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Can fresh insights into ancient boat building techniques shed new light on the truth behind the great biblical flood?

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For many of us, this does not make any sense.

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You've got to look at it through the prism of the peoples of the past.

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Is a mysterious underwater phenomenon being used as a secret weapon of war?

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The glow revealed this unearthly shape moving through the water.

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The sailors couldn't believe what they were seeing.

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And does a spine-chilling river discovery hold the key to a lost world?

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These bones are broken, twisted, cracked.

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There could be thousands of bodies.

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The underwater realm is another dimension.

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It's a physically hostile place where dreams of promise can sink into darkness.

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00:00:58,000 --> 00:01:00,000

I'm Jeremy Wade.

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I'm searching the world to bring you the most iconic and baffling underwater mysteries known to

science.

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Shipwrecks can't just disappear. Or can they?

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It's a dangerous unexplored frontier that swallows evidence.

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We know more about the face of Mars than we do our deepest oceans.

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Where unknown is normal and understanding is rare.

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The story of how Noah survived a great flood by building an ark is one of the defining tales of the human race.

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For some it's a myth. For others it's a literal truth.

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But could recent discoveries tell us once and for all whether this famous biblical story was based on real life events?

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Noah's ark is one of the most iconic tales there is.

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God comes to Noah and explains to him that he needs to go and he needs to build a gigantic ark.

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In that ark he needs to put in the animals that are on the planet to save them from a flood which is going to follow.

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The flood, as described in the Bible, is a storm that rages for 40 nights and for 40 days.

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It's alleged to have covered the entire globe and at the end all life is destroyed except for those individuals and those animals that are on board the ark with Noah.

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It's a much loved story that most of us have grown up with. But is it based on a real flood?

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On the one hand we don't expect it to necessarily be the truth but on the other hand many of these things are anchored in some reality.

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In fact many cultures and beliefs have a version of the Noah story. The oldest come from ancient Mesopotamia, more than a millennium before the Old Testament account was written.

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Many cultures have a mythological story about a deluge. So it seems as though this was a very real event in some way shape or form.

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When the Ice Age ends around 10,000 years ago it brings huge rises in sea level which separates continents and changes the world map to the one we recognize today.

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But this is a gradual change over many years. The biblical account describes Noah's flood as being

much more sudden.

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The Bible tells us that Noah's flood happened over a period of weeks, not hundreds of years.

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There is one event that could be behind the Noah story. A flood of truly epic proportions that happens in the Black Sea over 7,000 years ago.

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The Black Sea was originally a great lake and it was separated from the Mediterranean.

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But rising global sea levels from the melting ice eventually reach a crucial point.

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This got to the point when the plug which separated the Black Sea from the Mediterranean was breached.

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According to some estimates this global warming event pours water into the Black Sea with a force

around 200 times that of Niagara Falls.

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Something with 200 times the power of Niagara Falls would be a monstrous event that would be earth shaking, literally and figuratively.

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But there's a problem. Even the Black Sea deluge doesn't cover the entire earth.

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There is no geological evidence to support a worldwide flood as described in the Noah story.

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But to people living thousands of years ago it could have felt like their entire world had disappeared.

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We understand the world very differently than people would have at the time.

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For people living in that part of the world it would have looked to them that everything on the

horizon would have been submerged.

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With this in mind it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the great flood was based on real life events like the Black Sea deluge.

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And if that's the case we would expect to find other evidence that backs up the biblical tale.

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Such as clues to the existence of Noah's fabled Ark.

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A chance discovery in a Middle Eastern marketplace in 1948 could be the missing link.

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A Royal Air Force pilot goes to a local market in Iraq and comes across a clay tablet with very strange writing on it.

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He buys the tablet and takes it home to England but then it stays there forgotten about for years.

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Decades later his son takes it to the British Museum to find out if it's of interest.

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The museum curator immediately recognizes the strange markings as ancient cuneiform text.

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The world's oldest form of writing.

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He's seen thousands of tablets but this one is special.

