

## A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF AN-NAWAWI'S FORTY *AHĀDĪTH*

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### ABSTRACT

*Two translations of An-Nawawi's compilation of forty Ahādīth carried out by M. O.A. Abdul, on the one hand, and M. Bashir Sambo and Muhammad Higab, on the other, have been subjected to critical analysis. This is with a view to discovering the extent to which they have been faithful to the original text. Having been written as textbooks for secondary school students to pass the Senior Secondary School Leaving Certificate Examinations in Islamic Religious Knowledge, it can be understood that the books should conform to the level of the students in language, form and content. Nevertheless, this study has discovered that the works have shortcomings in conveying the meanings intended in the source language. Some of the factors responsible for this include the differences in lexis and structure of both Arabic, the source language, and English, the target language. More importantly, the proper understanding of the intended meanings as expressed in the source language coupled with ability to effectively express the same in English has been a great challenge for both authors. The method adopted for this study is comparative and narrative analysis of two selected translations. The article concludes that people to embark on the translation of Hadīth should avoid the pitfalls identified while teachers using translations for teaching should be on the look-out to discover deficiencies in such works with a view to making up for them.*

**Keywords:** Comparative, Translations, An-Nawawi, Forty Ahādīth

### INTRODUCTION

Students of Islamic Studies in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria cannot but come across the study of *Ahādīth* (pl. of *Hadīth*). In most cases, such students do not have good background in Arabic to enable them to read and understand the Arabic texts of the *Ahādīth*. As a way out, recourse is made to the English translation of the *Ahādīth* being studied. Pupils in pre-secondary schools, both public and private, mostly learn *Ahādīth* in translations into the local languages usually done extempore by teachers.

Many Nigerian scholars of repute have taken up the challenge of making the *Ahādīth* accessible to people literate in English. Prominent among them are M. O. A. Abdul, on the one hand, and M. Bashir Sambo and Muhammad Higab, on the other. There is no doubt that the works of these scholars have contributed immensely to the sustenance and expansion of the study of Islam generally and *Hadīth* in particular not only in Nigeria but also in West Africa and beyond. It is not out of place here to admit that this writer is one of the thousands of students who have profitably benefited from the works of these great scholars. In fact, this writer had the privilege of being a student of M. O. A. Abdul at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, for a period of more than a decade pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

In the light of the information given above, it is pertinent to mention that this study is a humble attempt to caution fellow teachers especially in the area of Islamic Studies to be on the look-out when using English translated books to teach *Hadīth*. This is not to claim that one knows better than the authors whose books are being used, but that there may be reasons to supplement, explain or modify the translations to make them more faithful to the original text or draw attention, more appropriately, to the intended meaning and teachings of the *Ahādīth*. This, of course, will be impossible if such a teacher does not understand the Arabic text of the *Hadīth* himself. As such, a teacher of Islamic

Studies, as a matter of importance, has to be proficient in Arabic to facilitate his access to and use of the original sources in Arabic. This effort becomes all the more important in view of the recent trends among some Muslim youth organizations to challenge the authority of Islamic Studies scholars just because some of their members happen to understand Arabic and read certain books on Islam.

The choice of the translations of An-Nawawi's Forty *Ahādīth* for this study is a matter of course. The book serves as the premier for the study of *Ahādīth* not only in Nigeria but also almost all over the Muslim world. Both West African Examinations Council (WAEC)<sup>1</sup> and National Examinations Council (NECO) prescribe the book for the candidates of the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. With this, Islamic Studies scholars in Nigeria have devoted attention to the book more than any other work on *Hadīth*. More importantly, the books being examined here are easily available in both the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria.

Apart from this introduction, this article consists of five other sections. They respectively look into the importance of An-Nawawi's compilation of forty *Ahādīth*, introduction to the translations under study, taking samples from them, and critical examination of the samples with a view to identifying and analyzing their deficiencies. Recommendations follow while conclusion rounds off the paper.

