

## **Sogdian Translators in Tang China: An Issue of Loyalty**

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### **Abstract**

Language is essential in human interactions. Its social function in multilingual and multicultural contexts is largely facilitated through translation. Translation bridges ideas expressed by people speaking different languages and it enhances social justice by securing people's rights to be heard and informed. The constructive role of translation in promoting social justice among people speaking different languages, however, is predicated on the assumption that translators are trustworthy. Yet translation can be manipulated to serve personal goals in such a way that justice can be compromised. In this presentation, I will talk about claims of biased translations by Sogdian translators in Tang China's (618–907) dealings with Turkic-speaking Uighurs (744–839), based on standard archival evidence in which translators' integrity was questioned in inter-state politics. China's growing suspicion of the integrity of Sogdian translators in the Tang court was fixated on their ethnic and business affiliation with the Uighurs; but was it justifiable, or were these non-Chinese translators wronged based on groundless accusations? This presentation will examine "justice" from both sides: the translation patron and the translators in late Tang China politics.

**Key Words:** Translation in Medieval China; Manipulation; Translators' Integrity, Sogdian Translators.