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He started reading it was totally blown away by what he was reading.

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It reveals a secret about Noah's Ark that has been hidden from the world for nearly 4000 years.

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Inscribed on it is the familiar story of the Great Flood with one intriguing new detail about the design of the Ark.

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Not only does it tell us the story of the deluge from a time before Noah but also crucially and here's the new thing.

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It says the boat should be round.

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This simple statement goes against thousands of years of anecdotal history.

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Noah's Ark that iconic ancient wooden boat is one of the most familiar and established images of all time.

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So how could it possibly be round?

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The biblical tale of Noah and the Ark is one of the best known stories of all time.

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But could it have a basis in real events?

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An ancient clay tablet predating the Bible contains a detailed description of a huge Ark built to survive a catastrophic flood.

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But there's one crucially important detail that's different from the traditional story.

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According to this tablet Noah's Ark is round.

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I think for many of us this does not make any sense because when we think of a sea-worthy craft it is rectangular or cylindrical in shape. It's not circular.

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Circular?

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We associate boats with being what we call boat shapes, sort of long, not round.

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So having a round shape looks to us to be odd but you've got to look at it through the prism of the peoples of the past.

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Research suggests that amongst ancient cultures in this part of the world circular vessels were not unusual.

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Circular boats were the common construction.

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So it actually makes sense coming from that region to build a circular vessel because that would be what they all knew how to build.

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I think if we try to get our minds off of Noah and his companions having to travel from point A to point B, if we think about them just having to survive, they just needed to stay above water.

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And if we think in that way a circular craft starts to really make sense.

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In fact, today's nautical engineers are beginning to utilize the unique properties of circular shaped vessels.

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Modern lifeboats on ships are often a round shape because the purpose of it is to protect the people and to keep them floating on the surface, not necessarily to travel any distance.

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Circular lifeboats are supposed to have a far higher survivability rate than traditional lifeboats.

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These shapes are incredibly strong, they're incredibly supportive.

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It's one thing to have a circular boat which offers shelter to a small group of people.

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But it's quite another to build one big enough to house Noah's family, plus a menagerie of animals.

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The tablet account gives very precise measurements for the arc.

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At 222 feet across, it's about two-thirds the length of a football field.

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A round vessel of these dimensions would have been a huge undertaking thousands of years ago, so could it actually be built?

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One man is determined to find out.

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When I first heard about it, I thought, oh yeah, that's an exaggeration.

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But the more I actually started it, I actually realized that that tablet tells you exactly how to build a round vessel.

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The technology and the construction method, it's real, it's good.

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In fact, the tablet gives what is effectively a 4,000 year old construction blueprint.

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This tablet for the first time actually tells us quite vital information about the boat, the size and the materials.

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You have specific figures about the shape, which is the most important and most interesting aspect, and also construction, sequence and methods.

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Dr. Alessandro Guidoni is a leading expert on ancient boat building techniques.

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Along with a team of other scientists, he plans to follow the directions on the tablet and create a replica of the arc.

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The instructions are clear. The vessel is to be built primarily from reeds.

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So reeds are hollow, which makes them buoyant. They're easy to manipulate, they're easy to handle. You can make almost whatever you want.

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The tablet mentions just two other materials, wood for the supporting framework and most importantly, bitumen to waterproof the vessel.

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Bitumen is a type of thick oil that seeps out of the ground and it was widely used by ancient people.

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Bitumen is a great material because you can use it for multiple purposes.

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And we know that they had bitumen for every purpose. So they had bitumen for boat building, they had bitumen for plastering walls or bitumen just used as glue.

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Harnessing all their knowledge of ancient boat building techniques, Guidoni and his team successfully build a circular vessel one-fifth the diameter of the tablet specifications.

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And it floats.

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It's a huge step forward in finding solid evidence to underpin the Noah's Ark story.

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But so far, Guidoni has struggled to build anything even close to the full size of the ark.

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When you actually start increasing the size of a boat, then it's when you start having problems.

