

Luisa Villani

Institutional affiliation: National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM)

JUAN-AKTZINÍ AND *TRUENO VIEJO*: THE TWO NAMES FOR THE TWO FACES OF
THE HURRICANE, DEITY OF THUNDER, LIGHTNING AND WIND

Abstract in spanish:

Hablar de los mitos del huracán es darle voz a un fenómeno meteorológico así como a un potente dios que, desplazándose sobre un sólo pie, manifiesta su presencia en el territorio totonaco de Tajín así como en la Costa del Golfo. Tajín ha sido definido por algunos estudiosos como la “casa del huracán”: este dios está a cargo de truenos, rayos, vientos y mar. El mito del Huracán *Aktziní* o *Trueno Viejo*, tiene larga distribución en el territorio totonaco y a lo largo de la Costa del Golfo de México. Es un viejo conocido de los totonacos de Papantla y también de Teenek, Tepehua, Nahuas y Popolucas. En Tajín y en otras comunidades totonacas de la Costa del Golfo de México, viven los dioses del trueno, los cuales controlan el trueno y el rayo y promueven la fertilidad de las milpas para que haya buenas cosechas. En tiempos antiguos, existían siete pequeños dioses del trueno (aunque algunos hablan de doce), cada quien con su traje y su espada. El jefe de estos dioses era *Trueno Viejo* o *Aktziní*, el Huracán: aunque los totonacos llaman a esta deidad con diferentes nombres, en realidad hablan del mismo dios y fenómeno meteorológico, cuya voz se escucha a lo largo y ancho del territorio totonaco.

Abstract:

To speak of the myths of the hurricane is to give expression to a powerful deity and meteorological entity that, proceeding on its single foot, manifests itself in the Totonac landscape of Tajín and the Gulf Coast in general. Tajín is the site which has been the home of the Hurricane, the atmospheric god who controls the thunder, the lightning, the wind and the sea. The myth of the Hurricane (*Aktziní*) or Old Thunder (*Trueno Viejo*) has a wide distribution along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. As well as the Totonacs of Papantla, he is an old acquaintance of the Teenek, Tepehuas Nahuas and Popolucas. In Tajín and other totonac communities of the coast Gulf of Mexico, the gods of Thunder live and control the thunder and the lightning: they promote good harvests. In ancient times, there were seven little gods of the thunder (although some say there were twelve): each one wore a costume and wielded a sword. The chief of these gods was Old Thunder or Hurricane: even if Totonacs refer to him in different manners as I demonstrate in this paper, they speak about the same god and meteorological phenomenon.

Key words: Totonacs, hurricane, *Aktziní*, *Tajín*, *Trueno Viejo*, minor thunders, wind, lightning and lightning energy.

1. Introduction:

The area defined as Totonacapan by Kelly and Palerm (1952: 11-15) has undergone border modifications over the years, given that in the 1940s, these did not coincide with those of the 16th century, a direct consequence of the colonial period. Even so, we can affirm that in the 16th century the limits extended "from the Cazonas river in the north, to the Antigua River in the south, occupying part of the Sierra Madre Oriental in the west (drawing a line from Huiztla in the extreme north from the state of Puebla, to Pahuatlán, Acaxochitlán, Zacatlán and from here to Jalancingo and Atzalan in Veracruz), to the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in the east" (Chenaut 1996: 207).

As Kelly and Palerm (1952: 13-15; Masferrer and Valdés 2013: 161-177) state: "the territory of the Totonacs turns out to be an inclined plane corrugated by mountains, a plane that encompasses the states of Puebla and Veracruz".

There are some Totonac towns quite far from the region framed by Aguacatlan-Huachinango and Tajín: these are located in the north of Jalapa, where their settlements reach approximately 1200 meters above sea level, which means that these towns are exposed to the constant cold and the winds (Kelly and Palerm 1952: 14-15).

The Papantla region is situated between the Cazonas and Tecolutla rivers. The latter rises in the vicinity of Huachinango, under the name of Necaxa, descends the ravine of Tlaula and passes near Ahuacatlán, Amixtlan and Camocuautla. The Tecuantepec river comes from the direction of Zapotitlan de Méndez to join the Necaxa (Kelly and Palerm 1952: 15), which enters the State of Veracruz near Chumatlan and converges with other tributaries to form the Tecolutla.

The control of resources and the connection with the environment explain why the peoples of the coast and in particular the Totonacs, established a remarkably close relationship with meteorological phenomena and especially with the figure of the hurricane, given its importance for the crops. These peoples unconsciously associated important meanings to meteorological phenomena, which are given consistency and relevance in the development of their myths and rites.

The alternation of the rainy and dry seasons has a great impact on their daily life and rituals and is important not only for the tropical zone of Mexico, but also for the Mesoamerican cultural area in general.

Such ethno-meteorological and ethno-climatic knowledge of the Mesoamerican peoples allows them to plan their daily activities and seek new solutions based on the mutual and symbiotic relationship between environment and culture. For this reason, the hurricane acquires cultural importance, because it influences the life and beliefs of the coastal peoples.

Even if the hurricane seems to be only bad for its strength, for coastal people it is also useful to take rains for the fecundity of the earth and takes away the drought from the cornfields. This research wants to show how two faces of the hurricane are complementary and both necessary, because also from its destructive face a new creation of the time will be born and how in Totonac culture the presence of the hurricane is invoked as we can detect in their oral stories.

Its voice or rather, its voices are spread throughout the Totonac territories and are heard on the one hand, in the Atlantic Sea to the East and on the other, in the mountains that surround these territories.

2. The voices of the Storm:

As I already indicated in my doctoral thesis, entitled: "The voice of the hurricane embodies in Tajín", the Storm, which is both a meteorological phenomenon and a god, has no face on the Gulf Coast; however, it is revealed through a voice, or better, "voices", that is to say names with which the coastal peoples define and delimit the spheres of action of the Storm in Totonacapan territory. The "voices" with which the hurricane is invoked are basically its two names that define its peculiar characteristics: Wind + Thunder / Lightning: *Aktziní / Tajín*, respectively.

