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Ewa Golachowska, *Conversation with God: Multilingualism among the Catholics in Belarus in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries. Sociolinguistic Study* (Translated from Polish by Benjamin Koschalka) [Sprach-und Kulturkontakte in Europas Mitte. Studien Zur Slawistik und Germanistik, Band 12] (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), 242 pp.

Jak mówić do Pana Boga? Wielojęzyczność katolików na Białorusi na przełomie XX i XXI wieku, a book written by Ewa Golachowska (Warszawa: Instytut Slawistyki PAN (SOW) & Wydawnictwo Agade Bis, 2012), was published in Poland in 2012. It is an invaluable study on the complex relationship between language, religion, and identity among the Catholics in Belarus, who have experienced a transformation of their national identity and language use throughout significant historical changes while retaining their Catholic faith. Their history has been marked by complex political developments such as the Polish rule in the interwar period, German occupation during World War II, policy of state atheism under the Soviet regime, and revival of the Belarusian language and culture since the end of the 1980s. The book under review, published by Peter Lang in Berlin, is the English translation of the Polish original.

The author, Ewa Golachowska, has been working for many years on the various issues of language use of inhabitants of the Polish–Belarusian border region from both dialectological and sociolinguistic perspectives. She has recently published several demonstrative studies based on extensive interviews, particularly focusing on language use and national identity among Belarusian Catholics, involving not only the Polish–Belarusian border region but also East Belarus. *Conversation with God* is a summary of the results of these studies.

This book consists of two parts. In the first part, which constitutes the main discussion on the issues addressed in this book, multilingualism among the Catholics in Belarus in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries is examined based on the fieldwork the author conducted in 2009–2012. This part is further divided into an introduction and three main chapters. The second part is an appendix that contains transcripts of selected interviews with various generations of informants describing the reality of the transformation of language and identity of the Catholics in Belarus.

In the introduction, the author presents the objectives of her research, along with the complicated historical and social background. Belarus is a region where religious denomination has traditionally been connected to national identity. Particularly in the Catholic communities of Belarus, where Polish has, for a long time, played a significant role in communication in people's religious life, being Catholic has been equated with having a Polish identity. With this background in mind, the author notes an interesting recent shift in the Catholic Church in Belarus, where Belarusian is gradually being used instead of Polish, and sets out the research question: How have the range and status of the functions of Polish in the Belarusian Catholic communities changed, and how have they affected the national identity of the Catholics in Belarus?

Chapter 1 reveals the complex reality of language use and national identity among the Catholics in Belarus from the Soviet era to the present day, focusing on the communicative and symbolic functions of language. Keeping in mind the actual situation of language use, the author successfully shows which linguistic varieties have played communicative roles in which spheres of the domestic and social lives of

Belarusian Catholics. It is commendable that the author has summarized, using tables, the complex reality of the differences in language use between the Catholics from noble families and those from peasant families and described how it has changed from the interwar period to today. The author has also gleaned the fact that Polish continues to have a symbolic function as a "mother tongue" in people's national identities, even though the range of communicative functions of Polish among Belarusian Catholics has become limited over time.

Chapter 2 details the linguistic varieties and how they have come to play communicative functions in various religious activities, such as catechesis, preaching, liturgy, and prayer, among Belarusian Catholics. This is in the context of the rapid increase in the symbolic importance of the Belarusian language due to Belarusianization since the 1990s. Previous studies have reported that the older generation prefers to use Polish, which traditionally considered to be highly prestigious in the religious sphere. However, the author further states that the youngest generation (children), which has already lost the opportunity to be exposed to Polish at home, increasingly uses Belarusian in religious and practical purposes and that the use of Belarusian in the religious sphere has been readily accepted by young people who began their education in the 1990s. This is an interesting perspective that highlights the latest sociolinguistic situation of the Catholics in Belarus.

In Chapter 3, the author considers, based on interviews with the younger generation of Belarusian Catholics, the complex coexistence of Polishness and Belarusianness in their national identity in the context of the political changes during the late 1980s and the early 1990s. The author reveals that the younger generation in modern Belarus is accepting that national identity is variable while maintaining their religious denomination as Catholics.

It is unfortunate that it is not clearly explained how the concept of *trasianka*, which is often used in Belarus today to refer to the vernacular of Belarusians in the countryside, is distinguished from (or related to) the concept of *plain language*, which is used in this book in the meaning of a local variant of Belarusian. Despite these shortcomings, however, the book provides a multifaceted and accurate picture of the dynamics of the changing linguistic situation in Belarus over time. The book will be beneficial to not only researchers interested in the language use and identity of Belarusian Catholics, but also many sociolinguists interested in more general linguistic issues in Belarus, such as the mutual influence and competition between Belarusian and Russian and the process of revival of the Belarusian language.

Shiori Kiyosawa