

Maya Zellweger

«*Chi va piano va faro*». Risk management of the linen merchants Zellweger from Trogen in the trading triangle Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Lyon and Genoa, 1750 to 1820

0. Introduction

The protestant St. Gallen is known to be *the* city of the eastern Switzerland linen trade par excellence.¹ Although in decline after the Thirty year's War (1618-1648)², there were still 52 trading companies actively participating in the traditional export of linen from St. Gallen to the silk metropole Lyon in France in the eighteenth century.³ Not a single one has left any economical source that would shed a light on how they were organized. Therefore, the substantial remains of the merchants in linen Zellweger from Trogen, a little village nearby St. Gallen in the protestant Appenzell Ausserrhoden, is *the* great exception. The little protestant state Appenzell Ausserrhoden splitted up from catholic Appenzell Ausserrhoden in 1597.⁴ The two places where the «Landsgemeinde» as the highest political authority in the direct democracy as annual meeting of eligible male voters was hold, are located in Hundwil and Trogen. The execution state was also placed in Trogen, which is the reason why the Justice as one of the four cardinal virtues features in the Zellweger coat of arms. The once seventeen trading companies Zellweger⁵ – organised in small unit companies

¹ The linen city St. Gallen released a linen statutes before 1364, cf. Mayer, Marcel: Article «Leinwand». In e-HLS, online-version, 23.05.2012.

² This fate hit many old linen trading cities in the German Empire of the Roman Nation in the linen regions near Konstanz, Augsburg, Ulm and Nördlingen. Exampels found in the trading room Zellweger were Bad Urach, Bibertal, Blaubeuren, Burgau, Elchingen auf dem Härtsfeld, Niederstotzingen, Heidenheim an der Brenz, Immenstadt, Söflingen, Sonthofen, etc.

³ State Archive Zurich (STAZH: Archiv des Kaufmännischen Directoriums Zürich: B. Schweizer Nation zu Lyon: D 145 and 146) Nation Suisse à Lyon: Noms et marques des marchands Suisses inscrits à la Douane de Lyon, vol. 1 (1654-1702) and vol. 2 (1700-1788).

⁴ Witschi, Peter: Article «Appenzell Ausserrhoden.» In e-HLS, online-version, 25.10.2019.

⁵ The great mistake of Bodmer (1959) in claiming a single company Zellweger is copied by all sorts of authors up to nowadays (Deschwanden 2025, 35). In fact, the seventeen trading companies Zellweger founded in 150 years of activity, each based on a company contract with varying durations from six to eight years show the necessary flexibility in the volatile textile trade. After that period, it was up to each partner to decide whether he wanted to extend the contract or take his leave. Each partner contributed with the amount he could afford to the companies' capital. The one who contributed the minimum was usually the appointed director of the branch in Lyon or Genoa. These brief time duration contracts show the importance of flexibility in the volatile textile trade. The longest duration for a single company was held by *Zellweger brothers & Comp.* with 27 years of existence (1747-1774), almost reached also by

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led by two to four partners on the base of a company contract with a term of six to eight years⁶ – left behind fifteen letter copy books. All of them were written in Trogen, none in Lyon or Genoa, where the branches were located. They cover about twenty years before (1747-1780) and after (1800-1820) the Industrial Revolution in 1780. In this two periods, which cover only about fifty years of the total of 150 years staying in business (1670-1820), the merchants Zellweger built up a Continental European trading room entertained by writing a minimum of verifiable 40 000 business letters to about 4000 addressees such as suppliers, customers, freight forwarders, bankers and finally their own branches in Lyon and Genoa on about 550 different localities in eighteen countries (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1. Evaluation of the fifteen letter copy books written by the merchants Zellweger in Trogen, 1747-1780 and 1800-1820

Period	1747-1780	1800-1820	Total
Business partners	1099	2856	3955
Business letters	17 360	21 953	39 321
Localities	215	332	547

Not even a single answer from all these 4000 addresses survived to this day. Based on these numbers, I estimate the actual amount of business letters once written in the trading triangle Zellweger between Trogen, Lyon and Genoa on at least 200 000.⁷ Investigating the example of their freight forwarders Salis-Massner of Chur (Graubünden) as bottleneck for exports across the Alps par excellence, I was able to identify a minimum of verifiable contacts to 3955 addresses in 547 locations (1727-1797). This proves the huge amount of business letters as contemporary standard (Zellweger 2025, 103).

How did the merchants Zellweger manage to survive the extended period of about 150 years in the volatile linen, cotton and cotton ware trade from 1670 to 1820? As the analysis of their business correspondence will show, the answer lies obviously in a strict risk management from 1747 to 1780 overrun by the turbulent changes in politics, economy, demographic and even climatic changes in the period from 1800 to 1820. In this paper, I will present the striking differences in the central outline and structure of their trade as well as their principles in dealing with business difficulties, in short, their risk management before and after the turn of the century.

Zellweger & Comp. with 25 years (1792-1817). However, *Zellweger, Müller & Comp.* (1774-1778) existed only four years of the six years suggested in the contract.

⁶ From at least 17 company contracts, only the two from 1756 and 1778 are verifiable, cf. State Archiv Appenzell Ausserrhoden: Pa.021, Zellweger, Zuberbühler & Comp.: Handelsvertrag für Trogen und Lyon, Trogen, 1754 and Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.: Handelsvertrag für Trogen und Genua, Trogen, 22.09.1778i.

⁷ Francesco Datini (1335-1410) of Prato left for his trading between Mediterranean, England, Flanders and Crimea the sheer amount of 140 000 business letters und 11 000 private letters (Origo 1985, 8).

