

## **CONNECTION AND HISTORY BETWEEN FINLAND AND ONIIPA**

Finland and Namibia have enjoyed a good lasting relationship. Recently in the year 2019, the Embassy of Finland in Namibia hosted a remarkable celebration to mark 150 years of Finland and Namibia friendship.

However, the notable connection between Finland and Namibia with Oniipa in particular, started through missionary work.

### **ARRIVAL OF MISSIONARIES IN NAMIBIA**

The first group of missionaries, among them Martti Rautanen, nicknamed Nakambale, set foot on the sand of Walvis Bay on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1869. Then they spent a year in Otjimbingwe, where Martti Rautanen met a lady by the name Frieda, who was only 15 at the time. The missionaries then continued to Owamboland, and first settled in a village called Omandongo, on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1870.

From Omandongo, the missionaries spread to Olukonda-Oniipa and other Kingdoms. The main building in Olukonda is today the Nakambale Museum, as Nakambale Martti and Frieda Rautanen with family lived here for most of their life. Nakambale died in 1926, Frieda in 1937, and they are buried in Olukonda, with some of their children.

### **ARRIVAL AT ONIIPA POPULARY KNOWN AS A HOME FOR THE FINNISH**

In 1887, the Aandonga late King Kambonde ka Mpingana allocated them a piece of land in Oniipa, 8 km north of Olukonda, but due to staff shortage only in 1889 Frans Hannula started building a house, joined later by Albin Savola. The old main building from 1891 is still there, and used as a guesthouse.

### **MAJOR WORK BY THE MISSIONARIES**

Besides preaching and teaching the Bible, they started learning Oshindonga and soon started writing elementary school books and grammar, and started translating passages from the Bible, and also hymns. They also started treating wounds and some illnesses but only in 1908 the first medical doctor, Selma Rainio and a trained nurse arrived, and started building Onandjokwe Hospital, first a small one, but over the decades it grew to become a major hospital in Owamboland, Northern Namibia. Onandjokwe Lutheran hospital is situated in the vicinity of Oniipa too. Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital is the oldest hospital and now a referral hospital for the Oshikoto Region of Northern Namibia.

### **IMPACT MADE DURING THEIR STAY**

The first baptism took place in Omulonga in 1883. By 1900 there were some 2000 Christians in Ondonga. In the early 1900's training of schoolteachers also started in Oniipa. Later Oniipa was home to the Teachers Training Seminary, which later in 1954 moved to Ongwediva. Women were trained in Okahao. Later also women started being trained in Ongwediva. I am a living testimony and a beneficiary; after Namibia attained its independence I was privileged to be trained as a teacher in Ongwediva.

## **BIBLE TRANSLATION**

The missionaries also translated the Bible. The translation was completed in the year 1920, but first only the New Testament was printed, the whole Bible was published 1954.

## **PRINTING MACHINE**

In 1925 the first printing machine was bought and they started printing the paper called **Osoondaha** (Sunday Paper). later called Omukwetu. The **Omukwetu** monthly paper is still printing mostly church related news.

In 1925, the first seven pastors were ordained, among them Pinehas Kamonde for Olukonda and Juuso Ngaikukwete for Oniipa. By that time, there were about 20.000 Christians.

In 1954, when there were 90.000 Christians, the Evangelical Lutheran Owambokavango Church was officially established, with missionary Birger Eriksson as the first church leader, followed by Alpo Hukka and Bishop Leonard Auala (a Namibian) in 1960.

Church leader/missionary Birger Erikson died in 1969. His son Tatekulu (Elder) Olle Eriksson is retired in 2003 and is now living in Finland, facilitating tours to Namibia through Koonono Tours, Koonono Matkat. We accord him with much respect as he continue to hold the legacy of his late father in high esteem.

## **SAD MOMENT/MIXED FEELINGS FOR US NAMIBIANS: TIME TO LEAVE**

Little by little the number of Finnish missionaries decreased, so when the country became independent in 1990 there were fewer than 20 missionaries left. The Owambokavango Church was renamed to The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia, and has today over 800.000 members and almost 200 ordained pastors. The last permanent Finnish missionary moved from Oniipa to Windhoek in the year 2000, but there have been Finns on short term also later. Today the only ones left are Sakari Löytty music work and Päivi Löytty development of diaconical work.

Take note, until 1960 all education and training of people was provided by the churches, only later the government took over. The church now only owns Oshigambo and Nkurenkuru High Schools, among the best in the county. The churches also provided all health services, only in the 1960's the government started giving financial support, but the church was still running all hospitals and clinics except the new Oshakati and Rundu hospitals. Still when Namibia became independent Onandjokwe and Nkurenkuru hospitals were run by ELCIN. Now the government took over.

