

# THE MEANING OF *ADABU* AND *ADHABU* FOR THE 'CHILD PROTECTION' DISCOURSE IN ZANZIBAR

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## THE MEANING OF *ADABU* AND *ADHABU* FOR THE 'CHILD PROTECTION' DISCOURSE IN ZANZIBAR

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### ABSTRACT

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This paper considers the relevance of the concepts of *adabu* (manners/discipline) and *adhabu* (punishment/chastisement) in the discourse concerning child protection in Zanzibar. It builds on data gained during 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Zanzibar Town between January 2014 to July 2015, which explored children's and teachers' ideas around personhood, protection and punishment in primary and Qur'anic schools partially involved in (inter)national 'Positive Discipline' (*adabu mbadala*) programmes. Recent efforts by international NGOs in cooperation with the Zanzibari government to forbid corporal punishment in schools are repeatedly rejected by students and teachers, as universalised child protection approaches fail to pay adequate attention to the socio-cultural and religious meanings of child disciplining practices. I argue that the notions of *adabu* and *adhabu* are central to understanding children's and teachers' attitudes towards seemingly protective interventions in Zanzibari schools. This article offers an exploration of the meanings, (mis)translations and uses of the concepts within the child protection discourse. By illustrating how these interventions may translate locally as an interference with children's journey towards full social personhood (*utu*), a call emerges for a re-evaluation of globalised protection programmes. Taking Zanzibari children's and adults' perceptions as a point of departure, this article suggests the need for child protection policies and practices that move beyond universalised ideas of well-being and towards more meaningful approaches of protecting children in their everyday environments.

## INTERLUDE: UNIT FOR 'ALTERNATIVE PUNISHMENT'

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"*Kitengo cha Uhamasishaji wa Utumiaji wa Adhabu Mbadala Maskulini - Unit for Alternative Forms of Discipline*" is printed in black and blue letters within a red frame on the sign outside the old Majestic Cinema in Stone Town's Vuga neighbourhood. It is a sunny morning in February 2014 and I'm standing outside one of Zanzibar's central child protection institutions staring at the sign and playing the Swahili and English terms back and forth in my head. Contemplating, I keep stumbling over the translation of *adhabu* (punishment) as "discipline." At the end of my interview with Khalid, the Unit's coordinator, I ask him why the Swahili name of the Unit calls for the promotion of *adhabu mbadala* – "alternative punishment", while the English translation right underneath it talks about "alternative discipline". Keeping in mind that Save the Children officially refers to their Positive Discipline programme as *adabu mbadala*, I ask him if this different terminology – the use of *adhabu* instead of *adabu* – was intended. "It's a mistake", Khalid responds, "but we haven't corrected it yet. When the name was agreed we couldn't decide whether to use *adabu* or *adhabu*, and only later realized that we should have used *adabu*, because that's what Save the Children staff use and because it's a more positive term for discipline than *adhabu*." When I follow up a year later the sign remains unchanged, advertising a government-led, donor-funded unit that promotes alternative forms of punishment in schools in Zanzibar.

## INTRODUCTION

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This paper explores the fine line between the concepts of *adabu* (manners/discipline) and *adhabu* (punishment/chastisement) in the context of children's everyday lives in schools in Stone Town. It considers specifically the tension between these two entangled ideas, and their impact with regard to child protection interventions that aim to improve child safety in Zanzibar. This article builds on 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in four primary and two Qur'anic schools (*madrasas*) in Zanzibar Town. My key research interlocutors included 60 children between the ages of 9 and 16, teachers, parents, religious leaders (*sheikhs*) and institutions, community leaders (*shehas*), child protection policy makers (Save the Children, UNICEF), Zanzibar government officials, and university students. Through a combination of participatory visual research tools (Photovoice and Draw & Write) with ethnographic methods (participant observation, interviews), as well as Swahili discourse analysis and translation, I gained valuable insight into the minutiae of conflicting understandings regarding children's safety.

