

MARQOS III (d. c. 1648)

Marqos was the first metropolitan to arrive in Ethiopia after the abdication of Negus Susenyos and the subsequent restoration in Ethiopia of the faith of the church of Alexandria; thus he is to be considered the immediate successor of Abuna Semon, despite the hiatus separating his episcopate from that of his predecessor. He was designated and consecrated by the Coptic [patriarch MATTHEW](#) III (1631-1656).

At the beginning of his reign (1632-1667), Fasiladas requested a new metropolitan from Cairo, but according to the account of Peter Heyling, a Lutheran who resided in Egypt at the time and who was preparing to go to Ethiopia, this first mission “came to nought because of the infidelity of the emissaries.” No details are given about the infidelity, but Heyling’s allusion can probably be related to the passage from the Abridged Chronicle (Béguinot, 1901, pp. 48-49) that states that toward the beginning of Fasiladas’ reign, a false metropolitan named Rizqallah arrived in Ethiopia, where, however, he was discovered and removed from office. Following a new request from the negus, the Coptic [patriarch](#) consecrated a monk from the Monastery of Saint Antony (DAYR ANBA ANTUNIYUS) named Ariminius, who took the name of Marqos III. The new *abun* left Cairo before the end of 1634 with Peter Heyling among his retinue.

Near Easter 1635 he reached Sawakin, a Red Sea port that, along with the port of Massawa, was governed by a Turkish pasha. Here he met the Jesuit Alfonso Mendez, former “[patriarch](#) of Ethiopia,” who had been expelled with his fellow Jesuits by Fasiladas. Delivered into the hands of the Turks, Mendez was waiting in Sawakin to be ransomed and to find a ship for Goa, the Jesuits’ headquarters in India. Since Marqos III was awaiting a ship to Massawa, he met Mendez and friendly relations were established between the two prelates. The metropolitan promised the Jesuit to do his utmost to help the Catholics in Ethiopia, who were exposed to persecution by the new regime.

Marqos, moreover, presented to Mendez a letter written at Manfalut, Egypt, on 15 [October](#) 1634 by Father Agathange of Vendôme, a subordinate at the Capuchin mission in Upper Egypt. In this letter the Capuchin introduced the Coptic prelate to the Jesuits, who, he thought, still had influence at the Ethiopian court, and warned them against the propaganda plans of the Lutheran Peter Heyling.

Near the end of 1635, Marqos III entered Gonder, which had just been founded by the negus, and upon his arrival he issued certain moralizing edicts to Ethiopian society. In particular, he objected to the custom of keeping several concubines, which was common, especially among the nobility. He also tried to help the Catholics, who were suffering under serious difficulties, but perceiving the Ethiopians' resentment against them, Marqos was obliged to keep his silence. Fasiladas then thought of assigning the metropolitan the task of preaching the cause against the Jesuit bishop Apollinaris de Almeida, former coadjutor of Mendez, who had not obeyed the negus's order to leave Ethiopia and was hidden in the countryside.

Marqos was able to refuse this assignment, however, but the Jesuit was put to death in 1638. That same year, the French priests Agathange of Vendôme and Cassien of Nantes, from the Capuchin mission in Upper Egypt, entered Ethiopia, where they were discovered and condemned to death (June 1638). Marqos III, who had known them well in Egypt, was powerless to save their lives.

Chiefly because of his restrained temperament, this metropolitan was often in difficulty with the clergy as well as with the court. It appears that with the idea of gaining the negus's favor, Marqos III revealed to Fasiladas the plot hatched by his brother, Galawdewos (Claudius) to seize power. Galawdewos was, in fact, apprehended and placed in seclusion (November 1646), but it appears that Marqos III never gained the king's confidence. Moreover, in the theological disputes that were then beginning to rock the clergy, this metropolitan avoided taking any clear

stand and, as a result, was disliked by all factions concerned.

Eventually he was openly attacked by the *eccage* of Dabra Libanos and head of the regular clergy, who reproached him for leading a licentious life. It is possible, however, that this accusation concealed other complaints. He was dismissed by an assembly of ecclesiastics, and the negus exiled him to a high mountain. According to an Ethiopian source, this occurred in 1640 of the Ethiopian calendar (A.D. 1647-1648). It is presumed that he died during this exile. His successor was Abuna Mika'el IV.

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