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Bitumen is a great material but it also has limits and the main issue is that usually reeds are more flexible than the bitumen and that can cause the bitumen to crack.

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Once the bitumen layer this coating cracks, then you sink.

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So did ancient people have a special boat building technique that has been lost in the mists of time?

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They have the knowledge, they have experience of hundreds if not thousands of years of using this material which we don't have.

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So now the big question is like how in the past would they make such a big ark and actually avoiding all these issues that we encountered.

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That's the main question. I'm not sure I have an answer for that.

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I'm still working on prototypes just to see if this time we will be able to make it work.

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Guidoni believes that if he can crack the secrets of the ancient boat builders, the circular ark might finally become accepted as reality and change the way we think about one of the most iconic marine mysteries of all time.

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On my travels around the globe I spent many nights on boats out on the ocean.

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Looking out across the water I've occasionally been lucky enough to witness an incredible spectacle.

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A spooky underwater firework display known as bioluminescence.

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I've never thought of this as anything more than a bizarre marine phenomenon.

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But I've recently come across a mysterious incident which suggests something a lot more sinister.

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The story comes from the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol.

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Ukraine's secret service raids the office of these unsuspecting marine biologists.

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They break into the Institute of Biology of the Southern Seas, interrogate four of its scientists and search their homes.

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What have these men got that the government is so eager to get its hands on?

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Perhaps the answer lies in the one thing that all four of these men have in common.

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It just so happens that they were studying bioluminescence.

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Bioluminescence is the light that many marine creatures produce to help them find prey, avoid predators or communicate in the darkness.

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Why would the secret service be interested in the light of marine creatures?

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Is there more to this bizarre ocean spectacle than meets the eye?

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The answer could lie in a little known event that allegedly took place during World War I.

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November 9th, 1918.

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The story goes that British Navy vessel HMS Preve is out at night in the Strait of Gibraltar.

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Many vessels are stationed in the Strait in an effort to prevent German submarines leaving the Mediterranean.

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All of a sudden there's an eerie shape glowing in the depths, building a new base.

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00:17:38,000 --> 00:17:43,000

All of a sudden there's an eerie shape glowing in the depths beneath the ship.

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The glow revealed this unearthly shape moving through the water.

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The sailors couldn't believe what they were seeing.

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They identify it as the silhouette of one of the most dangerous submarines in the entire German fleet.

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SMU-34 was one of the most successful, if not the most successful submarines of all time.

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For 117 missions, she sunk 119 ships.

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SMU-34 has eluded detection for years.

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But now she's easy pickings.

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The British naval records indicate that the submarine was identified and that it was sunk by depth charge.

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Now the story goes that the reason that they were able to finally see this submarine was because it went through a patch of bioluminescing organisms which lights up the path of the submarine.

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More specifically, experts believe that the organisms which betrayed SMU-34 were bioluminescent plankton, vast swarms of them.

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There's millions and millions of phytoplankton in the ocean and when they're disturbed they light up.

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Most plankton is invisible to the naked eye until something moves through the water and disturbs it.

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If I was on a ship in the middle of the night and all of a sudden I see this light glowing, that's an indication to me that there's something large in the ocean.

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The Navy happened to spot SMU-34 as it passed through a huge cloud of bioluminescent plankton.

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But it was pure fluke, a case of right place, right time.

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The question is, has anybody found a way to harness this unpredictable phenomenon and turn it into a reliable weapon of war?

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The science of bioluminescence

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Scientists are investigating the dark side of the mysterious ocean phenomenon known as bioluminescence.

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Has it secretly been turned into a weapon of war?

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Bioluminescence gave away the location of the submarine.

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So if you can imagine, if you could harness that technology, it would be one way to expose the locations of your enemy.

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Military powers are interested in any technological advancement or military application that will give them an edge against their enemy.

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There's evidence to suggest that after the sinking of SMU-34, bioluminescent plankton becomes a focus of naval engineers around the globe.

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And during the Cold War, the stakes are higher than ever before.

