Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte: A Jewish Mexican Martyr
by Seymour B. Liebman

Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte is an epic figure whose biography runs the gamut of adventure and human emotions. He feared no man and, although his amatory escapades would not rival in number those of Don Juan, he knew the straw palettes of Indian women in the mountains of Oaxaca and the fine linens and silk sheets of such women as the wife of a marquis in the city of Oaxaca. He played the role of a lone wolf until he married and then he became a devoted husband, father and pious Jew. He was a leader of one of the Jewish communities in Mexico City for over ten years prior to his incarceration by the Holy Office of the Inquisition in 1642.

A contemporary, Gregorio M. de Guijo, recorded in his diary that even during the march to the stake on 14 April 1649, there were "no words of condemnation of Treviño" (sic).¹ He added that the onlookers of the parade were left with admiration when Tomas refused to kiss the cross. His refusal denied him the privilege of garrote (a speedier, less painful, death) and, consequently, he was burned alive. In the publication of De Guijo's diary, Manuel Romero de Torreros wrote that Treviño exclaimed as the flames licked at his body, "Throw on more wood, this [fire] is costing me enough money."² He turned the moment of tableau and tragedy into an unforgettable vivid legend.

The report to the inquisitors by one of their attorneys, Francisco Corchero Correno, is at variance with the comments of De Guijo. Corchero's report covers Treviño's last hours and the unsuccessful attempts of the Dominican theologians to convince him to relent and convert. Corchero claimed that the populace lining the path of the Procession of the Green Cross was angered by Treviño and threatened him with mayhem because of the imprecations that he was shouting while on the way to the quemadero, the stake. José de J. Nuñez y Dominguez, director of the Mexican National Museum, quoted a long free verse poem written about the Jewish martyr in the nineteenth century, two hundred years after his demise:

Old parchments narrate/ that the excommunicated criminal/ caused terror by his blasphemous aspect./ As he was going to his torture,/ the mule on which he rode and which/ had been selected to carry his body,/ reared several times/ and caused him to fall to
the ground. Through fear that he might not be alive by the time that he reached the stake, it was ordered that a Negro should climb up on the mule in order to hold him with his arms throughout most of the way. The populace, which was looking at such awesome events, was muttering, not knowing the case: "This heretic has the devil so deep inside his body that not even the mule will tolerate him in order not to offend heaven." Thus more than 100 excommunicated men arrived with slow steps at the place of torture (all being firm and having confessed). The Jew's turn came, he was the first to be burned alive on account of his sacrilegious acts. It is said that when he was tied to the rough steel pole and when the red flames of the fire were all around him, he shouted to his executioners with a mad voice: "Throw more wood on, you wretched ones, because I am paying for it." Two centuries have passed and the place where the unfortunate criminal lived is still standing. His name was Tomas Treviño; he was neither old nor young when he died; he had a strong character and was intelligent. His name is still present in the people's memory because his misfortune of Christians and Jews alike cause good hearts to palpitate and cry.

Actually there were 108 Jews, male and female, both dead and alive in the Great Auto-da-Fé of 11 April 1649. (The discrepancy in dates between 11 April and 14 April is caused by the fact that sentences were read on the first day and, if the list of penitents were very long, also read on the second day, with lashes and the stake administered on subsequent days). Fifty-seven had died in the secret cells of the Inquisition, or prior to arrest, and all their bones were disinterred so that they might be burned at the stake and be represented by effigies of each person. Among those still living, thirteen went to the stake but twelve accepted the garrote after kissing the cross. Tomas was the only one to reject the offer. Of the total 108, 34 were females and 6 of them were among the aforementioned 13. The house mentioned in the poem, once a Mexico City landmark, was demolished in 1910.

Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte was born in 1592 in Medina de Rioseco, Spain. His father had been a majordomo of the Church of Santa Maria. His mother, Leonor Martinez de Villagomez, was a Jew, as were all her ancestors. Tomas fled from Spain in 1611 under the name of Geronimo de Reprensa when the Holy Office had begun to ferret out Jews in the area of his family. His mother was ultimately arrested, and died at the stake in Spain in 1623. His brother, Jeronimo Treviño, also imprisoned by the Holy Office in Valladolid, gave testimony in 1619 in the torture-chamber, that eventually led to Tomas' arrest in Oaxaca, southwest of Mexico City.

