

## GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS CONCERNING THE REFERENCE POINTS ESTABLISHED IN ORDER TO DEFINE THE TRADITIONAL VILLAGE MODELS OF DOBROGEA SO AS TO ENHANCE THEIR TOURISTIC VALUE

**Alexandru ILIEȘ**

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, 1 University St. 410087 Oradea/  
University of Gdansk, Institute of Geography, ul. Bazynskiego 4, 80-952 Gdansk, e-mail: ilies@uoradea.ro

**Dorina Camelia ILIEȘ**

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning,  
1 University St., 410087 Oradea, Romania, e-mail: iliesdorina@yahoo.com

**Abstract.** The Dobrogea region is considered to be the oldest from a geological standpoint and the most heterogeneous in what concerns its ethno-cultural aspect. It overlaps two counties: Constanța and Tulcea, of a cumulated surface measuring 15,000 sqkm and an average population of 1 million inhabitants. Its rural component comprises 1,058 villages distributed in 104 communes, mainly disposed in the central area of the region, but also found in the Danube Meadow and Delta. This study proposes an analysis of the situation of the authentic elements preserved in situ as well as out situ and of the main sources of information regarding the reconstruction of the traditional village of Dobrogea, such as museums in Dobrogea, Bucharest and Sibiu as well as over 30 studied villages from Dobrogea, offering precious data concerning the types of households and ethnographic landscape determined by the occupations of the rural population. The cartographic material based on the data acquired through study and field work thus obtained is relevant to the definition of the authenticity of Dobrogea's rural component, a viable starting point for the development of rural tourism which would complement seaside tourism.

**Key words:** Dobrogea, traditional village, heritage, touristic value

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### INTRODUCTION

Dobrogea's geographical position has allowed this region to play an important part in the Romanian territorial-politic system, aspect which has been highlighted almost a century ago by Brătescu (1928): "*Dobrogea is important to Romania mostly due to its position at the mouth of the Danube and by the Black Sea's coast...*". In the context of an accelerated process of globalization which is carried through by a "*cultural leveling*" and an "*urban aggression*", the Romanian rural space, in its most archaic form, represents a considerable inheritance due to the richness and diversity of its elements and to their uniqueness and originality. This study's objectives is to identify the reference points which characterize Dobrogea's traditional particularities in what concerns its households and villages, as well as to define some specific models which would enable the concept of "*touristic village*" to become the foundation for the development of different types and forms of tourism in rural areas. Attaining these objectives would offer an alternative to the current rural

development by planning and promoting autochthonous elements and preserving them in situ. Moreover, the historical-geographical and geopolitical particularities of Dobrogea which have influenced the modeling of the its villages as well as the diversity of elements which render it attractive and rich in touristic resources are also favorable to such an endeavor, as Nicoară T. (2006, 76-77) describes: “a Romanian province encompassing the richest antique vestiges: Greek and Roman, paleochristian and medieval Roman-Byzantine traces; a territory which superposed the largest number of human civilizations recorded in Romanian history; the region comprising the most diverse habitation condition and the oldest habitation sites.”



**Figura 1.** Dobrogea. Geographical framework and localities researched by various researchers (and research studies) in the context of valuing authentic village of Dobrogea

**THE GEOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ANALYSIS**

Dobrogea’s regional system, a component of Romania’s political territory, is surrounded by water: on the northern and eastern side by the Danube and by the Black Sea on its western side.

From a geological and physical-geographical point of view, it represents a complex synthesis of the “*oldest territory*” represented by the North-Dobrogea horst (Măcin Mountains) and of the “*youngest*” which is continuously expanding: the Danube Delta. The same complexity characterizes this region from a historical and demographical point of view, an advantage both for the ethno-cultural and the architectural heritage of the urban and rural areas. About 1 million inhabitants populate nowadays (2010) a surface of 15,570 sqkm representing the territory of Constanța (74.2 %) and Tulcea (25.8 %) counties, distributed in 104 communes which include in their administrative circumscription 1,058 villages (table 1). The villages are relatively unequally distributed at the level of the two counties (58 % in Constanța) as well as at the level of Dobrogea’s territory where the density of rural settlements is higher in the central-northern, central and south-eastern parts (figure 1). In what concerns its demographical dimension, the average Dobrogea village numbers 1,058 inhabitants, figure which varies from county to county, yet higher in the case of Constanța (table 1).