1. The «lettre à la maison» in Lyon and Genoa – weekly correspondence enabled and secured long distance trading, 1747 to 1780

Every Monday, no matter what, the merchant Zellweger would sit in his office on the ground floor of his department store and write his «lettre à la maison» to Lyon. Since 1747, each decade emerged one of the seven stone buildings in the modern style of bourgeois Baroque. They served both as living and working spaces. In terms of size, they are more suited to a city than to the village of Trogen. The letter's recipient was the branch manager in Lyon, who answered the letter immediately ensuring weekly correspondence. Although around 2500 of this type of lettre were to be identified, the correct German expression could only be found in one place: «Handlungsbrief».⁸ The loss of a single «lettre à la maison» meant no less than a «fatality», an «annoyance». Amazingly, such a catastrophe took place only twice during the rather long period examined. The first one «flew from the gallows on the wheel» in 1752, what had to be accepted with «patience» unaware of «cause & intention».⁹ Mail robbers caught it, but were caught themselves, not knowing what to do with those abstract exchange letters they found enclosed instead of cash. The second letter went lost while being carried by a mute young postman from St. Gallen to Trogen one Friday evening in July 1754. Johannes Zellweger (1695-1774), usually composed in his writing to Lyon, was panic-stricken by the nonappearance of the expected letter, talking about «the final judgment». The young postman repented deeply, nearly «felt ill and desperate» and «begged for grace and forgiveness».

The aura of tension and stress in connection with the «lettre à la maison» underscores its significance – it was simply *the* thread of life of the Zellweger's long-distance trading between Trogen, Lyon and Genoa. First, it played a key role in the exchange of valuable business papers containing up to six of those precious exchange letters with which the customers used to pay their purchase in the magazine of *Zellweger frères & Comp.* in Lyon. Furthermore, every end of the year the balance sheets as well as the inventory was sent from house to house allowing the yearly due balance sheet business to be done in Trogen. Otherwise, the letters also contained shopping lists, colour lists as well as little examples of threads or pieces of fabrics. Secondly, the information density of its well-structured content shows how important it was. Every single one began with the repetition of the date of the received letter from Lyon/Genoa allowing both sides to keep control. The deeply felt gratitude towards the partner's efforts contributed to the shared business, exposed and traceable in every detail throughout the letter's content, was always politely expressed. The reason was obvious. Without the information carefully gathered by the holding partners in Lyon and Genoa to write and deliver a mere shopping list, the old generation

⁸ Cantonal Library Appenzell Ausserrhoden (KBAR: Fa Zellweger.36.B.39), Zellweger, Johannes (1730-1802): Letter to his first born son Johannes Zellweger (1764-1832) in Bregenz, Trogen 01.11.1798.

⁹ State Archiv Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-04), Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 25.12.1752, 34.

Zellweger responsible for the purchase of the linen in the commercially diligent surroundings of Trogen felt utterly at lost.

To conclude, although they were «marchands en gros», their wholesale in the eighteenth century was not at all what it is nowadays considered as buying massive quantities to be thrown on the market on low single price. Surprisingly, it rather meant the well reflected, thought out purchase of every single piece of linen based on an available order from clients in Lyon and later Genoa and its surroundings. This kind of trade in goods is the safest trade at all and therefore itself a risk management. In case of an unexpected bankruptcy of a client, they went right on spot to put their hand on their goods such as to claim it back out of the bankruptcy estate to sell it to a better house. In 1766, because of a client's bankruptcy and as to minimize their loss, *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.* once took on a shipload of Jalap as barter transaction. This root originating in India, was used in Europe as a laxative. Based on this single example, Bodmer concluded erroneously similar barter transactions were done «more often» (Bodmer 1959, 55). In fact, the effort it took to sell at least somewhat of this completely out-of-range medical product was endless. From 1766 to 1769 they tried to sell the Jalap to not less than fourteen pharmacists in Bern, Erlangen und Nürnberg. Not even one of them replied to their offer.¹⁰ It was in this tiring and laborious connection that Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802) stated:

To work for the honour is a system rejected in the trade as well as in the military (alongside: No money, no Suisse [soldiers]). But to work and to sacrifice the own money to render service to others, would make an irreparable hole in the moon. My company [*Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*] is still burdened with 8 ballots of Jalap [...].¹¹

1.1 Caution, patience and long-term stability – the three main principles of risk avoiding management

After the detailed enumeration of the exchange letters received from Lyon, the partners in Trogen wrote carefully about their reflections and observations on the actual economic situation and the manifolded risks in purchasing linen in their rural surrounding. The term conjuncture was yet to be known. They talked about «Schläg

¹⁰ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-09-01-01), *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*: Offer of service on jalapp to Christoph Adam Rothkeppel von Erlangen, Georg Jacob Kiessling, Johann Sundersberg, Johann Wilhelm Pflüger, Stellweg & Linder sowie Justus Christian Kiessling von Nürnberg, In Erlangen und Nürnberg, 13.03.1766; *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*: Offer of service on jalapp to Samuel Wagner, Gottlieb Wittenbach, Wittenbach auf dem Platz, Morel beim Rathaus und Wittenbach bey der Gerechtigkeit von Bern, Frau Brunner an der Baarfüsser Gass und Gassmann «bey der Pfisterzunft» von Solothurn sowie an Gartier, Chirurgus, Lutzigen bei Solothurn, Trogen, 24.04.1769.

