

The East Syriac Psalm Headings in Manuscript 18>8dt1: Manchester, John Rylands Library, Rylands Syriac Manuscript 4¹

HERRIE VAN ROOY (NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY)²

ABSTRACT

Manuscript 18>8dt1 dates from AD 1727 and was copied from an earlier Eastern manuscript, now lost. The oldest manuscript that contains the East Syriac headings is 6t1, a Western manuscript with Western orthography. The oldest Eastern manuscripts that contain these headings date from the twelfth century. The John Rylands manuscript contains the headings in a form 400 years older than the oldest of the other Eastern manuscripts, giving new insight into the history of these headings. The value of this manuscript can be judged when its headings are compared to those in 6t1 and 12t4. Many headings have shorter and longer versions. This paper explores the place of 18>8dt1 in the history of the East Syriac Psalm headings to demonstrate the originality of many of the readings in this manuscript. The conclusion is the headings in 6t1 cannot always be regarded as reflecting the original headings.

KEYWORDS: Syriac psalms; Peshitta; John Rylands library; psalms headings/superscriptions; 18th Century AD manuscript.

A INTRODUCTION

Manuscript 18>8dt1 dates from AD 1727 and was copied from an earlier Eastern manuscript, now lost. It was given the number 18<13dt1 in the original list of manuscripts published by the Peshitta Institute in Leiden. That has now been changed to 18<8dt1, which means the original manuscript copied was from the 8th century, and not the 13th century, as had been thought earlier. The oldest manuscript that contains these headings is 6t1, a Western manuscript with Western orthography. The oldest Eastern manuscripts containing these headings date from the 12th century. The John Rylands manuscript contains the headings in a form 400 years older than the oldest of the other Eastern manuscripts, giving new insight into the history of these headings. The value of this manuscript can

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¹ I dedicate this paper to our colleague and friend Phil Botha upon his 65th birthday.

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be judged when its headings are compared to those in 6t1 and 12t4. Many headings have shorter and longer versions. In some instances, 18>8dt1 agrees with 12t4 and 6t1 in having a longer heading, as in Pss 2 and 9. Sometimes, 6t1 has a longer reading, while 12t4 and 18>8dt1 have shorter readings (Pss 11 and 42). This paper will explore the place of 18>8dt1 in the history of the East Syriac Psalm headings with a view to demonstrate the originality of many of the readings contained in this manuscript.

B THREE IMPORTANT MANUSCRIPTS WITH THE EAST SYRIAC HEADINGS

The manuscripts to which this contribution refers are among those for which the Peshitta Institute in Leiden developed a siglum to identify them for the publication of a critical edition of the Peshitta.³ Each siglum consists of three parts. The number at the beginning refers to the century to which the manuscript is dated, the following letter indicates the kind of manuscript and the number at the end distinguishes the different manuscripts of the specific group from the specific century. The siglum for the *codex ambrosianus* was used to indicate the basic format of the siglum for most of the books in the edition. It is 7a1, which means the first manuscript from the 7th century containing the whole Bible. The siglum 6t1 indicates the first manuscript of the Psalms from the 6th century, which is the oldest manuscript that contains the East Syriac headings.

The headings of the Psalms in the Hebrew Bible were not retained in the manuscripts of the Peshitta. Some Syriac Psalm manuscripts have no headings for the Psalms. Bloemendaal distinguishes four groups of manuscripts as far as headings are concerned. The groups are manuscripts with the East Syriac headings, manuscripts with the West Syrian tradition (as in 7a), the headings in editions such as the edition of Lee, and manuscripts with a mixture of headings.⁴ The East Syriac headings are related to the great commentary of Theodore of Mopsuestia on the Psalms, as Baethgen already stated in 1885.⁵

In a critical edition of the East Syriac Psalm headings, 17 different manuscripts were used, as well as three printed editions from the 19th century that contain these headings.⁶ For this contribution, three manuscripts are of

³ See Peshitta Institute, *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts (Preliminary issue)*; Leiden: Brill, 1961). A list of the manuscripts referred to is included before the Bibliography.

⁴ Willem Bloemendaal, *The Headings of the Psalms in the East Syrian Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), 2-3.

⁵ Friedrich Baethgen "Der Psalmencommentar des Theodorus von Mopsuestia in syrischer Bearbeitung," *ZAW* 5 (1885): 53.

⁶ For a discussion of the manuscripts and editions, see Herculaas F. van Rooy, *The East Syriac Psalm Headings: A Critical Edition, Texts and Studies: Third Series* 8. (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press), 2013, 53-66.

special importance, namely 18<8dt1, 6t1 and 12t4. They will be discussed briefly.

