Making Friends and Playing the Game
The Moral Economy of Bribery Among Tanzanian Indians

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Abstract
Bribery relations are a way to cope with the uncertainties of everyday life for many people living in Tanzania. For members of the Tanzanian Indian communities, the uncertainties not only count the faltering bureaucratic systems and a state lacking legitimacy. Being members of a resourceful yet marginalized ethnic group within a nation that has not been willing or able to offer them protection also puts Tanzanian Indian communities in a vulnerable position. Bribery friends, as this article shows, are relations that despite, or perhaps owing to, their uncertain nature create a level of certainty and protection. ‘Playing the game’, meaning to accept and engage in bribery, becomes a way for the Tanzanian Indians to control and claim both distance and belonging to a nation that never really accepted them as true citizens. Investigating the moral economy of bribery among Tanzanian Indians, the article argues that the experiences and logics of bribery help us to get a deeper understanding of Tanzanian Indians’ perception of the state and their role in it, which is, above all, ambiguous.

Keywords
bribery, Indian diaspora, migration, Tanzania, belonging

Introduction
In Tanzanian public offices, posters on the walls state that this is a ‘Corruption Free Zone’. However, in Tanzania, as in numerous other countries, bribery is an unofficially institutionalized practice (Haller and Shore 2005). Bribery is not only a tool to ‘grease’ the system (Langseth and Michael 1998); it is the system (Prasad, Da Silva and Nickow 2018, 99). In 2013, 56% of the Tanzanian respondents in a survey by Transparency International said that they had paid bribes for public sector services within the last 12 months. 86% considered the public sector to be
Corruption in Tanzania

The widespread practice of bribery in Tanzania intensified after the war with Uganda in the late 1970s and following the economic crisis, which characterized the repercussions of the failure of President Nyerere’s economic and social reforms and the incipient liberalization (Babetiya 2011, 101; Pepinsky 1992, 30). Until then, clientelism was ‘not especially debilitating’ due to the highly centralized power under socialism (Kelsall 2002, 598). In the early 1980s, when

1 These numbers had decreased dramatically in Transparency International’s 2019 report, which reflected President Magufuli’s anti-corruption reforms and rhetoric. However, an interpretation of the numbers could be that the authoritarian tendencies in Magufuli’s leadership (“the Bulldozer”) have deterred people from talking openly about their experiences (Rahman 2019).
The Tanzanian economy was liberalized, the public sector was ‘increasingly riddled by corruption and embezzlement of public funds’ (Mukandala 1983, 261), and according to the Auditor General’s reports from the 1980s, this development continued (Semboja and Theroldsen 1992, 1103) so that by the mid-1990s, corruption was ‘rampant in all sectors of the economy and politics’ (Fjeldstad 2003, 167).

The introduction of multiparty general elections in Tanzania in 1995 again sparked a rise in incidents of corruption (Babeyia 2011, 92). Among other indicators, businesspeople have begun to support the ruling party particularly in election times. Especially Indian businesspeople ‘are said to be more generous to the ruling party in providing financial support during the campaign period’ (Babeyia 2011, 94), and former Prime Minister Fredrick Sumaye informed the business community in Kilimanjaro\(^2\) that it was necessary for them to vote for CCM\(^3\) if they wanted their businesses to thrive (Babeyia 2011, 95). Stories about grand corruption in public tenders have been taking up a lot of space in the local newspapers during my field studies, and apparently 42% of companies expect to give gifts to politicians to win a tender (Chêne 2009). Practices of bribery are deeply rooted in the Tanzanian public institutions and bureaucratic systems at all levels, and thus for most Tanzanians they are a natural part of their everyday lives (Degani 2017, Rahman 2019). At the same time, corruption is seen as a malady that hinders development. Clearly, the neoliberal ideology of ‘good governance’ has influenced Tanzanians in the same way as the imperative of ‘development’ that has become a truth that cannot be argued against (cf Ferguson 1994, Muir and Gupta 2018, 8). Thus, in the perspective informed by Western anti-corruption agendas, which is prevalent in media, among politicians and people ‘on the ground’ in Tanzania, corruption is perceived as solely problematic. For late John Pombe Magufuli, who was the president of Tanzania from 2015 to 2021, the fight against corruption was a primary agenda. The initial period of his presidency was characterized by a ‘cleaning’ of public institutions, which meant that several people, among them the head of the Tanzania Revenue Authority and five customs officials, were fired, and as an attempt to create a leaner way of governing, he appointed 19 ministers as opposed to the more than 40 ministers of the former president Kikwete (African Business February 2016).

Meanwhile, bribery practices ‘are resilient because they perform critical functions for the political elites, private interests and ordinary citizens’ (Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017, 52). According to Andreas Eckert, a job in the state in Tanzania today is not attractive for those who want to make a career or money (Eckert 2014, 217), and bribery can thus be necessary for low-paid public employees to be able to maintain a certain living standard and share with their network as they are expected to. Low-paid employees in lower positions in public institutions see their

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2 Kilimanjaro is a region in northern Tanzania.