In exploring children's and teachers' perceptions of protection, personhood, and punishment, it emerged that the concepts of *adabu* and *adhabu* were of great importance to my research participants. Child protection programmes in Zanzibari schools currently focus on replacing the ordinary use of corporal punishment with what is referred to as 'alternative' or 'positive' forms of discipline (*adabu mbadala*). Yet, such efforts to decrease corporal punishment in schools have often been rejected and said to conflict with Zanzibari ideas of child-rearing that link disciplining practices to cultural and religious values. These values have been largely neglected by universalised approaches to improving child safety. Young people's manners are of critical importance in many cultural settings, so the question here is how this fundamental building block of personhood should be achieved – that is, through instilling discipline, or manners (*adabu*) or through punishment (*adhabu*)?

I argue that, despite their claim to protect, (inter)national child protection activities have the potential to interfere with children's achievement of full personhood (*utu*) as it is conceptualized in Zanzibar. This eventually leads people to contest institutionalised protection approaches, as they see their social realities and complexities being simplified and undermined. I claim that people do not reject child protection activities because they actually disagree with subjecting children to violence, but rather because the language employed to define and implement these processes suggests an alternative morality that cannot be simply adopted, as it emanates from and might even be considered as owned by the 'west'. In this article, I focus on this aspect of productive mistranslation of *adabu* and *adhabu* that allows for a better understanding of the nuances and contradictions in what is considered the child protection discourse in Zanzibar. I begin my analysis from a Zanzibari point of view, with an attempt to clarify the interrelation between the two concepts, in order to establish the broader moral and social universe in which chastisement takes place. Exploring the meanings of these ideas helps to improve protection interventions which have the aim of bettering children's lives, but practically often fail to do so.

## CHILD PROTECTION AND CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN ZANZIBAR

Child protection policy aims to improve the quality of children's lives by restricting practices which are considered harmful or abusive (*udhalilishaji*) according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). 'Abuse' can be divided into four sub-categories: physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect<sup>1</sup> (UNICEF 2011, 7). Physical abuse includes hitting (*kupiga*) as a punishment (*adhabu*): it is the most common form of violence experienced by Zanzibari children on an everyday basis in schools (UNICEF, 2011). Child protection efforts in educational settings aim to decrease this ordinary use of corporal punishment as an accepted form of chastisement and instead try to establish alternative or positive forms of discipline (*adabu mbadala*). Child protection interventions on the islands are led by Save the Children and UNICEF who work in cooperation with the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar<sup>2</sup>.

Corporal punishment remains legally sanctioned in Zanzibar and can be considered as equally socially accepted. The chastisement of children in public only seldom appears to cause visible distress to a child and adults do not usually intervene. Children can be seen playfully hitting each other in the streets, after school or *madrasa*, imitating their adult environment by smacking each other with smaller versions of the canes (*bakora*, *viboko*, *fimbo*) their teachers use to physically correct them in the classroom. The Education Act of 1988 includes special *Regulations for Corporal Punishment*, which grant the administration of caning by the headmaster only, for up to three strokes. The Zanzibar Children's Act of 2011 states that children should not be "subjected to violence, torture, or other cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment", but at the same time allows parents to "discipline their children in such manner which shall not amount to injury to the child's physical and mental wellbeing." There is no legal prohibition of chastisement of children. Attempts to regulate it as expressed

<sup>1</sup> *Udhalilishaji wa kimwili, wa kihisia, wa kingono, na utelekezaji.*

<sup>2</sup> Child protection interventions in mainland Tanzania are coordinated separately and work with other programmes, in contrast to Zanzibar, where the socio-cultural makeup is different.

within the Children's Act remain vague suggestions that are left to individual interpretation, and do not overrule older clauses such as the Education Act's corporal punishment regulations. From a child rights perspective, caning is considered violence against children, but I suggest that violence as a category takes a more nuanced definition in Zanzibar and to some extent must be considered as "culturally normative" (Wells 2014, 263).

