me and I will be happy to comply.

The recording for Class 10 is around 30 minutes long, and can be found in your attachments.

CLASS 10: Shell #s: 131,16,87,85

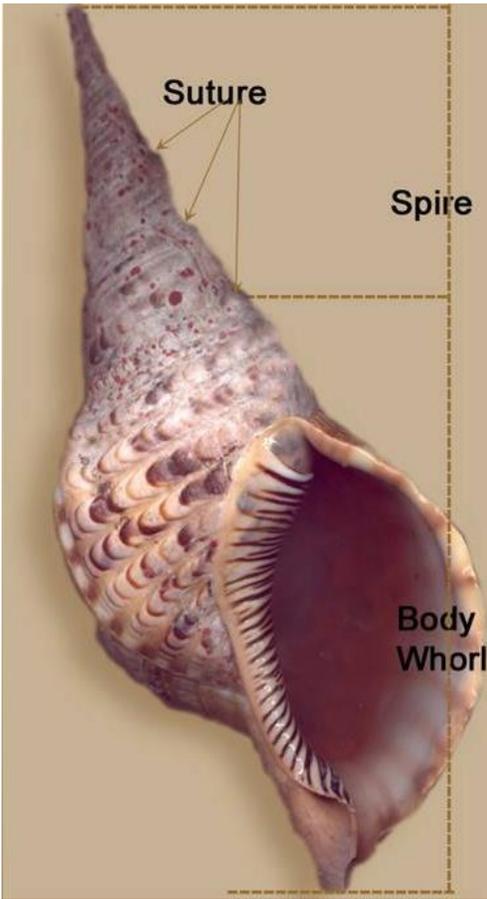


Seashell divination involves both the science of shells and the intuitive guidance of divination. In other words, we are using both hemispheres of our brain. If we strictly relied upon the science, we would only use our left hemisphere and limit any intuitive information from the reading. On the other hand, if we rely only on the right hemisphere, we lack the contribution we can receive from knowing about the lives of the beings that created the shells. We glean the most from these shell messages if we allow ourselves access to both hemispheres. When it comes to our brains, the whole is greater than the

sum of its parts. Science is wonderful, but without intuition, we don't venture far from the knowledge gained through our physical senses. Intuition is wonderful, but without the science, we are left without the foundation to stimulate our leaps in new directions. If we allow both hemispheres to work in partnership, they push and pull us to new discoveries. The bridge between these two hemispheres of the brain is called the corpus callosum... and that is the area we engage when working with our seashell partners.

I am going to take you on a journey involving the cowrie. We will explore the science, add some intuition, explore more science and then with this foundation, take another huge leap and see where that leads.

We will begin by picking up on our discussion of the mollusks' shell growth. In our very first class, we learned that the mollusk adds on to its shell as its body increases in size. In almost all cases, this involves adding a newer, larger living area to the former residence. Do you remember the pictures of the different shirts representing mollusk shell growth by adding to the sleeves, waistline, and letting out the side seams?



In this picture of the Triton Univalve shell, you will notice I have labeled the whorls. The early whorls of the triton's life are connected to each other through what is called a "suture", and all of them together comprise the "spire". These top whorls are more faded than the largest whorl on the bottom. That is because the animal's increased dimensions only enable it to live in the newest whorl. In Univalves, this final whorl, where the animal lives, is called the body whorl.

The mantle is the part of the animal that makes the shell, but we need to investigate this a bit more. The mantle lines the interior of the shell, and only the part of the mantle at the outer lip adds more shell material to the exterior (equating to adding to the shirt sleeves or waistline.) The internal mantle lining is able to make repairs to the inside of the shell, but is not able to improve upon the exterior. Since it can no longer reach the external old, faded early whorls of the triton's life, it is not able to repair any damaged areas in the spire that are beyond its reach.

This arrangement of whorls growing in a clockwise spiral is the typical pattern Univalves follow.

By now, you know that there is always an exception, and that is what I want to show you next.



Let's look at the univalve Cowrie shell. This picture may look familiar. It shows a few different species of Cowries found in *Ocean Oracle*. We first encountered this photo in Class 4 when we were discussing the organization of *Ocean Oracle* and how it is divided into four categories. Depending upon the reason for its meaning, different Cowrie Shells can be found under different categories. This resulted in cowries numbered 16, and 81-85, and 134.