3 Chama Cha Mapinduzi; the ruling party in Tanzania since Independence.
superiors getting richer and richer at the same time as the practice of bargaining, which has been a common practice in the region for ages, is being used as a legal transaction method by street vendors as well as traders in markets and shops (Pepinsky 1992, 31). And Magufuli’s reforms did not succeed in addressing the ‘deep structural issues that fuel Tanzania’s endemic corruption’ (Rahman 2019, 4). During my fieldwork in May 2016, it had become easier and faster to get a driving licence or a passport, and the long queue in front of Tanesco4 of people who wanted to pay their electricity bill had disappeared. Yet, my friends and interlocutors recounted how bribery had become harsher after Magufuli. ‘Instead of paying ten dollars, we now have to pay 20’, Waleed said. ‘It’s way riskier now, so the prices have gone up.’ This experience was shared by several others that I talked to. The need for bribery friends to soften the relation to the system had not diminished. In Tanzania, the widespread practice of bribery causes some people to work their way around the system: in order to avoid paying bribes, they choose not to register their business and not to pay full taxes (Eijdenberg et.al. 2019).

De Sardan notes that ‘the functioning of the administrative apparatus, entirely copied from the European pattern, is of a schizophrenic type’ (de Sardan 1999, 47), and that the civil servants likewise find themselves in a ‘schizophrenic situation’ being trained for a kind of administrative and professional legitimacy that fits modern European institutions, while their social legitimacy implies that they ‘act in conformity with more or less contradictory ‘sociocultural’ logics’ (de Sardan 1999, 48). Anders and Nuijten state that corruption and law are not contradictory, but rather constitute one another (2009, 2). It is necessary to leave the binary oppositions in the analyses of bribery, and in a framework of legal pluralism see how different moral and legal systems and imaginaries co-exist (Anders and Nuijten 2009, 13). Various traditional social logics of gift-giving, solidarity networks and negotiation, among other practices, have become analogous to corruption after the monetization of society (de Sardan 1999, 46); practices that are culturally embedded as morally and socially acceptable clash with notions of lawfulness within the paradigm of stateness. In de Sardan’s words: ‘Everyone is sincerely in favour of respecting the public domain, and wants the bureaucracy to be at the service of the citizens, but everyone participates by means of everyday actions in the reproduction of the system he denounces’ (de Sardan 1999, 48). There is thus a fundamental tension between the normative ideology and the system as it is with all its informal formalities and formal informalities, and the scholarship on corruption within the fields of economy, political science and management studies often fails to see and acknowledge this complex sociality of bribery. Likewise, the many projects and reforms targeting corruption seem not to work the way they were intended (Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017, 49).

In many instances, corruption works to create social cohesion and predictability and even becomes an expected part of social transactions (Chabal and Daloz

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4 Tanzania Electric Supply Company Limited
Bribery friendships are a way to alter corrupt relations into clientelist dyad systems, which are more stable (Blundo and de Sardan 2006, 82). In some instances, bribery relations can constitute ‘warm’ relations in contrast to ‘cold’ bureaucracy (Torsello and Venard 2015, 39). Jennifer Hasty (2005) shows how Ghanaian officials refusing to accept bribes and gifts are perceived as morally suspect and anti-social, and Smart and Hsu (2009) show how the Chinese practice of *Guanxi* is used and interpreted as legitimate by some, while being seen as illegitimate by others. These negotiations of legitimacy and legality are central in this article. Instead of trying to distinguish between formal and informal, legal and illegal practices, I use the concept of moral economy as suggested by de Sardan, meaning ‘to insist on as subtle as possible a restitution of the value systems and cultural codes’ (de Sardan 1999, 26) and ‘a question of ‘slants’ which leave a certain room for manoeuvre to the actors who operate within or around certain ‘logics’, often combining them, sometimes dissociating or refuting them’ (de Sardan 1999, 27). Thus, I explore experiences and perceptions of bribery among Tanzanian Indians with a holistic perspective that leaves room for complexity and ambiguity. This point of departure also draws on Muir and Gupta’s point about attending ‘to these sorts of discomfiting self-critiques and ambiguous judgements, which characterize so many people’s engagements with corruption and anti-corruption’ (Muir and Gupta 2018, 8). Furthermore, I draw on Gupta’s classical work on corruption and the state, where he sees corruption not as a dysfunctional aspect of a state and its organizations, but rather as a mechanism ‘through which “the state” itself is discursively constituted’ (Gupta 1995, 376). I thus study the state as experienced and imagined by a specific migrant minority group that has had an immense impact on the Tanzanian nation but continuously stays in the margins of society.

