From a Letter I Imagine.

POIA REWI

I feel so blessed to have been raised in the era which actualized the term mātua rautia[1]- that is, to be raised by a number of elders. In reflecting on my early years, it felt like many of my memories were of the people I met, and it seemed everyone was an aunt, an uncle, a nanny or a koro. As such, I would also be privileged to go from house to house, marae to marae, and be loved/spoilt by all those adults. In addition, I got to play with all the cuzzies and eat at their homes or they at ours, or at our marae. But I would always return home to our small 1.5-bedroom house which accommodated six of our family of eight.[2] During my primary school years, I recollect having to cross a small creek by way of two bendy planks set side-by-side to reach the house. I was then sent away to boarding school and then to university, only returning to this house during holidays. During my secondary school years, our paternal grandparents had since moved into this small house and our parents to a larger house on the opposite side of the creek. It was during my university years that I stumbled one day upon an old, musty, brown suitcase which had memoirs from my grandparent's time. It contained a wool classification book, diaries, some odd bits of clothing, a few old newspaper clippings and a handful of small envelopes. These items had remained in that suitcase in the old wooden closet in the small dilapidating house for a number of years minding their own business. Entering my twenties, and probably due to the university influence for enquiry, my interest would pique and the contents of the suitcase became treasures for me, in particular two related letters. My sense of attachment is probably not dissimilar to why all these items had been 'stashed' there in the first place, as cherished items by our grandmother, the mother of one of the two letter writers and sister-in-law of the other. This chapter opens some of those small envelopes and reveals the contents therein. One may ask, 'why now?' I honestly can't say. Perhaps these old letters are the past minding their own business, but now finding our business of today to be interested in their content.

I have selected two letters from the suitcase: one penned in 1940, written from the younger brother to his older sibling, and the other a response written by his nephew in 1941. Upon reading these letters for the first time, I was overwhelmed with emotion. I would read these letters again at later points in time, and that feeling of poignancy would come flooding in again. And of course, my reading also stirred some pleasure in connecting with these elders I never got to meet in person. In perhaps answering the 'why now' question above, it is this longing to reconnect through the letters that has prompted this writing today. The ponderings as I read and re-read provide some musings of what it must have been like.

As I share parts of these letters in this essay, I use the term 'imaginings' as my mind seeks to analyse the text and imagine the scene when the letters were written. I imagine where the authors or the recipients were, what the weather might have been like at that time and who might have been there with them. I imagine the authors' voices, what they might have sounded like based on the photographs I have of them, and I try to hear the narrations of the letters through these 'imagined' voices. And I imagine what they were experiencing physically and emotionally.

In addition, I discuss select textual features of one of the letters, as well as content matter from which I have attempted to interpret what the author was experiencing more than 70 years ago,

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the tone of the exchange, and what, perhaps, lay 'between the lines'. As a former teacher of te reo Māori, I also want to comment on the Māori language used and how it differs from the way a person might write today. My personal commentary about the exchange of information is merely interpretive and speculative. They are my imaginings. I do not know how people 70 years ago would have actually felt, let alone what they may have experienced. However, as a son, a grandson, a great grandson, a father and a grandparent myself, imaginings of experience have been afforded to both the text and context.

Letter One

The following letter below provides the base upon which my imaginings rest and develop henceforth.

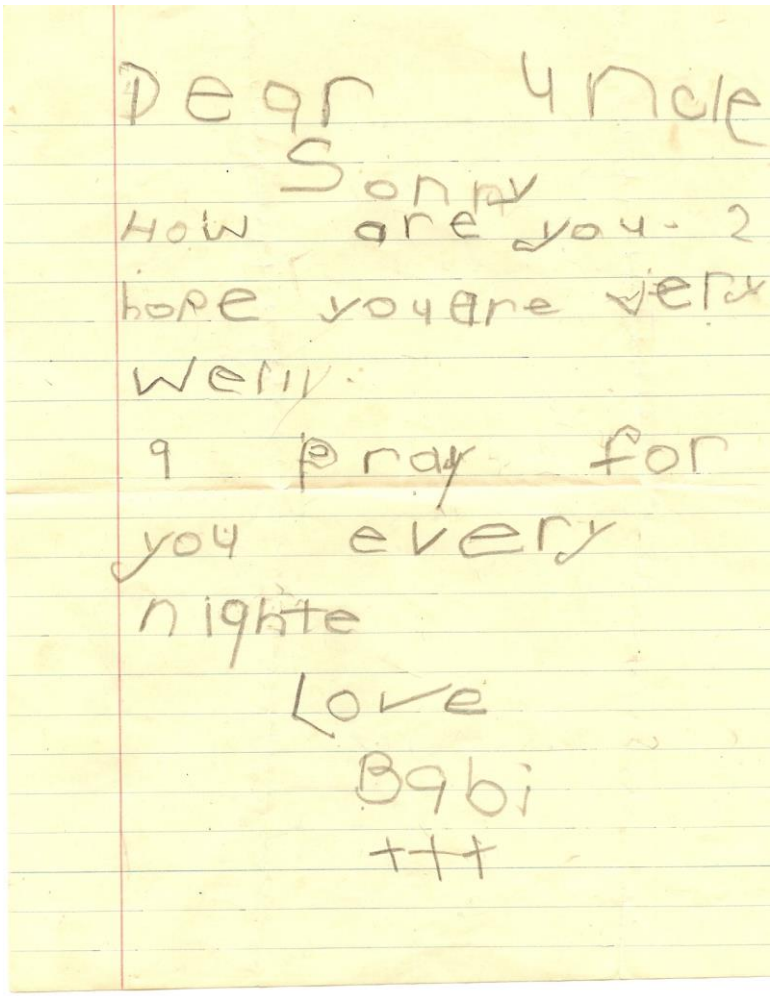
Dear Uncle
Sonny
How are you. I
hope you are very
well.
I pray for
you every
night
Love
Babi
+++

Figure 1: Babi letter, 28 May 1941.

