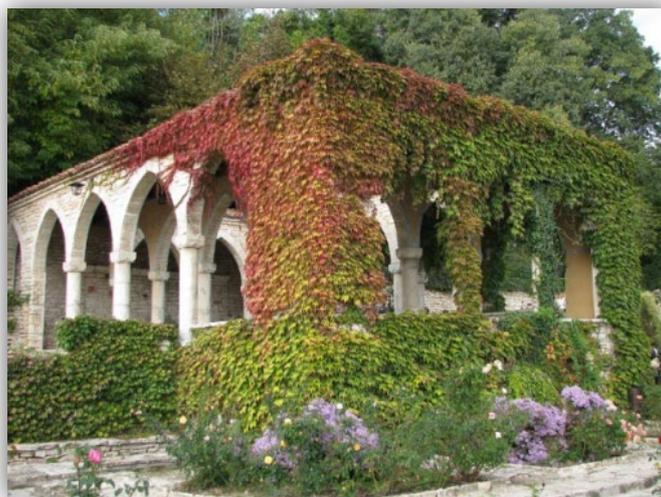


**“ANOTHER WAY” – ERASMUS PLUS – KA2 –  
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### **Output 1 “Anotherway Method – by Francesco Piccolo”**

#### **Training Course, Module 3**

#### **I. Architecture**



*1 – The nymphaeum at The Architectural-Park Complex „The Palace“ in Balchik*

The nymphaeum is a part of The Architectural-Park Complex „The Palace“ in Balchik. It is situated on the lowest level of the threshold-terraced complex, almost at the seafront, next to a waterfall and a rose garden. It is a low rectangular stony platform a few steps lead to. A peristyle colonnade surrounds the platform from three sides, forming arches. One of the colonnade’s shorter sides faces a higher stonewall built from typical for the region of Balchik limestone. A previously existed three-spouted fountain is bricked in and above it a marble inscription is embedded. A stone bench with a wide back is situated to the right of the fountain.

The other short side of the colonnade faces the sea. The columns are cut from whole stone blocks, about two meters in height. In the middle they have ornamental capitals where the arches gradually start shaping from. At the short sides the colonnade has three arches while at the longer ones there are five sharp arches. The columns are arranged in two rows and form rectangular porch surrounding the perimeter of the platform. The ceiling is covered by imbrices and is painted in dark-yellow decorated with geometrical and floral ornaments and arabesques in blue and white. There is an open space in the middle of the platform, shaped as a shallow rectangular pool with an apse wall. Water coming from the fountain runs into the pool from where drains away to the south flowing into the system of canals. Metal lanterns in the shape of multi-rayed stars hang alongside the walls. The nymphaeum is overgrown with ivy.



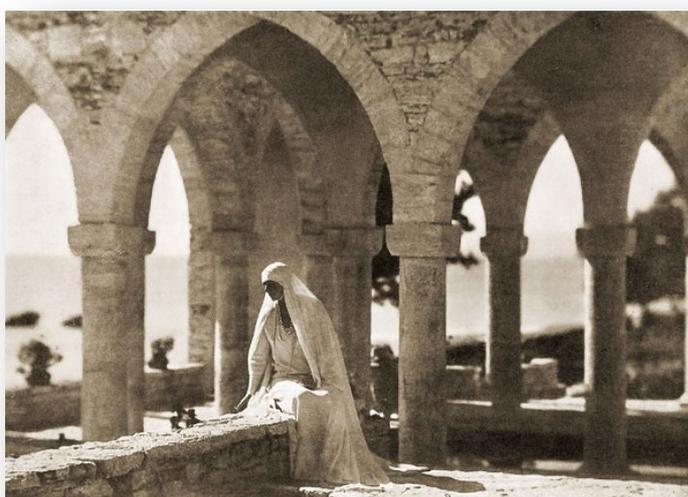
*2 – The nymphaeum*

Nymphaea are called the ancient sanctuaries devoted to nymphs. In the ancient Greek mythology nymphs are supernatural beings, minor female deities, presented as beautiful lasses. They are also associated with the life-giving vigor of nature – considered to be able to spiritualize lakes, forests, trees and springs. According to the environment they inhabit, there are different kinds of nymphs. These patronizing fresh waters, streams, lakes and springs are known as Naiads. Folklore presents them as capricious and frail beings who do not live in slack waters and could die should the source run dry. They are worshiped both individually and collectively. The most commonly spread image of them is The Three Graces – Aglaea, Thalia and Euphrosine. Springs patronized by them are sacred and are used for ritual bathing

for curing various diseases. Besides religious and healing ones, nymphaea function as administrative centers as well – significant official documents are kept there on behalf of local communities, institutions and authorities.