**Indians in East Africa**

Indian traders from Gujarat settled on the East African shores in the middle of the 19th century following numerous years of trade and exchange in the Western Indian Ocean (Burton 2013, 8; Heilman 1998, 380). These first settlers were followed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Gujarati peasant farmers fleeing drought and famine and trying their luck across the ocean (Bertz 2015, 15; Gregory 1993, 6). The Indians who succeeded in building businesses stayed on the continent, were followed by family members, and began to move inland to establish businesses and settled as *dukawallahs* (shopkeepers) in towns and cities in mainland Tanzania (Akhtar 2018, 61; Burton 2013, 9-10; Markovits 2007, 72; Oonk 2008, 109). During British colonial rule (1919-1961), Indians were placed in a position between British administrators and African subjects, and the Indians ultimately became a buffer protecting the Europeans from anger from below (Aminzade 2013, 339; Oonk 2013, 31). The Indians in East Africa were categorized and analysed by Edna Bonacich (1973) as a ‘middleman minority’ with a certain position in society, in the same way as Jews in Europe and Chinese in Southeast Asia, which both forced and enabled them to engage in private enterprise. In the existing literature on middlemen minorities, Bonacich argued
that there are three main themes characterizing these kinds of communities, the first being hostility from the surroundings, which puts the middlemen in a marginalized position. However, the middlemen manage to maintain a strong sense of solidarity within the community and can acquire considerable wealth. Secondly, the middlemen minorities are typically found in societies where there is a gap between the elite and the masses. The middlemen can fill this gap in several ways. Since they are not involved in the local society as such, they are free to trade with anyone. Finally, they can act like a buffer between the elite and the masses and ‘bear the brunt’ of the hostility from the masses, which would otherwise be directed towards the elite (Bonacich 1973, 583-4). Taking the theory of middlemen minorities as a point of departure, Stein Kristiansen and Anne Ryen (2002) argue that ‘alien entrepreneurs are in a better position to enact their business context in a manner favourable for success based on ethnic resources such as kinship, education, and pride, mobility and communication and social networking’ (Kristiansen and Ryen 2002, 165). This has indeed been the case for Tanzanian Indians. The segregated system during British colonial rule was highly discriminating, but the position of the Indians, and their alliances with government officials, enabled them to cultivate their businesses, and they came to dominate in trade and industry (Kristiansen and Ryen 2002, 166). In the beginning of the 1960s, the racialized distribution of wealth in Tanzania was significant: Europeans earned an average of 1,560 pounds per year, Indians earned 564, and Africans only 75 pounds (Kristiansen and Ryen 2002, 170). However, it was not only the protection in the segregated system that helped the Indians develop and maintain their market domination. Being aware of the potentials of their exclusive business networks, they secured their communities’ existence through cultural and social isolation as well as strict endogamy (Kristiansen and Ryen 2002, 168).

At the time of Independence, Indians had become scapegoats personifying inequality and injustice (Brennan 2012, 8; Akhtar 2018, 66). In Uganda, Indians were demanded to leave the country within 90 days and were not permitted to bring any belongings (Adams and Bristow 1979). In Tanzania, the fears of the Indians came true in the beginning of the 1970s, when President Nyerere, following the Arusha Declaration, decided to nationalize thousands of buildings and factories, the majority being Indian owned (Brennan 2012, 192). A great number of Indians left the country and migrated primarily to the UK in this period, afraid of what the future in Tanzania would bring for their communities (Brennan 2012, 193; Himbara 1997, 4; Oonk 2013, 15).

Between 1961 and 1970, the public sector went through a rapid transformation led by the quest for Africanization: 26.1% of the employees were African Tanzanians in 1961, while this number rose to 85.6% in 1970 (Eckert 2014, 209). This hierarchical change, which also implied a change in the position and possibilities of the Indians, forced them to engage in relations with people from outside their communities, and with Africans in particular. When I carried out my fieldwork, they were facing serious competition not only from African Tanzanian
entrepreneurs, but also from Chinese and South Africans (Akhtar 2018, 68). It had become impossible to keep the business network inside the communities. The challenges facing the business networks were threatening the desired purity and strength of the religious communities: As the business environment demanded more interaction with people outside the communities, it was critical for the Tanzanian Indians to make sure that their ‘culture’ would not be lost, and, most crucially, that the tradition of endogamy would not be broken (Nagar 1998, 133). At the same time, their strategy of transnational mobility and communal isolation has resulted in continuous resentment by African Tanzanians. In public debates on indigenization since the 1960s, Tanzanian Indians have been displayed and discussed as foreigners, exploiters and thieves (Aminzade 2003; Fouéré 2013: 23; Nkobou and Ainslie 2021). Tanzanian Indians are, thus, in a marginal position from where they carefully need to balance their engagements inside and outside of their respective religious communities.

In the town in northern Tanzania where I conducted my doctoral fieldwork between 2012 and 2016, the different Indian communities (Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Ismaelis, Khoja Shia Ithna Asheris, Sunnis, Dawoodi Bohras) had shrunk significantly since the 1960s and 1970s, and only a few thousand people of Indian origin were left. Just about all families had family members who had settled abroad, and many elderly couples considered or planned to join their children and grandchildren in the UK. Having secured themselves by having multiple citizenship in each family (Oonk, 2014, 7-9), most families were mobile and lived rather transnational lives with investments, social as well as economic, in both Tanzania and abroad (Schou Pallesen 2017). The people I worked with are children and grandchildren of the migrants who left Gujarat in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Before Independence, the families had planned for a future in East Africa, and as their businesses prospered and their communities grew, the potential seemed massive (Brennan 2012, 192; Burton 2013, 9-10). At the time of my fieldwork, the ambience was to a larger degree characterized by melancholy and anxiety. And it seemed, due to the diminished size of the communities, that it had become even more important to define the boundaries and uphold the distance to African Tanzanians.

Making Friends

On a quiet day in November 2013, Noora and I were having coffee in her and her husband’s coffee shop. The air was warm and humid, Noora was breastfeeding her youngest son, and as her scarf kept falling down on her shoulders, she continuously arranged the thin cloth in two layers by winding it around her head with her right hand. As I observed Noora’s face, I noticed its softness and mild expression. The recent birth had left her with slightly chubby cheeks. However, I understood that one should not mistake the soft face for a lack of personal strength: Noora’s dark eyes sparkled with will and ambition, and she spoke and rearranged her scarf with a characteristic certainty which I had been fond of since we first met.
Suddenly Noora became aware of two new customers. She called Waleed, her husband, who got up from the sofa and went to greet them. The two men, who were African Tanzanians in their 40s or 50s, dressed in shirts and trousers with creases, and carrying briefcases, sat down at one of the tables close to the entrance. Noora looked at Waleed, and she looked at me with resignation in her eyes.