¹¹ Cantonal Library Appenzell Ausserrhoden (KBAR: FaZellweger.36.B.Hi), original text in French: «Travailler pour la gloire est un system rejetté dans le Commerce aussi bien que dans le Militaire (NB: Point d'argent, point des Suisses). Mais travailler et sacrifier son propre argent en rendant service aux autres, seroit faire un trou à la Lune irreparable. Ma société se trouve encore chargé de 8 Balots de Jalap [...].», in: Zellweger, Johannes (1730-1802): Letter to Johann Caspar Hirzel (1725-1803) in Zürich, Trogen, 12.12.1768.

und Läubt / blow and course».¹² They wrote on their decision making, on the purchases made by their manifolded competitors such as merchants from Arbon and Rorschach on the lakeside of lake Constance. They also suggested significant alterations and modifications in their workflow such as the furnishing and implication of parts of the textile finishing by means of industrial espionage by the merchants, finishers and dressers Gonzenbach of Hauptwil (Thurgau), etc.

The little town Beaucaire, at that period geographically ideally located on the mouth of the river Rhone and the France Mediterranean coast was of great importance in their reflections. It was mentioned no less than several hundred times. The reason was the annually gathering of the at that time well known annual trade fair «de la St. Madeleine» on Juli, the 21.th to 25.th. By reading the «lettres à la maison», I could identify this trade faire of Beaucaire to be the climax of the annual selling cycle of the Zellweger's linen trade during the eighteenth century. In June, a month before it took place in Beaucaire, the clients came to Lyon to do their purchases in linen in the magazines of the Swiss textile merchants. Then, the clients put their just purchased linen goods on the so called «cloches», little boats specifically built for their effortless river trip downstream. Meanwhile in Beaucaire, a tent city sprang from the ground offering the short-term structure and backdrop for a trade fair mentioned already in 1168, officially founded based on the privilege of Raymond VI (1156-1222) of Toulouse, and visited throughout the eighteenth century by about 100 000 salespersons, buyers and spectators. All of them intended to profit from the two days of tax exemption in trade (Braudel 1990, 90, 92 f.). The merchants Zellweger themselves did not visit the fair trade in Beaucaire on spot. Stationed all year long in their magazine in Lyon in anticipation of the annual rush of the merchants who went for Beaucaire, they can be identified as mere suppliers. In this context, all the anxious reflections on risk make sense. Did they purchase too much or too little linen in summertime? Were they in time or too late with the textile finishing in wintertime due to unpredictable bad and cold weather? Or was there a fatal delay of the bleachers, the dyers or the expeditors to be provided with a considerable assortment of goods just in time in June when the French merchants were expected to do their purchases in Lyon? The difference in the portion of never-ending reflection, organization, preparation, hardship and tiresome work on behalf of the merchants Zellweger responsible for the organization of the transformation from the raw piece of linen into a commercial item by means of bleaching, dying, printing, finishing and sorting compared to the easiness of the purchase in Lyon and transport of the textile goods by a single river trip to Beaucaire on behalf of the French merchants could not be greater. The answer why such an organisation would work out profitably, was obviously the distribution of risk. The «Foire de la St. Madeleine» through its strategic location favoured the trade route between France, Italy and especially Spain from where the goods went into the huge Spanish colonial empire (Iselin, Lüthy, Schiess 1943, 55).

From setting foot in Lyon in 1679 to the opening of their own branch *Zellweger & Eugster* on spot in 1731, it took them about fifty years of development. Up to this

¹² State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-04), Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 19.01.1756, 367.

point as to limit their expenses, they hired a place in the magazine of textile merchants in Lyon to store their linen goods. In 1747 when *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.* just opened after the voluntarily breakup from *Zellweger & Eugster*, they had to face another bankruptcy wave in Lyon in which many of their clients were involved. Johannes Zellweger (1695-1774) from Trogen gave his son Jacob Zellweger (1723-1808) a moral sermon. He was the just appointed 25 years old director of the branch in Lyon:

[...] it is an art & trouble to sell, it is even bigger to be done with security and caution, & it is better to trade less & safely instead of trading in uncertainty. God may grant the interested partners patience & preservation of the like. This is the first but valid bankruptcy, in which the current raggion is involved. We wish to escape the disaster not to badly & never ever get into disasters like this again. Amen.¹³

The cautious father suggested to limit drastically the entrusted amount per client. In relation to the company's capital, anything more would lead to disastrous results when confronted by the customer's bankruptcy. As there are no sources left from any of the three branches *Zellweger frères & Comp.*, *Zellweger ainé & Comp.* or *Zellweger père & Comp.* in Lyon, it was tough to identify any specific clients. Nevertheless, a group of customers was called the «Montpellianer». The Languedoc city Montpellier is located on the Mediterranean coast only 85 kilometres west of Beaucaire. Those «Montpellianer» did not do their shopping exclusively in the magazine of *Zellweger frères & Comp.* in Lyon. They visited of course each of the many branches of trading houses of St. Gallen:

What has finally been done bey Mr. Farell & the remaining clients from Montpellier, please let us know, it seems our Swiss houses this time because of Beaucaire have no reason to drive in the coach, patience, thou noble herb!¹⁴

Repeatedly, they forced themselves to maintain patience in their economically liberal surrounding open to the competition of the free market. They were aware of the comfortable trade the citizens of Zurich maintained by oppressing the manufacturers in the surrounding area and forcing them to sell their products to given prices exclusively to them. Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802) commented: «Not all sorts of

¹³ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-02), the original text in German: «[...] es ist ein Kunst & Müh zu verkaufen, sie ist aber noch grösser, es mit Sicherheit und Vorsichtigkeit zuthun, & ist besser, weniger & sicher als mehr in Unsicherheit handeln. Gott verleihe den Interessenten Gedult & die Bewahrung vor derg[leichen]: Fählhen. Dis ist zwahr die erste, aber triftige Faillite, darinn die jezige Raggione Interesse hat. Wir wünschen, nicht gar übel aus der Sach & niemals mehr in derg[leichen]: Desastres zukommen. Amen.», In Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 19.05.1749, 232.

