Wa Alaykum As-Salam dear brother,

Shukran for your questions regarding the Tariqah Tijaniyyah, Shaykh Ahmad Tijani (RA) and some of the accusations against them. Here are some informative points that will help to answer your queries and clear the confusion:

**On al-Qutb al-Maktum Sayyidina al-Sayyid Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.)**

The famous Palestinian Sufi scholar and historian Shykh Yusuf al-Nabahani wrote in his _Jami’ Karamat al-Awliya_ with regards to the _Qutb al-Maktum_ Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.), “_Imam al-Arifin wa Ahad Afrad Akabir al-Awliya al-Muqarrabin_”, and also mentioned in his book _Sa’adat al-Darayn_ that, “Al-Shaykh al-Tijani took his awrad directly from the Prophet (S.A.W.) in a state of wakefulness.”

The historian of the Maghreb, Sidi Ja’far bin Idris al-Fasi al-Kattani (d.1912), who was a Qadiri/Shadhili, described him thus in his _al-Shurb al-Muhtadar wa al-Sirr al-Muntazar min Ma’in ba’d Abl al-Qarn al-Thalib Asbar:_

“And among them is _al-Wali al-Shahir wa al-Qutb al-Wadih al-Kabir, al-Ghawth al-Rabbani Abl’-Abbas Sayyidi Ahmad al-Tijani_. …in summary, his qualities were great, his states were extraordinary and his status in sainthood was big.”
Shaykh Ja’far al-Kattani’s son, another great Moroccan scholar and saint (who settled in Madinah), Sidi Muhammad bin Ja’far al-Kattani (d. 1925) described Shaykh Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.) in his historical masterpiece on the Awliya and Salihin of Fez named Sulwat al-Anfas wa Tuhfat al-Akyas fiman Uqbira min al-Ulama wa al-Sulaha bi-Fas, thus:


The famous Mauritanian Qadiri Shaykh, Muhammad Fal bin Ahmad al-Āqil compiled the names of some of the famous Awliya from the blessed Ahl al-Bayt al-Nabawi in a poem. I quote some lines from this beautiful Tawassul of his:

Wa Ma min al-Aqtabi Aydan Yantami
Ila Zura Bayt al-Nabiy al-Akrami

Fa-bi’l-Imam al-Arif al-Rabbani
Dhi’l-Majdi Abd-al-Qadir al-Jilani

Wa bi’d-Dasuqi al-Tawil al-Ba’i
Wa al-Badawi wa Ahmad al-Rifa’i

Wa al-Shadhili Sayyidi Ab’il-Hasan
Dhi’s-Sayti fi’l-Afaqi wa al-Zikr al-Hasan

Wa bi’l-Imami Ghurrat al-A’lami
Abd-al-Salam bin Mashish al-Sami

Wa Sayyidi Abd-al-Aziz al-Fasi
Yu’raf bi’d-Dabbagh ind al-Nasi

Wa bi’l-Jazuli al-Azim al-Sha’ni
Wa bi’sh-Sharif al-Majid al-Tijani
Ahmad al-Ma’rufi bi’t-Tijani
Dhi’l-Ilmi wa al-Asrari wa al-Irfani

The Sultan of Northern Nigeria, Amir al-Mu’minin Muhammudu Bello, the son of the legendary Qadiri warrior saint Shehu Uthman Dan Fodio (RA), wrote in a poem praising the Shaykh al-Tijani (RA):

Qad Kana Jadduka fi’l-Arsali Khatiman
Wa Kunta Khatimat al-Aqtabi Tijani

Fa-Dhaka Irthun Haqiqiyum, Laysa Yura
Man Yadda’i Dhaka Illa Anta Tijani

Fada’ila Qara’at Aima’a Hasidakum
Fa-Bata min Hiqdihi fi Nari Khizyani

Your Ancestor was the Seal of the Prophets
And you are the Seal of the Qutbs O Tijani

That’s is indeed true inheritance
For none claims it but you O Tijani

Virtues that hurt the ears of those envious of you
And they burn in the fire of Disgrace due to their hatred

(Quoted in Al-Bayan by Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse)

Regarding the Condemnation of the Tijaniyyah by Some

As far as the controversy regarding the Tijaniyyah goes, hardly any Wali or Tariqah from time immemorial has been spared it. The higher the maqam, the more the controversy.
However, one who understands the *maqamat* of the *Awliya* refrains from saying anything disrespectful.

In the specific case of the Tijaniyyah, Mauritanian shaykh Muhammad al-Khadir al-Mayabi al-Shinqiti’s distasteful book *Mushtaha al-Kharif al-Jani fi radd zalaqat al-Tijani* played a major role in instigating it.