Noora and Waleed met each other at a wedding in the Indian Sunni community in Kenya. When they got married, Noora moved from her family in Kenya to Tanzania where Waleed grew up and was running an internet café with his brother. Together, Noora and Waleed established a coffee shop. Waleed was officially the one running the café, while Noora was often busy with their growing number of children. However, Noora would help Waleed make coffee on the Italian coffee machine, she would bake cakes that were sold in the café, and she would stand behind the counter and take orders from customers.

Noora was a Kenyan citizen, but the work permit was expensive, $1,000 per year, and since Noora only worked periodically, Noora and Waleed reasoned that it was unnecessary for them to pay for the permit. Furthermore, they considered the government’s immigration policies to be hostile towards both Indians and Kenyans, and like many other Indians they were annoyed with the fact that Tanzania did not want to take part in the East African agreement on migration and labour. The decision not to pay for a work permit was in this way pragmatic as well as economic and political; a silent resistance towards bureaucracy and politics. And, as I would come to understand: a clever way of creating and preserving a level of protection for the family in an uncertain everyday life.

Noora told me quietly that the two men were from the Immigration Office a few hundred meters up the street. ‘I'm sick and tired of these men,’ she said quietly. ‘They come every now and then expecting free coffee. And they want to check us because I don’t have a work permit.’ Waleed prepared coffee and served it to the men. He talked to them for a while. Noora did not leave her chair.

In the evening, we were having tea in the living room of Noora and Waleed. Waleed told me about the men who came earlier:

‘They come to scare us. First time they came, they asked for money. They said they wanted 500 USD and if we didn’t pay, they would make sure that Noora would be put in jail. You know she has a Kenyan passport.’

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5 ‘In September 2013, the government cracked down on immigrants, fueling doubts about its commitment to the East African Community. It also launched numerous measures, including requiring all foreigners apply for work permits, pay $2,000 and wait five months. The measures were announced as the East African Community continued to seek common ground from member states on issuing work permits. Currently each country decides how to treat EAC citizens because there is uniform binding requirement’ [Star reporter 2016; see also Thome 2015].
‘Waleed is afraid of them,’ Noora said, ‘so he tries to be polite and negotiate with them. They are provoked when I discuss with them. They say, “why are you not like the other Indian women?” They expect me to be quiet and shy. But I’m not doing anything illegal. I’m just helping my husband in his business. If I were to have the work permit, we would have to pay 1,000 USD every year, and it would not be possible for us.’

Waleed succeeded in negotiating a reasonable price with the immigration officers. ‘Then we became friends. Now there’s no problem,’ he said.

The officers were still coming back now and then, and sometimes they were asking for money, sometimes just free coffee. Waleed and Noora called the officers’ practice ‘harassment’ and were repelled by the officers’ ‘harassing’ habits, and Waleed only had coffee with them because the friendship meant that he and Noora could keep running the café as they did, without paying for the work permit. Even though they were aware of the authorities’ gaze on them, they did not consider paying for a work permit. If they continuously invested the necessary energy and money in the friendship with the officers, Noora would be protected.

When I returned to the coffee shop in May 2016, Noora and Waleed had had to expand their business. To be able to pay their rent and school fees for their children, they had to find new ways to earn money. Waleed established a mobile phone shop, and Noora set up a branch of the coffee shop in a suburb. The new arrangement meant that Noora oversaw the new branch, while Waleed was looking after his shop and the café. I asked Noora if she had had to apply for a work permit after the expansion. She had not. Their friend in the Immigration Office made sure that she was protected from the eyes of the authorities. He was now labelled ‘Noora’s friend’ by Waleed, who told me that Noora had begun paying him occasionally on her own initiative. ‘For Christmas she gave him 100,000 TZS. And if other people from the Immigration Office show up, she can always call her friend. Then there’s no problem.’ There was no doubt in the minds of Noora and Waleed that it made more sense to have a friend than to have a work permit.

Bribery friendships are, in essence, instrumental. However, instrumental does not necessarily exclude the possibility of sympathy. In Noora’s and Waleed’s bribery friendship, the officer expects money and Noora and Waleed expect protection; like the Chinese practice of Guanxi and the Russian Blat (Yang 1994, Michailova and Worm 2003), bribery friendships are long-term exchange cycles with certain impersonal moral implications. Thus, there are clear expectations of continuous reciprocity. Seemingly ‘cold’ transactions can become long-term and mutually binding. Even though Noora was annoyed with her friend, she chose to give him money for Christmas. A hint of sympathy developed over time as Noora discovered the benefits of the friend. The uncertainty, intimacy and secrecy which characterize the bribery friendship demand a certain level of moral engagement.
At the same time, it does not entail or demand a personal engagement as such. When I observed my interlocutors interact with their bribery friends, it was obvious that there was only a minimum of eye contact and smiling, and that the interaction was characterized by a personal distance. The relation is based on a mutual understanding of the reciprocal need for money and protection as well as a recognition that the relation is risky for both parts. This means that it would not make sense for any of the two parts to betray the other. At the same time, there is no defined end to the relationship nor the transactions, and no defined amount of money or protection. Bribes are characterized by being negotiable and flexible (Pepinsky 1992, 31). Bribery friendships entail an openness that facilitates ongoing negotiations of the value of the exchanged ‘goods’ and likewise negotiations of distance and power. In the relation, it is not decided or expressed who is the patron and who is the client; rather, the roles are flexible. When the officer came for the first time and threatened Noora and Waleed, they were subject to his power, but when Noora voluntarily gave the officer money for Christmas, she turned the positions around. This openness and uncertainty are exactly what enables the right distance between the implicated parts: the exact distance that creates a space for the right and meaningful exchange. Thus, uncertainty characterizes bribery friendships and constitutes a potentiality that Noora and Waleed utilize. Without this potentiality, they would not be able to do what they do. Hence, bribery friends in this instance work to soften the relation between citizens and state by keeping open the question of who is helping who.

