

# In Search of the Viennese African, Angelo Soliman (ca. 1721-96): From Educator of a Hereditary Prince to Stuffed Exhibit

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## Implications of African Diaspora Research

It is not possible to deal with Angelo Soliman (ca. 1721–96) as a black man in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Vienna (the then capital of the Holy Roman Empire) without talking about certain present-day intellectual and social trends in Germany and Austria. Owing to the fact of Nazi-induced genocide and to manifest and latent racism, defining Africans as permanent and classical victims is understood as the right way to prove one's own political correctness if one is white. This attitude can be found among all those who are new to the topic; the present author acted like this too in 1993 when re-editing Wilhelm A. Bauer's biography of Soliman, first published in 1922.<sup>1</sup>

But it is precisely the role of the African as a passive victim that people of African descent, who were born in Germany or Austria or who live in these countries as a second home, want to have revised. They are tired of being constantly looked on as humiliated blacks in order to help create the perfect moral good white. Politically conscious people of African descent very clearly claim a new approach to African diaspora studies that is meant to point out the active role of Africans and their descendants in our social history,<sup>2</sup> whatever tragic circumstances they had to go through in their lives. There is nothing that children of black and white parents find so unbearable to hear as "When are you going back (to Africa)?" or "Nobody can be black, brown etc. and German/Austrian at the same time", especially when they were born in Germany or Austria.<sup>3</sup> Thus, documentation of black people's active participation in European history is instrumental to constituting their history as a means of discovering their own identity. Only with this kind of awareness of the past will they be able to strengthen their presence and create a future for themselves in Europe where they have to live their lives, and want to live them, whatever reasons they may have for being there.

### Implications of Angelo Soliman Studies

One of the many black people who played a part in the history of the German-speaking peoples was Angelo Soliman,<sup>4</sup> probably the most famous after Anton Wilhelm Amo.<sup>5</sup> In the case of Soliman we have to face a special dilemma for he was not only a former slave,<sup>6</sup> but the educator of a hereditary prince; furthermore, after his death his body was stuffed, dressed in a fancy costume, and put on display in a museum.<sup>7</sup> Between these two extreme positions, Soliman's biography has to be dealt with. Nevertheless, even the intellectual public is mostly interested in the fact that he was stuffed,<sup>8</sup> as evidenced in plays by Fritz von Herzmanovsky-Orlando (1936), Conny Hannes Mayer (1983) and Ludwig Fels (1991). The last two playwrights in particular represent Soliman as a mere victim of racism and sexism who was even abused by male and female paedophiles, and was not only stuffed but also murdered. Soliman's military, social and intellectual role is almost entirely ignored, and as an individual, he is shown as completely passive, only playing his drum from time to time.

Playwrights like Meyer and Fels try to show the members of the public what they so often do to their African compatriots in modern everyday life. But these playwrights are simply reproducing an archetype of the classical African victim whose role in European history was passive and without any significance. Unfortunately, Fels's view of Soliman as a humiliated inactive target of shocking sexual insults is coming to be generally accepted in German schools. Characteristically, playwrights do not use printed literature as sources, but instead present outdated biographical data found in fast-food-like Internet files.<sup>9</sup> To introduce Soliman for the first time to the readers of *Tinabantu*, let us refer to more serious research work.

### Angelo Soliman's Biography<sup>10</sup>

Soliman was born in about 1721, probably as a member of the Kanuri people in present-day North-Eastern Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> His clan (referred to as "Magni Famori") seems to have been the Mâgōmi Kanuri/Kanōri, from whom the Kanuri kings were elected.<sup>12</sup> In about 1728 Soliman and some of his compatriots were captured by African slave hunters and brought to North Africa on a Spanish ship. In about 1730 he was bought and freed, and taken to Messina in Sicily to the household of a marquise who treated him like her own child. He probably had private tutors, and was taught how to read and write Italian. For a long time he refused to be baptized as a Catholic, but when he fell seriously ill he agreed and was allowed to choose the name Angelo, after Angelina, the name of an African servant in the same house whom he loved very much. He was given the surname Soliman at the same time.

