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Summary :

Towards late September 1831, a cholera epidemic broke out in Smyrna. In October the epidemic spread all over the city and lasted until December of the same year. Several inhabitants abandoned Smyrna out of fear. In that period, commerce was paralysed.

Date

late September 1831 – early 1832

Geographical Location

Smyrna (İzmir)

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1. Onset and Spread of the Epidemic

A cholera epidemic broke out in Smyrna in late September 1831.[1] The epidemic was particularly active until early October among the Jews of the city, because their quarter was very densely populated. There were many Jewish victims. Then the epidemic spread to the Orthodox quarters neighbouring the Jewish district. The epidemic was at its peak between October 3 and November 17. That was the period when it spread all over the city.[2] Most of the victims were Muslims rather than Orthodox and Armenians. There were few European victims, as their hygiene conditions were better.

2. Preventive Measures

Panic prevailed in Smyrna. Lots of people left the city, while the wealthiest families sought shelter in neighbouring villages. The shops were closed and, as a result, commerce was paralysed. The workers remained unemployed. The inhabitants who remained in Smyrna gathered in churches, mosques and synagogues to pray.

Those who followed sanitation rules were not infected. The inhabitants tried to tackle the epidemic by receiving the treatment recommended by the doctors. They tried to keep the icy limbs of the patient warm and prepare poultices of camomile, mint and sage for them. The Orientals preferred willow leaves, drops of laudanum, ether and enemas with opium.

It is reported that approximately 8000 people sickened in Smyrna, 5000 of whom died. Half of the victims were Muslims.[3]

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1. Τσακύρογλους, Μ., *Χρονικόν της εν Σμύρνη Χολερικής επιδημίας* (Smyrna 1893), p. 12.

2. Τσακύρογλους, Μ., *Χρονικόν της εν Σμύρνη Χολερικής επιδημίας* (Smyrna 1893), p. 12.

3. H.A. 'La cholera dans le Levant en 1831', *L'Hellenisme contemporain* 1(Septembre-Octobre 1947), p. 451. A different opinion is expressed by Τσακύρογλους, Μ., *Χρονικόν της εν Σμύρνη Χολερικής επιδημίας* (Smyrna 1893), p. 12, who estimates the number of those who fell sick at 17,000 and the number of the casualties at approximately 6000-7000.

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H. A., "Le cholera dans le Levant en 1831", *L'Hellenisme contemporain*, 1, Σεπτέμβριος-Οκτώβριος 1947, 431- 452