

CHRISTIE'S

WILLIAM HOARE OF BATH, R.A. (NEAR EYE, SUFFOLK C. 1707-1792 BATH)

PORTRAIT OF AYUBA SULEIMAN DIALLO, CALLED JOB BEN SOLOMON (1701-1773), HALF-LENGTH, IN AFRICAN DRESS, WITH THE QU'RAN AROUND HIS NECK, IN A FEIGNED OVAL

Lot 20 / Sale 7782

Price Realized

£541,250

(\$889,815)

Price includes buyer's premium

Estimate

£50,000 - £80,000

(\$82,200 - \$131,520)

Sale Information

Sale 7782

OLD MASTER & 19TH CENTURY PAINTINGS, DRAWINGS & WATERCOLOURS

8 December 2009

London, King Street

Lot Description

William Hoare of Bath, R.A. (near Eye, Suffolk c. 1707-1792 Bath)

Portrait of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, called Job ben Solomon (1701-1773), half-length, in African dress, with the Qu'ran around his neck, in a feigned oval

with identifying inscription 'PORTRAIT OF JOB:BEN:SOLOMON' (on the reverse of the lining canvas) and with inscription and date 'PAINTED BY WILLIAM HOARE OF BATH IN 1733' (on the reverse of the stretcher)

oil on canvas

30 x 25¼ in. (76.2 x 64.2 cm.)



Lot Condition Report

THIS REPORT HAS BEEN PREPARED BY AN OUTSIDE RESTORER.

Support:

The canvas has a rather brittle paste lining though retains a good tension and remains structurally stable.

Varnish:

There is a thick, even layer of surface dirt and discoloured varnish with very little evidence of restoration visible.

Paint layer:

The paint layer remains remarkably well preserved with drawing, modeling and detail in a very good condition.

Ultra-violet fluorescence examination:

Confirms the density of the dirt and aged varnish and reveals only a little isolated in-painting of drying craquelure in the sitter's white robes.

Frame:

In a wooden frame with gilded detail, in a fair condition.

Special Notice

No VAT will be charged on the hammer price, but VAT at 15% will be added to the buyer's premium which is invoiced on a VAT inclusive basis.

Provenance

Thomas Edward McGill, 1840, and by descent to
G.T. Hertslet, The King's Equerry, the great-great-grandfather of the present owner.

Literature

T. Bluett, *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job, the Son of Solomon the High Priest of Boonda in Africa; Who was a Slave about two Years in Maryland; and afterwards being brought to England, was set free, and sent to his native Land in the Year 1734*, London, 1734, pp. 50-1.
D. Grant, *The Fortunate Slave: An illustration of African Slavery in the Early Eighteenth Century*, London, New York and Toronto, 1968, pp. 107 and 145.
J. Madin, 'The Lost African: Slavery and Portraiture in the Age of Enlightenment', in *Apollo*, August 2006, pp. 34 and 37.

Engraved

Engraving, published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XX, 1750, p. 252.

Lot Notes

'JOB's Aversion to Pictures of all Sorts, was exceeding great; insomuch, that it was with great Difficulty that he could be brought to sit for his own. We assured him that we never worshipped any Picture, and that we wanted his for no other End but to keep us in mind of him. He at last consented to have it drawn; which was done by Mr Hoare. When the Face was finished, Mr Hoare ask'd what Dress would be most proper to draw him in; and, upon JOB's desiring to be drawn in his own Country Dress, told him he could not draw it, unless he had seen it, or had it described to him by one who had: Upon which JOB answered, if you can not draw a Dress you never saw, why do some of you Painters presume to draw God, whom no one ever saw?'
(T. Bluett, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51)

This fascinating *ad vivum* portrait is of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, or Job ben Solomon as he became known in Europe, an African of high social and religious birth from the Kingdom of Futa, in present-day Senegal, West Africa, who became a victim of the ever-growing slave trade and was put to work on a tobacco plant in Maryland. His high-born status later enabled him to escape the harsh conditions of captivity and to travel to London, where he became a source of fascination amongst London society. Job was encouraged to sit for this portrait, which is almost certainly the earliest portrait of an African presented as a gentleman in 18th century Britain, within the formal traditions of European portraiture. Furthermore, far from remaining a mysterious, exotic figure, Job's memoirs were published as one of the earliest slave narratives in Thomas Bluett's *Some Memoirs of the Life of Job* (*op. cit.*) in English and French, in 1734, for which this portrait was used as the frontispiece.

This portrait provides a striking contrast to the fashionable appearance of Africans as anonymous, status enhancing exotica, Sir Joshua Reynolds' *Portrait of Paul Henry Querry and a Black Servant* (c. 1748, Saltram, The National Trust) being an example. Later portraits of Africans as individual gentlemen in 18th century Britain include *Francis Williams*, by an unknown artist (c. 1745, Victoria & Albert Museum, London), *William Anseh Sessarakoo* by Gabriel Mathias (c. 1749, known through a mezzotint by John Faber) and *Ignatius Sancho*, by Allan Ramsay (c. 1758, Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter) and by Thomas Gainsborough (c. 1768, National Gallery of Canada). This portrait is the only instance in which the sitter is shown in national, as opposed to British dress. This led to an interesting juxtaposition when Hoare's *Portrait of Job* in a turban and loose gown, with a Qu'ran strung from his neck, was paired with Mathias' *Portrait of William Anseh Sessarakoo*, in an elaborately brocaded jacket and styled hair, as an engraved bookplate in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1750.