This Khadir al-Shinqiti (also known as Ibn al-Mayabi al-Jakani) was criticized by his own learned brothers for his fanaticism. In *Aqidah*, he was an anthropomorphist Wahhabi and vehemently anti-Ash’ari. In *Fiqh*, he was a Maliki extremist. In *Tariqah*, he nominally followed the way of his forefathers, the Qadiriyyah. These points alone should explain to some extent his hatred for the Tijaniyyah.

For, *Sayyidina al-Qutb al-Maktum wa'l Khatam al-Muhammadi al-Ma’lum al-Ghawth al-Rabbani* Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.) was an Ash’ari in *Aqidah*, a broadminded Maliki who openly disagreed with the *Madhab* on a few issues, and the founder of a *Tariqah* that overtook the Qadiriyyah as the leading and fastest growing Sufi Order in Mauritania and West Africa. Today, it is the largest Sufi Order there. About 30% of all Mauritanians belong to it.

Khadir al-Mayabi al-Shinqiti was also the Mufti of the Malikis in Madinah under Wahhabi rule in the 1930’s. His prime rival in the leadership of the Malikis in Madinah at that time was the great *Mubaddith* of Madinah, the Senegalese Shaykh Alfa Hashim al-Futi, a staunch Tijani (and nephew of the legendary Tijani warrior saint Haj Umar al-Futi Tal). Khadir passed away in 1935. Shaykh Alfa passed way in 1930. Shaykh Alfa’s *ijazah* was highly prized by the Ulama and he was more popular with the students of *Ilm* in Madinah and Makkah than al-Khadir al-Shinqiti.

Moreover, Khadir was a Mauritanian, Shaykh Alfa was Senegalese, Khadir was a Wahhabi in issues of *Kalam*, Alfa was an Ash’ari, Khadir claimed to be a Qadiri, Shaykh Alfa was a Tijani. All of this contributed to friction and grudges, which came out in the form of a book condemning the Tariqah Tijaniyyah. The Wahhabi rulers received the book well.
Shaykh Alfa was allowed to teach in the Haram but was banned from promoting his Tariqah publicly (he nevertheless, secretly gave the Tijani Way to students in the Hijaz from West Africa to Indonesia where it spread greatly through his muqaddams).

In any case, Khadir al-Shinqiti’s anti-Tijani book (Mushtaha al-Kharif al-Jani) was refuted by many prominent Ulama of the Tijaniyyah from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Senegal, Nigeria, Egypt and Sudan.

A respectable Mauritanian Shaykh (Sidi Ibrahim Walad Hayba) told me that in Mauritania, people believe it to be a curse to possess al-Khadir’s book in their homes, and that indeed some people who brought that book in their homes incurred great calamites. One remembers the hadith qudsi, “Whoever shows enmity to a Wali of mine, I declare war on him.”

Our late Ustadh, Mubaddith al-Hijaz Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawi al-Maliki once told us that Shaykh Nur Sayf, one of the Ulama of Makkah, who was “Fani fi Mahabbat al-Tijani” used to say “al-Khadir’s book is indeed Mushtaha al-Kharif al-Jani”!!! (it is amazing how the books of the detractors of the Awliya are many a times disgraced simply by their names!)

What follows is a list of names of some of the famous Ulama who refuted Muhammad al-Khadir al-Shinqiti (Ibn al-Mayabi) and other ignorant/jealous critics of al-Qutb al-Maktum Sayyidina al-Shaykh al-Tijani (R.A.) and the Order named after him:


This and numerous other fantastic works of Sidi Ahmad Sukayrij on a large variety of subjects can be downloaded from his thoroughly updated website:
One wishes that all great traditional scholars of the past had admirers who would put all their works on the net like Sidi Sukayrij’s students did in Morocco. It’s a remarkable job indeed to upload nearly 150 Arabic works (including may voluminous ones) on one website.

2) The Mauritanian Tijani Shaykh, Sidi Muhammad al-Saghir al-Tishiti al-Shinqiti (d.1854), who authored the famous defence of the Tijaniyyah named *Al-Jaysh al-Kafil bi-Akhdh al-Tha’r mimman Salla ala al-Shaykh al-Tijani Sarim al-Inkar*.

3) The Shaykh al-Islam of Tunis, rector of the Zaytuna University, Sayyidina al-Shaykh Ibrahim al-Rayahi (d.1848), a man who was known as the *Izz-al-Din bin Abd-al-Salam of his time* and revered in the courts of the Sultans of Islam from Fez to Istanbul.

He was originally a follower of the Shadhili Tariqah, but took the Tijaniyyah after awe-inspiring meetings with *Arif-Bi’Lab* Sidi Ali Harazim, a Khalifah of the *Qutb al-Maktum*.

