

What's in a Title? The use of honorifics in media coverage

Linda Waimarie Nikora & Yvonne Te Pohe

*Maori & Psychology Research Unit,
University of Waikato*

Background

On the 15th August 2006, Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu (referred to in this paper as Te Arikinui) passed away at the age of 75 years old after serving the Kingitanga movement for forty years. Her passing heralded the movement of large numbers of people to Turangawaewae marae where she lay in state. Intensive media coverage played a significant role in representing who Te Arikinui was, in profiling the Kingitanga movement and activities associated with the tangi as it progressed from the 15th to the 21st August 2006.

The Kingitanga movement began in the 1850's, some years after the arrival of Pakeha colonists to Aotearoa. It was an attempt to halt the sale of land and to promote Maori authority. To achieve this, the Maori world settled upon an institution that Maori and Pakeha alike understood – a King. After much debate, the Waikato leader, Potatau Te Wherowhero reluctantly accepted the mantle of King from a representative gathering of Maori leaders from around the country. The Kingitanga leadership has remained with Waikato up to the present day. Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu was the sixth leader of the Kingitanga movement and the first woman to be elevated to the position.

In this paper, we refer to the late Kingitanga leader as “Te Arikinui”, a title never applied lightly and indeed, used in reference to an extremely limited number of people. For Te Arikinui, it was a title that grew in circulation as she grew into her leadership role but it was a title that came after a string of others. To begin with, she was crowned with the title “Queen” or “Kuini”. With the title of leadership also came a new name “Te Atairangikaahu” (or Te Ata) in honour of her mother, leaving aside the title and name “Princess Piki”. The title “Ariki Tapairu” was one preferred by Te Arikinui rather than “Queen” or

“Kuini” and is used to refer to a chieftainess in her own right as the daughter of King Koroki.

In 1970, four years after becoming the leader of the Kingitanga movement, her leadership and friendship was recognised by the British Sovereign Queen Elizabeth II. Te Arikinui became a Dame Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (DBE) for her services to her people entitling her to use the title “Dame”. In the same year she became a “Doctor” after being awarded an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Waikato, and again in 1999 from the Victoria University. As patron of many organizations (The Maori Women's Welfare League, Te Kohanga Reo) and recipient of many awards and prizes (The British Sovereign's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1978; the Office of the Order of St John in 1986; the Order of New Zealand in 1988; The New Zealand Suffrage Centennial Medal in 1993; and the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Gold and Silver Star – Japan in 1996).

To friends, family and colleagues, she was affectionately known as “Te Ata” or “The Lady” and on occasion as “Madam” but to the world, her official title, as recorded in the official programme for her 40th coronation anniversary in May 2006 was “Te Arikinui Dame Te Atairangikaahu”.

What were we interested in?

In this study, we were interested in examining how Te Arikinui was referred to in the media coverage of her passing and tangi. We examined six days of mainstream television coverage produced and aired by the New Zealand government owned TV One broadcaster. TV One maintains an archive of news bulletins aired in news shows that it produces. Conveniently we accessed and extracted 24 news items from TV One's online archive at <http://www.tvone.co.nz>.

Extracted From:

Levy, M., Nikora, L.W., Masters-Awatere, B., Rua, M.R., Waitoki, W. (2008). *Claiming Spaces: Proceedings of the 2007 National Maori and Pacific Psychologies Symposium, 23-24 November, Hamilton*. Hamilton: Maori and Psychology Research Unit.

Through repetitive viewing, we identified the range of titles used by presenters, reporters and those interviewed. There were 87 occurrences within 24 news clips. Ten different titles were used to refer to Te Arikinui. Of these occurrences it was clear that references to Te Arikinui varied according to who was presenting (P) or reporting (R) the news and by who was being interviewed (I) by news reporters. The media clips were reviewed and categorized accordingly to who the presenters, reporters or people interviewed were. Where known, the ethnicity of the presenter, reporter or interviewee was also recorded.

Preliminary Findings

The results of our analyses are presented in the three figures that follow. Figure 1 records the range of titles and the frequency of their use. In Figure 2 and 3, the forms of address and their occurrence in our news media sample as used by presenters, reporters and interviewees are presented by whether they were Maori or non-Maori respectively.