While for the Totonac name of Tajín there is agreement among scholars to translate it as Old Thunder or literally, "The one who smokes", by the root *-jin*, "smoke", which brings it closer to its Tepehua counterpart, *Siní*; for *Aktziní*'s name, scholars have given different interpretations. For example, Crescencio García (2009: 25), a native Totonac linguist from Tajín, translates it as San Juan.

Alternatively, Kelly who did her ethnographic work in San Marcos Eloxochitlán, Puebla, writes it as *Llatzaná*. This same character is called *Nattsun* among the Totonacs of Tecolutla and *Muxi'* among the Teenek.

A different voice, attested in the Sierra de Puebla, is the one proposed by Taggart (1983) who calls it *Nawewet*, a term that refers us to *Nanahuatzin*¹. Both authors affirm that this character causes the rains in the Sierra Norte de Puebla and that he is a god who lives in the water of the coast. He is heard in Xalapa, Jalacingo, Teziutlán, Zacapoaxtla, Tetela de Ocampo, Zacatlán and Huauhchinango and when he gets angry, he makes the sea tremble (Vicente Díaz Hernández 1945: 64). Among the Totonacs of Patla and Chicontla (Longino Barragón Sampayo 2012: 254-268) *A'ktzi'ni* represents the sea, while the downpour is named *ka:' ta: 'sahí:' n*.

In Tenango, and in the other towns that make up Totonacapan, we still hear *Ā'ktzini* defined as "the greatest of water", a powerful deity who rules over the water that surrounds the earth and the sea, of whom many people claim that he has a golden horn and no hands; he lives locked in the sea and cannot get out. *Ā'ktzini* was also the one who ruled the world in the past².

¹ A more complete analysis of these names can be found in my doctoral thesis (Villani 2018b).

² The analysis of this concept will be the subject of another work soon.

In the communities around the archaeological site of Tajín as San Antonio Ojital Nuevo, Luis Manuel Bautista translates *Aktzín* as “smoke”. He adds that when this character moves, he is heard in the sea. Agustín González Blas from San Antonio Ojital Viejo, a community close to it, says that *Aktziní* thunders and can be heard in the sea; he further adds that he is the Greater Thunder and is the Old Man. He calls this same character *Aknipakgnan*, that is, God of Thunder and Wind, while he names the Hurricane as *Akxtulu ‘Un*³.

In my doctoral thesis (Villani 2018b) I present a linguistic hypothesis, according to which the word *Aktziní* contains the two characteristics of the hurricane, the cold, and the hot element. This word, as I suggested, would have a root that derives from Nahuatl or Eastern Nahuatl that is maintained from Yutoazteca and then passes to Proto-nahuatl, a root ** *t* > Pn (Proto-nahuatl) which of * *t* > / *t* / *or* / *tl* / and, then, ** *ta* > * *ʔa*; so * *ta* would be an older root of morpheme / phoneme * *tl* of current Nahuatl.

However, Una Canger (1988: 28-72) proposed the hypothesis that, in ancient times, the two roots existed, not necessarily only * *ta*, but also of the * *ʔa* sound.

This root * *ta* / * *tla* would be from the word fire so we have: * *tahi* > * *tʔahi* > *tlai* > *tle*; in more depth, these steps could be deciphered as: *tʔai* > *tai* > *tʔei* > *tʔei* > *tʔi* that would give the term of fire for the Nahuas of the Altiplano: *tletl*.

I could also trace words that bear this root *-ta* in the dialect of Pajapan, southern Veracruz (Koji 2007) where *Tatah* is “Grandfather”, but *Tata* means “to burn” and *Tata’* “burned”. Also interesting is the word *Tatsini* which means “thunder or explode”.

This last word has its correspondence in the central Nahuatl where we find *Tlatlatzini*: “thunder when it rains”, *tlapetlani*: “lightning”, *Tlatla*: “burn” (Dictionary of Molina 2008), *Tlatlatziniliztli*: “Lightning of the Great Thunder” (Dakin 1989: 347-359; 1993: 47-51).

In my thesis I point out the presence of this phoneme **t*, (* *ta* and * *tla*) in the Gulf area, to underline the importance of the hot element of fire and lightning energy, in conjunction with the aquatic component: both would be characteristics present in the figure of *Aktziní* and the meteorological phenomenon of the hurricane in general.

Although in recent years my linguistic hypothesis in relation to the word *Aktziní* points more towards an origin from the Totonac language and not so much from the Nahuatl of

³ Field work, year 2014.

the Coast, I still think that these cold and hot characteristics, of water on the one hand, and of fire and lightning energy on the other hand, are at the base of the meteorological phenomenon and of the semantic-lexical characteristics of the god *Aktziní*.

If we analyze the phenomenon from the meteorological point of view, a hurricane or tropical cyclone is an atmospheric system in which wind circulates in a cyclonic direction, that is, anticlockwise in the northern hemisphere that is ours of Mexico, and clockwise in the southern hemisphere. When increased solar radiation warms the waters of the Atlantic, warm air begins to rise into the atmosphere from the sea. This hot air collides with the cold air that descends from the mountains and drives the mechanism of the phenomenon: rotating winds and circular clouds. This turning wind becomes a storm and when the winds reach the speed of more than 115 km / h, the storm becomes a true hurricane.

3. Hurricane Myths:

As stated by Alfredo López Austin (1983: 34-35): "myth is a historical fact of social thought immersed in long-term courses", with all the limits, I may add, which imply the idea of "long duration", above all regarding to the scarcity of references to periods prior to the Late Postclassic in the area of the Gulf Coast.