1 Manuscript 18<8dt1: Manchester, John Rylands Library, Rylands Syriac Manuscript 4

This manuscript dates to AD 1727 and was copied in China from an earlier manuscript, now lost.⁷ Originally, the earlier manuscript was dated to the 13th century, but later it was realised that the original manuscript dated from the 8th century, thus the siglum 18<8dt1.⁸

A complete description of this manuscript is given by Coakley.⁹ The first published information about the manuscript dates to 1831 in a note on Syriac manuscripts by S. de Sacy, who said he obtained the manuscript from the heirs of "M. l'abbé Brottier."¹⁰ The manuscript is a facsimile made in China. Mingana also refers to this manuscript. He has read the colophon of the manuscript and says it states the original manuscript dates to the year 1064 of the Greeks (that is AD 752/3), and 134 of the Hijrah, in the time of Cyprian, the metropolitan of Nisibis.¹¹ Coakley states the titles are those of the East Syrian tradition and that in some cases white space have replaced them entirely or in part. This means the headings or part of them had already been unclear to the Chinese copyist.¹² The original manuscript, copied in China, is older than the oldest Eastern manuscript that contains the headings of the Eastern tradition. The China copy of the original manuscript was read on microfilm at the Peshitta Institute in Leiden and the original China copy at the John Rylands Library as well.

2 Manuscript 6t1: London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 17,110

This manuscript dates from AD 600 or earlier. It had previously been given the number 7t1 in the list of the Peshitta Institute, but that was changed to 6t1.¹³ Wright published the first complete description of this manuscript.¹⁴ He notes

⁷ Peshitta Institute, *List*, 27.

⁸ James F. Coakley, "A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library," *BJRL* 75 (1993): 105-207 (122, note 39).

⁹ Coakley, "A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts," 120-123.

¹⁰ A. I. Sylvestre De Sacy, "Notice d'un manuscrit syriaque écrit à la Chine, contenant une portion de la version Syriaque de l'Ancien Testament, des Cantiques, e diverses prières," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Roi XII* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1831): 277.

¹¹ Alphonse Mingana, "The Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia and the Far East: A New Document," *BJRL* 9 (1925): 337.

¹² Coakley, "A Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts," 121.

¹³ Donald M. Walter, *The Book of Psalms* (The Old Testament in Syriac II 3; Leiden: Brill, 1980), VIII.

¹⁴ William Wright, *Catalogue of Syriac MSS in the British Museum, acquired after the year 1838 I* (London: British Museum, 1870), 116-119.

that the headings differ from those in the edition of Lee, as well as from those in additional manuscripts 14,436¹⁵ and 17,109¹⁶. The orthography of the manuscript is Western, while the headings are from the Eastern tradition.¹⁷

3 Manuscript 12t4: Baghdad, Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate, Manuscript 1113, folios 11^a-118^b (formerly Mossoul, Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate, Manuscript 1113)

Manuscript 12t4 dates from the 12th century. It is the most important Eastern text used for the critical edition of the Psalms.¹⁸ It has four headings for each Psalm. Three are linked to Eusebius, Athanasius and Theodore, while there are headings labelled "Hebrew".¹⁹

C THE HEADINGS IN THE RYLANDS MANUSCRIPT

Before discussing some headings in detail, the general view of variants in the East Syriac headings is briefly explained. In Peshitta manuscripts, the headings of the Hebrew text were not retained but replaced by different headings. In the East Syriac tradition, the headings are related to the interpretation of the psalms by Theodore of Mopsuestia. The heading, which usually gives a historical setting for a specific psalm, can be regarded as a short summary of Theodore's hypothesis at the beginning of his interpretation of a psalm. He did his interpretation in the light of the hypothesis.

The general view of these Syriac headings is offered by Vosté,²⁰ followed by Bloemendaal,²¹ namely that the East Syriac headings did not change much over the centuries, with the most important change the abbreviation of some headings in more recent manuscripts. A detailed study of the headings in 18>8dt1 and 12t4 presents a different picture. To illustrate this finding, a few examples will be discussed first. Not all variants in all the manuscripts will receive attention. The focus will be on the main trends that can be distinguished with reference to the three oldest manuscripts containing the Eastern headings, namely 6t1, 18>8dt1 and 12t4. The most important readings of the headings will

¹⁵ This manuscript contains both 9t2 and 10t3.

¹⁶ 9t3.

¹⁷ Bloemendaal, *Headings*, 13. This is the manuscript Bloemendaal used for his diplomatic edition of the headings.

