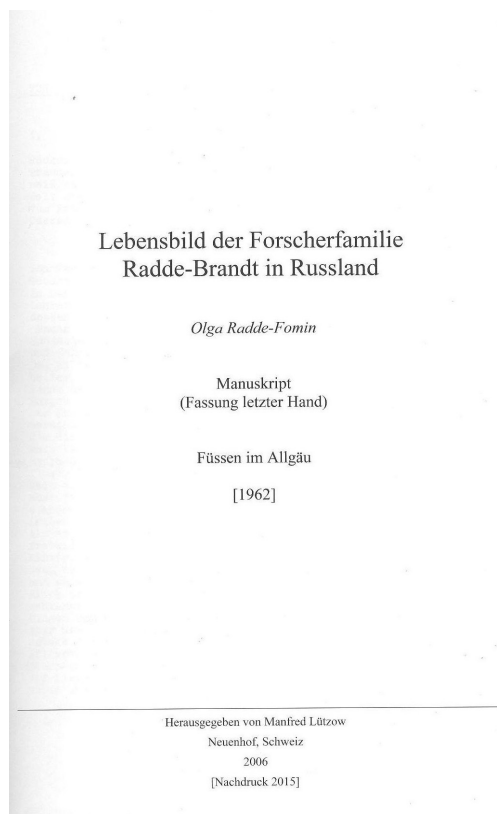


## A VALUABLE MANUSCRIPT OF OLGA G. RADDE-FOMINA



Restoration of true pages of real life and work of the scientists who left a bright trace in our science and culture is of a great importance for the history of science. Epistolary literature and memoirs of those who worked side by side with outstanding personalities may provide the most interesting and important information. One of the documents, containing a lot of interesting and new data on the history of science in Russia, Georgia and Ukraine, is a manuscript «Life of Radde-Brandt family naturalists in Russia», written by the Ukrainian botanist Olga G. Radde-Fomina (in Germany known as O. Radde-Fomin) about her family.

The way this manuscript got back to Ukraine was quite a story. Exploring the role of the unjustly neglected and sometimes even consciously concealed personalities in Ukrainian botany, I was interested in any information about a botanist Olga Radde-Fomina (1876–1963).

Her life and career, as well as her scientific heritage, is hardly known to the today's botanical public and science historians.

It was impossible to reproduce a complete portrait of this scientist and to evaluate the significance of her research based on the existing fragmented biographical data available in our country which I was able to gather. Continuing the search, I stumbled upon the official website of the school named after Gustav Radde in the village called Radde in Russia. From this website I learned that the unique materials on the history of the village for more than 150 years period are stored in the school museum, in particular, the materials about the school's founder, an outstanding German-born Russian scientist Gustav Radde and his family. Many heirlooms of the Radde family (photos of Mr. Radde, his wife, portraits, personal belongings of the scientist, etc.) are among the exhibits presented in the museum. I was particularly interested in the information about the manuscript written by the daughter of the scientist. However, any information about this manuscript and biography of Olga Radde-Fomina was out of reach here, since all my letters, unfortunately, remained unanswered by the Director of the school...

Continuing the search, I came across an article of the art critic Walter Nestmeier «Zum 150 Geburtstag des Kunstmalers Oskar Freiwirth-Lützw» devoted to the famous German artist Oskar Freiwirth-Lützw. He was married to Mary Radde, the elder sister of O. Radde-Fomina. From this publication I learned the date of death of Mrs. O. Radde-Fomina and the place of her burial. It was the beginning of my targeted search.

I wrote a letter to Walter Nestmeier, who immediately replied and kindly sent me more information about this Ukrainian researcher. It was especially touching that Mr. W. Nestmeier took the initiative and made a request to the Culture Department of Füssen Mayor's office (Germany). Thus he helped me to get in touch with Dr. Manfred Lützw, a grandnephew of Olga Radde-Fomina. He keeps a large family archive of Brandt – Radde – Freiwirth-Lützw – Lützw family. By the way, Dr. Manfred Lützw is also a biologist. Soon after our correspondence began, on 12 October 2015, I received a valuable gift – a copy of the Olga Radde-Fomina manuscript. Subsequently, Manfred Lützw posted other manuscripts of the researcher and her

husband, Alexander Fomin, their autobiographies and photos.

The manuscript of Olga Radde-Fomina is entitled «Lebensbild der Forscherfamilie Radde-Brandt un Russland» (635 typewritten pages). This manuscript text is a combination of scientific and artistic style; it contains both presentations and poetic descriptions of historical events, facts and persons associated with the Radde-Brandt family.

As Olga Radde-Fomina recalled in her autobiography, she decided to write a considerable work on her family history already in Kyiv. However, she was able to be absorbed in this work only after moving to Germany in 1945.

Olga Radde-Fomina meticulously wrote down everything she remembered. The manuscript was completed in 1962. Unfortunately, at that time none of publishing houses in Germany was ready to print out this work.

Without any doubt, this manuscript is a valuable historical, scientific and cultural resource presenting the live history of several generations of the Radde-Brandt family, whose representatives have played a significant role in scientific and cultural life of the country.

The basis of the manuscript is the life and work description of two naturalists. Gustav Radde (1831–1903), the father of Olga Radde-Fomina, was a traveler, naturalist and ethnographer; he established the Natural Museum in Tiflis, being a Corresponding Member of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences. Johann von Brandt (1802–1879), Olga Radde-Fomina's grandfather, was a paleozoologist and zoogeographer, Academician of the St. Petersburg Academy of Sciences and Director of the St. Petersburg Museum. They both, as well as their descendants, served the glory of Russia, Georgia and Ukraine through their devoted and selfless lives and works.

Family memories are interspersed with descriptions of various historical events. Historical personalities, state and public figures are mentioned in the manuscript, being a part of the acquaintance circle or close family friends. Many ordinary people who contacted family members, participated in various family events and contributed in different way to implementation of the ideas, research, etc. are also mentioned. Some scientific

ideas of Gustav Radde, e.g. on origin and development of Caucasian flora, its relations and so on are also described.

There are supplements placed at the end of this work; among them the memories of Olga Radde-Fomina about her husband which are especially valuable for Ukrainian botanists. Academician of the All-Ukrainian SSR Academy of Sciences, Alexander Fomin was the Director of the Botanical Garden of St. Vladimir University in Kyiv. Subsequently, he became a founder of the Botanical Cabinet and Herbarium of the All-Ukrainian Academy of Sciences and the first Director of the Institute of Botany of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR (at present the M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine). Their acquaintance, marriage, and scientific work in Kyiv, those hard years of the World War I and the Civil War, their work in the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, as well as the last moments of their married life together are described in a very moving way. Supplements also include information about Olga Radde-Fomina's organizational activities in the Regional Institute of Agricultural Botany during the Nazi occupation of Kyiv, and the years of emigration...

It makes no sense to repeat the contents of the manuscript. It must be conveyed to a wide range of readers interested in history. It is necessary to read it, analyze, interpret... I hope to find interested persons who will translate it professionally and a publishing house to accept it for publication. It will make various historical data publicly available and will give an opportunity for all those interested in science history to get familiar with many historical events in botanical science, as well as with scientific contribution of the taxonomist, florist and science historian Olga Radde-Fomina.

After my work with the manuscript is finished, I will deposit it in the scientific library of the M.G. Kholodny Institute of Botany, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Finally, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. *Manfred Lützow* (Neuenhof, Switzerland) for kindly sending manuscripts and photos, and to Mr. *Walter Nestmeier* (Füssen, Germany) for his help and information provided during the search.

M.V. SHEVERA