The myth is a social product, a resource for the conservation of collective memory, since it reflects the various ways of conceiving reality through the worldview, because it expresses beliefs and conceptions about the conformation of the world and the universe; it crystallizes the identity of a social collective. Furthermore, the myth is not a story that happened only in times past but is also a timeless reality that is reiterated in history through its oral reproduction and which changes and is enriched by new particulars in each historical period.

These myths are stories which describe the emergence of beings from another time and space, mythical space-times, in the life of man. The mythical space-time is made up of generally invisible beings or forces, such as the hurricane, and light matter, which influences the life of the Totonac community in phenomena such as natural cycles.

For the Totonacs of the Gulf Coast and the Totonac Sierra, nature is a vital force; the elements of sea, land, sky, and air, therefore, are forces that the Totonacs appropriate and humanize as belonging to the landscape. Likewise, they interpret and relate these forces to the environment through cults and oral and ritual practices, with which they transform the social and cultural landscape.

In the Tajín area, the Sierra Papanteca and Sierra Norte de Puebla, myths are told that refer to the figure of *Aktziní* and *Tajín*, two names which, as I have underlined above, reveal the same concept: a complex deity formed by the union of opposite elements, on the one hand hot (thunder and lightning), and on the other, cold (air, wind, fog).

One of the pioneers in the study of this powerful phenomenon has been Roberto Williams (1954: 77-80) who has compiled stories in which the character of the hurricane appears among the Totonacs and the Tepehuas and with whom we will dialogue.

I took as a reference story the one told to me by some inhabitants of the communities near Tajín, such as Ojital Viejo and Nuevo, the elders of Tajín and of surrounding communities such as Plan de Hidalgo.

Alejandrino, a former dancer of the Flyers (Voladores) of Tajín, recounted that one day a vagabond boy, an orphan, called *Juan-Aktziní* arrived in this place. He was looking for a home and a job. He first went to see his grandmother, but she could not provide him with work and instead told him to follow the path that leads to the home of the Thunder gods, with whom he would surely be able to work and find a home. The boy, thanks to an ax which he saw rolling in the forest and followed, arrived at the house of the Thunders, and asked if he could work with them.

At first, they answered him that he was not yet old enough to work and that he did not have the strength to control his powers. However, in the end, they decided to accept him and gave him the job of preparing the food for when the Thunders returned from their daily tasks.

As the boy grew up, he became anxious to know what the gods did when they went out to work. He only knew that when they arrived, they did so, flying with a special suit and sword in hand. When everyone returned, *Juan-Aktziní's* daily task was to keep this clothing and the swords in a safe place, in a trunk or pot.

As time went by, the young man began to spy on the Thunders and one day when they were not watching he took the most powerful sword and suit and so he began to fly. Up in the skies he realized that every movement he made, turned him into thunder and that amused him. He became a great thunder and a deluge was released.

The gods came for him, but they could not stop him and so they asked the Virgin Mary to help them. They asked her for a hair (or twelve as counted in another version) to tie the boy, *Juan*. The hair became chains with which the Thunders tied *Juan* and threw him to the bottom of the sea.

For this reason, every June, virgin girls have their hair cut to reinforce the chains tied to *Juan-Aktzín*, says Alejandrino. Today *Juan* is still in the middle of the sea and in June he can be heard screaming, because he wants to know when his birthday is. However, the Thunders do not tell him because they know that, if they do, *Juan-Aktziní* would unleash another flood. Variants added to this reference story are found in the Totonacapan regions and on the Gulf coast in general.

I propose to imagine this flow of events as a spiral, the same spiral of the wind of a hurricane, in which the main sequence is placed in the center where *Trueno Viejo* and

Juan-Aktziní act; then step by step, each arm of the spiral will represent a second sequence, a third, a fourth ... etc., until reaching the final sequences which add elements to the spiral without changing the basic core of the figure. That is why, despite this shared central nucleus, we can find in Totonacapan and along the Gulf Coast important variants which, by incorporating or discarding sequences, enrich the mythical corpus, allowing us to access the worldview of the place in greater detail.

An example of this is the version of Maestro Tiburcio Olarte⁴, a native of Papantla, who says that the child was not an orphan, but naughty and disobedient. He left the house and entered a forest which he came across after he found an ax rolling in the sky, and he found there the house of Thunder, which is the Pyramid of the Niches of Tajín.

In it, twelve Thunders or old men called "*Tajínes*" lived, who every day irrigate the world with fertilizing rains. The boy asked them for lodging and after considering, they agreed and left him the task of cooking for them so that when they returned from work everything would be ready. They warned him, however, that he should cook only a grain of corn or a bean. The child disobediently put many more grains in the pot and was covered by the food that poured out, because in the Thunder house the food is abundant. The Thunders forgave and helped him. One day, while the Thunders were out working in the various corners of the Earth, *Juan*, full of curiosity, opened one of the trunks that he was forbidden to approach. He saw that inside were kept a sword, some boots and the hurricane suit which is the most powerful wind suit.

Since *Juan-Aktziní* was mischievous, he decided to put on the suit to play. Suddenly, he took to flight, the sky clouded and a strong wind began accompanied by thunder and lightning: he had unleashed a deluge. The Thunders realized that the weather had changed and did not know why until they discovered the open trunk. They looked up and saw *Juan* flying in the hurricane suit. They tried to stop him; however, none succeeded. They decided to go to see the Virgin and asked her to give them one of her hairs to tie up the boy. Finally, they managed to hold him and send him to the bottom of the sea. Since then, he has been heard roaring when his birthday approaches in June. Roberto Williams García (1954: 78), a great connoisseur of Totonac mythology, explains that *Trueno Viejo* (*Juan-Aktziní*'s counterpart, as proposed here) "is chained at

⁴ Personal communication, field work, June 2015.

the bottom of the sea and his snoring begins to be heard from June to August", "he is in the sea in a supine position, with his legs bent and his head raised; he smokes a cigar and with every puff he throws he produces the noise of thunder".

