

THE BULGARIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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Statement of Purpose: The Bulgarian Studies Association is a non-profit scholarly organization which promotes the study and exchange of knowledge about all aspects of Bulgaria and Bulgarians: language, literature, culture, history, politics, economics, and international relations.



LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear BSA Members,

Our second issue of 2011 of the *Bulgarian Studies Association Newsletter* has arrived! The first thing to remind you of is the upcoming deadline for submissions to the Ninth Joint Meeting of North American and Bulgarian Scholars. See page four for more details. The BSA President's letter also includes time-sensitive information related to the meeting along with the website for submitting abstracts for the conference.

Inside you will find a review by Christo Stamenov of *Bai Ganyo: Incredible Tales of a Modern Bulgarian*. In other book news, for those interested in nominating an author for the John D. Bell Memorial Book Prize, please see the details on page five. You'll also find a picture of the recipients of the 2010 BSA Book Prize on page eleven.

Please be thinking about sending articles, reviews, pictures and other interesting material to be included in the winter edition of the newsletter.

Best regards,

Blake Shedd (for Don Dyer as well)

BULGARIAN PROVERB

Гладна мечка
хоро не играе.

A hungry bear
doesn't dance.

Source: wikiquote.org

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

In the heat of the summer we are already at work gearing up for 2011-12 BSA events. Here are the highlights:

The call for papers is underway for the **Ninth Joint Meeting of North American and Bulgarian Scholars** (BSA-BAN conference), which will be held on May 30-June 2, 2012 at the University of Oregon in Eugene, OR. The abstracts deadline is ****SEPTEMBER 15****. We will not be extending the deadline beyond September 15, as we will need to have a preliminary program ready by October 1 to submit as part of our application for an external conference grant. The instructions for submission of abstracts are at <http://logos.uoregon.edu/bulgarian/papers/index.php>. The conference website contains further information on the conference, and will be updated as further information becomes available. The full conference website can be reached at <http://logos.uoregon.edu/bulgarian/home/index.php> or through a link on the BSA homepage <http://foreninger.uio.no/bsa/>.

The **BSA Annual Business Meeting** is now officially scheduled for ****3 p.m. Thursday, November 17th (Session 2)**** at the ASEEEES convention, in the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington, D.C. Please note that this is the first day of the convention. The room location will be listed in the final ASEEEES conference program. The agenda will include a progress report on the 2012 BSA-BAN conference, and will

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be posted on the BSA webpage and e-list closer to the date of the meeting. If you would like to propose an item for the agenda, please send your proposal to BSA president Cynthia Vakareliyska, at <vakarel@uoregon.edu>, before November 1, 2011.

The BSA is now accepting nominations for the 2011 John D. Bell Memorial Book Prize, for the most outstanding scholarly book within any area of Bulgarian studies published between 2009 and 2011. Books published anywhere in the world and in any language are eligible, and nominated authors do not need to be BSA members. Self-nominations are also acceptable. Details for submitting nominations are in the announcement printed in this issue of the Newsletter. The deadline for submitting nominations is ****OCTOBER 1, 2011.**** If you would like to serve on the book prize committee, please contact Don Dyer at <mldyer@olemiss.edu> and indicate in the e-mail your area(s) of expertise.

Best wishes for a happy, productive, and not interminably hot summer!

Cynthia Vakareliyska

President,

Bulgarian Studies Association

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Ninth Joint Meeting of North American and Bulgarian Scholars: May 30 - June 2, 2012

All BSA members in good standing are invited to submit individual abstracts for consideration for the Ninth Joint Meeting of North American and Bulgarian Scholars. Any individuals wishing to submit an abstract who are not BSA members may register for membership at <http://foreninger.uio.no/bsa/applicat.htm> before submitting an abstract.

The deadline for submission of paper abstracts is September 15, 2011. Papers may be in any discipline and on any topic related to Bulgaria. The abstract must not be longer than 300 words, and must not include the applicant's name or otherwise clearly identify the author. The abstract is to be submitted in PDF form, attached to a cover e-mail giving the abstract title and the applicant's full name and email address. The e-mail should be sent to the program committee at vakarel@uoregon.edu. Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of their submissions once they are received and will be informed of the decisions of their abstracts in early November.

A refereed web-published conference proceedings volume is being planned. Please see the conference website for more details: <http://logos.uoregon.edu/bulgarian/papers/index.php>.

BSA Annual Business Meeting at 2011 ASEEES Convention

The BSA's annual meeting will be held on Thursday, November 17 at 3:00 p.m. at the 2011 ASEEES Convention (Omni Shoreham Hotel, Washington, D.C.).