## DISCLAIMER: A THREE-FOLD DISCURSIVE TERRAIN

Prior to exploring the ideas of *adabu* and *adhabu* in more depth, I lay out the discursive terrain in which the concepts are embedded across the Indian Ocean archipelago. Instead of one coherent discourse of child protection in Zanzibar, a symbiosis of three different discourses defines children's lives: a) *kisiasa/kiserikali* – used within the context of development and aid intervention and on the governmental level, b) *kidini* – used within the religious realm of Islam, and c) *kitamaduni/kienyeji* – within the cultural, or 'traditional' domain of the Swahili people. The *kidini* and *kitamaduni* discourses are often too interwoven to be considered separately, but as my interlocutors stressed the importance of both as independent systems of thought, I hereby follow their preference. This three-fold discursive sphere produces a multidimensionality of concepts such as *adabu* and *adhabu*, which is often inherently contradictory, but remains inevitable. While definitions of abuse include corporal punishment according to the *kisiasa/kiserikali* discourse, this is neither immediately so in the *kitamaduni/kienyeji* nor in the *kidini* sphere. Later, I illustrate this tension with examples from these theoretical realms.

## ETYMOLOGIES OF ADABU AND ADHABU

"*Huna adabu!*" (You have no manners!) or "*Nitakutia adabu!*" (I will teach you manners!) are frequently overheard expressions in parent-child interactions in Zanzibar. Derived from the Arabic term *adāb* أدب (customary practice, or habit),<sup>3</sup> the Swahili term *adabu* (manners/good behaviour), particularly in the context of Islam, refers to good manners or courtesy, morals (*maadili*), discipline (*nidhamu*), respect (*heshima*), and humaneness (*utu*). Interestingly, in early Islam, the verb *addaba* was used to indicate punishment (Stepanjanc 2007, 247). There are various types of *adabu*: manners for eating, praying, speaking, greeting, entering a house, helping the elderly, etc.<sup>4</sup>

Children's photographic depictions of *adabu* show, for example, children greeting each other and older people, carrying things for an elder person, or acts of cleaning. One child's explanation, on the back of their drawing of a child and an adult, reads that having manners (*kuwa na adabu*) is "when you are sent somewhere by an older person to get it for them" (girl, 12), i.e. to the shop.<sup>5</sup> Another photo shows a girl and a boy taller than her shaking each other's hands with the young photographer's explanation reading "the child has to greet the

<sup>3</sup> See *Oxford Islamic Studies Online* [http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e1008?\\_hi=1&\\_pos=2](http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com/article/opr/t236/e1008?_hi=1&_pos=2)

<sup>4</sup> *Adabu ya kula* [na mkono wa kulia], *adabu ya kusali*, *adabu ya kusema*, *adabu ya kuamkia*, *kupiga hodi*, *kusaidia wazee na kadhalika*.

<sup>5</sup> *Mtoto au mdogo anapotumwa na makubwa wake anapaswa kumtumikia. Mtoto anaweza kutumwa dukani, au popote pale.*

one that is older than him, she has good manners. You have to love the child and the child has to love you. It is not good to hit the child all the time as the child will not respect you and will not have good manners and will not love you”<sup>6</sup> (girl, 14). A manual for good behaviour by the East African Literature Bureau (1962) states: “There is nothing else that makes the child lovable like good behaviour/discipline. It is our responsibility to teach this to our children, so as to build and form them for their future life. Manners/discipline are to be taught to a child, so they will have good behaviour in the future” (ibid: 1, my translation).<sup>7</sup>

*Adabu* is also part of the Islamic concept of *akhlaq* (ethics), which in singular form, *khulq*, means character, nature, or disposition. In Swahili, it is often translated as *tabia* (character, behaviour). A Sheikh told me, while *akhlaq* is “the behaviour of the whole society” (*tabia ya kijamii*), *adabu* is the “behaviour of each individual person” (*tabia ya kila mtu mwenyewe*). Therefore, *adabu* is a concept of morality and manners so fundamental to existence, that a single translated term would be too restrictive in encompassing its full meaning. In this regard, the notion of good manners can also be understood as an embodied practice consisting, to a large extent, of the physical display of respect towards others.