The roar of Old Thunder is heard from June to September, a period during which the mountains and coasts overlooking the Atlantic Ocean prepare for the possible arrival of hurricanes, meteorological forces which have great destructive power but on which the correct supply of rain depends in summer. It is especially during the '*canicula*', a period of interstitial drought that endangers the survival of farmers' fields along the Gulf of Mexico Coast, that the hurricane's rain becomes most necessary.

This dual relationship of need and fear towards this figure explains the thousand-year-old devotion that indigenous peoples have had in the face of the hurricane, meteorological force and God whose face we can recognize on the one hand, in the monolith of the archaeological city of Tajín, and on the other, in the images of Saint John the Baptist, a saint who for almost five centuries has lent a Christian body and name to the old storm god. For this reason, despite the damage that the hurricane can generate, for the Totonacs of Tajín there are more benefits than dangers and for that reason it is invoked in rituals in order to promote its arrival, in a way that is not destructive.

The hurricane must be held in check, but not completely stopped. That is why, in addition to the chains forged from the Virgin's hair, it is necessary to deceive the old god who lives in the middle of the ocean. When summer approaches, *Juan-Aktziní* asks when his birthday is going to be, he wants to know when June 24 is coming so he can celebrate with a big party.

The Thunders know, however, that if they tell him, he will unleash the flood and so they deceive him. Only when the day of *San Juan* has passed, they tell him to celebrate a little, thus bringing abundant rains, but not hurricanes. Old Thunder is eager to flood the world, for only then he can bring more beings into his kingdom to keep him company.

The action sequences that constitute the development of the mythical tale of *San Juan Aktziní-Trueno Viejo* can therefore be summarized in these steps and in a scheme that I present below:

Step 1. Abandonment of the home: The orphan child lives with his grandmother or his parents but leaves the house to look for work.

Step 2. Encounter of a guide-object: The boy finds a bundle or a rolling ax in the forest and follows it or finds his half-brother or Major Thunder or Sea Lightning (that is, his mythical counterparts).

Step 3. Arrival at the House of Thunder: The child arrives at the Pyramid of Niches or cave or palace in the sky where he finds the Thunders, who are sometimes twelve or sometimes seven, who, every day, water the earth using equipment such as boots, special suits, a sword, etc.

Step 4. *Aktziní* begins to work for them: The thunders ask him to cook only one grain of beans or corn, but *Aktziní* puts more than one grain of corn or beans to cook, opens a pot where the suit and sword of the mightiest wind is stored. He takes these objects with which he dresses and, becoming a hurricane, unleashes a deluge.

Step 5. The Thunders tie *Juan-Aktziní*: The Thunders with a hair (or twelve hairs) of the Virgin Mary or a Rainbow, tie *Aktzini* and throw him to the bottom of the sea where every June 24 he roars to be released.

The narrative sequences:

Old Thunder / Thunders	<i>Juan-Aktziní</i>
<p>Primary sequence:</p> <p>The Thunders or <i>Tajines</i> receive <i>Aktziní</i> in their house, or Pyramid or palace and they commission him to cook a single bean or a single grain of corn.</p>	<p>Primary sequence:</p> <p><i>Aktziní</i> arrives at the House of Thunders, who decide to receive him and he begins to work for them. However, because he is disobedient, he cooks more than one bean, or one grain of corn and the house fills up with food.</p>
<p>Second sequence:</p> <p>The Thunders forgive <i>Aktziní</i> for this</p>	<p>Second sequence:</p> <p><i>Aktziní</i>, who is still mischievous, moved by</p>

<p>transgression and entrust him to clean the house, but they order him not to touch the pots or trunks where they keep their suits and instruments to make rain.</p>	<p>curiosity, opens a rattling pot or trunk from which he extracts the most powerful sword and suit with which he dresses.</p>
<p>Third sequence:</p> <p>The Thunders realize that the sky is darkening, and they look at the sky and see <i>Aktziní</i> spinning in it.</p>	<p>Third sequence:</p> <p><i>Aktziní</i>, who has donned the most powerful suit of the Thunderbolts and grasped the sword, begins to circle in the sky like a whirlwind. This unleashes a flood.</p>
<p>Fourth sequence:</p> <p>The Thunders anchor <i>Juan-Aktziní</i> with the twelve hairs of the Virgin Mary or the owner of the Water or the Mermaid or <i>Tepscóyotl</i>⁵, or "the woman of the Sun."</p>	<p>Fourth sequence:</p> <p><i>Aktziní</i> turns in the sky causing a deluge and for that reason, he is tied up in the sea, to which he falls sometimes face up and, sometimes, face down.</p> <p>Every June 24 he "roars" or screams to know when his birthday is. However, they never tell him, because otherwise he would unleash another deluge.</p>

⁵ In one of the mythical tales of Tajín this character is a woman and it is said that she is one of the watchmen of the world who helps to tie Juan to a rock, to throw him into the bottom of the sea (in Totonac Tales. Anthology 2000: 87 -94: Juan Zimbrón Méndez and Rosa Isabela Albarrán Serrano from El Tajín).

4. The two faces of the hurricane:

In the Mesoamerican vision, duality is at the base of many creation processes, not only of humanity, but at the cosmogonic level, of the Sun and the Moon and of the process of creation, death and regeneration of the cosmic Eras. Alfredo López Austin (2012: 200-205) points to the hot-cold duality of beings. The author affirms that the two substances are found in each being, but one of the two elements dominates in each one. In the peoples descended from the ancient peoples of pre-colonial Mesoamerica, there existed, to a greater or lesser extent, a principle of universe geometry from which a type of worldview was structured that was characterized by being dualistic.

