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Latakia, Ottoman period

Latakia in the Ottoman period was integrated into the administration of the province of Syria. Economic changes, notably the introduction in the eleventh/seventeenth century of the cash farming of tobacco, contributed to Latakia's rapid development under Ottoman rule. Further innovations were wrought by the Egyptian occupation of 1831–40, the Tanzimat reforms, and the 'Alawī resistance movement against the French at the end of the First World War.

Latakia (Ar., al-Lādhiqiyya; Ott. Turk., Lazkiyetü'l-'Arab), like the rest of the Syrian coastal mountain region, was integrated into the Ottoman Empire after the conquest of Aleppo in August 922/1516 by Sulṭān Selim (Selīm) I (r. 918–26/1512–20). We have no contemporary reference to this integration beyond an Ottoman tax census (*taḥrīr defteri*) from about 931/1524–5, which notes an influx especially of Christian migrants from the Platanus (Qardāḥa) area in the mountains to the east, where there had been several rebellions against the Ottomans. The same registers suggest a

steady rise in the town's population in the first half of the tenth/sixteenth century, from at least 1,410 inhabitants, assuming five people per counted household, in 925/1519, to 2,750 in 931/1524–5, and 4,115 in 954/1547–8, with Christians accounting for up to 35 percent of the total. By 1055/1645–6, however, the total population appears to have dropped to about 1,720, of whom only about 18 percent were Christians. The *nahiye* (*nāhiye*, administrative subdistrict) of Latakia, part of the province (*sancak*, *sanjāq*) of Jabala, initially comprised twenty-one tax-paying villages; in 954/1547–8, after absorbing the previously independent *nahiye* of Wādī Qandīl on the coast north of town, it encompassed to thirty-one villages as well as several Arab and Turkmen tribes.

Latakia in the tenth/sixteenth century was home to a few Muslim scholars who had moved there from Aleppo, but it otherwise had little social or economic significance. After the establishment of the *eyalet* (*eyālet*, province) of Tripoli (Trablus-Şam, Ar., Ṭarāblus al-Shām) in 987/1579, Latakia seems to have come under the influence of the *powerful Lebanese leader Fakhr al-Dīn Ma'n (d. Ramaḍān