### IMPORTANCE OF AN-NAWAWI'S COMPILATION OF FORTY AHĀDĪTH

In his introduction to the compilation of forty *Ahādīth*, Imam Yahya ibn Sharaf ad-Dīn an-Nawawi, the author, admitted that the motivation for the compilation was to emulate scholars who had reacted to the saying of the Prophet (P.B.O.H.) urging people to memorise and preserve forty *Ahādīth*. The Prophet is reported to have given the promise that handsome rewards, including the privilege of being in the company of jurists and religious scholars on the Day of Judgment, would be given to those who heeded the instruction.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the popularity of the *Hadīth* having been reported by quite a good number of Companions, the unanimous decision of *Hadīth* scholars is that it is weak (*Da'īf*). The question now arises: Why did the author rely on a weak *Hadīth* to make the compilation? According to Imam An-Nawawi, it is permissible to use weak *Ahādīth* as the basis for voluntary acts with a view to earning additional rewards from Allah.<sup>3</sup> The issue of the quality of a *Hadīth* attracts serious attention when it forms the basis of obligatory actions that attract rewards, if carried out, and failure to do which attracts punishment. Nevertheless, he claimed to have based his effort rather on the instruction of the Prophet that people should preserve and impart knowledge received from him to others.<sup>4</sup> In other words, this great scholar would not like to be accused of basing his action on a weak *Hadīth*, hence, his reference to other sound (*Ṣaḥīḥ*) *Ahādīth* urging the Companions to transmit instructions received from the Prophet to others. However, he did not give any justification for compiling only forty *Ahādīth* in the book.

Despite the fact that many compilations of forty *Ahādīth* had been made before and after that of An-Nawawi, there is no gainsaying that the compilation has held sway and has almost exclusively dominated the stage for the past eight centuries.<sup>5</sup> With each day passing, its popularity grows wider as many children and students of Islam get introduced to it here and there throughout the Muslim world. Why has this compilation enjoyed such unique recognition and acceptance?

It has to be admitted that it is almost impossible to identify the exact factor responsible for the popularity of any scholarly work. All one can do in this respect is to identify probable factors and relate them to the success story. In the light of this, among the factors one may identify in this respect are the quality of the compilation in terms of its contents, relevance to the daily needs of the rank and file of Muslims for which it is meant, simplicity of approach by dropping long chains of transmitters, precision and conciseness of expressions.<sup>6</sup> The language of most of the *Ahādīth* compiled is so simple and straightforward that one need not labour much to understand them.

The personality of the author is another important factor. To say the least, Imam An-Nawawi was one of the greatest scholars of *Hadīth* that have ever appeared. He wrote many works on *Hadīth* including *Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn* and *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Imām Muslim*. In addition, Imam An-Nawawi produced so many students consisting of those who had personal contacts with him and others who learnt from him through his works. He was such a dedicated and objective scholar that he would always go for

authentic *Ahādīth* and would not mind to admit publicly if at all he had to cite *Ahādīth* deficient in one way or the other.<sup>7</sup> His preference for arranging *Ahādīth* according to their subject-matters could not but have endeared him to scholars for facilitating reference and cross-checking.

### Translated works under study:

The two translations under study are:

1. M.O.A. Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam: Life, Sayings and Deeds (An Introduction to the Study of Hadīth)* (120 pp.).<sup>8</sup>
2. M. Bashir Sambo and Mohammad Higab, *Islamic Religious Knowledge for WASC, Book 3, Hadīth* (140 pp.).<sup>9</sup>

It is self-evident that the two books have been written as textbooks for Secondary School students to prepare for the West African School Certificate Examinations in Islamic Religious Knowledge. In the light of this, each of the books discusses the life history of the Prophet, the four rightly guided caliphs, the science of *Hadīth* and the Arabic text, transliteration and translation of An-Nawawi's Forty *Ahādīth*.

