

To whom it may concern:

This letter regards a formal request from Kevin McLeod that I confirm my impression of his interpretations regarding Stanley Kubrick's use of Amerindian symbols in his 1980 motion picture, *The Shining*.

My name is Allan L. Maca. I have a PhD from Harvard University and have taught anthropology and archaeology at Columbia and Colgate Universities in the state of New York in the U.S. I also lead an archaeological expedition at the ancient Maya city and UNESCO World Heritage Site of Copan in western Honduras, which has been funded by the National Geographic Society and Colgate University. I am trained in the fundamentals of Mayan hieroglyphic decipherment and have taught the Classic Period (AD 300-900) Maya calendrical system to university students for more than 15 years.

Let me begin by stating in no uncertain terms that any scholar or specialist in the history and study of Native American art and symbolism will be able to vouch for the very real, complex, and deep use of native imagery in *The Shining*. North American and Central American indigenous symbols are shown frequently and explicitly in curtains, floor tiles, carpets, rugs, glass windows, clothing, and more. Kevin McLeod is not the first to notice this in Kubrick's film. To my knowledge, however, he is the first ever to demonstrate convincingly the degree to which and how Kubrick uses these symbols in highly specific ways to advance the story beyond surface content. He is also the first to recognize the use of very distinctive symbols basic to the ancient Maya hieroglyphic script.

It took very little time for McLeod to persuade me that Kubrick was drawing directly on the visual power and meaning of Classic

Period Maya calendrical glyphs and symbols. In fact, when I saw the symbols I immediately recognized them as Maya hieroglyphs. There is no mistaking these or their very rich and unique details. The most extraordinary example, representing I believe a significant breakthrough in the study of *The Shining*, is Kubrick's use of the 'IK ("eek") symbol both in the famous movie poster for *The Shining* and as an abstracted form in other contexts throughout the film (most overtly in the framing of the elevator doors). To us the 'IK symbol looks like the letter "T". It is in actual fact a prominent logograph, or word sign, that means "spirit, wind, or breath" in ancient and living Maya languages. It is the second named day of twenty in the Maya calendar (similar to "Monday" in ours) and is found in countless hieroglyphic texts throughout the Maya area in the Classic Period. This logograph (or glyph) is so well documented that scholars long ago gave it a registry number: T503. All of this information is readily available to you through online sources and numerous books on the history and study of the ancient Maya script.

One of the most fascinating uses of the 'IK symbol in Maya antiquity has been known for more than a century at the Classic Period city of Palenque in southeastern Mexico. This site was discovered in the 1790s and first published in the 1830s by Frederic Waldeck in France and shortly thereafter by the American John Lloyd Stephens. It is one of the iconic cities of the ancient Maya right up to the present day. Dozens of books have been published on Palenque in the last 40 years and several of these have gained wide readership and recognition.

In several monumental buildings at Palenque, including especially the famous houses of the palace complex, the 'IK symbols have been built into the walls as windows. Scholars and lay people refer to these as "IK windows." They are each just wider than the human head and are built at heights that meet the eyes of a medium-sized person. Kubrick obviously either had access to any

of the numerous books and images describing Palenque's 'IK windows or else he actually visited the site himself, something which hundred of thousands of tourists have done since the 1940s.

McLeod's writing states that the 'IK window is the basis for the 'T'-shaped window designed by Kubrick in The Shining movie poster. He is certainly 100% correct. The proportions of the windows at Palenque, and their relation to the height and width of the human head, are precisely those seen in Kubrick's poster design. I repeat: precisely. The odds of Kubrick creating that T-shaped window on his own, with those proportions, are too slim to fathom. In all of my studies and teaching of world art and archaeology I have only seen this symbol in the context of ancient Maya culture (texts, art, and architecture). Moreover, the 'IK windows at Palenque are completely unique, not only in the world but in the entire Maya area. It is a HIGHLY specific sign with very specific meanings that Kubrick must have found in his travels abroad or the thousands of volumes of books we know he possessed at his home in England. Both the 'IK glyph and the K'AN sign (discussed below) were well published and widely known decades before the writing and production of The Shining.

McLeod draws attention to Kubrick's unmistakable use of and reference to the ancient Maya K'AN symbol which, broadly speaking, represents a cosmogram and the center of the sacred world realm. The sign is typically quadripartite (or four quartered) and has a long history in several important ancient Mesoamerican and North American Amerindian cultures over the last 3000 years. The symbol was so important that it likely served as a transcultural common denominator to signify sacred space, cosmic origins, and the divine separation of the world into four directions based on the fixed and idiosyncratic movements of the sun. Indeed, one of the most basic and widespread meanings of the K'AN sign is the color yellow and its most pervasive association is with the sun. In The Shining, the massive wall-to-wall carpet seen in the *Gold Room*

(the ballroom) is replete with K'AN signs. In fact, Kubrick designed the carpet to have four K'AN signs within larger K'AN signs. He is effectively shoving the idea in our faces. The evidence in the relevant scenes for the use of this very specific symbolic referent is incontrovertible. Kubrick knew exactly what he was doing because, while the K'AN symbol is well known in ancient Amerindian and especially Maya art and texts, it is not known beyond the Americas. And again, I would call your attention to the very precise details of the K'AN sign in Maya art: it is readily apparent that Kubrick chose exactly the same lines and curves and proportions. This cannot be coincidence.

I am available at any time to speak further with you or any of your associates regarding the 'IK or K'AN symbols and their presence and meaning in Maya and in broader Amerindian art, texts, and architecture. Kubrick's 1980 film renders these signs at precisely the proportions employed in ancient contexts and with an attention to ancient cultural details that is uncanny. It only stands to reason that Kubrick's borrowing was intentional, intended to elaborate the filmic narrative beyond the surface content of the movie.

In closing, I should add that for many years I have used McLeod's writing on *The Shining* in both my introductory anthropology classes and in my courses on Native American culture. Students respond directly and positively to his arguments and I do not exaggerate when I say that McLeod has radically changed the visual fields and visual cognition of dozens and dozens of my students. He has also had an enormous impact on my studies of cultural symbolism, cinema, and visual media and his provocative and critical writing has been the basis of this.

With all best wishes,

Allan L. Maca, PhD

Thompson, Sir J. Eric. S.

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House C at Palenque and House B