

Selected Tributes to Prince Fakhreddine al-Ma'ni II

(Chronological Order)

The earliest record of a portrait of Fakhreddine is documented in a letter written on July 20, 1659, by Shaykh Abū Nawfal al- Khāzin, a Maronite overlord who had lived in Tuscany from 1635 to 1637. He wrote, on behalf of Fakhreddine's grandnephews emirs Qurqmāz and Aḥmad, to Fernandino II de Medici, grand duke of Tuscany, asking to borrow the portrait of Fakhreddine in the Grand Duke's possession. In it he reported the death of Fakhreddine's nephew Amir Miḥim Ibn Yūnis al-Ma'ni, and asked in the name of his two sons and successors that "Your highness kindly allow the Jesuit Fathers, delegated by their Superior, to bring to the emirs the painted portrait of their uncle Amir Fakhreddine in the palace of your Highness, or allow them to copy it, and send it here (to Beirut) from Livorno in the first vessel to sail to Sidon or Beirut." There is no evidence that Fernandino II acted upon his request, however, and the whereabouts of the portrait today is unknown. [...].

In his book on Fakhreddine, Adel Ismail reproduces an engraving by Henri Bonnart (ca. 1642-1711), which Bonnart identifies with the caption, "Emir Fechrredin prince des Druses". This portrait was found at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris in a manuscript on the Druses. The print is probably the same as the other item numbered 127 on Charles Le Blanc's list of Henri Bonnart's engravings. Henri Bonnart most likely based his illustration on Roger's drawing because there are several similarities between the two. Both faces are old and bearded; the turbans are similar; the cloaks are striped and held in the same manner; both figures are wearing an ample robe above trousers tied at the ankle; in both the protagonist is wearing the same type of shoes; the arms are shown in a similar posture with one hand resting on a cane. In Henri Bonnart's engraving, the prince's figure is shown in a mirror-reverse position, though the outlook is otherwise unvaried. The emir's face and his hand resting on a cane are further detailed in Bonnart's illustration. The dagger in the belt is the same, but Bonnart added an embroidered fringe at the bottom of the tunic and portrayed the prince standing on the tile floor; the portrait in Roger shows a low horizon of mountains.

There is a similar portrait that illustrates in Maurice Chehab’s article “Le costume au Liban” published in 1943. Chehab does not mention Roger’s representation of Fakhreddine, and does not seem to have seen Henri Bonnart’s portrait later published by Ism^ˆail. He identifies the portrait of a turbaned personage wearing an elaborate costume as “Emir Fakhreddine II, Prince du Liban” but gives no source for the illustration except an attribution to “H. Bonnart”. They could well be by the same the same artist, although the name Bonnart was shared by several related engravers and publishers. “H. Bonnart” may be Henri Bonnart (d. 1682) or Henri (II) Bonnart (d. 1711). Illustrating picturesque costumes was a specialty of Nicolas Bonnart (1636-1718). Whoever did the print illustrated used the engraving of H. Bonnart attributed to Henri Bonnart by Le Blanc changing only the background and the costume. [...].

Because Mariti wrote and published his *Istoria di Facardino* in Tuscany, it is generally believed that his frontispiece is a copy of the portrait requested by the Ma’an emirs. Paolo Carali, who reproduces it as his frontispiece of his *Fakhreddine II, Principe del Libano e la Corte di Toscana 1605-1635*, commented upon it briefly under the heading “ Il ritratto di Fakhreddine.” He also reported that he had in the 1930’s searched the Medici palaces, the Real Accademia d’Italia, and the R.R. Galerie for the Medici painting without success.[...].

We can conclude, then, that the frontispiece of Mariti’s *Istoria de “Faccardine”*, published in Livorno in 1787, is the only known reliable portrait of Amir Fakhreddine Ma’an and that it was taken from a portrait probably drawn from life during the prince’s sojourn in Tuscany from 1613-1615. Although the prototype of this painting may well have been the Medici portrait of Amir Fakhreddine, it cannot be proved.

Since Fakhreddine also resided for about three years, from 1615 to 1618, in the domains of the Spanish viceroy Duke of Ossuna, other portraits of him may well yet surface in southern Italy, Sicily, or Spain. A thorough compilation of Dutch, Flemish, Portuguese, and English publications might also eventually bring to light other portraits of the grand emir of Mount Lebanon.

Hafez Chehab,

Muqarnas, an annual on Islamic art and Architecture, volume XI, Edited by Gülru Necipoğlu, Leiden, E.j. Brill, 1994, pp 117-119, 121-122.

###

For a few decades in the early seventeenth century, the Druze warlord Fakhreddine (1572-1635) ruled a sizable portion of today's Lebanon and Syria, forging his own trade agreements with the West under the nose of the Ottoman Empire. In 1613, threatened by the sultan, he used his agreements with the Grand Duke of Tuscany as a pretext to set sail for Livorno, where he began an exile that eventually lasted five years, split between the courts of the Medici in Florence and of the Spanish viceroy in Naples. In 1618 he returned home, with unprecedented knowledge of Western ways, as one of the more remarkable figures to bridge the gap between Islamic East and Christian West. Praising Italy as a model of efficiency, he then challenged the Sultan's self-image as a beneficent ruler. A remarkable story well told, but the moral is disheartening. For his independence of mind, Fakhreddine was assassinated in 1635.

T.J. Gorton,

Renaissance Emir: A Druze Warlord at the Court of the Medici by T.J. Gorton (review), Common Knowledge, Volume 22, Issue 2, May 2016, p.319.

###