

Eric T. Schluessel (University of Montana in Missoula, USA)

**Practice of Turkic Translation in Xinjiang (Chinese Central Asia) in the Late Qing Period**

Time: Wednesday, 22 November, at 15.15

Place: Engelska parken, Uppsala, room 9-3042

**Abstract:**

Scholars of the Qing empire (1636/44-1911) are increasingly interested in the problems of translation. It is clear that translating or interpreting between multiple languages was a political and potentially very powerful act on multiple levels, from imperial expressions of universal rule to commercial transactions. The theories and practices that informed translation, however, remain obscure. This talk explores a series of acts of translation and their meanings in a multilingual, multicultural, and multiconfessional society, Xinjiang (Chinese Central Asia) in the late Qing, roughly 1877-1911. During this period, a conservative Chinese ruling elite subjected this region's Turkic-speaking Muslim majority to a top-down program of social, moral, and political transformation. Where previously translation had mainly taken place in written communication between the region's native elites and the Qing government, now acts of translation and interpretation became an increasingly frequent occurrence for ordinary people. In this lecture, we will examine three kinds of translation, each of which followed a different method that reflected the backgrounds and priorities of the participants. We will see how ordinary Turkic Muslims could make their demands intelligible to the local Chinese bureaucracy; how a Manchu and a Protestant missionary transformed an imperial morality text into an Islamic scripture; and how another group failed to communicate entirely. Each case will illuminate practices that we are not necessarily accustomed to thinking of as "translation."

**Eric T. Schluessel** is Assistant Professor of Chinese History and Politics at the University of Montana in Missoula, USA. He graduated from Harvard University with a PhD in History and East Asian Languages and holds an MA in Central Eurasian Studies from Indiana University and an MA in Linguistics from the School of Oriental and African Studies. Prof. Schluessel's research focuses on the social history of China and Central Asia in the eighteenth through twentieth centuries, particularly of Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan). His recent publications include several articles on Qing legal history. His textbook *An Introduction to Chaghatay* will be published by Maize Books.