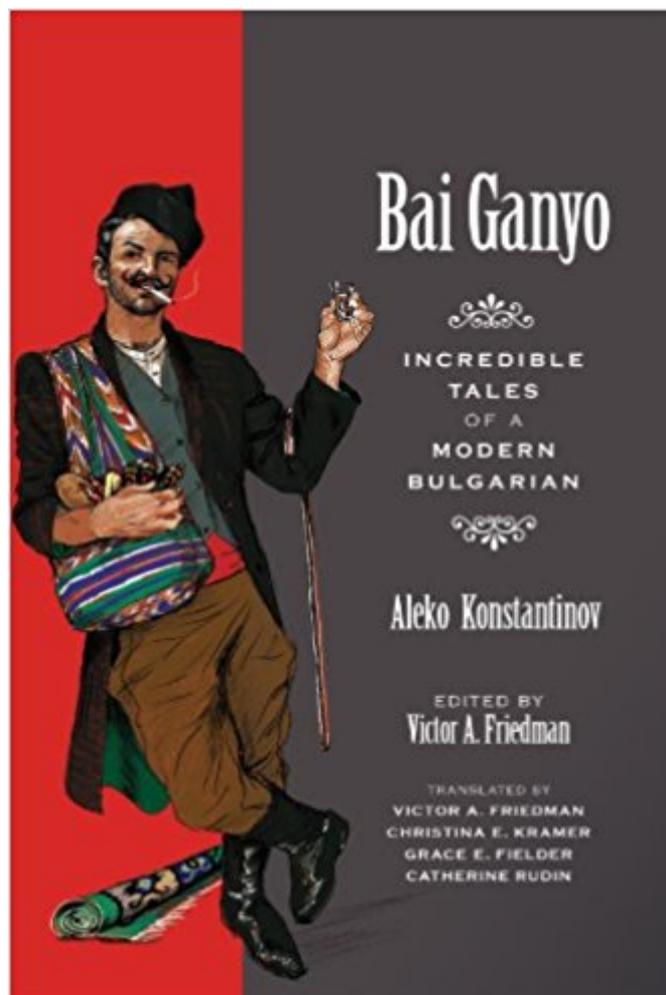


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Bai Ganyo: Incredible Tales Of A Modern Bulgarian



Synopsis

A comic classic of world literature, Aleko Konstantinov's 1895 novel *Bai Ganyo* follows the misadventures of rose-oil salesman Ganyo Balkanski (a "Bai" is a Bulgarian title of intimate respect) as he travels in Europe. Unkempt but endearing, Bai Ganyo blusters his way through refined society in Vienna, Dresden, and St. Petersburg with an eye peeled for pickpockets and a free lunch. Konstantinov's satire turns darker when Bai Ganyo returns home "bullying, bribing, and rigging elections in Bulgaria, a new country that had recently emerged piecemeal from the Ottoman Empire with the help of Czarist Russia." Bai Ganyo has been translated into most European languages, but now Victor Friedman and his fellow translators have finally brought this Balkan masterpiece to English-speaking readers, accompanied by a helpful introduction, glossary, and notes. Winner, Bulgarian Studies Association Book Prize Finalist, Foreword Magazine's Multicultural Fiction Book of the Year Winner, John D. Bell Book Prize, Bulgarian Studies Association Best Books for Special Interests, selected by the American Association for School Libraries Best Books for High Schools, selected by the American Association for School Libraries Best Books for Special Interests, selected by the Public Library Association

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Customer Reviews

Bai Ganyo is an interesting piece of literature and perhaps not my usual cup of tea although I sincerely enjoyed it very much. This is not a novel but instead a series of small vignettes, written as if they were the various stories shared by friends. Unlike the *Decameron*, there is not surrounded

structure around the series of stories to set the context; however, there is a very fine introduction to this edition that helps to set the political and historical context for this book. I highly recommend reading that introduction as that information really illuminates the stories. Konstantinov writes each vignettes as if it were the retelling by one of the men in his close circle of friends. This is one of the many things I really loved about the book. Each anecdote has a style that is slightly different and nicely underlines the premise of a group of friends exchanging tales. There is a breeziness and chattiness that provides the same feeling as the best late night discussions with friends in a cafe. This style not only drew me into each vignette but also made me feel included in that circle of close friends as they shared their stories. Each of the tale tellers-given various monikers to obscure the actual identities of the men who were the templates-was based on a real member of Konstantinov's circle. Perhaps he was able to imbue each story with their style of discourse because he knew them so very well and enjoyed such jovial story telling on a regular basis. Regardless, by the end of the of the book, I had begun to get a feel for each of these tale-tellers. Fortunately for us modern readers, this edition provides very nice footnotes that illuminate the historical counterparts to Konstantinov's tale tellers. (I admit freely that I enjoyed the footnotes as much as the stories.

Baj Ganjo, as a modern representative of capitalism in Global Village. In order to understand Aleko Konstantinov and his main hero, Baj Ganjo, You must replace this character in it's political and historical environment. Bulgaria, end of 19th and beginning of 20th century. This is already a far away history. As any Bulgarian would say. After having been during 5 centuries under Ottoman imperium, Bulgaria was "liberated" by Russians 1878. The vertebral column of humanists who organized, or rather provoked this freedom from Turkish yoke, were intellectuals with democratic and laic ideas. Bulgaria had to accept a Royalist government, with which all my ancestors agreed, being convinced that they would be able to arrange liberty and equal rights for all Bulgarians in such a society. You would see immediately parting away of ideas and practice, similar to what happened during French revolution, one century before. Liberté, Fraternité et Egalité were first ideas which moved the country, but ended in the First French Empire. About France, all further History is well known, about Napoleon, etc... Bulgaria is a small country, and even my fellow-countrymen do not know well their own history, and ignore, in fact, who Aleko Konstantinov was. They all have read this author. But, even during his living, his writings and their meaning were largely ignored by contemporaries. It is similar to what Bourvil, a French actor, would tell about his living in France. People are unable to dissociate depicted character, especially a humoristic one, from the actor or writer himself. Konstantinov would complain about people who knew his face, that they

would address him calling him Baj Ganjo.

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