

## Macalester Professor's book offers new perspective on the Qur'an and modern Islam in Turkey

**St. Paul, Minn.** – Religious Studies Prof. Brett Wilson's new book, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism - Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford University Press, 2014), explores how the Qur'an – the central text of Islam – became a modern book.

Until the late nineteenth century, the Qur'an was copied by hand in Turkey, and it was illegal to publish translations until the 1920s. Wilson's book examines how Muslims in Turkey, Egypt and around the Muslim world decided that the modernization of their holy text – via print and translation – was essential for Muslim societies in the modern age.

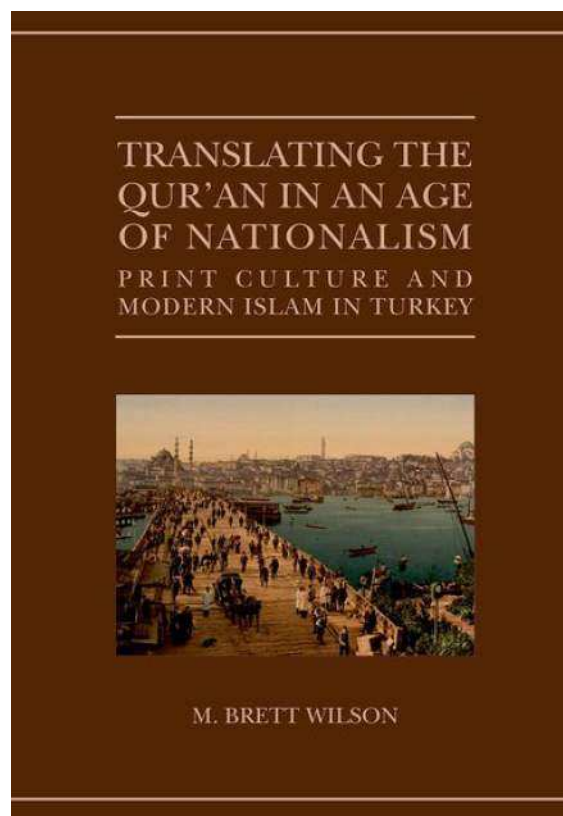
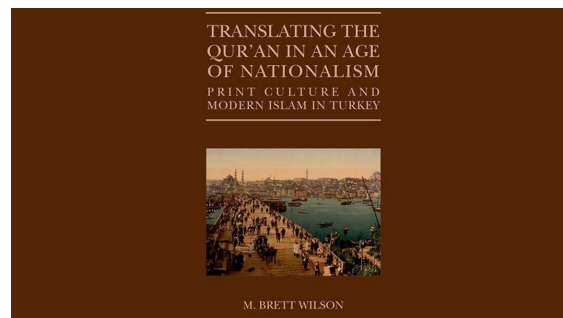
“Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German has often been cited as a decisive turning point in the history of Christianity,” said Wilson. “In this book, I explore how Muslims approached the translation of their central religious text and the transformations that it brought about in Turkey and the broader Muslim world.”

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic, and most Muslim scholars have held the view that the Arabic of the Qur'an is divine language. Therefore, many Muslims consider translations of the Qur'an impossible. Nevertheless, in recent centuries, translated versions of the Qur'an have gained widespread acceptance by Muslim communities. In Turkey, translations in the 1920s and 30s sparked controversy around the Muslim world when the first president of Turkey – Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – attempted to introduce Turkish translations into mosque rituals. The ensuing debates defined how translations would be used in the contemporary Muslim world.

Focusing on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, and following the debates to Russia, Egypt, Indonesia, and India, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism* tries to answer the question of how this revolution in Qur'anic book culture occurred, considering both intellectual history as well the processes by which the Qur'an became a modern book that could be mechanically reproduced and widely owned.

Wilson's book was recently published by Oxford University Press in the United Kingdom.

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