Shaykh al-Islam al-Rayahi authored *Mibrad al-Sawarim wa al-Asinnah fi al-raddi ala man akbraj al-Shaykh al-Tijani an Da’irat Abl al-Sunnah* in defence of the Tijaniyyah.

He writes in one of his poems:

*Wa al-Imam al-Tijani Ahmad fina*  
*Da’iyan bi’l-Huda li-Dar al-Salami*

*Kayf La wa al-Imam Ahmad Qutbun*  
*Ma Lahu fi al-Maqami Qutbun Musami*

*Khatamun Khassahu al-Ilabu bi-Fadlin*  
*wa Ataya min al-Mazaya al-Izami*
4) The Sultan of West Africa, the great warrior Saint, Amir al-Mu'minin al-Haj Umar al-Futi Tal (d.1864). He authored the renowned Rihab Hizb al-Rahim fi nubur Hizb al-Rajim, a superb defence of the knowledge of tasawwuf in general and the Tariqa Tijaniyyah in specific. Many books have been written on the life and times of this great man, one can check the note on him in the index of the Reliance by Shaykh Nuh Keller.

5) The famous Moroccan Faqih and advisor of the Sultan, Arif-Bi’Llab Sidi Muhammad al-Qurashi al-Kansusi (d.1876) of Fez, who is also referred to as Shaykh Akansus. The Shaykh was originally on the Shadhiliyyah-Nasiriyyah Tariqa, and then took the Tijaniyyah after witnessing some Kushufat Rabbiyyah from the fuqara of al-Qutb al-Maktum Sidi Ahmad al-Tjiani (R.A.).

This prominent Faqih’s taking of the Tijaniyyah caused great jealousy amongst many so-called scholars, some of whom then attempted to steer him away from it by condemning the Tariqa itself. Prominent among these was the politically motivated Ahmad al-Bakkai al-Kunti of Mali.

However, their ill-advised effort didn’t succeed, but rather made the Shaykh author Al-Jawab al-Musakkit fi al- Radd ala man Ankara ala al-Shaykh al-Tijani biduni Tathabbut, one of the best defences the Tijaniyyah to date.

6) The famous Mauritanian Qadi and Faqih, Sidi Muhannad Baba Walad Ubayd al-Daymani (d. 1865).

He authored Al-Adb al-Yamani in defence of the Way of Sidi Ahmad al-Tjani.

There is an interesting story on his taking of the Tariqa Tijaniyyah. Contemporary Mauritanian Scholar Shaykh Sidi Abd-Allah al-Hadi al-Ya’qubi narrates in his Tawali al-Su’ud fi Hayat wa Manaqib Abi’s-Su’ud (p.136) that Sidi Muhannad Baba had actually seen a dream in which he saw the caravan of Prophet (S.A.W.) stopping to rest by a certain spot near his desert encampment.
Thereafter the Prophet (S.A.W.) asked him to prepare a tent for him to make his prayers, which he did. Then, after Maghrib Salah, he saw the Prophet (S.A.W) making a certain unique Zikr with his Sahabah there. Then the dream ended.

Soon after seeing this dream, the caravan of the great Mauritanian Tijani saint Sayyidi Mawlud Fal (d.1859) stopped near his desert encampment at the same spot the caravan of Prophet (S.A.W.) had stopped in the dream.

After a while, Sayyidi Mawlud asked Sidi Muhannad to prepare a tent for him to make his prayers, which he did. Then, to his amazement, he saw Sayyidi Mawlud making the same Zikr with his disciples after Maghrib Salah that he had seen the Prophet (SAW) make in the dream.

When Sidi Muhannad asked Sayyid Mawlud Fal what Zikr he was making, the saint told him that it was the daily Tijani Wazifah, which the Prophet (SAW) had instructed al-Qutb al-Maktum Shaykh Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.) and his followers to make.

This was more than enough sign for Sidi Muhannad Baba. So he immediately took bay’ah in the Tijani Way, and went on to become a renowned Mauritanian Sufi Alim.

The biography of Sidi Muhannad Baba can be checked up in Al-Wasit fi Tarajim Udaba Shinqit by Shaykh Ahmad bin al-Amin al-Shinqiti (d.1913).

7) The Imam al-Muhaddithin of Egypt, Arif-Bi’LLah Sidi al-Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Tijani (d.1978). This celebrated Egyptian Alim authored many scholarly works in defense of the Tariqah and explaining some of the more problematic issues relating to it; among them are, Asfa Manabil al-Safa fi Mashrab Khatam al-Awliya and Radd Akadhib al-Mustarin ala Abl al-Yaqin. There is also his famous khutbah called Radd al-Shubuhat.