Treviño arrived in the New World through the port of Vera Cruz and made his way to San Luis Potosí. It was his plan to go overland south to Peru accompanied by a Señor Sefuente. At Oaxaca, however, Sefuente turned back to Mexico City. Treviño remained in Oaxaca as a shepherd. He later began bartering and eventually opened a store. Within a few years, he was considered the wealthiest man in the city. The records of his Inquisition trial reveal that he had a reputation for paying too much attention to women which, in the words of one of the inquisitors, was "a common weakness in these times."
was also known for his charitable contributions to the Church and for attending mass regularly.

The first Inquisition order for his arrest was issued on 15 October 1624, and it also directed that he and another of his brothers, Francisco, be barred from speaking to each other during incarceration. Francisco had already left the area and was thought to be in Peru.

When the inquisitors in Mexico City, the seat of the Holy Office, asked him the pro forma question, "Do you know, presume, or suspect the reason that you have been arrested and brought to this Holy Office?" he began a series of possible reasons. Some of them confirmed his weakness for women. He first replied that about two years previously he had slept with the daughter of an Indian chief in the mountains and months later heard that she had given birth to twins, crediting him with their paternity. He also admitted that he had been intimate with Doña Luisa de Bilona, the wife of Marquis Alonso de Canaga.

At that time, the marquesa was six months pregnant and all efforts to have her abort had failed. He then recalled that when he was a lad in Spain, he had killed a page to Don Rodrigo Enriquez, uncle of the Admiral of Castile, for calling him a Jew. He finally admitted that his arrest may have been caused by the fact that some of his relatives went to the stake in Spain in 1623.

He had no hesitancy in stating that his mother had taught him about Judaism and about the Law of Moses which he followed until he began his residency in Oaxaca. Yet, he said, he desired to continue to live as a good Catholic, which he had been in recent times. During the first trial (1624-25), he recited some of the Jewish prayers that he had been taught. One of those that he recited daily was "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory" (Isaiah 6:31). He recited the foregoing and several others in Hebrew. He knew the Shema (Hear, O Israel) and several names of God which appear in the Bible and prophetic writings. His mother had also taught him a prayer in Spanish to be said when washing before eating: "Blessed be the Almighty God who in His lessons has taught me the washing of the hands, mouth, and eyes in order to bless, serve, praise and honor Thee, O God, according to the Law of Moses."

He also recited in Hebrew the last verse of Psalm 90: "And let the graciousness of the Lord our God be upon us; establish Thou also upon us the work of our hands; yea the work of our hands establish Thou it." (The transliteration of the Hebrew into Spanish by the amanuensis of the Holy Office does not facilitate the identification of some of the prayers, the sources of which Treviño did not seem to know).

While the Jews ridiculed Church dogma and derided Christian beliefs, their antagonism was not directed to Christians as people. There is no evidence of maledictions against Christians or prayers invoking God's curse or retribution toward Christians. Their prayers were filled with humility, penitence, and
requests for absolution and earthly salvation. The longest prayer which Treviño recited in Spanish was:

To You, great ineffable God./ To Your essence beyond the knowledge of man./ To You, everlasting glory./ To You, unchangeable Lord./ Forgiveness and mercy./ If You consider that I have offended You/ by my bearing and insolent acts,/ You will have no forgiveness for me;/ but do not consider me/ and my iniquities and vices./ Great God; consider only Yourself,/ and do not judge me who has offended You./ I have sinned more than anyone else./ He, the Devil knew how to lure me into the world./ I tasted so much of his pleasure/ that I thought of him much more than I thought of You./ Seeing now Your sovereign and clear light./ I find that he was my enemy./ And I see that my guilt requires Your punishment./ But if You trust that I will remember/ what my obligations are towards You/ I will come out in triumphant and victorious/ over the world, flesh and sin.®

While in the Inquisition cells (called "secret" by the Holy Office) in 1624, Treviño requested a companion. Another prisoner, Antonio Baez, about fifty years of age, was placed in his cell. Antonio was also known as Antonio Vaez Casteloloblanco, Captain Tirado, and Captain Castelolblanco. He had also been apprehended for suspicion of being a practitioner of Jewish rites. The Holy Office often placed people under the same accusation in the same cell so that Inquisition agents could eavesdrop and possibly pick up additional proof against the prisoners who might be exchanging confidences. Antonio was learned in Judaism. He taught Tomas many things about their faith, circumcised him, and gave him a Hebrew name, Isaac. Antonio Vaez Castelolblanco is referred to as a munidor, beadle or sexton, but in the trial proceedings of Antonio himself, the inquisitors termed him a rabbi and dogmatizer. A dogmatizer was one who sought to bring back to Judaism those who had converted to Catholicism.