**Table 1.** Dobrogea. Population and rural settlements, in 2010  
(data sources: insee.ro; Direcțiile Județene de Statistică din Tulcea și Constanța)

No	Counties / Region	Surface (sqkm)	Total inhabit	%	Density (inhab/sqkm)	Rural Population	% from total Dobrogea /County	No villages	Nr communes	Inhab/village (value medium)	Diferences no villages 1990-2010
1	Constanța	7,071	718,330	100	101.6	212,393	29.5	188	58	1,129	-1
2	Tulcea	8,499	250,641	25.8	29.5	127,171	51.0	133	46	956	0
	<b>DOBROGEA</b>	<b>15,570</b>	<b>969,481</b>	<b>74.2</b>	<b>62.3</b>	<b>339,564</b>	<b>47.27</b>	<b>321</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>1,058</b>	<b>-1</b>

### CURRENT LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE

While a great number of studies concerning the elements of heritage, the methodological component, etc. have been published, in what concerns the understanding and promotion of the Dobrogea village, such endeavors are recent and limited in number. The first initiatives of preserving the elements specific to the Dobrogea region have been taken by the Ethnographical Museums of Sibiu and Bucharest which have “displaced” in the ’70 some of the specific elements of Dobrogea, without considering *in situ* preservation. Here are some of the studies which are important in what concerns the Dobrogea region: the *Romanian Ethnographical Atlas* (3 volumes), coordinated by I. Ghinoiu which refers to no less than 22 Dobrogea villages, the two volumes of “*Dobrogea. An ethnographical study*” (2003, 2008) coordinated by Maria Magiru or Budiș Monica’s study on “*The Romanian rural household*”, published in 2004, mentioning the Dobrogea region in one of its chapters. This list can be enriched by several papers published by V. Mihăilescu concerning the typology of the Dobrogea village, a geographical and multicultural study proposed by V. Nicoară (2006) etc. The Museums of Tulcea and Constanța have managed in the last 4 decades to assemble important collections of ethnographical pieces, characteristic to the multicultural Dobrogea region, which are also extremely valuable.

### METHODOLOGY

The logic of such a scientific venture requires coherent answers to questions such as where? why? and how? The specialized literature mentions a preexistent touristic potential (strictly referring to the rural space) which is significantly transforming both quantitatively (decrease, displacement) and qualitatively (by introducing modern yet atypical models). An ample bibliographical documentation and a sustained field activity were meant to identify the villages which preserve the authenticity of the traditional rural Dobrogea and which may represent the foundation of a highly functional and economically efficient rural touristic system. Also, in order to theoretically support the need of such an approach at the level of the analyzed region, principles, methods and instruments approved by specialized literature must be applied, such as: the concept of integrated tourism (Rieser, 2000), generating functional territorial systems (Ianoș, 2000, Ilieș, et

al. 2009), a durable and touristic development and planning (Hall and Lew, 1998; William, 1998, Cocean, 2005; Hall, 2005; Ciangă and Dezsi, 2007; Cocean and Filip, 2008). As a research method and instrument of planning and management for administrative actors, the diagnostic analysis allows the identification and the accentuation of favorable and/or restrictive elements for the development of an integrated touristic system in the given region. Methodologically speaking, another important aspect is that of establishing the optimal parameters for the functioning of a territorial system organized according to the characteristic elements of the concept of touristic planning (Ciangă and Dezsi, 2007, 32-33) such as: modeling the territory accordingly to the particularities of the genetic factors; maintaining a high level of complexity regardless of the taxonomic level; implementing a systemic approach; conceiving transformable and multifunctional systems; a real quantitative and qualitative knowledge of attractive resources; a professional evaluation of the environment's limit of supportability so as not to cause unbalances which may destroy the functioning mechanisms of the system. Another important methodological step is that of applying a complementary method by combining: geographical, ethnographical, historical, architectural, sociological, economical etc. methods. Also, the synthesis elements of the cartographical method substantially contribute to the spatial understanding of the represented phenomena. This endeavor is based on research and polls conducted in the studied area, a study of documents and previous investigations, cautioning local administrative actors regarding the threats of "globalization", all in order to identify, structure and scientifically prove the benefits of local solutions as alternatives to universal ones.