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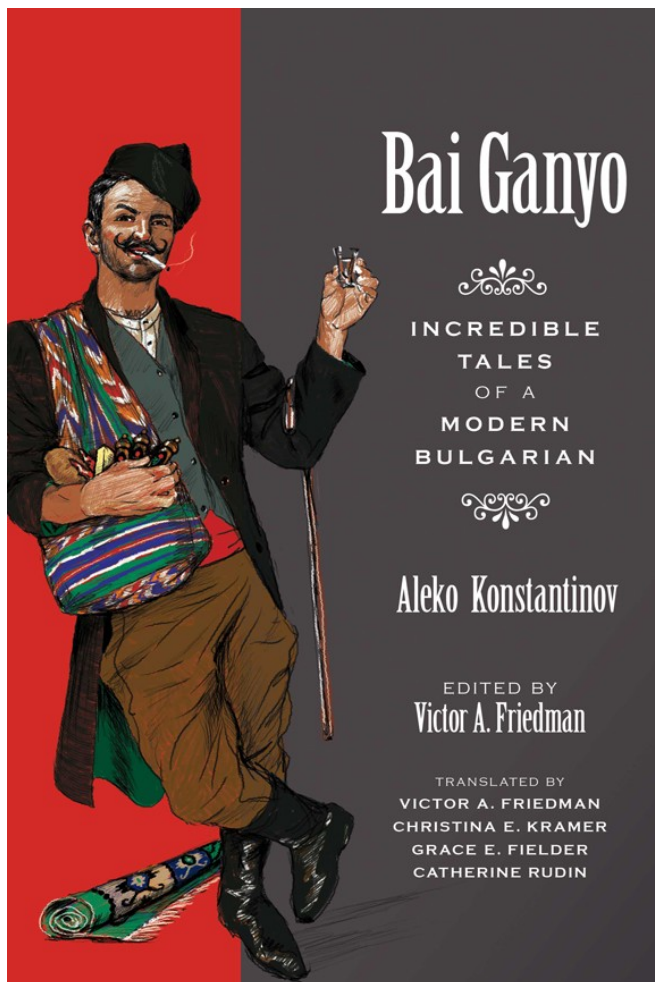
JOHN D. BELL MEMORIAL BOOK PRIZE

<<http://foreninger.uio.no/bsa/prizes.html>>

The BSA is accepting nominations at this time for the annual John D. Bell Memorial Book Prize. This non-monetary award is established for the most outstanding recent scholarly book within any area of Bulgarian studies. The author of the winning book receives a BSA award certificate, and a notification letter is sent by the BSA to the book's publisher. The award announcement is made at the BSA Annual meeting and is then posted on the BSA webpage. The BSA also sends an announcement of the winning book to the AAASS NewsNet, the AATSEEL Newsletter where appropriate, and any other relevant newsletters.

Nominations may be made for scholarly books published anywhere in the world from 2009 through 2011. Self-nominations are permitted. Books may be written in any language, and nominated authors do not need to be BSA members. Please submit nominations by e-mail to Don Dyer, Chair, Book Prize Committee, before October 1, 2011. Don will be seeking members for the Book Prize Committee who are specialists in the scholarly areas that represented by the nominations received. If you are interested in serving on the committee, please contact Don directly at <mldyer@olemiss.edu>. Nominations are open to all members of the BSA in good standing, in any country.

REVIEWS



Aleko Konstantinov, Bai Ganyo.

Incredible Tales of a Modern Bulgarian

Victor A. Friedman (ed.), Translated by Victor A. Friedman, Christina E. Kramer, Grace E. Fielder and Catherine Rudin

The University of Wisconsin Press
176 pp., ISBN: 978-0-299-23694-2

Reviewed by *Christo Stamenov*

Sofia University

Translating and editing for publication the full text of Aleko Konstantinov's comic masterpiece *Bai Ganyo* is a project which deserves special attention. Its significance lies in the first place in the importance of the original. The genre of this book is not easy to determine: S. Igov defines it as "a novel *in statu nascendi*," or an open novel, while in the Introduction to the publication under review, Victor Friedman calls it a picaresque novel. There is no doubt that this is one of the most popular works of Bulgarian literature and its eponymous character, Bai Ganyo, has achieved on a national scale what

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Don Quixote and Othello have achieved worldwide. New jokes and stories with Bai Ganyo as their protagonist keep appearing even nowadays, more than a hundred years after his first appearance on the printed page, so that we have to acknowledge that Bai Ganyo has acquired an independent life of his own and has become part of Bulgarian folklore. This character is an important instrument of self-reflection and self-evaluation for all Bulgarians. An organic and at the same time unique blending of universal human characteristics and local color, this character has provoked many discussions and arguments as to where he properly belongs and how he should be categorized. Does he epitomize national characteristics or is he a representative of a social type? Those are only two quite common but somewhat

simplistic and one-sided interpretations. No matter how such questions might be answered, Bai Ganyo offers important clues to understanding certain aspects of the way of life and mentality in the Southeast of Europe, of the *homo balcanicus*, in addition to offering insights into human nature in general. Critics and commentators have compared Konstantinov's *Bai Ganyo* with Francois Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and with A. Daudet's *Tartarin de Tarascon*, with Gogol's *Chichikov* and Hašek's *Švejk*, among others. Far from being only mildly amusing in telling us about Bai Ganyo's misadventures during his travels abroad, Konstantinov poses important questions about the relationships and the clashes between us and the other, Balkan and European, Oriental and Western, about civilizational, cultural and moral choices. It