8) The exiled Sultan of Morocco, Amir al-Mu’minin Mawlay Abd-al-Hafiz (d.1937), who was a King and Scholar at the same time. Originally, the Sultan was an enemy of the
Tijaniyyah, but changed after coming in contact with Sidi Shaykh Ahmad Sukayrij, from whom he took the *bay'ah*.

After that, he authored the following books in the defence of the Tariqah, *Zajr al-Mu'tadi Ala al-Janab al-Ahmadi, Al-Jami'ab al-Ifantiyyah fi Shurut wa Jull Fada'il Abl al-Tariqah al-Tijaniyyah* and *Nahr al-Jazur* (which was specifically in refutation of Khadir al-Shinqiti).

On his repentance from condemning the Tijanis and taking the Tariqah, the learned Monarch wrote:

*Wa inni wa in Kuntu al-Mus'i alladhi I'tada*  
*Wa Haraba Jahran...Ha Ana al-yawma Ta'i'u*

Although I was the sinner who had attacked and fought (the Tijani Way) openly…  
Here I am today as an obedient one (to Shaykh al-Tijani)

9) The early 20th century Azharite Shafi'i *Faqih*, Muhammad Hasanayn al-Tasfawi, who was originally a Naqshbandi but took the Tijani Way after visions of a famous Tijani saint. He authored *Al-Fat'h al-Rabbabi fima yahtaj ilayhi al-Murid al-Tijani*, in which he answers various accusations against the Tijaniyyah.

The book has a poetic *taqriz* by the *Grand Mufti of Sudan*, Shaykh al-Tayyib Hashim who wrote:

*Amuhammad al-Tasfawi qad ahsant fi*  
*Haza al-Kitabi wa Ji'ta bi'l Burhani*

*Am dha Kitab al-Fat'hi fada Ma'imubu*  
*Bi-hayani Sirri Tariqat al-Tijani*

10) The learned *Senegalese Shaykh Muhammad al-Khalifah* bin Abdullahi Niasse (d.1945), the elder brother of the *Shaykh al-Islam* al-Haj Ibrahim Niass (R.A). He authored a detailed refutation of Khadir al-Mayabi al-Shinqiti, which has been published
11) The Mufti of the Malikis in Madinah and Teacher in the Prophets Mosque, Shaykh Alfa Hashim al-Futi. The Shaykh was born in Senegal, but migrated to Madinah due to the French occupation of his land. He used to teach Tafsir, Hadith and Fiqh in the Haram of Madinah and was highly regarded by the students of knowledge in the Hijaz. Although he was banned by the Saudi authorities from teaching Sufism or openly practicing the Tijani Tariqah, he nevertheless wrote a poem (mandhumah) in defense of the Tijani usage of the word “Asqam” in a salawat on the Prophet (SAW).


He authored the book after an Algerian Salafi newspaper delightfully reported the news of Shaykh Alfa Hashim’s interrogation and persecution in Madinah by the Wahhabi Qadi there. It was a Moroccan Wahhabi, taqi-al-din al-Hilali who first alerted the Wahhabi authorities in Madinah that Shaykh Alfa Hashim, the renowned teacher in the Haram, was “secretly practicing and promoting the Tijani Tariqah.”

Subsequently, Shaykh Alfa was called in and interrogated by the Wahhabi Qadi, Abd-Allah bin Hasan Āl-al-Shaykh. In conclusion, it was agreed that he could continue to teach in the Haram, on the condition that he would not propagate the Tariqah. The Algerian Salafi newspaper al-Shihab reported the whole incident, endorsing the accusations of Kufr made against the Tijaniyyah by the Najdi Qadi. This caused a stir in Algeria, which was the birthplace of the Tijaniyyah, and consequently Shaykh Sidi Abu-Tahir, a practicing Tijani himself, took it upon himself to refute these accusations.

What makes his work unique is that the learned Jurist employed many hitherto unused Usuli and Fiqhi points in defense of the Tariqah, and its beliefs and practices. He also quoted extensively from previous scholars such as Imams, al-Ghazali, al-Shatibi, Ibn-Hajar, Ibn-Abi-Jamrah, Ibn-al-Haj, Ibn-al-Qayyim, al-Suyuti, al-Alusi, and others. This has made it one of the best books written in defense of the Tariqah, to date.
13) The famous Mauritanian scholar and historian, Shaykh Ahmad bin al-Amin al-Shinqiti (d.1913), author of the famous *Al-Wasit fi Tarajim Udaba Shinqit* (a history of the literary personalities of Mauritania). He authored *Dar’ al-Nabahani an Haram al-Tijani*, in explanation and correction of a misunderstanding Shaykh al-Nabahani harbored regarding one of the *Dhikrs* recited by the Tijanis.


