

= Church of St George , Kyustendil =

The Church of St George (Bulgarian : ?????? ? ?????? ?????? ? , tsarkva ? Sveti Georgi ?) is a medieval Eastern Orthodox church in the city of Kyustendil , which lies in southwestern Bulgaria and is the administrative capital of Kyustendil Province . The church is located in the Kolusha neighbourhood , which was historically separate from the city . The church was constructed in the 10th ? 11th century and its frescoes are somewhat later , as the earliest layers were painted in the 11th ? 12th century .

= = History = =

The Church of St George is dated to the late 10th or early 11th century based on its architectural appearance and mural paintings , which makes it the oldest preserved church in the city . It is located in Kyustendil 's southwestern part , in the former village of Kolusha , which in 1939 was merged into the city .

There is a theory that Bulgarian emperor Michael Shishman was buried in the Church of St George after he perished in the Battle of Velbazhd in 1330 . The battle was a Serbian victory over the Second Bulgarian Empire which paved the way for the short @-@ lived Serbian dominance over the Balkans in the mid @-@ 14th century . However , scholar Bistra Nikolova entirely dismisses this theory as an " erroneous reference in [Bulgarian history] literature " .

Despite being located outside Kyustendil at the time , up until the construction of the city 's main Bulgarian National Revival @-@ style church in 1816 , the Church of St George served as Kyustendil 's cathedral . The church suffered some severe damage during the 19th century , the time of the Ottoman rule of Bulgaria ; it was mostly destroyed , leaving only the foundations of the arches . It was reconstructed in 1878 ? 1880 , just after the establishment of the Principality of Bulgaria , with further restoration in the 2000s .

= = Architecture and decoration = =

The church follows the Byzantine cross @-@ in @-@ square design and measures 10 by 8 @.@ 70 metres (32 @.@ 8 ft x 28 @.@ 5 ft) . The dome is octagonal and features eight bays , four of which contain windows . There is no narthex and the cella appears square . A total of six pillars support the church from the inside . Two frame the entrance of the altar , while the remaining four stand below the dome . The church has three apses , all of a semicircular design . Materials used for the church 's construction were bricks and mortar , resulting in interchanging rows of red and white .

The church 's interior has preserved a number of medieval frescoes , particularly in the lower reaches of the walls and pillars . The paintings in the altar were done in the 11th ? 12th century , while the decoration of the pillars dates to the 12th century . All inscriptions that accompany the murals are in Medieval Greek . The altar features the images of four deacons bearing a censer and monstrances as well as two bishops who could possibly be identified as Basil of Caesarea and John Chrysostom . A number of saints are also depicted inside the church , including Saint Elijah , Saints Cosmas and Damian , Saint Hermolaus , Saint Pantaleon , and four unidentified female saints . There are also later works of art in the church . It boasts icons or murals by painter Ivan Dospevski from 1881 as well as works by Mihail Belstoynev .

Due to its architectural and artistic value , the Church of St George has been part of the list of Bulgaria 's monuments of cultural of national importance since 1927 . With the reorganization of the list in the 1960s , it was included on it both as an architectural and as an artistic monument , in 1968 and 1969 respectively . Together with the native house of Dimitar Peshev and the city art gallery , since 2010 it has been listed as number 26 among the 100 Tourist Sites of Bulgaria .