#### **ELEMENTS, INSTRUMENTS, MECHANISMS AND STRUCTURES WHICH SUPPORT A TERRITORIAL SYSTEM WITH A TOURISTIC FUNCTION, BASED ON SPECIFIC RURAL CHARACTERISTICS**

A scientific venture of this sort is based on an impressive initial volume of data, more or less processed, thus engendering results which match the territorial reality. Thus, one can observe the traditional and authentic details which have been preserved, measure the ration between what is authentic and what is non-authentic and identify the elements which can be preserved *in situ* as well as what has been preserved "*out situ*" the Dobrogea region. It is obvious that the deterioration of the authentic patrimony is due to local authorities and to the lack of implication on the part of the specialists concerning the decisions concerning the conservation, organization and management of a rural richness which decreases as we speak. A correct evaluation and a promotion of the position and responsibilities of the institutions accountable for the management of this important heritage are adamant. It is through a detailed analysis of the economical, social and political factors that one can establish the solutions needed in order to integrate the phenomena suited to this line of activity in logical structures, identifiable at regional level. By synthesizing these aspects one can finally determine the fundamental elements of a model fitting the local context, the functionality of which is due to the horizontal disposition and the vertical hierarchy of the main actors and institutions responsible for the dimensioning, dynamics and functioning of these local territorial systems.

*Globalization as opposed to traditionalism and the Romanian territorial context* are aspects which have been negatively influenced by modernity and have, unfortunately, replaced traditional elements with cheaper, "*kitschy*" ones. Due to the leveling of cultural values and through the transforming of preexistent heritage into vendible, commercial products, in the context of an economical regress and population impoverishment, globalization represents the main threat to preserving traditions and elements of architectural patrimony, both in the general Romanian context and particularly in Dobrogea.

To sustain this idea, we offer two opinions on this matter, generated by different mentalities and cultures at a European level. In an interview obtained by the publication "*Formula AS*" in 2005 (Year XV, nr. 662, 3, April 2005), Evelyne Pivert, the President of the Association "*Operation Villages Roumaines*" (*Operation Romanian Villages*) made several affirmations which should

interest the main actors responsible for the creation of an optimal legal and material framework for preserving the values of the Romanian traditional village, as well as the communities and local authorities. We quote: “Romanians should not repeat the mistakes of the Western world. For example, in France, a disaster has occurred due to the promotion of a commercial mentality and the metamorphosis of every single thing in a vendible, therefore there aren’t any authentic peasant elements left. [...] The Romanian villages represent live monuments of an ancestral civilization which has been long lost in the West. [...] The Romanian rural world symbolizes a reservation of traditions and values that has been vanished in the rest of Europe” (Pivert, 2005).

On the same note, a 2009 article posted on Deutsche Welle’s (a German radio) site entitled “Postcard from Europe: Romanian countryside transformed by EU subsidies”<sup>1</sup> presented William Blacker’s perspective on the matter. The British writer and journalist declared: “EU agricultural subsidies are demolishing a cultural heritage: Romania’s historic villages and their architecture.” He added: “For a tiny proportion of the money spent on subsidizing agriculture, the EU could have ensured that Romania’s historic architecture was properly legally protected. It did not.”<sup>1</sup>

**Actors and institutions.** Following field investigations and the analysis of bibliographic sources, one can assert that Dobrogea has not received proper attention from local and national actors in order to preserve its architectural patrimony *in situ*. Even though its original heritage was rich and diversified, the new millennium has unraveled a changed, impoverished Dobrogea: valuable elements have been displaced or preserved *in situ* and then replaced by contemporary elements or have simply been destroyed due to a lack of interest etc. Even though the Dobrogea village, be it situated in the Delta, the Meadow, by the Black Sea or “inland”, represents in itself a form of *in situ preservation*, this conservation is nevertheless misguided, uninstitutionalized and developing according to the stages of economical progress or regress. Therefore, we can differentiate two major types of initiatives: *institutionalized “inside of” (in situ)* and “*outside Dobrogea*” (*out situ*); villages still preserving their traditional values due to the “rediscovering of patrimonial richness” by the contemporary community.