It is pertinent to mention at this juncture that works done for specific purposes like this cannot but have "a few blemishes here and there" as remarked by M. S. El-Garh in his foreword to the first book.<sup>10</sup> The focus of both books is primarily to satisfy the immediate need of providing textbooks for the secondary school students. The constraints of the books become more apparent if one bears in mind the variety and scope of topics discussed. Given the size of both books respectively and the number of topics treated against the backdrop of the immediate readership in mind, whatever the "blemishes" one may point out here are not unexpected and do not fairly reflect the academic status of the authors.

Perhaps to further drive home the fact mentioned above, at least M.O.A. Abdul acknowledges indebtedness to Monton Company, Hague, "for their kind permission to use part of the English translations of An-Nawawi as in Arthur Jeffery (ed.) *A Reader on Islam*."<sup>11</sup> In other words, the translation under study did not originate from the author partially or totally. Many reasons might account for that, major among which could be the pressure of meeting the time limit. Evidently, the authors were commissioned by the publisher to write the books.

Much as the excuses above have been given to avoid drawing wrong conclusions from this humble effort, the fact still remains that the two translations under review are largely used by teachers of Islamic Studies at the various levels of institutions of learning in Nigeria. To that extent, it is necessary to analyse the books. Whatever may be the shortcomings discovered may be made up for by teachers while other prospective authors may take the advantage of this paper to avoid the pitfalls identified here.

### SAMPLES FROM THE TRANSLATIONS

To save space and time, the chain of transmitters is dispensed with. The Arabic texts of the *Ahādīth* are not produced here as well. Since there is almost perfect agreement between the two works on the Arabic texts just as it is the case with other books treating the Forty *Ahādīth*, it suffices to mention the number of the *Ahādīth* referred to with the hope that any book containing the *Ahādīth* will be consulted for confirmation. However, quotations from the texts are made to clarify issues and drive home points.

Only three *Ahādīth* have been selected. The selection is mainly based on the size to avoid too lengthy a paper and to focus attention on issues at stake. It has to be admitted that some other shortcomings having no resemblance to those discovered in the samples taken may be found in other *Ahādīth*. In short, the following discussions do not speak for all other *Ahādīth* in the book except the ones selected. Other researchers may make further discoveries.

**Ḥadīth I****Translation I<sup>12</sup>**

From the Commander of the Faithful, Abū Hafs ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb who said: "I heard the Apostle of God say: 'Works (will be rewarded) only in accordance with the intentions, so each man will receive only according to what he intended. Thus, he whose migration (from Mecca to Medina) was for the sake of God and His Apostle (will be rewarded for) a migration for the sake of God and His Apostle, but he whose migration was for the sake of some worldly thing he might gain, or for a wife he might marry, his migration (will be rewarded) according to that for the sake of which he migrated".<sup>13</sup>

**Translation II**

On the authority of ʿUmar b. al-Khattāb [may Allah be pleased with him] who said: "Actions must be judged according to intentions. And for every man is that which he intends [to achieve].

He who migrates towards Allah and His Messenger, he really migrated towards Allah and His Messenger. And he who migrated towards the worldly things or towards a woman he intends to marry, his migration is really towards which he migrated.<sup>14</sup>

On the level of language, Translation I has the problem of the agreement of tenses – future and past tenses - as shown in the first sentence (Actions will be rewarded ... each man will receive only according to what he intended). Since the statement talks about a natural fact, it is more seemly and correct to change the tense of "intended" to the Present Simple Tense to become "intends". As far as Translation II is concerned, there is no need for emphasis by using the phrase "must be judged". Also the use of "towards" to translate the particle *ʾilā* in Arabic does not conform to the context. Words or phrases like "for", "for the purpose of" or "for the sake of" are more appropriate in the context.

Coming to the meaning and import of the *Ḥadīth*, the two translations have some flaws. In the case of the first, the author appears to be interested in the eschatological implications of intentions for actions. Thus, he talks of being rewarded. The statement translated is *إنما الأعمال بالنيّات* which evidently has no word relating to rewards. The simple translation "Actions (or works/deeds) are by intention" is more faithful to the text.

