

1904 Report of the Caucasus Kustar' Committee

...

[1]

The publication of popular technical manuals on all of the various domestic industries, as well as books of more general content, especially on economics, which would promote the dissemination among the populace of correct attitudes toward this form of labor and its various applications, is in all respects to be desired. The task of creating such manuals is not a simple one, since they must combine a wide range of features, chief among them well-chosen primary materials, clarity and simplicity of exposition. It seems nevertheless that the time has come to embark on the implementation of this project. To accomplish this it would be appropriate to conduct a contest with large monetary prizes to go to the authors of the best manuals, which would make participation in this endeavor attractive to the best talent that our technical and scholarly world has to offer. Given the [2] undeniable need for such books, resources should not be spared for their publication.

By way of concluding our overview of the decade-long efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property to promote development in the domestic industries, we must note that it was necessary to focus this activity, owing to a lacking of funds, primarily in the zemstvo guberniyas; only rarely was the above-mentioned agency able to offer financial or technical assistance to handicraftsmen outside of this region.

Recently, however, the Ministry of Agriculture had no choice but to give particular attention to the unique and urgent needs of the domestic industries in the Caucasus.

This region has long been renowned for its domestic industries, which are highly developed owing both to the natural riches of the region and to lifestyle and economic conditions of the local population. Even today, the Caucasus' abundance of all types of minerals and metals, the lush vegetation and variety of woody trees, the animal husbandry and silk-worm industry provide abundant materials for the production of all manner of wares, along with the near-total lack of transportation routes, the limited number of factories and mills, the relatively harsh and lengthy winters in the mountainous parts of the region, all of which leave the local inhabitants a great deal of time free from their work in the fields, and, finally, the particular [3] lifestyle of a significant portion of the Muslim population which inhibits the extensive use of the peasant family work force in agriculture—all these favor the expansion and development in this region of every kind of domestic manufacturing, some varieties of which are famous the world over.

There are today in the Caucasus over forty distinct domestic industries, whose economic importance in the lives of the local population, incidentally, varies considerably. Some industries satisfy the needs of a relatively limited group of consumers and are of only secondary importance to the economy, whereas others are very widespread and are a source of significant revenues. Local rugs, palasses, weaponry, and silver and copper wares are marketed not only in the Caucasus, but abroad as well. Accordingly, certain domestically-produced wares are traded only locally on a small scale, often in barter, while others bring the handicraftsmen more or less respectable and stable earnings. The domestic industries have become firmly established primarily in the eastern belt of the Caucasus region and have reached their pinnacle of development in Dagestan. The gradual decline in handicrafts in the lives of the local population from the shores of the Caspian to the Black Sea holds true even in the mountainous areas along the entire length of both slopes of the main Caucasian range.

Despite the variety and developed state of the domestic industries in the Caucasus, and despite the high quality of the materials, the durability and unusual beauty of the wares, the future of the domestic industries in the region is far from secure and one can already observe the gradual decline and even [4] disappearance of certain forms. With recent improvements in transportation demand for handicraft wares has been declining, prices are falling, and at the same time the quality of the wares is deteriorating. The reason for these developments lies primarily in the fact that local manufacturing technologies are extremely out of date.

The particular circumstances of the daily life of the Caucasian handicraftsman are such that he is almost completely confined within the tight bounds of the family unit. The division of labor and specialization in manufacturing which are commonly found in Russian villages are almost completely absent in the Caucasus. Domestic industries constitute the occupation of individual families, which resemble something like a series of artels, in which one or another art or trade is gradually passed down from the older to the younger family members, and thus from generation to generation. The technology and particular manufacturing methods are the family's legacy and are kept secret not only from the inhabitants of other villages, but from members of the same village as well, which is why they tend to stagnate. Upon close examination of the various manufacturing processes, one can only marvel at the primitive methods and work tools with which the Caucasian handicraftsmen make their wares. It goes without saying that under these circumstances competition from imported wares, produced using more sophisticated and more streamlined methods, is disastrous for the Caucasian domestic industries.

The isolation of Caucasian handicraftsmen, their lack of sophistication and separation into clans make it quite difficult to assist them in any way. To provide effective assistance to the local population from outside requires that one study as thoroughly as possible the unique [5] features of each form of industry and organize the assistance as close to the individual handicraftsman as possible, through the mediation of people who must not only be sufficiently expert in their field, but must also know the local languages, mores and customs.

