

Ball lightning (Kugelblitz) is a large amount of electrical energy concentrated in a small volume. This rare phenomena generally appears at the end of a thunderstorm as a brightly luminous and slow moving ball. The ball may be rotating, emitting sparks or "shotgun blast" like reports (Ley 1967, Brand 1923, Mohr 1966). The earliest known description of this phenomenon, in the New World, comes from the *Florentine Codex*.

On the night of August 12th 1521 (dated by the capture of Cuauh-témoc after daybreak) "...there appeared to the Mexicans what showed itself to be [a ball of] jasper which seemed to issue from the heavens and came to view like a large coal of fire" (Sahagún 1955:115).

And when night had fallen, then it *rained* and sprinkled at intervals. Late at night the Flame became visible; just so was it seen, just so it emerged as if it came from the heavens. Like a *whirlwind it went spinning around and revolving*; it was as if *embers burst out of it*—some very large, some very small, some like sparks. Like a coppery wind it arose, *crackling, snapping, and exploding* loudly. Then it *circled* the dike and traveled toward Coyonacazco; then it went into the middle of the lake there to be lost.

None shouted; none spoke aloud.<sup>1</sup>

#### REFERENCES CITED

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<sup>1</sup> Italics mine. The source of this quotation is chapter thirty-nine, Book 12, *The Conquest of Mexico, of the General History of the Things of New Spain*.

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