



Did You Know These? Milestones of Vaccination Practice in The Ottoman Empire I: Takvîm-i Vekâyi and Sheikhulislam Fatwa

Bunları Biliyor muydunuz? Osmanlı Devleti'nde Aşı Uygulamasının Dönüm Noktaları I: Takvîm-i Vekâyi ve Şeyhülislam Fetvası

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Takvîm-i Vekâyi, which began its publication life in the Ottoman Empire on November 1, 1831 and was published on Thursdays every week, consisted of six main sections. These sections can be listed as umûr-ı dâhiliye (general events within the country), umûr-ı hâriciye (events taking place abroad, news) mevâdd-ı askeriye (military events, news), fûnûn (news on science, events), tevcihât-ı ilmiye (news on the appointment and dismissal of the ilmiye class) and ticaret and es'âr (news on trade and customs). At the same time, Takvîm-i Vekâyi, which was the official organ of the state, published decisions, regulations and laws, and everyone concerned was obliged to abide by these decisions. Takvîm-i Vekâyi, which was renamed "Ceride-i Resmiye" in 1921,

continued to be published as "Official Gazette" in 1927 following the proclamation of the Republic (1-3).

On March 21, 1847, an official announcement was published in Takvîm-i Vekâyi, in which a fatwa was issued stating that the smallpox vaccine protects against smallpox and that vaccination was appropriate in terms of sharia. This date, when the practice of vaccination in the Ottoman Empire was supported by a fatwa for the first time and announced to the public through Takvîm-i Vekâyi, represents an important turning point in the history of vaccination.¹

The main duties of the sheikhulislams, who were at the highest level of the ilmiye organization, were to issue

¹ See Figure 1 for the related announcement in Takvîm-i Vekâyi. Although various announcements on smallpox and smallpox vaccination had been published in Takvîm-i Vekâyi before, the first official announcement on smallpox vaccination and its support by fatwa was published in Takvîm-i Vekâyi dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326. For previous announcements, see (4-9). See also (10,11) for the fatwa on smallpox vaccination.

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fatwas on religious, political, military and administrative issues and to be responsible for the appointment and promotion of people in the ilmiye class. It is also known that the sheikhulislams ensured the legitimacy of the decisions and practices through their fatwas. For example, in 1838, Mekizade Mustafa Âsım Efendi, the sheikhulislâm of the period, issued a fatwa stating that quarantine was religiously and legally permissible and played an important role in ensuring the legitimacy of the quarantine practice to prevent the spread of epidemics (12). In this context, the fatwa issued by Sheikhulislam Ârif Hikmet Bey in 1847 was an important turning point in our medical history in terms of religious and legal legitimization of smallpox vaccination.

Sheikhulislam Ârif Hikmet Bey was born in İstanbul in 1786. His father, İbrahim İsmet Bey, served as kazasker (judge of the army) and nakibüleşraf during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807). His grandfather was Râif İsmâil Pasha, the reîsülküttâb of the reign of Abdülhamid I (1774-1789), and his great-grandfather was İbrâhim Pasha from Malatya, who was a vizier during the reign of Mahmud I (1730-1754). Growing up in a family that served in the upper echelons of the state for generations, Ârif Hikmet Bey became a muderris in 1796 and served as kadî of Jerusalem, Egypt and Medina respectively. During his tenure as qadi, he was highly appreciated by not charging court fees. In 1833, he became the kazasker of Anatolia and in 1838, the kazasker of Rumelia. He also took part in the Assembly-i Maârif-i Muvakkat, which was established to develop and expand the education system in the Ottoman lands. Upon the death of Sheikhulislam Mekizâde Mustafa Âsım Bey, he was appointed sheikhulislam on December 11, 1849. Although he had a library of approximately 12.000 volumes, most of these books were donated to various institutions. Ârif Hikmet Bey continued to serve as sheikhulislam until March 24, 1854 and died on March 22, 1859 (13,14).