Because it is impossible for a centralized agency to accomplish such a complex task, and in view of the urgent necessity of supporting the Caucasian handicraftsmen, the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property conceived the idea of organizing a special office in the Caucasus which would be assigned responsibility for seeing to the affairs of the local domestic industries. With this goal the Ministry created a special Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee, and by agreement with the Director of the Civil Service in the Caucasus on October 23, 1899 adopted the following by-laws for the activities of said Committee:

1. With the goal of promoting the development and improvement of domestic industries in the Caucasus, there is established in Tiflis the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee, under the aegis of the Section for Rural Economy and Agricultural Statistics of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property.

2. The tasks of the Committee will be:

a) to study the state of domestic industry in the region and determine the short-term needs of its various forms; b) to acquaint handicraftsmen with improved manufacturing techniques; c) to assist handicraftsmen in acquiring on the most favorable terms possible materials, tools and equipment required for producing the given wares, etc. d) to assist to the extent possible in marketing handicraft wares and satisfy other needs of the domestic industries as they arise.[6]

3. To carry out the above-mentioned tasks the Committee will: a) make arrangements for specialists at its disposal to study on site the state of the domestic

industries and their needs; b) establish relations with various institutions regarding training in rural and other schools in trades of importance to handicraftsmen; c) take measures to train vocational instructors for the most important of the forms of domestic manufacturing and direct the efforts of such technical specialists d) see to the establishment of permanent workshops for the training of handicraftsmen in improved methods in certain types of manufacturing; e) act as an intermediary in the acquisition by handicraftsmen of state-of-the-art tools and accessories used in domestic manufacturing; f) publish popular guides on these forms of manufacturing in Russian and local languages; g) organize exhibits, storage facilities and bazaars for local handicraft wares; h) collect, as necessary, statistical information on domestic industries through local correspondents, etc.

4. The Committee Chair shall be the Representative of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property for the Caucasus and its membership shall consist of the following individuals: the Agriculture Inspector for the Caucasus, the Assistant to the Representative, a representative of the Director of the Civil Service in the Caucasus to be appointed by the latter, the Director of the Caucasus Silk-Industry Office, two representatives from the Imperial Caucasian Agricultural Society to be chosen by the Society, and local representatives of domestic industries to be appointed by the Minister of Agriculture and State Property in conjunction with the Director of the Civil Service in the Caucasus. [7]

Note: The Chairman has the authority to invite to Committee meetings other individuals whose participation may be considered useful; such individuals will have the status of non-voting members of the Committee.

5. The Committee will have at its disposal a staff to carry out various assignments in connection with the domestic industries. The Committee shall present candidates for staff positions and their proposed salaries to the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property. Such individuals will participate in Committee meetings as non-voting members. The size of the staff will be determined in accordance with the extent of the Committee's activity and the requirements of its work.

6. The Committee will meet as directed by the Chairman as the need arises. At the end of each year the Chairman will present a report on the Committee's activities for that year to the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property. The Committee will also present to the Ministry for approval its recommendations for the development and improvement of the domestic industries as well as an estimate of the funds required to carry out such recommendations.

7. Research on domestic industries presented to the Committee by individuals working under its auspices, statistical data and all other information on domestic industries in the region will be processed and then delivered for printing to the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property.

8. All interactions with government units and other institutions and individuals relating to the work of the Committee will be conducted through the Chairman of the Committee.

9. The logistic and office functions of the Committee shall be supervised by a member of the Committee's staff to be appointed by the Chairman. [8]

On the basis of the by-laws recorded above, the Representative of the Minister of Agriculture and State Property became the Chairman of the Committee and its members consisted of the individuals indicated in by-law 4. above. In addition the following individuals were invited to join the Committee: a representative of the Caucasian Education District, and, in the capacity of member-clerk the agronomist A. S. Piralov. To cover the Committee's expenses the Ministry

of Agriculture appropriates an annual subsidy of 4,000 rubles, of which 2,200 rubles go for compensation of the member-clerk¹.

Thus, in its membership and source of funding for its maintenance the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee is a local agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Property, though within the sphere of its activities the Committee is not without a certain degree of autonomy, since in issues touching the domestic industries of the region it is empowered to undertake significant initiatives.