No physical examination for the mark of circumcision was made of Treviño during his first trial. His sentence in 1625 was mild. The benevolence of the inquisitors owed, undoubtedly, to his uninhibited confession of past Jewish practices. The inquisitors noted in their judgment that he showed signs of contrition and repentance. He was sentenced to be confined to a cell for one year and to wear a sanbenito of yellow cloth with a diagonal cross of St. Andrew on the front and back. His property was to be confiscated. He was also to attend mass and sermons on Sundays and to recite with great devotion five times on Saturdays the Pater Noster, Ave Maria, Credo, and Salve Regina, and to confess and receive the Holy Sacraments on all three-day festivals. He abjured de vehementi on 15 June 1625, in the Church of Santo Domingo, which term meant that a second offense of practicing Jewish rites automatically imposed a death sentence at the stake for being a relapso.

Within a month after being sentenced, he wrote to the inquisitors complaining of illness since "the cell in which I am, being so damp and full of water, is making me grow deaf and my strength is failing, which prevents me
from doing anything to earn my food." His request to be transferred to a hospital for from four to six months was granted on 14 July 1625. He was taken to the Hospital De Los Desamparados (the Hospital of the Friendless) with leave to go out to earn his living during the day but to return at night to sleep. This permission was to expire within four months. On 22 September 1625, he requested the return of some of his clothes that had been sequestered, so that he could "realize a little money for my wants." The inquisitors acceded to his request.

On 6 November 1625, he asked for and received four months extension of his stay in the hospital because he was not yet cured. He curried the favor of the Tribunal on 13 November 1625, by reporting that he had forgotten to tell them that, in Spain, the other Jewish members of his family used to read *Flos Santorum* by Villegas because it contained the lives of the Patriarchs and the Prophets and the marvels and miracles "which God had worked through the saints of the Old Testament."

On 16 July 1626, his petition to remove the sanbenito that he had been wearing over his clothes when in public was granted and he was freed. The Inquisition dossier shows an accumulation of denunciations against him commencing in 1629. He was seen riding a horse, bearing arms, and wearing silk and fine cloth, all of which were prohibited to him as one reconciled.

In 1633, he was requested by letter to report to the inquisitors because they had received a report from their attorney that he had ridden to the attorney's office on a horse and was attired in all the prohibited clothing. Tomas wrote a letter to the inquisitors in which he blithely stated that he had received a pardon or letter of rehabilitation dated 6 May 1631, from Cardinal Antonio Zapata, the inquisitor general for all Spain. He had had this letter for over a year and explained that he had "overlooked" delivering it to the Holy Office. He added that "as a fine for my failure to present the rehabilitation until today and having belted on my sword, I venture to offer 100 pesos for the expenses of this Holy Tribunal." The 100 pesos were accepted and the letter filed.

More correspondence accumulated in his file during the years 1633 to 1642. Most of them were from people who declared that they had not heard him say, "Gloria Patria," after the name of the Trinity had been uttered. Such failure was imprudent since he was known in Mexico, Guadalajara, and Zacatecas as a *reconciliado*. In 1638, he saw a Spanish captain abusing a man known by Tomas to be a Jew. He stepped between the two and ordered the captain not only to cease the abuse but also to apologize. Upon the captain's refusal, Tomas picked him up by the scruff of the neck (or the collar of his uniform) and held him aloft until he apologized.