It may be wondered why we criticise the use of the word "rewarded" in this context since we are talking about deeds in Islam, the religion that attaches importance to the legal and spiritual consequences of deeds in most cases. The reason is that there are differences between the meaning of *Niyyah* as a lexical item in Arabic and a terminology in Islamic Theology, Law, Jurisprudence and other fields of Islamic Studies. For instance, talking about the Islamic Law, it is not every action that attracts rewards whether positive or negative. Actions considered to be *Mubāḥ* "Legally Neutral" are without rewards or punishment.<sup>15</sup> With reference to Theology, the question of *Niyyah* is fundamental and has to do with dedication of actions to Allah and sincerity of purpose. Anything short of this amounts to *Shirk*, a heinous and unforgivable sin in Islam that forfeits and nullifies supposedly acts of worship.<sup>16</sup> In the same vein, jurists talk of *Niyyah* to identify and classify actions into the various legal groups. For instance, *Niyyah* is required to differentiate between compulsory and voluntary actions such as *Salātun Farīdah* and *Nāfilah*, *Zakāt* and *Sadaqah*, obligatory and voluntary fasts, just to mention a few. In the light of this, it is safer and more faithful to the original text to avoid the use of the word "reward" in the translation.

In the case of Translation II, the emphasis is on the legal implications of actions a fact which the text does not apparently lead to. Accordingly, the facts given above in relation to the meaning and implications of *Niyyah* as used in the various disciplines relating to Islam also apply here. In addition, one may ask: Is the intention alone enough to determine the worth of an action? There is no doubt that the issue of *Niyyah* is of paramount importance in Islam. As such, many verses of the Qur'ān, *Aḥādīth* and *Āthār* (statements of predecessors) are unequivocally explicit on this fact. Nevertheless, the question of reward takes into consideration more than the intention. Accordingly, three conditions are required to be fulfilled before an action attracts the anticipated rewards. They are piety, good intention and conforming to Prophet's guidance for the action.<sup>17</sup> Thus, intention alone is not the parameter to determine the quality of actions especially when it comes to being rewarded.

**Hadīth 17****Translation I**

From Abu Ya'la Shaddād b. Aws [relating] from the Apostle of God who said: "Verily, God has prescribed the best behaviour with regard to everything. So if you kill make it a good killing; if you slaughter make it good slaughter; let each one of you put a good edge on the knife and make his victim die quickly".<sup>18</sup>

**Translation II**

On the authority of Shaddād Ibn Aws [may Allah be pleased with him] who said: "Allah enjoins man to practice goodness in everything he does. Therefore, when you kill, kill in the proper way, and when you slaughter, slaughter in the proper way. And one of you should sharpen his knife and make his victim comfortable".<sup>19</sup>

As far as the language is concerned, the expression in Translation I "... God has prescribed the best behaviour with regard to everything" is awkward. The problem here is the dictionary meaning of *Ihsān* which, among other things, means "right action", "goodness", "charity", "proficiency", "doing something properly", just to mention a few.<sup>20</sup> As far as this context is concerned, it is apparent that "proficiency" or "doing something properly" fits in better than any other option. This context resembles that of some verses in the Qur'ān and *Ahādīth* in which أحسن has been used with this meaning.<sup>21</sup> One is also uncomfortable with the expression "put a good edge on the knife". Rather, it is more familiar and straightforward to say "sharpen the knife". Similarly, the phrase "making his victim die quickly" does not convey the meaning intended in the *Hadīth* based on the original Arabic text. The command فليريح among other things, means "allow to rest", "grant rest to", "relieve" or "spare (of the rigour, discomfort or agony of ...)"<sup>22</sup> Of course, "spare" is more appropriate in this context.

In the case of Translation II, the expression "to practise goodness ..." does not convey any clear meaning. It is ambiguous. The word "proficiency" or "to be proficient" is more appropriate. The expression "killing the victim in the proper way" appears to be close to the meaning intended in the original text. The idea of making an animal to be slaughtered comfortable can hardly be imagined. One can only minimize the suffering to the barest minimum by "sparing" the victim of unnecessary discomfort.

