

# The Tijâniyya and Economic Well-Being in Cameroon

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## Abstract

The Tijâniyya, a Sufi brotherhood of Maghrebian origin, has played a crucial historical role in shaping sociopolitical and religious dynamics in Cameroon, particularly in predominantly Muslim cities. As a spiritual and community-based actor, it offers a worldview grounded in solidarity, mutual aid, and social justice, values that resonate within the current economic context. This study seeks to promote the idea of reinventing the economy by proposing an explorable and achievable version of it: It questions the Tijâniyya's capacity to propose a credible economic alternative by fostering sustainable economic well-being for and among its followers. In line with the broader theme of new pathways in the global economy, the central aim is to demonstrate how the Tijâniyya can serve as an economic lever for Cameroon. By drawing on the concepts of "moral economy" and "economic spirituality," this contribution aims to analyze economic practices, community-based economic resource management, and the establishment of financial and commercial solidarity networks. It argues that in Cameroon, the Tijâniyya can draw upon its collective strength to generate new economic dynamics where wealth redistribution, education, and collective empowerment are essential. Thus, the central argument of this study is based on the hypothesis that the Tijâniyya can put forward an alternative economic model, rooted in an ethic of solidarity and sharing, capable of positively transforming the socioeconomic environment of followers who claim allegiance to this order. Although informal and often overlooked, this model may represent a potential response to the dysfunctions of modern African economies, particularly in contexts of economic crisis and structural inequality. In this way, the contribution will question the place of Muslim religious brotherhoods in reimagining economic models in Africa. This will be achieved by offering sustainable solutions to development challenges. The primary approach employed is qualitative research, using interviews, documentary research, and direct observation as techniques.

## Keywords

Tijâniyya, alternative economy, community solidarity, economic well-being, Cameroon

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## Introduction

Given the gradually increasing influence of religious movements in the socio-economic renewal of contemporary societies, the relationship between “*religion and development*”, two overused and intertwined themes that reflect singularly different realities has been the subject of much debate. To understand their contours, the work of Henri Desroche (1961)<sup>1</sup>, who analyzes the impacts of the relationship between religion and development, is fundamental. Although it is well known that religious traditions have significantly contributed to societal transformation, religion had long been excluded from development studies. Now addressed in modern literature, both critically and enthusiastically, this thematic approach has continued to spark growing academic interest. In Africa, where religion remains an essential frame of reference for development (Ezra et al., 2020, p. 15), various contributions of researchers such as Marshall and Van Saanen (2007), or Tomalin (2013, 2015), stand out. While these innovative studies contribute to clarifying the link between religion and development, they remain incomplete, as they only marginally address the role of Islam in development. This “scientific gap” was subsequently filled by the reflections of Kurshid (1985), Mannan (1981, 1984), and Diouf (2008). In line with the aim of breaking down barriers to knowledge on the theme of “Islam and development”, their work shows that in Africa, Islam, while influencing the development process, plays a crucial role in structuring socio-economic dynamics.

Despite this historiographical contribution, in the Muslim<sup>2</sup> world, there is a bleak picture, evocative of desolation displayed in several states that identify with Islam. The persistence of slogans and propaganda that depict Islam as inherently fatalistic, backward, hostile to progress, and symbolic of stagnation reinforces the reductionist views found in certain strands of Western literature. Rightly considered an obstacle to economic and social progress, this deficit in entrepreneurial spirit, marked by centuries of “nonchalant fatalism among Muslims<sup>3</sup>” (Destanne de Bernis, 1960, p. 110) is all biased interpretations of and/or about Islam based on a reality marked by underdevelopment and poverty. What of the essentialist views that hastily concluded that Islam is incapable of evolving, let alone fostering the dynamism that could generate progress? With the growing body of studies on “Islam and development”, it is increasingly difficult to maintain this line of controversy. In fact, the interaction between these two domains reveals complex dynamics that have a tangible impact on the material and social well-being of Muslim communities.

However, the question of the logical relationship between “Islam and development”, offers insights into the promotion of education and the improvement of living conditions. Within this Maghrebian context, the Tijâniyya, an influential Muslim religious brotherhood in Cameroon, which can act both as a Sufi spiritual framework and as a potential economic lever, deserves special attention. Institutionalized since the 19th century, this brotherhood, now dominant in Cameroon, distinguishes itself through its strong roots and widespread presence. It has been able to establish, through its followers, a network within Cameroonian Muslim society, which itself is characterized by the fragmentation of its religious landscape. This has been achieved through the proliferation of religious associations and the slow breakdown of ethno-regional territories that once formed the foundations of large historical Christian and Muslim organizations (Lasseur, 2005, p. 93).

1 For this author, the relationship between “religion and development” can be, and is, conceived according to three models, namely: in positive terms, “Religion is a factor of Development, which entails a growth or renewal of Religion”; in negative terms, “Religion is an obstacle to development, which entails the decline of religion and its institutions”; and in differentiated terms, where Religion and Development are relatively unrelated to one another. Their relationship depends on the types, phases, or levels of religion, as well as the types, phases, or levels of development.

2 The Muslim geographical area is vast, stretching from the Maghreb (“the West”) with Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya, to the Mashreq (“the East”), comprising Egypt, the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Yemen, Oman, and Kuwait), Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and the Palestinian territories, but also Turkey and the Caucasus, as well as Central Asia, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Malaysia, and a large part of Sub-Saharan Africa (from Senegal to Somalia).

3 This pejorative term from European literature, employed by Maxime Rodinson, refers to a kind of deficiency in entrepreneurial spirit observed in the medieval Muslim East. It sought to denounce an attitude within Islam that entrusts God with providing human beings the goods necessary for life, if He deems it useful and appropriate. See on this subject: Rodinson, M. (1966). *Islam and Capitalism*. Éditions du Seuil.

In Cameroon, a secular country, Christianity and Islam are the most widespread monotheistic religions. In the absence of an official religious census, an analysis of the religious demographic and the geo-religious map is necessary. According to mid-2022 estimates by the U.S. government<sup>4</sup>, 60.2% of the population identifies as Christian, 32% as Muslim, 5.6% as animist, 1% as adherents of other religions, and 1.2% with no declared religion. For a total population estimated at nearly 30 million, Lasseur (2010) proposes a kind of geography of religions. He points out that “territories of Islamic majority overlap with those of certain ethnic groups in the North (Peul, Mandara, Kotoko, Choua, Kanuri), the South (Hausa), and the West (Grassfields, Bamoun)”. Lasseur (2010) adds to this by mentioning the various Christian denominations that merge with the Douala in the Littoral (Baptism), the Béti in the Centre-South (Catholicism), the Bulu in the South (Presbyterianism), and the non-Islamized Sudanese groups in the North (Lutheranism). However, it should be noted that Sunni Muslims—comprising mainly Sufis, Wahhabis, and Tablighs<sup>5</sup>—are concentrated in the North, Far North, North-West, Adamawa, East, and West regions. With a dispersed presence across regions, “Islam entered Cameroon through the Sahelian-Sudanese routes of the North, while Christianity arrived from the coasts with the colonizers” (Lasseur, 2005, p. 94).

