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THE MURALES OF THE FIRST PAINTED LAYER IN “ST. GEORGE” CHURCH IN  
SOFIA

*(Summary)*

In the church-rotunda of St. George in Sofia, which originally was a late Roman building, there are three layers of fragmentary preserved medieval mural painting. The subject of this article is the most ancient among these frescoes, consisting of a frieze of sixteen prophets located between the eight windows of the drum. Only three figures of this frieze survived. The most interesting is the upper frieze situated in the space between the drum and the summit of the dome, including fragments of eight flying angels. The painting of these figures is of remarkable quality, as one can see in the only surviving head from the frieze.

This article situates the oldest medieval layer of frescoes, mainly the angel frieze, in the iconographical and stylistic context of the middle-Byzantine monumental painting. On the bases of iconographical analogies it is proposed that in the dome an image of the half-length Pantocrator was situated. The unique character of the angel frieze can be explained by a scheme transitional from the Iconoclasm. Certain liturgical indications connect this type with a symbolic image of the Second Coming of God.

The stylistic analysis allows to date the first layer of frescoes in the church of St. George at Sofia to the first half of the 11th century.