

Egypt says King Tut mask was scratched, sends 8 to trial

January 24 2016, by Brian Rohan



In this Tuesday, Oct. 20, 2015 file photo, German restorer Christian Eckmann begins restoration work on the golden mask of King Tutankhamun over a year after the beard was accidentally broken off and hastily glued back with epoxy, at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. Egyptian prosecutors have referred to trial eight restorers involved in the botched repair of the famed golden burial mask of King Tut, which was corrected late last year. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil, File)

King Tut hasn't been around for a few thousand years, but his power remains: after a botched repair job of the famed pharaoh's beard left

scratches on his burial mask, Egyptian prosecutors have ordered eight museum workers to a disciplinary court for "gross negligence."

The 3,300-year old mask, whose beard was accidentally knocked off and hastily glued on with epoxy in 2014, was scratched and damaged during the amateurish repair work, prosecutors said in a Sunday statement, which implicated the then-head of the Egyptian Museum and the chief of the restoration department.

"In an attempt to cover up the damage they inflicted, they used sharp instruments such as scalpels and metal tools to remove traces of adhesive on the mask, causing damage and [scratches](#) that remain," it said, citing an investigation. The eight now face fines and disciplinary measures including dismissal.

The mask was put back on display last month after a German-Egyptian team of specialists removed the epoxy and reattached the beard using beeswax, used as an adhesive in antiquity.

A year ago, a museum conservator who was present at the time of the repair told the Associated Press that epoxy had dried on the face of the boy king's mask and that a colleague used a spatula to remove it, leaving scratches. Another conservator who inspects the artifact regularly also saw the scratches and said it was clear that they had been made by a tool used to scrape off the epoxy. They both spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of repercussions.

Restoration specialist Christian Eckmann said shortly thereafter that the cause of a scratch found on the mask had had not been determined, but that it could have been recent.



In this Saturday, Jan. 24, 2015 file photo, The gold mask of King Tutankhamun is seen in a glass case during a press tour, in the Egyptian Museum near Tahrir Square, Cairo. Egyptian prosecutors have referred to trial eight restorers involved in the botched repair of the famed golden burial mask of King Tut, which was corrected late last year. (AP Photo/Hassan Ammar, File)

The mask was discovered in a tomb along with other artifacts by British archeologists in 1922, sparking worldwide interest in archaeology and ancient Egypt. It is one of the world's most priceless artifacts and the best-known piece in the Egyptian Museum, a major tourist attraction in

Cairo that was built in 1902 and houses ancient Egyptian artifacts and mummies.

Lately, King Tut has been at the focus of new archaeology and media buzz after British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves theorized that Tutankhamun, who died at the age of 19, may have been rushed into an outer chamber of what was originally Queen Nefertiti's tomb.

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