

# Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

Booklist Online Exclusive: March 14, 2018

## ★ **Finding Kukan.**

Jan 2018. New Day Films, DVD, \$95. (9781574484403).

The 1942 Academy Award for documentary was awarded to photojournalist Rey Scott for *Kukan*, a film shot in China during WWII. Listed on the credits is Li Ling-Ai as technical advisor. Filmmaker Robin Lung, intrigued by the role of this Asian American woman, sets out to investigate the film's origins and Ling-Ai's role. She tracks down Ling-Ai's descendants and friends and hears firsthand accounts of the woman's determination to present the truth behind the Japanese invasion of China in the 1940s. According to these memories, as well as newspaper accounts and scholars' commentaries, it is determined that Ling-Ai conceived the idea for the documentary, raised funds for Scott's filming, and promoted the film, in effect making her the producer. In a 1993 interview with Ling-Ai in her New York apartment, the feisty octogenarian discusses her life and talks about racism and tells how she tried to improve the image of the Chinese in America. We also meet Scott's sons, one of whom has an original 16mm copy of the film, which has been missing from the Academy of Motion Picture archives. Brief dramatizations in silhouette and some jazzy background music add atmosphere to this fascinating portrait of a pioneer Asian American filmmaker and her determination to push boundaries and promote China. Includes two bonus archival features of the remastered *Kukan*. The college and university price is \$325.

— *Candace Smith*