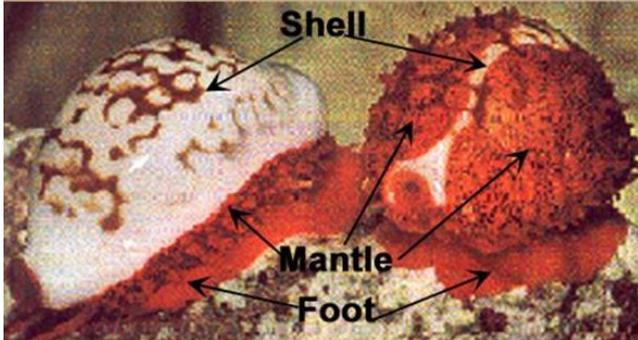
If any of you have ever held a Cowrie shell, you might have noticed that it feels smooth...so smooth that you might think someone polished it.

Actually, no human labor was involved in creating this glistening surface. It happens as a result of the cowrie mollusk. Please take another look at the picture of the Cowries, and in the center at the top, you will see one called the Sieve Cowrie, #134. On the next page, I want to show you the mollusk that creates and inhabits the Sieve Cowrie shell.

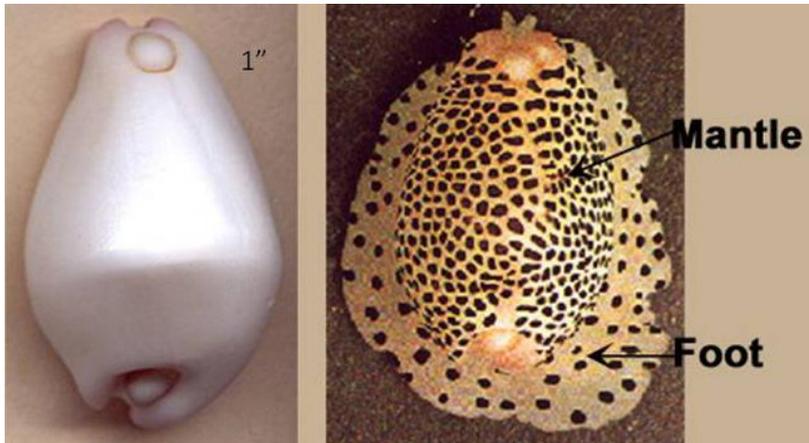
Sieve Cowrie



On the bottom left, you will see the orange foot of the sieve cowrie mollusk sticking out of its shell, and the mantle barely peeking out. But, take a look at the sieve cowrie on the right. You will see the sieve cowrie with the right and left lobes of its mantle completely wrapped around the outside of its shell. Cowries like to wrap their mantles around the outside of their shells.



Another species of Cowrie with the same behavior is the Warty Egg Cowrie (also called the Umbilical Ovula). Below, I have included a photo of the shell because the spotted mantle completely obscures any hint of the shell beneath it.



By the way, this is an example of the benefit of a scientific name. Everyone around the world agrees that the scientific name for this shell is the *Calpurnus verrucosus*, but the common name varies. Some call this a **Warty Egg Cowrie**, and others call it an Umbilical Ovula. The meaning for this shell derives from the name Umbilical Ovula. As you will note in *Ocean Oracle*, **shell #131** has the meaning "Needing to detach, cutting the umbilical cord, gaining independence."

Egg Cowrie



Another cowrie following the same shell growth pattern is the Egg Cowrie. Here you can see a picture of the white shell and beneath it, the black egg cowrie with its mantle wrapped around its shell. The white constellation-like pattern you see is where the underlying shell is peaking through the animal's mantle.

