

Egyptologists differ on Tut tomb 'hidden chambers'

May 8 2016



The golden sarcophagus of King Tutankhamun displayed in his burial chamber in the Valley of the Kings, close to Luxor

Egyptian Antiquities Minister Khaled al-Anani said on Sunday new technology is needed to determine whether Tutankhamun's tomb contains hidden chambers which a British archaeologist believes may hide queen Nefertiti's remains.

Anani spoke to archaeologists and reporters at a conference in Cairo dedicated to King Tutankhamun and his world-famous golden funerary mask.

The mood at Sunday's conference was sceptical months after former minister Mamduh Damati said the secret chambers probably existed, raising expectations of another historical find.

Damati inspected the tomb last September with the theory's proponent, British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves.

His theory and the attention paid to it came as Egypt struggles to revive its key tourism industry after years of political turmoil.

However, experts disagreed on Sunday over how the search for the chambers was handled.

"Handling the project wasn't done scientifically at all," said former antiquities minister Zahi Hawass.

Damati himself said more tests were needed.

"The infrared scan said we need to repeat it because we have something that we cannot be sure what it is exactly," he said.

Damati had said in March that there was a "90 percent chance" that the tomb had two hidden chambers containing organic material.



Egypt's Antiquities Minister Khaled al-Anani (C) attends the Tutankhamun Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) conference on May 8, 2016 in Cairo

Reeves theorised that Tutankhamun's tomb was in fact Nefertiti's, and when the boy king died unexpectedly at a young age, he was rushed into her tomb's outer chamber in Luxor's Valley of Kings in southern Egypt.

Hawass suggested that the current antiquities minister hire an autonomous committee of experts to handle the investigation.

"We have to stop this media presence, because there is nothing to publish," he said.

To reassure archaeologists at the conference, Anani said: "I will not make any drills (in the tomb walls) until I am sure 100 percent that there is a cavity behind the wall... I'm very satisfied with the warm scientific

debate."



Egyptian former antiquities minister Mamdouh al-Damati speaks during the Tutankhamun Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM) conference on May 8, 2016

Nefertiti was famed for her beauty as depicted in the famous bust now in Berlin.

She, Tutankhamun and Akhenaten ruled during a turbulent time, and were one of ancient Egypt's most controversial ruling families.

Nefertiti was married to Akhenaten, who tried and failed to force Egypt to convert to monotheism.

DNA evidence has shown that Akhenaten was Tutankhamun's father, but

Egyptologists do not agree on who his mother was.

Egyptologists rely on a mix of DNA evidence as well as information documented in ruins and historical calculations to map the pharaohs' family tree.

Most [tombs](#) contain more information about the passage to the afterlife rather than solid information about the deceased's biological lineage.

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