This duality also present among the Totonacs was reflected in the Universe, as in their vision of the Universe and of the gods themselves, as is the case of the hurricane, as I want to demonstrate. While the Totonac Universe, as Laura Romero Vivas (1998: 75) tells us, in the words of the teacher Porfirio, is conceived as a "space-time" or "place of times", *kakilhtamakú* and it is dual, the same duality it is shown in the world divided between gods and men, who have different domains. This dichotomy is reinforced with presences and powers for both domains. In the divine realm, the hurricane in the Tajín is conceived as a dual being, to which two parts correspond that are also two faces of the meteorological phenomenon: Wind on the one hand and Thunder and Lightning on the other. To understand the duality of the hurricane in the figures of Juan-*Aktziní* and *Trueno Viejo*, we must refer to the variants of the myth-reference described above.

The grandparents of the community of El Tajín⁶ tell me the story, as they told Hernández Viveros (2000: 17-18) that some time ago he lived among the thick mountains near the Pyramid of Tajín, a young Totonac named *Talimaxqan*, "the orphan brother":

In that place *T'alimaxqan* came to live with the twelve old Thunders (*Chakutú Tajinín*). One day the Thunders went to "work" in different directions around the world, to make rain. However, when they left the house, they told *T'alimaxqan* to take care of it, and above all, that he should not touch the "box" (the trunk) or the

⁶ Field work, year 2015 and in Hernández Viveros (2000: 17-18).

sword, or even try to approach these objects. The Thunders went away and *T'alimaxqan* was left alone at home and it occurred to him to open the trunk, where the best suit of the twelve Thunders was kept. He tried it and when he had it on, he felt so strong that he grabbed the sword, put on the boots and soared into the skies, and then he began to cause great roars, lightning, cloud smoke and rain and almost caused a flood at that time.

The thunders realized the daring of *T'alimaxqan* and soon returned to stop him but since he was extraordinarily strong, they had to consult other gods to see if they would arrest him. They could not stop him either, so they went to the Virgin Mary who donated her hair and when she threw one on *T'alimaxqan*, that hair turned into a large snake. Another made a chain, so they tied him up and took him to the bottom of the sea, in the east and he is confined there until now. He is the one we know as *Qoló Aktzín*, the Old Thunder, the main one of the thirteen old Thunders (Hernández Viveros 2000: 17-18).

In another version of the story that an elder totonac of Tajín sayed to me, the rainbow is used to bind *Juan* and it is said that when this young man is thrown into the sea, he grows old there. At this point in the story, it is noted how the apparent contradiction between the young and old character of this character is not in reality a contradiction: he is young when he is crossing the forest and through the mountain to the house of Thunder and he begins to age when the Thunders tie him up and take him to the sea: there are the two periods of the rainy cycle. From there, he yells as old *Juan*, Old Thunder. Here you notice how *Juan-Aktziní* and *Tajín*, the Old Thunder, are the same character, that is, they are the two faces of the same character, the hurricane. Sometimes the Totonacs distinguish them and sometimes they assimilate them in the same figure⁷. As we can see in this last mythical tale, the child, in addition to being an orphan, is called *Talimaxqan*, from the Totonac *t'a*, root of *t'ala*, "the like, the brother"

⁷ The dual nature of the hurricane, being young and old at the same time, as Damián González Pérez suggests to me, could refer to the two seasons of the rain cycle and the hurricane season, which in the Pacific Ocean has its most intense time in September-October, after the Dog Days.

and *limaxqan*, "the orphan"⁸, then, the "orphan brother". The collaborators of Minerva Oropeza (1998: 84-85) refer to a particular type of orphanhood, that of the only survivor of a past generation or bygone era⁹. What I want to emphasize here is the character of brotherhood, which indicates that the child is not just one, instead he is a dual character. Regarding the name *Talimaxqan* (written like this in this manuscript, *Talixmacan*) I found a manuscript at the Indigenous Institute, without a date, in which it speaks of the Legend of Our Ancestors and where a name similar to this, appears: *Talimahkgen* or *Actzinni*.

In another mythical story (personal information of Leopoldo Trejo), the Old Men from the Mount lead to *San Juan-Aktziní* where the Owner of the Water lives, also called *Aktziní*: it is clearly glimpsed here that it is the same character with two different "faces", two brothers who are part of the same phenomenon¹⁰.

Old Thunder	San Juan-Aktziní
<p data-bbox="186 993 738 1066"><u>Other names and characteristics of the characters:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="235 1119 698 1192">- 12 / 7 Thunders or <i>Tajines</i> or Lightning or Thunderbolt <li data-bbox="235 1245 446 1276">- 12 brothers <li data-bbox="235 1329 365 1360">- Kings <li data-bbox="235 1413 519 1444">- Angels/Migueles 	<p data-bbox="836 993 1388 1066"><u>Other names and characteristics of the characters:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="885 1119 1250 1150">- Orphan or half brother <li data-bbox="885 1203 1144 1234">- Major Thunder <li data-bbox="885 1287 990 1318">- Ray <li data-bbox="885 1371 1177 1402">- King of the Sea¹¹ <li data-bbox="885 1455 1088 1486">- Evil wizard

⁸ This translation is referred to by Crescencio García Ramos (in Oropeza 1998: 84) in "An approximate interpretation of the Totonac myth "*El Trueno Viejo*".

⁹ This idea is developed in my doctoral thesis (Villani 2018b) and will be the subject of another work.

¹⁰ As an atmospheric phenomenon it is dual: it is thunder when its roars announce the rains and storms, but above all it is wind, a wind machine that drags clouds from the eastern sea or, when it is time of misfortune, furiously swirls over the continent dragging with their sigmoid arms (Ortiz 2005) houses, lives, and crops.

¹¹ The reference to *Aktziní* as King of the Sea is by Antonio Ponce de Atlequizayan, Puebla, who speaks of the myth of *Aktziní* which is "lightning from the sea and which is still heard as an echo, it thunders beyond the sea and his guitar sounds because he warns that in two, three days it will rain "(compilation by Leopoldo Trejo in June 2011, doctoral thesis in process).

