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**Nicholas Poppe**

**REMINISCENCES**

Edited  
by  
**Henry G. Schwarz**

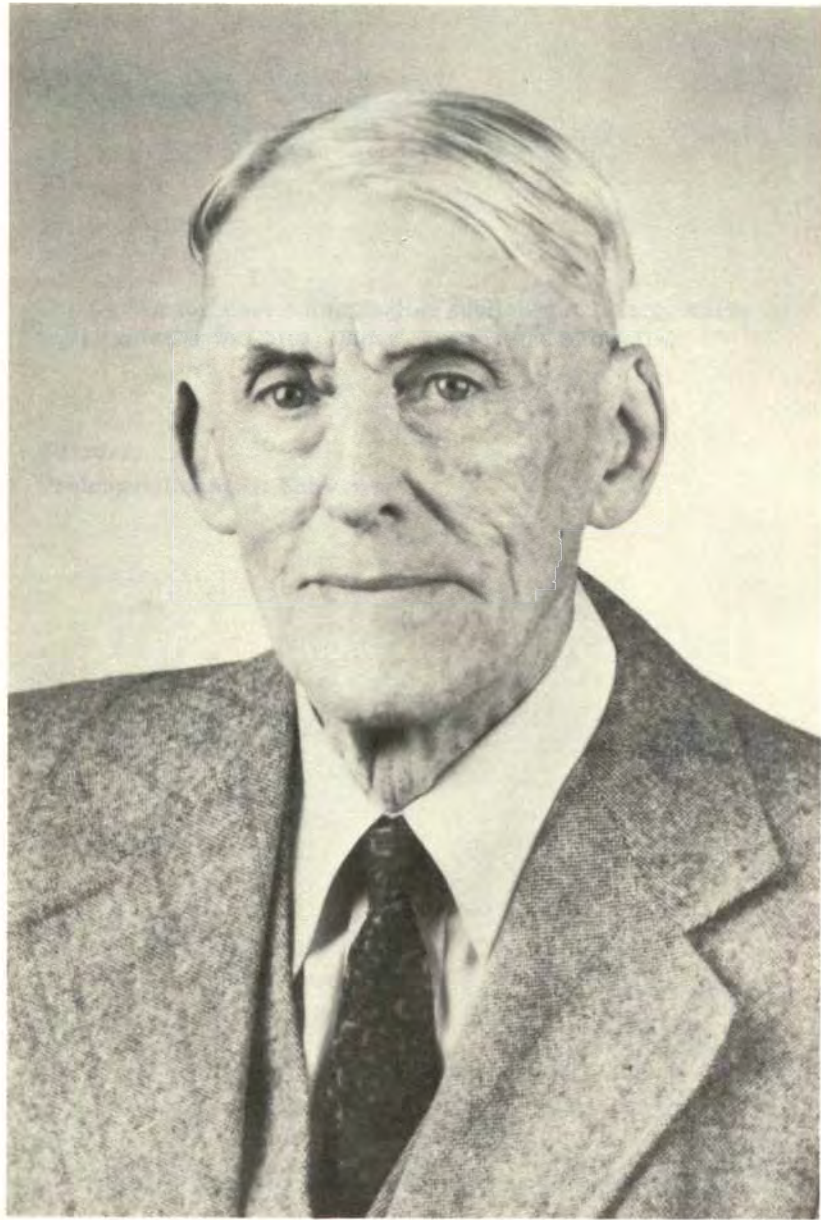
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*Editor:*

Professor Henry G. Schwarz



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Western Washington

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In Memory of  
Nataliya and Edith,  
my faithful companions and helpers

# Acknowledgments

The photograph of Gordon Hall in Tientsin has been reproduced, with the courteous permission of the Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, from the book *The Siege in Peking* (New York and Chicago, 1900) by W. A. P. Martin. The photographs of Koenig and the Alexander Koenig Museum have been obtained, through the courtesy of Professor Dr. Martin Eisentraut, Director of the Alexander Koenig Museum in Bonn, now retired, from his book *Alexander Koenig und sein Werk, Biographie eines Bonner Ehrenbürgers* (Bonn, 1973). The nine lines from Alexander Pushkin's "Ruslan and Lyudmila" in Walter Arndt's translation have been taken, with the courteous permission of the Ardis Publishing House in Ann Arbor from Alexander Pushkin, *Ruslan and Ludmila* (1974). I express here my gratitude to the two publishing houses and to Professor Dr. Martin Eisentraut.