At some time between 1732 and 1734 Soliman was given as a gift to Prince Johann Georg Christian von Lobkowitz, the Austrian governor of Sicily, who for a long time had wanted to have him as a member of his court.<sup>13</sup> Yet Soliman, it should be emphasized, was not a slave as some authors maintain.<sup>14</sup> Slavery did exist at the time, e.g. in Portugal, in the Muslim world, and in the Americas and West Indies, but there was no slavery in the Holy Roman Empire.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless serfdom (of the white population) was practised in rural regions and serfs could be sold together with the land or even as individuals.<sup>16</sup> Soliman's being made a gift to Lobkowitz has to be understood as a transfer from one household to another, though Soliman and the marquise had to undergo a grievous separation.<sup>17</sup> In former

times life was much harder for all children (white and black) than it is nowadays. So, for example, in 1716 it was quite acceptable to send 100 young baker boys right into Turkey to bake bread there for the Austrian troops during the Turkish war.<sup>18</sup>

The fact that Soliman was a former slave and forever separated from his family must be carefully handled since the public tend to be so impressed by it that they see him merely as a victim. Yet this denies the role that he later played in Viennese society, and by cheating him of his biography, adds to the insults he has suffered. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (ca. 50–138 C.E.) himself was a former slave, as was the Roman playwright Terence (185/195–159 C.E.). But the fact that they were slaves has never been regarded as diminishing their intellectual role or work.

To return to Soliman's biography: Lobkowitz took him to one of his castles in Bohemia, but, as the prince was usually on active service, he did not take much responsibility for Soliman's further education. This was eventually seen to by an old steward. Soliman later spoke excellent Italian, French and German, and passable Latin, Czech and English. Eventually, he accompanied Lobkowitz to war as qualified servants were allowed to.<sup>19</sup> He became the prince's valued comrade in arms and once saved his life when he was wounded by carrying him off the battlefield on his own shoulders. Being a confidant of the prince he was fond of handing over all the petitions he got from the other subjects, etc. As a servant, Soliman was without doubt paid for his services, as he was later by the princes of Liechtenstein.

Pichler reports that Count Franz Moritz von Lacy (1725–1801) had an extraordinarily high regard for Soliman because of his military courage, and once offered him the rank of captain out of turn, which Soliman refused – probably to avoid the envy of his fellow soldiers.<sup>20</sup> Some authors, like Bauer,<sup>21</sup> express doubts about Lacy's esteem for Soliman. But in 1999 the present author found a copy of a letter, written in French, from Lacy to Soliman, dated 9 November 1761. There is no salutation, but the letter begins with the following words:

You know, my dear Angelo, that there is nothing I would refuse you if the means of doing you a favour depended on my good will ....

If we take in consideration what we know about Soliman's biography as a whole, he is certainly the addressee. Obviously he had asked Lacy for a better position for one of his friends in the army.<sup>22</sup>

After Lobkowitz's death in 1753, Soliman entered the service of Prince Joseph Wenzel of Liechtenstein (1696–1772), although Emperor Francis I Stephan, husband of Empress Maria Theresa, had tried to engage him on very *flattering* terms, according to Pichler.<sup>23</sup> Liechtenstein was the most important general in the Empire, and a special confidant of Maria Theresa. Like Lobkowitz, he had one of his permanent residences in Vienna. When Soliman received Lacy's letter in 1761, he was one of Liechtenstein's valets (ranking third among the valets) and earned a salary of 150 florins a year. In 1764 Soliman had reached the first position in the hierarchy of valets and thus was the head of the domestics and an absolute confidant of his princely employer.<sup>24</sup>

In the same year, when he accompanied Liechtenstein to Frankfurt am Main where Joseph I, Maria Theresa's son, was elected Emperor, Soliman won 20 000 florins from a banker while playing cards at a banquet. The fact that he offered the banker a chance to avenge himself, won an additional 24 000 florins, but gave his opponent the chance to win this sum back, earned him the *respect* of all the onlookers and the *admiration* of his opponent, who paid him a visit next day, *embraced* him and *expressed appreciation for his magnanimity*.<sup>25</sup> Whether it was Soliman's deliberate strategy or not, his social qualities won him the appreciation of the public. And as had been the case when he was in Lobkowitz's service, in the service of Liechtenstein he was *the protector of the unfortunate and of the people in distress*.<sup>26</sup> Maybe Soliman, as a man who had once been separated from his family forever and yet had found in the marquise's house in Messina another African woman whom he had loved so much that he had chosen to be named after her, had a special understanding of other people's distress and a special sense of how to help them.