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The Cold War was mostly fought under the water with nuclear submarines.

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And these nuclear submarines were getting more and more sophisticated and harder to track.

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So there was this idea of using bioluminescence to detect submarines that were undetectable any other way.

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Rapid developments in satellite technology could make bioluminescence an extremely powerful tool.

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I suspect, and again, this is only speculation on my part, that you could use satellites to detect bioluminescence.

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Saying you're looking down at the ocean and there's a massive bloom being disturbed, you could potentially see the bioluminescence from space.

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There's little doubt that military powers on both sides of the Iron Curtain attempted to weaponize bioluminescence.

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But with what success? That's where the trail goes cold.

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We do know that both sides have experimented with bioluminescence and have studied it.

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And we don't know how successful it's been. So in some ways that's still a mystery.

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If the military did figure out how to use bioluminescence plankton as means for detecting vessels, would we even know?

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Military research is highly secretive. But new information from the US Ministry of Defense reveals that marine creatures are still very much on the radar.

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DARPA are the American Defense Research Agency. They are the ones charged with inventing the future.

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DARPA has recently launched an ambitious project. As well as using the light of marine animals to track submersibles, they're investigating the possibility of using sound.

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One of the speculations is as objects like a submarine move past animals will make different sounds.

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So they may be talking to one another saying, hey, there's something big that's just moved by.

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Any significant changes in the sounds made by the animals can be picked up by high-tech hydrophones.

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According to DARPA, this is a real program that they're working on right now.

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Perhaps marine animals will soon be operating as underwater spies if they're not already.

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Just like a lot of closely guarded naval secrets, if it is being used as a surveillance technology, it will remain a secret.

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A long time ago, a team of archaeologists made an extraordinary discovery.

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The remains of two large, luxurious Roman superyachts, unlike anything ever seen before.

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But rumor has it that the mothership, a vast vessel even bigger and more extravagant, is still to be found.

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Now, a new lead promises to reveal the long-hidden truth.

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Lake Nemi, central Italy.

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A man is fishing at the western end of the lake when his net catches on something solid under the water.

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00:25:03,000 --> 00:25:12,000

Local people believe that it could be the remains of a huge Roman ship and for good reason.

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In 1927, fascist Italian dictator Benito Mussolini orders his men to drain the lake.

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Mussolini, who was fascinated with Rome, came up with this grand scheme to drain the lake.

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It's the kind of ambitious project that probably only a dictator could get away with.

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Mussolini has heard the rumors of magnificent Roman vessels lying on the lakebed.

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If he can find them, they could be used for his own political gain.

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It was trying to show the glory of the Italian state based on the Roman past.

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And he isn't disappointed.

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As they drain these lakes, what was exposed was these two massive beautifully built ships being raised up out of the bottom of the lake.

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Examining the remains more closely, archaeologists discover that these are no ordinary ships.

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In their day, they would have looked more like floating Roman palaces.

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These are massive, massive ships and not only that, but they were found with these beautiful decoration.

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They were really kind of decked out with the most luxurious goods of the time.

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It was really impressive. Not only did they have water systems on the ship, it appeared that they had hot water and cold water.

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Also platforms that could rotate and all sorts of conveniences that was very advanced.

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00:26:54,000 --> 00:27:00,000

But the question is, what are these vast ships doing in such a tiny landlocked lake?

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00:27:01,000 --> 00:27:05,000

What use would they serve and what's their purpose?

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00:27:06,000 --> 00:27:16,000

It's a mystery until archaeologists discover that behind these superyachts is one of history's most unhinged and infamous men.

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00:27:16,000 --> 00:27:34,000

In 1929, two luxurious Roman superyachts were discovered in Italy's Lake Nemmi.

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00:27:35,000 --> 00:27:41,000

But there are rumours that a third, even more extravagant ship remains hidden beneath the surface.

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00:27:42,000 --> 00:27:47,000

It is a tantalising mystery as to what is at the bottom of the lake.