In the official announcement published in Takvîm-i Vekâyî with the approval of Sultan Abdülmecid I (1869-1861), the sultan of the period, and the fatwa of Ârif Hikmet Bey, who served as the sheikhulislam between 1846 and 1854, it was first stated that smallpox was extremely dangerous and that it had been conclusively proven that this disease could be prevented by vaccination, and it was emphasized that this was personally approved and supported by Sultan Abdülmecid I. Then, the religious appropriateness of smallpox vaccination was formalized with a fatwa issued by Sheikhulislam Ârif Hikmet Bey, and it was stated that smallpox vaccination was and would continue to be practiced in the center and provinces under the Sultan's patronage (15).

In the continuation of the announcement, it was stated that deaths due to smallpox had occurred in and around İstanbul and therefore more importance be attached to vaccination. After this statement, it was emphasized that smallpox vaccine would be administered free of charge to all Ottoman citizens within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, and it was announced that doctors and vaccination officers were assigned for vaccination and vaccination centers were established in various places (15).

Since children were the target group of the vaccination program at the time the fatwa was issued, schools, as one of the gathering points for children, became an extremely important location. It was stated that if there were children in schools who had not yet had smallpox or had not been vaccinated, they would be identified and vaccinated, while children who had not yet reached school age and/or were not attending school would be taken to vaccination centers close to their homes and get vaccinated (15,16). There is also important information on vaccination of newborn children. While the relevant authorities were already being informed through imams and mukhtars to vaccinate newborn boys against smallpox, the announcement in Takvîm-i Vekâyî emphasized that as of this date, the necessary information would also be provided to vaccinate newborn girls (15).

As a result, in Takvîm-i Vekâyî dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326, it was announced to the public with the approval of the Sultan and the fatwa of sheikhulislam that smallpox was extremely deadly and that smallpox vaccine provided effective protection against it. In addition to being one of the first serious steps taken by the state to break the apathy and prejudices against vaccination, this announcement was an important turning point in the history of vaccination as it paved the way for the vaccination nizamnames of 1885, 1894, 1904 and 1915. Nizamname means a set of articles showing the provisions that an institution or organization must comply with, a charter (17).

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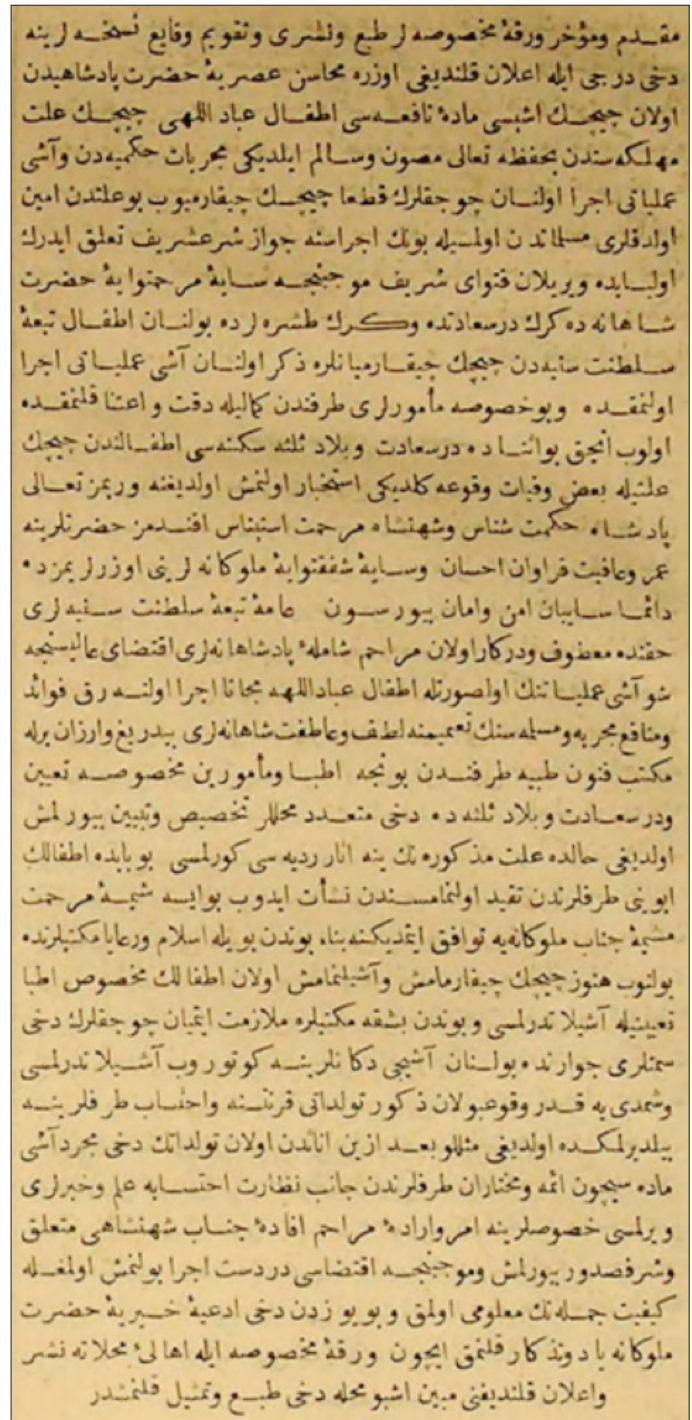