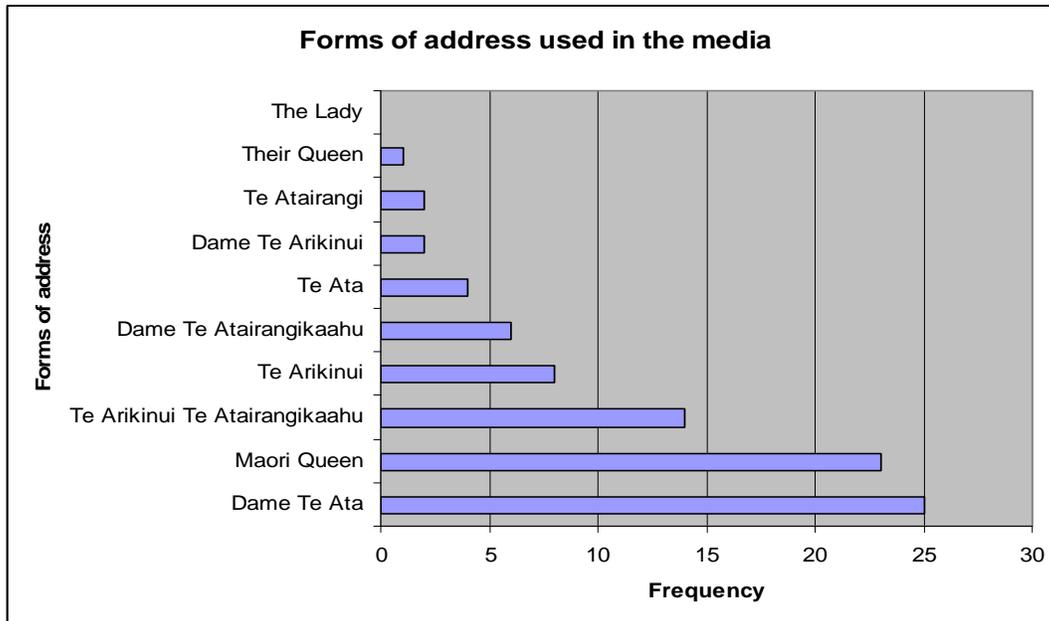
Thoughts and Comments

Though we have applied a very simple analysis procedure to our media sample, what is clear from these results is that Maori references to Te Arikinui favoured the use of the titles “Te Arikinui Te Atairangikaahu”, “the Maori Queen”, “Te Arikinui” and “Dame Te Ata”. Non-Maori tended to use “Dame Te Ata”, “The Maori Queen” and “Dame Te Atairangikaahu”.

While we may be able to identify a “correct” honorific for Te Arikinui, our findings suggest that its understanding and use by mainstream television news media presenters, reporters and interviewees is a matter influenced by ethnic and cultural politics. The preferred use of titles by Maori and non-Maori sets up a process where representations of Te Ariki are contested. To non-Maori she is a “Dame”. To Maori, she is Te Arikinui.

Through further analysis and theorising we will endeavour to further discuss the nature of these politics and the differences between Maori and non-Maori representations of Te Arikinui.

Figure 1. Range of titles and frequency of use



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Figure 2. Forms of address used by Maori in the media