15) The late Shaykh-al-Islam of Africa, Mawlana al-Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (d.1975), founder of the holy village of Medina-Baye in Senegal, which became the spiritual capital of some 50 million Tijanis in West Africa who paid allegiance to him. Due to the great spiritual revolution that he initiated, he is titled as the *Sahib-al-Faydah* (Leader of the Spiritual Flood). It is proven that Shaykh Ahmad Tijani himself had predicted this “Faydah”.

Shaykh Sidi Ahmad Sukayrij had written to Shaykh-al-Islam Ibrahim Niyass that, “You are the living Shaykh in this *Tariqah* today. Whoever takes from you, it is as if he took from al-Shaykh al-Tijani himself, and whoever took from al-Shaykh al-Tijani, it is as if he took from the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) himself.”

Shaykh Ibrahim authored *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin fi al-Tijaniyyah wa al-Tijaniyyin*, a very concise but to the point explanation and defense of the Tijaniyyah and its precepts.

He also authored a more comprehensive and detailed work on the matter, named *Kashif al-Ilbas An Faydat al-Khatm Abi’l-Abbas*, which has gone through many prints.
Regarding the holy Qur’an and the *Salat al-Fatih*

The *Salat al-Fatih* is a *salawat* which the Prophet (S.A.W.) ordered Mawlay Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.) to recite and informed him of its immense virtue and merit over all other *Azkar*. It is recited by many *Turuq* but the Tijanis give special emphasis on its recital.

However, with regards to the claim that “a single recitation of the blessed *Salat al-Fatih* equals 6000 recitations of the Exalted Qur’an,” which is found in the *Jawahir al-Ma’ani wa Bulugh al-Amani fi Faydi Sayyidi Abil-Abbas al-Tijani* (the motherbook of the Tijaniyyah) the Ulama of the Tariqah have taken two viewpoints:

A) Many consider the statement as an interpolation in the book and a false attribution to *al-Qutb al-Maktum* Sayyidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A). Their reasons for saying this are:

*Firstly*, the book *Jawahir al-Ma’ani* was not written by the Shaykh but is a collection of his lectures and sayings by his student Sidi Ali Harazim Baradah, who *does not* quote the Shaykh verbatim. Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim al-Rayahi of Tunis, who was closely connected to Sidi Ali Harazim, mentions this fact in his *Mibrad al-Sawarim*.

*Secondly*, in the book itself, the Shaykh is quoted as saying that the speech of the entire universe, including all worship and *Zikr*, cannot match a word of the holy Qur’an as it is the direct word of the Supreme Being.

In another place in the same book, the Shaykh is quoted as saying that 1 recitation of the unique *Ism al-Azam* of Allah equals 1 recitation of the full Qur’an and 6000 *Salat al-Fatih*!! Therefore, how can the same person claim that the reward of reciting the *Salat al-Fatih* is more than that of reciting the whole Qur’an?!

*Thirdly*, the printed versions of the *Jawahir al-Ma’ani* contain passages that are not there in the original manuscript which was in the possession of the *Qutb al-Maktum* himself.
This original manuscript came into the possession of the Shaykh al-Islam fi Ifriqiya Mawlana al-Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse (d.1975) of Senegal (he was given the title of Shaykh al-Islam fi Ifriqiya by the Ulama of the Azhar. The grand Muhaddith of Morocco Sidi Abd-al-Hayy al-Kattani mentioned him thus in the Ijazabhe gave him, “Hadrat al-Alim al-Fadil, al-Sufi al-Nabil al-Kamil, al-Mursbid al-Jalil, al-Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse bin al-Hajj Abd-Allah al-Tijani, Hafizahu Allah wa Ra’ab’”).

Shaykh al-Islam Niass mentions in his Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin fi al-Tijaniyyah wa al-Tijaniyyin that he noticed “many discrepancies between the original and published versions of the Jawahir when he used to teach it to his students.”

He also mentioned that he had compared this original copy with another handwritten manuscript by the Khalifah of the Qutb al-Maktum in Mauritania, Arif-Bi’llab Sayyidina Shaykh Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Alawi al-Shinqiti (RA), and found that the two manuscripts were the same, thus confirming that the published versions had unauthorized additions in them.

This also confirms what the Ulama of Syria contended that immoral people working for the French rulers of North and West Africa had interpolated such things in the book to cause division and hatred between Muslims and especially the people of the Turuq.

Any student of the history of Islamic scholarship knows that such interpolations have been all too common in our history, especially in Sufi works. The books of men like al-Ghazali, al-Jilani, Ibn-Arabi, al-Sha’rani, Rumi have all been known to be tampered with.