a.) *The in situ institutionalized initiatives* primarily include the museum-like institutions of Dobrogea, an important factor in preserving the architectural identity of Dobrogea’s habitat, be it that of the damp meadow or delta or that of the coast and “inland”, which can provide precious information to those interested in developing the economy of the region through a rural tourism based on authenticity and real traditional values. Of these institutions and their accomplishments, according to the diversity of sources, we may mention (table 2): *The Museum of Ethnography and Folk Art of Tulcea*, holding a collection of *about 8,000 pieces which compose a priceless ethnographical anthology of folk art and clothing collections, ethnographical elements and photographic documents*<sup>2</sup>; *The North-Dobrogea Village Museum of Enisala*, a synthesis of the traditional household specific to the region of Lake Razim of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century represented by an architectural ensemble preserved *in situ*<sup>3</sup>, including: the house (porch and two rooms) and annexes equipped with specific instruments (the kitchen, the summer oven, the stable, the granary, the shed, the fountain, agricultural tools, Dobrogea’s traditional painted horse wagons, fishing gear, tools and products for cooperage, smithing, bee-keeping, pottery and sewing) as well as by an interior collection of specific elements, characteristic to household activities and crafts; “*Panait Cerna Memorial House*”, situated in the middle of Cernea village, is not only a symbol of a famous author but also houses a permanent exhibit dedicated to the arts and craft of the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is decorated with traditional peasant elements (furniture and fabrics dating from the same period); *The Museum of Oriental Art of Babadag*, housed by *Panaghia Residence* is build in the architectural style of the region, characterized by traditional elements typical for the Turkish and Tatar communities of Dobrogea; *The Eco-Tourism Museum*

<sup>1</sup> Data source: <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,4905885,00.html>

<sup>2</sup> Data source: <http://www.info-delta.ro/orasul-tulcea-23/muzeul-de-etnografie-si-arta-populara--142.html>

<sup>3</sup> Data source: <http://tulcea-info.ro/muzeul-satului-nord-dobrogean-enisala>; [http://cimec.ro/P/Ghid/6975506\\_1](http://cimec.ro/P/Ghid/6975506_1);

Center “Danube Delta” of Tulcea is a symbol of the delta as it offers precious information on the socio-cultural environment of this region, exhibiting traditional fishing tools, fishermen’s daily-life details, data concerning the methods used to preserve and prepare fish etc; *The Folk Art Museum of Constanța* has been the first museum to have started, since ’71-’72, the preservation of traditional values of the Dobrogea region.

b.) *The institutionalized initiatives “outside of” Dobrogea or villages of Dobrogea preserved out situ* are characteristic to the 1960s. The idea of preserving elements of architectural patrimony specific to the region of Dobrogea was promoted by museum outside of Dobrogea: The Village Museum from Bucharest, The Museum of Folk Art of Bucharest, The Museum of Folk Art of Sibiu (table 2).

**Table 2.** Local and national actors in order to preserve its architectural patrimony institutionalized “inside of” (*in situ*) and “outside Dobrogea” (*out situ*)