In 1768 Soliman married Magdalena Christiani von Kellermann, the widow of a secretary who had worked for a member of the important Harrach family.<sup>27</sup> This marriage took place secretly with the help of the then archbishop of Vienna. Unfortunately Emperor Joseph II, who was *very interested* in Soliman's life, learnt his secret one day while casually *promenading with him arm in arm*.<sup>28</sup> By 1768 Joseph II (1741–90) had already been twice widowed; he never married again. In summer he lived in a house in the Augarten, close to the entrance. Several times a day he took a walk among the people.<sup>29</sup> Obviously it was in the Augarten that the Emperor walked arm in arm with Soliman and came to know of his secret marriage.

When Liechtenstein heard of Soliman's secret marriage, he immediately fired him.<sup>30</sup> This is sometimes misinterpreted as meaning that Africans were not allowed to marry white women or that Liechtenstein was motivated by homosexual jealousy. Neither of these assumptions is correct. Firstly, we find countless legally married black and white couples in the Holy Roman Empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, every servant had to ask his princely employer's permission to marry. Without doubt, Soliman was aware that Liechtenstein did not want his employees to marry at all, since he tried to avoid spending money on their families when they died.<sup>31</sup> This must have been his reason for marrying in secret. Obviously, he was under the illusion that Liechtenstein would excuse his unauthorized action, and this demonstrates once more how eminent Soliman's position was. Nevertheless, if the prince had shown any indulgence in this affair it would have caused him a severe loss of prestige. After his dismissal, Soliman and his wife lived in their own little house in a Viennese suburb and enjoyed a circle of *very educated and excellent people*.<sup>32</sup> Their only child, Josephine, was born in 1772. Among her godparents were aristocrats and other influential people.<sup>33</sup>

In 1773, Joseph Wenzel of Liechtenstein's nephew and heir, Prince Franz Joseph of Liechtenstein (1726–81), met Soliman by chance in the streets of Vienna. He called him into his coach and "told him that he was entirely convinced of his innocence and wanted to make good his uncle's injustice". The younger Liechtenstein paid Soliman an annual salary that would be his wife's old-age pension in case of his death. In return, Soliman only had "to perform a kind of supervision over the education" of Liechtenstein's son, Hereditary Prince Alois (1759–1805).<sup>34</sup> This means that Soliman was responsible for the smooth organization of

the young prince's education. Soliman's engagement shows how highly esteemed he was in the eyes of his princely employer, who had known him a long time. Soliman, who "pursued the sciences with a will" and whose "favorite subject" was history,<sup>35</sup> now earned 600 florins a year.<sup>36</sup> This is the same salary as for a princely steward. The whole family moved once again to the centre of Vienna, where they lived in Liechtenstein's palace.<sup>37</sup> Soliman was now responsible for the education of a hereditary prince. He was not the first African to reach such a position, since Abraham Hannibal (1696–1781), the great-grandfather of Alexander Pushkin, had taught mathematics to the then tsarevitch (crown prince) in 1725.<sup>38</sup>

The extent to which Prince Franz Joseph of Liechtenstein appreciated Soliman as a supervisor is documented in a declaration that Soliman signed on 1 October 1773. There he undertook to stay in the same position under the same conditions until his pupil attained his majority or married, even if his father should die.<sup>39</sup> As it happened, Franz Joseph died in 1781, upon which his son Alois I succeeded him. Alois married in 1783, and Soliman retired in 1784.<sup>40</sup>

His former pupil had no objection to Soliman becoming a freemason. In September 1781, Soliman joined the elite Viennese lodge "Zur wahren Eintracht".<sup>41</sup> Even before he had gone through the final ceremony, an *in absentia* recommendation by Soliman of another potential member was delivered by the then Master of the Lodge.<sup>42</sup> In November 1781, on the recommendation of Soliman, Ignaz von Born (1742–91) was elected a member of the lodge.<sup>43</sup> This mineralogist, author and imperial confidant was one of the leading Austrian intellectuals and internationally renowned. He and Soliman were friends,<sup>44</sup> but we do not know when their friendship began. Though Born without doubt had many friends, it obviously had to be Soliman who was his sponsor. In March 1782, Born, elected by his fellows, became the Master of the Lodge.<sup>45</sup> Soliman was immediately appointed "preparing brother" by Born himself.<sup>46</sup> The "preparing brother" had to examine and instruct the designated and new members of the lodge, and in this role Soliman came into close contact with his freemason brothers of the intellectual upper class. In March 1784, Soliman was elected deputy master of ceremonies, which meant that he had to organize and supervise the meetings.<sup>47</sup>

