

## Correspondence between Jeronim De Rada and Thimi Mitko



### Literature

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### Abstract

From the research done at the Central Archive of the State I have found about 49 letters of Thimi Mitko sent to the Arberesh writer and researcher Jeronim De Rada. Studying these letters there were brought into light some private aspects of Mitko's and Derada's lives. In addition, the correspondence reveals the relationship between the two personalities. It testifies on different phases of their lives and particularly on some thoughts about the political situation Albania was passing in 1880. We learn about the difficulties and the calvary onored figures of the Albanian letters passed to publish their works. Through this correspondence it was also learned something more for their relationship with Dora D'Istria and Dhimitër Kamarda or Abdyl Frashëri. In this scientific study it is used a research and file, analyzing, deducting and synchronizing method.

### Introduction

At the Central Archive of the State there are about 49 letters and notes sent by Thimi Mitko to Jeronim De Rada. The correspondence started in 1870 and these letters have been sent mainly from Egypt and some of them from Bucarest. In the first letters from Bucarest, in the one sent in May 13, which has not been signed by Mitko, but analyzing the calligraphy it is clear that is him, he describes to De Rada the stages of a journey from Italy to Banjaluka. In one letter of 1879, in January, Mitko admits that he has received letters and books from De Rada. He expresses his great pleasure... "I have received your precious books that you sent to me and many of them will be included in my book that is going to be published in May 2-3 My accursed illness sent me back a lot because I have been baned to write and sing". Mitko admits in this letter that he has received the book of Dora D'Istria "The Albanian race" translated by Dhimitër Kamarda. Because of the Albanian dialect of your country that has been used by Kamarda, I have difficulties in understanding it that's why I have searched and found the book in Greek or French. Mitko admits that in the book of Dora D'Istria he is interested in the part where it talks about the Albanians in exile. "All united Ottoman and Christian Albanians ask to the High Port some privileges and in particular the writing and studying of the Albanian language and let us see what we will achieve".

In 1879, exactly on July 7th, Mitko wrote to De Rada "I'm writing in Albanian (father's language) and think that we will understand better because you do not speak Greek and I don't speak Italian... . When it comes to the ABC book let us see what will the Albanians do in Costandinopoli, I'm waiting today or tomorroy letters from Abdulla Frashëri" Then the correspondence continues again by Mitko with letters written in Greek. On June 14, 1880 he writes from Cairo "Events that happened today in Albania have lightened our hearts and how it appears in Gegëri (Upper Albania) Ottomans and Christians are in very good relation, but in Toskeri (Lower Albania) our Christians (Orthodox) are not so propensed to rise up". Then he recommends to Abdyl Frashëri to accompany De Rada in Albania if he would come "By my reccomandation he will have you as a brother! But, to go to Athens the road is very dangerous because of marauders. When you come, let firstly write to Abdyl Frashëri to receive you in Preveza. I think that it is still early for this job, - writes Mitko having into account the request and desire expressed by De Rada to visit Albania. "I much appreciate you for your noble heart toward our country". Then Mitko makes known to De Rada that in Rumania there are "many Albanians rich and powerful, but without love for their homeland and I will wake them up from this malefic sleep and give love, but I have not done much in this regard".

On May 17th, 1880 Mitko asks De Rada the names of the most appreciated Arbëresh scholars in Italy to write for them a poetry (bejte). I would like to write a poetry in Albanian on the Arbëresh from mother Albania and I kindly ask you to sent me a cathalog with the names and surnames of the most wellknown Albanian families wherever they are in Italy and Sicily. Write me who is a writer (author), who is a fighter, who is a polititian and their instruction and all what it serves to write poetry. He makes him know that Abdyl Frashëri received with “joy and gladness” the letter from De Rada, but he asks him to write in French because Abdyl Frashëri does not speak Italian. They talk about the mistake made by Europe in giving Janina to Greece. “Albania will not let peacefully Janina. And here it is written in Italian “Tutto dipende da questo)”. Mitko thanks for the cathalog of the most wellknown Albanian men in Italy and makes him know that the poetry “Bleta Shqiptare”-“Albanian bee” will soon be ready. He promises that three of four songs from the Rapsodies “Skenderbeu i Pafan” will be included in the Bee poetry. But, he also asks explanation on some words that he couldn't understand.

By means of a letter written in Greek from Cairo, on Saint Mëhill or third autumn 1880, Mitko writes,- I received the letter of “The Italian-Albanians, alla Nazione Albanese Italia 1880 and I was deeply touched. Cairo, Autumn 20, 1880, a letter almost uncoded because the calligrafy is almost cancelled . He asks again explanations for some words that he couldn't understand in the books of De Rada because he writes “We do not have them in our country”.