It is understood that several studies, such as those by Octave Depont and Xavier Coppolani (1897), O’Brien (1970, 1971), Alexandre Popovic and Gilles Veinstein (1996), Jean-Pierre Mulago (2005), and Chadhy Fitouri (1982), show that Islam brotherhood, as an important economic actor, actively contribute to the revitalization of local economies through the practice of community mutual aid, the promotion of education and the redistribution of resources among members. In this context, beyond the centrality of its spiritual dimension, Sufi brotherhoods such as the Tijâniyya seem to use economic resources as the foundation of their influence within communities. It is therefore important to take a cross-cutting and synoptic view in order to determine whether the Tijâniyya, as a brotherhood capable of offering an alternative economic model, uses the economy as a lever to increase and/or consolidate its influence in Cameroon. This complexity raises an essential question: how can the Tijâniyya contribute to economic well-being in a context of globalization and the reconfiguration of economic dynamics?

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the Tijâniyya can be perceived as an economic lever, in connection with the theme of new pathways in the global economy<sup>6</sup>. Through an in-depth analysis of its economic practices, this article seeks to demonstrate how the Tijâniyya fosters community solidarity, promotes education, and facilitates resource redistribution, thereby generating a form of economic well-being among its adherents in Cameroon. The working hypothesis argues that in a constantly changing world, Sufi brotherhood Islam is called upon to rethink and reinvent itself. In other words, the Tijâniyya’s engagement in economic development should not be motivated solely by religious considerations but can, above all, be a strategic means of strengthening social ties while improving the quality of life of its members. In this way, the Tijâniyya could contribute to the emergence of new economic pathways. The methodological approach adopted in this research is primarily qualitative, focusing on an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic dynamics linked to the Tijâniyya in Cameroon. The method used is mainly qualitative, with techniques such as interviews, documentary research, and direct observation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders, including religious leaders, followers, and economic actors, to gather their views on well-being and economic empowerment. Documentary research drew on bibliographic, archival, and prior academic work on the Tijâniyya and religious economies in Africa. Finally, direct observation proved to be a major methodological asset, providing access to concrete practices, community rituals, and economic initiatives undertaken

4 See the 2022 Report on Religious Freedom in Cameroon from the United States Embassy in Cameroon, dated July 13, 2023, available online at: <https://cm.usembassy.gov/fr/rapport-2022-sur-la-liberte-de-religion-dans-le-monde-cameroun/>.

5 The Tabligh (*Jamâ'at al-Tabligh wa al-Da'wa*, literally “Community for Preaching and Call”) is a missionary and spiritual movement that seeks to renew the piety of Muslims through grassroots preaching and the imitation of the Prophetic model, while remaining apolitical, non-violent, and universal.

6 At the initiative of the Joint Doctoral School of the Ateliers de la Pensée and Global Africa, held in Dakar from July 8 to 13, 2024, fourteen selected candidates were supervised by seven mentors as part of their presentations on the theme: “*New Pathways of the Economy: Rethinking and Reinventing the Economic Order*”.

by the brotherhood. This methodological triangulation made it possible to cross-reference data, ensure its validity, and develop a nuanced analysis of the mechanisms through which the Tijâniyya contributes to the economic well-being of its members.

Accordingly, the present study is structured around three main axes. The first part examines the socio-historical and economic foundations of the Tijâniyya in Cameroon. The second part provides an overview of the principles of the Tijâniyya and their impact on economic well-being. The third and final part returns to the question of economic empowerment within the Tijâniyya in Cameroon. Ultimately, the aim is to provide a reflection that will enable us to rethink the Cameroonian economic order through the lens of the Tijâniyya.

## The Tijâniyya in Cameroon: Historical Context and Socio-Economic Foundations

In this section, we examine the socio-historical and economic foundations of the Tijâniyya. This is an African Sufi spirituality that takes its name from its founder, the scholar, mystic, and jurist Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijâni. He was the spiritual leader of the Sufi *Chuyûkh* (Abun-Nasr, 1965, p. 18). Specifically, we will revisit the history of the brotherhood in Cameroon, and particularly in Northern Cameroon, while highlighting the socio-economic profile of the communities affiliated with this spirituality.

### *Origins and Expansion of the Tijâniyya in Cameroon*

The itinerary and progression of the *tariqa* Tijâniyya help provide insight into its origins and historical trajectory. The contribution of religious leaders in the dissemination of the values of this brotherhood is undeniable. From the outset, it is worth noting that the culmination of the various stages of the mystical life of its founder constitutes its true starting point. Thus, following a prophetic vision, received in broad daylight and while awake, the spiritual realization (*fath*<sup>7</sup>) that occurred in 1781–1782 in the Algerian oasis of Abû Senghûm (Triaud & Robinson, 2000, p. 9) marked the beginning of the call to affiliation with this new Sufi *tariqa* Muhammadiyya. As soon as it was established in Fez in 1789 (Abun-Nasr, 1965, p. 19), the Tijâniyya, which drew its power of seduction from the charisma of its founder, needed this character to establish itself and expand. In Fez, Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijâni surrounded himself with disciples and trusted men to whom he entrusted with the missionary work in distant countries. By conferring upon them the title of *Muqaddam*<sup>8</sup>, they were tasked with preaching the virtues of the new brotherhood. Thus, in Algeria, Tunisia, and Mauritania, the diffusion and implantation of the Tijâniyya became a reality. South of the Sahara, the Tijâniyya experienced significant expansion after the travels of Mawlûd Faal al-Ya'qûbî, who sought to spread the brotherhood across West Africa (Bah, 2024, p. 115). This expansion was further reinforced by the “imperial” and “imperialist” jihad launched by El Hajj ‘Umar Tall (1797–1864) in 1852. It was thanks to his efforts, influence, and various recruitment tours among local aristocracies that West African Tijâniyya was consolidated (Bah, 2024, p. 111). Moreover, it was the arrival of this first Tijâni Caliph of West Africa<sup>9</sup> in Nigeria (Bornu and Sokoto, from 1830 to 1838) that marked the beginnings of the history of the Tijâniyya in this country. Through various affiliations, El Hajj ‘Umar Tall managed to strengthen the ranks of the brotherhood in Sokoto, where Sultan Muhammad Bello was initiated (Bah, 2024, p. 112). From 1834 onward, El Hajj ‘Umar became his personal advisor. With this affiliation of Sultan Muhammad Bello of Sokoto to the Tijâniyya, all the political entities that received (politico-spiritual) directives from Sokoto would gradually adopt the virtues of the new path. By 1888, within the Adamawa Emirate, “the Muslim scholars of the royal court followed the Tijâniyya” (Mohammadou, 1992, p. 437).