As the minutes of the lodge have been preserved and edited, we know that Soliman had very special relations with several other members of the lodge. He proposed Erasmus von Grezmüller (public servant), twice voted by proxy for Joseph von Barth (chair of anatomy and imperial oculist) when he could not be present at meetings, and stood sponsor when Franz Anton Estner (priest and mineralogist) became a member. Joseph Friedrich von Retzer (one of the three leading intellectuals of Vienna) once stood proxy for Soliman when he could not attend a meeting.<sup>48</sup> The mother of the banker Franz Xaver von Stegner was godmother to Soliman's daughter, and August Veith von Schittlersberg acted as the executor of Soliman's estate in 1797.<sup>49</sup>

In 1784 or 85, Johann Anton Mertens, who became chair of law at the University of Vienna in 1786, addressed Soliman in a letter as follows.

Best friend!

For a long time, it has been my object to become a member of such an

excellent society of upright and enlightened men as is the one of which you are a member. Certain circumstances have hitherto impeded me from asking for the fulfilment of my wishes. Yet now, my dear friend, I believe myself to be entitled to ask you to promote my membership, as a friend. In gratitude for this favour, I shall use any occasion to serve you in return and never give you any cause to regret the effort that you had undertaken for me. I am your sincere friend and servant,

Joh. Anton Mertens  
Doctor of Laws<sup>50</sup>

This letter, which I discovered in 1994, clearly shows the social position that Soliman enjoyed. Soliman was a member of his lodge as long as it existed. He also joined its successor, "Zur Wahrheit" in 1786, and remained a member until freemasonry came to an end in the same year because of the political restrictions imposed by Emperor Joseph II.

As mentioned above, Soliman's lodge was a gathering-place for the Viennese elite, and under Born's direction it became like an academy, offering lectures and publishing two periodicals. Mozart and Haydn were among its famous members.<sup>51</sup> Soliman's freemason name was Massinissa.<sup>52</sup> Massinissa (240–148 B.C.) was the king who founded the ancient Numidian empire (in present-day Algeria). This is not a black African king's name like Sundjata or Mansa Musa – kings of whom Soliman presumably had not heard. But the name Massinissa does show his awareness of his origins on the African continent and his being at home with historical details, for he avoided the names of Jugurtha and Hannibal, North Africans who ended up defeated.

In 1994 István Fried, a specialist on the great Hungarian writer and freemason Ferenc Kazinczy, discovered that the latter was one of Soliman's friends too. Thanks to Fried's research,<sup>53</sup> we now know further details. Kazinczy lived in the town of Kaschau in Hungary (the present-day Košice in Slovakia), which was part of the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. So did Victor d'Este, one of Soliman's fellow freemasons, who in 1786 worked as a professor of physics and agriculture in Kaschau. In the same year Kazinczy and d'Este travelled to Vienna, and since d'Este boasted of his acquaintance with Soliman, Kazinczy wanted to meet him too. He followed d'Este's advice, and sent Soliman a present of sweet Hungarian Tokay wine. Having received it, Soliman paid a visit to Kazinczy and addressed him with the words: "Brother Kazinczy, I thank you for the delicious Tokay wine." Then Soliman kissed him.<sup>54</sup> In 1791, Soliman and Kazinczy saw each other when the latter came to Vienna once again. Later, Kazinczy reported some details of their meetings.<sup>55</sup> Among other things we read that Soliman's daughter Josephine once danced with the later King Charles X of France when he paid a visit to Vienna and attended a ball in 1791.<sup>56</sup>

In 1786 Soliman paid a visit to Kazinczy in Kaschau. He was accompanied by one Michael Leopold Brigido, to whom Soliman had delivered his letter of appointment as prince bishop of Laibach (the present-day Ljubljana in Slovenia).<sup>57</sup> This means that Soliman was a temporary commissioner for Emperor Joseph II at the time, since in those days it was the emperor and not the pope who appointed clerics like Brigido.<sup>58</sup>

Fried also mentions a letter from Soliman addressed to Kazinczy in 1792. It can be found in the latter's correspondence, having been published in 1891. Soliman addressed his friend

Kazinczy as follows:

Vienna, 16 November 1792

Highly honoured friend!