Additionally, he proposes to create a committee or a school in our language for the good of our country. Hasan Pasha (a name encountered also in the precedent letters of Mitko) is a rich man and he is eager to contribute for Albania. We notice that many letters are written in foreign languages and not in Albanian. In the State Archive, file 54/6 no. 204, there is a letter written in Greek.

Alexandria, June 17, 1881 - my brother, I am poisoned for the misfortune occurred to our Albania. Even Gegëria (upper Albania) was not able to gather entirely in the war. Toskëria, even though my heart wants, they didn't move at all. And Christians have also fear by the government, which is even worst than the Turks. In Korca, in my village, in 1879 Turks burned out the Christian's market, because they were frightened to join the Albanian legacy (Lega Albanese). With great pain I inform you brother that Albania is not united. All are enemies of the Government and against it, but they are not united with each other. It is needed a head to unite them.... patience until that day! Your idea to build an Albanian printing house in Italy, writes Mitko to De Rada will be a great and beautiful job and it will serve to our country (per la nostra patria). The same idea I have had since a lot of time, writes Mitko, but I didn't succeeded because Albanians here are many, but they are as foreigners. That's why “my Bee I didn't have” any help here, even in Romania where I was for this reason. When it comes to the letters (lettere) of our language, those of Sami Frashëri probably are good for the moment and then we will see in the course. As the illuminant Dora D'Istria had written in La Nazione Albanese the light to illuminate Albania should start from Italy.

Letter no. 208, 1882 in Greek. No. 210 Bennisueff June 23, 1882, the same with the one in the Greek language. It would be a very good job to open the printing house and to come out a journal on our language, but it should be with the letters of Sami, maybe it's not possible. But it should also be in French or Italian... not only in Albanian. In this way, it's better understood. The Greeks are worse enemies than the Turks and try with all their energies against us, Albanians in order not to write in our language. I'm really glad that the four schools are opened in Gegëri (upper part of Albania) and our God helps poor Albania!

On 23rd January 1884, Bennisueff talks about his son's death and condoles with him. At the same time, he gives him the notice that many subscribers have not received their journal. On 8th June 1884 he talks more about the payments he's done for some books and newspapers he has sent to De Rada. Bennisueff, 28th June, 1884 – I happily received your letter because you gave me good news for our journal Fjamuri and God be with it! As it writes that Albania is divided into four parts – Gegëri, Toskëri, Arbëri and Çamëri, Mitko informs that the biggest city of Gegëri is Shkodra, that of Toskëri is Berat, that of Arbëri is Vëljeva and that of Çamëri is Delvina.

Bennisueff, 26th July 1884, Mitko informs that he has received De Rada's letter and the 8-th edition of Fjamuri i Arbërit and he liked them very much. From Bennisueff, Mitko writes that he is dissatisfied concerning the Albanians who don't pay for the journal Fjamuri i Arbërit but justify themselves by saying that they don't know your language. Mitko asks De Rada to send an ordinance for three names Anastas Economo, Harito Ciacco and Caralampo Vita who, says Mitko, don't want to pay. No 224 talks again for payments that Albanians don't do because of the bad economic conditions, but also states Mitko because they pretend they don't understand your dialect. How it pains my heart for Fjamur and our language? Sir, you can consider me a real brother, - writes Mitko. On 31-st Decamber 1884 Mitko writes and informs De Rada that his patriots and co-patriots are not interested in paying in order to buy the journal – “finally they say they don't want to pay and he asks De Rada to not send anymore journals because they don't want it.” It pains my heart but I don't know what to do my brother, - says Mitko. No. 224, 22-nd March 1885 Bennisueff. He informs him that an Albanian person called Jusuf bej Ali publishes the journal of Sofia and he writes quite well about Albania. No. 226, 29 March 1885 he talks about the Committee of Kërkira. He says that they have gathered some Albanians that are killers, unemployed and poor people who want to divide Albanians in Ottomen and Christians, Ghegs and Tosks. Again they're writing from Korça that they haven't received the journal Fjamuri. Mitko asks De Rada if it's possible to send him some journals with the help of the Italian Consul in Thesaloniki and Manastir. Letter no. 228. Even on the 12th of winter 1885 he informs him about the help in money and again he writes that the Albanians of Egypt don't want to pay for Fjamuri because they don't understand it. My despair has to do with the fact that I want to keep well and safe the journal Fjamuri, this honours us in Europe, but I believe that after the restoration of Silogy of Bucarest, even Fjamuri will receive some help. No. 233, March 1886 – Mohammedans of Albania are better, patriots. I like the politics of Fjamuri. He congratulates him about the idea of sending the son in Albania and advices him about where to stay and who to be accompanied with. He should take with him Muslim guides as there are many robbers that strip and kill you. No. 235, 14th March, 1886 Mitko makes a request to De Rada to make it possible for him to receive the Italian passport as he is enrolled as an Albanian emigrant in Itali since 1857. He asks a favour to De Rada to be enrolled in his village since 12 or 15 years ago otherwise he has to wait other 10 years to receive the Italian passport. You should write my name Eutimio Costantino Mitko, 10-12 years before 1886. I am a Christian of the Greece church. If it is possible please, give me a quick reply and I'll be very grateful to you – Mitko writes these words in Italian. I desire to come to Sicily and Calabry later on, but for now that's impossible. If I would live some other years, I'll come. I'm 66 years old. My wife has died, after that even my two daughters. Now I've got a married daughter and two sons, Kosta who is 24 years old and Mitri 22 years old. I'm afraid that they will be recruited by Italy after being an Italian citizen. Up to now Egypt hasn't got any brave man. No. 236, 31 St. Andrew 1886, Bennisueff – He sends good news about the Albanian language. The High Port has ordered that in the schools of Albania should be spoken and learned the Albanian and Turkish language and not the Greek one. The Greek Church in Costantinopoli is trying to obstruct this order but there is Abdyl Bej Frashëri who is helping in the implementation of it. There are other smart Albanians and it seems to me that with God's help our efforts are rewarded and a good day has arrived for the Albanian language.