As it began its work², the Committee found it necessary first of all to gather and familiarize itself with the existing literature on the state of development of the various domestic industries in the region. The report which resulted from this effort revealed that the absence of institutions and the limited number of individuals in the Caucasus taking special interest in issues surrounding the domestic industries has had a negative impact on the quantity and quality of the information available on this subject. Published data on handicrafts, which had virtually all been gathered without any organized plan, [9] proved to be fragmentary, incomplete and of uneven quality, and therefore could not provide with any degree of clarity even a general picture of the most important segments of the domestic industries of the Caucasus, not to speak of those of less importance. Given this state of affairs, the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee concluded that it was urgently necessary to undertake a study of the state of the primary domestic industries in the region in order to identify the most pressing current needs, in the belief that without such a study any sort of major program of action in this area would be premature. A study of the wool-processing industries, which are so important economically for almost every part of the Caucasus region was given top priority, and further it was decided to begin by collecting information on the rug industry, since it is certainly one of the major sectors of the labor market in the Caucasus. In carrying out the study of the wool-processing industries, it was deemed necessary to limit the description to only the most typical households of handicraftsmen in the major centers of this industry, since a household-by-household description, owing to a lack of funds, seemed unfeasible. While carrying out the research plan mentioned above, it was suggested that note also be taken of the most urgent and pressing needs of the handicraftsmen and that practical steps be devised to improve the industries under study.

Between autumn of 1900 and the end of 1903, studies were made of 27 settlements in the Kubinskiy Uyezd in Baku Guberniya; in Elizavetpol Guberniya: 23 settlements in Shushinskiy Uyezd, 27 settlements in Zangezurskiy Uyezd, 14 settlements in Dzhevanshirskiy Uyezd and 18 settlements in Dzhebrailskiy Uyezd; in Erivan [Yerevan] Guberniya: 5 settlements in Nakhichevanskiy Uyezd, 13 settlements in Sharuro-Daralagezskiy Uyezd, 9 settlements in Novobayazetskiy Uyezd, 6 settlements in Echmiadzinskiy Uyezd, 4 settlements in Aleksandropolskiy Uyezd, and 14 settlements in Surmalinskiy Uyezd. [10]

In gathering information on the technical and economic aspects of rug production, owing to common features of daily life in the above-mentioned areas, a plan for the study of domestic industries in Russia was used as a guide, since it had served the same purpose for the Domestic Industry Commission of the Ministry of

¹See pp. 89, 92 and 101 of this volume.

²The Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee began functioning (in Tiflis) on December 31, 1899.

Finance³, though it was modified somewhat to adapt it to specific features of the Caucasus region; special attention was paid to elucidating the household budgets of the most typical peasant families in order to determine the role of the rug industry in the economic life of the households under study, and hence of the whole population of the region.

Because it was felt that, in the absence of up-to-date general economic studies of peasant households in the Caucasus, only carefully organized budget statistics could shed some light on the current state of peasant household economies and clarify the role of domestic industries in the economy as a whole, the researchers were tasked with focusing their attention not so much on collecting the greatest number of household budgets but rather on the quality of each number obtained. Thus, in the settlements listed above upwards of 125 budgets were compiled.

A portion of the data which were obtained from this study have already been processed and published⁴. These data represent a valuable contribution to the statistical portrait of the domestic industries because they give a very complete and clear picture of the economic importance of the [11] rug industry in the center of this industry where the most valuable rugs are made (Kubinskiy Uyezd) and in the land of the Kurds, concerning whose rug production there have been up until now absolutely no published data apart from the constation of the fact of the industry's existence.

Further, the very first studies of the rug industry called the Committee's attention to the gradual disappearance in the Caucasus of valuable original local rug designs⁵, which has resulted from the buying up and export abroad of antique Caucasian rugs. The inferiority of the above-mentioned designs is becoming with each passing year more and more apparent, something local [female] weavers and rug makers complain about quite vehemently. At one time handicraftsmen would commonly copy designs from older rugs; lately they've begun to imitate the designs on factory-made rugs, wool and even cotton material. What's more, for lack of suitable models, patterns are even copied from the paper used by certain companies (e.g. Brokar, Siou) to wrap bath soap—with the result that on saddle bags and rugs one can often see the letter S. Hence Caucasian rugs are beginning to lose some of their unique characteristics, such as the originality and beauty of their designs, and as a result demand for them and hence their value has fallen noticeably on the world market. [12]

Meanwhile, apart from the foregoing considerations, close study of the rug industry in the Caucasus has revealed a number of technological and other

³ This plan was designed in the early 1870's by the Statistics Section of the Russian Imperial Geographic Society, see pp. 5-6 of this volume.