<u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thunders work as a team to irrigate the earth with their rains. - Watchers of the Earth of which one is a woman named <i>Tepscóyotl</i> 	<u>Activities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Play the flute or guitar
<u>Where they live:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the Pyramid of the Niches - In a cave - In a palace in the sky 	<u>Where he lives:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - With the grandmother - On the mountain - On the stove
<u>What they do:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They go to work every day - Every day they water the land with the rains and winds that they have stored in their pots or trunks 	<u>What he does:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Since he is disobedient and / or mischievous, he leaves Grandma's house. He goes to the mountain and here he sees an ax which he follows. - Or finds his half brother - Or finds the <i>Tajines</i> who guide him to the Pyramid of the Niches, their home
<u>Which tools they use:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Special boots or shoes - Cloaks 	<u>Which tools he uses:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The most powerful suit - The sword

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trousers - Sword 	
<p><u>Other characteristics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He is old - He Separates into Major Thunder and Minor Thunders - He is identified as <i>San Miguel</i> 	<p><u>Other characteristics:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He is young - He has a female counterpart, <i>Juana</i> who is Owner of the Water¹² - He is identified as <i>San Juan</i>

As can be seen in the table, on the one hand, there is a protagonist who is *Juan-Aktziní* and on the other, his counterpart, or antagonist, Old Thunder or *Tajín*. We can also consider them as two antagonists who oppose each other: the orphan child or half-brother of thunder, *Aktziní*, represents the dangerous part of the hurricane, the "bad" part of it, because it is the one that causes the flood and must be tied in the sea; on the other, there are the thunders, which irrigate the earth with rain and make life possible¹³. Old Thunder then manifests itself in three forms: *Jiliní*, the great lightning, *Sikulán* (or *Tajín*) the discharge that thunders trees and kills men, *Maqlípini*, the crash of thunder. Each of the manifestations of Thunder is, at the same time, masculine and feminine. While Old Thunder appears as an old man, *Aktziní* appears as a child. A first duality may be this: an "old" phenomenon because he is prior to the sun, that is, he was imprisoned in marine waters before the world was like the one we know now, he is also young because, despite his previous confinement, today he retains his childish, disobedient, fickle character: he is a smoker, a drunk, he lacks the calm and patience of

¹² This character is the companion of *Juan-Aktziní* in some Totonac tales. She appears like a terrestrial deity, of terrestrial water, while *San Juan-Aktziní* is the deity of the sea (Totonac Tales. Anthology 2000: 104) and is identified with the Siren in some Tepehua tales (Williams 1972: 198). The character of the Siren is also found among the Nahuas of the Huasteca and she is the lady of the water and the well: her name is *Apanxinola* or *Apancihuatl* (Mar-Olivares 2015: 58). Among the Otomi, the Siren is the goddess of water and rain (Galinier 1990: 583).

¹³ We can read this duality as the different forces of water that can be benevolent if brought from the sky by the gods Thunder or *Tajines*, in moderate quantities or the strong, devastating deluge that *Juan-Aktziní* brings, which has to be stopped so that it does not cause damage to the "*milpa*".

the old thunders who hold him down. Another duality that appears evident is that these two characters, *Aktziní* and *Trueno Viejo*, co-protagonists and faces of the same character exemplify what will be re-signified in postcolonial times as *San Juan* on the side of *Aktziní* and *San Miguel* on the side of Old Thunder. *San Miguel* is the syncretic figure of the ancient Totonac deity *Jilí* or *Rayo* that in some texts is mentioned as Old Thunder (Ichon 1969: 35-40; Williams 1980: 15-16). The sword he brings is related to his ability to make thunder, fulfilling the function of the ancient rain-making staves. *San Juan*, on the other hand, is known on the Totonac coast as *San Juan* and shares attributes of the two polarities of water. He is more related to the rain and the earth. Among the Totonacs there is no conception of the opposition between Good and Evil as in Christianity; the gods are both beneficial and destructive. If, on the one hand, Old Thunder and the other thunders are the ones who water the earth so that it can bear fruit, *San Juan-Aktzini* is the one who destroys the temporal cycle with a flood or deluge, so that mythical time and the rainy season can begin again.

Due to the Catholic conception and its contrasting character between Good and Evil, these two characters separated: in general, on the one hand, *San Juan-Aktziní* lives below the earth, in the sea and is the destructive "face" of the hurricane and he was assimilated to the Devil. On the other hand, *San Miguel* or the *Migueles*, the Thunder and thunders, live in the sky and represent the beneficial "face" of the storm. Although their home is heaven, they bring water from the top of the mountains, which falls on the earth in the form of rain. Both are necessary and both live in the agricultural year, which also explains why the characters go from being young to ending up old every year.

The figure of *Juan-Aktziní*, then, presents features of symbolic reformulation that is the result of Christianization, as Oropeza (1998: 104) comments. In "Los disfraces del Diablo", Báez-Jorge (2003: 383) explains that, in the Totonac worldview of Coyutla, the ancient principle of Mesoamerican duality is expressed in two complementary opposites: *San Miguel Arcángel* and *Juan-Aktziní*.

According to the interpretation of Romero Vivas (in Down 1974: 225) this duality has water as its central reference and is part of a broad symbolic system in which "the four natural elements and the multiple space-time dimensions of the cosmos are included". As the author indicates (Vivas 1999: 67-68): "On the conception of the fundamental

structural duality of Totonac thought, the Christian idea of the irreconcilable opposites of Good and Evil has been superimposed and then, *Aktziní* has become identified with Satan, which gave him a negative evaluation". The author exemplifies stating that within the framework of the symbolic association of Saint Michael the Archangel with lightning, *Jilí*, also present among Nahua, Otomi and other Totonac groups, such as those from the Sierra Norte de Puebla, *Akztiní* was responsible for fulfilling the role of Lucifer, a symbiosis favored by his attribute of "owner of the snakes" who "lives at the bottom of the sea." Laura Romero Vivas (1999: 67-69) also affirms that his informants refused to talk about *Aktziní* and even said they did not know him, hence the prefiguration of him as Diablo. Of course, the representations of Saint Michael defeating the dragon with the seven heads or a serpent will contribute to the demonization of the Totonac deity of water.