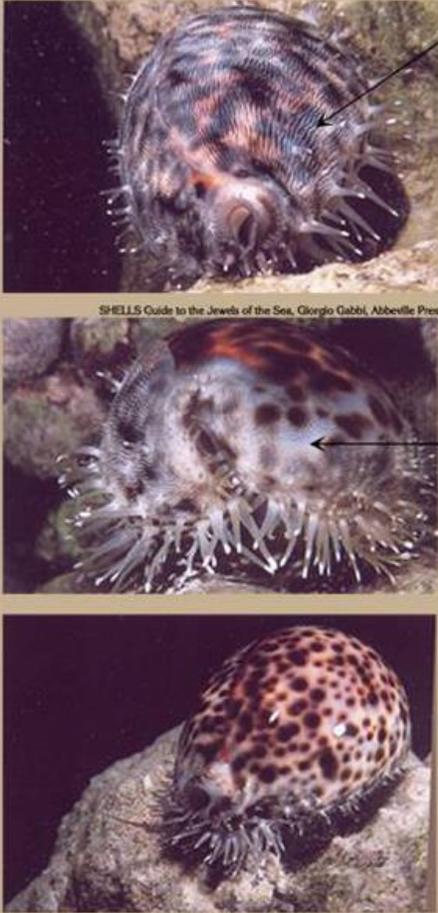


If you recall how soft and tender these bodies are, (remember that the word mollusk comes from the Latin word for "soft"), it would be suicidal to have any scratches or spines on the outside of their shell. To prevent this, the cowrie constantly lays a new coat of shell material over the entire shell. It grows its shell in a different method from the typical Univalve such as the Triton. Instead of adding ever larger whorls as the shell becomes too confining, the cowrie uses acid to eat away at the interior of its shell reabsorbing the calcium. Then it wraps its mantle around the outside of its shell and redeposits the calcium there. This increases the internal surface area while allowing the mantle to repair any damages anywhere on the external surface. With this level of attention, the entire shell glistens to perfection. Even when fully grown, when other mollusks discontinue shell growth, the cowrie continues to

add new layers of shell material throughout its life resulting in a thicker shell that remains forever smooth.

This concept is the essence of the meaning attached to the **Eyed Cowrie, # 16** in *Ocean Oracle*. You can see its picture in the group of Cowrie shells on page 2. In *Ocean Oracle*, its meaning is, “*The desire to make improvements*”. As mentioned above, the cowrie will never have faded areas on its shell as it continually improves upon its appearance redecorating its entire shell with newer, brighter colors.

Cowrie Wrap



The white tissue is the cowrie mollusk wrapped around the top of its shell. Notice how delicate the animal's body is, you can see the shell right through it.

Here, the mantle is working its way back inside the shell

The animal is safely inside, leaving the glistening shell in full view.

SHELLS Guide to the Jewels of the Sea, Giorgio Gabbi, Abbeville Press, New York, N.Y. ©1999 Page 39

Let's continue our discussion of the Cowrie shell. This series of pictures of the tiger cowrie begins by showing the white mantle of the mollusk as it would be in its native habitat. When it is relaxed, or eating, the animal's mantle would be wrapped around the outside of the shell as in the top photo. You can clearly note how delicate the animal is...you can see the shell right through the animal's mantle. If it encountered danger, the two halves of the mantle would work their way down the two sides of the shell, and tuck into the shell as you see in the bottom photo.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gDVbrkgnR7A> This video shows the time it takes to retract its mantle. At the 42 second mark, the cowrie on the left has its mantle wrapped around the outside of the shell. At the 1minute mark, it pulls the mantle inside. The body parts you see are the proboscis (large tube for feeding), eye spots at the base of the tentacles, and the siphon (small tube for breathing). At 1:25 the radula makes its way to the tip of the proboscis. By the way, any bumps or hairs sticking out are on the mantle, not the shell

Tiger Cowrie



Top view

Bottom view

In addition to the polished external surface, we need to turn the shell over to explore the underside. Here, you will observe a puckered slit running the entire length of the shell. This is the aperture, or opening, of the Cowrie Shell. With its narrow slit, it serves as great protection from predators. Every species of cowrie grows its shell with this toothy central slit on the underside of the shell. The bottom view on the right side shows the underside of the Tiger Cowrie shell.

So far, we have discussed the behavior of the animal as it creates its shell. Although this makes cowries different from other mollusks, and their shells easy to identify, I want to take this one more step. Let's look at individual species of Cowrie shells, and their interaction with man.



First, take another look at the Egg Cowrie shell you met earlier. Like all cowries, the shell has a slit running down the underside. It almost looks like it is smiling. But, if you were to turn this shell upside down, you would get a different emotional reaction.