**NB:** Finland has also played a role in the Independence of Namibia through another famous Finnish Martti, **President Martti Ahtisaari**, he remains a well-known figure in Namibia. It should be noted that, besides preaching the gospel, missionaries also laid a foundation for Socio-economic development of Namibia.

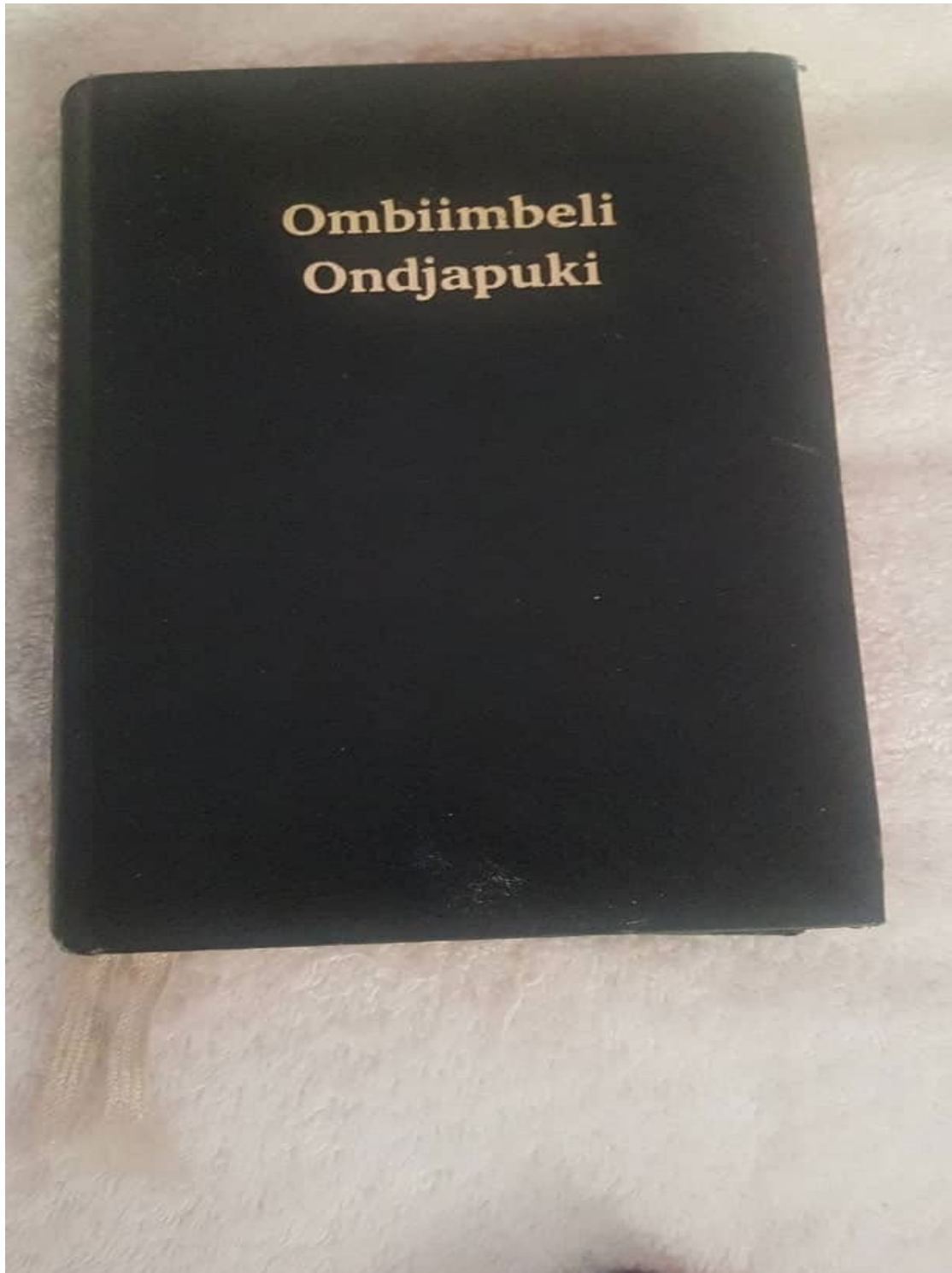


Figure 1: Ombimbeli Ondjapuki: The Holy Bible

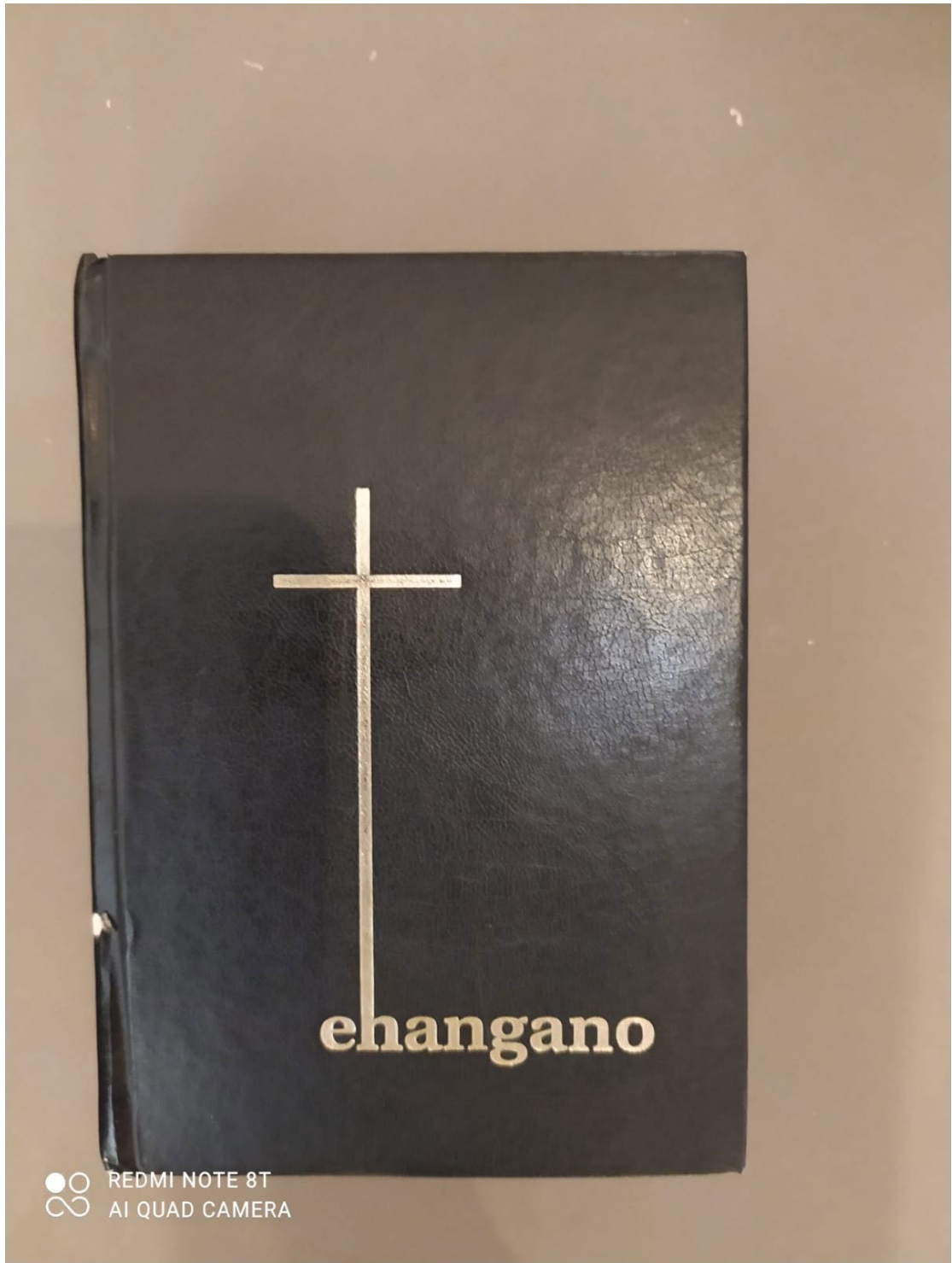


Figure 2: Eimbilo Ehangano (Hymn Book)

