

Advances in Iconography of Maya Enema Rituals since 1977 Discovery by Furst and Coe

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Today in year 2022 I would like to correct and update my iconography analysis of enema paraphernalia that I began in 1977. The first iconographic focus on ceramics was Coe's 1973 Grolier Club monograph, with everything in double-page size quality. This book inspired me to become interested in learning about iconography and learning about the Popol Vuh in 1973. I estimate that this book is what jump-started my studies in Classic Maya iconography from just stelae, altars, lintels (Morley, Proskouriakoff, Thompson, etc.) and murals (obviously Bonampak murals) to move into studies of scenes on ceramics. However enema rituals were not yet recognized in 1973 even though later we all realized enema syringe scene was present (but only held in a person's hand, not inserted in someone's tail end).

Then in 1977 Furst and Coe's discovery of enema insertion ritual was ground-breaking since no one had discussed intimate scenes, no sex acts had been featured and nothing as unexpected as public display of enema injection had been known or even expected.

Furst and Coe report came out in March 1977 and inspired me so much that I searched for every scene on other vases, bowls and plates that had visual presentation of enema rituals. By June I had found enough to give a presentation at an international conference in late June 1977. The precis/abstract of this conference was still preserved in the library of Peter De Smet. He kindly sent a scan and I have now made it available to issue on-line this month: what was found in four months of iconographic study in 1977.

Then I updated my research in 1978, then learned more in coming years and updated that in 1984 and again in 1985. Now, in 2022, I have updated knowledge which also means I have detected misconceptions of the earlier years which I now wish to improve.

Dozens of other iconographers and ethno-chemists have published reports on enemas over the years; all that I could find I have listed, year-by-year, and summarized in my 2022 "Time-line of Discovery of Enema Paraphernalia and Enema Rituals". But today I wish to point out which aspects of 1977-1985 documentation can be rewritten.

First, my idea that there are three sizes, shapes of "enema jugs". This concept needs additional discussion.

- The common enema jugs that vary from large to super-large. This remains. We just have to decide whether any hand handles on the sides, or not.
- The small portable containers often with a strap handle when carried. This needs lots of further research as to whether always associated with enema ritual, or with pre-ritual parades. They are often called Akbal jugs because of common decoration.
- A completely different size and shape jug but present in enema ceremonies: has spherical supports. This is not often listed by other reports on enema ritual accessories.

I wish to remove the small portable containers from generic enema jugs for several reasons. First, the small portable containers are almost always the same size. Yes, at first they look like a small version of the common large jugs. But, these small portable containers are carried so often in processions that I estimate it is more practical to study independently what rituals they are associated with rather than automatically having them in “enema jug” classification.

An entire MA thesis could be done on these small portable jugs. And if so, surely an inspired student will find several more situations where and how they are used, but in advance the two most common are:

- Carried by hand with a strap (I assume a piece of rope, leather or comparable).
- shown upside down, usually hanging from a necklace, “spilling out” in volutes.

Second, the “enema bibs.” Yes, they are present in vomit episodes within enema rituals, but calling them vomit bibs is best to avoid since other scholars have reminded us that the identical bibs are worn by individuals elsewhere (especially in processions) and lots of celebrants in drunken orgies do not wear these bibs whatsoever. That said, I have now found three or more scenes where parading males have arrived at the ceremony and a standing woman behind each is helping take off (or put on?) aspects of the clothing. In most of these scenes the bib is clearly visible but is off the body. This raises the question of whether these are undressing or dressing scenes. Are the bibs being removed or are they about to be put on. Lots more to study.

Michael Coe pointed out to me, circa 1977-1978, when I gave a lecture on enema scenes at Yale University, that often the same material as the bibs were wrapped around the head as turbans. And many scarfs are similar: some are just a scarf but others also seem to be wrapped around the head.

Additional Research Needed for my 1977 initial comments:

Bundles of “sticks” need more research.

For the enema syringe most now realize that it’s a gourd with an inside aspect that is not as well known (perhaps an animal bladder) and a bone tube. Now we can also say that the gourds come in many different sizes and shapes. Most show an opening in the top. This is so your fingers can press down on the “envelope” that holds the liquid so the envelope pushes the liquid out the tube and into the tail end far enough to continue its path inside the body.

The association of self-sacrifice such as God A’ (Aprime) is very complex and best resolved with

a PhD dissertation level of research. For example, is the entire set of personages on the Castillo Bowl all actors in a single ceremony? Or is each area of the long series of individuals a different ceremony (so one enema ceremony (the jaguar with the syringe and enema jug), one self-sacrifice, one bat aspect (from the Popol Vuh Xibalba potentially, etc.). There are at least two other vases by either the same painter or at least showing segments with the same actors (such as always one committing self-sacrifice and often jaguar surrounded by flames). It really helps to read chapters of the Popol Vuh that discuss the final activities of the Hero Twins.