After being in Aleksandri and Cajro, Mitko believes that soon the Albanians who live there will create an association for the Albanian language. I hope it will become better even here – Mitko writes to De Rada. 1-st of March 1887 Bennisueff, Mitko writes - It seems to me that in Bucarest they love their language heartedly, but they can't understand it. Whereas in Manastir Geras D. Qiriazzi says that he desires Fjamuri but they don't receive it. It seems that Turkey prohibits it.

24-th February 1886. I'm writing to those in Bucarest if they would like to take 100 copies of Fjamuri where Mitko asks De Rada to add 4 copies written in their alphabet as he writes. Let us see what they would answer. In Bucarest they don't have and can't help in printing it, but they are good-hearted people. Vreto doesn't seem to be able concerning our language but Sinologu like it. Meanwhile Mitko talks to him about the alphabet compiled by De Rada. But even the alphabet of Your Sir seems to be hard, difficult. That of Dorsa sounds better.

15 March 1887, Bennisueff, I have read the syllabus of your school in St. Adriano and I see that the Greek ritual pays less and the Latin ritual more. And there is no Albanian language taught. Why not? - asks Mitko. In the meantime we think that between them there was a correspondence to send Albanian guys in St Adriano College. There are 2-3 Albanian guys that wanted to come, but they are 16 and 14 years old. You have written to me that the guys should not be over 12 years old. These guys wanted to learn the Albanian language. Please, reply to me as soon as possible! It would be very good if this way can be opened for our guys from Albania. After only three days Mitko writes again to De Rada on 1 march 1887. Give me an answer for the three Albanian guys. One of them speaks French and Greek. But, they wanted to learn Albanian in order to be teachers for Albania.

15 July 1887, he makes him known that the last publications of "Fjamuri" could not reach Korça because the Government banded it. But, Albanians want their own alphabet. I told and wrote to them to wait because it is still early – says Mitko. When it comes to the Grammar of your son De Rada, send me two coppies in Korçë. Probably they will serve to teacher Pandeli Sotiri to take it as an example.

On 16 April 1888 from Bennisueff he makes known that Albanians of Egypt are not scholars and that the journal Fjamuri i Arbërit has never arrived in Korça, Manastir and Costandinopoli. Mitko hopes that only in Italy it is possible to create a society, committee which task should be the Albanian language and its prosperity. You have scholars and for this I also informed Mr. Schiro in Piana dei Greci . Talking about the help asked by him to send the three guys in Italy, Mitko admitts that "exept him and Mr. Kamarde there are no other friends in Italy" My guys will found in you a second father writes Mitko to De Rada in this letter without a date.

25 March 1889, he writes to De Rada on the fact that Italy opened colleges with meals. It will also be very good to open colleges like those in Korça and Berat because they are in the middle of Albania. His lordship probably could pass this idea to Mr. Buseli. In Korça the Albanian school is going well, but the Greek language is an obstacle. That's why I recommend an Italian college would give us force to spread our language strongly and quickly. In this letter he makes him known that since 4-5 months Zef Skiroi has not written. What has happend to this good man-asks Mitko to De Rada . 15 February 1889. From Korça I have been informed that two Italian colleges were opened, one in Janina and the other in Prevesa. But, they didn't say that our language is taught there-writes Mitko. He informs De Rada that Mr. Crispi has opened two schools in the Albanian language, one in Korça and one in Berat, where Muslims and Christians can learn without distinctions – in this way we will heal both the Albanian language and nationality, writes Mitko. If this likes to his lordship, write to Mr.Crispi. That lordship loves so much Albania.