7 According to Ali Sukayrij, the realization of Ahmad al-Tijâni's *fath* took place at the tomb of ‘Abd al-Salâm ibn Mashîsh before his journeys to Tlemcen, Ayn Mâdi, and other places. He would later prohibit visits to the tomb of Ibn Mashîsh at Jabal al-‘Alam in the southwest of Tetouan, as well as to that of Mawlay Idris in Fez. The explanation for this prohibition appears to be linked to the influence, ultimately, of the Indian or Maghrebi masters whom Ahmad al-Tijâni encountered in Mecca.

8 Of Arabic origin, *Moqadam*, *Muqaddam*, or *Moqadem* (plural: *Muqaddamûn*) designates a leader, an administrator, or a manager of a community's property.

9 From Guinea to Niger, passing through present-day Senegal, Mali, and Nigeria.

Since Islam as practiced in Cameroon was introduced from the west, namely Nigeria, it is equally possible to trace the advent of Tijâniyya in Cameroon along similar lines. Thus, with the substantial contribution of the emissaries from the Sokoto Caliphate to the establishment and consolidation of Islam in Fombina<sup>10</sup>, it is possible to assume that with the beginnings of the *tariqa* Tijâniyya in this caliphate, all territories under its authority, such as the emirate of Fombina, would gradually “adopt” and/or embraced the new brotherhood (Bah, 2024, p. 119). This was probably how Modibbo Adama adopted the Tijâniyya and imposed it within his emirate.

In the 19th century, the Tijâniyya spread across the entire empire, establishing itself in the emirates of Zaria, Bauchi, and Adamawa (Loimeir, 1997, p. 25). From then on, at the beginning of the 19th century, under the initiative of Muhammad Bello, suzerain of the *Laamiibe* of Adamawa, the Tijâniyya was firmly implanted in this socio-political entity (Frœlich, 1954, p. 70). A similar process occurred in the northern regions of Cameroon, where the post-‘Umarian and Niassene<sup>11</sup> branches of the Tijâniyya later became a reference point.

### Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities Affiliated with the Tijâniyya

Alongside the Mouridiyya<sup>12</sup>, the *tariqa* Tijâniyya appears to be one of the brotherhood orders that generate the “greatest enthusiasm in Africa” (Wane, 2010, p. 118). Within the Islamic public sphere in Cameroon, the Tijâniyya seems to be, “on the surface”, the most widely accepted of the existing initiatic paths. It is, at the very least, the one that elicits particular fervor among a significant segment of Cameroonian Muslims. Given its deep roots and influence on the daily lives of the population, the zeal and fervor of its members, and, above all, the ever-growing number of *Tijânîs* observed during major religious events, the Tijâniyya appears to be the largest brotherhood in Cameroon. It plays a crucial spiritual and socio-economic role, particularly in predominantly Muslim cities. Communities affiliated with this initiatic path are organized around *zawâya*<sup>13</sup> and influential religious leaders, who act as mediators on spiritual, religious, and economic levels. It is a collectivist brotherhood in its structure and community rituals (emphasizing fraternity, solidarity, and group belonging), but it does not abandon the importance of individual spiritual practice. In a logic of inner purification, the

10 It is a word of Fulani origin that designates the cardinal point south. It refers to all the southern peripheral territories in relation to the center, which was Sokoto. The Emirate of Adamawa, also called the Emirate of Fombina with Yola as its capital, was both a province of the vast Fulani empire of Sokoto and a large socio-political entity that extended from northern Nigeria to present-day Adamawa (Cameroon).

11 The influence of the Fayḍa branch of Shaykh Ibrahima Niassé (1900–1975), the eminent Sufi master from Kaolack (Senegal), in Cameroon is at once religious, social, intellectual, and transnational. It is part of a network of Tijâniyya expansion that transcends national affiliations, mobilizing spirituality, mobility, economic solidarity, and moral authority within the Islamized Sub-Saharan space. In this regard, many Cameroonian Tijâni *chuyûkh* identify with the Fayḍa, which continues to structure religious training, preaching, rituals (*dhikr*, *Mawlid*), and initiation chains (*silsila*). The doctrine of the Fayḍa emphasizes knowledge (the centrality of *ilm*, considered the path to inner freedom and authority), universality (direct accessibility to divine proximity [*ma’rifâ*] and emancipation for all). Thus, some community leaders affiliated with the Fayḍa play a discreet but real role in social mediation or in negotiations between public authorities and Muslim communities. The influence of the Fayḍa rests on the creation of collective economic structures around the *zawâya*: a transnational network of mutual assistance in which Cameroonian disciples interact with their brothers from Senegal, Nigeria, Niger, and the diaspora (Europe, the United States), and on the emergence of a form of religious entrepreneurship (the sale of Sufi books, clothing, perfumes, the organization of spiritual journeys).

12 The Mouridiyya, or Muridiyya, is a Sufi brotherhood of Senegalese origin founded by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacké (1853–1927) at the end of the nineteenth century, with the city of Touba as its spiritual and administrative capital. Derived from the Arabic *murîd*, meaning “one who desires [God]” or disciple, the Mouridiyya is situated within Sufism. Its spiritual and religious foundations rest on a rigorous spiritual quest (purification of the soul, prayer, *dhikr*, submission to God), the centrality of work (manual or agricultural labor as a form of worship), non-violence, and patience, along with an ethic of discipline, devotion, and service toward the Cheikh. For the founder, work is understood as a path to sanctification. For the disciples, labor is viewed as an extension of their spiritual journey. The creation of self-managed rural communities and solidarity-based economic centers stems from the doctrine of this brotherhood. With a hierarchical organization centered around the Cheikh and his heirs, the Mouridiyya developed a network of *daara* (Qur’anic schools) and circles of disciples who make offerings (*hadiya*) to their guides, finance community projects, and take part in the *Magal* (the great annual pilgrimage) of Touba.