¹⁴ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-02), the original text in German: «Was endlich Mr: Farell & die übrigen Montp[ellianer]: noch gemacht haben werden, biten uns anzuzeigen, es scheint unsere Schweizer Häuser haben dismahl kein Ursach wegen der foire de Beaucaire in der Carosse zufahren, Gedult du edles Kraut!», In Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 05.07.1751, 548.

merchants are able to set up their businesses as comfortable as the ones in the city of Zurich. Patience! We want to let the complaining to times of lull».15

In 1749 Johannes Zellweger (1695-1774) gave some advice to his young son as director in Lyon: «when a good house is starting to be guilty 5 to 6000 ld, we consider it enough, because a big slap in the face causes more pain than a little one.» The argument «*nothing ventured nothing gained*» was opposed with an Italian expression: «Chi va piano va faro».16 In 1751, not being able to buy four balls of the linen article «All-magnettes» at a bearable price was considered a «slap in the face».17 In 1755 he suggested to continue the purchase in the linen article «Cambrais & Façon mousseline» «pian piano in convenient prices.»18 In 1774, his younger son Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802) would rather give up on a profit than hurt the company's capital: «It is better to miss a profit than to touch the capital».19 In 1775, he advised his partner Graf in Lyon to act according to the principle of caution: «You are on spot, do what prudence tells you to do».20 In summary, the wording «patience», «prudence» and «slowness» identifies their preferred stile of doing business calmly by avoiding too great a risk.

It goes without saying that in trading there are always multiple factors beyond predictability. One of them will always be the solvency of the client in whose hands one had to put one's good, believing in his trust- and creditworthiness. The burden of this risky uncertainty left its impact on the mental health of the merchants Zellweger. Almost all of them went through deep psychological and physical crisis. Outsiders described them as «hypochondriacal».21 The great encyclopedist Johann Heinrich Zedler (1706-1731) defined hypochondria contemporary as a «difficult illness caused by its mixed up and disgusting coincidences» (Zedler, 13/1732-1754, 761f.). In fact,

15 Cantonal Library Appenzell Ausserrhoden (KBAR: FaZellweger.36.B.Hi) the original text in German: «[...] nicht alle Kaufleuthe können ihre Sachen so commod einrichten wie die in Zürich. Gedult! Wir wollen die Klagen lassen, wo keine Geschäfte haben.» In Zellweger, Johannes (1730-1802): Letter to his brother-in-law Johann Caspar Hirzel (1725-1803) in Zurich, Trogen, 03.02.1772.

16 State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-02), the original text in German: «wann E[ure]L[ieben] auf ein gut Haus anfangen 5 à 6000 ld schuldig ist, so achten es für genugsamb, dann *eine grosse Ohrfeige macht mehr Schmerzen als 10 kleine*». In Zellweger, Johannes (1695-1774): Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 26.05.1749, 236-237.

17 State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-02), Zellweger, Johannes (1695-1774): Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 10.05.1751, 524-525.

18 State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-04), Zellweger, Johannes (1695-1774): Lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 14.07.1755, 321.

19 State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-02), the original text in French: «Il vaut mieux manquer un bénéfice que de risquer de perdre ou de voir des fonds accroché». In Zellweger, Müller & Comp.: Lettre à la maison à Gènes, Trogen, 24.10.1774, 40.

20 State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-12-01-03), the original text in French: «Vous êtes sur le lieu, faites ce que la prudence vous dites, in: Zellweger Vater & Comp.: lettre à la maison à Lyon, Trogen, 16.10.1775, 284.

21 Cantonal Library Appenzell Ausserrhoden (KBAR: FaZellweger. 36cop.B.Hi), Zellweger-Hirzel, Maria (1732-1802): Letter to her brother Johann Caspar Hirzel (1725-1803) in Zurich, Trogen, 1770.

hypochondria was a contemporary widespread diagnosed but hard to define illness in case of mental and physical overreactions.²²

1.2 The two branches in Genoa, 1768 and 1774/78 – forty years of textile trade and cotton import to the Swiss Confederation

Compared to Lyon as their sales market with own branch, it took them about forty more years to open *Zellweger & Honnerlag* in Genoa in 1768. Because of the falling out and deliberate dissolution of *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.* in 1774, it was closely followed by the opening of the second branch *Zellweger, Müller & Comp.* (1774-1778) only six years later, renamed four years later in *Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.* Why would textile merchants from Appenzell Ausserrhoden choose Genoa «La Superba» (Roth 2022) rather than Venice «La Serenissima» as place to be? First, Venice has always been the place of merchants from Germany (Ressel 2022). Second, after a long period of economic decline, Genoa, searching for ways to revive the commerce, turned its seaport into a «porto franco» in 1763 allowing merchants the highly attractive duty-free import and export of trading goods (Piccinno L./Zanini A. 2019; Iodice A. 2017; Costantini C. 1978, Giacchero G. 1973). Third, in Genoa, *Gebrüder Schläpfer* of Speicher (Appenzell Ausserrhoden) were established since 1740.²³ They were competitors in the purchase of linen in their native region. In 1765 *Schläpfer & Vigo* opened another branch in Genoa. Johann Georg Honnerlag (1743-1820) of Trogen who completed his apprenticeship at *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.* in Trogen, was their appointed director from 1765 to 1768. Therefore, the opening of a branch Zellweger was probably some lining up to the Schläpfer's example.