I dare to write you in German, in a language in which I am less experienced, in the hope that you will be indulgent to me. I had already forgotten that I had asked you for a small bottle of Tokay essence. I was very surprised when I received your letter. I thank you very much for the kind-hearted remembrance, which has made me feel more flattered than I would be pleased by 10 measures of Tokay. What I have told you here, is true, upon my honour. You are indeed lucky, dear brother Kazinczy, to own an estate, so you can, like the father of Roman rhetoric, stay on your Tusculanum, accept your friend's visits and be pleased with the new days to come. I am living quite quietly, far from the great world; from time to time I calmly watch the sudden changes in the political scene.

Farewell and be quite well, and be assured of my respect and friendship.

Angelo Soliman<sup>59</sup>

As this letter shows, in 1792 Soliman was leading a retired life. His wife had died in 1786, and, as Pichler reports, after that he never again invited friends to dinner, as he was trying to save money for his daughter, to whom he gave the best education he could. From time to time Soliman went on a journey, on his own or on somebody else's business. When he visited Milan, Archduke Ferdinand the governor treated him with distinction, though the details are unclear.<sup>60</sup>

In his letter, Soliman alludes to the Roman orator, statesman and author Cicero (106–43 B.C.) without mentioning his name. That he was familiar with Cicero's life can be seen from the fact that he mentions Tusculanum, Cicero's estate in Tusculum near Rome. Presumably Soliman had read Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, a discourse on Stoic ethics and theology. Soliman's reference to his calmness in watching the *sudden changes in the political scene* sounds like Stoic philosophy. Was it, in Cicero's own words, *the most precious fruit of the entire philosophy* that Soliman found in this author's text – namely *to heal the sorrows, fears and desires* (Tusc. Disp. I, 119)? Out of his own past as a former slave, separated forever from his family, Soliman must have developed a special sense of the tragic in life, like the other famous African, Anton Wilhelm Amo.<sup>61</sup> In 1781 Kant had published his *Critique of Pure Reason*, but Soliman would have had no motivation to be one of his admirers, if he had read his racist statements about Africans in 1764.<sup>62</sup>

In 1794 Soliman's Hungarian friend was suddenly accused of rebellion, and though innocent, he was put in prison, where he remained until 1801. In 1795 he was granted some relief, and allowed access to some books and a few personal items. He was also allowed to order food at his own expense. These concessions were granted by special order of Archduke Joseph (1776–1847), who as governor was responsible for Hungarian affairs. When Kazinczy was free again, he casually recorded certain reminiscences of his late black friend in 1809, and also wrote down the following words concerning Soliman: "Blessings on your ashes, venerable man!" and "Blessing, blessings, blessings on you, good man!"<sup>63</sup>

Why did Kazinczy praise his late friend Soliman so enthusiastically? As I have discussed elsewhere, Soliman, whose good connections with the imperial court have been mentioned above, had probably asked the archduke to ease Kazinczy's awful conditions in prison.<sup>64</sup>

### Angelo Soliman's Death and Afterlife

In November 1796 Soliman died of a stroke while walking in the streets of Vienna. His body was taken home.<sup>65</sup> Here we find the beginning of the scandal that overshadows not only his own biography, but also a lot of biographical research since the public is mostly interested in this scandal, to the extent that it is often forgotten that this African was an active individual. It seems as if people only want to discuss the tragic ends of Lumumba, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Steve Biko, and not their political importance.

Soliman's intestines must have been removed, for something was indeed buried two days after his death.<sup>66</sup> Then the corpse was transferred to the faculty of medicine where undefined experiments were carried out. Subsequently, the remains were delivered to an Abbé Eberle, at his request. Under Eberle's supervision the body was skinned, stuffed and put on display in a cabinet in the Imperial Palace, though we do not know what happened to the skeleton. The first source of these facts was an episcopal appeal, addressed to the imperial government and referring to a letter (since lost) from Soliman's daughter.<sup>67</sup> The next source was an article by L.J. Fitzinger. In 1868 the director of the Imperial Museum declared that Soliman's beauty *caused in the then Emperor the desire* to have him displayed as a stuffed exhibit in his museum.<sup>68</sup> This statement, that the Emperor alone gave rise to the scandal, is what until now has always been repeated by journalists and other uninformed authors, and it raises the image of an arbitrary imperial act. But if we look closely at the historical circumstances, the story seems to be quite different, as I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>69</sup>

