

The Church of „St. Archangel Michael“ near Goranovtsi, Kyustendil region

Angel Angelov*

The church of „St. Archangel Michael“ is situated 2 km north of the village of Goranovtsi on the right bank of the river Dragovishtitsa. It's a small single-aisled barrel-vaulted building - 6,50 m long, 4,30 m wide and with contemporary height of 4,54 m. It is constructed entirely of stone and mortar. On the inside though, there are 3 brick niches on the south wall and as many on the north. They are attached to the walls by constructional joints. The whole inner space of the walls above the niches is faced with bricks as well. This represents a very unusual decision as far as Bulgarian territory is concerned. Another exceptionally rare element in the church is the appearance of a brick-made altar barrier, which ends with an arch at its northern side. It is very probable that there has been another arch, facing the apse. Till now that presents the only example of such type found in single-aisled churches from the territory of Bulgaria. This is a lot more usual for Macedonian churches.

Two layers of murals are recognized but unfortunately they are very fragmented. Only the lower

parts of the earlier murals have survived, depicting mainly Old Testament subjects. The upper layer covers the northern part of the apse as well as all that is preserved on the west wall of the church. The later murals aim at reaching the stylistic achievements of the early ones but they differ drastically in reference to the colors, modeling of the figures and the elements of the costumes.

The evidence presented gives as the opportunity to distinguish 3 constructional periods. The first can be dated to the 15th-16th centuries. There is a strong possibility that at that time the building has been covered with a cupola. During a reconstruction in the 17th century it has been removed, together with the altar barrier, and the church received a new barrel-vaulted cover. Parts of the apse have been renewed as well. This is also the moment when the second layer of murals has been painted. The third period of construction dates to the second half of 20th century, when conservation and restoration work has been performed and the church got its present-day appearance.