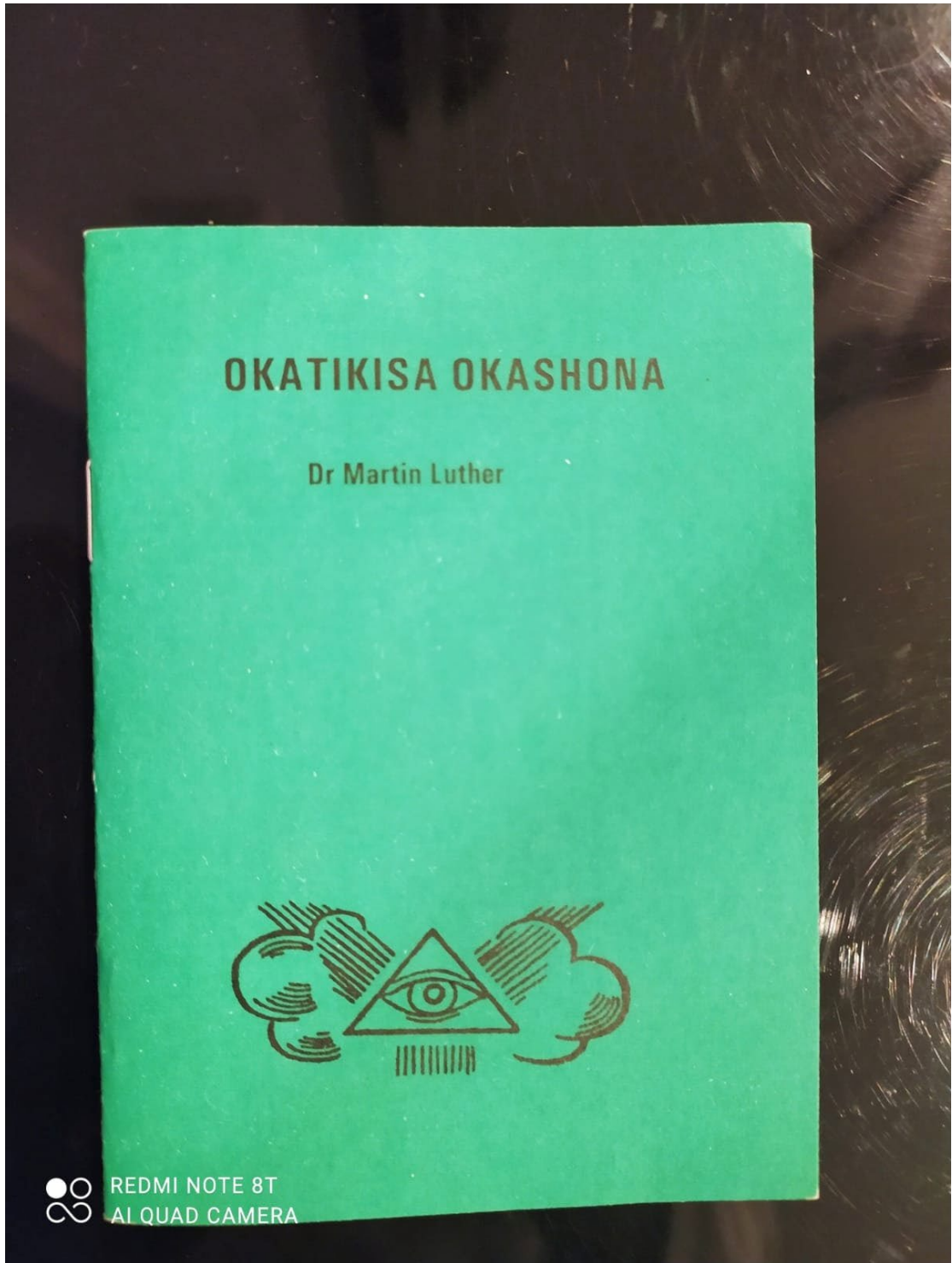


Figure 3: Okatikisa: Catechism (Katekismus)

# OMUKWETU



Oshifo shi Omukwetu moomvula 115 (1901-2016)

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## OMUKWETU OTA WANITHA OOMVULA 115



KuFomas Uushona

- Omukwetu oye oshifo eleki okwaevangeli li yomuNamibia /ELCIN. otwa kEhangantumo i momumvo 1901.

gwanitha omimvo 115 a nuumvo. Oshituthivalo shi dhanwa ikando iyali Hosianna moWindhoek 01- a, osho wo 14-15 Kotoba ngalo Oniipa.

ha li sha tseyika nedhina a edhina ndyoka lya lukwa a, nosha lukwa kaavalewa wetu muSeptemba momuvo ifo shika osho shotango ndana ayihe, oshoka osho tango okuleshwa mu South a ano moNamibia nena.

ka enyanyagidho lyasho eti 01 mewiliko lyomutumwa ola. Osha kala mewiliko 1901 - 1965, opo ihe oshe liko lyaavalelwa mo okuza nena. Osha kala monkalo machongo nathimbo ndiva

Methano hotulyo omusamane Matheus S h a n d e omunyanyagidhi gw O s h i f o s h O m u k w e t u na. Medwalem Jikwa. Oya thanchwa taakonakona eshina chulu lyokunya-nyagidha Omukwetu, ndyoka lya li lya mbomwa komutondi nohupya pa 1980



Eshina ndika sigo onena olya kala mOshinyanyagidho shaELOC, mOniipa ondhimbulutho

- okuhokitha iilyo yOngeleki okulesha.
- Okweetela iilyo yOngeleki elaka etoye monkalamwenyo yayo yesiku kehe.
- Okukwatha iilyo yOngeleki yi isile oshimpwiyu yoyene, muukalinawa, momahupilo nomiikwankalathano.
- Okugandja omakankameno gOngeleki kiilyo yayo miinimatayi eta omalimbililo monkalo yesiku kehe monkalathano.