Let us speak first about the above-mentioned Abbé (Simon) Eberle. In the very first source, he – and not Emperor Francis II – is the person who is reported to have been responsible for what happened to Soliman's body.<sup>70</sup> In 1796 Eberle, a renowned natural scientist, was the director of the Imperial Museum. Since this was the Emperor's private property, the Emperor had to approve the director's suggestions;<sup>71</sup> in fact, he eventually dismissed Eberle in 1801 because of his arbitrary and unauthorized actions.<sup>72</sup> Eberle, like Soliman, was a freemason, though not a member of the same lodge.

In 1796 Eberle's assistant was Abbé Andreas Stütz, who also was a freemason and a member of Soliman's lodge "Zur wahren Eintracht", where he met his African brother more than thirty times.<sup>73</sup> Stütz, like Eberle, was a renowned scientist. In 1802, Stütz succeeded Eberle as director of the Imperial Museum, and held the post until 1806. In that very year, the new director, von Schreibers, had Soliman's stuffed body and those of three (!) other Africans removed.<sup>74</sup> Thus, stuffed Africans were only displayed while Eberle and Stütz were directors. Stütz had also installed a small natural history cabinet in his and Soliman's lodge, and once delivered a speech entitled "Death means life". He stated that death is only feared by the eye and the heart while the inquiring mind knows very well that there is no destruction in the universe. And so the death of one causes the life of another.<sup>75</sup>

There are other details to consider: first, Ignaz von Born, Soliman's friend and master of his lodge, was one of the officials of the Imperial Museum long before his freemason brothers



Eberle und Stütz. He had criticized the whole imperial family for being unable to look at stuffed animals, which was the reason why the museum had to do without a collection of them.<sup>76</sup> Second, Joseph von Barth, another of Soliman's freemason brothers and a professor of anatomy, had founded the first theatre and museum of anatomy in 1786.<sup>77</sup>

Soliman's social circle consisted of a scientific set which in 1784 welcomed young George Forster, a former member of Cook's expedition, and kept him close company as long as he stayed in Vienna.<sup>78</sup> Forster had called S.T. Soemmerring's 1785 racist publication "On the anatomical difference between moor and European" "a beautiful treatise", though the author maintained that Africans were inferior to blacks. Soemmerring was a special friend of Forster's and dedicated his work to him.<sup>79</sup>

In the list of Soliman's heirs and creditors we find the name of a certain Dr Vetter. This Rudolph Vetter was a former student of Barth's, an assistant to another professor of anatomy, and *had put in sheets of newspaper*. In the register of Soliman's heirs and creditors, he was one of only two who was not a creditor (the other was one of Soliman's freemason brothers the von Schittlersberg mentioned above). Schittlersberg was presumably appointed the trustee of Soliman's daughter. But what exactly was Vetter's function? The only possibility is that Vetter was to inherit something into which he had put the "sheets of newspaper". And this must have been Soliman's corpse, from which Vetter had presumably removed the intestines. So, the "sheets of newspaper" served as padding for the empty abdominal cavity.<sup>80</sup>

Since the corpse was exploited in this way immediately after Soliman's death, the plan must have been settled long before, as Bauer points out.<sup>81</sup> But this would have been absolutely impossible without a declaration by Soliman.<sup>82</sup>

It seems as if some of Soliman's fellow freemasons who were interested in natural science had asked him to leave his remains for exhibition. If this is so, then his daughter Josephine, who tried to intervene with the archbishop's help, was not informed of it. This is understandable, since otherwise she would have tried day and night to change her father's mind. Obviously the above-mentioned Fitzinger was not telling the truth when he said that the Emperor, and nobody else, had wanted Soliman's corpse.<sup>83</sup> Since Fitzinger was a freemason too,<sup>84</sup> it is possible that he tried to cover up for other freemasons like Born, Barth, Eberle and Stütz. If, on the other hand, the Emperor had really been responsible for the scandal, then the whole episode had been set in motion by a superior power which nobody would have been able to resist.

