

International

Pharaonic fake could save ancient tombs

Replica of Tutankhamun's burial chamber shows how historic sites might survive pressures of mass tourism

Patrick Kingsley **Luxor**

"Can I tell the difference?" wonders Tish Chapman, a teacher from Nottingham, standing in the latest tomb to be opened to the public at southern Egypt's Valley of the Kings.

Chapman's answer could be a pointer to the future of mass tourism. For the tomb in which she stands is a replica: an exact copy of the tomb of Tutankhamun, dug into the sand about a mile from the real thing. And on Thursday Chapman, who has visited pharaonic sites including Tut's original tomb for two decades, became its first paying visitor.

"No, I don't think I can," she says finally, staring at murals first drawn more than 3,300 years ago. "No. It looks good enough for me."

Chapman's response will delight those who think the replica is a first step to a new approach to managing tourism at ancient sites.

One of the idea's chief proponents is Adam Lowe, a British artist and master



The golden death mask of Tutankhamun was found over the head and shoulders of the young pharaoh's mummy

restorer who led the creation of the Tutankhamun facsimile, and supervised its installation here in Luxor. He hopes the lifesize facsimile will provide as good an experience as the original and, by diverting visitors from it, ultimately help to preserve it.

"What I hope you'll be able to see is that it's possible to create an exact copy that from a normal viewing distance looks exactly like the tomb," Lowe says, sitting beside the nearby house of Howard Carter, the man who first discovered Tutankhamun, in 1922. "And more than that, actually feels like the tomb."

In an ideal world, Lowe would admit, there would be unrestricted access to tombs such as Tut's. But the reality is that these delicate burial chambers, weathered by millions of tourists for decades, are at risk of deteriorating beyond recognition. The majority are already closed, and the most impressive - that of Sethi I - has long been too fragile for visitors.

The hope is that Tut's replica will show that a facsimile can be a good compromise between celebrating heritage and preserving it, and lead to copies of Sethi's tomb and Nefertari's, two stunning relics that tourists would otherwise never get to see.

"This is not about taking things away," says Lowe. "It is about bringing things back."

Sceptics scoff at his approach, but yesterday it was hard to find a critic



Visitors admire the replica of the tomb of Tutankhamun. Below, the original, discovered by Howard Carter (kneeling) in 1922 Main photograph: Alicia Guirao



among the replica's first visitors. "You actually have a more personal interaction with the replica," says John Chapman, Tish's husband, a former lecturer at Nottingham Trent University and a veteran tomb visitor.

"Over the years, we've seen the [real] tombs change. They've put up glass screens, so the experience of seeing the real thing has been compromised. But in this replica you haven't got that problem."

Others liked it but felt it lacked the aura of the original. "I don't think it can quite have the same feeling, the same ambience," says Christina Beale, a 65-year-old retiree from Norfolk. "When you go down into the original you feel as if you're being pulled inside it."

What the site lacks in aura it may make up for with context. Uninitiated visitors to the original sometimes have little idea about the history and mean-

ing of Tutankhamun's tomb. But the antechamber to Lowe's replica contains a series of panels explaining the significance of the real thing.

This is one of several aspects that excite the seasoned Egyptologist Salima Ikram. "It was like going into the original itself, but with everything better explained," says Ikram, an Egyptology professor at the American University in Cairo, who was moved to tears when she entered the replica on Wednesday.

"It's quite fabulous - the display panels allow you to understand the tomb

'It was like going into the original itself, but with everything better explained'

as it was when Carter first entered it." The £420,000 facsimile is said to be the most detailed copy ever made. To measure the original tomb, Lowe's company, Factum Arte, used its own scanner, which can capture images as small as a tenth of a millimetre, and created a document that should be of sizeable assistance to future researchers.

The replica was carved with a machine that can make details as precise as a third of a millimetre in length. The plan is to train a team of Egyptians to record and copy tombs so that Egypt can be at the forefront of the process.

"I hope this is the beginning," says Lowe. "This could be a watershed moment where, for the first time, visitors can really start to talk about sustainable tourism, about how you can preserve the Valley of the Kings itself."

"It's my dream that it can actually be there in 3,000 years' time."

UN hunts for next Syria envoy as Brahimi prepares to resign after failure of the Geneva peace talks

Ian Black
Middle East editor

Urgent efforts are under way to find a replacement for the UN's special envoy on Syria, Lakhdar Brahimi, who is expected to resign his post this month.