Cyrus Adler wrote that Treviño was "one of the best known of the South American [sic] martyrs of the Inquisition." One of the documents in Adler's article was a denunciation by Diego Pantoja about the failure of Tomas to tip
his hat when passing a cross or church, or neglecting to say "Amen" after "Praised be the most holy sacrament." Pantoja also reported that Treviño had a bar of silver. The second document listed by Adler was a confirmation of Pantoja's statement. The third was an affidavit by Joseph de Albris dated 16 July 1641, in which a Santiago Porras related that Tomas had hidden in the ground "three or five thousand dollars" (sic) in a place called Las Peñelas. Treviño contended to his friend while in the Inquisition cells during his second trial (1643–49) that the inquisitors were primarily interested in where he had secreted fourteen ingots of silver.

Tomas' conduct as a husband and father are as noteworthy as his role as a Jew. Tomas remained in Mexico City after his release in 1626 rather than returning to Oaxaca. We do not know whether the marquesa finally aborted or bore his child but illegitimate births were not uncommon among Spanish Catholics and Jews. Tomas' brother, Francisco, sired an illegitimate child in Cartagena who was given the name Antonio Treviño. Other Jews appeared to have left such "by-blows" on the paths of their peregrinations, but most of their amatory dilatoriness preceded the entry of the Jewish male into matrimony.

Treviño married Maria Gomez in 1629. He must have been a knowledgeable Jew by that time because his mother-in-law, Leonor Nunez, would not have otherwise sanctioned the marriage. Leonor Nunez had trained and reared her daughters in all the minutiae of Jewish wifehood. In the minutes of the trials of her two daughters, Isabel Nunez and Maria Gomez,* we read about Jewish marital customs which have been and still are practiced by some Orthodox Jews.

On the marital night of Maria and Tomas, "they knew each other," but thereafter he waited seven days before again having sexual relations with her "in order not to make her impure." This custom or law is alleged to stem from the desire to permit a virginal wife to recover from the first act of intercourse, to rid herself of any blood, and to permit the healing of any laceration.

Another marital custom is revealed in the proceedings of Tomas' brother-in-law, Luis Perez Roldan. Luis required his wife Isabel to have sexual relations with him on Friday nights according to an old Jewish injunction which directed cohabitation on that night unless the wife is "unclean," having her menstrual period.** This custom was followed even on the occasion when Isabel had not slept the previous night because she had maintained a vigil with the corpse of her mother-in-law. (Jewish law prohibits the cadaver being left alone until burial. Such a vigil is mandatory because of the possibility that actual death might not have occurred).

The wedding meal preceding the marital night of Maria and Tomas was prepared in accordance with strict Jewish laws. The bride's mother, Leonor Nunez, personally slaughtered the fowl which were to be served as the main course. She faced East—toward Jerusalem—and recited a prayer, "Blessed be He who created thee for my sustenance." Before decapitating the fowl, she inspected the slaughtering knife for nicks, tested it on her fingernails, and then
plunged it into the ground three times. The fowl were drained of blood by being hung by the legs and having the blood flow into a pan of water which was then emptied into the earth. All of this was in accordance with Deuteronomy 12:23-24.

The men ate with their heads covered. The first course was a honey cake. The explanation for this custom given to the inquisitors was that honey cakes "were eaten in memory of the honeycomb which the angel gave to Asenath, the oldest daughter of Potiphar, when she married Joseph." This custom reminds Jews of Asenath who bore the biblical Joseph two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Fathers bless their sons on Friday evenings before the Sabbath meal by placing their hands on each son's head and saying, "May you be as Ephraim and Manasseh." The honey cake is eaten at weddings in anticipation of the birth of sons with the qualities of Joseph's sons. After the meal, blessings were recited (they were not read into the record) and cold water was thrown on each hand prior to praying. The hands were dried "with a towel in a peculiar way." Tomas and Maria then went to church where they were wed according to Catholic rites.

Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte prospered greatly. He moved his family to Guadalajara after the great flood in Mexico City in 1629. He returned to Mexico almost two years later. He was a traveling merchant, and also a manufacturer of cochineal dye for export. He went to Vera Cruz or Acapulco when the flotillas were scheduled to arrive from Spain or the Far East. He bought wares from both places. He once bought very expensive "housecoats." They were of the finest material and cost 100 pesos each (about $500 in modern coin). He had seven of them in his bedroom and, following a visit of Blanca de Rivera and her grown daughters, one of them was missing. This loss caused a rift between the two families because Tomas did not hesitate to accuse them of the theft. One of the daughters, Margarita de Rivera, had had a liaison with Tomas prior to his marriage to Maria, and she testified against him during his second trial. She knew that he was a Jew because of the circumcision of which she had personal knowledge. Vengeful, she had been rebuffed by both Tomas and Antonio Vaez Casteloblanco.