While *adabu* as a category describes a concept or a state of being (having *adabu*), *adhabu* is the tool to establish and reinforce it. *Adhabu*, Swahili for punishment, penalty, chastisement or correction, is derived from the Arabic *adhāb* عذاب (punishment) and in an Islamic context refers to God’s anger and torment upon mankind for disobedience<sup>8</sup> (*mateso anayopewa kiumbe, mateso ya Mwenyezi Mungu*) (BAKIZA, 2010). The Guide for Alternative Discipline<sup>9</sup> by the Zanzibari government and Save the Children explains that “punishment [*adhabu*] is an action done to a person when they break the law or for ethically unacceptable behaviour. Discipline [*adabu*] is the action of teaching a person to obey the law or moral values in both the short- and long-term”<sup>10</sup> (25, my translation).

Children’s visual portrayals of *adhabu* included, amongst many others, a drawing with the title, “A child is being punished” (*mtoto anapewa adhabu*) that shows a boy being hit with a stick by a woman, and a man approaching the two with his hand raised high in the air. An explanation was added to the picture saying, “a child has the right to be protected against abuse like being hit”<sup>11</sup> (girl, 12). Various photographs show children being caned: a boy being hit with a stick by his teacher in the *madrassa*, a father caning his daughter outside their house, an older boy hitting his younger brother with an upturned broom in their living room. One boy (14) presented a photograph showing a student being hit with a stick by another student with the caption: “this picture shows that a student is being punished by being hit”<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> *Mtoto anamsalimia mkubwa wake hii ndio adabu lazima umpende mtoto naze akupende ikiwa unampiga kila wakati hatokuheshimu na atakuwa hana adabu na weve hakupendi labda.*

<sup>7</sup> *Hakuna jambo jingine linalovuta ili mtoto apendwe kama adabu njema. Ni wajibu wetu kuwafundisha watoto wetu hivi ili kuwajenga kwa maisha ya mbele. Adabu ni mafunzo ya kupewa mtoto, ili awe na adabu nzuri wakati wa baadaye.*

<sup>8</sup> عذاب القبر *Adhāb al-Qabr* – the Punishment of the Grave, as mentioned in the Hadith.

<sup>9</sup> *Muongozo wa Mafunzo ya Adabu Mbadala na Kumkinga Mtoto*

<sup>10</sup> *Adhabu ni kitendo ambayo anapewa mtu kwa kuvunja sharia au kwa kufanya maadili yasiyokubalika. (...) Adabu ni kitendo cha kuelimisha kumfunza mtu kutii sharia au maadili ya kitabia kwa muda mfupi au mrefu.*

<sup>11</sup> *Mtoto ana haki ya kulindwa dhidi ya udhalilishaji kama ile kupigwa.*

<sup>12</sup> *Picha hii inaonesha kuwa mwanafunzi anapewa adhabu ya kupigwa.*

In Zanzibar the ideas of *adabu* and *adhabu* – manners/discipline and punishment/chastisement – are inevitably interwoven. Even though they are distinct concepts, they are largely interdependent. If a child lacks and therefore exhibits a lack of *adabu*, for example through disobedience or bad behaviour, there is a need for being corrected (*kurekebisha*) through punishment (*adhabu*). One of my interlocutors explained to me that the basic connotation of *adabu* is positive (*chanya*) as “it puts the child in a state of safety/a state of following instructions”,<sup>13</sup> while the connotation of *adhabu* is negative (*hasi*) for “it puts the child into a state of danger”.<sup>14</sup> Hence, on the one hand, we are talking about refinement and humaneness (*adabu*), and on the other hand about pain and affliction (*adhabu*) – two ideas that seem opposing, but in everyday child-rearing practice, operate side by side.

