

Lutheran and Greek-Catholic Churches Taken Over by the Orthodox in Bistrița- Năsăud County

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Abstract:

Seen as a new stage in a long history, as adaptive reuse is by no means a new practice, the present study deals with the transformation of Lutheran and Greek-Catholic churches taken over and used by the Orthodox Church from the middle of the twentieth century to the present day. I am particularly interested in how the churches were adapted to meet new needs, such as the addition of murals or iconostases where these did previously not exist.

Since many of the masonry churches that suffered such radical transformations are in Bistrița-Năsăud County, I chose to analyse the most interesting cases found here. As information on this type of adaptive reuse is scarce, with the monuments' historiography focusing mainly on their older construction phases, I visited most of the churches dealt with in this study to observe their current state on site.

The stories of those places of worship still standing which have undergone various interventions close to correct restorations, and whose takeover by the Orthodox Church meant their salvation from decay, is countered by those that were renovated in a vernacular and clumsy manner, for example, losing their high altars and organs, or suffering the addition of heavy iconostases and neo-Byzantine murals that ignored the medieval architecture of the original building. The worst cases presented here are those that have been completely abandoned after the parish raised the money needed to build a new church, and were thus left to gradually decay, their "adaptive reuse" becoming irreversible.

Keywords: *Church, Lutheran, Greek-Catholic, Orthodox, adaptive reuse, Bistrița-Năsăud County*