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is not by chance that excerpts from *Bai Ganyo* are obligatory reading for students of Slavic languages and Bulgarian at many foreign universities: the texts are equally interesting culturally and linguistically. (From now on the students' efforts will be facilitated by the availability of this edition in English!). It is surprising how many of Konstantinov's keen observations are still relevant today, especially at a time of greater social changes and the dislocation of social strata.

Oddly enough, no full translation of the book into English was available until the very recent appearance of the publication under review. Only parts of *Bai Ganyo* have been published in specialized journals, notably Francis Salter's version of some of the chapters, which appeared in *Canadian Slavic Studies* during the period 1969-

1971. Thus the publication of this book fills a gap in the presentation of Bulgarian classics in English.

The translation of the book is the collective effort of four well-known North American Slavists – Victor A. Friedman, Christina E. Kramer, Grace E. Fielder and Catherine Rudin – the first of them also serving as the editor of the publication. We learn about the way they performed this task from the Preface to the book. They did not simply divide the job mechanically among the four of them but communicated regularly in order to unify their approach and solve specific difficulties and problems. In addition to this they were also able to benefit from the comments and suggestions of a number of other experts who read parts of the book or the whole of it while the work was still in progress, and this is

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also duly acknowledged in the Preface. This methodology is a guarantee of the high quality of the translation. The main challenges before the team of translators are connected with rendering the vivid colloquial style of the Bulgarian satirist and bridging the cultural gap between a contemporary English-speaking reading public and the Balkan/Bulgarian reality of a century ago. Highly qualified linguists and scholars, the translators are well-equipped and prepared to cope with this task. (An interesting spin-off from this translation project, and a proof of their varied theoretical interests, were the scholarly papers presented individually by the four translators at the 17th Balkan and South Slavic Conference in Ohio, yet another way to draw attention to Konstantinov's work.)

The translators resort to a bal-

anced combination of means to cope with the difficulties at hand, ranging from making use of English expressions functionally similar in their stylistic effect to occasionally keeping the original vocabulary connected with some of the *realia*. Sometimes this requires paratextual insertion and we do find at the end of the book a Glossary of some twenty lexical items which remain transliterated in the text. Among them we find such key concepts as *kelepir* "free lunch, unearned profit, [...]" and its synonym *kyoravo* "something for nothing," crucial for understanding Bai Ganyo's philosophy, as well as *realia* like *muskal* "... a glass phial containing ... a measure of rose oil" and *disagi* "a kind of saddlebag ...", connected with his activity as a rose-oil salesman travelling across Europe. There are also footnotes supplying relevant

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information for the “average” English-speaking reader. One or two of them unfortunately run onto the next page, which causes the inconvenience of having to turn over a new leaf.

In addition to the Preface, already briefly discussed, there is also a Note on Transliteration (which is always a problem when switching from Cyrillic to Latin) and an Introduction, all added to Konstantinov’s original text and greatly facilitating its perception by the contemporary reader. These sections are the result of a substantial editorial job, one which takes into account important editions of Konstantinov’s works in Bulgarian. The additional sections of this publication also offer some historical background, in general or connected with the first appearance of the separate stories in Bulgarian; there is also a list of the members of Konstantinov’s circle,

“Jolly Bulgaria,” and the respective nicknames under which they appear in the book; a discussion of some of the specific linguistic difficulties in the translation; and a brief account of the organization and execution of the collective translation process. Lastly, there is a list of recommended Further Reading, including relevant recent titles accessible in English.

Aleko Konstantinov, Bai Ganyo. Incredible Tales of a Modern Bulgarian is a major contribution to the presentation of Bulgarian literature to the English-speaking world at large. It is a successful attempt to make an important Balkan/Bulgarian text available in English despite the considerable difficulties which face the translator. It is also an example of fine editorial work.

Reprinted with the permission of *Balkanistica*, vol. 24 (2010), pp. 322-23.

2010 BULGARIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION BOOK PRIZE

Congratulations to Victor Friedman, Christina Kramer, Grace Fielder and Catherine Rudin, 2010 recipients of the Bulgarian Studies Association Book Prize!



Friedman and Kramer are pictured here receiving the award at the annual ASEES meeting last year.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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