About the meaning and teaching of the *Hadīth*, the main message is that one should acquire the necessary know-how before embarking on anything. Not only that, one should be in the psychological condition and be mentally alert to do the appropriate thing in the appropriate manner and place. The expectation here is that one should be close to being perfect although man, by nature, is not and can never be perfect.

In view of the facts stated above, it is difficult, if not impossible, to grasp the import of the *Hadīth* fully based on the Translations I and II above. Failure to use the appropriate word to translate *Al-Ihsān* in consonance with the context has robbed the translations of their effectiveness. The lesson of not exposing the animal to be killed to unnecessary difficulty and hardship as a result of lack of knowledge and required skills is missing. More importantly, the principle of learning and acquiring adequate skills about anything before embarking on it is lost. Ignorance is a disease and a dangerous one for that matter. Effrontery to take the life of the animal without having any feeling for it is expressly against the teachings of the *Hadīth*.<sup>23</sup>

In the same vein, the other shades of the meaning of the word *Ihsān* are also important—righteousness, goodness and good conduct just to mention a few. Many people tend to derive joy and satisfaction from the suffering of others. This is bad, to say the least. The case is even worse if such suffering is as a result of the punishment from or high-handedness of those being thrilled. It is the teaching of Islam that one should love for others what one loves for oneself.<sup>24</sup>

**Hadīth 40****Translation I**

From Ibn ‘Umar who said: “The Apostle of God took me by the shoulder and said: “Be in this world as though you were a stranger or traveler”. Now Ibn ‘Umar used to say: “When evening comes on you, do not expect morning, and when morning comes do not expect evening. Take from your health (precaution) for your sickness, and from your life for your death”.<sup>25</sup>

**Translation II**

On the authority of Ibn ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with them) who said: “The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) took hold of my shoulder and said: “Be in this world as a stranger or as a wayfarer”. Ibn ‘Umar used to say: "If it becomes the evening, do not expect the morning, and if it becomes the morning do not expect the evening. Take from your health to your illness, and from your life to your death”.<sup>26</sup>

On the level of language, Translation I fails to translate *رضي الله عنهما* “May Allah be pleased with both of them” being the traditional accolade or compliment accorded the companions when their names are mentioned both in speech or writing. It appears the author decided to do this to economise space or avoid unnecessary repetition. There is nothing wrong in giving the English translation of the complimentary prayer. This is important to impress on the reader one of the Islamic traditions especially when the book is meant primarily for students.

As far as Translation II is concerned, it appears the expression “took hold of my shoulder” is queer. “Held or took me by the shoulder” seems more correct. “When it becomes the evening... the morning” is also strange in English. Apart from this, it does not fully convey the meaning as intended in the original language. It does not reflect the meaning of the personal pronoun in *أَصْبَحْتَ* and *أَمْسَيْتَ* (when you witness the evening or live or are alive in the evening/morning ...). The reflection of the personal pronoun shows that the focus of attention is the Second Person being addressed. One should constantly bear in mind that the alternation of days and nights is not for fun. Sooner or later, one is going to witness an evening after which one will not witness the following morning or vice versa.

**Analysis Of The Shortcomings Discovered**

The two translations being studied here have been written as a section of a book treating the wide topics of the pre-Islamic life of the Arabs, the life history of the Prophet, the caliphate of the Orthodox Caliphs, the science of *Hadīth* and its compilation as well as the text, translation and comments on the *Ahādīth* contained in An-Nawawi’s Collection of Forty *Ahādīth*. Without any doubt, it is unfair to evaluate the quality of the translation of *Ahādīth* in a book like this the same way one would treat that of another work exclusively on the translation.

