

THE TURKISH AND TATAR MINORITIES IN DOBRUDJA BETWEEN RELIGION, CITIZENSHIP AND COMMUNIST IDEOLOGY

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Abstract: The WWII resulted in changes both in the territorial map of Romania and its political regime from monarchy to communism. The Turkish and Tatar minorities residing in the region of Dobrudja passed through hard times in keeping intact of the basic elements of their cultural identity immediately after the communist regime came to power. Intensive collectivization and industrialization policies pursued by the new regime changed the traditional way of life of the Muslims. Inherently opposite to the communist ideology the regime adopted nationalistic approach towards all minorities for the sake of homogenization of the society. This policy triggered the closure of the Turkish schools in Dobrudja one by one and ultimately the Muslim Seminary in Medgidia in 1967, which is regarded as the pioneering educational institution for the Muslim minority. As a direct consequence of these closures, Turkish and Tatar children attended the Romanian schools with no chance to learn their mother tongue. However, within a general context of surveillance and control of the regime, all minorities (including the Muslim Turkish-Tatar) continued to practice their religious rituals, celebrations, traditions at least at the private level suffering the general deprivations, as the whole Romanian citizens.

Keywords: Dobrudja; Turkish and Tatar minorities; communist regime; cultural identity; Muslim Seminary; mother tongue;