⁴loc. cit. The Rug Industry in Kubinskiy Uyezd: the Rug Industry of the Kurds of Erivan Guberniya, see p. 232.

⁵Rug manufacturing has existed for more than 4,000 years and over this period of time it has outlived whole civilizations, political cataclysms, and governments, and each historical period through which it has survived has left its mark on the decorative elements and the design of the rugs: when we analyze today the patterns of rugs of pure and primitive design we see traces of Chaldean, Assyrian, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek and Arabic decorative elements. —Georg Bervud 1) Publication of the Austrian Trade Museum; 2) N. N. Shavrov. Rug Manufacture in Asia Minor and Implications of Its Status for Our Own Rug Industry.—Report no. 46 to the Congress of Practitioners of Domestic Industry in St. Petersburg in 1902.

shortcomings in local rug making, the elimination of which would significantly further the development and refinement of this form of labor. For instance, all types of rugs are woven on quadrangular wooden frames of quite primitive construction called "khana" (Tatar), which are set up in handicraftsmen's homes at an angle of 45 degrees. One of the major drawbacks of this type of frame is that there are no appropriate devices whatsoever to keep the threads parallel as they are wound onto the warp frame⁶. During weaving the threads get out of parallel and often the rug ends up crooked with folds and wrinkles. The looms used in the Caucasus are awkward in many other respects as well. Equally in need of improvement are some of the methods used to comb out the wool, prepare the threads, tighten the woof knots, dye the wool and perform other processes. Without going into a detailed description here of various aspects of the complex techniques of rug making, it will suffice to mention that despite the industriousness and natural abilities of the Caucasian handicraftsmen, which are sometimes [13] astonishing, the rug making industry itself is at a very low level of technological development, and in fact in recent times in a number of areas not only has it not moved forward, but on the contrary, in many respects it has declined in quality.

According to available data the average daily earnings of a female weaver-rug maker amounts to 9-15 kopecks (occasionally it reaches 20 kopecks?), and the total annual family income would be 23-30 (?) rubles. These numbers are quite instructive. Comparing them with the corresponding figures for the net-making industry⁷, it turns out that the numbers are the same in both areas. Thus, owing to flawed production techniques, the making of rugs, i.e. items of great value which could easily find a market the world over, is no more lucrative than the making of simple fishnets, which of all the handicrafts are practically the least expensive. Technological backwardness makes work more difficult, slows it down and lowers its quality, while at the same time reducing the earnings of the craftsman.

In the absence of the relevant statistical data, it is difficult to accurately determine the volume of rug production in the Caucasus. According to the latest figures, local researchers calculate that rug making uses up in processed form at least half of all the wool that remains in the region for use in domestic industry, i.e. over 200,000 poods, worth 1,200,000 rubles. Bearing in mind that wool which is converted into rugs is worth roughly four times more than unprocessed wool, the total value of the rugs produced in the Caucasus amounts to 5,000,000 rubles⁸. [14]

⁶The weaving loom of the Kubinskiy handicraftsmen (in Baku Guberniya) is extremely flawed: the form of the cross-bars, with barely rounded edges, significantly hinders the movement of the warp which is necessary when part of the rug (3/4-1 arshin) has been finished; owing to the absence of notches or depressions on the cross-bars for the threads, the latter do not lay correctly, and one must constantly check their position and fix them. The problem with the threads is reduced somewhat by the use of dough, which the women weavers smear on the cross-bars and which, when it dries, holds the threads in place for a while; each time the warp is moved the cross-bars must be smeared anew with dough. A great deal of time and effort is spent setting up and adjusting the threads, and moving the warp itself by removing the wedges—time which is in effect completely unproductive. (The Rug Industry in Kubinskiy Uyezd, loc. cit. pp 49-50).

⁷see p. 184 of the present volume.