Thomas Bluett addressed his biography of Job 'To The Right Honble. [*sic*] His Grace the Duke of Montague', continuing, 'May it please your Grace, Job (being gratefully sensible of the repeated Favours he had received from Your Grace) requested me to write an Account of him, and to lay the fame before You, as an Acknowledgment of your Grace's great Humanity and Goodness to an unfortunate Stranger' (*op. cit.*, pp. iii-iv). John, 2nd Duke of Montagu (1690-1749) evidently held liberal views regarding the treatment of Africans, he financed the education of Ignatius Sancho and Francis Williams, sending the latter to the University of Cambridge.

Job was born in the town of Bondu to a prominent Fulbe family of Muslim religious clerics. His grandfather had founded the town of Bondu at the end of the 17th century and reigned as sole Lord Proprietor, Governor, and High Priest, or *Alpha*. Destined for the Priesthood, Job studied the Qu'ran with Sambo, heir to the Kingdom of Futa. At fifteen, Job married the daughter of the *Alpha* of Tombut, and had three sons, Abdolah, Hibrahim and Sambo. Two years before his captivity he took a second wife,

daughter of the *Alpha* of Tomga, by whom he had a daughter, Fatima.

In February 1730, Job was sent by his father on a trade mission from Bondu to the Gambia River to sell two slaves and buy supplies. Having failed to barter with a Captain Pike, he exchanged the slaves for cattle with another African trader. On his return home, however, Job was captured by a group of Mandingoes and sold back to the same Captain Pike. Job's attempts to send word to his father failed and he was put aboard *Arabella*, owned by William and Henry Hunt, merchants of London, and delivered to Mr Vachell Denton, Annapolis, Maryland, one of the British colonies on the Northern American mainland.

Purchased by Mr Tolsey of Kent Island, Maryland, Job was put to work on a tobacco plantation. Unaccustomed and ill-adept to the hard labour regime, Job was soon moved to tending cattle. In June 1731, he chose the only form of resistance available to him and ran away. He was captured and imprisoned at the Kent County Courthouse, where he came to the attention of the English lawyer Thomas Bluett who: 'could not imagine of what Country he was, or how he got thither; for by his affable Carriage, and the easy Composure of his Countenance, we could perceive he was no common Slave' (*op. cit.*, p. 22). With the aid of a translator Bluett was able to uncover Job's background and high social status. Encouraged by the circumstances, Mr Tolsey allowed Job to write to his father in Africa. The letter was dispatched to the Gambia via London, where it reached the office of James Oglethorpe, philanthropist and Director of the Royal African Company. After having the letter authenticated by John Gagnier, the Laudian Chair of Arabic at Oxford, Oglethorpe arranged for Job to be redeemed from slavery and brought to London. Mr Tolsey was more than happy to oblige 'finding him in no ways fit for his Business' (*op. cit.*, p. 24).

In March 1733, Job and Bluett set sail in the *William*, under the command of Captain George Uriel, arriving in London in April. Job aroused considerable fascination amongst the intellectual elite. Sir Hans Sloane, 1st Baronet (1660-1753), whose library and cabinet of curiosities became the foundation of the British Museum, commissioned him to translate several of the Arabic manuscripts and inscriptions in his collection. Sloane recommended Job to the Duke of Montagu, who, being so impressed by his genius and capacity, introduced him to the Court, where he was received by the Royal Family 'cloathed in a rich silk Dress, made up after his own Country Fashion' (*op. cit.*, p. 31). Job entered the services of the Royal African Company and returned to Gambia in July 1734 with the intention that, in return for his redemption and good treatment, he should further English interests in the region.

The dating of this picture to 1733-34, during Job's sojourn in England (as so clearly recounted by Bluett), and, more specifically, to 1733 (the date given on the back of the picture), runs contrary to the belief that Hoare was in Italy from when he left London with Giuseppe Grisoni in 1728, until c.1737. This notion stems from George Vertue's record in one of his celebrated note-books (V,f.82), given as in 1729 but reasonably interpreted to mean 1739, that 'Mr Hoarde Crayon painter returnd from abroad'. Yet previously, written no later than October 1738, Vertue stated that '... Wm. Hoard, who upon his return from his travells having made the tour of Italy. provd to be a good ingenious painter fell into the manner of painting in Craions - with success went to Bath &c'. Documentation of Hoare's time in Italy is scant, though he is known to have been living in Via Gregoriana in Rome from 1729 until 1732, after which there is no record of him. The likelihood must therefore be that he returned to England in 1732/33, possibly making a later trip to the continent from which he returned c.1737-39.

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