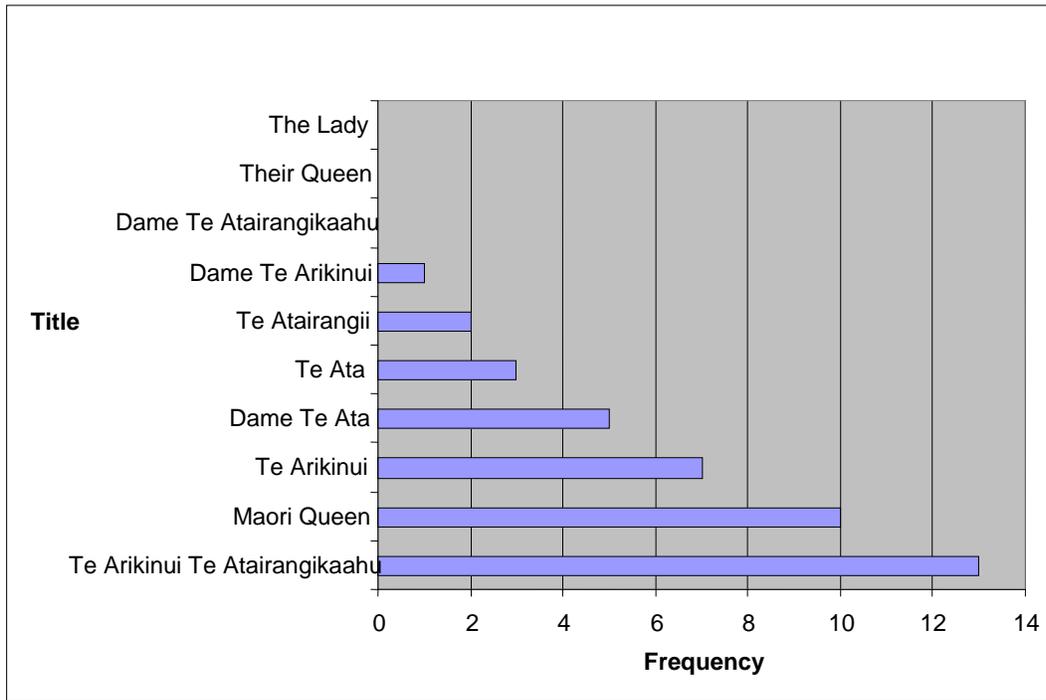
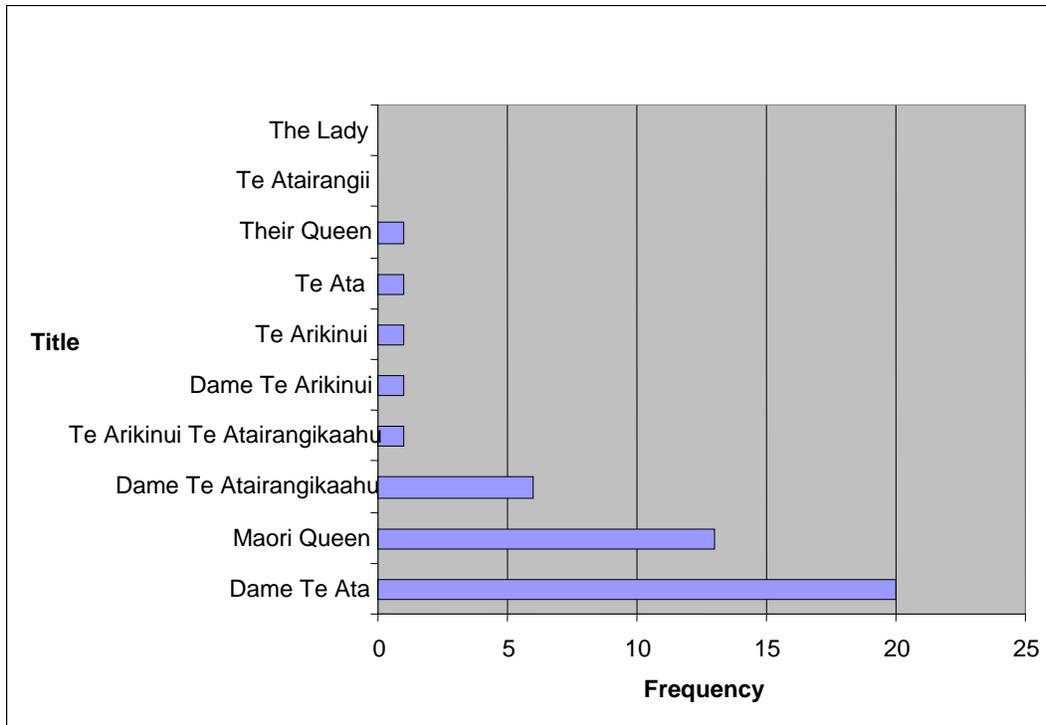


Figure 3. Forms of address used by non-Maori



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