The analysis of the «lettre à la maison» to Genoa revealed another main goal of opening a branch in Genoa. It no longer was the selling of linen alone, but the purchase of raw cotton from merchant ships arriving in Genoa's seaport from Greek, Cyprus, Egypt and the Levantine. Up to the 1750ties, their vendors such as *König* and *Jenisch* in raw cotton all came from Venice, but originated surprisingly from Kempten (Bavaria, Germany) where their main houses were located.²⁴ They brought a late

²² Farner. Claudia. 1963. «Der Bündner Chirurg Johann Ulrich Bilguer (1720-1796) und sein Werk über die Hypochondrie» In *Bündnerisches Monatsblatt*, 281-330.

²³ The company *Schläpfer fratelli* was founded by and belonged to Jacob Schläpfer (1719-1779) of Speicher and his brother Matthias Schläpfer. Its director was Johannes Schläpfer who was not a relative of the brothers, but the only one with the knowledge of how to do business on the level of far distance trading from Appenzell Ausserrhoden to Genua, vgl. Fuchs, Thomas: Article «Schläpfer, Jacob (1719-1779)» In e-HLS, online-version, 10.06.2010; Holderegger (1992), Schläpfer, Jacob (1719-1779), 49, 92; Jacob Zürcher-Hirzel (1741-1808) of Teufen (Appenzell Ausserrhoden) did his apprenticeship in their branch in Genoa and was their trade servant for years before becoming the director and appointed partner of *Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.* in Genoa 1778. On suggestion of his partner, he married the sister-in-law of his partner, Hirzel of Zürich]. In 1792, because of the founding of *Zellweger & Comp.* as partnership of family members only, he retired and returned to his hometown in Appenzell Ausserrhoden.

²⁴ For example *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*: Letter to Föhr & Sohn in Kempten, Trogen, 05.03.1764, 250; *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*: Letter to Johann Jacob de Matthias Jenisch in Kempten, Trogen, 17.12.1764, 357; *Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.*: Letter to Johann Jacob Gebhardt in Kempten, Trogen, 29.04.1765, 419.

'Golden Age' to Kempten represented up to nowadays in many impressive town-houses built in the style of bourgeois Baroque (Nebinger 1984, 140-255). The opening of *Zellweger & Honnerlag* in Genoa 1768 put an immediate and ultimate end to the correspondence related to those merchants in cotton from Kempten in Venice. From this moment on, the business correspondence of the merchants Zellweger shows off many service-offers in raw cotton to new clients in eastern Switzerland such as Toggenburg, Rheintal, and Glarus. Even this cotton import based on carefully gathered orders obtained beforehand in the surroundings of Trogen by means of offers written to potential clients such as Jenny in Enneda (Glarus), Luchsinger in Schwanden, and Luchsinger in Mollis.²⁵ At the same time, Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802) requested his partner Jacob Zürcher (1739-1808) as director of *Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.* in Genoa in 1778/79: «Vous faites très bien d'aller piano dans l'achat des Cottons d'Alta car Mr: *Reck et Laminit* de Venice à qui nous avons écrit exprès nous marquent que les Cottons de Cypre étant sans demande [...]. / You do very well in going piano while purchasing the Alta cotton, because Mr. *Reck & Laminit* of Venice told us the Cotton from Cyprus was of no demand [...].»²⁶ The relevance of the two branches Zellweger in Genoa can be estimated by the radiance of their directors. Jacob Zürcher (1738-18) as director of *Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.* was on February 16, 1784 in the inn «Santa Marta» the chosen interview-partner of king Joseph II. (1741-1790) of Austria and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire who used to travel under the pseudonym of Graf von Falkenstein in pursue of gathering first-hand information. Matthias Schläpfer-Heidegger (1763-1830) of Trogen, however, the director of *Zellweger & Comp.* in Genoa, was the first Consul of the Swiss Confederation in Genoa from 1819 onwards. He founded the cemetery for members of all non-Catholic religions in Genoa.²⁷

Due to the finale repeal of the alliance between the king of France and the Swiss Confederation in 1783 after having been renewed in 1777, together with the French Revolution turning Lyon in a dangerous hot spot²⁸, the two branches *Zellweger ainé & Comp.* and *Zellweger père & Comp.* in Lyon were finally closed in 1792. Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802), whose three sons were now fully trained merchants, merged the capital invested in France in the newly founded *Zellweger & Comp.* in Trogen and Genoa. This doubled its financial capacity. From this moment on, business in France was done by business travellers only. His older brother Jacob Zellweger (1723-1808), who had been the main force behind the opening of *Zellweger & Honnerlag* in Genoa

²⁵ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-13-01-01), Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.: Service offering to Fridolin Jenny und Joachim Jenny in Enneda, Johannes Luchsinger in Schwanden and tax officer Luchsinger in Mollis, Trogen, 05.03.1780.

²⁶ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-13-01-01), Zellweger, Zürcher & Comp.: Lettre à la maison à Gênes, Trogen, 07.12.1778, 798; the same, 11.01.1779, 808.

²⁷ Fuchs, Thomas: Article «Schläpfer, Matthias (1763-1830) von Trogen», in: e-HLS, online-version, 13.12.2010; Lätt, A. (Hg.) 1931. Schweizer im Ausland, 1931, 175; Roth, Prisca. 2022. GENUA La Superba. Streifzüge durch die Kulturstadt, Zürich: Hier + Jetzt Verlag, 2022; Schläpfer, Johannes. 1988. Die Familie Zellweger im politischen, wirtschaftlichen und soziokulturellen Umfeld ihrer Zeit. In JbSGF, 107-126.

