



## Matamata and Pilipili

A Film by  
Tristan  
Bourland



In the 1950s Albert Van Haelst, a Belgian missionary and film fanatic, made some twenty films in the Congo: the Matamata and Pilipili series. These comic heroes, an African answer to Laurel and Hardy, delighted Congolese moviegoers.

The films disappeared at the close of the colonial period. Until Tristan Bourland recovered the original negatives from archives in Belgium and produced MATAMATA AND PILIPILI, the films had never been viewed outside of Africa.

More than fifty years later, MATAMATA AND PILIPILI reveals these forgotten gems. Through them, and through the story of their creation, their reception by the Congolese audiences, their disappearance, and what happened to Van Haelst and his two Congolese stars, MATAMATA AND PILIPILI reclaims an important episode in Congolese cultural history, while exploring the complex terrain of colonial relationships, media representations, and popular culture.

"A significant documentary... Lays bare the tension between exploitation and the need of Africans to see images of themselves even if mediated by a colonial hand. Bourland succeeds both in recovering lost cinema history and exposing, to a degree, contemporary postcolonial tensions. An important contribution... appropriate for postcolonial, cultural, ethnological, African and cinema studies courses or venues."—Professor Sheila Petty, University of Regina, for H-AfriLitCine

\*\* 1997 African Studies Association Conference Film Festival

\*\* 1997 Margaret Mead Film Festival, New York

\*\* 1997 Bilan du Film Ethnographique, Musée de l'Homme (Paris)