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Beate Sirota Gordon

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#989564 in Books Beate Sirota Gordon 2014-04-11 2014-04-11 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.00 x .50 x 6.00l, .55 #File Name: 022613251X176 pages The Only Woman in the Room A Memoir of Japan Human Rights and the Arts | File size: 77.Mb

Beate Sirota Gordon : The Only Woman in the Room: A Memoir of Japan, Human Rights, and the Arts before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Only Woman in the Room: A Memoir of Japan, Human Rights, and the Arts:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Family History By David M What an amazing life Beate

Sirota Gordon lived. This book caught my attention because it dealt with her part in helping write a new constitution for post-war Japan. It also gives a good account of conditions in Japan before, during, and just after the war. Over half the book deals with Beate's life in various countries with a large amount of her growing years spent in Japan. This helps understand where her passion came from in fighting to include articles in the new constitution about protections for women and children. Her deep understanding of Japanese culture was key to why she knew these would be essential for the future of Japan. Fascinating family history and a great read for anyone and especially those interested in WWII history. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Incredible story By J.I got this as a gift for my mother and she said she cried all the way through it was such an incredible book 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Am Always Learning By John Manjiro Didn't know about her and her background until I read this book. We came so close to meeting each other yet we never did. Too bad, I wished I had met her. Enjoyed reading this book very much. Although, I enjoyed reading her activities after her return from Japan, wished she wrote more of Japan during those turbulent years. With both of us being raised by a musician father and my father winning medal in Vienna as the first Japanese in music competition around the same period, am sure we would have had lots to talk about. It seems like both of our parents knew Kosaku Yamada very well. Life is indeed very interesting.

In 1946, at age twenty-two, Beate Sirota Gordon helped to draft the new postwar Japanese Constitution. *The Only Woman in the Room* chronicles how a daughter of Russian Jews became the youngest woman to aid in the rushed, secret drafting of a constitution; how she almost single-handedly ensured that it would establish the rights of Japanese women; and how, as a fluent speaker of Japanese and the only woman in the room, she assisted the American negotiators as they worked to persuade the Japanese to accept the new charter. Sirota was born in Vienna, but in 1929 her family moved to Japan so that her father, a noted pianist, could teach, and she grew up speaking German, English, and Japanese. Russian, French, Italian, Latin, and Hebrew followed, and at fifteen Sirota was sent to complete her education at Mills College in California. The formal declaration of World War II cut Gordon off from her parents, and she supported herself by working for a CBS listening post in San Francisco that would eventually become part of the FCC. Translating was one of Sirota's many talents, and when the war ended, she was sent to Japan as a language expert to help the American occupation forces. When General MacArthur suddenly created a team that included Sirota to draft the new Japanese Constitution, he gave them just eight days to accomplish the task. Colonel Roest said to Beate Sirota, "You're a woman, why don't you write the women's rights section?"; and she seized the opportunity to write into law guarantees of equality unparalleled in the US Constitution to this day. But this was only one episode in an extraordinary life, and when Gordon died in December 2012, words of grief and praise poured from artists, humanitarians, and thinkers the world over. Illustrated with forty-seven photographs, *The Only Woman in the Room* captures two cultures at a critical moment in history and recounts, after a fifty-year silence, a life lived with purpose and courage. This edition contains a new afterword by Nicole A. Gordon and an elegy by Geoffrey Paul Gordon.

From Publishers Weekly This engaging, modest account recalls the life and times of a woman who made significant contributions to both Japanese and American cultures, first as an advocate for civil rights clauses in the postwar Japanese constitution, later as a promoter of Asian-American amity through the arts for the Japan Society and the Asia Society. A daughter of internationally known pianist Leo Sirota, a Russian-Jewish emigre who settled first in Vienna, where the author was born, and then, with the shadow of Hitler looming, emigrated to Japan, where Sirota taught at the Imperial Academy of Music in Tokyo. There Gordon grew up and became, as she notes, "part Japanese." After attending college in California and working part-time monitoring Japanese broadcasts, she landed a research job in Japanese affairs at Time magazine after the outbreak of WWII; during the war she assumed a position on Gen. Douglas MacArthur's occupation staff, where she participated in the drafting of the new constitution, with particular attention to women's rights. Noting that she was frequently "the only woman in the room" during these experiences, she offers here quietly feminist, freshly illuminating observations about the two cultures that are distinguished by a persuasive international outlook. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist This memoir by the daughter of the famous Russian pianist Leo Sirota reveals an eventful life, recollected with succinct but vivid detail. Of Russian Jewish heritage, Gordon grew up in Vienna, about which she remembers little. Political and economic conditions compelled her family to leave Europe for Japan, where her parents planned to remain for only a few months, but they ultimately stayed for many years. Gordon herself came to the U.S. to attend college; then war broke out, and she was separated from her parents for an excruciating length of time. After Japan's defeat, she rejoined her mother and father there, and she worked for the American occupation forces. She returned to the U.S. in 1947, began a career in arts sponsorship, and became a wife and mother. Interesting reading for those who enjoy hearing about quiet but strong lives, from which personal inspiration may be gained. Brad Hooper From Kirkus s Gordons memoir fails to convey the passion and excitement of her extraordinary life. As the only daughter of world-famous Russian pianist Leo Sirota, from a young age Gordon was launched on a brilliant cosmopolitan trajectory. Her earliest experiences of Europe's reigning cities and a flashing cultural elite promised the girl a heady future. According to her, however, the most important aspect of Gordon's youth was her extensive expatriate stint in Japan, where her family fled shortly

before WW II, alarmed by mounting European anti-Semitism. Although she left for the US during the war, Gordon returned to Japan once WW II had ended, working as a civilian in General MacArthur's Tokyo office and assisting with the writing of the Japanese constitution, which laid the framework for postwar life in that nation. She was mandated to research and draw up the part of the constitution which altered the status of women in a society where, until then, none had ever enjoyed a bona fide legal status. The constitution also ensured education for all people in a country that in some respects remained fundamentally feudal. Gordon ably conveys the historic significance of her undertaking, while giving short shrift to personal insights. Her style hides the writer from us, muffling the excitements of her intercontinental, multi-lingual roving. The book is also hampered by Gordon's disconcerting decision to tilt forward and backward in time, creating an uncomfortable distance between the then and the now of her story. When she took up residence in New York in 1947, Gordon by no means abandoned her unusual cultural expertise and training. Instead, she assumed a leading role in bringing the arts of Asia to an American audience and traveled, consorting with emperors, gurus, and koto players. Too bad her tale largely fails to take leave of the page. (36 bw photos, not seen) -- Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.