

Day 4

The Our Father in Aramaic, Fr. Boulos Khano



Fr. Boulos Khano

After a long work, the Syrian Orthodox monk Boulos Khano, has completed the writing of the Gospels in ancient Syriac. The work, completely handwritten, has been published in a volume with a red cover - the symbol of the blood of Christ - while the pages are decorated in gold, the color of Christ the King.

Fr Boulos Khano Syrian Orthodox Monk from Jerusalem explains, "I answered a call from God, to revive the Aramaic language in this country, here in the Holy Land, where the Lord Jesus lived." Father Boulos heard this call last year during his months of isolation from the Coronavirus pandemic.

"I felt the desire to write the Gospel in Aramaic, and I said to myself, "Lord, if this is your will give me a sign." The next day a dove came to rest on my window: it had never happened before and I thought it was a sign from the Lord, but I still wasn't sure. The dove also came back the next day, and the day after that, and so I told myself that it was indeed a sign from the Lord".

And so Father Boulos began to write, starting with the Gospel of Mark. "I chose to start with Mark's gospel first of all because I live in St. Mark's Monastery, and then because it is the shortest, 16 chapters. I said to myself let's try it and see if I can do it"". Writing the Gospel of Mark took a month and a half. "I turned off my cell phone and closed the door, lit a candle and incense, and put my hand on the Bible to bless me and my work, and avoid mistakes."

The Old Syriac script was used by the Syriac fathers in the 14th century. Today it is still used by the Syrian Orthodox, Syrian Catholic and Maronite Church. It is much more articulate and complicated than the modern one. Father Boulos wrote on parchment made from sheepskin, using special nibs.



"We are proud of our history: we value our church, science, and language". Father Boulous has handwritten over 4,000 texts in ancient Syriac, taken from the Bible, to spread knowledge of this language. His texts have also been reproduced on various objects, donated to political or religious representatives, but also schools and associations, to show that the language of Christ is still alive today.

<https://cmc-terrasanta.org/en/media/terra-santa-news/25576/the-ancient-syriac-language-lives-again-in-the-gospel>

The Aramaic language

Semitic language of the Northern Central, or Northwestern, group that was originally spoken by the ancient Middle Eastern people known as Aramaeans. It was most closely related to Hebrew, Syriac, and Phoenician and was written in a script derived from the Phoenician alphabet.

Aramaic is thought to have first appeared among the Aramaeans about the late 11th century BC. By the 8th century BC it had become accepted by the Assyrians as a second language. The mass deportations of people by the Assyrians and the use of Aramaic as a lingua franca by Babylonian merchants served to spread the language, so that in the 7th and 6th centuries BC it gradually supplanted Akkadian as the lingua franca of the Middle East. It subsequently became the official language of the Achaemenian Persian dynasty (559–330 BC), though after the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek displaced it as the official language throughout the former Persian empire.

Aramaic dialects survived into Roman times, however, particularly in Palestine and Syria. Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the language of the Jews as early as the 6th century BC. Certain portions of the Bible—i.e., the books of Daniel and Ezra—are written in Aramaic, as are the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds. Among the Jews, Aramaic was used by the common people, while Hebrew remained the language of religion and government and of the upper class. Jesus and the Apostles are believed to have spoken Aramaic, and Aramaic-language translations (Targums) of the Old Testament circulated. Aramaic continued in wide use until about 650 CE, when it was supplanted by Arabic. In the early centuries AD, Aramaic divided into East and West varieties. West Aramaic dialects include Nabataean (formerly spoken in parts of Arabia), Palmyrene (spoken in Palmyra, which was northeast of Damascus), Palestinian-Christian, and Judeo-Aramaic. West Aramaic is still spoken in a small number of villages in Syria.

East Aramaic includes Syriac, Mandaean, Eastern Neo-Assyrian, and the Aramaic of the Babylonian Talmud. One of the most important of these is Syriac, which was the language of an extensive literature between the 3rd and the 7th century. Mandaean was the dialect of a gnostic sect centered in lower Mesopotamia. East Aramaic is still spoken by a few small groups of Jacobite and Nestorian Christians in the Middle East.

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Aramaic-language>

