On Sarabamon, Bishop of Nikiu, from the Arabic Synaxarion

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From the Arabic synaxarion, for Hattūr 28 (= November 24); Arabic text (and a French translation) in PO 3: 273-277 (http://goo.gl/aUTNMf).

English translation

On this day the holy Sarābāmūn the bishop, bishop of Nikiu, was martyred. He was of the family of Stephen [Iṣīfānūs], of the tribe of Judah, from Jerusalem. The name of his father was Abraham [Ibrāhīm] b. Levi [Lāwī] b. Joseph [Yūsūf], brother of Simon [Ṣimʿān], the maternal uncle of Stephen. At his birth, they named him Simʿān after his grandfather. When his parents died, he wanted to become a Christian, then an angel of the Lord appeared to him and commanded him to go to the bishop, Anbā John [Yūḥannā]. When [Simon] reached him, [Anbā John] told him of the secret of the incarnation of the Lord Christ, but he did not dare to baptize him in Jerusalem because of his fear of the Jewish people and he remained uncertain as to what he should do. Then the Lady [Mary], the bearer of God, appeared to him, and she told him that he should go to Alexandria to Patriarch Anbā Theonas [Ṭāʾunā]. The angel of the Lord accompanied him in the appearance of a person until he reached Alexandria, the angel having previously told the patriarch his situation. The patriarch rejoiced in him, preached to him, and baptized him. He [Simʿān] then became a monk in the Zuḡāǧ monastery. Then, when Patriarch Anbā Theonas went to reṣṭ, and they installed Peter [Buṭrus] in his place, he [Peter] summoned him to assist him with the patriarchal duties, and thereafter he ordained him as bishop over Nikiu. The church rejoiced in him greatly and the Lord manifested at his hands many signs and miracles.

Near his city were ancient Egyptian temples, in which they would worship the idols, and he did not stop asking of the Lord Christ that they be worshiped. The church rejoiced in him greatly and the Lord manifested at his hands many signs and miracles.

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1Hill Museum & Manuscript Library, acmccollum101@gmail.com
2Patriarch of Alexandria, 282-300.
3That is, died (tanayyaha).
4Patriarch of Alexandria, 300-311.
5karrazahu = karraṣahu.
6āyāt wa-ʕaḥālīb.
7harābi, from Coptic ṣn with the definite article n-; see Jaroslav Černý, Coptic Etymological Dictionary, 135.
8al-awṯān.
obiterated and destroyed. The water rose and covered them, and he uprooted the worship of the idols from his see completely. He put a stop to the blasphemy of Arius, who made the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit out to be a single substance.

One day, as he was stopped at the altar, he saw a fiery man saying to him, “You, entrusted with the people of God, why have you neglected [p. 275] the priest of the nearby church? For Satan has inclined his heart to the considering of the weak elements, the choosing of days and hours, geomancy,10 the taking of omens, and magic. He says that the Nile will come to such-and-such a number of cubits, and he has accrued a lot of money, and we spiritual angels want to destroy those who do these dirty deeds on the earth, but the king of truth, Jesus Christ, does not allow us to, saying, ‘Grant them respite: perhaps they will repent. Now they have the books of the prophets, apostles, and the gospels to forbid them all these things.’ And now I advise you: If you wish to get rid of his sin, no longer allow him to enter to the altar, for when he does, I will cut him in two. But let him stay with the believers, so long as he does not act as priest.” Then the bishop fell down due to the deep fear that had seized him, but the angel of the Lord stood him up and said to him, "If the Lord God did not love you, and if your prayer was not received by him like the incense of Melchizedek, king of Salem, and if you had not destroyed the ancient temples, he would not have sent me to you." Then he departed from him, and [Sarābāmūn] remained all that day like someone drunk, with inattentive mind. And he sent after the priest and he told him all that the angel of the Lord had told him, and he said, "My son, if you want to save your soul, and me with you, no longer act as priest, lest you destroy [p. 276] your soul and body in hell.”11

Then, since Diocletian was an infidel, and they told him that the holy Sarābāmūn was destroying the worship of the idols, he commanded his presence before him. When he reached Alexandria with the envoys, Patriarch Anbā Peter and a group of priests came to him in prison and greeted, and they saw his face like [the face] of the angel of the Lord. When he came to the emperor, he [Diocletian] tortured him with various tortures, but the Lord Christ was keeping him without pain, and a large group believed because of him. Then, since the emperor feared that, if he continued to torture him, then they would believe even more, he sent him to Upper Egypt (al-ṣaʕīd), to Arianus the governor and to the city of Antinoë, for him to torture him and to take off his head, but it happened that Arianus the governor was then in Alexandria. When he boarded the boat with him — they were heading to Upper Egypt — and the boat reached Nikiu, his town, they were unable to move it from its place. Then, when they disembarked [p. 277] with the saint into the town’s river, they cut off his head. He obtained the crown of martyrdom, and his people took him in great honor and carried him to the church.

May his prayer and his blessing be with us, amen!

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8In Arabic here with an active impersonal plural, the implied object being the temples, but I render with a passive and the temples as subject in the same sense.
9aqnūm.
10drb al-raml.
11There is a misprint in the text: al-haḡim should be al-ĝahim.