²⁸ Because of its widespread trade and well-established silk commercial and commerce, Lyon was not a revolution-minded city. Nevertheless, some of the swiss merchants were beheaded in the earlies 1790s.

in 1768, kept the branch. Apart from the two metropolis Lyon and Genoa, the merchants Zellweger never opened a branch on the Atlantic coast. Only former apprentices in Lyon with far-fetched family relationships such as the pastor's son Lorenz Hegner (1731-1807) from Winterthur went for economic dangerous spots such as La Rochelle and establishing *Hegner & Thieriot* in Bordeaux (Lüthy 1943, 187; Künzli 1790-1850, 458).²⁹ Johannes Zellweger (1730-1802) and his first-born son Johannes Zellweger (1764-1832) were the only ones investing parts of their capital in limited partnerships in the sense of «*accomandita*» (Braudel 1990, 480). In the 1780th he invested in *Walser & Comp.* in St. Petersburg, led and entertained by Johannes Walser (1739–1805) of Herisau (Appenzell Ausserrhoden) (Ebel 1/1798, 274) and its subsequence *Ris, Sulzberger & Co.* in Moskau up to 1802. In the 1790th, he invested in *Guebhardt, Schläpfer & Cie.* in Barcelona. At the end of 1802, *Zellweger & Comp.* from Trogen and the linen merchants *Gebrüder Fankhauser* from Burgdorf (Bern) as limited partners invested each £ 32 000.- as capital in the subsequent company *W.A. Gebhardt & Co.* in Barcelona.³⁰ In October 1814 his son Johannes Zellweger (1754-1832) invested in *Schürch & Comp.* in Livorno fl 15 000.- only to lose it just a year later when the catholic Schürch of Luzern as his limited partner on spot went bankrupt.³¹

2. Five companies Zellweger and a short and sharp ending, 1800 to 1820

The changes in the structure of the trade business observed in the business correspondence of the merchants Zellweger after the turn of the century 1800 were considerable. In comparison to the long-term relationships with suppliers and clients, bankers and freight forwarders in the eighteenth century, the business correspondence after 1800 shows a significant alteration. Almost none of the manifold once long-term stable relationships survived the revolutionary years followed by Napoleon's wars and especially his Continental System (1806-1814). In Trogen, in the meantime, there existed not only one or two textile trading companies Zellweger, but due to demographic reasons no less than five each of them belonging to one of the five cousins Zellweger equally professionally trained as textile merchant in the 1770th to the 1780th. After the death of their fathers in 1802/08, all of them founded their own companies based on the 1 Mio Gulden heritage each one received.

2.1 Business travellers instead of branches on site

The merchant Johann Caspar Zellweger (1768-1855) tried hard to resurrect connections to suppliers in Silesia and Bohemia as former procurement market after

²⁹ Cantonal Library Appenzell Ausserrhoden (KBAR: FaZellweger.36.B.He), Zellweger, Johannes (1695-1774): Letter to Johann Jacob Hegner (1721-1789) in Winterthur, Trogen, 05.01.1756, 364.

³⁰ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-02), Zellweger & Comp. von Trogen/Gebrüder Fankhauser von Burgdorf: Kommanditvertrag mit Wilhelm Anton Gebhardt über die Kommanditgesellschaft Guebhardt & Cie. in Barcelona, Burgdorf, 19.12.1801.

³¹ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-17-02), Schürch & Comp.: Company contract, Trogen/Livorno, 25.10.1814.

visiting the devastating trade fair Frankfurt am Main just when Napoléon fought the Battle of the Nations by Leipzig from October 16.th to 19.th 1806. When returning from this wearing business trip, he suffered from a nervous breakdown facing the upcoming fair trade in Bozen as soon as arriving home, starved and utterly exhausted. He then decided to leave *Zellweger & Comp.* his partner and younger brother. Jacob Zellweger (1770-1821) was mainly politically active as the chosen «Landammann» of the direct democracy Appenzell Ausserrhoden from 1803 to 1817, a period of accelerated drastic political, economic, and climatic changes. From then on, Jacob Zellweger shouldered not only the responsibility for the highest government office in Appenzell Ausserrhoden, but also the greatest trading company in the country, and beyond that a family of seventeen children. Having no time to concentrate on business, he completely failed the principles of caution and patience. The generous outline of an extended business travel suggested to his employee Ferdinand Foichtig on his journey through Sicily sheds light on his manner and way of doing business.³² He was described as being «defiant» by his textile printer Johann Heinrich Mayr (1768-1838) of Arbon who commented on the situation:

Business travellers of the house [*Zellweger & Comp.*] crisscrossed half Europe in every direction, huge businesses were made, but never was it possible to gain the overview, considered the limited time left! Merchants fate escapes anybody from the subject, and who dares to risk high stakes, is aware of great losses next to unsure profits. (Buenzli 2010, 1341)

By means of the analysis of the copy letter books I traced down ten commercial employees in the name of *Zellweger & Comp.* on their extended routes crisscrossing Europe as business travellers from 1800 to 1811. Wilhelm Friedrich Rueff of Au (Vorarlberg) was in Trieste, in Frankfurt am Main, in Brescia, Milan, Bologna, Livorno and Naples from 1800 to 1809.³³ Christian Gschwend from Appenzell Ausserrhoden was in Orihuela, Barcelona and Figueres in 1806.³⁴ Carl Philipp Friedrich Lang (1786-1853) from Blaubeuren (dukedom Württemberg) was in Bozen, Leipzig, Dresden, Prag, Chalon-sur-Saone, Tarare, Nimes, Amiens and Lyon from 1800 to 1814.³⁵ Johann Jakob Graf from Appenzell Ausserrhoden was in Venice, Milan, Semigallia, Trieste, Bozen, Verona and Messina from 1806 to 1809.³⁶ Johann Ulrich Zuberbühler

³² State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-05), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Ferdinand Foichtig in Messina, Trogen, 13.12.1810, 375.