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00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:59,000

Locals believe that like the two found in the 1920s, the missing ship once belonged to notorious Roman Emperor Caligula, also known as the Mad Emperor.

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00:28:01,000 --> 00:28:09,000

Caligula is the Mad Emperor. We have references to Orges, we have killing of family members,

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00:28:09,000 --> 00:28:11,000

we have the killing of senators.

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00:28:12,000 --> 00:28:25,000

He was a playboy without the limitations of a credit card. He wanted the finest palaces, he wanted the finest of everything and he made sure he got it.

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00:28:26,000 --> 00:28:30,000

The Lake Nemmi ships were built to suit Caligula's flamboyant taste.

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00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:36,000

These ships were the equivalent of a billionaire's mega yacht today.

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00:28:36,000 --> 00:28:42,000

Experts believe that Caligula hosted his infamous parties and Orges on board.

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00:28:44,000 --> 00:28:54,000

He had his ship basically built for his wants, desires, needs and they were built in the most advanced fashion of the day.

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00:28:56,000 --> 00:29:04,000

But just a year later, Caligula was murdered and his state of the art pleasure palaces ended up on the bottom of the lake.

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00:29:07,000 --> 00:29:13,000

By the time Mussolini's team finds the first two, they've been underwater for centuries.

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00:29:14,000 --> 00:29:19,000

Even though these ships were 2,000 years old, they were in a pretty good state of preservation.

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00:29:20,000 --> 00:29:25,000

Both ships and their contents are removed from the lake and displayed in a purpose-built museum.

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00:29:26,000 --> 00:29:29,000

But then, disaster strikes.

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00:29:30,000 --> 00:29:39,000

The tragedy is that at the end of the Second World War, the museum was destroyed.

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00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:46,000

It was either hit by Allied artillery or it may have been German arson. We don't know, but the museum was destroyed and within it, the ships.

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00:29:49,000 --> 00:29:55,000

They lasted over 1,900 years underwater. They were there, they were safe, they were preserved.

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00:29:55,000 --> 00:30:00,000

And then they were only open to human eyes for another 20 years before they were destroyed.

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00:30:02,000 --> 00:30:04,000

It was a huge loss.

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00:30:06,000 --> 00:30:13,000

But what if there's a third, even larger vessel still hidden safely away beneath the surface?

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00:30:14,000 --> 00:30:18,000

There have been stories about a ship in the western end of the lake for years.

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00:30:20,000 --> 00:30:23,000

Could this be what snagged the fisherman's net?

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00:30:26,000 --> 00:30:29,000

It would be great if Mussolini missed one, so we could find it today.

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00:30:31,000 --> 00:30:37,000

To investigate, the Italian authorities commissioned a thorough scientific search of the lake bed.

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00:30:39,000 --> 00:30:44,000

The team is using side scans, so you're getting a sideways view of the floor.

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00:30:45,000 --> 00:30:48,000

And this can give you a lot of heights and a lot of textures.

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00:30:49,000 --> 00:30:54,000

The scans locate one intriguing point of interest, around 60 feet down.

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00:30:56,000 --> 00:31:01,000

They find something, but they can't make out what it is, so they send scuba divers out to find out.

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00:31:04,000 --> 00:31:10,000

Scrabbling around in the murk, one of the divers comes across something solid, buried deep in the silt.

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00:31:12,000 --> 00:31:17,000

Could this be the lost pleasure palace of Mad Emperor Caligula?

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00:31:19,000 --> 00:31:38,000

The wreck of two priceless Roman superyachts belonging to crazed Emperor Caligula were tragically destroyed in World War II.

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00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:46,000

But could there be another one hidden safely away in the depths of Lake Nemi?

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00:31:46,000 --> 00:31:51,000

Is there a third or even a fourth Roman ship hiding in the depths of Lake Nemi?

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00:31:54,000 --> 00:31:58,000

Scientists have discovered an unidentified object on the lake bed.

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00:31:59,000 --> 00:32:04,000

But divers soon confirm that it's not Caligula's missing pleasure palace.