## DISCURSIVE DISSONANCE

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Having offered some insight into the diverse meanings attributed to *adabu* and *adhabu* in Zanzibar, I now take a closer look at where these ideas intersect and collide. There is discursive dissonance when considering that *kutia adabu* can be translated as both ‘to punish’ or ‘to teach good manners’, while *kuadhibu*, from *adhabu*, can be translated to mean ‘to punish’, as well as ‘to correct, chastise, persecute, torment’ (TUKI 2001, 2). Caning can be both translated as *adabu* or *adhabu ya bakora* – the discipline or the punishment of the cane. We see *adabu* as interchangeable with *adhabu*, despite their inherent contrast in positive and negative connotations. Further, and despite CRC-based attempts to eliminate corporal punishment, according to one hadith<sup>15</sup> (Sahih by al-Albani in *al-Irwa’*, 247), parents are advised to “instruct our children to pray from the age of seven, and beat them if they neglect their prayers from the age of ten”<sup>16</sup> (Mswagala 2014, 30). Furthermore, with regard to correcting a child upon making a mistake (*jinsi ya kumrekebisha mtoto anapokosea*) it states that, “the parent should not immediately beat the child, but instead if the child has made a mistake, first explain to them gently,”<sup>17</sup> yet, it follows, “if the child is resistant/shows ‘chronic’ behaviour” (*kama huyo mtoto atakuwa sugu*) and “all these ways do not work/are not sufficient, then the parent shall use the stick to hit like the teacher”<sup>18</sup> (ibid, 28). According to another hadith the Prophet (saw) the instruction is to, “discipline him/her [the child] but do not punish” (*umtie adabu usimadhibu*) alongside other instructions like “do not hit in anger”, “do not hit more than three strokes”, “do not raise your arm when hitting”, and “do not hit with a stick bigger than a tooth brush”. Nevertheless, teachers seldom adhere to these instructions for the administration of corporal punishment. Another research participant tells me that “a house that has a stick (*bakora*) hanging is merciful,”<sup>19</sup> and even just to place a stick as a sign of warning (*kuiweka tu kama alat au onyo*) for the children is a recommended action

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<sup>13</sup> *Inamweka mtoto katika hali ya usalama/hali ya kufuata maelekezo.*

<sup>14</sup> *Inamweka mtoto katika hali ya hatari.*

<sup>15</sup> The *hadith* include the collected traditions of the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).

<sup>16</sup> *Waanrishiwa watoto wetu kuswali wakiva na umri wa miaka saba, na wapigani wakizembea kuswali wakiva na umri wa miaka kumi.*

<sup>17</sup> *Mzazi asianze kupiga kwanza, bali mtoto anapokosea amweleze hilo kosa lake kwa upole.*

<sup>18</sup> *Njia zote hizo hazikufaa ndipo atapotumia kiboko kumpiga kama mwalimu.*

<sup>19</sup> *Nyumba yenye kuninginia bakora imerehemewa.*

to ensure discipline in regular prayers and religious teachings. This religious instruction is often taken literally and commonly referred to as a justification for *adhabu* – but may also, as another Sheikh told me, be considered a misinterpretation of *adabu*.

Students and teachers argue equally that alternative forms of discipline – *adabu mbadala* – are not sufficient to correct a child, as they do not affect the child directly, but often even rather extend the 'punishment' to the parent, if, for example, a financial compensation is demanded as a substitute for physical chastisement. One research participant complained to me, "if a child has to bring a broom as a form of alternative discipline, the child's mistake extends and the punishment will go back to the parent,"<sup>20</sup> and added "stroke them once or twice and the punishment could already be finished."<sup>21</sup> Others told me that, "discipline without pain does not help the child, it has no effect."<sup>22</sup> The overwhelming majority of my research participants supported the necessity of *both* corporal punishment and alternative forms of discipline in schools – *adhabu* and *adabu mbadala* together – but barely anyone considered *adabu mbadala* a sufficient replacement for *adhabu*, as child protection programmes had intended. Therefore, the rejection of such a full substitution only becomes meaningful when considered alongside the deeper meanings of *adabu* and *adhabu*, and equally in relation to the concept of personhood.