In the Tijani context, Sidi Ahmad Sukayrij tried to clear some of the mess in his work called Jinayat al-Muntasib fima nusib ila al-Shaykh al-Tijani bi al-Kadhib. He mentions that even the sons of the Qutb al-Maktum had burnt some books containing false attributions to him.

The original copy of the Jawahir remains today with the grandson of Shaykh al-Islam Ibrahim Niasse (RA), his eminence Mawlana Shaykh Hassan Cisse of Senegal.
Fourthly, shedding more light on how interpolation might have taken place, Zakariya Wright (Stanford) writes in his *On the Path of the Prophet: Shaykh Ahmad Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya* (p.107):

“Later Tijanis have offered a further explanation of how the statement of the worth of the *Salat al-Fatih* over the Qur’an came to be in the *Jawahir al-Ma’anî* in the first place.

According to Shaykh Hasan Cisse, Shaykh Ibrahim Niassé (RA) had proposed that what was meant was six thousand *khatms* (seal or completion). The scribe had understood this to mean a completion of the Qur’an, but in reality the statement was to be understood in the context of people of Fes at the time, who used to boast of the number of *khatms* of prayer on the Prophet, *Dala’il Khairat*, they had finished.”

Finally, when Sayyidina Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A) was asked, “Will there be statements falsely attributed to you”, he replied by his well known answer:

“Yes! Therefore, if you hear any statement attributed to me, weigh it with the scale of Shari’ah, if it is in line with it, accept it, and if it contradicts it, then leave it.”

This is the first Saying of Sayyidina al-Qutb al-Maktum (RA) that his student al-Sharîf al-Tayyib al-Sufyani quotes in his collection of the Shaykh’s sayings called *Al-Ifadah al-Ahmadiyyah li-Murid al-Sa’adah al-Abadiyyah*.

Therefore, it follows that if any statement goes against the Shari’ah, it cannot be attributed to Sayyidina Shaykh (RA).

B) Some Shaykhs of the *Tariqa* have chosen another route here, and that is to explain away the supposedly anti-Shari’ah sayings as from the *Shat’bat* (ecstatic statements) of the *Awliya*, or make a Shari’ah compliant *Ta’wil* (explanation) of them. Many previous Ulama had done the same with the seemingly unorthodox statements made by famous Sufis, e.g. Sayyidina Bayazid’s statement: “To see me once is better for him (the murid) than seeing Allah a thousand times.”
However, acknowledging the genuine states of absorption in Allah of these pious men and their observance of the Shari’ah in normal times, the Ulama excused them for their sayings and didn’t make takfir of them for the fear of calling a genuine believer a kafir. Na’uddhu Bi’Llab.

When the famous Algerian Shadhili master Arif-Bi’Llab Sidi Ahmad bin Mustafa al-Allawi was asked about some of the more difficult statements made by the Qutb al-Maktum Shaykh Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.), he replied by first acknowledging the Shaykh’s sainthood and then stated that people of his caliber sometimes speak on behalf of the essence of the Prophet (S.A.W.) when in a state of absorption in it, therefore their statements may sound strange and far-fetched. However, one must realize that they are not in a normal state at that time.

Therefore, only narrow-minded people will rush to condemn them. (in our own times, we have seen so-called defenders of the Sunni Aqidah making takfir of pious men like Shaykh Ibrahim Niasse, Shaykh Nazim al-Haqqani, Habib Ali al-Jifri, and other Salihin).

Ibn-Khaldun wrote a long time ago in his Muqaddimah (Chapter on Tasawwuf):

“And from justice with regards to the Qawm (Sufis) is that they are people who experience absence from the sensory (world), and transcendental inspirations (waridat) take control of them until they speak what they do not intend; and this is what is known as Shat’h.

A person who is absent-minded from the sensory world is not mukallaf (bound by the Shari’ah) and the overcome person is excused. Therefore, whoever of such people is known to be honorable and observant (of the Din), then his words are assumed in good intention…from this is what happened to Bayazid al-Bistami and his like”.

(End of quote from Ibn-Khaldun)

One of the more honest scholars of the Zahir wrote:

*Kalam al-Awliya lastu Afshamu
Li-Annani Ana Ana wa Humu Humu*
The Words of the Awliya, I don’t understand
Because I am me! and they are they!

The Aqidah of the Shaykh Sidi Ahmad al-Tijani (R.A.) is clear. In the Jawahir al-Ma’ani itself, he is quoted to have said that he considers no speech in the universe to be holier and more exalted than the holy Qur’an. All Tijanis agree on this Aqidah without exception.