But what part did Soliman play, if my assumptions are correct? How could he leave his skin and skeleton to be displayed in a museum? Pichler reports that Soliman always kept his word and that nobody was able to change his mind if he had decided something "upon mature consideration".<sup>85</sup> This might be a hint at the assumed fact that he finally had done what some of his freemason brothers may have asked him to do. Perhaps he was able to face the prospect of being skinned and exhibited with equanimity because he accepted Stütz's views on death as put forward in his speech "Death means life", or because of what Cicero wrote on death and burial in his *Tusculan Disputations*, which Soliman must have had in mind when he wrote his letter to Kazimierz in 1792. Cicero states that "a great man never dies in a miserable way" (*Tusc. Disp. I, 96*) and that only the body and not the deceased person is involved in the

burial (Tusc. Disp. I, 104–105).

Soliman's stuffed skin was displayed together with stuffed animals in an American (!) environment. He was displayed as an African, however. In the fictional landscape of the Imperial Museum there were no white human exhibits,<sup>86</sup> and this clearly proves a racist point of view. Maybe Eberle and Stütz were eager to install a "modern" exhibition where everything was genuine, and at the same time repressed all racist implications in their minds. The same intellectual aberration can be found in the Nazi concentration camp physicians, who never experienced the slightest inner conflict.

But how did Soliman manage to act in the way suggested above? Obviously he not only agreed with Cicero but also with people like Eberle and Stütz. Jacobus Eliza Johannes Capitein (1717–47), born in present-day Ghana, acted in a similar way. Members of the inner circle of the Dutch West Indian Company had subsidized his theological studies in Leiden in the Netherlands. In 1742, he graduated with a thesis "On slavery that is not controversial to Christian freedom". From 1742 till his death he served as pastor of Fort Elmina.<sup>87</sup> He, as an African, had presented a justification for slavery. Obviously Capitein had to write what his "benefactors" wanted him to, as this brought him social recognition. Presumably Soliman acted in the same self-oppressed way. And so did people like Senghor, with his theory of Negritude, and Josephine Baker, dancing topless like figures in racist cartoons.

As I have discussed elsewhere,<sup>88</sup> Capitein, Soliman and others performed something called "identification with the aggressor". Anna Freud described it for the whites, and Frantz Fanon for the black people. Soliman did what millions of people did and actually do. He is by no means exceptional.

### Conclusion

First and foremost, Soliman was a human being like others. He has the right to claim his full biography without being idealized or treated as a scandal; in other words, treated with any bias whatsoever. Only in this way will he be taken seriously and find his proper position in the history of the African diaspora in Central Europe.



## Notes

1. Wilhelm A. Bauer (1922/1993). This book was based on the first publication on Soliman by the Viennese writer Karoline Pichler (1808). The French abolitionist Henri Grégoire had asked her to contribute to his famous *De la Littérature des Nègres*. Pichler's text appears in French translation as chapter 5 (Grégoire, 1808). It was Grégoire's intention to show, in contradiction of all supporters of slavery, that Africans had the same intellectual and moral abilities as whites. Bauer did a good deal of additional research and extended Pichler's work in many respects. For the present author's views, see Firla-Forkl (1993).
2. Hügel-Marshall (2001:77). The author is the daughter of a black GI.
3. The main organization for people of African descent is ISD (Initiative schwarze Deutsche und schwarze Menschen in Deutschland ["Initiative of black Germans and black people in Germany"]). Most members are descendants of Africans who came from German colonies from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, or of black GIs after World War II. A relatively new group are descendants of blacks who immigrated to Germany in the 1950s and 60s.
4. For some of the many others, see Debrunner (1979); Martin (2001); Firla (2001b).
5. Amo (ca. 1700– ca. 1753) was born near Axim in present-day Ghana and lived in Jena (East Germany), where he worked as a lecturer in philosophy till 1739/40. 1747 he returned to Axim and worked as a soothsayer and sage; see Brentjes (1976), Firla (2002).
6. Most Africans who came to Germany in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were former slaves bought and freed in Africa. They were brought to this country because the aristocracy liked to have black servants, valets, trumpeters, kettle-drummers, breakers-in etc. for their aesthetic appeal and as evidence of long-distance relations. While countries like Great Britain and Portugal practised slavery, in the Holy Roman Empire there was no slavery, only serfdom, which made it possible to sell and buy white people legally (Freese, 1995:261).
7. Bauer, 1993:82–84.
8. Martin (1993/2001:232–240) discusses Soliman as a mere "case" and does not mention his role as the educator of a hereditary prince.
9. Frederking & Krommer, 2003.
10. Soliman's first biography was Pichler (1808/1993; see note 1). The data was collected by Pichler's friend Eleonore Fliess, née Eskeles (1752–1812) from the circle of the late Soliman's upper-class friends (Firla & Forkl, 1996:129–133). In 1922 Wilhelm A. Bauer published a more comprehensive biography (1922/1993) which was based on Pichler's text. Bauer did a lot of archive research, and consequently was able to substantiate most of Pichler's data; he also discovered some new facts. Other researchers will be mentioned below.
11. Firla & Forkl, 1996:122–129.
12. Firla, 2003:8, n. 6.
13. Pichler, 1993:114–115.
14. For example, Wagner (1980:24).
15. Only foreigners who were accompanied by their slaves and staying in the Holy Roman Empire temporarily were allowed to keep slaves and take them back home in accordance with the laws of their own countries.

