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## ETYMOLOGICAL PARALLELS: Mtskheta - *mashītā*/*mašqītā* - *dimašq*

The following article presents the etymologies of Mtskheta, Damascus (*dimašq*), and the historic Syrian settlement of Maskhita (*mashītā* < *mašqītā*). The conducted analysis established a connection between them. In particular, the name of the Georgian capital Mtskheta (as well as Samtskhe) is etymologically associated with Meskheti, which probably originates from the ancient tribe of Mushks/Mosokhs of Asia Minor (cf. Biblical Meshekh). To study this problem, linguistic data are noteworthy, especially the proper and geographical names of the Old East, domestic, agricultural, and lexical units of other contents.

The name of the historic village Maskhita (*mashītā*) near the Syrian port city of Latakia is written in Arabic using *šīn* and *qāf* (*mašqītā* – مشقينا). Such written tradition reflects old, historical circumstances. The settlement must have been founded by the ancient Assyrians, hence its name is of non-Arabic origin and it, in our opinion, must be related to the tribe of Mushks. In oral speech, the substitution of ‘Mashqita’ (*mašqītā*) with ‘Maskhita’ (*mashītā*) should be explained by the influence of spoken Arabic. In ancient times, namely, in the second millennium BC, Mushks were living in the well-watered lands of Upper Mesopotamia. Their migrations have been studied. Ivane Javakhishvili considered the ancestors of the Kartvelian tribes of Mushks and Tobals as the emigrants from Asia Minor in the pre-ancient period. It should be mentioned that the Mushks from Mesopotamia created a kingdom in Cappadocia. Their capital was named ‘Masakha’, which is associated with their patriarch, ‘Mosokh’ (Josephus Flavius).

The tribal name ‘Mushk’ (*mušk*) is, in our opinion, also found in the name of the ancient city Damascus (in Arabic – *dimašq*). In Aramaic, we have *dammašq*, in ancient Hebrew *dammešeq*. *darmešeq* is recorded in the inscriptions of Qumran. The first member in *dār mešeq* – *dār* means dwelling, and the second member – *mešeq*, in our opinion, means the tribe of Mushks. Thus, *dimašq* (دمشق) can be translated as the abode of Mushks. The presented etymology of Damascus is proposed for the first time based on a comparative analysis of the scientific literature.

**Keywords:** *Mtskheta, dimašq, Mushks, etymology*