	Name of institution	Localisation	Components
<b>A</b>	<b><i>In situ – inside of Dobrogea</i></b>		
1	The Museum of Ethnography and Folk Art <sup>4</sup>	Tulcea	- about 8000 pieces which compose a priceless ethnographical anthology of folk art and clothing collections, ethnographical elements and photographic documents <sup>4</sup> ;
2	The North-Dobrogea Village Museum <sup>5</sup>	Enisala	- architectural ensemble preserved <i>in situ</i> <sup>5</sup> , the house and annexes equipped with specific instruments
3	“Panait Cerna” Memorial House <sup>6</sup>	Cerna	- with traditional peasant elements
4	The Museum of Oriental Art <sup>7</sup>	Babadag	- elements typical for the Turkish and Tatar communities of Dobrogea
5	The Eco-Tourism Museum Center “Danube Delta”	Tulcea	- exhibiting traditional fishing tools, fishermen’s daily-life details
6	The Folk Art Museum	Constanța	- the preservation of traditional values of the Dobrogea region.
<b>B</b>	<b><i>“outside of” Dobrogea or villages of Dobrogea preserved out situ</i></b>		
1	The Astra Museum of Traditional Folk <sup>8</sup>	Sibiu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Cherhana” fisherman from Mahmudia (Tulcea County)</li> <li>- Fisherman household from Mahmudia (Tulcea County),</li> <li>Low Windmill from Enisala village (Tulcea County), XIX Century</li> <li>- Storey Windmill from Dunavățu de Sus village (Tulcea County),</li> <li>- Storey Windmill from Frecăței village (Tulcea County),</li> <li>- Windmill Sailing from Curcani village (Constanța County), comuna Negrești</li> <li>- Windmill Sailing “Căciulată” from Beștepe village (Tulcea County),</li> <li>- Vortex Fountain and Animal Traction from Chimogeni village (Constanța County),</li> <li>- The struggling ferry from Topalu (Constanța)</li> </ul>
2	The Museum of Folk Art	Bucharest	- Folk creation
3	National Museum of Village “Dimitri Gusti” <sup>9</sup>	Bucharest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Windmill from Sarichioi village (Tulcea County) XIX Century, moved in 1953</li> <li>- Windmill from Valea Nucarilor village (Tulcea County) XIX Century, moved in 1965</li> <li>- Windmill from Enisala village (Tulcea County), XX Century, moved in 1965</li> <li>- specific houseolders from Ostrov Village (Constanța County)</li> <li>- specific houseolders from Jurilovca Village (Tulcea County)</li> <li>- “cherhana” from Jurilovca village (Tulcea County)</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> Data source: <http://www.info-delta.ro/orasul-tulcea-23/muzeul-de-etnografie-si-arta-populara--142.html>

<sup>5</sup> Data source: <http://tulcea-info.ro/muzeul-satului-nord-dobrogean-enisala>; [http://cimec.ro/P/Ghid/6975506\\_1](http://cimec.ro/P/Ghid/6975506_1);

<sup>6</sup> Data source: <http://tulcea-info.ro/casa-memoriala-panait-cerna/>;

<sup>7</sup> Data source: <http://tulcea-info.ro/expozitia-de-arta-orientala-casa-panaghia-babadag/>;

<sup>8</sup> Bucur și colab, 1995

<sup>9</sup> Data sources: [http://www.muzeul-satului.ro/dobrogea\\_62\\_sarichioi.php](http://www.muzeul-satului.ro/dobrogea_62_sarichioi.php); <http://ran.cimec.ro/>

In order to establish a model for a touristic village of Dobrogea, an important part is played by the studies which have been published on the subject, for these are the only sources which can provide elements of local specificity. One such data source is the *online Ethnographic Atlas of Romania*, offering information regarding different typologies of villages, according to the predominant occupations of the population and specific natural resources. Another such material is entitled “*The identification and Evaluation of Landscape (of Civilizations)*”, analyzing the cultural and architectural heritage of 38 villages (20 from Tulcea County and 18 from Constanța County). Several landscapes which deeply influence the morphology and functionality of the traditional village have been identified in Dobrogea: *the ethnographic piscicultural landscape* of the Delta, its and tributaries and ponds; *the ethnographic agricultural landscape*, comprising villages from plain areas whose inhabitants mainly cultivate plants; the ethnographic pomicultural /vicultural landscape is a subtype of the agricultural landscape, comprising Murfatlar and Niculițel vineyards.

Famous artists<sup>10</sup> have painted villages specific to Dobrogea: the traditional village with its characteristic houses can be admired in Tonitza’s, Dărăscu’s or Șirato’s paintings and which can inspire us as well as provide us with visual information for determining the characteristics of the traditional village of Dobrogea.

*The architectural typology of the village of Dobrogea* is diversified due to the physical-geographical conditions previously mentioned, to the historical background as well as to the different ethnicities present in the region. In order to complete a historical atlas of the Romanian settlements of Dobrogea, Magiru and his collaborators (2003, 18) have established, according to particularities described by Mihăilescu, three village typologies: villages set up by the side of Danube: Ostrov, Oltina, Dunăreni, Vlăhi, Rasova, Cochirleni, Seimenii Mici, Seimeni, Ciobanu, Gârliciu; villages which are farther from the banks of the Danube: Băneasa, Ion Corvin and Saraiu; and settlements situated in the central north area: Târğușor, Grădina, Mircea Vodă etc (figure 1).

