

The most prominent Aleppo-Jewish family in Kobe was the **Sassoons**, nicknamed at the time as “the Rothschilds of the East”. **Rahmo Sassoon**, born in 1912, immigrated from Halab to Japan in the 1930's. Shortly after their arrival in Kobe, Rahmo and his family, began to engage in export/import. Later Rahmo acquired land both for the community and for his own business. The warehouse built on this land was used for social activities as a cards clubhouse and later as a gathering place for prayers, such as a modest synagogue named after Rahmo's father, Shlomo. This, according to Joe Djmal, is where the congregation used to pray, without the presence of an accompanying Rabbi.

### The Character of the Community

The Jewish community was organized along “legislative” principles, including orderly Articles of Association and a committee composed of a president, vice-president, treasurer, secretariat and chairman.



Apart from community members gathering for prayer services, their social activity also took place at the “Kobe Club”. The Club was set up as an attraction for foreign residents in the region, and housed, inter alia, a swimming-pool, movie hall and various game rooms.

**Joe Djmal** describes the Jewish population in Kobe as a closed community, especially as long as it was small and everyone knew everyone else there. This was the situation in the early years of its activity, when Jews from Halab and Iraqi comprised the majority in Kobe. Community members served as a family for one another.

Kobe Jews who had immigrated from the Middle East preserved their cultural traits and common

values in diverse ways. They spoke Arabic within their own community, in the dialect characteristic of that community, whilst the literary Arabic language served as a common language among the various communities. On the other hand, in Kobe as in various other places worldwide, synagogues services and religious functions were predominated by the Halab customs. Prayers were conducted according to the chants, liturgical texts and cantillation notes of Halab, and Jews originating from other countries who had settled in Kobe also learned the Halab form of prayer. The Jewish population in Kobe preserved its orthodox-traditional nature, as distinct from the community in Tokyo, where the Reform and other streams of Judaism were practiced. The community celebrated Jewish feasts together at the synagogue, including the Independence Day of the State of Israel.

### Jews Under Japanese Rule

The community gradually increased. Jews arriving in Kobe to purchase Japanese merchandise