## ADABU AND ADHABU AS MAKERS OF PERSONHOOD

*Adhabu* builds and establishes *adabu* and thereby assures *tabia/akhlaq* which is essential to the acquisition of social personhood (*utu*). Discipline is achieved through punishment, and personhood through discipline. In other words, in Zanzibar, personhood (*utu*), or "how human beings ought to behave" (Kresse 2007, 139), is dependent on having manners/discipline (*adabu*), which in case of absence is (re-)established through punishment (*adhabu*). Concepts of personhood are central to the creation of a human being, or making a child into a full social person. A child cannot yet possess *utu*. It is semantically impossible to express that a child does not have *utu* (*mtoto hana utu*). Such a remark, on the other hand, can be directed at an adult (*mtu hana utu*) to indicate that their behaviour is poor and hence considered not humane. Conversely, it is common to say that a child does not have manners/discipline (*mtoto hana adabu*) but unlikely that anyone would use this expression to comment on an adult's behaviour.

Not having *utu* can be considered as losing "the right to be morally respected by others" (Kresse 2007, 150). Children are therefore not considered full people through this differentiation, as their personhood – their *utu* – is still in the process of being established/created through *adabu*.<sup>23</sup> As one of my interlocutors told me, "we are giving the child their right to build their humanity/morality/personality."<sup>24</sup> An adult, consequently,

<sup>20</sup> *Ikiwa mtoto analazimishwa kuleta fagio kwa ajili ya adabu mbadala, kosa inaextend na adabu itarudi kwa mzazi.*

<sup>21</sup> *Tumia bakora moja mbili na adhabu ishamaliza.*

<sup>22</sup> *Adabu bila maumivu haimsaidii mtoto, haina athari.*

<sup>23</sup> *Adabu zinatumika kujenga utu/ubinadamu.*

<sup>24</sup> *Tunampa haki yake ya kumjengea utu wake.*

can be considered a full social person, but only by possessing and visibly enacting *utu*, illustrated by the proverb *asiyejua utu si mtu*, which literally translates as 'a person who does not know how to be humane is not human'. Since full personhood/humaneness can only be achieved in adulthood, it follows that children in Zanzibar must be considered as people in the making – as both 'beings' and 'becomings'.

It is here that I see a direct association with the concepts of *adabu* and *adhabu*. I suggest that in Zanzibar, alongside other factors, children are cultivated or 'made' into social people through the application of *adabu* and *adhabu*. Children are considered to be in need of formation – through *adabu* and *adhabu* – to achieve full social personhood and become good adults. If *utu* depends on *adabu*, a child that lacks *adabu* cannot build or achieve *utu*. Hence, it becomes necessary to instate *adabu* through *adhabu* to assure *utu*. Otherwise, the interference of establishing a child's manners would also imply an interference with the entrenchment of a child's personhood. This, I argue, is precisely what happens when child protection programmes promote the use of *adabu mbadala* as a substitution for *adhabu*, and find themselves rejected in the Zanzibar context. Hence, I argue that the social acceptance of corporal punishment, and its perception as necessary, together with the rejection of programmes attempting to replace it with alternative forms of discipline, are partially grounded in the Zanzibari conceptualization of personhood. It therefore becomes necessary to acknowledge that, at the local level, global protection programmes may be perceived as interfering with children's achievement of full social personhood (*utu*).