Maria called her husband a saint and had once objected to moving from a certain house because it was "an abode of felicity." Six children were born of the union; one child, Antonio, died when he was about four years old. Rafael, the oldest, born about 1631, was circumcised by his father when he was ten years of age. Tomas used a special knife and remained in his son's room for the week that it took him to convalesce. At the outset of Rafael's Jewish training, the boy was required to fast on Thursdays from dawn to sunset. He was once caught eating a piece of bread and butter on a Thursday. His father upbraided him and threatened to bury him alive if he repeated the violation of fasting. Rafael's maternal grandmother, mother, and aunt Isabel impressed upon him the importance and truth of all that his father taught him. His fasts were broken by a meal of boiled eggs and fish prepared with oil and vinegar.
Maria was arrested in 1635 for practicing Jewish rites and was reconciled a few months later. She and Tomas schemed that he should refuse to take her back until the Holy Office ordered him to do so because he was a reconcihado himself. Since Tomas had been reconciled in 1626, they wanted to avoid any suspicion that he was still a practicing Jew. "He kept up the farce of reluctance before complying" with the inquisitors' order to take her back. They were an ideal married couple. She reared their children to adore their father and to abide by their faith. Her mother lived with them and was accorded the greatest respect by her son-in-law. When they were all dining in their house on Calle San Francisco (now Avenida Madero) in Mexico City in 1639, Leonor Nunez had a premonition of impending danger. She insisted that they abandon their afternoon meal and leave the house. They complied and a half-hour later, the roof caved in. The following day, they all fasted in thanksgiving. It was the Sephardic custom of those times to fast as a substitute for reciting the prayer known as "gomel."

When Tomas had his store in Guadalajara, he placed a cross under the threshold. Those who stepped on it when entering, received a discount if they were Jewish.

Tomas prayed four times every day: about an hour of prayer upon arising; a half-hour in the afternoon, another half-hour shortly after Angelus; and for about an hour at midnight. In order not to violate the Sabbath by extinguishing the candles lit for religious reasons and in order not to arouse the suspicions of the servants, he did not extinguish the candles on week nights in the upstairs room that he used for midnight prayers.

Treviño believed, as did Jacob ben Asher in Arb'a turim, that it is especially meritorious to arise during the night and pray to God to redeem the people of Israel and to restore Jerusalem and the Holy Sanctuary. Nahum N. Glatzer refers to this custom and quotes the verses from Job (13; 15) which would be most meaningful to the Jews in New Spain.

Sometimes Tomas prayed on his feet and at other times on his knees. His head was always covered, usually by a skullcap. From the numerous references to a cloth which covered him, it is presumed that it is a prayer shawl. There is a single reference that indicates that he used phylacteries. A dispute once arose between him and Antonio Vaez Casteloblanco concerning the date of the Great Day (Quipur, Yom Kippur). Tomas claimed that the Jewish calendar sometimes had twelve and sometimes thirteen months in the year. (There are seven leap years of thirteen months in each cycle of nineteen years). Since the exact date of Quipur was in doubt, Treviño fasted for two days. He also tried to educate other Jews and performed circumcision on many of them.

Although only olive oil was used for cooking in his home, and his family refrained from eating pork, pieces of pork were put into the stew when non-Jewish guests were present. As a man of means, his family would have owned
more than one pot. From the *proceso* of Juana Tinoco, we learn that some Jews kept one pot especially for Christian guests. In this pot, were placed pieces of pork. Other pots, into which no prohibited meat was placed, were reserved for the family and Jewish guests.

His faith was shared by Maria. While she was incarcerated in 1645, and knew what her fate as a *relapso*, a second offender, would be, she said, “This Tribunal may condemn our bodies, it cannot condemn our souls.” Her happiness in her marriage appears in her reply to the inquisitors when they asked if she were married. Instead of answering simply, “Si,” her answer was “Feliz casada,” happily married.