We know when it was written, but who wrote it? Where and why was it written?

It was of course written by 'Babi', a young boy living at the time in the small rural community of Te Whāiti, near Murupara in the Bay of Plenty. Babi's father Dave was the older sibling of 'Uncle Sonny' and according to his father, Dave, 'little Bubbie' was 'lying all over the table' at the time he wrote it.

The next image will give you a good idea of the main context of this article.

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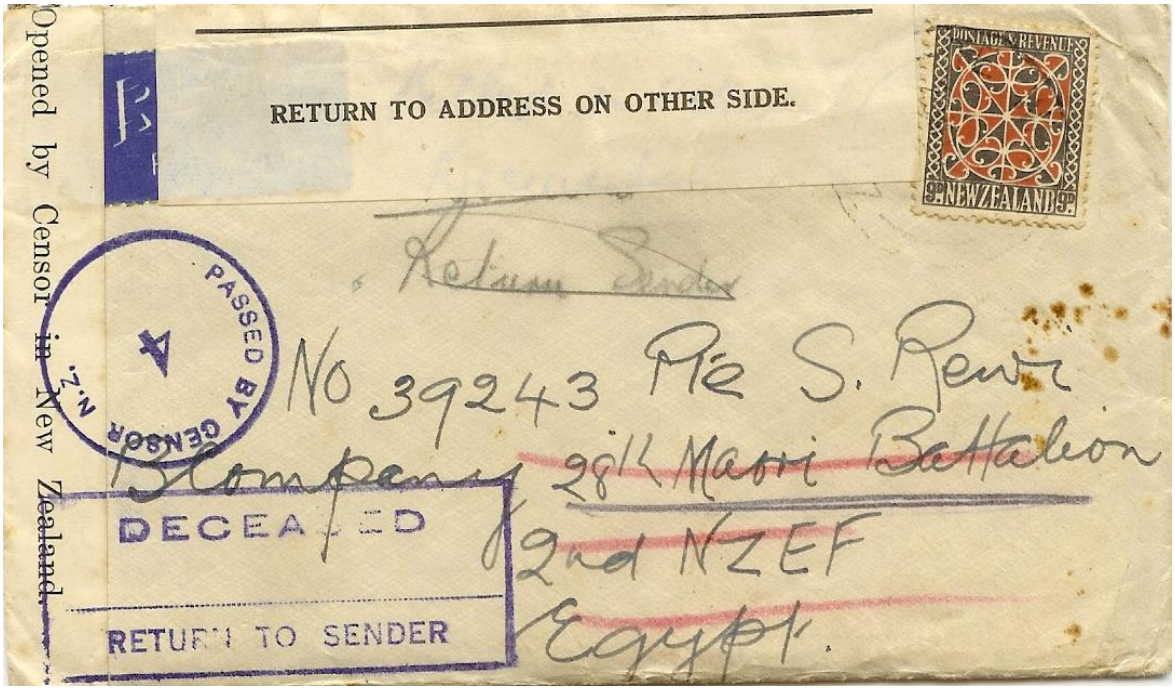


Figure 2: Envelope. "Deceased Return to Sender"

'Uncle Sonny', service number 39243, is Private Sonny Rewi[3] of B Company of the 28th Māori Battalion,[4] which was part of the Second New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF) deployed to Egypt in 1940.[5] Sonny Rewi was born in 1911 and killed in action in Crete on 27 May 1941. Babi's letter had sat alongside the letter sent by his father, Dave, written on the 28 May, just one day later. These letters would still have been on New Zealand soil when Sonny was killed.