⁸According to the latest figures, there are in the Transcaucasus roughly 6,551,000 head of wool-bearing animals. The average animal yields 665,000 poods of wool; of

The marketing of rugs is entirely in the hands of buyers who travel from village to village buying up rugs at very low prices. The consumer often pays 50-100% above the buyer's cost. Sales of Caucasian rugs are concentrated in the cities of the Caucasus and of the Empire. In the major centers and the capitals Caucasian rugs are being pushed out of the market by higher-quality rugs of Persian manufacture, with which our rugs are unable to compete. It should be noted that rug production in Persia over the last decade has taken the lead thanks to the initiative and practical efforts of two English firms (Hots and Co. and Ziegler and Co. from Manchester). These firms have established factories for the wholesale purchase of rugs in Sultanabadskiy District⁹, the most industrialized district of Persia, and have taken control of the entire local rug industry. Representatives of these firms have analyzed the demand in the European market and guide the handicraftsmen: they give them high-quality designs, wool treated with color-fast dyes, they dictate the dimensions of the rugs and provide the necessary tools and equipment. In the designs they try to preserve the ancient Eastern style. The factories of these firms have large warehouses as well as special workshops where Persian artists copy patterns from old rugs and compose new ones. The shop libraries [15] contain, incidentally, the well-known album of Eastern rug patterns published by the Viennese Museum of Industry¹⁰. Great attention is paid to coloring, and the factories have laboratories for dye production headed by special experts in chemistry. The business is well organized, brings in large revenues and the volume of sales by these companies is in the millions. Thanks to this level of organization, rug production in Sultanabadskiy District is flourishing. The finished goods command a solid share of the world market, where they sell for a good price and, as far as one can tell based on available information, the handicraftsmen are well-paid for their labor¹¹. Rug production in the Caucasus needs to be organized along the lines of Sultanabadskiy District. Leaving open the question as to who should be responsible for carrying out this project, and what funds would be used, one cannot help but conclude that we must acquaint our local handicraftsman with the demands of the marketplace, shown him the best methods for dyeing wool, give him designs and organize marketing and sales of his wares. The peasant must understand what guarantees that the products he makes will sell. Rug making began long ago, in primitive times, and was adapted to the needs of the family unit. Since that time living conditions have changed radically. People have come to make rugs not only for their own needs, but also for

this approximately 250,000 poods is exported, primarily to Marseille, while 415,000 poods are used in local domestic industries. Figures for 1888 show that in the Caucasus government-owned grazing land alone amounts to 2,876,000 dessiatinas summertime (alpine), and 1,708,000 wintertime (steppe). These figures do not include an unknown quantity of grazing territory in private hands throughout the region nor government-owned land in Karsskiy oblast.

⁹Several days hike from Teheran, along the road to Burudzhir. Something similar seems to have been undertaken or already accomplished by German firms in Asia Minor.

¹⁰see p. 248

¹¹An attempt was made to recruit a female master rug maker from Persia for a teaching rug-making shop which was to be opened in Tiflis. The idea had to be abandoned, since no rug maker from Persia was willing to come to Russia for less than 840 rubles a year, and in addition the round trip cost of transportation had to be paid by the employer.

sale to others. Meanwhile, the nature of the product has changed not at all. A handicraftsman who is unfamiliar with the demands of the marketplace continues to put out [16] the same long and narrow rugs that are only good for covering ottomans and divans, but which do not satisfy the foreign consumer, who needs them for a different purpose — as floor coverings, which requires square or nearly square rugs (for example 8 arshins square or 8 arshins by 10 arshins). The older Caucasian rugs for the most part are attractive by virtue of their designs and color combinations. Although the variety of colors is not great, they are selected and combined with astonishing artistry. There have existed in the past specialized [female] artists whose designs generate interest even today. But now all this has changed. The oldest rugs have been removed to other countries and for the local population they no longer exist: there are no new designs, and so people have started copying the designs of Moscow chintz factories, cheap wallpaper and, as was mentioned above, even paper used to wrap bath soap. All of this, naturally, reduces the value of the rugs. Under these conditions it goes without saying that competition with foreign rugs becomes impossible and the squeezing out of Caucasian rug products from the world market becomes simple a matter of time¹². Furthermore, given the intensive activity, the rational and generous assistance in economic and technological matters which are being accorded to domestic industries (Kleingewerbe-Heimgewerbe) in neighboring European nations, it is to be feared that for our handicraftsmen soon even our own domestic markets will be far from secure. Austro-Hungary [17] stands out particularly in this regard. Special attention is being paid there to the development and improvement of the domestic industries. With every passing day there are greater and greater numbers of technical training schools and workshops whose goal it is to disseminate among the populace technical knowledge and to train the instructors required for this. For instance, to promote the development of rug making, primarily in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where there is a Muslim population and consequently a large number of unoccupied female workers, there have been established workshops (with outstanding equipment, incidentally) for training local [female] weavers and rug makers in improved production methods. These workshops are equipped with new model looms, which according to experts are far ahead of all previously existing equipment of their type. Along with the technology, the artistic side of the process is no less well attended to. Seeing to this are personnel from the staff of the Viennese Museum of Industry. With an eye toward assisting the local rug industry and promoting its development, a collection of examples of the best Eastern rugs currently selling on the world market were bought, including Caucasian rugs. In addition to this, copies were made of designs from the vary same kinds of rugs in the collections of various museums, palaces and factories. In this way an extremely rich collection of designs was created which provided material for the publication in 1893 of the Viennese Museum of Industry's album¹³ of Eastern rug designs.