16. Frese, 1995:261.
17. Pichler, 1993:115.
18. Österreichisches Kriegsarchiv Wien (Austrian Military Archive, Vienna), Karton AFA-I R 58, 1714-17 (Pièce 188, a/1+2).
19. Firla, 2003:12.
20. Pichler, 1993:115.
21. Bauer, 1993:38–39.
22. For the complete letter, its German translation and full commentary see Firla (2003:14–21).
23. Pichler, 1993:115.
24. Firla, 1996:71–72.
25. Pichler, 1993:116.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 116; Bauer, 1993:66.
28. Pichler, 1993:116.
29. Gräffer, 1848–50 (vol. 3, 1848:197; vol. 5, 1850:80).
30. Pichler, 1993:116.
31. Firla, 1996: 87 n. 51.
32. Pichler, 1993:116.
33. Bauer, 1993:60.
34. Pichler, 1993:116.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
36. Bauer, 1993:59.
37. Pichler, 1993:117.
38. Gnamankou, 1996:82.
39. HALV (Family Archive of the reigning princes of Liechtenstein in Vaduz, Liechtenstein), Karton 231.
40. Bauer, 1993:63.
41. Wagner, 1980:25.
42. Irmen, 1994:47.
43. Wagner, 1980:25; Irmen, 1994:54.
44. Firla, 2003:24.
45. Wagner, 1980:8; Irmen, 1994:66.
46. *Ibid.*
47. Wagner, 1980:25; Firla, 1996:77.
48. Irmen, 1994:47, 103, 150, 155, 134.
49. Firla, 2003:46.
50. Cited *ibid.*, p. 29.
51. Wagner, 1980.
52. Fried, 1994:29–30.
53. Fried (1994). Since I have discussed Fried's research and added translations of his Hungarian sources, in the following passages I shall refer to my ensuing publication Firla (2003).

54. Cited in Firla, 2003:33, 42.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid., pp. 35–36.
57. Ibid., p. 35.
58. Ibid., p. 39.
59. Cited *ibid.*, p. 40.
60. Pichler, 1993:116.
61. See Firla, 2002:69.
62. See Firla, 1997.
63. Cited in Firla, 2003:42.
64. Ibid.
65. Pichler, 1993:117.
66. Bauer, 1993:85.
67. Ibid., p. 87.
68. Cited *ibid.*, p. 83.
69. Firla, 2001a.
70. Bauer, 1993:87.
71. Firla, 2001a:17 n. 103.
72. Ibid., p. 16.
73. Ibid., p. 11.
74. Ibid., p. 14.
75. Ibid., p. 12.
76. Firla, 2002:14.
77. Firla, 2001a:9.
78. Ibid., p.18.
79. Ibid.
80. Ibid., p. 9.
81. Bauer, 1993:84–85.
82. In 1996, I found a bust of Soliman in the Rollettmuseum in Baden near Vienna. It had previously not been identified (Firla & Forkl 1996:133–134).
83. Firla, 2001a:15.
84. Lewis, 1872:209.
85. Pichler, 1993:118.
86. Firla, 2001a:5–6.
87. Prah, 1989:42–43.
88. Firla, 2001a:18–19.

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