As for the statement quoted in the Jawahir al-Ma’ani that “the reward for reciting the Salat al-Fatih is equal to 6000 recitals of the Qur’an,” those Shaykhs of the Tariqah who didn’t deliberate over its authenticity, have considered it as a restricted statement and have given the following explanations for it:

1) That the intended meaning here is that, one recital of the Salat al-Fatih by someone who does it properly (i.e. visualizing the blessed Prophet (S.A.W.) in front of him and fully understanding its deepest meaning which explain the essence of Allah, Rasul and all existence) is far more rewarding that 6000 customary/routine recitations of the holy Qur’an, in which people normally don’t ponder over meanings nor feel any presence of God.

This explanation was offered by Shaykh al-Tasfawi of the Azhar in Al-Fat’h al-Rabbani.

2) That the implication here is for the general masses of the time who are consistently engaged in various major sins. For people like that, reciting the Qur’an is hypocritical and the Qur’an will be cursing them as they read it and violate it.

However, the Salawat on the Prophet (S.A.W.), especially an auspicious one like the Salat al-Fatih, will guarantee forgiveness of sins and call Allah’s Mercy on them.

Shaykh al-Islam al-Hajj Ibrahim Niasse, grand-Shaykh of the Tijaniyyah, wrote in his Al-Riblah al-Hijaziyyah al-Ula (the translation is summarized):
“The detractors argue that Tijani’s claim that ‘the Salat al-Fatih is superior to the Qur’an.’ This is a lie forged against Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him. For he states in the Jawahir al-Ma’ani that the Qur’an is superior to all Azkar and all prayers; this is brighter than the light of the Sun…”

But! If the person who recites the Qur’an - regardless of whether he knows the meaning or not - continuously disobeys the commandments of Allah, then the recitation of the Qur’an is not the best thing for him to do. On the contrary, the more he reads, the more he sins and the curse on him becomes greater…

Therefore, for such a sinner, praying for the Prophet (S.A.W) is much better than reading the Qur’an, because whoever prays for the Prophet once, Allah blesses him ten times and the entire universe also prays for him ten times. Thus, he obtains everlasting bliss. The promises made by Allah here (i.e. regarding the rewards of making the Salawat), are fulfilled whether in favor of the obedient or the disobedient…Thus, major sinners such as these are doomed to damnation and affliction when reciting the Qur’an, and to bliss when praying for the Prophet (S.A.W.).”

(End of quote from Shaykh-al-Islam Ibrahim Niasse)

The Muhaddith of the Holy Lands al-Sayyid Muhammad bin Alawi al-Maliki (who was not a Tijani) also supports this viewpoint when discussing the issue of preference between reciting the Qur’an and reciting the Salawat, in his Manhaj al-Salaf fi Fahm al-Nusus. In fact, in another work of his on polemical issues, Huwa Allah, he explicitly quotes Shaykh Sidi Ahmad Tijani to this effect, thus vindicating the great Shaykh from the allegations against him.

3) That the great reward in the recitation of the Salat al-Fatih does not mean it’s superiority over the Qur’an, for many lesser acts of worship have been promised rewards which seem greater than the ones promised for superior acts of worship.

For example, it is narrated that the Shaytan flees from hearing the Azan but not from the Salah or the recital of the Qur’an although the latter are greater acts of worship.
Also, many Prophets displayed certain miracles which our Prophet (S.A.W.) didn’t display; however this cannot be implied to mean that they are greater than him. Also, many Sahabah are praised in the hadith in ways Sayyidina Abu-Bakr was not, nevertheless he is still considered greater than them on the whole. The Ulama also mention that it is Afdal to recite Tasbih and Azkar on certain occasions than reciting the Qur’an. Nevertheless, the Qur’an remains the greatest of all speech.

The Usuli Shihab-al-Din ibn Idris states in al-Furuq the principle, “Tajwiz Ikhtisas al-Mafdul bima laisa li’l-Fadil i.e. the possibility of an inferior to possess a quality that is not present in the superior.” He mentions many examples of this from the Qur’an and Sunnah.