Figure 1. Official announcement on smallpox vaccination in *Takvim-i Vekâyi* dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326. For the transcription and simplified text, see Annex 1 and Annex 2. For the full issue, see Annex 3.

Transcription

Takvîm-i Vekâyi, Issue 326

H. 3 Rabiulahir 1263 / March 21, 1847²

Mukaddem ve müehhir varaka-i mahsusaları tab' ve neşri ve takvîm-i vekâyi nüshalarına dahi derci ile ilan kılındığı üzere mehâsin-i asriye-i hazret-i padişahiden olan çiçek aşısı madde-i nafiası etfal-i ibadullahı çiçek illet-i mehlkesinden bahıfz-ı teala masun ve salim eylediği mücerrebât-ı hükmiyeden ve aşı ameliyatı icra olunan çocukların kat'an çiçek çıkarmayub bu illetten emin oldukları müsellemtâdan olmasıyla bunun icrasına cevaz-ı şer'i şerif taalluk ederek olbabda verilen fetva-yı şerif mucebince saye-i merhametvaye-i hazret-i şahanede gerek Dersaadetde ve gerek taşralarda bulunan etfal-i tebaa-i saltanat-ı seniyyeden çiçek çıkarmayanlara zıkr olunan aşı ameliyatı icra olunmakta ve bu hususa memurları tarafından kemaliyle dikkat ve itina kılınmakda olub ancak bu esnada Dersaadet ve bilâd-ı selâse sekenesi etfalinden çiçek illetiyle bazı vefayat vukua geldiği istihbar olunmuş olduğuna ve remz-i teala padişah hikmet şinas ve şehinşah merhamet istinas efendimiz hazretlerine ömr ve (ü) afiyet firâvan ihsan ve saye-i şefketvaye-i mulukanelerini üzerlerimizde daima sâyeaban emn ve aman buyursun amme-i tebaa-i saltanat-ı seniyeleri hakkında matuf ve derkar olan merâhim şamile-i padişahaneleri iktiza-yı âlîsınca şu aşı ameliyatının ol suretle etfal-i ibâdullahı meccanen icra olunarak kavaid ve menafi-i mücerrebe ve müsellemesinin tâmimine lütf ve atıfet-i şahaneleri bidiriğ ve erzan-ı birle Mekteb-i Fünun-ı Tıbbiye tarafından bunca etıbba ve memurin-i mahsusa tayin ve Dersaadet ve bilâd-ı selâsede dahi müteaddid mahaller tahsis ve tebyin buyurulmuş olduğu halde illet-i mezkûrenin yine âsar-ı reddiyesi görülmesi bu babda etfalın ebeveyni taraflarından tekayyüd olunmamasından neşet idüb bu ise şime-i merhamet-i meşime-i cenab-ı mülûkaneye tevafuk etmediğine binaen bundan böyle İslam ve reaya mekteblerinde bulunub henüz çiçek çıkarmamış ve aşılanmamış olan etfalın mahsus etıbba tayiniyle aşılatdırılması ve bundan başka mekteplere mülâzemet etmeyen çocukların dahi semtleri civarında bulunan aşıcı dükkanlarına görütüb aşılatdırılması ve şimdiye kadar vukubulan zükur tevallüdatı karantina ve ihtisâb taraflarına bildirilmekde olduğu misüllü ba'dezin inasdan olan tevellüdatın dahi mücerred aşı maddesi için eimme ve muhtaran taraflarından canib-i nezaret-i ihtisaba ilmühaberleri verilmesi hususlarına emrûirade-i merâhim ifade-i cenab-ı şehinşahi müteallik ve şerefsudur buyurulmuş ve mucebince iktizası derdest icra bulunmuş olmağla keyfiyet cümlelerin malumu olmak ve bu yüzden dahi ediye-i hayriye-i hazret-i mülûkane yâd ve tezkâr kılınmak için varaka-i mahsusa ile ahali-i mahallâta neşr ve ilan kılındığına mübeyyen işbu mahâle dahi tab' ve temsil kılınmıştır.