¹⁸ Walter, *Psalms*, XXVII.

¹⁹ This manuscript was discussed in detail before; see Herculaas F. van Rooy, "The 'Hebrew, Psalm headings in the Syriac manuscript 12t4,'" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 25 (1999): 225-237, and Herculaas F. van Rooy, *Studies on the Syriac Apocryphal Psalms* (Journal of Semitic Studies Supplement 7; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁰ Jacques-Marie Vosté, "Sur les titres des psaumes dans le Pešitta, surtout d'après la recension orientale," *Bib.* 25 (1944): 210-235.

²¹ Bloemendaal, *Headings*, 20-21.

the heading in 6t1 has the same information as the other manuscripts but phrased in a slightly different way. Ps 11 is a good example in this regard.

In three instances, 6t1 has a heading different from the other manuscripts. The headings here have a slightly different setting, as is the case of Ps 20 discussed above. In this instance, 6t1 has no support from any manuscript. The same is true of the variant in Ps 46. In this instance, the commentary of Theodore has no reference to Hezekiah, as discussed above. In Ps 41, 6t1 has a reading that occurs in other manuscripts as well, but not in 18>8dt1 and 12t4. In these instances, 6t1 probably also reflects an early revision of the heading.

In a number of instances, 6t1 has a shorter heading. Some of these are related to a single word, as in Pss 20 and 41. In Ps 44, it omits the final phrase of the heading (as in M). As the reference to Antiochus, who forced the people, was part of the summary of Theodore²⁵ and as the heading makes more sense with the addition, the heading of 6t1 is probably secondary. See Ps 128, where 6t1 omits the last two words. More important are examples such as Ps 82, where 6t1 is substantially shorter. In this instance, the reading of 6t1 has substantial support, and the shorter heading is probably the original one. The same is true of the headings of Pss 108 and 110.

Psalm 126 is an interesting example, as discussed above. Some more recent witnesses have a much longer heading. A somewhat shorter heading occurs in the majority of manuscripts. 6t1 has a shortened heading, omitting the phrase "from building the temple". This phrase occurs in 18>8dt1, 12t4 and many other manuscripts. In this instance, 18>8dt1 and 12t4 probably have the original heading, while 6t1 has undergone an early revision and the more recent witnesses a much later revision, as discussed above. The same is true of Ps 146.

As far as other variants in 12t4 and 18>8dt1 are concerned, 18>8dt1 has only one unique reading (Ps 86), while 12t4 has quite a number of variants, sometimes supported by other manuscripts. This testifies to the probability that 18>8dt1 is much closer to the original than both 6t1 and 12t4.

D CONCLUSION

The examples discussed lead to the conclusion that 6t1 must not be regarded as the paradigmatic witness in all instances. Where 6t1 is supported by both 12t4 and 18>8dt1, the reading can be regarded as at least being close to the original. When 18>8dt1 supports 6t1, and 12t4 has variants, the reading of 6t1 and 18>8dt1 can be regarded as closer to the original. When 12t4 and 18>8dt1 have a reading different from 6t1, the reading of these two manuscripts is probably closer to the original.

²⁵ Hill, *Theodore*, 538-539.

E LIST OF MANUSCRIPTS

6t1	London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 17,110.
18>8dt1	Manchester, John Rylands Library, Rylands Syriac Manuscript 4.
12t1	London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 14,674, I, folios 1 ^a -78 ^b .
12t4	Baghdad, Library of the Chaldean Patriarchate, Manuscript 1113, folios 11 ^a -118 ^b .
13t1	London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 14,675.
13t2	London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 14,677.
13t3	London, British Library. Add. Manuscript 17,219.
13t4	Leiden, Peshitta Institute, Manuscript 5.
16t2	Jerusalem, Greek Patriarchate, Syriac Manuscript 27.
17t1	Cambridge, University Library, Manuscript Oo.1.22.
17t2	London, British Library, Add. Manuscript 7156.
17t3	Paris, National Library, Syriac Manuscript 24.
M25	Birmingham, University Library, Mingana Syriac Manuscript 25.
M428	Birmingham, University Library, Mingana Syriac Manuscript 428.
M507	Birmingham, University Library, Mingana Syriac Manuscript 507.
U	Old Testament published in Urmia in 1852.
U ^P	Psalter published in Urmia in 1891.
M	Syriac Bible published in Mosul between 1886 and 1891.

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Prof Herrie van Rooy, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Theology, North-West University, South Africa, Email Herrie.VanRooy@nwu.ac.za. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5032-2356>.