Given the threat to us from competition from foreign rugs, and in the desire to come to the assistance of local handicraftsmen, the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee deemed it useful [18] to undertake: 1) the study and resurrection of earlier rug designs in each of the separate rug-producing regions of the Caucasus; 2) the compilation of a color album of outstanding examples of older rug designs; 3) the

¹²See Papers of the First Congress of Practitioners of Domestic Industries of the Caucasus in Tiflis, 1902. Address by H. A. Sultan-Krym-Girey, announcements by A. A. Kalantar and A. SA. Piralov.

¹³Oriental Rugs. Published by the Imperial Austrian Crafts Museum. Vienna. 1903.

dissemination among handicraftsmen of sample designs in color; and 4) the creation of a directing body for the establishment in women's schools of training programs in the simplest practical techniques for creating rug designs. Along with this, in order to organize an effective system for providing Caucasian handicraftsmen with original designs from older rugs, the Committee decided to purchase the album of Eastern rug designs published by the Viennese Museum of Industry¹⁴.

Unfortunately, owing to lack of necessary funds, the plans laid out above, together with programs of technical assistance in the establishment of workshops, could be implemented by the Committee only in very modest measure, falling far short of the demand. Also in the interests of rug making, the Committee, with the assistance of a chemical engineer hired temporarily for the purpose, collected information on the dyeing practices among handicraftsmen in Elizavetpolskiy, Erivan [Yerevan] and Baku Guberniyas and Dagestanskiy oblast. The report submitted by the above-mentioned individual¹⁵ contains very valuable information and consists of two parts: the first contains a description of the dyeing methods used by handicraftsmen in various parts of the region both as concerns older vegetable dyes and new chemical ones; the second part of the report encompasses a series of practical measures whose implementation is demanded by the urgent needs of Caucasian handicraftsmen. [19]

Owing to lack of funds, the report mentioned above has to this day not been published.

Speaking of the activities of the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee, mention must be made of its participation in the mounting of exhibitions. In the very first year of its existence the Committee, under the direct supervision of the former director of the Museum of the Caucasus, G. I. Radde, was engaged in compiling a collection representing the domestic industries and ethnography of the Caucasus for the 1900 World's Fair in Paris. Over 650 individual works by local handicraftsmen were collected, most of them quite valuable, and whose total value exceeded 22,000 rubles. Feeling that it was important to have its own representative at the exposition, the Committee obtained sanction to send on assignment to Paris its clerk, A. S. Piralov, whose was further assigned the task of acquainting himself with foreign products competing with the wares of Caucasian handicraftsmen. For visitors to the exposition, and for individuals interested in the state of domestic industries in the Caucasus, the above-mentioned delegate of the Committee composed a "Short Sketch of Caucasian Domestic Industries" with 3 colored map/charts which was published as a separate brochure. The following year the Domestic Industry Committee, through its representatives, took an active role in organizing the Handicrafts and Trades Section of the Caucasian Jubilee Exposition in Tiflis and in the Congress of Practitioners of Horticulture and Related Sectors of Agriculture and Industry. In that same year, at the suggestion of Her Highness' Royal Organizational Committee of the All-Russian Crafts and Industry Exposition, conducted under Her Most August Imperial Majesty Lady Empress Aleksandra Feodorovna, [20] work began on collecting all the items necessary for the Caucasian section of this exposition in accordance with a special plan devised by the Organizational Committee of the exposition with the participation of the Chairman

¹⁴There is a large album of all conceivable rug designs and Eastern decorative motifs in the possession of a certain local artist.