My Imaginings

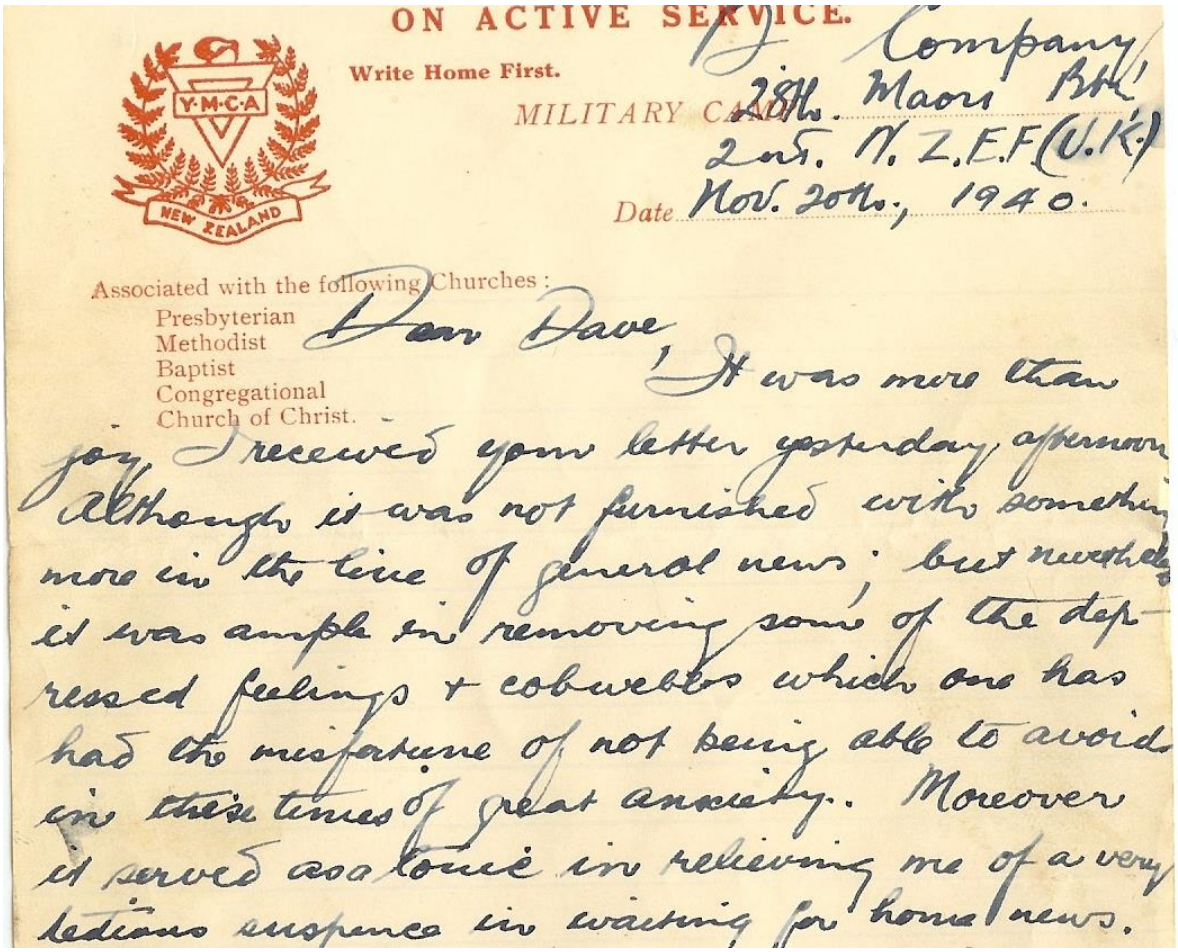
So my imaginings begin. Who received the letter when it was delivered; a cousin, a nephew or niece, his mother, an aunty or uncle? The most emotive reaction I could imagine would be that received from his very mother living in Te Whāiti. I imagine her heart would initially be lifted with joy and hope to know she was receiving mail from her son. I imagine this would be followed by the heavy thump in realising what the external markers on the envelope have already foreshadowed. The official "Deceased Return to sender" stamp has confirmed for her what every whānau member of any soldier would have dreaded, despite sudden death being an expectation of war. She would never see her son alive again. She would never see her remaining seven children welcome their middle brother home and shed tears of relief that he had returned safely before they laughed and joked with each other. I imagine she would, however, witness their tears of sorrow and faces of grief. One hand would be on the letter and the other on her heart where the pain would be searing and sharp, cold and blunt, implosive and explosive. Or perhaps that hand was not on her heart, but on her mouth as she attempted to suppress the grief in the form of a gasp, or a piercing wail that would let all in close proximity know that te takapau nekeneke a Aituā[6] had positioned itself below this whānau on this day. Would her legs have been strong enough to support her body now bending under the weight of this loss? How long would it take for them to move? Who would console her? Her husband, siblings, cousins or nieces and nephews?

Stepping back from herself, more questions would add to the confusion. How did he die? What will happen to his body? Will I bury him in our urupā? Where will I position him? They may perhaps have heard more details of his death from the returned veterans, such as Private Henry Bird who came across two of his comrades:

> Both men were crying, and one handed him Sonny Rewi's paybook. Opening this he found 'that a bullet had entered the photo of his girlfriend Wiki Nuku, passed on through his pay book and I guessed into his heart as he carried his pay book in the left pocket of his tunic'.[7]

Sonny and Henry Bird were cousins. The 27th May was the eighth day of a 12-day battle in which four men, including Sonny Rewi, of the Waiohau/Murupara district lost their lives.[8] We leave these musings here and digress towards other exchanges before we resume the narrative of imaginings.

On 20th November, 1940, Pte Sonny Rewi penned a letter to his brother Dave, three years his senior, who had been restricted from enlisting for health reasons. This letter had paragraphs in both English and Māori; we first look at parts of the English text, then parts in te reo Māori. It must also be clear that I do not have the letters written to Uncle Sonny prior to this so what follows are merely my own interpretations and imaginings of the text.


ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

Write Home First.

Y·M·C·A NEW ZEALAND

MILITARY CAMP. 28th. Maori Bn. Company
2nd. N.Z.E.F. (U.K.)

Date Nov. 20th., 1940.

Associated with the following Churches:
Presbyterian
Methodist
Baptist
Congregational
Church of Christ.

Dear Dave, It was more than
joy I received your letter yesterday afternoon
although it was not furnished with something
more in the line of general news; but nevertheless
it was ample in removing some of the depressed
feelings & cobwebbs which one has
had the misfortune of not being able to avoid
in these times of great anxiety. Moreover
it served as a tonic in relieving me of a very
tedious suspence in waiting for home news.

Figure 3: Excerpt 1, Sonny Rewi letter, 20 November 1940

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Dear Dave,

It was more than joy I received your letter yesterday afternoon. Although it was not finished with something more in the line of general news, but nevertheless it was ample in removing some of the depressed feelings & cobwebs which one has had the misfortune of not being able to avoid in these times of great anxiety. Moreover it served as a tonic in relieving me of a very tedious suspense in waiting for home news.

My imaginings

The beginning of the letter is, as one would expect, emotive in its simplicity. I sense desperation in the words being received with 'more than joy'. It emits anticipation and waiting, and finally relief. The second line then juxtaposes acknowledgement and appreciation, with a hint of criticism, in that it was great to receive the letter from whānau back home, however, Uncle Sonny was longing or interested in knowing how the extended whānau are doing. I also sense that where Uncle Sonny commends the information provided and especially the ability of the content to provide him some buoyancy amidst such challenging circumstances, he was subtly hinting that more correspondence would be even better. He then goes on and reiterates the suspense endured while waiting for correspondence from the home folk.

