

# Bringing a 90-Year-Old Film of Samoa Back to Life

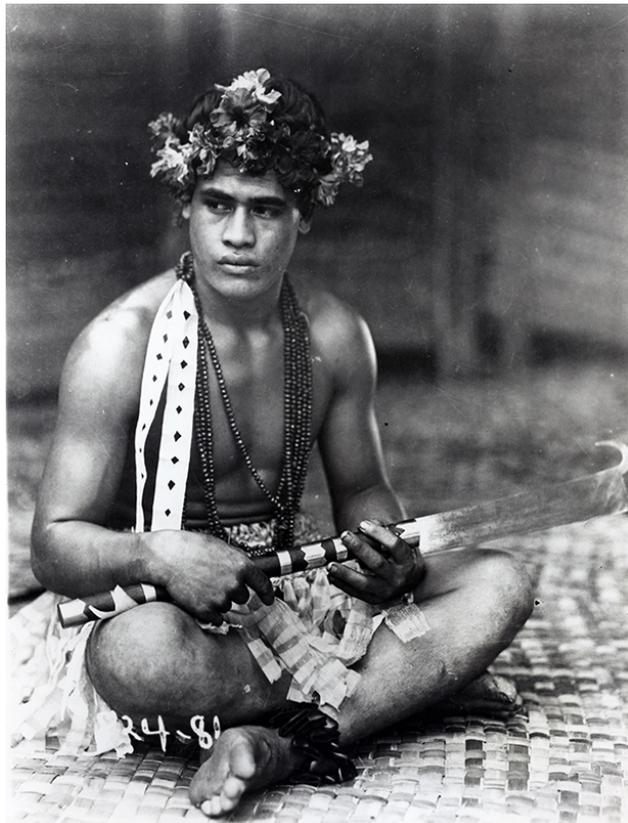
*A rare chance to see  
and discuss an  
exceptional film*

[Victoria University of Wellington's Stout Research Centre](#) and Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision have come together, with the support of [Kava Club](#), to host the New Zealand premiere public screening of the restored film *Moana with Sound* (1926/1980/2014).



*Moana with Sound* (Robert J. Flaherty, Frances H. Flaherty and Monica Flaherty, 1926/1980/2014)

Sami Van Ingen and Bruce Posner digitally restored the sound version of the film in 2014. The restored film will premiere on 1 September in Wellington and is followed by a free, day-long public symposium on 2 September to discuss the film with Pasifika filmmakers, writers, artists and academics. Speakers include Sima Urale, Victor Rodger, Sean Mallon, Teresia Teaiwa, Karlo Mila and Tusi Tamasese.



*Moana with Sound* (Robert J. Flaherty, Frances H. Flaherty and Monica Flaherty, 1926/1980/2014)

*Moana* was filmed by the husband and wife team Robert and Frances Flaherty over 1923 and 1924 in the Samoan village Savai'i, and is the first feature-length film to be noted as having "documentary value." In 1975 Monica Flaherty returned to Savai'i to create a soundtrack for her parents' silent film.

At the film's centre is Moana, son of a tribal chief, who journeys towards manhood as he spends a week being tattooed. The film captures the villagers as they fish, hunt, make clothes, feast and dance.

As New York film editor and writer Alan Scherstuhl writes of the 1926 film:

*“Moana, a film of incomparable calm and beauty, is not a documentary in the strict sense, but it remains a document of great historical truth: Here is how Flaherty and the Western world preferred to imagine that tribal cultures lived.”*

Victoria University’s Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Pasifika) Associate Professor Hon. Luamanuvao Winnie Laban, whose maternal grandmother was born in the village, says it’s incredibly special to see traditional Samoan life, untouched and unedited, on the big screen:

*“The film really captures the spirit of Samoa. The landscape is so lush and you see the beauty, mutual respect and generosity of the people.”*

Stout Research Centre director Professor Lydia Wevers says the Centre is delighted to partner with the New Zealand audiovisual archive, Ngā Taonga Sound &



Vision.

“*Moana* is a remarkable record of Samoan life in the 1920s and it was described at the time as a ‘living panorama.’ It will be fascinating to see what filmmakers, scholars and students make of it now.”

In May this year, a private screening of the restored film was held in Wellington for descendants of the Safune district. “It was important to return this footage first of all to the people whose ancestors’ lives and images are recorded in this film,” says Diane Pivac, Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision’s Outreach & Engagement Manager.



*Moana with Sound* (Robert J. Flaherty, Frances H. Flaherty and Monica Flaherty, 1926/1980/2014)

## What: Screening of the restored *Moana with Sound*

**When:** 6pm, 1 September and 4.30pm, 3 September

**Where:** Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, 84 Taranaki St, Wellington

**Tickets:** Premiere 1 September \$12 general admission, \$10 students (incl complimentary drink) - ***this screening is now fully booked***

Second screening 3 September, \$10 general admission, \$8 students - [book tickets](#)

## What: *Moana* symposium

*If the registration link below is booked out please email [communications@ngataonga.org.nz](mailto:communications@ngataonga.org.nz) and we will put you on a waiting list.*

**When:** 9am-5pm, 2 September

**Where:** Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision, 84 Taranaki St, Wellington

**Cost:** Free, [register online to reserve your space](#)

**Guest speakers:** include Sima Urale, Victor Rodger, Sean Mallon, Teresia Teaiwa, Nathaniel Lees, Karlo Mila and Tusi Tamasese.



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