

## **OMUKWETU HISTORY AND THE ROLE THE FINNISH MISSIONARIES PLAYED IN ITS HISTORY**

Written by: Karin Amukugo, May 2021

Omukwetu Newspaper was founded in 1901 by the Finnish missionaries of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and later the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia - ELCIN. Oniipa was the main Centre of their activities. In October 1901 they established a small press at Oniipa.

In 1901 Albin Savola bought a small printing machine in London. The first publication was the newspaper called Osoondaha, means Sunday, printed monthly in 200 copies, and soon more, later called Omukwetu. The other first work were Okatekisa (Katekismus) written both in Ndonga, Kwanyama and Kwangali.

Later more and bigger printing machines were bought and in the 1950's even professionals were brought in, Eero Kanninen and Aarne Hartikainen. In the early 1960's the printing house moved from old Oniipa to near Onandjokwe Hospital, and employed about 30 people.

Omukwetu is an important way for the church to reach out to the people. Basically, people are members of the home congregation, but they also want and need to know what is happening in ELCIN and in the worldwide church at large.

The aim for the paper besides reporting church news and events, other multi purposes were to provide for the community a written words in their own vernacular languages; provide and promote reading material to motivate the culture of reading and writing, and also to attract the new readers with news from the country and beyond concerning the social, economical and political matters. In earlier time, especially during the apartheid, Omukwetu also informed about other things other newspaper did not report. Today also other newspapers publish in local languages, Ndonga, Kwangali etc, in earlier days not.

The first Namibian to take over management was Moses Amkongo, around 1970. Rev Sebulon Ekandjo then was the editor of Omukwetu, followed by Rev SetSon Shivute and today's Rev Thomas Uushona. In 1973 the whole printing house, book storage and book shop was burnt down by the South African Army or Police, then rebuilt where it stands now although it also was destroyed in 1981, apparently because of the critical news published by Omukwetu. Then again a new printing house was built and new machines were bought with assistance from The Lutheran World Federation and the Finnish church magazine Kotimaa. Besides Omukwetu, best seller is the hymn book Ehangano. A book shop is attached to the Printing House.

In 2001, there was a big centenary celebration on the grounds of the Printing House, attended by then Deputy Minister of Information. Rev Sebulon Ekandjo presented the historical overview. Also in 2016 the Omukwetu celebrated greatly.

To date, Omukwetu sells its newspaper in different ways such: customers subscribing; N\$70/year, single copy N\$ 4:00. Omukwetu also sells photos of all the former and current bishops. Omukwetu has now introduced a programme of live streaming events

such as memorial services, funerals and church services especially when in connection with special events. Omukwetu also accommodates other areas with events live streaming more especially during Covid-19 pandemic,

Currently Omukwetu collects all the newsletters from January to December and combines it to be a book with all the news for the whole year.

On behalf of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Namibia (ELCIN) and Namibia at large, I would like to use this opportunity to give our appreciations to Haagan Seurakunta for providing this platform to commemorate on good history. Our humble gratitude's goes to Finnish missionaries of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland for all the amazing initiatives so far, which I believe was a strong foundation you laid for us and also for the on going support by the government of Finland.

God Bless you abundantly!

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# OMUKWETU

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*Cohifa shOmukwetu moomuula 119  
(1901-2020)*

**IIPUNGULILA IIFO YOMUKWETU 2020**

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*Editor Rev Thomas Ushonzi*

2021-04-13

**Fig1: A yearly combined book of Omukwetu paper**



**Fig 2: Picture taken from Onandjokwe Lutheran Hospital towards Oniipa Church.**



**Fig 3: Oniipa Printing Press to the right. Near Oniipa also the old church which is not there anymore. Picture from 1977. From the right a builder, Bishop Auala, Assistant Bishop Dumeni, Moses Amkongo, Tatekulu Olle Eriksson.**