Being stationed in the United Kingdom at the time, dislocated from whānau, the term matemate-ā-one comes to the fore. Matemate-ā-one is a yearning Māori normally experience when they reside away from their relatives and, essentially, the lands to which they are tribally attached. At the time this letter was exchanged, Dave and Uncle Sonny were living approximately 18,300 kms apart from each other. Dave was working with his parents and living in a small village surrounded by his Ngāti Whare, Ngāti Manawa and Ngāi Tūhoe relatives while Uncle Sonny was in a foreign land with their Ngāti Whare, Ngāti Manawa, Ngāi Tūhoe relatives as well as extended Te Arawa and Mātaatua relatives of Company B. By this time, they would all be comrades and collectively become his wider stand-in whānau away from home.

As I compare modes of contact now, especially with electronics and social media, I wonder whether there is the same level of intimacy and emotion generated from a text message or a Facebook chat, in comparison to the handwritten letter.

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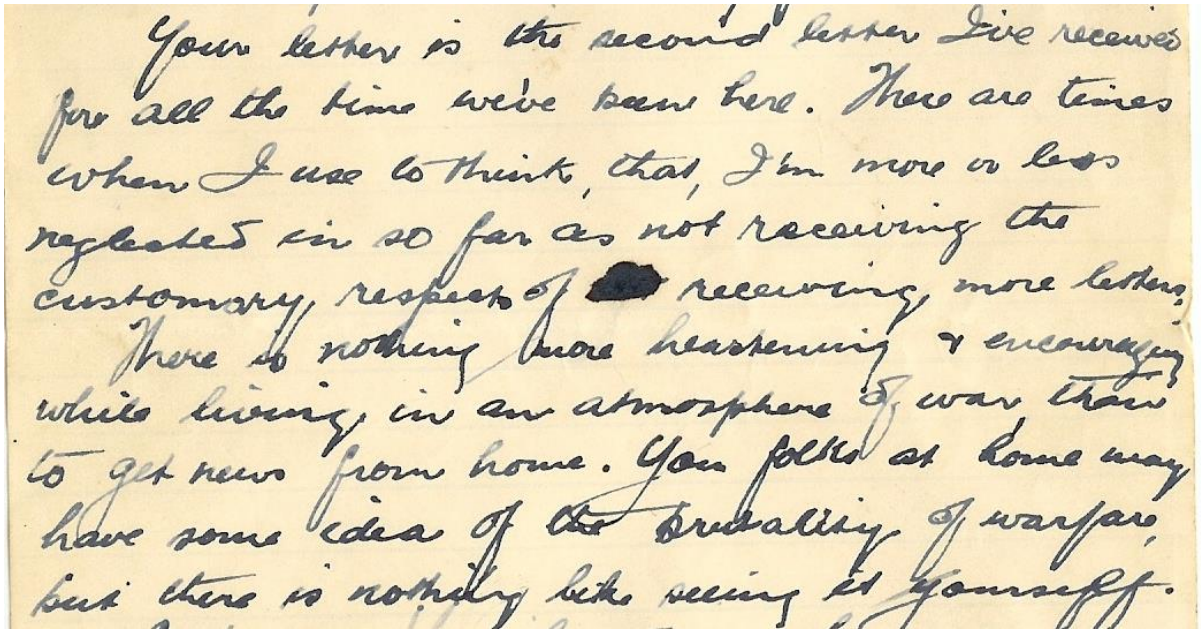
Your letter is the second letter I've received for all the time we've been here. There are times when I use to think, that, I'm more or less neglected in so far as not receiving the customary respects of receiving more letters.

There is nothing more heartening & encouraging while living in an atmosphere of war than to get news from home. You folks at home may have some idea of the brutality of warfare, but there is nothing like seeing it yourself.

Figure 4: Excerpt 2, Sonny Rewi letter, 20 November 1940

Your letter is the second letter I've received for all the time we've been here. There are times when I use to think, that, I'm more or less neglected in so far as not receiving the customary respects of receiving more letters.

There is nothing more heartening & encouraging while living in an atmosphere of war than to get news from home. You folks at home may have some idea of the brutality of warfare, but there is nothing like seeing it yourself.

Discussion

Following on from the mesh of hints, recognition and appreciation in the former part of the letter, Uncle Sonny actually mentions the quantity of letters received and his disappointment at not receiving more letters. Again, he reiterates the effect of letters in dealing with the war environment. Emphasis is also applied when he explains the full understanding of someone actually on the frontline as opposed to someone residing within the safe confines of their home. You sense the self-pity, understandably so. All of this builds the platform for his plea to further encourage more letters from the homefolk.

Imaginings

What would Uncle Sonny's mother be thinking when she read this section? In being told, or at least reminded, that this was only the second letter he had received since leaving New Zealand in May. Would the whānau experience guilt? Would this then promote a barrage of letters from one whānau or from a number of whānau? Might they have penned several letters to Uncle Sonny and mailed them in a single envelope? Maybe they informally planned that whānau members would take staggered turns in writing in the hope that Uncle Sonny would receive letters more frequently and, thereby, lessen the tension and the wait for him. Perhaps it would lessen his feeling of isolation and depression as well as the sense of neglect.

Uncle Sonny uses some apt and succinct words regarding not merely his own expectations, but

an expectation of the country by soldiers when referring to the 'customary respects'. Does he allude to it in this way in order to reinforce the expectation, by removing what might be perceived as his own personal criticism with the notion of customary practice, that is, the whole activity of receiving correspondence being a practice that has endured for a sustained period and, therefore, becomes the normal mode of operation that should be adhered to, respected and applied.