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Johann Georg Koenig and his wife, Elisabeth, née Weber, from Julia Koenig, *Johann Georg Koenig und sein Haus, Dem Demütigen gibt Gott Gnade, 1785-1885* (St. Petersburg (1885));

Ferdinand Morawitz, from the necrology by Andrei Semenov, "Ferdinand Ferdinandovich Moravits † 5 dekabrya 1896," *Trudy Russkago Entomologicheskago Obshchestva v St.-Peterburge* 31 (1898), i-x;



Oskar Fredrik Hultman, from Hugo Pipping, "Oskar Fredrik Hultman, Minnestal vid Finska Vetenskaps-Societetens sammantrade den 14 April 1930," *Societas Scientiarum Fennica, Årsbok-Vuosikirja VIII B*, no. 6 (Helsingfors, 1930), 1-17;

Professor Shternberg, from N. I. Gagen-Torn, *Lev Yakovlevich Shternberg* (Moscow, 1975).

The remaining photographs are reproductions of photographs in the Poppe family album, snapshots made by me and photographs in my possession.

# Preface

The idea of writing this brief life story has not come from me. I have never thought to write one, not because I am, in principle, opposed to the idea but simply because it has never occurred to me. I should add that I never thought that such a story might be of any interest to others, not to mention that I am not so ambitious as to yearn for fame. I have done only what I wanted to accomplish in order to satisfy my own curiosity. Besides, in order to write a complete autobiography, one must have ample materials, such as notes and diaries. I had kept a diary before the revolution of 1917 but not after it, although the period following the revolution was in many respects the most interesting one. Diaries became very dangerous after the October revolution, as the Soviet secret police, when raiding people's homes, was especially eager to confiscate diaries. Information in diaries, such as the names and addresses of various persons, could have dire, sometimes fatal, consequences for a diary's author and for the persons mentioned in it. Later, when I lived in war-time Germany, I did not keep a diary because living conditions were so harsh that keeping a diary would have been the last thing on one's mind. Besides, I had already forgotten long before then that there is such a thing as a diary.

The idea of writing down my reminiscences has come from my friends in the United States, Europe and Japan. Listening to some episodes of my life, such as my travels in Siberia and Mongolia and my activities in the Soviet Union and war-time Germany, they

urged me to write everything down so that it could be read by people. I agree that this is a good idea, especially in view of the fact that I have met many interesting people and witnessed events not experienced by people outside places where these events took place. I am aware of the fact that I know some details of generally known events which are unknown to most persons and which are not found in the literature.

I finally agreed to record my reminiscences about people and events I witnessed or learned about from reliable sources. Of course, I had to inform the readers in brief about myself and my family. I have omitted details concerning life in our family, my everyday routine activities, birthday celebrations, and vacations. I have confined myself to the most essential. The result is a rather thin book, quite different from the multi-volume biographies of great celebrities in whose company I certainly do not belong.

The reader should be told in advance that this book contains only what I have personally experienced, along with some commonly known facts which form the background. One should not expect to find here detailed descriptions of events such as the October revolution or the civil war in Russia, nor should one expect to find analyses of such events.

My main source is my memory which is, on the whole, quite good. Information about my ancestors has been obtained from several publications cited in Chapter 1, and dates of births and deaths of some scholars were obtained from their obituaries or articles in encyclopedias.