This supports the need for child protection policy and practice that moves beyond universalised ideas of wellbeing and towards more meaningful approaches of protecting children in their everyday environments taking into account vernacular concepts of being-in-the-world. In Zanzibar, contrary to child protection policy makers' view of *adhabu* as punishment, the concept itself is in fact considered a tool for protecting children, as it will ensure that they will become good people. Or, as one of my interlocutors explained, "society raises a child to be on the right path. So, if a child goes astray, manners, discipline/punishment is used to bring them back on track, so they will again have humanity. If we don't build their humanity (through the use of discipline) we are depriving them their rights."<sup>25</sup> The link between the child's perceived 'right' to be raised properly and the adult's responsibility to ensure this in a protective manner, if necessary through the application of discipline, mirrors the complexity inherent in the process of becoming a social person in Zanzibar's society.

## CONCLUSION

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In this article, I have explored the ways in which the concept of child protection in Zanzibar is influenced by the ideas of discipline (*adabu*), chastisement (*adhabu*) and personhood (*utu*). Children's and adults' perceptions of the notions of protection, personhood and punishment have served as the foundation of this exploration. This exploration has highlighted the frequent rejection of the development approach that requires the adaptation of social norms,

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<sup>25</sup> *Jamii inamlea mtoto ili aishi katika njia sahihi. Hivyo akitoka katika ile njia sahihi adabu/adhabu inatumika kumrejesha katika ile njia sahihi ili awe tena na utu/ubinadamu. Ikiwa hatujenga utu/ubinadamu wake (kwa utumiaji wa adabu) tutamkosesha haki yake.*

while considering the fluidity between concepts and their meanings connected to child protection. Recognizing the interchangeability of *adabu* and *adhabu*, I suggest that there actually is *adabu* within *adhabu*. None of my research participants agreed that it was possible to fully replace the notion of *adhabu* with *adabu*, for the notion of correction, or punishment, was not sufficiently reflected in the latter. This is much like in magic where there are no substitutes or alternatives<sup>26</sup> for the essential ingredients that need to be used as the idea itself is in the thing. The challenge became to create such an essence in a living world, in Zanzibar, and through the means of policy. Central to this undertaking was achieving this without eventually suggesting the substitution of *adabu* – a complex concept of manners and morality – and in that sense the disposal of Zanzibari modes of child rearing, personhood and ethics.

Attempts to eradicate violence against children must do so in a way that does not run contrary to essential tenets of Zanzibari society. Programmes against corporal punishment may very well continue to be rejected in light of the enduring misconception that they somehow promote the opposite of protection, which consequently jeopardises the achievement of personhood. It remains a challenge to find ways of linking or bringing into some kind of symbiosis Zanzibari-Swahili vernacular modes of thinking about child protection and punishment (*kidini* and *kitamaduni/kienyeji*) and international and political (*kisiasa/kiserikali*) objectives. Returning to the confusion over the name of the *Unit for Alternative Punishment* it has become obvious that the choice of words – *adhabu* instead of *adabu* – simply indicated the repackaging of an old option into a new model.

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<sup>26</sup> While no one I spoke to would accept child protection activities as a wholesale replacement of existing practices, many of my interlocutors were in favour of limiting the use of corporal punishment. A point that was repeated by several of my research participants was that the discussion about child protection in schools should not focus on whether adults continue to use corporal punishment as a means of discipline, but rather about how it is being done. Simply forbidding the use of corporal punishment was overwhelmingly considered unthinkable, as there were no widely accepted valid alternatives which would carry the same meaning and/or have the same effect. Therefore, continuing to use corporal punishment but regulating it more strictly was often suggested as the only acceptable option for change.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Franziska Fay is a PhD Candidate in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, with a background in Educational Philosophy and Swahili Linguistics. Working within the anthropologies of childhood and development she is interested in processes that concern and shape children's lives - particularly from their own perspectives. In her research she specialises in questions of child protection, child rights, and education innovations in Swahili communities across East Africa. She has recently completed 18 months of fieldwork on children's perceptions of "child protection" interventions in state and Qur'anic schools in Zanzibar Town.