One aspect of Uncle Sonny's letters is that they are bilingual in English and Māori. Having been a Māori language lecturer for some 30 years, I don't normally endorse the intermittent inclusion of Māori language words or terms, preferring to write totally in one language or the other. Uncle Sonny alternates full paragraphs between English and Māori, but of course he was writing informally, perhaps reflecting the spoken reality of his whānau, where code-switching may have been the norm. As a Māori-speaking academic, I have been compelled to practise this myself at times, driven by the formulaic constructs used when Māori address each other and/or the intimacy of the communication I wish to share in Māori. Understandably, for Uncle Sonny, necessity dictates that communications between soldiers of war and the external world are devoid of any information that might assist the enemy regarding their location and movements, any plans and strategies, the morale and sustainability of the troops; basically, any information that might give the enemy the upper hand during the conflict.

We now redirect our focus, for the time being, in particular on the Māori-language sections written by Uncle Sonny. Again, I first provide my translation of the text, bearing in mind that my translation is interpretive as the letter was penned 25 years before I was born, and my translation 75 years after it was written.

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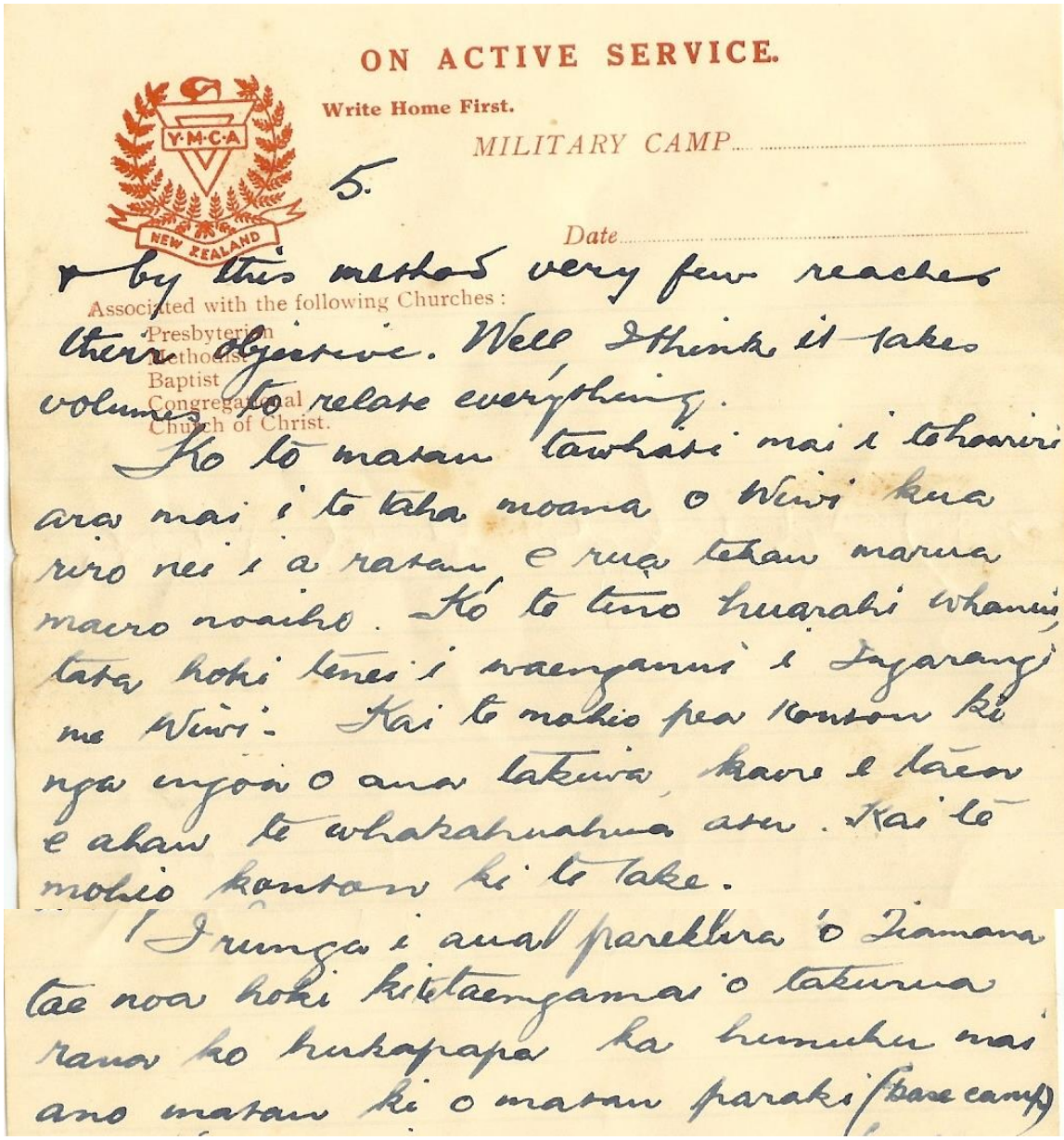
ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

Write Home First.

MILITARY CAMP.....

5.

Date.....

Associated with the following Churches:
Presbyterian
Methodist
Baptist
Congregational
Church of Christ.

by this method very few reaches
there objective. Well I think it takes
volumes to relate everything.

Ko to matau tawhiti nai i tohoarii
ara nai i te taha moana o Wiwi kua
riro nei i a ratau e rua tekau marua
mano noaiho. Ko te tino huarahi whanui
tata hoki tenei i waenganui i Tagarangi
me Wiwi. Kai te mahio pea koutou ki
nga ingoa o ana takiwa, kaore e taea
e ahau te whakahuahua atu. Kai te
mohio koutou ki te take.

I runga i anal pareatua o Tiamana
tae noa hoki ki tetaengamai o takiwa
rana ko hukapapa ka hunuhu nai
ano matau ki o matau paraki (base camp)

Figure 5: Excerpt 3 and 4, Sonny Rewi letter, 20 November 1940.