Sanctuaries of this kind are spread all around the Bulgarian soil since The Antiquity. Even after the conversion to Christianity worshipping the nymphs continues by transforming their images into divas, fairies and mermaids.

The cult of water does not fade away in modern times. Built in the first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the nymphaeum at The Palace in Balchik illustrates the general tendency for transforming ancient art. Many European mansions and parks feature during this historical period swimming pools, fountains and pavilions shaped and decorated like works of ancient architecture and art. Queen Marie Alexandra Victoria of Edinburgh builds a Temple of Water as a replica of the famous Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. The space is saturated with history, arranged with royal opulence, soaked with the fragrance of roses. The natural greenery combined with the blue of the sea sparkle the scene. The nymphaeum is where The Queen celebrates her name and birthdays, receives numerous guests, delegations and processions. At night the nymphaeum is transformed into an open-air ceremony and festivity area. There is no roof over The Temple of Water and the stars, reflected on the water surface, look like they have specially come down from the sky to be touched.



*3 – Queen Marie of Romania, sitting under the arches of the nymphaeum*

In 1913 during The Second Balkan War Romania occupies the northeastern Bulgarian territories, Balchik included. Having paid her first visit to the town in 1921 Queen Marie of Romania is much taken with the newly-conquered land with its mild climate, warm sea water and the picturesque cliffs of Balchik. The reasoning for choosing the spot to build her new summer residence however is political – to mark the occupied territory as Romanian in its most southern point. Captivated by the natural beauty and tranquility of the strand Queen Marie before long decides to come back to stay. The complex intended to be her summer residence is constructed between 1925 and 1936 and consists of 46 villas and a huge park, designed by the Swiss Gianni and Gutman. A work of the Italian architects Amerigo and Augustino, the architectural layout of The Palace represents the crowned follower of the Baha'i faith dreams for unity between various cultures and religions, as well the one between beauty of nature and human aesthetics. Founded in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in the Middle East and spread afterwards throughout most of the world's countries and territories, this religion considers God as single and all-powerful. The emphasis is on the unity of all religions and the goal is set on united world order that ensures the prosperity of all nations, races, creeds and classes. This eclecticism is clearly distinguishable in The Palace which combines Old Bulgarian, Gothic and Oriental elements. There are a decorative minaret and crosses inscribed in Old Church Slavonic. A Byzantine-styled chapel neighbors Moresque colonnade, while a Hellenistic marble throne from Florence – bas-reliefs and big earthen pithoi from Morocco. Different symbols are also to be found in the nymphaeum, although it looks like a Roman loggia at first glance: ornamental arabesques coexist with Christian crosses, the shallow pool in the middle of the colonnade resembles in its form an Orthodox church, the metal lanterns in the shape of multi-rayed stars point to Judaism ... As Queen Marie answers when asked what she believes in: “Unity instead of separation, hope instead of reproach, love instead of hate. As well as inspiration for all people.”

On 7 September 1940 The Treaty of Craiova is signed and Southern Dobrudzha is handed back to Bulgaria, Balchik included. Several more agreements between Bulgaria and Romania are signed subsequently where the possession of The Palace is settled. In 1955 a part of the park is transformed into an academic botanical garden run by The University of Sofia. Nowadays The Palace is well preserved and regularly maintained, and after the 1980s turned into a remarkable cultural and touristic center.

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1 – The nymphaeum at The Architectural-Park Complex „The Palace“ in Balchik

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2 – The nymphaeum

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3 – Queen Marie of Romania, sitting under the arches of the nymphaeum. Archive photograph

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