13 Generally, the *zawâya*, founded by a Cheikh or in his honor, are genuine institutions where conviviality and companionship are practiced. Their establishment is explained both by divine will (the order for their foundation is said to come from the Prophet) and by the growing number of disciples. A *zawiya* is a religious building whose interior is organized around three distinct spaces: an area reserved for meditation and education; a prayer hall and space for the recitation of litanies; and the quarters reserved for the Cheikh and a few advanced disciples for meditation and writing activities. In the Tijâniyya *tariqa*, for example, the *zawiya* represents both an institution and an *umma* organized into a principal *zawiya* and secondary *zawâya*. While the principal *zawiya*—the center of doctrinal elaboration—refers to the residence and/or mausoleum of the Cheikh, the secondary *zawâya*, administered by the *Muqaddamûn*, constitute annexes of the principal *zawiya*.

Tijâniyya also encourages its followers to strengthen their *dhikr* and to undertake *khalwa* (spiritual retreats). In other words, this brotherhood calls its adherents to deepen their faith both through collective life and through occasional spiritual retreats, with a preference for the daily regularity of the *wird* rather than prolonged isolation. Before focusing on the study of the socio-economic practices of the various Tijânî communities in Cameroon, it is important first to review the socio-economic profile of Tijâniyya followers.

Upon observation, adherents of the Tijâniyya in Cameroon come from diverse social backgrounds, although a significant proportion belong to the working and middle classes. Traditionally, the various communities are composed of farmers, herders, traders, artisans, Qur'anic teachers, and workers in the informal sector. Nonetheless, it is worth noting the existence of a Tijânî elite composed of Muslim scholars, intellectuals, and entrepreneurs who exert multifaceted socio-economic influence. Specifically, the majority of *Tijânîs* in the northeastern and northwestern parts of the country (Cameroon) are farmers and herders who live in very remote peripheral areas. It should be noted that their organization relies strictly on community structures that compensate for the absence of formal social protection institutions. By adhering meticulously to the traditional hierarchical system, followers find in the Tijâniyya a framework for socio-political fulfillment and a structure of economic and moral support through numerous scattered *zawâya* that function as clerical centers of mutual aid. It is worth mentioning that these *zawâya* are rightly regarded as centers of spiritual flourishing and influence, places of instruction and ritual observance, and hubs of charismatic power for the followers of Sheikh Ahmad al-Tijânî (Bah, 2024, pp. 137–138). As “an organized form of the social” (Dassetto, 1997, p. 183), the *zawâya* “draw from the world and the temporal in order to develop a doctrine and practices” (Cottin, 2007, p. 69).

In order to provide a more comprehensive overview of the socio-economic profile of followers<sup>14</sup>, Tijânî Sufi religious leaders in Cameroon often serve as imams, marabouts (healers, tellers of the “hidden things”, “performers of miracles”), religious advisers to the *Laamiibe* and Sultans, Qur'anic masters, or teachers. As advocates of educational concepts of Islam, the Tijânîs, seeking proper integration into the Muslim community, ensure that their followers acquire sound moral and intellectual training (Bah, 2022, p. 108). Alongside the professions of “marabouts paid for their services” (Kane, 2009, p. 210) or “marabouts who are farmers<sup>15</sup>” (Fall, 2011, p. 51), who combined “work and religion”, there are also Tijânî scholars who are tailors, embroiderers, weavers, and artisans.

Within the spectrum of Tijânî adherents in Cameroon, some are also civil servants of the Republic, “senior” administrators, or well-off economic actors (transporters, traders, herders). This last category of Tijaniyyah followers, who make sacrifices, pious donations, and the giving of mandatory alms (*zakat*), constitutes the resource of the brotherhood in Cameroon. It should be mentioned that in Cameroon, most Tijânîs embody the motto of “Islam and work.” They are Muslims who live both from their religion and from the sweat of their labor.

Furthermore, to better understand the socio-economic characteristics of Tijânîs in Cameroon, it is essential to analyze the interactions between Sufi spirituality and the traditional economic practices of Tijânî communities. This demonstrates that the Tijaniyyah plays a fundamental role in structuring the economic practices of the followers of this brotherhood (traditional economic activities). Work ethic and business management are often framed by religious principles derived from Sufism. While it is evident that the economic ethics of the tijânîs are influenced by Sufi spirituality, it is equally true that they refer, for example, to the contribution of *baraka* (divine blessing) in their

14 In this study, the focus is placed on the male profile as the sample of analysis. This choice stems from the observation that, in the Cameroonian context and within the specific framework of the Tijâniyya, men more frequently occupy visible and responsible positions in the management of religious, economic, and community activities. Their historically central role in the organization of Sufi networks and in the structuring of certain forms of the informal economy justifies the orientation of this work. This does not mean, however, that women's contributions are non-existent or insignificant. For this reason, this reflection privileges the analysis of the male profile, while acknowledging that further research centered on women's experiences would be necessary for a more comprehensive and balanced understanding of the dynamics at play.

15 This is a conventional expression in Senegal used to designate Muslim scholars who are teachers/masters of Qur'anic schools and who simultaneously work as farmers or herders. Their students thus constitute a labor force, a real productive resource, and an evident factor of development. These marabouts hold prestige and influence within the population.

economic activities, in light of the combined charismatic and traditional domination<sup>16</sup> (Max Weber, 1971). In this context, the prosperity of the *Tijânîs* seems to depend on their piety and adherence to Sufi values. Thus, economic solidarity through almsgiving (voluntary and legal) within Tijânî communities is strongly encouraged by Tijânî scholars and leaders in Cameroon. To demonstrate how spiritual doctrine translates into concrete practices of economic solidarity, just as Tijaniyyah teaches generosity, Tijânî *Muqaddamûn* such as Sheikh Mohammadou Bachirou of Ngaoundéré (Cameroon) advise Muslims and followers of the brotherhood to help those in need, emphasizing that solidarity is what maintains cohesion. Better still, in Douala and Yaoundé, Tijânî leaders affirm that “giving to others is investing in the hereafter”. As Saïdou Babba explains: “In our *zawiya*, we have established a solidarity fund: everyone contributes according to their means, especially on Fridays”. The same applies to the equitable distribution of these resources by promoting support for the most vulnerable. These mechanisms of redistribution aim not only to reinforce community cohesion but also to reduce economic inequalities.

As a result, in everyday economic relations, Sufi values such as honesty, moderation, and solidarity are embraced and integrated. The various traditional economic practices of Tijânî communities are based on agriculture, trade, and pastoral activities. While Tijânî farmers can draw inspiration from Sufi teachings to manage their land sustainably and avoid overexploitation of resources, Tijânî herders in the Sahelian and northwestern regions of Cameroon apply Sufi principles within pastoral economies, in the spirit of community mutual aid. As for Tijânî traders, they benefit from transnational economic networks developed through the digital deployment of followers across Cameroon and West Africa. This facilitates trade across borders crossed by the brotherhood. These various networks thus increase social mobility and strengthen the security of commercial transactions, as exemplified by cross-border trade between Cameroon and Nigeria via Kano.