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Transcription	Interpretation/translation:
Ko to matau tawhiti mai i tehoariri ara mai i te taha moana o Wiwi kua riro nei i a ratau, e rua tekau marua maero noaiho. Ko te tino huarahi whanui. Tata hoki tenei i waenganui i Ingarangi me Wiwi. Kai te mohio pea koutou ki nga ingoa o aua takiwa, kaore e taea e ahau te whakahuahua atu. Kai te mohio koutou ki te take.	*Our distance from the enemy, from the French Coast which has come under enemy occupation is approximately a mere 22 miles. It is the main trunk. This lies between England and France. You are perhaps familiar with the names of those places, places I am not at liberty to divulge, the reason of which is obvious to you.*
I runga i aua parekura o Tiamana tae noa hoki kitetaengamai o takurua raua ko hukapapa ka hunuku mai ano matau ki o matau paraki	*Because of those great losses in Germany and the arrival of winter and the frost, we returned once again to our barracks.*

Imaginings

As you can see from my translation, the Māori language content does share some information about location and I would assert that Uncle Sonny feels safe to share this through the medium of Māori which, as far as was known, the enemy did not have translators or interpreters for at that time.

I imagine Uncle Sonny provided the general location in order to allow whānau back in New Zealand to at least access a map and thereby pinpoint approximately where he actually was.

In addition to the content, I imagine what other reasons Uncle Sonny wrote in Māori. Was he writing in Māori merely to share more on the location? Was it because he was being encouraged, or inspired, by other Māori Battalion soldiers to write in Māori? Did he feel that he needed to write in Māori as something familiar that fully engaged his identity as Māori, as a New Zealander, to help ease the struggles of unfamiliarity and isolation, geographic and familial dislocation? Did he long to receive letters also written in Māori? Perhaps there was some inherent sense that by writing in Māori he was not only reconnecting with the primary language of his Māori identity, but that through the medium of Māori he was connecting with his ancestors, those alive and those passed; he was reconnecting with his culture and all the things that make him complete in the Māori world, from which he would survive this non-Māori environment – the war.

Or was his compulsion to write in Māori a blatant act of defiance on his behalf against regimental authority and imposed restriction, or a rebellious act against suppression of his native language—Māori? Or maybe I am imagining too much and this was merely something his heart told him to do without providing any apparent rationale as to the 'why'?

Writing style: he taera tuhi

Literacy was introduced to Māori over 120 years before Sonny Rewi wrote to his whānau, and the way Māori have written their language had been changing over that time. With my "Māori-language teacher" cap on, I cannot resist musing on Uncle Sonny's medium of delivery, and make some observations on the style and form of his writing.

First, a modern reader would find his grammatical forms of the Māori language text to be full

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and accurate, but Uncle Sonny wrote in a style more generally used at that time. For example, if subsequent more modern Māori orthography had been used, his letter would have looked like this if macronisation, punctuation, personification and word separation were applied.

> *Ko tō mātau tawhiti mai i te hoariri, arā, mai i te taha moana o Wīwī kua riro nei i a rātau, e rua tekau mā rua maero noa iho. Ko te tino huarahi whānui. Tata hoki tēnei i waenganui i Ingarangi me Wīwī. Kai te mōhio pea koutou ki ngā ingoa o aua takiwā, kāore e taea e ahau te whakahuahua atu. Kai te mōhio koutou ki te take.*
>
> *I runga i aua parekura o Tiamana tae noa hoki ki te taenga mai o Takurua rāua ko Hukapapa, ka hūnuku mai anō mātau ki ō mātau paraki[.]*

Vowel length

There is of course an absence of accentuation on long vowel length (or stress) in his letter. This is normally represented by the 'double vowel' or the macron, a diacritic that I have applied above to fit modern orthography. Prior to the 1970s, application of the macron or double vowel was visible, albeit rare. Stressing the vowel length began to be applied by renowned linguist Bruce Biggs, co-founder of the Linguistics Society of New Zealand, with his debate on the double vowel. His use and authorship of the double vowel, controversial at the time, can be seen in his 1950s works.[9] The Waikato people adopted the use of double vowels as opposed to macrons, possibly due to the association of the late Sir Robert Mahuta, past director of the Centre of Māori Studies, Waikato University, who was earlier a student of Biggs at the University of Auckland, and later as an influential academic in his own right. Sir Robert later became chief negotiator of the Waikato Raupatu Claim in the 1990s and the use of the double vowel is evident in early written documents regarding the claim, and it is now an accepted and encouraged orthographic convention for the Waikato people.[10]

When Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) was established in 1987, one of their pivotal roles was the revitalization of the Māori Language. With new curricula and Western words and concepts, the Commission worked from the 1990s to assist with the development of new Māori lexicon to accommodate the new needs of the language and new orthographic guidelines for writing Māori.[11] As a result, the macron became the preferred means of stressing the long vowel, at least for the greater population of those writing in the Māori language. I also recollect a discussion by some of my Tūhoe elders about not needing to apply the vowel stress, either as a double vowel or a macron, because fluent Māori speakers understand the intent regardless of the stress in the written word. This aligns with Uncle Sonny's non-use, in that the meaning was clear without any indication of vowel length.

There are records and anecdotal recollections of macrons being used prior to 1900, but the practice was rare.[12] Because the lengthened vowel is predominantly to assist learners of the Māori language with more accurate pronunciation, the current general practice is (if you are from the Waikato tribe) to use the double vowel, but otherwise apply the macron on those words which require it.

Joined words

In the letter some words have been merged together.

- "marua" – ma rua
- "tehoariri" – te hoariri

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- “noaiho” – noa iho
- “kitetaengamai” – ki te taenga mai

This was not unusual in older texts, whereas Te Taura Whiri’s modern orthographic conventions would normally expect each word to be written separately. I note with my current work in Te Mātāwai, which promotes iwi language reclamation, particular iwi are now encouraging their own orthographies which do not always align with the Commission’s initial standardized orthography.