*The Ethnographic Atlas of Romania* (coordinated by I. Ghinoiu, 2003) is another document offering information for the construction of the model of traditional villages. Within the above mentioned document 23 villages have been studied (fig. 1), among which a number of 11 villages from Tulcea County (C.A Rosetti, Casimcea, Cârjelari, Chilia Veche, Luncavăț, Niculițel, Peceneaga, Sf. Gheorghe, Stejaru, Visterna, Valea Nucarilor) and 12 from Constanța County (Cochirleni, Comana, Dobromir, Istria, Oltina, Ostrov, Peștera, Runcu, Silișteea, Șipotele, Topalu, Valu lui Traian). The first volume of the Ethnographic Atlas of Romania, *The Habitat*, contains highly useful information concerning the structure and the architecture of the household of the 22 villages. Among the constituent parts of the households which compose its image, partially determined due to field information and from the Romanian Ethnographical Atlas<sup>11</sup> and due to the villages included in the area of analysis, the following elements are of great importance: the occupation of inhabitants, the technical characteristics of the house, the fence and the gate (including the construction materials), the well, windmills etc. Based on these elements, there are several types of households that can be built, all of them which characterize Dobrogea’s traditional particularities. Thus, the models can be included in a project portfolio which may be found in every townhouse of Dobrogea and they can be viewed as a compulsory source of inspiration for anybody who wishes to build within the traditional rural area of Dobrogea.

To **conclude**, we consider that through field documentation not only is an important database being built/updated, but also an important information support in order to complete the other specific objectives of a complete measure. Therefore, in order to determine the touristic potential of a region/place, a variation of the quantifiable elements must be made by including the ones that create specificity and those which can differentiate the touristic places/regions not

<sup>10</sup> Data source: <http://clasate.cimec.ro>; Bunuri culturale mobile clasate în Patrimoniul Cultural Național

<sup>11</sup> The Romanian Ethnographical Atlas coordinated by I. Ghinoiu, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, 1st volume *The Habitat* (2003); 3rd volume *Traditional technique. Alimentation*(2003)

through quantitative values, but through a degree of preservation of the authentic and traditional in comparison with the meaning of allochthonous elements or the ones that alter in time the specificity of a place identified as keeper of tradition. Also, the reference framework can be improved through an evaluation at the level of place not at the level of territorial administration, for it is known that a commune can include several villages whose disposal of territorial lands affiliates them in completely different functional territories. In the Danube Delta, along with the touristic potential this unique place offers the European area, “*the household of this area is developing by preserving most of the traditional architecture, especially the one of the houses of Lipova, a great attraction for the Romanian and foreign tourists. Nowadays, most of the houses are made out of modern materials combined with building materials specific for the Dobrogea area, such as thatch and wood*”.<sup>12</sup>

Another objective which supposes precise steps of promotion activity of the values of the local patrimony, among the local participants and with their help, is the promotion of the preservation and protection of the traditional, authentic *in situ* village and the local and national legislative support. Thus, the promotion of normative acts for the preservation and protection of the authentic patrimony is very important because it avoids actions that led to its diminution. This step is compulsory in order to limit the proportions of the disaster from the qualitative point of view, which affects the authentic values of a traditional village. The lack of experts in the field and in the decision-making structures has created “*architectural monsters*”, which are analysed from the point of view of their placement, the purpose of their building, the context of their appearance and their authentic and traditional concept.

We believe that the above mentioned identified and synthesised elements can bring a substantial contribution to the creation of some touristic models whose value will be determined by the degree of traditional specificity. We also believe that an element which has a patrimonial value, characterised as a unique element within a modern environment can be deteriorated, rendered insufficiently profitable or assimilated, and is not sufficient to determine a functional touristic system.

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<sup>12</sup> Data source: <http://www.info-delta.ro/traditii-in-dobrogea-28/arhitectura-satului-dobrogean---casa-46.html>

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