Furthermore, in Cameroon, the Tijâniyya, through its capacity for mobilization, its strength of solidarity, and the number of its followers, can contribute to the economic development of communities. In other words, it is up to Tijânî leaders to launch local initiatives and projects (construction, renovation of Qur’anic schools, boreholes, community health centers) that will be carried out thanks to contributions from followers and voluntary donations. Capitalizing on the power of human mobilization within this community helps strengthen local development. To improve the economic conditions of Tijânîs in Cameroon, mechanisms of mutual aid and informal financing (rotating credit associations, establishment of a community fund) can be promoted. These efforts aim to strengthen the economic resilience of the Tijanis in Cameroon against market challenges.

After studying the socio-historical and economic foundations of the Tijâniyya in Cameroon, it is now essential to examine the core principles of this brotherhood, demonstrating how they can profoundly influence the economic behavior of its followers. This involves analyzing how principles such as solidarity and personal effort promote their economic well-being.

## The Principles of the Tijâniyya and Their Impact on Economic Well-Being

At first glance, and in line with certain other Sufi brotherhoods, the Tijâniyya proposes a model of society in which spirituality is combined with material well-being. Its various principles are understood through the doctrinal teachings of its founder, informed by the jurisprudential values of the Mālikî rite as well as the classical ties between the founding Sheikh and the gnostic experience. The Tijâniyya is thus distinguished by a set of spiritual and ethical principles that transcend the strictly religious dimension in order to have a tangible impact on economic well-being. This calls for

16 In order to grasp the foundations of the authority and legitimacy exercised by Tijânî *chuyûkh* in Cameroon, it is necessary to invoke the form of charismatic domination, which rests on belief in the charisma of a religious leader through his *baraka* or *karâmât* (miracles). Here, legitimacy is tied to the person himself. Alongside this is the form of traditional domination, which rests on belief in the sanctity of age-old traditions and in the legitimacy of those called to exercise authority, most often linked to lineage.

an analysis of the principles upheld by the Tijâniyya, a brotherhood that embodies a model of social cohesion and collective prosperity based on solidarity, redistribution, education, and economic development.

### *Solidarity and Redistribution in the Tijâniyya*

As in Sufi Muslim brotherhoods, solidarity lies at the heart of practices advocated by the Tijâniyya. By promoting a culture of sharing and mutual support, this spirituality responds to the immediate economic needs of its adherents. This is achieved by building strong and resilient communities. This proves that, in addition to piety and devotion to God through the Sheikh, Cameroonian *Tijânîs* are strongly encouraged to cultivate a philanthropic character expressed through a spirit of sharing, humility, and gentleness of the soul. Socially shaped within the *zawâya* across Cameroon, the dynamic social relationships that are forged there are based on sacred bonds taught by the norms and values of Sufi doctrine, which advocate “brotherhood, mutual aid, and hospitality” (Moussa, 2017, p. 2).

In this particular case, *zawâya*, comprising mosques, mausoleums, and teaching centers, are spaces for exchange that also play a social role of mutual aid and solidarity. These functions are anchored in the spiritual, insofar as spirituality constitutes the essential element that regulates social relations, frames solidarities, and motivates mutual action (Moussa, 2017, p. 11). Within these spaces of solidarity and the promotion of social charity (mutual aid and support) where Islamic values are encouraged in the context of a donation (*zakat*: mandatory and *ṣadaqa*: voluntary), pious donations (constructions and renovations of mosque, wells, subsidies for health and education), and religious offerings (*hadiyya*), for example, the *Chuyûkh* and *Muqaddamûn* Tijânî in Cameroon receive money, gifts, livestock, grain, and other consumable goods, as well as resources from economic activities such as livestock farming, trade, and transportation.

Regardless of their form or nature, these donations, gifts, or presents are typically offered as a sign of homage to the *Chuyûkh* according to one’s means during religious festivals, the Mawlid<sup>17</sup>, as part of pious visits (*ziyâra* or *Ziara*<sup>18</sup>), and for the organization or animation of the Tijani brotherhood life. On this subject, Depont and Coppolani (1897, p. 231) believe that “religious leaders who centralized so many donations, who used or distributed them for humanitarian purposes, increased their reputation for holiness by the goods of their servants”. In contexts where accusations are made denouncing the plundering, enslavement, and swindling of Tijânî Muslims, it becomes essential to question both the symbolism of giving and the symbolic value of money. What is the ultimate purpose of donations or money? Should money or gifts be used to serve the community for investment in a closed economy? Or are they intended exclusively for the well-being of a Tijani Sheikh with a view to increasing his notoriety while strengthening his prestige and influence? How can we understand the generosity of Tijâniyya followers in Cameroon?

Clearly, based on the interviews conducted, the funds collected and accumulated seem to be devoted to the needs of the brotherhood. According to Nsangou Ibrahim of Fouban, “donation to a Sheikh or a *zawiya* is justified by one’s commitment to the brotherhood. Donations are made out of respect for the Sheikh who possesses knowledge, who knows the secrets of the Highly respected by other *Chuyûkh*, he guides the faithful and serves the community”. Donations are intended to advance the brotherhood, to organize Mawâlid and spiritual retreats. From this perspective, the motivation of adherents seems to be much more attached to obedience (commitment) and great respect (reverence) for the Sheikh, who is feared and esteemed in part for his faith, his skills in the day-to-day affairs of the brotherhood, his prestige among his peers, and his interpretive exploits of spirituality. This reality also applies to Mourides, for whom work, prayer, and religious education are fundamental, and is complemented by a conviction that “working hard for one’s own benefit is approved only if

17 A word of Arabic origin that designates a religious ritual celebrating the birth of the Prophet Muhammad or the anniversary of a saint.

18 A word of Arabic origin derived from the root *zara*, which means a pious or respectful visit to a person of higher rank. The act of visiting a holy place, a tomb, or a religious figure is intended as a gesture of respect. This term is specifically used to indicate visits to religious figures or sacred sites. Religious pilgrimages outside of Mecca are also described as a *ziara*, always accompanied by an offering. One may both receive and make a *ziara*, or send a servant to perform *ziara*, that is, to carry out religious offerings or quests.

the (follower) uses the fruits of his labor for religious purposes, giving alms to the poor and offerings to the Sheikh” (O’Brien, 1970, p. 571). Cheikh Ibrahima Fall, founder of the Baay Faal movement, was the theorist of religious devotion through work within Mouridism. Thus, as in many Sufi cultures, donations, gifts or presents, and religious offerings are an expression of the disciple’s devotion. With reference to verse 12 of Sura 58<sup>19</sup>, which refers to giving alms (*ṣadaqa*) before having a private conversation (*najwâ*) with the Prophet, is a gift made to him and/or a Sheikh not an investment in the hereafter? In any case, these various contributions fall into three main categories: some are destined ultimately for the poor, others are reserved for the Sheikh’s exclusive use, as an expression of direct personal dependence ; and still others are intended to be transmitted to a higher authority. This was done with a view of belonging to the entire Tijâni community. According to the interviews conducted in Cameroon, this latter form of contribution, which also constitutes one of the brotherhood’s operating resources, seems to be transferred to autonomous centers in Nigeria and Senegal, as well as to any other country that is part of the vast transnational sub-Saharan network of the Tijâniyya.