¹⁵The engineer-technician Minasyanets of Munich Politechnikum, who made a special study of dyeing techniques in Germany.

of the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee. For the acquisition of items representative of the work of Caucasian handicraftsmen to be exhibited first in the 1901 Jubilee Exposition in Tiflis, and then in the 1902 All-Russian Crafts and Industry Exposition in St. Petersburg, the Ministry of Agriculture put at the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee's disposal 2,000 rubles. In all, the Committee involved 336 participants in the Caucasian Section of the All-Russian Exposition, representing over 1,650 numbered entries and more than 2,000 individual items worth in total over 24,000 rubles. At this exposition the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee was awarded a large silver medallion "for research into a number of Caucasian domestic industries and a complete collection of local handicraft wares and samples of Caucasian tree varieties." Separately from the activities described above, the Caucasian Domestic Industry Committee saw to the creation of a library which by the end of 1903 contained 198 publications relating to domestic industries; the Committee's quarters house a small museum containing 373 objects of Caucasian domestic manufacture.

The Caucasus, both in its natural resources and in the unique features of the daily life and economy of its people, has all of the prerequisites for a highly developed domestic industry. At present, there exist in this region up to 40 individual domestic industries [21] which taken together are of great importance to the local population. According to some estimates, the gross income received by the peasant population of the Caucasus from domestic manufacture amounts to 22 million rubles. This figure should be taken as a minimum. There are many other quite serious reasons to believe that the average income from domestic industries is in reality significantly (at least by a factor of two) greater than that given above¹⁶. Given the abundance and high quality of the many materials available in the region, as well as the abundance and low cost of the unoccupied work force capable of meeting twice or triple the demand currently placed on it, there would seem to be no reason why handicrafts in the Caucasus should not expand and flourish. Unfortunately, outmoded production methods and technologies, together with a number of other lapses, seriously inhibits progress in this field. Local studies of the current state of the domestic industries in the Caucasus region fully support this point of view. The shortcomings in the rug-making industry, discussed above, are repeated in other sectors of local domestic manufacture as well. This state of affairs bodes extremely ill for Caucasian handicrafts, and therefore speedy efforts at assistance support are very much to be hoped for. The short period of activity by the Caucasus Domestic Industry Committee should certainly be considered valuable and worthy of attention, but with the miserable budget at its disposal the implementation of anything of significance hardly [22] seems feasible. To develop Caucasian domestic industries will require first and foremost technicians, technical schools and workshops.

The activities of the Caucasus Committee on Domestic Industry cannot be divorced from the government's concerned efforts to support and develop domestic manufacture in Turkestan and neighboring territories.

Our Central Asian rugs are truly a world commodity which attracted the interest of foreigners as far back as the 13th century and for which there has been a steady demand to this day. In Western Europe much more is known of this industry than in Russia. In Western Europe large collections of Eastern rugs were established long ago, the most minute details of their manufacture are studied, albums are

¹⁶See Papers of the First Congress of Practitioners of Domestic Industries of the Caucasus in Tiflis, 1902, p. 146, 147 and others.

published of the most valuable rug designs, etc., while in Russia there has been nothing like this up until just recently. At the 1902 All-Russia Crafts and Industry Exposition in St. Petersburg, in the interests of research a collection of Eastern rugs was brought together for the first time. Of particular note among others was the superlative collection of Lieutenant-General A. A. Bogolyubov, who built his collection in the Transcaspian region from the most typical examples of Central Asian rugs, especially Turkmeni. For its part, the Ministry of Agriculture has also embarked on research into Central Asian rug making and at present the Handicrafts Museum holds a significant collection of Eastern rugs acquired in the places where they are produced. In addition there is a collection of photographs and watercolors of the most original rug designs. These collections were created by an individual [23] sent on assignment by the Ministry to Turkestan, Persia, Asia Minor, Paris and London to study rug manufacturing techniques, its economic importance in the life of the local populace, marketing conditions for rug products and the requirements of foreign markets. Finally, in 1903, the government appropriated 22,500 rubles to organize an experimental warehouse facility in Merv for wool and vegetable dyes to be handed out on credit to the poorest handicraftsmen producing rug products.

...

(Translated from the Russian by John Caemmerer)