The smile turned upside down is now a fierce frown. Warriors in New Guinea take advantage of this fact. Holding the Egg Cowries in this frowning position, they fasten two Cowries on either end of a strip of cloth, and then bite down in the center of the cloth. With the Cowries bordering both sides of their mouth, they create a very menacing appearance. This is the mask they wear into battle. Here is an example of the Cowrie interacting with man by providing a mask. In Ocean Oracle, the **Egg Cowrie is shell #87** and its meaning is "*Hiding emotions behind a mask; false bravado*". When

you select the Egg Cowrie shell in a reading, it indicates that you are acting like you are fine, hoping nobody sees the truth, because inside you are not fine at all. It is all an act.

In ancient Rome, people noticed that the opening on Cowrie shells, that toothy slit, resembled the genital tract of their female pigs, their sows. For this reason, they called these shells porcellana shells because that means "little pig." When Marco Polo returned from China with pottery the Romans had never seen before, the polished surface of the pottery reminded them of their porcellana shells, and they called the pottery.....porcelain!

por-ce-lain (pōrs'lin, pōrs'-, pōr'sə-lin, pōr'sə-) *n.* 1. A hard, white, translucent ceramic made by firing a pure clay and glazing with variously colored fusible materials; china. 2. An object made of this material. [French *porcelaine*, from Old French *porcelaine*, from Italian *porcellana*, "of a sow," hence cowry shell, hence porcelain (from the resemblance of the shell to the vulva of a sow), from *porcella*, diminutive of *porca*, sow, from Latin, feminine of *porcus*, swine. See *porco-* in Appendix.*] —**por'ce-la'ne-ous** (pōr'sə-lā'nē-əs, pōr'-) *adj.*
porcelain enamel. A silicate glass fired on metal. Also called "vitreous enamel."

Here is an excerpt from the American Heritage dictionary showing the word "porcelain." I underlined the derivation in red where it traces the word porcelain from the Old French which was based upon the Italian porcellana "of a sow". You might wonder what does porcelain have to do with pigs?

It is the connection to the Cowrie shell!

Eventually, the concept broadened from pigs, to the general connection to the womb and the Goddess. Women from Pompeii wore Cowries to prevent sterility. In Japan, the Tiger Cowrie is called the ko-yasu-gai shell which loosely translates to “peaceful child shell”. Women in labor grip these sturdy shells believing they will ease the childbirth. In shell divination, **Tiger Cowrie is shell #85**, and is about “*Possessing great faith; having no fear*”. It is about having faith in the birth of anything in your life, and that birth does not have to be physical. You can be in the process of rebirthing through spiritual growth...or you can be giving birth to some creative enterprise or artistic endeavor such as a painting, or poem, or book.

Now, I want to share something with you that is not in *Ocean Oracle* because it occurred after this book was published. Whenever I teach workshops in person, I carry a bag of Tiger Cowries. As people are taking their seats, I pass the bag around the audience so that each person can select one to feel the smooth surface and see the slit under the shell. In one of my workshops, there was a 7-month pregnant woman who was paying great attention to the information on ko-yasu-gai. She later took me aside to tell me that her baby is always very active, constantly kicking. When I passed the bag of shells around, she placed her Tiger Cowrie on top of her baby bump, and forgot about it as she listened to the workshop. Three hours later, when I reached the information on the “peaceful child shell” she was shocked because she realized that her baby had been perfectly calm for the entire workshop. I was grateful to her for sharing that with me because the following week, someone asked me if I knew of a shell that might help her friend who was having a difficult pregnancy. Immediately, I suggested trying the Tiger Cowrie. This intuition was possible based upon the ko-yasu-gai information from the pregnant workshop student.

A few months later, I received a letter from this woman who told me that working with the Cowrie shell calmed her baby to the point where it prevented premature contractions, and she delivered on her normal due date. This clearly demonstrates how the shell represents the peace that comes from faith in the birth process.

Some of you have indicated that the stories I share with you help the shells come alive. From my email, I am hearing wonderful stories that indicate the shells have started speaking to some of my students. For instance, Ameena and Deb have both worked with the Tiger Cowrie on the youngest members of their families.

They have granted permission to share a little of their experiences with Tiger Cowrie in this transcript.

Deb: My daughter-in-law was having a difficult pregnancy-she was sick almost the whole time-when she sat with tiger cowrie, baby was calm and momma was too. Now Mary Catherine takes tiger cowrie with her when Caroline gets her vaccinations, and when they came to visit over thanksgiving-her first flight and she did very well.