Obviously, in addition to charismatic power, addressing these dynamics requires engaging analytical frameworks of a circular economy based on the solidarity economy, moral economy, and the social and solidarity economy. Considering Sufi brotherhoods as actors of socio-economic transformation, the theories mobilized demonstrate that, far from being a religious institution of Muslim spirituality, the Tijâniyya, based on values of solidarity, sharing, and mutual assistance, functions as an economic entity that offers alternatives that can respond to the contemporary challenges of economic development in Cameroon. Therefore, to truly embody a successful model of brotherhood, the Sheikh to whom contributions and donations are entrusted, most often proceeds to their systematic redistribution. In this case, it is important to emphasize that the Tijâni spiritual system encourages the redistribution of wealth within the community, particularly to its most modest and economically vulnerable members. It is therefore appropriate to link the logic of Tijani spiritual solidarity to the symbolic and social structure of gift-giving observed by Griaule in traditional African societies, where gifts-giving is never reduced to mere material transfers but instead forms part of a universe of reciprocity, obligations, and spirituality. In line with ideas put forward by Griaule (1948), the spiritual system of the Tijaniyya, by promoting the voluntary or obligatory redistribution of goods among its members, is part of a symbolic logic of “total gift-giving” where the act of helping the poor becomes a form of ritual investment in the world order. Giving is both a sign of faith, a tool for social cohesion, and a means of circular baraka- which nourishes the relationship between the Sheikh, his disciples, and the entire brotherhood “umma”. By reinforcing social solidarity, such redistribution has the merit of mitigating economic inequalities while fostering a sense of collective responsibility towards the brotherhood in Cameroon. However, the principle of equitable redistribution within the community is based on the logic of sharing, which goes hand in hand with respect for the religious authority of Tijâni leaders. In general, Tijani scholars are the guardians of the many works of benefactors, which aim to carry out community projects such as the construction and renovation of Tijani *zawâya* or mosques, as well as economic infrastructure like local markets, financing, renovation, and equipping community health centers. They never fail to share the benefits with their followers.

Rightly considered structures of mutual aid par excellence, these initiatives contribute to well-being, improve living conditions, and help to reduce inequalities within society. The social and solidarity economy (Jany-Catrice et al., 2014), which emphasizes collective and civic initiatives, aims to reconcile economic activity with social impact. Therefore, for all economic projects, the issue of equitable redistribution of resources can be analyzed. The same is true of moral economy (Thompson, 1991)<sup>20</sup>, which is perceived as a form of economy based on the common good rather than individual profit. These different analytical lenses demonstrate that Tijaniyya offers a credible economic alternative for its members.

19 Qur’an, Surah 58 (*al-Mujâdila*), verse 12: “O you who believe! When you wish to confer privately with the Messenger, precede your consultation with a charity (almsgiving).”

20 See also Fassin (2009).

## Education and Economic Development

In every human society, education, a foundational pillar of the Tijâniyya, plays a decisive role in shaping people's lives and futures. Regarded as an essential condition for both spiritual and material fulfillment, education, as a means of accessing religious knowledge, also serves as a lever for economic development. For this reason, Tijânî leaders in Cameroon encourage training in both religious sciences and in secular disciplines. This will enable members of the spiritual community to contribute actively to economic development by acquiring practical skills. As adherents of “work and Islam”, the Tijânî intellectual elite in Cameroon encourage disciples to live by their religion as well as by hard work. In other words, to gain credibility with one's audience, one must possess, in addition to Islamic religious knowledge, a professional activity that frees one from material contingencies.

In Cameroon, the Tijâniyya's intellectual elites know that education is the foundation upon which the disciple can be refined and prepared to attain spiritual fulfillment without hindrance. They have therefore established a system that enables them to acquire the skills necessary not only to face spiritual and worldly challenges, but also to ensure proper integration of the individual into the community. Thus, starting in the family unit, disciples are prepared to acquire the fundamentals of the Sufi system, which is based, among other things, on “imitating the Prophet and his ‘rightly guided’ companions in their morals and conduct; nourishing oneself with lawful things; and acting with sincerity” (Bah, 2024, p. 22). Beyond the family, the preferred places for Tijânî Islamic education in Cameroon are Qur'anic schools housed in the *jangirle*<sup>21</sup>, the *jawleeji*<sup>22</sup> of the *Muqaddamûn*, the *madâris*, the mosques, and the *zawâya*, which “opened up veritable treasure houses of grain to the weak and the needy” (Depont & Coppelani, 1897, p. 230). Tijânî disciples then pass through elementary and complementary cycles, spontaneous teaching, and the education of the soul through spiritual companionship (*ṣuḥba*).

All these educational structures work towards training a “pious” Tijânî generation. Through training and spiritual education, the desired behavior among Tijânîs in Cameroon is one of strict adherence to the *sharī'a*, spiritual purification (*tazkiyya*), and spiritual openness (*fath*) (Bah, 2024, p. 170). This form of “spiritual discipline”, codified by the founding Sheikh, seems to be particularly interested in the idea of empowering the disciple to move from the mundane to the spiritual, through the concepts of *tarbiya rūḥāniyya* (lit. spiritual education) and *tazkiyat al-Nafs* (purification of the soul) (González, 2018, p. 71). Henceforth, the relations binding Tijânîs to the master are governed by respect of propriety or *adab*, a sacred code of conduct to which they must adhere in all circumstances (Moussa, 2017, p. 8).