Annex 1. Transcription of the official announcement on smallpox vaccination in Takvîm-i Vekâyi dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326.

² The Hijri calendar is a calendar based on the lunar year, with Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medine (622 A.D.) as the beginning.

Simplification

Takvîm-i Vekâyi, Issue 326

H. 3 Rabiulahir 1263 / March 21, 1847

As it was announced in Takvîm-i Vekâyi, it was realized that children who received the smallpox vaccine, which was approved by the sultan and was one of the favors of the century, were protected from a dangerous disease such as smallpox and were healthy, and it is an accepted fact that children who are vaccinated do not get smallpox and are protected from this disease.

Smallpox vaccination is permitted by the sharia and, based on the sharia fatwa issued on this subject, under the merciful patronage of the sultan, children of the subjects of the sultanate, both in İstanbul and in the provinces, who are not infected with smallpox, get vaccinated.

Although full care and attention was paid by the officials in this regard, it was learned that some deaths from smallpox occurred among the children of the residents of İstanbul and Bilad-ı Selase (Üsküdar, Eyüp, Galata).

May Allah grant long life and good health to our wise and merciful sultan and may the shadow of his compassion always cast a shadow of security and peace over us. In accordance with the sovereign sultan's comprehensive compassion and sublime will for all subjects of the sultanate, the vaccination was ordered to be given free of charge to the children of the subjects of the sultanate to be beneficial. In addition, many doctors and special officers were assigned by the Mekteb-i Tıbbiye (School of Medicine) and many places in İstanbul and Bilad-ı Selase (Üsküdar, Eyüp, Galata) were allocated and designated with the grace and compassion of the sultan.

While this was the case, the fact that the negative effects of the aforementioned disease were still seen was due to the lack of the necessary care and attention by the parents of the children, and since this situation was not in accordance with the merciful character of the Sultan, from now on, doctors will be assigned (vaccinated) for children in Islamic and rayah schools who have not yet had smallpox or have not yet been vaccinated, and children who do not attend schools will be taken to vaccination centers close to their neighborhoods and get vaccinated.

The Sultan's compassionate order stated that, just as the births of boys had been reported to the Ministries of Quarantine and Ihtisab, from now on, the births of girls should be reported to the Ministry of Ihtisab (Ministry of Security and Supervision, abolished in 1855) by imams and mukhtars for the purpose of vaccination. Necessary actions were taken accordingly, and the situation was made public. In addition, on this occasion, the Sultan's benevolent aids were announced and publicized with a special document to be remembered and commemorated.

Annex 2. Simplification of the official announcement on smallpox vaccination in Takvîm-i Vekâyi dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326 into english.

[illegible]

Annex 3. All pages of Takvîm-i Vekâyî dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326.

[illegible]

Annex 3. All pages of Takvîm-i Vekâyî dated March 21, 1847 and numbered 326 (continue).