Secondly, the purpose of writing the books was to provide a book for Secondary School students in West Africa in preparation for their final Secondary School Certificate Examinations. In the light of this, the aim was mainly to allow the students to have an idea of the contents of the *Ahādīth* translated to the extent that they might be able to pass the examinations. They would have better exposure to the subject if they proceeded to study Islamic Studies at the tertiary level. This fact must have constrained the authors to use as simple language as possible to accord with the level of the students’ understanding.

Bearing in mind the peculiarities of the two works being studied in terms of their focus, the variety and scope of topics treated and the level of their target readership, it is not unexpected that they may contain some “blemishes”. However, it is pertinent to mention here that the teachers of Islamic Studies need to bear the shortcomings pointed out herewith in mind so as to make up for them while using the textbooks under study. This exercise is also useful to remind prospective writers of the need to guard against the pitfalls of the past. In the end, there will be improvement on the quality of learning/teaching process especially in relation to *Hadīth*.

As far as the use of language is concerned, translation from Arabic into English is usually beset by so many problems. The main reason for this is the fact that both the source and target languages have fundamental differences in lexis, structure, grammar, syntax and cultural background.<sup>27</sup> The problems

become compounded if the texts relate to religion and circumstances not expressly disclosed. The main factor responsible for this complexity especially in connection with the *Ahādīth* is that many of the statements of the Prophet are concise and pithy. The understanding of each individual differs and this goes a long way to influence the translation. Even simple statements or instructions may be understood in different ways.<sup>28</sup>

In the light of the point made above, one may not be surprised to discover inconsistency in the use of tenses. This is apparently due to the influence of the sentence structure in Arabic in which the Past Tense is used whereas the meaning intended is that of the present tense especially to refer to something habitual. Thus, sentences like وإنما لكلّ امرئ ما نوى translated in Translation I as "...so each man will receive only according to what he intended" are not uncommon in Arabic-English translations.

Another problem that often occurs in translations is the influence of the dictionary meaning at the expense of the contextual meaning. For instance, the translation of the expression ومن كانت هجرته إلى الله ورسوله as "He who migrates towards Allah and His Messenger (Translation II) reflects the literal translation of the particle إلى (meaning "to" or "towards"). Ordinarily, this translation does not give the meaning of the purpose but of destination whereas the Divine Being, to all intents and purposes, is not in particular place where He can be located and reached. He is close to the creatures anywhere they may be. The use of إلى in Arabic is apparently to give the meaning of the purpose and literarily to balance the pair of the particles من and إلى ("from" and "to"). In short, expressions like "for the sake of" or "for the purpose of" convey the meaning more faithfully and effectively.

About the meaning and teachings of the *Ahādīth*, the problem of over-generalisation and assumption of meaning and implications has been observed. For instance, the first statement in the first *Hadīth* gives only the fact that actions are according to intentions. Nothing in the statement gives the meaning of judgment or reward. As explained above, issues relating to the intention (*Niyyah*) in terms of meaning whether ordinary or technical as well as their implications and significance have to be related to their background and contexts to fully grasp them.

The fact mentioned above applies to the translations of *Ihsān* as "the best behaviour" (Translation I) and "goodness" (Translation II) respectively. It is true that both meanings given apply to the word except that they do not fit well in this context. In fact, the use of the word or its derivatives is along the line of these translations in most parts of the Qur'ān and many *Ahādīth*.<sup>29</sup> but it is apparent that the meaning of proficiency, doing things in the proper way based on adequate knowledge and acquisition of relevant skills is meant here. Having imbibed this meaning, one understands that killing or slaughtering animals according to the *Hadīth* calls for serious caution, self-examination and evaluation. By extension and in line with the introductory statement of the *Hadīth*, this principle should be applied to everything one intends to embark on. Without knowledge and necessary skills, there is no way one can make a success of any undertaking. In fact, the probability of creating problems and causing dangers is higher in that case than achieving desirable goals. In short, it is necessary to relate words and terms properly to their contexts to determine which translation applies appropriately.