After the failure of the Geneva peace talks and President Bashar al-Assad's decision to stand for re-election, Kevin Rudd, the former Australian Labour prime minister, and Michael Williams, a British veteran of the UN and now a peer, have emerged as leading candidates for the most important - and probably the most thankless - role in world diplomacy, which is in effect paralysed in the fourth bloody year of the Syrian crisis.

Diplomats confirmed yesterday that the other names on the UN shortlist are Kamel Morjane, a former Tunisian foreign minister, and Javier Solana, the Spanish politician who has been both Nato secretary general and the European Union's foreign policy supremo.

Brahimi is due at the UN in New York today and is expected to brief the security council on 13 May. But the Guardian understands that it is almost certain to be his final appearance.

The veteran Algerian mediator, who is 80, has been in the job since September 2012, when he replaced Kofi Annan, the former UN secretary general. Brahimi had threatened to resign almost from the start of his mission but UN officials insisted that this time he meant it.

Annan and Brahimi both represented the UN and the Arab League - as "joint special representative" - but the new appointee is expected to report only to the UN because of the deep divisions within the Arab world over Syria.

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and other Gulf states openly back the anti-Assad rebels, while countries such as Algeria and Iraq stand solidly behind Damascus. "The Arab League's role has become a drag because of the divisions," said one well-placed source. "It's not an asset but a hindrance."

Britain, one of the five permanent members of the UN security council, faces



Lakhdar Brahimi, a veteran Algerian diplomat, has told the UN before that he wants to resign but apparently this time he means it

a tough choice. Rudd is admired by David Cameron and the foreign secretary, William Hague. The Australian, a former diplomat, is said to have his eye on becoming secretary general of the UN - though the next incumbent, according to the principle of continental rotation, is expected to be a European.

The Syria envoy position could be seen as a stepping stone to that, though success is clearly not guaranteed in a job some have described as a poisoned chalice. Rudd has a reputation in Australian politics for being abrasive. Rudd's public calls for Assad's departure when he was foreign minister in 2011 may also count against him.

Lord Williams has a lower profile but the advantage of extensive experience in the UN. The former BBC journalist has served in Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia and has rich regional experience as UN co-ordinator for the Middle East peace process and its representative in Lebanon.

Meanwhile, Syrian opposition activists say at least 33 people were killed in a government air strike on a busy street in the northern city of Aleppo yesterday. The air strike on the Hillok district of the rebel-held eastern part of the city also injured dozens of people.

Row over Israeli soldier triggers social media mutiny in military

Peter Beaumont **Jerusalem**

Israeli soldiers, their faces obscured to avoid punishment, have mounted an unprecedented mass online campaign in support of a soldier they believe was jailed for pointing his gun at Palestinians who were arguing with him.

The social media campaign in support of "David of Nahal" - as he has been dubbed, referring to his brigade - follows the publication online on Sunday of a video shot in Hebron in which he is seen threatening Palestinian youths who are confronting him with his cocked rifle.

The campaign began after it was suggested on Facebook that he had been jailed because of the incident, prompting an outpouring of support. A report on the Maariv website had said the soldier had been dismissed and jailed for 20 days.

However, according to a statement put out by the Israel defence forces (IDF), David Admov's punishment was for assaulting superior officers - allegedly on two separate occasions - and was not connected to the incident.

Despite the confusion, the incident and the reaction of Israeli soldiers and politicians has touched a deep nerve in Israeli

society, triggering a widespread debate in the media.

It has sufficiently alarmed the IDF's chief of staff, Lt Gen Benny Gantz, that he has ordered an investigation into the original incident and the social media campaign.

"It's important that we remember and tell our subordinates in a clear manner that Facebook is not ... a replacement or even a parallel channel for dialogue between commanders and their soldiers," Gantz told the weekly general staff meeting, according to several Israeli papers last night. He added that the online campaign of dissent "raised issues of ethics in the military, which we must deal with on every level".

The incident was interpreted yesterday in front-page reports as a sign of soldiers' frustrations over their service in occupied territory, where their actions are often under scrutiny from journalists and pro-Palestinian activists.

A Facebook page called "I also back David from Nahal" showed hundreds of photographs, many of them of male and female soldiers in uniform holding placards in front of their faces with messages of support. Another Facebook support page had more than 80,000 likes.