

Övgü Ülgen

Translation / Traduction

**Introduction to Turkish Jews in Canada:
Translator's Notes**

I conducted the following interview with Roger and Ida Gilodo, an Istanbul-born Turkish Jewish couple who immigrated to Toronto in the 1970s in Turkish (my native language) and translated it myself. The excerpt is drawn from my doctoral research and was recorded in Toronto in July 2020. I listened to the trajectories of the Gilodo's migration story during that warm summer day, and was struck not just by the transnational nature of their lives in Turkey, Israel and Canada, but with the uncertainties and anxieties created by the world-wide COVID-19 outbreak.

Following their expulsion from the Iberian Peninsula in the fifteenth century, some Castilian Jews settled in the Ottoman Empire and carried their medieval Judeo-Spanish language with them. Ladino or Judezmo is the first sub-variety of this language which prospered in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire. The majority of the Jews who lived in the early Republican period in Turkey spoke Ladino as their mother tongue, like Ida's grandmother.

In 1942, *Varlık Vergisi* (a wealth tax) was instrumentalized as a Turkification policy during the early Republican period. Although Turkey remained neutral during World War II, it levied a specific tax on its non-Muslim populations—and Jews were no exception. The main objective of this tax was to raise funds of wartime. It was a heavy tax that aimed to provide resources for the nation's treasury and the redistribution of non-Muslims' wealth to the Muslim bourgeoisie. The non-Muslims thus had to pay more taxes than other ethnicities, like Roger's grandfather.

As Ida told me during the interview, Ladino is now a dying language. I hope that more people who are linguaphiles, like myself, would wish to learn this language thanks to the recent documented Netflix series called *Kulüp* (The Club) that focuses on the life of Turkish Jews in 1950s Istanbul.

While translating the interview, I pondered the subtle differences between the meanings of the Turkish expressions and idioms and the possible translations in French and English. Translating the original phrases and word choices into English and French created semantic shifts. As I searched for similar, vernacular idioms in French and English to try to capture something of the Gilodos' casual tone, I began to think about the importance of effective translation, and how tricky it is to translate the meanings of many Turkish expressions into foreign target languages. Like writing an article or a novel, I realized that, while translating, one must not only master available target language phrasing, but devote plenty of time for weighing options and editing. Translators embark on an arduous and lonely journey with words, meanings, sentences and paragraphs that can make their heads spin, yet translating can be quite enjoyable when it is done meticulously and with pleasure.