The translations of the word خذ in both translations do not give the meaning intended adequately. Translation I says "Take from your health (a precaution) for your sickness...". To say the least, Translation II is too literal, obscuring the meaning. Translation II gives the meaning of taking caution. The questions here are "How?" Does it mean that one should exercise caution in the use of one's health to avoid sickness? To some extent, this is acceptable except that the question of sickness is sometimes beyond what one can take precaution against. In this sense, the *Hadīth* has limited application. The shortcoming becomes more apparent if related to the concluding statement of the *Hadīth* that man alternately experiences good health and sickness, on the one hand, and life and death, on the other. Health and life in each of both pairs respectively are positive and desirable to man while the other two are negative and man does not want them even though they are inevitable. The message is that while enjoying good health, one should not forget that one may fall sick and while alive, one should not forget death. To avoid regrets, one should take advantage of good health and life respectively to make preparations for the impending sickness and death. In other words, the translation

is better put as follows: Take (advantage) of your health (in preparation) for your sickness and of your life for your death.

If the alternative translation suggested above is taken, the questions of “How?” and “Why?” do not arise. The message is that of making a good use of the opportunities one has when healthy and alive to adequately prepare for the time of sickness and for death. Of course, this is perfectly in agreement with the general teaching of the Qur’ān<sup>30</sup> and *Sunnah*.

The teachings of the *Hadīth* go beyond religious or spiritual realms. The *Hadīth* applies to all aspects of the human endeavour. It has to do with the natural law of diminishing return which is true of any living being. The life cycle begins in the minutest form, reaches the peak of development and thereafter, wanes in strength and power progressively until it finally gives up. The *Hadīth* urges one to save for the raining day in terms of taking full advantage of any opportunity that comes one's way because an opportunity once missed can never be regained. The message is meant for individuals, corporate bodies and nations.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

*An-Nawawi's Collection of Forty Ahādīth* is apparently one of the most popular anthologies of *Ahādīth*. The book is studied at the various levels of learning almost everywhere in the Muslim world. Among the factors responsible for the popularity of the book are the sound quality of the *Ahādīth* it contains, the simplicity of their language, the relevance of their teachings to the day-to-day needs of average Muslims and direct bearing on the essence and teachings of Islam. In recognition of the book, both the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO) recommend its use for their candidates for the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations. Hence, the efforts of scholars of Islamic Studies to translate and comment on the book required in the syllabi of both examination bodies respectively.

Among the books treating *An-Nawawi's Collection of Forty Ahādīth* are those of M.O.A. Abdul, on the one hand, and Bashir Sambo and Muhammad Higab, on the other. Both books have been written to provide study materials for students preparing for the School Leaving Certificate Examinations. Thus, the books are not exclusively on the Collection of An-Nawawi. In fact, the topics they treat are so wide and diverse that hardly can one justifiably expect them to do justice to each and every topic, the translation of the *Ahādīth* inclusive.

As a result of the constraints of time and space, only three of the forty two *Ahādīth* have been examined in this paper. Some of the shortcomings discovered relate to the use of language while others have to do with the inadequate presentation of the meaning as intended in the source language. Among factors suspected to have been responsible for the shortcomings are the influence of the sentence structure in the source language, influence of the dictionary meanings, and inadequate attention to the messages of the *Ahādīth*. Of course, these discoveries do not necessarily account for possible ones in the other *Ahādīth* translated. The aim here is just to draw attention to the salient points above with a view to urging teachers to bear them in mind while using the books and other translations. In addition, prospective writers may take advantage of this humble research to guard against the mistakes pointed out here.