The education instilled from the Tijânî family home predisposes adherents to a spirit of sacrifice and the assimilation of the foundational principles of Islamic ethics and morality that determine their conduct as exemplary Muslims and Tijânîs. This initiation provides them with the principles that should govern human relationships and the behavior they should adopt in life. Alongside educational principles, the disciple's spiritual journey requires him to have qualities that enable him to welcome and care for the poor and never eating alone. Does the Tijâniyya not require of a spiritual master the capacity to be disinterested in worldly things and generous toward others, sacrificing his goods for the aspirant? Focused on scholarship and religious education, the impact of the programs offered has a positive influence on the mindset of the Tijânî. Throughout a disciple's spiritual journey, effective training, education, and learning are essential (Bah, 2024, p. 453). Thus, to strengthen adherents' autonomy, in addition to professional activities, entrepreneurship or the acquisition of any other skills useful for labor-market integration is promoted. By focusing on education, entrepreneurship, and social cohesion, the Tijâniyya helps improve well-being and offer economic opportunities to its followers. This multidimensional approach, developed by Stiglitz et al. (2009), could be analyzed as a form of inclusive development that promotes dignity and empowerment.

21 A word of Fulani origin that designates places of learning and knowledge acquisition.

22 *Jawleeji*, the plural of the Fulani word *jawleeru*, designates vestibules. In the culture of the Cameroonian Fulani, the *Moodibbe* or *Muqaddamûn* generally provide instruction in their vestibules, which also serve as reception rooms and dining areas.

Given the well-established involvement of the Tijâniyya in cultivating an intellectual and economic elite in Cameroon, it should be emphasized that Tijânî scholars recommend that their disciples adopt a lifestyle that combines spirituality with engagement in the material world. In Cameroon, as reported by Mahmoudou Alfaki of Douala, “while the Tijânî path teaches that science is a pillar of faith and progress, the rigor, discipline, and sense of *baraka* received during *tarbiya* help one to rise.” For this young entrepreneur, many Tijânîs who have received Islamic and brotherhood education are today among Cameroon’s major economic actors. Working, an almost categorical imperative, becomes both a means for providing for one’s needs—a form of service to the community—and a guarantee of personal development. In several regions of Cameroon, the brotherhood encourages the creation of collective projects such as commercial shareholding schemes, agricultural and artisanal cooperatives managed by the adherents themselves. These economic initiatives, which reduce poverty by increasing economic resilience, enable, above all, the pooling of resources, the optimization of production, and the guarantee of a better profit distribution. Through its solidarity networks and community mutual-aid structures (agricultural, commercial), the Tijâniyya could be considered a brotherhood that promotes a form of basic solidarity economy through initiatives that foster adherents’ autonomy while strengthening collective well-being. By valuing solidarity, self-management, and the primacy of the human over capital, this approach emphasizes cooperation and equity in economic practices.

After examining the principles of the Tijâniyya and their role in promoting economic well-being, it now seems essential to analyze their contribution to the economic empowerment of followers and communities. In what ways could the Tijâniyya constitute a sustainable response to economic development challenges?

## Tijâniyya and Economic Empowerment: Toward an Alternative Economic Model

In Cameroon, the question of the empowerment of Muslims in general, and of Tijâniyya followers in particular, which constitutes a subject of constant debate, remains a persistent concern for intellectual elites. Based on observations, given the unanimous agreement on the pursuit of economic well-being, Sufi spirituality thus emerges as a means of overcoming material hardship. This section is the place to revisit the analysis of projects and initiatives that can contribute to the empowerment of Tijânîs in Cameroon. Before doing so, however, it is important to highlight a prevailing contradiction in order to encourage critical reflection on the management of resources and a reorientation toward sustainable actions. The aim here is to put forward proposals for the reinvention of the economic order.

### *Economic Projects, Community Initiatives of the Tijâniyya, and the Importance of Networks (Commercial and Financial)*

In Cameroon, it is paradoxical to note that the Tijâniyya, through its followers, mobilizes immense resources to support certain Tijânî *Chuyûkh* during pious visits, while some disciples themselves live on the brink of poverty and their most pressing existential needs remain unmet. At every visit of a Tijânî Sheikh from distant regions, collections, sometimes amounting to tens of millions of CFA francs, if not more, are organized. These sums, which reflect immense generosity, do not directly benefit the community that assembles them. In this case, how can one accept that such resources are not managed and redirected toward economic investments and local initiatives capable of sustainably improving living conditions? Instead of being diluted in a system of donations with no structural impact, these contributions could be used to fund commercial centers, Tijânî microfinance institutions, or agricultural cooperatives, for instance. By directing this money into economic projects, it is possible to create employment opportunities, ensure food self-sufficiency, and strengthen the resilience of the Tijânî community in the face of socio-economic challenges. This paradox raises a fundamental question: should the generosity of Tijânîs not serve as a driver of

empowerment and community development, rather than perpetuating a cycle of charity “without lasting return”? It seems urgent to rethink this spirit of solidarity in order to transform it into a genuine lever for social transformation within the Tijani communities of Cameroon.

Furthermore, according to oral tradition, particularly in rural peripheries among Fulani and Mbororo communities, there are Tijâni religious leaders actively involved in the economic development of their people. In Koinderi (northern Cameroon), for example, Tijâni leaders constantly remind people that religion is also about work and development. This explains the presence of an agricultural cooperative. Young people farm together and sell together. The same practice is observed among the *Chuyûkh* in Mogom, Rumde, and Katouwal (in the Far North). Aware that physical “well-being helps to strengthen faith”, they encourage Tijani to come together and work the land. This is proof that Tijaniyya has been able to adapt its practice to encourage and support various economic projects or local initiatives (agricultural cooperatives, mini farms, micro-businesses, community-financing systems for periodic village markets or water points) that can serve as vehicles for the empowerment of followers. It should be noted that these projects or initiatives aim to meet the specific needs of the marginalized local populations. With this in mind, it appears that through a kind of tontine or redistribution of alms (mandatory and voluntary), internal microloans are granted to support investment in income generating activities. In regions such as Adamawa and the Far North (Cameroon), plots of land are entrusted to Tijâni farmers by major landowners or Tijâni leaders as a form of support. Likewise, seeds and agricultural equipment are provided to expand production. Designed to improve living conditions, such initiatives also aim to reinforce local resilience by fostering a culture of mutual aid and financial support, strengthened by informal Sufi financial networks designed to create economic opportunities at both the national and international levels. In this respect, it is worth recalling the role played by the Tijâniyya in facilitating commercial trade within its communities.

Commercial, economic, and sociocultural networks serve as bridges to establish a true “spiritual economy of faith” between different communities. Grounded in mutual trust, ethics, and transparency, this form of circular economy is essential for strengthening ties between communities while fostering the emergence of a bond of spiritual solidarity. By relying on these national and transnational networks, the Tijânis of Cameroon benefit from privileged channels that facilitate the export of local products (livestock, agricultural products) and the import of goods necessary for the community. This obviously helps to strengthen the economic weight of Tijâni communities.

