

## SURAMI IN GEORGIAN LANGUAGE LITERARY WORKS OF ISRAEL<sup>1</sup>

Keywords: *Surami, Jews, Urbanization, Railway, Israel*

Surami was one of the most important cities of Kartli in ancient times. In the distant past, there was an important trade-caravan route from east to west which is mentioned in the historical sources as far back as BC. The information can be found in the works of Greek historians and geographers of IV-III centuries. The small town of Surami was located in the very center of Georgia, which contributed to its multifaceted development. Such a favorable geographical location has always made this place very attractive.

In the 18th century, Surami was inhabited by Georgians, Armenians and Jews. The Jews lived in the vicinity of the Surami fortress and pursued trade and handicrafts.

In addition to economic, political, and demographic factors, the Jewish social factor must have had some influence on the urban development of Surami, especially during the period of globalization when the capitalist mode of production took on a perfect form. The agrarian sector, which was the basis of agriculture, was replaced by a trade-making relationship. The domestic market was expanding, both domestic and foreign trade was growing in which more or less all parts of Georgia would be involved. The gradually growing economic ties between the regions of Georgia put an end to the isolation. The class of merchants was growing and expanding. Along with trade, pawnbrokers started to lend money at interest. Surami Jews were actively involved in these processes.

One of the contributing factors to the urbanization process is an increase of the urban population. The Surami Jews whose main occupation was trade gradually developed into the civic population. They had large families. They established close trading ties with neighboring countries and in this respect they found themselves in a somewhat advantageous situation in the region – Surami was a place where all kinds of deficit goods could be purchased. The number of the Jewish population in Surami was growing, thus contributing to the process of urbanization, which, with rare exceptions, took place in fairly peaceful conditions. Centuries of peaceful coexistence with Georgians have finally shaped the identity of Surami Jew who is symbolically an offspring of two nations: he speaks Georgian, wears Georgian clothes, follows certain Georgian traditions and at the same time strongly adheres to the Jewish religious way of life.

It was such peaceful coexistence with Georgians that led to the sweet memories and strong nostalgia of Surami Jews after their return to Israel. Many of them are also successful in Israel in various fields. Some of them are creative. The source of inspiration for a large part of the intelligentsia is the longing for the Georgian reality, including Surami, which is realistically reflected in their works.

For example, Izolda Krikheli, one of the representatives of Georgian émigré literature, immortalized the Jews living in Surami in the 20th century in her book "Surami: Dream and Reality" who together with the Georgian people endured the cruel events of this difficult period. She describes the reality impartially, introducing the reader with the Jews who were born in Surami and contributed to the reconstruction of Georgia with their dignified secular or religious activities. The book provides a brief overview of the history of Surami and the role Surami Jews played in it. The title of the book points to the special relationship between the two nations - the author lived in Surami and dreamed of Israel, now she is in Israel and dreams of Surami ...

The writings of Georgian Jews on the topic of Surami Jews tells us a lot about the lifestyle, occupation and history of the small Jewish community and their role in the urban development of Surami

---

<sup>1</sup> The work was supported by Rustaveli National Science Foundation (SRNSF). Grant number: FR-21-19474 "Georgia through the Eyes of the Jews - Archiving and Literary Linguistic Analysis of Georgian Printed Products Issued in Israel".