Ameena: My step daughter had a very high risk pregnancy. After her birth to Nat, she had to take a week of bed rest and couldn't move hardly at all. Nat was so upset in his tummy constantly. When I stayed with her for a week, I brought my tiger cowrie and whenever he would cry because he was so "gassy" we would rub his tummy with it and he calmed down. We still use it when he gets fussy after eating, and it seems to be a natural sedative!!!

This is the peaceful child shell.... living up to its Japanese name.

For those of you interested in seashells as massage and energy tools, I wanted you to know that Deb asked Ameena: When you rubbed tiger cowrie on Nat's tummy, did you go clockwise or counter-clockwise? or did it matter?

Ameena responded that she went up the ascending colon, across the transverse and down the descending. One other piece of information came from a third senior. She informed me that she has difficulty sleeping at night because her mind is so active. She now sleeps with her Tiger Cowrie nearby and its calming energy enables her to sleep.

Yet another student found that using the Tiger Cowrie helped with heart palpitations that were energy related.

This course is serving many purposes, and it is my hope that this energy information can be useful to some of you in the future.

Based on all of this information, I am going to take you a bit deeper with Tiger Cowrie. Do you remember when I mentioned that questions can stretch me?

The science gives me a base to let my intuition guide me to an answer. Then, other peoples' feedback validates the information, and that becomes a new "fact" to guide my next intuitive leap. When you are working with the shells, this process can aid you in keeping your shell reading as a constant work in progress leading to deeper revelations.

A mollusk is born with a perfectly fitted shell surrounding its body. With age, as the animal's body expands, discomfort is created in its now too-confining enclosure. New calcified material is added to accommodate its increased dimensions. Our own comfort zones likewise surround us like shells. They define our boundaries: "I will go this far, but no farther." Upon exposure to new thoughts and ideas, if we permit ourselves to grow, these comfort zones may stretch and expand to accommodate the new beings we become. When considering my relationship with seashells, my own comfort zone has mimicked the molluscan growth pattern. As my comfort zone expands, somewhere just short of the breaking point, I am granted time to acclimate in the new realm. Then I am stretched or pulled, and it is time to grow again.

(As you read this, see if you can recall which shell represents this change of comfort zone?)

Green Tree Snail

I was definitely stretched when an immigration lawyer and documentary film maker came to me insisting that there was a shell that could help her with African immigrants who practice genital mutilation. She wanted to know what shell to use. Of course, I had never thought about this before, but I realized it was the Tiger Cowrie. The men who practice this mutilation perceived a woman's ability to give birth as a sign of great power, and they were jealous. Mutilation is designed to remove any pleasure a woman might derive from connecting with her reproductive organs and female energy. This would prevent her from recognizing the power she possesses. How can the Tiger Cowrie assist with this? The men are jealous because they think they only possess male energy and lack female energy. They are thinking from duality, either/or. However human beings contain both male and female energy. The two energies may be in balance, or one may dominate the other. The men who practice mutilation are in the second category. Their male energy so over-shadows their female energy they are left unaware they even have any. Tiger Cowrie connects to the womb and universal female energy which might assist these men in connecting with their own female energy. As balance between their male/female energy is restored, the feelings of jealousy would recede, thus eliminating the motive for mutilation.

I share this as an example of how the shells take you through layers.... deeper and deeper. Remember the corpus callosum, we are using the right and left hemispheres of the brain.

Transcript Extras:

Website with information about Female Genital Mutilation:

<http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/video/2005/03/08/razors-edge-controversy-female-genital-mutilation>

While I was researching, I also found these sites I want to share with you.

<http://www.aquaticcommunity.com/SwSnails/TigerCowrie.php> The section on Size and Appearance may answer some questions regarding the appearance of the cowrie as far as color and thickness of the shell. I was surprised it says they eat sea urchins, and can find no other site to confirm this. Most say the cowrie eats sponges and soft corals.

And this may answer other questions you have regarding colors, patterns, and shapes of shells:

<http://www.conchologistsofamerica.org/faq/#q2>

In the next class, we will have a remarkable story from a former student involving the Tiger Cowrie. I am excited to share this because it is her magical experience with seashell partners, not mine 😊