Linguistic Borrowing

Linguistic borrowing is the adaption and adoption of words from one language to another, and was a noted feature of the Māori language of first-language speakers beginning soon after first contact, where foreign words were altered to fit the sounds of te reo Māori, soon becoming part of the indigenous vernacular.[13] Therefore it is not surprising that common Uncle Sonny, in with other Māori speakers of his time, occasionally used loanwords. In this particular Māori language text section, there are only five examples of linguistic borrowing; such as the word ‘maero’, which is applied for the distance ‘mile’, and ‘paraki’ is used for barracks. Three of the loans refer to European nations. ‘Tiamani’ and ‘Ingarangi’ relate to Germany and England respectively, although the latter can refer more broadly to Britain; ‘Wīwī’, is onomatopoeic of the French words ‘oui oui’, meaning ‘yes’, but applied to the nation and its people.[14] There is now some resistance to loan words, when once they were considered normal and unproblematic.

Personification

The final linguistic note I would like to highlight in this Māori language text is the personification of ‘winter’ and ‘frost’. This is identifiable because the words ‘takurua’ and ‘hukapapa’ do not have the definitive particle “te” preceding them, as would be expected for common nouns. Secondly, the word ‘rāua’ is used to join the two, a conjunction normally applied to people, not abstract entities.

Conclusion

A key question posed to us as authors for this journal was taking earlier texts and sharing their contexts, but also considering what they might mean today. Of course there are two aspects to this texts that I chose to analyze, the more emotive discussion on Uncle Sonny’s death and how it might have affected his whānau, and my reading of the texts as an exponent of te reo Māori to reflect on the aspects of language I found, including the changing position of te reo Māori, and to point out similarities and/or differences with today, particularly in terms of communication.

Code-switching

As I noted earlier, I have consciously adopted a writing style during this essay which I normally object to, that is, dropping Māori words in the middle of English prose. My normal preference is to write entirely in the definitive language, whether that be all Māori or all English. So why have I deviated from that practice for this essay? Perhaps, similar to the reason I imagined Uncle Sonny wrote components in Māori, I felt the need for a word that represents the historical and cultural understandings, inferred or otherwise, of Māori than what I felt any English word could provide. I have used ‘whānau’ as opposed to the word ‘family’, because when Māori use the word whānau, it incorporates more than the immediate family, as understood from the Western perspective. Whānau, for Māori, may extend as far as ninth cousins. It also

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incorporates those who have married in as well as those who are not blood relatives, but have affiliated to a family grouping or social structure predominated by biological kin. There is an increased intimacy when a Māori term or word is used amidst an English sentence. I imagine that this is also another reason that Uncle Sonny may have chosen to write in Māori for part of his letter. Why he opted only to write part in Māori as opposed to the whole letter, however, remains an unknown, although this might have reflected the day-to-day reality where English was slowly permeating Māori society.

Vowel stress

Stress and intonation are critical parts of language, especially oral use. There are currently thousands of new learners of Māori, with the abilities of only 27% of all Māori-language speakers ranging from 'fairly well' to 'well'.[15] Therefore, it is extremely important that the long vowel is applied in order for students to speak the language more accurately and fluently while also differentiating between word meaning when the vowel is stressed. Take for example the following words and the different meanings depending on the vowel stress: 'keke'(cake), 'kekē' (to creak) and 'kēkē'(armpit); and 'wherū' (to be tired or lethargic) and 'whēru' (to wipe one's anus). Therefore, it is probable that the macron or double vowel will continue to be used for educational purposes. Admittedly, it is also strongly recommended for mainstream and iwi orthographic conventions, and is now largely normalized in printed Māori, outside of Waikato. On a personal level, however, I sometimes consciously leave out the stress (macron or double vowel) if I am communicating informally on forums like Facebook or whilst text-messaging. Of course, I am writing in this way under the premise that any readers are not learners of Māori and will, therefore, understand the intended meaning.

Communication type

How many of us actually still hand-write letters, put pen to paper? I think the last one I wrote was some four years ago in my vain attempt to instill some old school value in the personalization of a letter as opposed to my current mode of practice of email, text message and message. Some years before that I handwrote another letter to a secondary school student as part of a mentoring approach by that school. The student did respond with a letter, however, we only traded three letters in total in the one year.

Digital communication has of course revolutionized communication in that it is practically instant with mere milliseconds of delay. This means that there is a higher frequency of short correspondence because of the immediacy of the exchange. I liken these two modes, the letter versus the text message, to two oratorical styles when delivering whaikōrero; pāeke and tauutuutu. The letter, to me, is like pāeke in that the letter is written over a particular length of time, then it is sealed and, in the case of Uncle Sonny's letters, takes weeks of travel from the United Kingdom to be delivered by sea, motorized vehicle and finally by foot to its final destination in rural, isolated Te Whāiti. It is then read and shared before a response is penned and then sent back to the United Kingdom or Egypt. The pāeke speaking pattern expects the host speakers to deliver their orations before a response is returned by the visiting orators, therefore, I liken the letter form to the pāeke pattern of oratory, in that a visiting speaker cannot respond instantaneously, unlike the tauutuutu pattern, whereby the orations alternate between host and visiting speakers. With tauutuutu there is less lag time between a speech and a response from the visitor and then a counter response from the host, then a visitor and so forth. New technology like email, text messaging and Facebook allow instantaneous responses between parties, like tauutuutu.

