Going into this topic I had little useful knowledge of the Aztecs and found several topics interesting, thought provoking, and even shocking. Some of the more interesting topics I discussed and read about over the past week were the Aztec’s interpretation of time, their rituals, the beginning of time, and more so, their interpretation of events.

To begin, the ballgame is a fascinating bit of history. I found it fascinating that it was a game that was played not only for entertainment purposes, but for religious reasons too. The fact that the players were able to play without their hands and move a nearly 10 pound ball across the court with minimal protection and score a point by getting it through a hole in a stone hoop a good distance overhead still stuns me. The skill, strength, stamina, and training that must have gone into the game is just mind boggling. I also found it fascinating that the losing team in many cases was sacrificed for religious purposes. This seemed like a harsh punishment until I read that it was supposed to restore balance and ensure the gods remain content.

I also found their interpretation of time intriguing. From a western point of view, seeing time as cyclical is a completely new way of thinking. From birth we are raised believing that time started at a point in the past and has progressed ever since, but the Aztecs believed in cycles, where the sun is reborn and a new era of time begins. This raises the question of whether the prediction of the end of a cycle meant the end of life for society, or a new beginning. I was unable to definitively determine this.

Finally, I found it interesting that the events which couldn’t be explained were interpreted as warnings from the gods that a larger event was on the horizon. Reading that the fire in the mountains erupting out of nowhere and several other events in close succession marking the Spanish invasions sparked a question… why were the Spaniards not feared after these omens occurred? Why were they seen as “a supernatural force that needed to be controlled and accommodated” and not a real threat to their survival? One would think that omens as seemingly severe as they encountered would cause great alarm with the invasion of an unknown culture. Did this opinion change after a while due to the hostile takeovers or the questionable deaths of many people due to the newly introduced diseases?