To Know and Be Known
Karan, who was 70 years old, Jain and owned a factory and a shop, had several friends in the police as well as in the municipality (manispaa). He was invited for functions in both institutions, and he understood that being known and respected by influential people was important for a man in a vulnerable position, which is why he always brought gifts from his factory as well as an envelope with money. Karan valued and was proud of these friendships with important people, his encounters with the country’s most powerful people, and his contacts abroad: ‘When they employed a new officer in manispaa, my friend, the district officer, came here and introduced him to me. “This is Karan”, he said to him. Then he knew me,’ he told me. Karan recalled an incident a few years ago where his son was taken to the police station after being caught with worn-down tires on his car. The son rang his father, who went to the police station and was met by the chief officer, who bursted out: ‘Karan! What are you doing here?’ ‘I was called by my son,’ Karan responded. ‘Karan is your father?’ the officer asked Karan’s son, ‘But why didn’t you tell me?’ And he let him go. The friendship instantly paid off.

In some ways, Karan distanced himself from these friends. He laughed quietly when talking about them, and he would never invite them home. He had a fundamental aversion against the need to bribe. At the same time, I sensed that he found a hint of pride in knowing these powerful and influential men, or, perhaps
more precisely, a pride in being known by these men. Success, in an African context, demands investments, and generosity and access to the right people can be ‘richly rewarding’ (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 102). Obviously, having a name and being known gave Karan agency in a different way than Noora, who was not as ‘known’. Many people in town knew Karan, his industry and his shop. They knew that he would bring gifts for the functions, and, as he himself put it, ‘a few important people know’ that he donated a considerable amount to the ruling party CCM during the election campaign. Karan was a man people wanted to know, and because of the long-term exchange cycles he was engaged in, police officers and district officers were aware that he expected to be provided with some level of protection and was willing to pay for it. This was why officers introduced their new colleagues to him and kept inviting him to functions. Putting an effort into maintaining and developing his network to have a stable level of protection from different authorities, Karan invested in his and his family’s future socially as well as economically. Through his connections, he managed to avoid or get around obstacles in his everyday life. Karan and I often talked about the future for Indians in Tanzania. Karan was worried that it would become increasingly unsafe to be an Indian in the country, and the fact that he and his wife Bhavana did not have British but Tanzanian citizenship was a source of anxiety and worry. But when I asked him directly what they would do if they suddenly had to leave the country, he said: ‘People know us here. We will figure something out.’ He trusted his friends and his privileges of being ‘someone’. These kinds of elite privileges are described by Chabal and Daloz, who state that ‘the main political and economic elites are able to use the absence of transparency as a most valuable resource’ and ‘a system of such profound uncertainty and disorder, if not opaqueness, which depends on subtle and constantly fluctuating ties of loyalty, provides ample opportunity for the instrumental use of properly cultivated social relations’ (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 103). Being willing to engage in these kinds of friendships opens up possibilities in several ways, and being able to show generosity merely expands the potentialities of the relations. Karan’s investment in friends meant that his ‘knownness’ was working for him as a currency in the exchange. When his son was caught by the police, he could obviously have paid the fine himself. But Karan’s name and knownness allowed the police officers to let the young man go without paying. In this way, it becomes evident how the pragmatics of uncertainty facilitated an easy and convenient solution to an immediately precarious situation, and how relations were being realized according to the situation.

When Karan felt obliged to give gifts to officers at their functions, he did not refer to it as ‘harassment’. For him, the relationships entailed such great benefits that he engaged in them with a feeling of voluntariness. The gifts were gifts, not bribes. But when having to pay bribes to get a new passport within an acceptable time frame or to pass a roadblock without being fined, he saw it as sheer harassment. These relations were short term and did not encompass mutuality: Karan saw them as a way to slightly speed up bureaucracy, but he did not feel that the money was worth the result. Rather, he viewed these conditions as symptoms of a weak state, poorly governed institutions and a general culture of harassment, which in
some instances seemed to particularly target Indians. Waleed had the same experience of being harassed in daily meetings with public institutions. Apart from the continuous police stops on the road to the airport, he told me how he had been harassed when applying for a licence for his new mobile phone shop. When he had filled in the application form and paid the fee at the municipality, he was told to come back after two weeks. At his return, the woman at the desk informed him that they did not issue licences for mobile shops here. ‘You have to go to Dar es Salaam,’ she had said. Then Waleed gave her 20,000 TZS and she began to work on his case. Two weeks later, Waleed returned to the woman who told him that she could only issue a licence for mobile phone accessories. ‘That’s not true,’ he told her. ‘Let me call my boss,’ she responded. After hanging up she told Waleed that if he paid additionally 50,000 TZS, he would get the licence. ‘30,000 TZS,’ Waleed suggested. ‘Okay,’ the woman said, and immediately Waleed got the licence. ‘They know how they can hit us,’ Waleed said to me after telling me the story. ‘They are many, we are few.’ Waleed thus framed and understood the experience as harassment and particularly as ethnically motivated harassment, but by using his negotiation skills he opened a discussion of the content and value of the transaction and managed to get a good price for fast service. The uncertainty of the actual rules and procedures worked for Waleed despite his immediate frustration with not getting the treatment that he felt entitled to.

