

Memorial and Centre of technical education - Conservation of an electric generator in a regional museum of Tigray, Ethiopia

A conservation project of HTW Berlin, university of Applied Sciences Berlin, in cooperation with regional Government of Tigray and the Society for the Promotion of Museums in Ethiopia.

Authors: Ruth Keller and Dietmar Linke

In the Tigray region of Ethiopia close to the town of Wukro important archaeological discoveries have been made. The establishment of a museum to present these findings was planned by the regional government and the Society for the Promotion of Museums in Ethiopia. A building with an electric generator out of use was assigned for the Museum. The device had been destroyed at the end of the last civil war. Not having given access to electricity for the town by the government, people of Wukro organised it and worked for it within the community.

Rural settlements developed into an urban structure during the Fascist occupation in 1936. After they had withdrawn in 1940, Wukro provided the head office of the new district in 1943. It set up a municipality and established modern urban structures. Its residents felt responsible for these. Electricity was provided by private generating systems for a few houses first and for 3500 incandescent lamps from 1967 - 1976. A committee of the eldest citizens then purchased a powerful enough Japanese Diesel-driven generator for the town from 1977 to 1981: a building was needed and funds were to be raised. Regional products had to be exported to obtain the required foreign exchange currency. Supported by the Ethiopian Electric Light and Power Authority, the device was eventually ordered in Japan. It was shipped to Assäb and transported to Wukro, where it was positioned by a crane. Fund raising for oil to fill the tank was started. A staff of technicians kept the device operational until its destruction at the end of the last war in 1991.

During the first contact of HTW with the community of Wukro in 2010 the local community was quite happy to learn about the possibilities of conserving a technical devices as much as a memorial of the common sense and power of people in Wukro as of the sufferings of war. They had the wish to also get a centre for technical education as there is the intention to educate as many young people as possible in engineering.

The documentation, historic identification of the technical devices in the building and the planning and practical conservation work of HTW Berlin students and teachers, partially together with students from Mekelle University will be presented.