The women of Treviño’s family, his wife, mother-in-law, and sister-in-law went to confession in the church. Before going, they washed completely, donned their clean and best linen, and then returned home to “kneel with hands turned down and their bodies bent so low as to almost touch the ground and ask the Almighty for pardon,” for resorting to the Catholic practice.

Leonor Martinez, daughter of Tomas and Maria, was the apple of the family’s eye. She bore the name of Tomas’ martyred mother. She and her brothers performed Jewish rites “in a manner which compared favorably with the performance of grown people and was a joy to behold,” as reported by Francisco Lopez, el Chato (the snub-nosed), in his testimony at Treviño’s second trial. Genaro García commented that Leonor, at fourteen years of age, was taken for a little saint and that her sentence by the inquisitors, exiling her to Spain where she was to wear a sanbenito, was “a cruelty to a child accustomed to the graceful, affectionate kindness of her mother and grandmother and the copious richness of emotion of her father.” Since the prisoners who were to be sent to Spain to serve their sentences did not leave until 1650, Leonor, who had been sentenced in the auto-of 30 March 1648, was compelled to watch her parents go to the stake in the Great Auto-de-Fé of April 1649.

Leonor had been taught her prayers when she was eight or nine years old. She practiced her religious duties devoutly. She sang religious duets with her grandmother. She recited a blessing when she saw the first star at dusk or saw a falling star. She fasted regularly. She received new shoes for all holy days and she did not eat dairy products with meat. She accompanied her grandmother who used to shout for the benefit of their Christian neighbors, “Get ready, we must go to mass.” They would, however, only walk past the church. The child never heard mass. Prior to leaving Mexico, she was placed in the home of an official of the Holy Office for the purpose of being taught the rites and dogma of Catholicism.

Licenciado Corchero, the attorney for the Holy Office, resorted to a series of pejorative names and phrases attributed to Tomas during the course of his second trial: i.e., perverse Jew; a Jew of the highest rank; a false priest and rab-
bi; a cursed prisoner; a backsliding Jew; "a dog who returns to his vomit in order to lick up that which apostasy has ejected from his stomach." (This last statement was originally used in the twelfth century by a bishop in England when he learned that one whom he had converted from Judaism to Catholicism had again embraced Judaism).

For several years, Treviño denied all the charges against him at his second trial. He even denied that he had circumcised his son, although he should have known (or did know) that his son had testified about this. His denial of having performed the act may have been predicated on the fact that the scars that his son (and he) bore were longitudinal. Several Jews were similarly circumcised in an attempt to vary the traditional circular cutting of the prepuce and thereby deceive the inquisitors if they were apprehended.

Another slip made by Tomas in his testimony was his denial of knowledge of the custom of farda, then proceeding to describe the history of the custom. (Contribution of funds for coreligionists in the Holy Land was called farda by both Jews and Muslims, the latter doing the same for their coreligionists in Mecca). Tomas contended that this custom was neither a matter of faith nor of contributing to oppressed Jews in the Holy Land; it began, he claimed, during the reign of King Philip III to raise funds for the release of Portuguese of Jewish descent who were imprisoned in Spain, and that the funds were paid to the Duke of Lerma.

He explained why Blanca de Rivera and her daughters, particularly Margarita, were permitted to enter his home even though he regarded Margarita as a mortal enemy. He stated that his wife permitted their visit because "they might think that we despised them for being poor and it might be that they came on account of being hungry." Margarita was the proverbial woman scorned. Her animosity to Treviño was brought fully to fame by the marriage of Baltazar Diaz Santillan to Maria's niece, Ines. Margarita, having lost Tomas, had set her cap for Baltazar. The double loss probably caused her to focus blame on Tomas.

He invented hundreds of excuses to maintain all dietary laws while imprisoned. He prayed and his religious fasts ran into many days. This latter act caused the inquisitors to send doctors to examine him. At the time that he went to the stake, he had fasted for seventy-two hours.

As a proud Spaniard, Tomas ridiculed those who testified against him, saying that they were Portuguese to whom "it comes natural to their black souls to cry 'Death to the Spaniard' and they are a crowd of lunatics." His words, "I have been a source of profit to the Holy Inquisition" preceded a detailed list of its confiscations of his parents' property in Medina de Rioseco (part of which would have been his as an heir of his parents); his own property in Oaxaca including 500 pesos stored in it; and the dowry which he had received from his wife's family and which he had to surrender when she was arrested in 1635.