**Playing the Game**

Akshay, a 50-year-old Jain of Indian origin owning a safari company and a hotel, was also aware of the importance of having the right friends. For him, the vanishing Indian communities in Tanzania meant a drastic decline in the number of local Indian customers in his hotel. It used to be full of Indians who came to swim in the pool and have lunch in the Indian restaurant on weekends, but now the pool and the restaurant were filled with Africans and Western tourists instead. Akshay could not count on his community when it came to business maintenance and development anymore. At the same time, he experienced a growing need to engage in different kinds of bribery:

> ‘You know, they come to the office or the hotel, and they want to check things. Different people are coming, and they look for different things and have different demands. Then I need this document, or I should fill this form. This thing is not supposed to stand here, or I should move something somewhere. Every time they come from TRA, they find something which is wrong, and they want something in order not to make a case out of it. You know, they could close my business if they wanted to. So, I have to pay them something. The amount depends on the status of the person. If it’s a big man, I have to...’

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6 Tanzania Revenue Authority
give him a lot of money. But it’s better to accept than to fight. If you want to make business here, you need to play the game instead of fighting. You can try to fight, but it will not make life easy for you.’

To ‘play the game’ was a way for Akshay to secure his businesses. Apart from paying bribes to different officials, he had networks in which he socialized with Africans. He was a Rotarian, and he had informal groups of friends with whom he would meet for a beer and to discuss business. However, it was clear that these friends were only friends in relation to business. As many of my interlocutors stated when I asked about their personal relations to Africans: ‘Only if it’s business-related.’ Akshay had certain friends to be able to ‘play the game’. According to Ilda Lindell and Mats Utas, social networks ‘provide a critical means through which the vulnerable realize incomes and attain a measure of social and economic security as well as the means through which the powerful secure profits and control’ (Lindell and Utas 2012, 410). In Thomas Blom Hansen and Finn Stepputat’s words, ‘this local art of politics also requires a certain command of the “rules of game” as well as the discursive register through which bribes and kickbacks are talked about and constructed as reasonable within a local cultural economy’ (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 31). Akshay knew the rules of game, and he knew how he as an influential and powerful businessman could benefit from his network.

Suggesting the notion of a ‘feel for the game’ to describe the ‘encounter between the habitus and a field’ (Bourdieu 1995, 66) and thus the subject’s ability to act within the field, Pierre Bourdieu viewed the game as practice in a given field. The game and its rules are obvious for ‘the native’; a feel for the game demands experience, which is why ‘one cannot enter this magic circle by an instantaneous decision of the will, but only by birth or by a slow process of co-option and initiation which is equivalent to a second birth’ (Bourdieu 1995, 68).

For Akshay, Noora, Waleed and Karan, ‘the field’ was complex. They lived in overlapping and interfering fields and were actors in several different kinds of games to which they were all somewhat native; their habitus was characterized by a ‘native’ understanding of the practices inside the Indian communities, the transnational communities and the local, African society. However, people like Akshay, Noora, Waleed and Karan all accepted, and were skilled within, several fields. For them, ‘the game’ was the practice of bribery and engaging in the right bribery friendships, which in their openness allowed the actors to negotiate distance, power and value. The name of the game was uncertainty.