## REFERENCES

- [1] For instance, *The West African Examinations Council Regulations and Syllabuses for the West African Senior School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE)* (Lagos, WAEC, 1999), pp. 331-332 recommends the book under study for candidates who apply to sit for the Islamic Studies examination.
- [2] Ezzedin Ibrahim and Denya Johnson-Davies (eds.) *An-Nawawi's Forty Hadīth* (Damascus, The Holy Qur'an Publishing House, 1977) pp. 19-21.
- [3] *Ibid.* p. 23.
- [4] For details on such *Ahādīth*, refer to M. M. Ali, *the Religion of Islam* (Lahore, Ahmadiyah Anjuman Ishā'at Islam, 1973), pp. 51-52.
- [5] *Ibid.* p. 15.
- [6] *Ibid.*
- [7] *Ibid.* pp. 19-21.
- [8] M. O. A. Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam*, (Lagos Islamic Publications Bureau, 1976).
- [9] M. Bashir Sambo and Muhammad Higab *Islamic Religious Knowledge for WASC* (Lagos, Islamic Publications Bureau, 1984).
- [10] Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam ...* p. 12.
- [11] *Ibid.* p. 11.
- [12] To save space and avoid repetition, the translation of M. O. A. Abdul is referred to as Translation I and that of M. Sambo and M. Higab as Translation II.
- [13] Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam ...* p. 68.
- [14] Sambo and Higab *Islamic Religious Knowledge ...* p. 47.
- [15] For details, refer to Zaynu'd-Dīn Abu'l-Farāj al-Baghdādi, *Jāmi' u 'Ulūm wa'l Hikam*, (Beirut, Dāru'l Ma'rifah, n.d.), pp. 8-9.
- [16] For further details, refer to Ali, *The Religion of Islam ...* pp. 121-127.
- [17] For details, see Zaynu'd-Dīn al-Baghdādi, *Jāmi' u 'Ulūm wa'l-Hikam ...* pp.10-11.
- [18] Abdul *The Prophet of Islam ...* p. 76.
- [19] Sambo and Higab *Islamic Religions Knowledge ...* p. 76.
- [20] For details, refer to Dr. Ibrahim Anis *et. al*, *Al-Mu'jam al-Wasīt*, (Bayrut, Dāru'l-Fikr, n.p.) Vol. 1, p. 195, and J. Milton Cowan (eds.) *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic* (Ithaca, Spoken Language Services, Inc. 1976), p. 178.
- [21] For instance, the Qur'an: 40 and 64: 3 says *inter alia* وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَأَحْسَنَ صُوْرَكُمْ (... And [Allah] has given you shape and made your shapes good [looking]) and *Hadīth* of the Prophet saying إِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا تَوَضَّأَ فَأَحْسَنَ الْوَضُوءَ (... If any of you performs Ablution and does it properly ...) as recorded in Dr. Muhammad Matraji (tr.) *Riyādu-Sālihīn* (Beirut, Dār El-Fikr, 1993), pp. 14-15.
- [22] Anis *Al-Mu'jam ...* p. 174, and Cowan *A Dictionary ...* p. 368.
- [23] For details on the proper method of slaughtering animals in Islam, refer to Abū Jābir al-Jazā'iri, *Minhāj al-Muslim* (n. p. Al-Maktabah al-Tawfiqiyyah, n. d.) pp. 432-433.
- [24] *Hadīth* 13 of An-Nawawi's Collection of Forty *Ahādīth*.
- [25] Abdul, *The Prophet of Islam ...* pp. 118-119.
- [26] Sambo and Higab, *Islamic Religious Knowledge ...* p. 134.

- [27] For details, refer to Ashraf Mi'wad Mustafa *Your Guide to Correect Translation* (Cairo, Maktabah Ibn Sīna, n. d.), pp. 6-8.
- [28] For more information, refer to Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwi, *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism* (Riyadh, International Islamic Publishing House, 1412 A. H./ 1991), p. 118.
- [29] For details, see Zaynu'd-Dīn al-Baghdādi, *Jāmi' u'l-'Ulūm wa'l-Hikam ...* pp. 8-11, and M. F. Abdu'l-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahris li Alfāzi'l-Qur'āni'l-Karīm*, (Beyrut, Dār al-Fikr, 1997/ 1418), pp. 256-260.
- [30] See, for example, the Qur'ān 62: 6-8.