So, does one have more value over another? They serve different functions, and both probably have, or had (in the case of the letter), their benefits. In today's society, is there still a place for the handwritten letter? There was a time when I argued that the letter form required fuller processing and structure because there is no facility to 'delete' or 'cut and paste', such as those we have whilst using Microsoft Word. Therefore, perhaps more work was required in terms of accuracy, otherwise one small mistake might require a re-write of that part, or even the whole letter. The digital forms also allow for recyclable components, unlike the letter, therefore, personalizing of letter-forms, I would assert, was applied more in letter-writing as opposed to the digital forms of communication. Would I, then, re-adopt the letter form? That would depend. As mentioned, I have on occasion handwritten letters to individuals. In the main, however, convenience and efficacy prevail on me in order to survive in this, the digital age. I doubt the letters shared with you here would have resonated as much with me if they were typed and sent with the press of a button, as opposed to the stroke of the six or 30 year old putting 'pen to paper'.

As Migoto Eria has written, the very physicality of a document connected to ancestors can be "a thing of intrinsic value for generations, a window into the lives of our tīpuna and a source of our empowerment and identity", with all the emotive power that that entails.[16] Of course we know that it is not just the words on paper that provide the ambience and feel. There is the whole package of the narrative, the history, the genealogical ties, the personal draw towards Māori language, the paper the letters were written on and the smell of those letters also which drive my own imaginings and feelings.

Final Imaginings

Imaginings have been a recurring approach in this chapter, so in finishing, I would like to imagine one more time. What might *You*, Sonny Te Toroa Rewi, son of Amokura Mereraina McCauley, be thinking right now? I imagine you would be trying to correct some of the imaginings which have been created from an overzealous or creative mind. Might I even conceive that you are wondering why so much effort is being invested into these musings and that the interpretations of these letters are worth less than the time they have been afforded? On the other hand, perhaps there are parts which you would happily and thankfully confirm or rectify. Perhaps you might even have imaginings of your own, and you now ponder what it must have been like for your whānau upon receiving the dreaded return to sender mail with the 'Deceased' stamp clearly visible telling the whānau of your passing. As I imagined what your mother and brother would have been feeling when the letter was handed over, perhaps you, Koro Sonny, might also imagine what they were experiencing – you might even be talking with them about this in the spiritual realm. And I imagine your heart would hurt, like mine, as you empathize with your mother's emotion at that very point in time of receiving the letter and after. Your imaginings, of course, Koro Sonny, would have more detailed images of the situation than what I could ever conceive, let alone imagine. Alas, that is all I can do. Imagine.

[1] Personal Communication, Te Wharehuia Milroy (n.d.)

[2] My parents had the main bedroom and three of my five siblings and I slept in bunks in the small room. In the early years, two of us stayed in the same room as our parents, and two siblings stayed in a small room which had a bunk. There was no bathroom per se. Later on, our two sisters were placed with our grandparents, one each to both lines.

[3] For more about Sonny Toroa Rewi, see Wira Gardiner, *Ake Ake Kia Kaha E: Forever Brave! B Company 28 (Maori) Battalion, 1939-1945* (Auckland: Bateman Books, 2019). See also, "Sonny Rewi", 28th Māori Battalion, https://www.28maoribattalion.org.nz/soldier/sonny-rewi (accessed 9 December, 2022).
[4] "B Company 1940, group photo", 28th Māori Battalion, https://www.28maoribattalion.org.nz/zoomify/b-company-1940-group-photo (accessed 9 December, 2022).
[5] Gardiner's *Ake Ake Kia Kaha E* is a dedicated history of B Company; chapter 5 relates to the Battle of Crete, 20-31 May, 1941.
[6] A metaphorical 'mat of misfortune and death'.
[7] Gardiner, 121.
[8] Gardiner, 125.
[9] Andrew Pawsley, "Bruce Biggs, 1921-2000: A Tribute", *Oceanic Linguistics*, 40: 1 (2001): 12-13.
[10] Raukura Roa, Paania Papa, Jarred Boon and Rahui Papa (eds), *He Puna Kupu He Manawa Aa-Whenua: He Kohinga Kupu noo Roto i a Tainui: A Collection of Words Used Within Tainui* (Auckland: Raupo, 2019), 14-15.
[11] For example see, Māori Language Commission, *Te Matatiki: Ngā Kupu Hou* (Wellington: Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 1992); Māori Language Commission, *Ngā Tikanga Tuhi a Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori: Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography* (Wellington: Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori, 2012).
[12] The first known macron in printed Māori was in 1869. See BIM728, Phil Parkinson & Penny Griffith, *Books in Māori, 1815-1900: an annotated bibliography: Ngā tānga reo Māori: ngā kohikohinga me ōna whakamārama* (Auckland: Reed, 2004).
[13] See John C. Moorfield and Lachy Paterson, "Loan Words Used in Māori-language Newspapers" in Jenifer Curnow, Ngapare Hopa and Jane McRae, *Rere atu, Taku Manu!: Discovering History, Language and Politics in the Maori-language Newspapers* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2002), 60; John C. Moorfield, J. and Tania M. Ka'ai, *He Kupu Arotau: Loanwords in Māori (*Auckland: Pearson, 2011), v-vi.
[14] The coining of a word based on the non-Māori sound has been applied elsewhere, for example, the word 'Tararā' is used for 'Dalmation' (Croatian) because of the fast pace with which Dalmatian people spoke.
[15] Karena Kelly, "Iti te kupu, nui te kōrero: The Study of the Little Details That Make the Māori Language Māori" in Rāwinia Higgins, Poia Rewi and Vincent Olsen-Reeder (eds.), *The Value of the Māori Language: Te Hua o te Reo Māori (*Wellington: Huia, 2014), 257.
[16] Migoto Eria, "He Rau Mahara: The *Te Wananga* Ledger" in Annabel Cooper, Lachy Paterson and Angela Wanhalla (eds), *The Lives of Colonial Objects* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2015), 124.