At the end of the letter Mitko writes a small note: Korça's school is going well . 29 May 1888 from Bennisueff he writes "I'm deeply touched for the valued journal "Fjamur". But what can I do, poor me, when all Albanians here are ignorant and ununderstandable concerning the needs and the goodness of our language. In addition they are under Greek influence". That is the reason why Mitko thinks that among the Albanians of Italy there will be some good and wise man "with mind and heart" that will feel useful to create a society for our language and homeland there far away from the events of our enemies.

In the same letter Mitko informs that Gustav Majer has done a grammar, with three fairytails and some of them in Albanian. He speaks for your lordship and for me too,- writes to Mitko. He informs him that the typography in Bucarest is working well and that in Albania there are now 9 schools in total with "Ottoman and Christian guys and they are doing very well". It will be good to spread out everywhere the Albanian alphabet once it has been distributed in all schools. All Albanians have to be put in a system. On 27 Autumn 1888 from Bennisueff Mitko informs De Rada that schools in Korça are going well both for Christians and Muslims, too. "His Lordship you should better do once again the ABC book because there it is the richness of our language " Again Mitko repeats the fact that Albania has many enemies, but the greater ones are Greeks. Greek diaries write very badly on Albania, when it comes to our language. That now they want to pray in Albanian. Soon it will be opened a new window in Albanian in Costandinopoli. And at the end of this letter, Mitko speaks shortly for the alphabet of Sami Frashëri. "When it comes to the alphabet of Sami even there are some mistakes, we cannot speak for the moment. Let it firstly spread out and then it will be adjusted" In one letter where there are written names and payments done in 1887.

On the correspondence between Mitko and De Rada there are data also in the correspondence of Princess Dora D'Istria: Mr. Mitko himself seems to be not so happy concerning the accuracy of some passages of his translation - Albanian nationality. That's why he asked me the text in French before he continues. He would have been very happy if he had the version of Mr. Artom. I'm convinced that if you kindly show the mistakes of the first part, he will be keen to take into account your remarks – writes to De Rada Princess Dora D'Istria (17 January 1879) – putting a letter of corrigenda at the end of its translation. But, some months later, in April of the same year, Dora D'Istria writes to De Rada informing him that she is sorry about the difficulties encountered in the correspondence between him and Mitko "on which you informed me". I don't believe - says Dora D'Istria that the Silogy that Mitko is willing to found, will have the importance of a national congress. In the meantime the Princess asks De Rada to send to Mitko, if this is possible, the corrigenda that he sent to her. I didn't send it because it is not clearly spoken about him- informs Elena Gjika admitting that she has preferred to take them herself temporarily.

It continues for some other months June, July, August where in almost all letters that Princess D'Istria sent to De Rada she also speaks for Thimi Mitko giving news on him. Once she sent a letter to Mitko without writting to De Rada. In another letter she admits that she feels luckier than De Rada about the information she had on Mitko's state of health that was improving. I think that Mitko will find difficulties to change his "Bleta" in a temporary summary. Mr. Mitko has written to me that he received the Albanian grammar sent by me and that he wants to thank you. He is very grateful for everything you are doing for his "Bleta". There are no doubts that your suggestion to transform Mitko's Bleta in a temporary summary is really a valuable thing. But, it could be that the difficult circumstances to found a Silogy (Albanian-Egyptian) can be an obstacle for the transformation of Bleta (27 August 1879). It is probable that De Rada couldn't communicate with Thimi Mitko because Dora D'Istria says to him that in November 1879 through Dhimiter Kamarda she has been informed that Mitko has departed in a long journey toward Bucarest even though his health status was really bad, because he has problems with his eyes. Probably he is so sick that for him it is impossible to write to you.

## Conclusions

As it is reflected by the correspondence, the two personalities have exchanged thoughts for a long period with each-other. In general their thematic has been focused on the talks and comments on the literature and language activity of De Rada and Mitko. It is impressive what Mitko expresses continually in relation to his co-nationals in Alexandry. More then once Mitko expresses regret because his co-nationals are cold and not collaborative in relation to the Albanian language issues. He complains that they do not pay money for the journal Fjamuri i Arbërit or they do not contribute for the various issues of patriotism. One other point of interest is the fact that in some letters Mitko writes to De Rada in Greek and not in Albanian. Often, some words are put in brackets in order to be explained in Italian, Greek or French language.