³³ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-01), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Johannes Rueff in Trieste, Trogen, 13.10.1800, 149.

³⁴ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-02), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Domenico Francesco Abril in Orihuela, Trogen, 17.11.1806, 131 (STAAR: Pa.021-); Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Bernardino Catala & Co. in Barcelona, Trogen, 20.11.1806; Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Veuve Denamiel & fils in Figueres, Trogen, 12.11.1806, 132.

³⁵ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-05), Zellweger & Comp.: 57 letters to Carl Philipp Friedrich Lang in Lyon, etc., Trogen, 1810-1811; (STAAR: Pa.021-17-01-03 to 04), Johannes Zellweger Sohn: 4 letters to the same, Trogen, 1803-1816; (STAAR: Pa.021-18-01-01), J.C. Zellweger: 60 letters to the same., Trogen, 1813-1821.

³⁶ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-02), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Johann Jakob Graf on the way, Trogen, 19.02.1807, 487; xx.02.1807, 513; 02.03.1807, 522; 05.03.1807, 535; 09.03.1807, 545; 16.03.1807, 567.

from Appenzell Ausserrhoden was in Lyon, Nimes, Perpignan, Girona, Valencia, Barcelona, Madrid, Cartagena, and Frankfurt am Main from 1806 to 1808.³⁷ Amado Thormann of Bern was in Naples 1809.³⁸ Ferdinand Foichtig of Rottenburg (dukedom Württemberg) was in Messina, Malta, Cadiz and Gibraltar in 1810.³⁹ Heinrich Notz was in Livorno, Barcelona, Lyon, Mailand, Ancona, Naples, Leipzig, Hamburg, Königsberg, Prag, Wien, Berlin, Lübeck and Riga from 1806 to 1810.⁴⁰ Johann Caspar Waser of Zürich was in Bellinzona, Lugano and Verona in 1811.⁴¹ Georg Friedrich Krauss (1786-1859) of Augsburg (Bavaria) was more than once in Bayonne, Mallorca, Menorca and Ibiza, in Geneva, Lyon, Limoges, Angouleme, Bordeaux, Bayonne, Bilbao, Vitoria-Gastiz, Valladolid, Madrid, Orihuela and Bayeux from 1808 to 1813.⁴² Traveling three years crisscross Europe on behalf of *Zellweger & Comp.* completed the professional training of a commercial employee. Some of them succeeded and gained the hand of a daughter Zellweger such as Krauss of Augsburg. Some of them failed and got a complaining letter from Trogen filled with criticism, orders and disappointment such as Thormann from Bern. Their large and spaciouly designed travel routs not only show off the enormous will and tremendous effort to build up customer proximity all over Europe. They also point out the limitation of the textile trade on Continental Europe.

2.2 The three bankruptcies from 1814 to 1817

After over 140 years of continuous success in textile trade the end in the 1810th was quick and sharp. From five at the same time existing trading companies Zellweger in Trogen three went bankrupt from 1814 to 1817 (Zellweger 2009, 171-187). The owner of the fourth company left Trogen in 1820 due to legal proceedings because of supposedly committed incest. The fifth company *J.C. Zellweger* based on the fourth mechanical cotton spinning in Switzerland merely existed on after a devastating conflagration in 1814. Its owner Johann Caspar Zellweger (1768-1855), from 1795 to 1802 director of *Zellweger & Comp.* in Genoa and responsible for the purchase of raw cotton in its seaport, became himself client of *Triimpler & Gysi* in Marseille

³⁷ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-03), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Johann Ulrich Zuberbühler on the way, Trogen, 31.12.1807, 22.

³⁸ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-04), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Amadeo Thormann in Neapel, Trogen, 09.01.1809, 45.

³⁹ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-05), Zellweger & Comp.: Letter to Ferdinand Foichtig from Rottenburg (Herzogtum Württemberg) in Messina, Trogen, 13.12.1810, 375.

⁴⁰ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-02 to 05), Zellweger & Comp.: 71 letters to Heinrich Notz in Livorno, Barcelona, Rom, Mailand, Ancona, Neapel, Leipzig, Hamburg, Königsberg, Prag, Wien, Berlin, Lübeck und Riga, Trogen, 1807-1811.

⁴¹ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-05), Zellweger & Comp.: 2 letters to Johann Caspar Waser in Verona, Trogen, 04.03.1811, 590-591 und 11.03.1811, 606-607.

⁴² State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-02 to 05), Zellweger & Comp.: 86 letters to Georg Friedrich Krauss (1786-1859) of Augsburg in Bayonne, Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza, etc., Trogen, 1807-1811.

under his peer Johann Jacob Trümpler (1768-1845) of Zurich.⁴³ Who would have known that Marseille would become the rising star as the French empire's door to the Mediterranean rather than the French occupied Republic of Genoa from 1797 that simply vanished in 1814? Revolution, war, economic blockade and demographic increase are incidents out of human control developing their own dynamics by means of deep reaching changes. The five cousins Zellweger representing the fourth generation of merchants did not idle around living on their massive heritage. Each of them tried to build up a textile trading company on his own. But the time of the 'marchand en gros' needed as hinge between suppliers and clients was gone. The job profile of the new age after the turn of the century was the manufacturer, who knew himself how to trade his goods. The once so busy village place Trogen desolated in just a few years. Grass grew over the place and figuratively over the story of the textile trade that shaped it throughout the eighteenth century.

