

Expert with new theory on Nefertiti's tomb invited to Egypt

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In this Oct. 15, 2009 file photo, a 3,300-year-old bust of Queen Nefertiti is seen at the New Museum, in Berlin, Germany. Egypt's Antiquities Ministry announced Wednesday, Aug. 19, 2015, that it is inviting an Egyptologist behind a theory that the tomb of Queen Nefertiti may be located behind King Tutankhamun's 3,300-year-old tomb in the famed Valley of the Kings. British-educated expert Nicholas Reeves has been invited to Cairo in September to debate his theory with Egyptian colleagues. (AP Photo/Markus Schreiber, File)

An Egyptologist behind a new theory that ancient [Queen Nefertiti's tomb may be hidden](#) behind King Tutankhamun's 3,300-year-old tomb in the famed Valley of the Kings has been invited to come to Cairo to debate his ideas, Egypt's Antiquities Ministry said Wednesday.

The theory by British Egyptologist Nicholas Reeves, while gaining a lot of attention online in recent weeks, has yet to be reviewed by peers. However, it could offer a compelling new theory into a turbulent period of ancient Egyptian history that fascinates both experts and hobbyists around the world.

The ministry said Reeves will have the opportunity

to discuss his theory with Egyptian experts in September. A joint expedition to Luxor, where the King Tut's tomb is located, could be on the agenda, the ministry said.

Reeves did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Reeves argues that Tut, who died at the age of 19, may have been rushed into an outer chamber of what was originally the tomb of Nefertiti, which has never been found.

He claims high-resolution images of King Tut's tomb include lines underneath plastered surfaces of painted walls, showing there could be two unexplored doorways, one of which leading potentially to Nefertiti's tomb. He also argues that the design of King Tut's tomb suggests it was built for a queen, rather than a king.

Aidan Dodson, an Egyptologist at the University of Bristol, is skeptical of parts of Reeves' theory.

"The possibility that there are hidden chambers behind those walls is a reasonable suggestion, but it's the jump to Nefertiti (being) behind the door that I would find somehow problematic," Dodson said. "There's absolutely no example of anyone ever doing that to a tomb."

John Darnell, a professor of Egyptology at Yale University, also said it would be "nicely surprising" if Nefertiti's tomb lay in a hidden passage behind Tut's tomb. British archeologist Howard Carter discovered Tut's tomb in the Valley of the Kings in 1922 and was "meticulous" in documenting what he found, Darnell said.

"I would be very surprised if Carter missed an additional chamber, but again, you always have to question what you think you know; and it's a very intriguing possibility," Darnell said, adding that he supported Reeves' research efforts.

Already, there's a mummy at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo that has strong DNA evidence of being Tut's mother. DNA testing also has provided strong evidence suggesting that Tut's father likely was the Pharaoh Akhenaten, the first pharaoh to try switching Egypt to monotheism. The testing also brought a new discovery: that Tut's mother was Akhenaten's sister.

Still, some archaeologists like Dodson believe the two were probably cousins and that this DNA result could be the product of three generations of marriages between first cousins—and that Nefertiti, Akhenaten's chief wife, may in fact have been Tut's mother.

Many Egyptologists believe there were probably one or two co-pharaohs between Akhenaten and Tutankhamun. Many believe at least one of them may have been Nefertiti. And by finding her tomb, that could provide further insight into a period still largely obscured despite so much interest worldwide in ancient Egypt.

"Finding a presumably intact tomb (of any previous ruler) would provide extremely important information," said Willeke Wendrich, a professor of Egyptian archaeology at UCLA.

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