As Bourdieu put it: ‘Because native membership in a field implies a feel for the game in the sense of a capacity for practical anticipation of the “upcoming” future contained in the present, everything that takes place in it seems sensible: full of sense and objectively directed in a judicious direction’ (Bourdieu 1995, 66). For
the Indians who played the game, the game made sense, and they practised actively bringing about uncertainty in ways that allowed them to conduct business and to live in Tanzania. Noora, Waleed, Karan and Akshay were all born into the world of business as their parents were also running businesses in East Africa, but despite this they felt distanced; they expressed a feeling of standing outside the field, knowing that they needed to act in certain ‘local’ ways to do business. Their feel for the game was conscious and their participation deliberate. They thought the game was silly, frustrating and harassing, and at the same time, they were aware of how and why it worked, and they knew how to get the most out of it. Several different agendas and imaginaries were at stake in their reasoning. They condemned corruption from a point of view that was informed by Western anti-corruption ideology, in which corruption was contaminating the state (Muir and Gupta 2018, 8) and hindering a pure and good kind of governance. Also, the condemnation was part of a nostalgic narrative of the law and order that existed during colonial rule, when Indians felt safe in Tanzania, had a privileged position in society and concretely inhabited the town centre. The longing for law and order was used to explain and justify Indian migration from Tanzania to the UK. Often, my interlocutors used the word harassment to describe the way they felt stigmatized and badly treated by the state (who nationalized their houses and properties in 1972 and continuously refuses to give them back) and by civil servants (who target their demand for bribes specifically at Indians). At the same time, they skilfully made friends with the right people and paid bribes to not get in trouble or to be protected, and some friendships were even perceived with a kind of pride. The engagement in corruption was seen as both illegal and legitimate. While Karan was proud of his important friends, he also kept on saying, referring to the Tanzanian authorities, that ‘they don’t know how much we contributed’ and felt that he was being stigmatized because of his ethnicity. He was emotional when he talked about how things used to be and how bad he thought it had all become. In his view, it was not fair that public officers demanded him to pay bribes, as he wished to be seen as a Tanzanian citizen and treated like his fellow Tanzanians. In his view, Tanzanian Indians had to pay bribes far more often than African Tanzanians. At the same time, his way of putting his disappointment, ‘they don’t know how much we contributed,’ paradoxically points toward his distance to ‘them’ and his experience of not belonging to the place where he has lived his whole life. In the same way, Noora, Waleed and Akshay felt that they were being seen as Others when public officers threatened them. The demand for bribes made them experience their otherness intensely, and sometimes it made them consider moving abroad. At the same time, they established new businesses and invested heavily in their Tanzanian lives.

**Why Fighting is Not an Option**

When my interlocutors took part in bribery, they were themselves part of the continuation of a system which they felt repelled by. This can seem paradoxical, but in their perspective, it was their only opportunity. As Akshay stated: ‘If you want to make business here, you need to play the game instead of fighting. You
can try to fight, but it will not make life easy for you.’ ‘To fight’ denoted not to play the game; not to engage in bribery; but being active by fighting with the system and claiming one’s legal rights. In this way, the idea of ‘fighting’ presupposed a reliable and well-functioning state apparatus as well as a fair and efficient legal system. But it also presupposed a lack of the uncertainty and flexibility that enabled the practices of Tanzanian Indians. For Akshay, to fight would mean to deny paying bribes to the Tanzania Revenue Authority when they came to check his company, to refuse to pay bribes to get a licence, or to decline to use his friends when in need of something. Running a business that would be too great a risk. And according to Akshay and a number of other Tanzanian Indian businesspeople whom I talked to, one would never achieve anything by refusing to play the game.

This tendency of trying to fit in and not making too much noise was characteristic for Tanzanian Indians. They were aware of their vulnerability on a personal as well as on a communal level, and they did not wish or dare to challenge their position in society. Given their citizenship statuses and transnational engagements, their wealth and their background as middlemen between the British and Africans, it has been difficult for them to claim rights. Rather, as other middlemen minorities, they have focused on carving out a place in local business as well as in transnational communities. Thus, in endogamous religious communities of which many are engaged in strong transnational networks (in particular the Jains, Khoja Shia Ithnashers, Dawoodi Bohoras and Ismaelis), they have kept businesses inside and primarily used community members or at least fellow Indians as business partners. In this way, it has been possible to keep resources inside the communities, and to primarily interact with other Indians. Furthermore, the primary security net is provided by their religious community, where members can get help to pay school fees, pay hospital bills or get support in other ways. Instead of trying to achieve rights and protection through the formal structures and systems, they have sought to create networks via informal channels. This strategy has proven to work well for many Indians, but they are aware that being grounded and connected locally with African Tanzanians is also important, especially when running businesses and being Indian, and in particular now, as the market is not controlled by Indians anymore. Indeed, being too unwilling to pay bribes and engage in friendships with certain people would be seen as provocative and arrogant by African Tanzanians and probably enhance the harassment. Indians are already being perceived as arrogant ‘others’ by Africans. With only one exception, every time I have told African Tanzanians about my fieldwork among Tanzanian Indians, their response has been ‘Kwa nini??’ (why??). They simply do not understand my interest in them.