However, at times, the figure of Saint Michael turns out to be ambiguous, because in some mythical tales he fights the Devil, in others, he is the other face of *Juan-Aktziní*¹⁴.

Roberto Williams García (in Hernández Viveros 2000: 15-30) tells us about some stories compiled by the bilingual technician Peralta Guzmán in the community of Zozocolco de Hidalgo, a town located southwest of Papantla, within the Sierra de Papantla region. Among these stories there is one entitled "*Nattsun*: origin of the cyclone." With the presence of *Nattsun*, she tells him, the cycle of the second rainy season is closed. Noting that in Zozocolco there were two deities, *Aktziní* and *Nattsun*, Williams asked her who the two were and she said that *Aktziní* corresponded to *San Juan* and *Nattsun* to *San Miguel*, who manifested at the time of the cyclones. This Saint is celebrated on September 29 (Hernández Viveros 2000: 15-30).

In addition to these two Saints, in Tajín and in Xico, as Noriega Orozco (2008: 449) affirms, *Santiago* is related to Thunder or rather to lightning, and by metonymic relationship to the sword of the Apostle *Santiago* and with the *toto*, the turkey.

¹⁴ Among the Teenek, Marcela Hernández Ferrer (2001: 123) writes: "Along with the Virgin Mary who they call *Nana*, San Isidro Labrador, Juan Bautista, Santiago Apóstol and Miguel Arcángel are worshiped, who intervene as natural phenomena for the better fulfillment of agricultural work. All these are representations of the Thunderbolt that carries water: The Saints maintain aquifer attributes and have characteristics of elders, messengers and fierce warriors who in most cases overcome adversity to achieve their objectives". The author continues: "In particular, Saint Michael the Archangel is highly respected and apparently he and the *Mam Lab* (the great grandfather) are the same". The *Mam Lab* or *Muxi* is the same *Aktziní* for the Totonacs.

In Coyutla, as in some areas of the Sierra Norte de Puebla (Paradowska 2013: 102) *Aktzini* has not materialized with *San Juan*, but with *San Bartolo*, whose feast is on August 13. There seem to exist, then, among the Totonacs, different logics that could be explained as religious syncretism or as the result of intercultural hybridization as stated by the same author Paradowska (2013: 211), but it could also be perceived on a horizontal plane as a rationality that does not recognize contradictions, it accepts duality and non-exclusion. The latter is interpreted in terms of the logic of the "included third"¹⁵ as affirmed by Nicolescu (1996: 22), in which the opposites are the contradictory: the tension between the contradictory encodes a broader unit that includes them, or else, as the presence of a holistic, participatory consciousness as proposed by Berman (1981: 75-77). Although *San Miguel* and *San Bartolo* belong to different logics, the first to a binary logic and the second to the logic of the "third included", both coexist in the Totonac worldview.

¹⁵ The concept of the "excluded third" in classical physics refers to the fact that a term B cannot be, at the same time, A and not-A. Said discourse changes when we talk about quantum logic that modified the axiom of non-contradiction, introducing non-contradiction at various levels of truth in the place of that binary pair (A-no-A). These multivalent logics have not taken into account another possibility: the modification of the third axiom, the axiom of the excluded third. Lupasco had the historical merit of having shown that the logic of the included third is a true formalized logic, multivalent (it has three values: A, not-A and T) and not contradictory, that is, the comprehension of the axiom of the third included: exists a third term T that is both A and not-A (Nicolescu 1996: 23).

5. Conclusions:

As we have seen throughout the article, the meteorological phenomenon of the hurricane in its manifestations of Thunder, Lightning and Wind represents a symbolic and representative character of the oral tradition of the Totonacs of the Coast and the Sierra Norte of Puebla. Throughout Totonacapan, the presence of the hurricane is manifested through its "voices" and its multiple manifestations, myths and rituals. This constant presence allowed me to speak of hurricane logic for the Gulf of Mexico Coast (as I affirm in my doctoral thesis, Villani 2018b). Within this same hurricane logic, it is possible to trace the thinking and the way of interpreting the phenomenon among the Totonacs, based on their worldview. As in the Mesoamerican mega-cultural area, there is also awareness among the Totonacs of the alternation of the rainy and drought seasons and that the subsistence of these peoples is based on them. Furthermore, the need for balance between these two periods has been the foundation of the existence of deities like that of the hurricane, causally related to atmospheric agents. Although the storm is basically named by two names: *Aktziní* and *Tajín*, its manifestations can be triple: thunder, lightning, wind. The duality of *San Miguel-Trueno Viejo* and *San Juan Aktziní* as it is presented in the mythical tales of the Totonacs of the coast and the mountains does not exclude the principle of the "third included" which in the Totonac mentality coexists with the principle of duality. Just as the physical phenomenon of the hurricane can be manifested under its three physical forms of wind, thunder and lightning, also the saints, under which the figure of the hurricane appears with its different characteristics, can be three: *San Juan-San Miguel* and *Santiago* or as we detect in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, *San Juan* is replaced by *San Bartolo*.

In turn, these Saints can be dual, composed of a male and a female part: *San Juan-San Juanita*; *San Miguel-San Micaela*, alternating their functions in different regions of the landscapes. We saw how the hurricane can be a mischievous child and Old Thunder at the same time, as well as how he can manifest his destructive force when he unleashes a flood and his creative force when, as Old Thunder, with his assistants the Lesser Thunders, he waters the earth with beneficial rain for the land.

In conclusion, such is the importance of this meteoric god, that he is actually invoked every time a hurricane myth is told in Tajín, in an attempt to control his arrival as though repeating his story would exorcise the risk that this powerful god brings with him.

6. References:

Báez-Jorge, Félix

- 2003 *Los disfraces del Diablo: ensayo sobre la reinterpretación de la noción cristiana del mal en Mesoamérica*. Universidad Veracruzana. Xalapa.