The Allamah al-Muhaddith al-Faqih al-Arif bi’Llah Sidi Shaykh Muhammad Fal bin Bab al-Alawi al-Shinqiti also states this point when discussing this issue in his poetic refutation of Khadir and his predecessor in condemning the Tijanis, Adaybaj al-Kamlili (all 3 Mauritanians!):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Wa man Yaqul Inna al-Salata Aksaru...} \\
\text{Ajran min al-Qur'ani La Yukfaru} \\
\text{Idh Kasrat al-Ujuri La Tastalzimu...} \\
\text{al-Afdaliyyata Kama Yu'lamu} \\
\text{Minma Hakabu al-Nawawi wa Ibn-Hajar...} \\
\text{fi al-Fat’bi Aydan Nassa Dhalika Zakar} \\
\text{Wa Adaybaja Dha Jabilahu wa al-Khidru...} \\
\text{Fa Ja'a Minbuna Kalamun Nukru} \\
\text{Bibi Yulabbisu ala Dhi'l-Jabli...} \\
\text{Wa Kullu man Kana Da’if al-Aqli} \\
\text{ja-Kaffara Imam al-Awliya’i...} \\
\text{Wa al-Jablu wa al-Hasadu Asl al-Da’i}
\end{align*}
\]
In conclusion, I would like to re-iterate that notwithstanding these commendable attempts by great Ulama to explain the misunderstood (supposed) words of a great saint of Allah, all Tijanis agree that the holy Qur’an is the greatest of all Speech and consider reciting it as one of the most compulsory and most blessed acts of worship. The Qutb al-Maktum himself and many of his successors till today are known to make Khatms of the holy Qur’an on a continuous basis.

**The Issue of the Khatmiyyah and the Seal of the Saints**

Some scholars (especially of other Turaq) have had a problem with the Tijaniyyah because of their claim that al-Qutb al-Maktum Sayyidina al-Shaykh Ahmad al-Tijani al-Hasani (R.A.) who passed away in 1815 was the predicted Khatam al-Awliya, i.e. the Seal of the Saints, also known as Khatam al-Wilayah al-Muhammadiyah, i.e. Seal of Muhammadan Sainthood.

This issue and all that it entails has been discussed in detail elsewhere. I can forward that material (in Arabic and English) to anyone interested in the topic.

For now, I think Shaykh-al-Hadith Sidi Muhammad al-Hafiz al-Masri summarizes the matter best from a Tijani point of view. The savant writes:

‘Shaykh Muhyi-al-Din bin al-Arabi mentions in *Al-Futuhat al-Makkiyyah*, chapter (bab) 73, that ‘the Seal of the Saints is in the land of the Magreb (i.e. Morocco) and that he had met him in Fez.’

However, this meeting was in the spiritual world as he mentions in another place that he (i.e. the Seal) will appear after him in the last of times, therefore the existence of the Seal in his (i.e. Ibn-Arabi’s) time was a spiritual one and their meeting was such too.

He also mentioned about the Seal that he will be from the most honorable houses of the Magreb and most generous, and that he will be afflicted by the people’s condemnation of him.
Ibn-Arabi also authored a book about this position called *Anqa al-Maghrib fi Khatm al-Awliya wa Shams al-Maghrib*. He specified the Seal’s address as Fez and that his *kunyah* will be Abu’l-Abbas; and this *kunyah* is famous for those whose names are Ahmad.

Sidi al-Mukhtar al-Kunti (the great Mauritanian Qadiri Scholar/Saint) mentioned in his *Kitab al-Tara’iq* that he (i.e. the Seal) would appear in the 12th century (*hijri*).

**Now**, none of these signs gathered in any of the *Awwal* who were attributed with this *maqam* (of *Khatm al-Wilayah*) save Sayyidi Ahmad al-Tijani, may Allah be pleased with him.

For, he was from the Maghreb, a *Sharif Hasani*, and his generosity was so famous that it was used as an example. Furthermore, he was in the 12th century and he lived, became known and passed way in Fez and was buried there.

His name was Ahmad, his *kunyah* was Abu’l-Abbas, and the people’s condemnation of him is from the most manifest signs that make us firmer in our belief and conviction about him.

Moreover, he (*Mawlay Ahmad al-Tijani*), may Allah be pleased with him, mentioned – and he is a truthful person – that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) told him in clear terms while he was awake – and no regard is given to those who deny this (i.e. meeting the Prophet (S.A.W.) while awake as the proofs are against them)... *He, the Prophet (S.A.W.) told him that he (i.e. Mawlay Ahmad al-Tijani) is the one who holds this position (i.e. the Seal of the Saints).*

We have no reason to falsify the claim of a *Wali* with regards to something that is possible. Therefore, we believed in him like we believe in all the *Awwal*.

(End of quote from Shaykh al-Hafiz from his commentary on the *Ifadah*)

In conclusion, we ask Allah to grant us love for Him and love for all those who loved Him, and *Husn al-Zann* in Him and His *Awwal*. Ameen.
The Salat al-Fatih

"O Allah! Send Your Divine Blessings on our master Muhammad,
the Opener of that which was closed
and the Seal of all that was before him,
The Supporter of the Truth by the Truth,
and the Guide to Your Straight Path.
And on his Family, according to his exalted Status and Worth”

Was-Salam,

Servant of the Awliya-Allah

Fakhruddin Owaisi al-Madani al-Tijani