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Heinz Altschul:  
"As I Record These Memories ..."  
Erinnerungen eines deutschen Kaufmanns  
in Kobe (1926–29, 1934–46)

OAG

Nikola Herweg / Thomas Pekar / Christian W. Spang (eds.)

## Heinz Altschul: "As I Record These Memories..."

Erinnerungen eines deutschen Kaufmanns in Kobe (1926–29, 1934–46)  
(Recollections of a German businessman in Kobe, 1926-29, 1934-46)

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*The following is from the Introduction by Thomas Pekar:*

Underlying this book are the remembrances of Heinz Altschul, who in 1989 at the age of 86 (...) recorded them (...) in his apartment in California. His son, Dieter Robert Altschul, transcribed the recordings in 2011, provided them with several annotations, and edited them into manuscript form. By various circuitous routes the manuscript reached the German East Asiatic Society (OAG), who made the decision to issue it in English, the language used by Altschul sen. in his recording.

Heinz Altschul, born in November 1903 in Dresden, was a German businessman in the western Japanese port city of Kobe. In his remembrances he reported primarily about the time of World War II. As a German businessman he was well integrated in the multifarious life of the German community in Kobe, its clubs, organizations and social life, until the National Socialists' race delusions began to spread also there. Altschul, raised as a Protestant, was classified by the perverse logic of the Nuremberg Laws as a Full Jew, which during the fateful years of the Nazi dictatorship were grounds for discrimination, persecution, loss of citizenship and murder. Altschul experienced most of the Nazi years in Japan; after first living there from 1926 to 1929, working for a German company, he returned to Kobe in 1934, this time together with his wife and small son, again to work for the same company. In effect this second journey to Japan could well be viewed as an "emigration," although Altschul himself did not use this word in his recordings. In Kobe he was safe from the Nazis' extermination policy, in as much as Japan, although since 1936 an ally of Nazi-Germany, had its own policies which offered Jews a minimum of protection and residence opportunities. Yet, even in Kobe, Altschul was not spared the enmity of the Germans in Japan.

Altschul's unique situation, living in Japan as a German with Jewish background and forced to come to terms with these discriminations and exclusionary forces make his remembrances a historical document of a very specific kind. Little is known about the living conditions of not only the German Jews, but also of the dissidents and the non-collaborators among the Germans in 1930s and 1940s Japan.

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The German original of this circular is available at: <http://www.iudicium.de/katalog/86205-110.htm>.  
The English version was prepared by D. Robert Altschul & Christian W. Spang