The extensive use of informal systems and channels, by Indians as well as Africans, is symptomatic of a society characterized by a fragmented and distrustful relation to the state. As Blundo and de Sardan note in their work on corruption in West Africa: ‘there is a widespread mutual agreement on the fact that “stealing from the state is not stealing from anyone”, and that the parties will benefit
mutually at the expense of the excluded “third party” (Blundo and de Sardan 2006, 82-83). In Tanzania, as an exception in the region, the state has been fairly stable since Independence (Green 2011). This means that the state has not been associated with violence or insecurity as such by its citizens, apart from the years under Magufuli. Yet not many people fully trust the state institutions or that the state will take care of them, and Tanzanian Indians in particular, because of their experiences during and after Independence, are extremely reluctant to trust that the state will protect them. When I talked to my interlocutors about the election in 2015 and the new president, they were hesitant and without hope. ‘They are all the same,’ people said, referring to the high level of corruption in the government. Even though Magufuli’s campaign and politics were focused on fighting corruption, people did not believe that he would continue this line. ‘Wait and see. After some years, they all become corrupt,’ people would tell me. In this way, the systems of bribery were also a response to the inefficacy and corruption of the state (Blundo and de Sardan 2006, 70). The informal layer of bribery, which is informed by a fundamental critique of state corruption, could be viewed as a response to what Cooper et al describe as ‘radical, routinized uncertainty’ (Cooper and Pratten 2015, 1). The lack of certainty in the formal systems, which means that a person does not know how long it will take to get a particular service and how much it will cost, creates a need for specific kinds of friendships and a ‘game’ where money, services and protection are the focus of transactions. Yet, I find it imperative to question the divide between formal and informal in the literature as well as among those who use the systems (Hodder 2016, 113). Rupert Hodder argues that ‘informality’ in the shape of social relationships is ‘the material from which the formal organization (with its processes and rules) is shaped, and by which it is sustained’ (Hodder 2016, 125). Thus, the distinctions between ‘playing the game’ and ‘fighting’ become unclear. If ‘playing the game’ potentially works to support the established system by softening the relations between state and citizen, by enabling efficiency in the bureaucracy and by creating a level of flexibility that shapes different kinds of potentiality, then the game becomes part of ‘the system’. Furthermore, as shown above, the practices of bribery are customary to such an extent that they are formal rather than informal, and as public as private. But for Tanzanian Indians, the narrative of ‘fighting’, which they all agreed was the ideal response to bribery demands, placed them in the margins of Tanzania, closer to the West than to Africa, and closer to the kind of good citizenship and law and order that they cherished. Thus, even though fighting was not an option, the narrative of fighting as an ideal was important. While de Sardan writes about the schizophrenic state and schizophrenic civil servant, I will add the schizophrenic briber. I am well aware that millions of African Tanzanians are demanded or in other ways pushed to pay bribes, and that the majority of them would prefer not to, but owing to their specific role and history in Tanzania, Tanzanian Indians are shaped by several different cultural systems that to a large degree situate them with ‘a foot in the door’ (Schou Pallesen 2017) and in a position as insider outsiders. The discrepancy between what is seen as legitimate and ethical, what is being practised, and how it is perceived and talked about is evident. And it is
symptomatic for the Tanzanian Indians’ way of belonging in Tanzania, which is highly ambiguous.

Mads Damgaard writes that ‘every mode of condemning and critiquing corruption articulates a marginal zone of action and forms a boundary in relation to a specific notion of the common good’ (Damgaard 2015, 411). Fighting practices of corruption, then, articulates a certain idea of a ‘common good’ that takes the shape of normative, Western notions of a strong and ‘pure’ state. We can look at how corruption enables people to imagine the state (Gupta 2005, 175) and, in the case of Tanzanian Indians, to imagine an idealized state without corruption. Hansen and Stepputat note that ‘if the state as an actual social form is not universal, we may suggest that the desire of stateness has become a truly global and universal phenomenon’ (Hansen and Stepputat 2001, 37). For the Indians, the desire of stateness becomes framed in a longing back to a time characterized by ‘law and order’; when they knew their position and possibilities; and when it was not necessary to negotiate distance to and with African Tanzanians; when distance and isolation were enforced by the nature of the colonial segregated system. Also, the desire of stateness was expressed as a legitimate reason for the young people to leave the country and settle in the UK. The harassment and messiness in Tanzania were not worth wasting one’s energy on anymore, I was told several times. In the UK, there was a proper state with proper, trustworthy institutions, rules to follow; a legal system, and, obviously, services that one should not spend too much time fighting for. For Tanzanian Indians, thus, stateness and the ‘purity’ of states was to a large degree expressed as accountability, certainty and the lack of harassment. And they felt they fitted better into that kind of state than the Tanzanian with its unpredictable processes and demands.

Conclusion

By showing how Tanzanian Indians are schizophrenic as bribers, and in a schizophrenic position, this article contributes to the burgeoning field of ethnographic studies of corruption that seek to collapse the corruption/anti-corruption framework by seeing the ethical and the legal as complex and intertwined. Having invested economically and socially in Tanzania, many Tanzanian Indians need to be able to stay in the country. Furthermore, Tanzania was for many of my interlocutors the only place where they could maintain their communities, lifestyle, traditions, language and religion. Those who moved to London would ‘lose their culture’. Despite being outsiders and others and standing with a foot in the door, Tanzania was their home, the place where they grew up, where their houses, shops, temples and mosques were, and where their parents and grandparents settled and established what grew into the resourceful Indian communities in Tanzania today. It was not without costs to leave the country, but also not without costs to stay. The insecurity and the uncertainty which characterize Tanzanian Indians’ present and future position in Tanzania mean that ‘the game’ of bribery also encompasses affective negotiations of belonging.
and non-belonging. For many Tanzanian Indians, this paradox was central in their everyday lives. At one and the same time, they were anxious about not belonging and satisfied to be Others. And while deeming corruption wrong, they took part in it themselves, sometimes overtly, sometimes themselves referring to the practices as bribery or corruption or ‘the game’, and sometimes less explicitly by securing themselves by having the right friends and giving them gifts of the right amounts at the right time. Through these practices and logics, which I have explored as moral economy, it is apparent that bribery is ambivalent to take part in and ambivalent to legitimize. It is necessary, frustrating, sometimes a bit fun, sometimes horrible and expensive. This ambiguity of right and wrong, giver and taker, displays the fundamental ambiguity of the Tanzanian Indians’ role in contemporary Tanzania, of their imaginaries of what a good state is, and of how to navigate and engage in it in the ideal way. Hence, the article argues that a holistic exploration of people’s conceptualizations and imaginaries of corruption tells us something not only about their ideas and experiences of the state and its institutions, but also about their position in society and their feeling of belonging, or not belonging, in the nation state.

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