Additional Research Needed for my 1978 initial comments:

After my lecture in Guatemala City in 1977 on enemas, with feedback from the audience and feedback from Michael Coe, I was able to expand my several page 1977 concepts. These need the same changes as my original 1977 list of features.

Additional Research Needed for my 1984 and 1985 documentation in:

PRINCIPAL DIAGNOSTIC ACCESSORIES OF MAYA ENEMA SCENES

In the early 1980's I learned about the research by ethnopharmacologist Peter De Smet. He indicated he wanted to do his PhD dissertation on enemas. Since by the 1980's I had been working on "hundreds of topics" while a Post Graduate Research Fellow, Dept of History of Art, Yale University, I had not focused back on enemas until preparing material for De Smet's dissertation. My 1977 report and the 1978 report had no illustrations; only citations to enema scenes published in my 1978 book on the Maya and in Coe's work. Robicsek's 1978 book on "The Smoking Gods..." was the only publication of that date that at least showed enema scenes albeit at this early time authors did not yet discuss the enema iconography. Peter De Smet (1981, 1983) are the first in-depth discussion of enemas since Furst and Coe 1977 and following Hellmuth reports.

The 1977, 1978, 1984, and 1985 reports do not yet pull out the hand-held jug as needing separate additional research. And bib aspect I already mentioned needs updating.

Also, the jug in Tikal Bu. 116 and Tikal Bu. 196 I no longer accept as enema jugs whatsoever (Culbert 1993: Fig. 96,e for Bu. 196). (They lack the narrow neck and wide upper part and are not large enough. This raises the question, where are all the enema jugs at Classic Maya sites? Were none buried in elite tombs? Are these jugs found only discarded in middens or elsewhere. Definitely need TWO MA theses or one PhD dissertation:

- Where are the small portable jugs found at Maya ruins? Whether carried by a hand strap or upside down from a necklace, they are pretty much same size and usually same decoration.
- Where are all the giant enema jugs? And in the future, how can excavators record the contents of these ceramic containers before the burials are cleaned out?

As an additional comment, would surely help if there was some kind of infrared photography or macro photography that could detect fraudulent repainting whereby the syringes or drinking cups or other aspects have incorrect details due to modern paint.

Newly Discovered Aspects with the help of additional knowledge from additional scenes

While studying the symbols on a polychrome plate that had showed two enema jugs I noted three motifs that were of similar size to each other but had different details. Then last week I saw another vase with ecstatic felines that has three other symbols that appears to be the identical size and shape. So here are several additional symbols that I was now aware of in the 1970's-1980's. The vase of several ecstatic jaguars definitely suggests something bizarre is being featured; the three motifs up in the air are upside down and emitting coils. The identical almost hieroglyphic like symbol is on the tail of one of the jaguars.

All this will be shown in upcoming reports plus a PowerPoint presentation that people are now asking for.

Even though I was a student at Harvard in the 1960's (the hippy years), and in graduate school (at Brown University) I wore bell-bottomed leather trousers and a lavender/purple long-sleeved shirt. Plus of course leather boots and long hair; however, I am a tad conservative and have not delved into the anatomical aspects nor the sexual aspects (a high percent of enema rituals are just males, but one unexpected enema scene shows a male administering the syringe to another male). Normally it is self-administration or if by an assistant, by a woman. With respect to the anatomical aspects, I can't avoid noticing a sphincter design as a large aspect of a divider panel on an enema injection scene. And I am still estimating that a lubricant was essential to keep the large wide bone tube from injuring the entry area of the body. Sophia Parades kindly showed me an artifact that looks like a shoe horn but for administering enemas. So, a lot for other iconographers and proctologists to study in the future. Plus for ethnopharmacologists: lots more was available besides pulque and balche. I vote for tobacco as an obvious ingredient and potentially cacao as well (if you don't have steroids, helps to have pure cacao (mixed with tobacco). There are dozens, scores, of other potential ingredients or flavorings to study.

Several of the enema scenes not previously published have hieroglyphs or designs on them that look different than the pulque symbol already documented by others. So plenty of new material for epigraphers.

We also need to redefine the "water lily jaguar" since the feline present in many enema scenes has floral aspects sticking out from the front of the tops of their heads that are not immediately identifiable as water lily aspects.

<p>I have two separate bibliographies being published this September 2022. So everything you need is there, such as the chemical aspect analysis by Peter De Smet and De Smet and co-authors.</p>