### *Rethinking the Economic Order Through the Tijâniyya*

The economic practices, financial solidarity, and the strength of networks (both national and transnational) promoted by Sufi brotherhoods such as the Tijâniyya contribute to shaping an alternative economic model. This model invites us to rethink and reinvent the economic order in Cameroon. Based on community solidarity, local development, and respect for spiritual values, this model offers a vision of a more humane system centered on the collective well-being of Tijânis. As a Sufi spirituality, Tijaniyya promotes an economy based on the principles of equity, inclusion, and sharing, while fostering harmonious development, offering a credible alternative for the entire community. This demonstrates that material success and spiritual fulfillment can be combined to offer the vision of an inspiring economy that integrates ethical and spiritual values.

Since Tijâni *zawâya* are at the heart of an economic redistribution process within the community, the model that demonstrates the ability of this brotherhood to enrich the socio-economic fabric in Cameroon calls for the regulation of all resources that feed the coffers of the Tijâniyya. In other words, the management of forms of donations (religious collections, voluntary granting of *sadaqa*, legal alms, *waqf*, and religious offerings) must evolve into a more productive framework. Beyond to the “ordinary” resources that should be systematized, Tijânis are invited to create other resources that should constitute the treasury of this brotherhood in Cameroon.

In addition to the regular contributions proportional to a taxpayer’s wealth, collected by *Chuyûkh* Tijâni of Cameroon, it is necessary to preserve these “piously” in order to redirect and reuse them for specific community projects. Through its hierarchical structure, the Tijâniyya in Cameroon

must set up a system for collecting fees from members to be used for a specific purpose. Such a system, comparable to a form of personal tax, could be based on a fee payable to the *Muqaddam* by all affiliates. Thus, as a sign of submission and in exchange for the Sheikh's blessing, a symbolic sum may be given as a mandatory contribution or offering. Consequently, the functioning of the Tijâniyya in Cameroon could essentially be based on this principle of mandatory contributions, comparable to a form of "divine tax", collected on a regular basis from wealthy Tijânî Muslims. This principle of requiring a fixed mandatory payment from affiliated members of the brotherhood and various Tijânî household heads for the cause of collective enterprises will certainly multiply the fixed amount by the number of dependents. This practical system of religious taxation, justified by the fact that collected funds must be used for a predetermined collective enterprise (O'Brien, 1970, p. 573), will then make it possible to finance community investments in Cameroon. This will certainly represent clear economic added value generated through accumulation.

The reinvention of the economy could consist in prioritizing this system of mandatory payments from Tijânî affiliates. Obviously, this system needs to be extended to initiation or investiture<sup>23</sup> fees, as well as membership subscriptions within various *zawâya* or Tijânî associations in Cameroon. In this context, payments made by followers and contributions from Tijânî *murîdûn*<sup>24</sup> could take the form of symbolic sums ranging from 1,000 to 5,000 CFA francs. The same applies to the pious and self-interested visits of adherents to their *Chuyûkh* or *Muqaddamûn*, which generate substantial amounts of money. Proportional to the wealth of the solicitor, the pious and self-interested offering seems, in most cases, to be substantial. From this perspective, it should be systematized, collected over a period of time, and directed toward local and community initiatives.

Therefore, it seems urgent for the Tijâniyya in Cameroon to secure and generate "additional" revenue streams based on income-generating activities (commerce, local agriculture managed by the Sheikh or his representative) and thus redistribute the income within the community. In addition to periodic contributions aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged, encouraging the oppressed, and reducing inequalities within the community, the *zawâya* should systematically generate income.

For the Tijaniyya, in the shifting context of African economies, the challenges and opportunities are numerous. From the limited example of Cameroon, the potential to promote a model based on social inclusion, economic resilience, and sustainable development exists. From this perspective, through its economically based social stratification, the Tijâniyya positions itself as a model of a sustainable and inclusive economy. The effectiveness and success of this alternative economic model would open up broader horizons. Depending on local realities, actors' behaviors, and market conditions, it seems possible to put forward proposals that integrate Sufi values into the reinvention of the continental and global economic orders.

Therefore, to urgently rethink the economic order in Cameroon through the alternative model proposed by the Tijâniyya, the brotherhood must reinvent itself by drawing inspiration from Sufi economic models such as that of the Mouridiyya in Senegal, while taking into account local specificities. The creation of Islamic community microfinance institutions, the establishment of agricultural cooperatives and community shopping centers, the development of social enterprises, and investment in community infrastructure are all proposals for building an inclusive and sustainable economic vision. This would make the Tijâniyya in Cameroon a socio-economic force capable of contributing to the improvement of collective well-being.

23 Neophytes and disciples elevated to a higher function offer their spiritual masters gifts intended to celebrate their admission or promotion within the brotherhood. In reality, however, these offerings go to the treasury of the Cheikh-Caliph or that of the initiating *Muqaddam*.

24 A word of Arabic origin meaning "aspirants" (sing. *Murîd*). It designates one who aspires to the knowledge of God through teachings, by means of intermediaries.

## Conclusion

This study analyzed the role played by the Tijâniyya in economic well-being in Cameroon. The findings show that the Tijâniyya, which is present and influential in Cameroon, is a Muslim religious brotherhood that can contribute to economic empowerment and the promotion of well-being within communities. Through a structured mutual aid network and collective economic initiatives, the Tijâniyya can offer concrete support to its followers, particularly in sectors such as agriculture, livestock farming, local trade, and microfinance. The Tijâniyya thus contributes to establishing a model of solidarity-based and sustainable economy rooted in the Sufi values of sharing, equity, and solidarity. This makes the brotherhood of Cheikh Ahmad al-Tijânî a potential and powerful alternative economic lever, promoting community resilience in the face of socio-economic challenges. Although this pioneering reflection has shown the positive impact of the Tijâniyya on the well-being of its followers in Cameroon, it also opens up interesting avenues for future research. An in-depth exploration of the economic impact of all the Sufi brotherhoods across Africa could provide a better understanding of the dynamics between spirituality and economics in contexts characterized by precariousness. It would be particularly relevant to assess whether and how Muslim Sufi brotherhoods contribute to the socio-economic transformation of their members by evaluating the contribution of these models to the needs of the communities. However, in the Cameroonian context, these research perspectives, though compelling, raise the complex question of the transferability and adaptability of innovative economic models. Moreover, in a context marked by the search for sustainable and more inclusive economic frameworks, the Tijâniyya in Cameroon could draw greater inspiration from similar initiatives in other African countries and beyond, provided that local specificities are duly considered. Consequently, to promote the fulfilment of Muslims within this order and that of communities at local and global level, all Sufi religious brotherhoods, such as the Tijâniyya, are invited to continuously reinvent themselves with a view to rethinking the foundations of an alternative economy in the service of well-being. This necessarily entails integrating moral and spiritual values into their economic practices.

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