Tomas had planned to leave Mexico and go to the Low Countries for a
few years prior to 1642. He knew that he could practice Judaism openly and freely there and that is what he desired. He wanted, however, to first retrieve 3,000 pesos from his wife's uncle who had either stolen or defrauded this large sum from him. His procrastination in leaving cost him his life and those of his wife, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, Francisco Lopez Blandon, and also the loss of his children to Judaism.

He was convinced that his persecution by the Holy Office could have been halted if he had given information concerning the location of fourteen ingots of silver which he had secreted some time prior to his arrest. He did not believe that he would ever go to the stake since he had friends in Spain working for his release. His written answers to the thirty-two charges in the fiscal's accusation against him reveal a high degree of legal talent. His acute mind and his piercing, penetrating logic used words as rapiers that tore away the tissue of lies, weaknesses, inconsistencies, and ignorance in the case against him. Yet, all this availed him naught. The Holy Office was adamant in its purpose to "get him."

Only when he was informed of his sentence did he avow his true beliefs. Then, and for the ensuing twenty-four hours, he reiterated that he wanted to die as a Jew. Three theologians were assigned to him but they failed to have him swerve from his devotion to remain a Jew. His reply, stated over and over again, was that there was but one God and He was the God of all people. He remained steadfast in his beliefs.

Postscript

About 1660, Daniel Levi (Miguel) de Barrios wrote a poem in Spanish that was intended to be an elegy for Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte. Around that time, de Barrios resided either in Tobago or Cayenne. The poem confuses Treviño with Francisco Maldonado de Silva, the great Peruvian Jewish martyr. The first line of the poem reads," Fourteen years of rigorous jail," which was the time served by Maldonado before he was burned in the 1639 auto- in Lima. The main theme, however, is the story of Tomas.

It is important to know that within eleven years of the Great Auto-de-Fé in Mexico, the story of Treviño had spread, becoming so powerful and appealing a legend that his fame and devotion to his faith inspired even non-Jewish Mexicans to write of him as a folk hero.

On 4 May 1649, a petition was presented to the inquisitors by Leonor Martinez, Micaela Martinez and Gavriel de la Cruz, "legitimate children of Tomas Treviño de Sobremonte and María Gomez," who "humbly state that due to our great poverty we have no clothes to cover our nakedness and allow us to attend mass . . . and we beg . . . that the clothing of our said parents be given to us, which would be an act of Christian charity." On 18 June 1649, the three inquisitors ordered the return of only "worthless clothing for distribution among the relations of the condemned."
NOTES


5. The complete Inquisition account is in el Ramo de la Inquisición del Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN) vols. 365 nos. 11, 33; 373, no. 9; 378, no. 2; 381, no. 5; 401, no. 3; 405, no. 9; 415, no. 5; 426, no. 7; 435, no. 1; 684, fol. 476; Riva Palacio Coll. 20, no. 5; *Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid*, Inq. docket 1738, file 1.


7. Proceso of Antonio Vaez Castelblanco, AGN 414; see also the *Abecedario de los Relajados, Reconciliados y Penitenciados*, now at the Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California; and Liebman, *Great Auto*, p. 127. The book is a translation of the *Relación* of the auto- and was written by Mathias de Bocanegra, S.J., the official historian of the auto-de-fe. This 200-hundred page account was published in Mexico City in 1649.


10. Proceso of Maria Gomez, AGN 381, nos. 5, 9; 426, no. 10; see also José Toribio Medina, *La Historia del Tribunal del Santo Oficio de la Inquisición en México*, amplified by Julio Jiménez Rueda (Mexico, 1952) pp. 119, 185.

11. Proceso Luis Perez Roldan, AGN 401 no. 3; 414, fol. 164; 415, fol. 118; 487, no. 14; 572, no. 10.


15. Proceso of Francisco Lopez (el Chato), also known as Francisco Lopez Diaz, AGN 393, no. 10; 404, nos. 1, 3; 405, fol. 587; 413, fols. 101–104; 414, nos. 6, 6A, 8; 453, fol. 65.


17. Proceso de Leonor Martinez (Riva Palacio Coll.) AGN 20, no. 6.