

Queen Nefertiti's lost grave is in King Tutankhamun's tomb, archaeologist suggests

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Though Nefertiti was a powerful and influential Egyptian queen with one of the most recognizable profiles in history, archaeologists have never found her tomb.

But in a paper published last month, an English Egyptologist has suggested her lost grave could rest in a familiar place - just beyond a wall in King Tutankhamun's tomb in Egypt's Valley of the Kings.

Nicholas Reeves, an archaeologist specializing in ancient Egyptian history and a recent visiting scholar at the University of Arizona, said if his theory is correct, the historical significance of such a discovery would be "incalculable."

"To find the tomb of an Egyptian king or queen, it's the dream of all Egyptologists if we're honest with each other," he said in a phone interview this week from the United Kingdom. "To find the last resting place of somebody like Nefertiti is quite extraordinary."

Reeves' theory came after months of studying a facsimile of the tomb of 14th-century B.C. pharaoh Tutankhamun, published online early last year by Factum Arte, an art-replication specialist based in Madrid. Some experts have speculated that Queen Nefertiti was King Tut's mother.

High-resolution scans detailing the surface of the walls reveal what Reeves called the "ghosts" of two previously unrecognized doorways leading to a storage room to the left of King Tut's tomb and, according to

his belief, the undiscovered burial site of its original owner, Nefertiti, behind it.

Archaeologists have long posited that King Tut's tomb, discovered in 1922 by Egyptologist Howard Carter, was too small for a king of ancient Egypt's 18th Dynasty. Reeves argues that when Nefertiti was buried, the space wasn't intended to serve as the same tomb for King Tut. But when the boy [king](#) unexpectedly died 10 years later, and without a burial chamber yet prepared, Nefertiti's was reopened and enlarged for him.

Reeves notes that the L-shaped tomb originally turned "decisively" to the right, indicating a queen was buried there. Tombs for kings typically bent to the left, he said. Further, he argues, paintings on the tomb's north wall featured "regal iconography" that preceded King Tut. Beneath that art, he added, a corridor was made large enough for "pharaonic-style" shrines.

"On these criteria there would seem to be but one viable candidate. ... Only one female royal of the late Eighteenth Dynasty is known to have received such honors, and that is Nefertiti," he wrote.

The next steps lay with Egyptian authorities, who can commission a radar scan of both walls, Reeves said.

"If there is a hollow void behind them, we may be onto something. If the radar comes back completely solid, then we know we were mistaken," he said.

Next, a tiny hole could be drilled, and a fiber optic camera inserted, to capture images of the interior.

At least one other Egyptologist, however, questioned Reeves' findings.

Joyce Tyldesley, a senior lecturer in Egyptology at the University of Manchester, told the Times newspaper in London she would be "very surprised if this tomb was built to house the original, or first, burial of Nefertiti."

"It seems to me that it is highly likely that she died during her husband's reign ... but I would have expected her to be buried somewhere in the Western Valley, rather than in the center of the Valley of the Kings."

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