Barragán Sampayo, Longino

- 2012 "Aktzini", in *Las lenguas totonacas y tepehuas. Textos y otros materiales para su estudio*, Paulette Levy y David Beck (Eds.). UNAM. México: 254-268.

Berman, Morris

- 1981 *El reencantamiento del mundo*. Editorial Cuatro Viento. Santiago de Chile.

Canger, Una

- 1988 "Nahuatl dialectology: a survey and some suggestions", in *IJAL*, 54, núm.1. University of Copenhagen. Copenhagen.

Chenaut, Victoria

- 1996 *Procesos rurales e historia regional. Sierra y costa totonacas de Veracruz*. CIESAS. México.

García Ramos, Crescencio

- 2009 *Nombres indígenas*. Academia Veracruzana de las lenguas indígenas, Xalapa. Veracruz.

Cuentos totonacos. Antología.

- 2000 CONACULTA, Dirección general de Culturas Populares, México: 87-94.

Dakin, Karen

- 1989 "Sugerencias acerca del origen yutoazteca de *IL- en náhuatl", in *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, 19, IIH, UNAM, México: 347-359.

Dakin, Karen

1993 "Composición yutoazteca en el náhuatl: algunas etimologías", in *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl*, 23, IIH, UNAM, México: 47-51.

Díaz Hernández, Vicente

1945 "Nanahuatzin", in *Tlalocan*, II, núm. 1: 64.

Dow, James W.

1974 *Santos y supervivencias: funciones de la religión en una comunidad otomí*, INI, SEP. México.

Galinier, Jacques

1990 *La mitad del mundo. Cuerpo y cosmos en los rituales otomíes*. Centro de Estudios Mexicanos y Centroamericanos. INI-UNAM-IIA. México.

García Ramos, Crescencio

2009 *Nombres indígenas*. Academia Veracruzana de las lenguas indígenas. Xalapa, Veracruz.

Hernández Ferrer, Marcela

2001 *Ofrendas a Dipak. Ritos agrícolas entre los teenek de San Luis Potosí*. ENAH. México.

Hernández Viveros, Raúl

2000 *La mitología de Roberto Williams García. El mito en una comunidad indígena, Pisaflores, Veracruz*. Ediciones Cultura de Veracruz. Veracruz.

Ichon, Alain

1969 *La religion des totonaques de la sierra*, trad. José Arenas. CNCA. México.

Koji, Ando

2007 *Dialecto nahua de Pajapan (Gramática náhuatl de Pajapan)*. Xalapa, Universidad Veracruzana.

Kelly, Isabel y Ángel Palerm

1952 *The Tajin totonac. Part.1 History, subsistence, shelter and technology*. Publicación n.13. Institute of Social Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution. Washington.

López Austin, Alfredo

1983 “Nota sobre fisión y fusión de los dioses en el panteón mexica”, in *Anales de Antropología*, 20, núm. 2. IIA-UNAM. México.

2012 *Cosmovisión y pensamiento indígena, en Conceptos y fenómenos fundamentales de nuestro tiempo*. IIS-UNAM. México.

Mar Olivares, Héctor Manuel

2015 “La relación entre Naturaleza y Cultura entre los nahuas de la Huasteca”, in Hernández González, María de los Ángeles, Maribel Domínguez Basunto y Atanasio García Durán (Eds.), *Educación Ambiental desde la Innovación, la Transdisciplinariedad e Interculturalidad. Tópicos Selectos de Educación Ambiental*. ECORFAN. Veracruz.

Masferrer Kan, Elio y Verónica Vázquez Valdés

2013 “Los totonacos a través de la mirada de Isabel Kelly”, in *Dimensión Antropológica*, 57. INAH. México. En línea: <http://www.dimensionantropologica.inah.gob.mx/?p=9962>, consultado el 7-01-2021.

Molina, Fray Alonso de

2008 *Vocabulario en lengua Castellana y Mexicana y Mexicana y Castellana*. Editorial Porrúa. México.

Nicolescu, Basarab

1996 *La transdisciplinaridad. Manifiesto.* Ediciones Du Rocher. México.

Noriega Orozco, Blanca Rebeca

2008 *Tlamatine. Mito-lógica del trueno de Xico para el Golfo de México.* Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz. México.

Oropeza Escobar, Minerva

1998. *Juan Aktzín y el Diluvio. Una aproximación estructural al mito totonaco.* INI. México

Ortiz, Fernando

2005 *El Huracán. Su mitología y sus símbolos.* FCE. México.

Paradowska, Krystina B.

2013 *Diálogo de saberes para el replanteamiento teórico de la restauración ecológica con enfoque biocultural,* tesis de Doctorado, Universidad Veracruzana. Centro de Investigaciones Tropicales. Veracruz.

Propp, Vladimir

1999 *Morfología del cuento.* Colofón S.A. México.

Romero Vivas, Laura Isabel

1998 *Mitos y símbolos del agua en un grupo totonaco de la Sierra norte de Veracruz,* tesis de Licenciatura en Antropología social. División de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades-Departamento de Antropología. México.

Taggart, J.

1983 *Nahuat Myth and Social Structure*. University of Texas Press. Austin.

Villani, Luisa

2018a "Con la Danza de los Voladores en el Tajín vuela el viento "huracánico", in *Anales de Antropología*, 52, núm. 2, IIA-UNAM. México.

2018b *La voz del huracán toma cuerpo en El Tajín*. Tesis de Doctorado en Estudios Mesoamericanos. UNAM. México.

Williams García, Roberto

1954 "Trueno Viejo-Huracán-Chan Mool", in *Tlatoani*, núm. 8 y 9. ENAH. México.

1972 *Mitos tepehuas*. SEP. México.

1980 *Tradición oral en Tajín*. Ediciones Cultura de Veracruz. Instituto de Antropología. Universidad Veracruzana. Xalapa.