Some events mentioned in this book took place long ago, like the October revolution, the civil war in Russia, and Stalin's era with all its atrocities and violations of fundamental human rights. Times have changed, and many aspects of life in the Soviet Union today are different from those of long ago. However, I do not speak about the Soviet Union of today but of the time when I lived in that country. If I skipped the purges and deportations, I would paint an utterly false picture of that country. Thousands of persons who witnessed the events of Stalin's era would rightfully criticize my reminiscences as biased.

I have put together all the necessary facts, either by recording on tape or in writing, in the form of a rough continuous text, with numerous handwritten additions. I take pleasure in expressing my heartfelt thanks to my friend, Professor Henry G. Schwarz, of Western Washington University, for not only editing the manuscript of this book but for practically rewriting the entire original text. Professor Schwarz is also the one who most urgently insisted that my reminiscences be put down in writing and eventually published.

The text contains numerous Russian personal and place names. They are rendered in a simplified English transcription. The following symbols should be pronounced as indicated:

- A, a are English a as in father
- E, e are ye as in English yet
- È, è are English e as in ebb and bed
- I, i are English i as in in and pin, and after a vowel like English i as in oil, or y as in May
- ii is a diphthong approaching the English ee in seem
- Kh, kh are Gaelic ch as in loch
- Y, y before a vowel are English y as in yard and yolk and after a consonant like English i as in winter
- Zh, zh are English s in pleasure.

Nicholas Poppe

# Contents

|   |      |
|---|------|
| Acknowledgments . . . . .   | v    |
| Preface . . . . .   | vii  |
| Illustrations . . . . .   | xiii |
| 1. Childhood and Youth . . . . .  | 1    |
| 2. My University Years . . . . .  | 33   |
| 3. The Period of War Communism and the<br>New Economic Policy . . . . . | 55   |
| 4. Research Among the Mongols . . . . .                                 | 85   |
| 5. The Purge of the Academy of Sciences . . . . .                       | 109  |
| 6. Life in the Thirties . . . . .                                       | 123  |
| 7. War Comes to Russia . . . . .  | 153  |
| 8. On the German Side . . . . .   | 163  |
| 9. In Post-War Germany . . . . .  | 185  |
| 10. A New Life in America . . . . .                                     | 199  |
| 11. My Publications . . . . .   | 261  |
| 12. Conclusion . . . . .  | 281  |
| Notes . . . . .   | 295  |
| Person Index . . . . .  | 313  |

# Illustrations

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Nicholas Poppe   | frontispiece |
| 1. Elisabeth Poppe, née Morawitz                                   | 2            |
| 2. Ferdinand Karl Joseph Morawitz                                  | 2            |
| 3. Johann Georg Koenig   | 4            |
| 4. Gertrud Elisabeth Koenig, née Weber                             | 4            |
| 5. Oskar Fredrik Hultman   | 5            |
| 6. Alexander Koenig  | 5            |
| 7. The Koenig Museum in Bonn                                       | 7            |
| 8. Gordon Hall in Tientsin   | 7            |
| 9. The Author at the Age of Four                                   | 9            |
| 10. Lake Simpele   | 22           |
| 11. The Villa in Parikkala   | 22           |
| 12. Petrograd University   | 34           |
| 13. Sergei Fedorovich Ol'denburg                                   | 52           |
| 14. Lev Yakovlevich Shternberg                                     | 66           |
| 15. The Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union                    | 111          |
| 16. The Meeting Hall of the Academy of Sciences                    | 111          |
| 17. The Author and his Family at Anapa in 1937                     | 133          |
| 18. The Author's Academy Pass                                      | 143          |
| 19. Shichirō Murayama  | 180          |
| 20. The Manor in Böckel  | 187          |
| 21. Gustav John Ramstedt   | 212          |
| 22. Ramstedt's Last Letter to the Author                           | 209-213      |
| 23. Letter from the Archives of the Federal<br>Republic of Germany | 217          |
| 24. The Author and the Dilowa Khutuktu                             | 234          |
| 25. Edith Poppe, née Ziegler                                       | 246          |
| 26. Nicholas and Edith Poppe                                       | 246          |
| 27. The Author's Military Card                                     | 283          |