

Paper from Cham

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The second pillar of the early industrial economy was paper. In 1825, Johann Jakob Vogel-Nötzli bought the property of a hammer forge in Cham. Heinrich Vogel-Saluzzi, who acquired the paper mill in 1861 and modernised it, was succeeded in its management in 1884 by his son Carl Vogel-von Meiss.¹ Under Carl Vogel-von Meiss, the Papierfabrik Cham became one of the technologically most advanced paper mills in Switzerland. In 1879, it added a mill for grinding wood. After acquiring in 1881 a licence for the sulphite pulp process developed by Alexander Mitscherlich, then professor at the Forestry Academy in Hann. Münden, it began producing sulphite pulp in 1882, the first mill in Switzerland to do so. In 1894 it installed its first standing digester.² Its output rose from 500 tonnes a year to 4,100 tonnes in 1912, an eightfold increase over thirty years.³ In 1937, the mill had 380 employees.⁴

The paper mill illustrates the role of technology licensing in the industrial development of a small economy. Cham acquired the licence for the sulphite process from a foreign inventor and was the first in Switzerland to apply it, gaining a technological lead over its domestic competitors. The acquisition of foreign technology and its rapid application in a favourable local setting is a pattern that recurs in the later history of the canton, in the electricity meters of Landis & Gyr and, a century later, in the blockchain enterprises of Crypto Valley, most of which built on protocols and technologies developed elsewhere. Another paper mill in Baar, the Upper Paper Mill, specialised in cardboard production from 1869.⁵

1 Notes

1. Zug in der Welt, "Villen der Wirtschaftskapitäne": purchase of the Hammerschmiede property in 1825 by Johann Jakob Vogel-Nötzli; acquisition and modernisation of the paper mill by Heinrich Vogel-Saluzzi in 1861; takeover by his son Carl Vogel-von Meiss in 1884. ↩

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2. Source as cited in the printed edition. ↩
3. Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": output of the Papierfabrik Cham under Carl Vogel-von Meiss increased from 500 tonnes annually to 4,100 tonnes by 1912. ↩
4. Zug in der Welt, "Zwischen Not und Norm": Papierfabrik Cham with 380 staff in 1937. ↩
5. Zug in der Welt, "Zugs zweite Industrialisierung 1880–1913": the Upper Paper Mill in Baar specialised in cardboard production from 1869. ↩

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