3. Summary and research outlook

The example of the linen merchants Zellweger of Trogen demonstrates how, in the 1660ties, long-distance textile trade shifted from the city of St. Gallen to the surrounding countryside. The city provided the knowledge of the merchant's trade, logistical advantages such as access to the postal service and export companies. However, the Zellweger merchants organized all textile finishing in the countryside, completely bypassing the relevant experts in the city. The same movement from the city to the countryside was also undertaken by the Gonzenbach merchants from St. Gallen. They left the city of St. Gallen in a dispute over restrictive guild regulations, to dedicate themselves to textile finishing, such as bleaching and dressing, in the Thurgau countryside, establishing one of the first large-scale manufactory in the 1660s. Initially active in the linen trade, they were among the very first customers of the Zellweger merchants. Later, they were only identifiable as their bleachers and finishers. Zellweger's records from the peripheral perspective on the countryside, shed new light not only on the density of contemporary textile finishing companies. Through countless suppliers, subcontractors, export companies, bankers, customers, and personnel, everything from trade routes, financial flows, goods flows, as well as changes in strategies and processes over the years can be examined and illustrated.

To illustrate the potential of analyzing their business correspondence, let us refer to the city of Augsburg. The Zellweger merchants maintained 72 relationships. Exceedingly intensive were the relationships with the bankers Christian Georg Köpf

⁴³ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-15-01-01 to 05), Zellweger & Comp.: 13 letters to Trümpler & Gysi in Marseille, Trogen, 1800-1811; (STAAR: Pa.021-17-01-03), Johannes Zellweger Sohn: 16 letters to Trümpler & Gysi in Marseille, Trogen, 1803-1809; (STAAR: Pa.021-18-01-02), J.C. Zellweger: 31 letters to Trümpler & Gysi in Marseille, Trogen, 1809-1814.

(1699-1758)⁴⁴, *Johannes Halder*⁴⁵ and *Johannes & Georg Walter von Halder*⁴⁶ for their money exchange business, each of them documented in 260 to over 500 letters. Furthermore, the investigation of their relationship to the successful *Georg Friedrich Zäckelmayer* in Augsburg would be worthwhile. *Zellweger Vater & Comp.* bought the cotton items «Mouchoirs Calencas» and «mi Calencas».⁴⁷ Since around 1770 Zäckelmayer, also referred to as Zaggelmeyer or Zegelmajer in the Zellweger's correspondence, has been one of the largest calico manufacturers in Augsburg. Nevertheless, nothing is known about his origins or his exact dates of birth and death.⁴⁸

Like all old trade fairs such as Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main and Bozen toward the end of the eighteenth century, the trade faire Beaucaire suffered the decline to a mere fair. The phase of periodic, tax-exempted trading was over. At the same time, the institution of linen control in Trogen was closed after 120 years in 1798 to be followed some years later by the several centuries old one in the nearby city St. Gallen. Unlike linen fabric, cotton fabric as the highly sought-after textile item of the new time had never been subject to any inspection. Serious changes in the political relationship between France and the old Swiss Confederacy before, during and after the French Revolution led to the closure of the two Zellweger branches in Lyon after more than a hundred years of presence. The same happened to the two branches in Genoa after forty years of presence in 1808 while the occupied and oppressed Genoa lost its economic importance in favor of Marseille highly celebrated as gate of the French Empire to the Mediterranean.

After the turn of the century up to 1820, a huge number of new names appeared in the registers of the copy of letter books, but each correspondence being insignificantly small, seldomly more than two or three letters. As a result of the political war-like circumstances in trade under Napoleon, three of the five at the same time in the same textile trade participating companies Zellweger went bankrupt from 1814 to 1817. Nevertheless, many of the sons Zellweger completed again their commercial apprenticeship and became merchants. They founded insurances (*Helvetia*, St. Gallen), banking businesses (*Ulrich Zellweger & Cie.*, Paris) or entertained factories in communication technology (*Zellweger AG*, Uster). Some of them traded in cotton (*Zellweger frères*, Winterthur-Le Havre). Their sons served as merchant employees of cotton trading companies (*Gebrüder Volkart* and *Paul Reinhart & Cie.*, Winterthur) up to the middle of the twentieth century.

⁴⁴ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-03-01-01 to 05, Pa.021-08-01-03), Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: 503 letters to Christian Georg Köpf in Augsburg, Trogen, 1747-1769.

⁴⁵ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-08-01-03), Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: 286 letters to Johannes Halder in Augsburg, Trogen, 1762-1769.

⁴⁶ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-08-01-03), Gebrüder Zellweger & Comp.: 266 letters to Johannes & Georg Walter von Halder in Augsburg, Trogen, 1762-1769.

⁴⁷ State Archive Appenzell Ausserrhoden (STAAR: Pa.021-12-01-03), Zellweger Vater & Comp.: 15 letters to Georg Friedrich Zäckelmayer in Augsburg, Trogen, 1774-1778.

⁴⁸ Mark Häberlein, Michaela Schmölz-Häberlein. 2010.09.03. Article «Zäckelmayer.» In *Augsburger Stadtlexikon online*; Wolfgang Zorn. 1961. Handels- und Industriegeschichte Bayerisch-Schwaben (1961), 55.

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