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00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:09,000

It turns out to be a small boat dating back to the 1920s.

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00:32:10,000 --> 00:32:15,000

Possibly one of the boats which Mussolini's men would have used to find the first two ships.

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00:32:17,000 --> 00:32:20,000

The investigation is frustratingly inconclusive.

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00:32:22,000 --> 00:32:27,000

But in 2018, a revolutionary new technology brings fresh hope.

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00:32:28,000 --> 00:32:38,000

A company has used new data analysis technology to take commercial satellite footage to examine the part of the lake which wasn't drained by Mussolini.

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00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:47,000

By reinterpreting satellite image data, they claim to be able to reveal objects that weren't visible before.

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00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:55,000

And as they scan Lake Nemi from space, something incredible emerges.

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00:32:57,000 --> 00:33:02,000

Not just one, but at least three large ship-like objects.

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00:33:03,000 --> 00:33:09,000

It's a tantalising possibility that there could be more shipwrecks at the bottom of the lake.

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00:33:10,000 --> 00:33:16,000

If we do find another Nemi ship, it would be a literal gold mine for anyone who studied the Roman Empire.

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00:33:17,000 --> 00:33:24,000

Until divers explore further, the case of Caligula's lost super yacht remains unsolved.

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00:33:25,000 --> 00:33:33,000

But it seems that even after 2000 years, Lake Nemi has not yet given up all of her secrets.

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00:33:47,000 --> 00:33:53,000

Exploring the depths of a murky German river, divers make an extraordinary find.

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00:33:55,000 --> 00:33:59,000

The long-forgotten remnants of a Bronze Age bridge.

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00:34:00,000 --> 00:34:05,000

And the discovery of human remains nearby raises a colossal question.

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00:34:06,000 --> 00:34:10,000

Could this be the site of Europe's first major war?

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00:34:16,000 --> 00:34:19,000

The Tolentzer River, northern Germany.

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00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:29,000

This story begins with an amateur archaeologist finding a human bone with a flint arrowhead,

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00:34:30,000 --> 00:34:36,000

with a flint projectile point embedded in it. And this immediately raised questions.

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00:34:37,000 --> 00:34:43,000

Radiocarbon dating analysis reveals that the bone is a rare relic from the Bronze Age,

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00:34:44,000 --> 00:34:49,000

more than 3000 years old. But who did it belong to?

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00:34:52,000 --> 00:34:57,000

The arrowhead is hard proof that this is no accidental death.

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00:34:58,000 --> 00:35:02,000

This is deliberate. This is not an accident. This is not somebody being hurt.

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00:35:03,000 --> 00:35:05,000

This is somebody engaging in some kind of conflict.

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00:35:06,000 --> 00:35:13,000

As underwater archaeologists start to explore the river and its extensive floodplain,

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00:35:14,000 --> 00:35:18,000

a much more chilling picture begins to emerge from the gloom.

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00:35:19,000 --> 00:35:23,000

They kept expanding the dig, finding more and more bones.

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00:35:26,000 --> 00:35:27,000

They were scattered everywhere.

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00:35:28,000 --> 00:35:31,000

They slowly piece together the remains of body after body,

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00:35:31,000 --> 00:35:37,000

until they have an unexpected assembly of over 130 skeletons.

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00:35:40,000 --> 00:35:45,000

They've only dug 10% of the site and they already have hundreds of bodies.

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00:35:46,000 --> 00:35:50,000

So the potential is there could be thousands of bodies still to be found.

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00:35:53,000 --> 00:35:57,000

It's clear that something much bigger than a fatal duel took place here.

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00:35:58,000 --> 00:36:01,000

We start telling a much darker story.

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00:36:02,000 --> 00:36:08,000

Closer examination of the bones reveals some vital clues about how these people died.

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00:36:10,000 --> 00:36:13,000

These bones are broken, twisted, cracked, smacked.

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00:36:14,000 --> 00:36:20,000

They found numerous skulls and some of these skulls have wounds in them that are phenomenal.

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00:36:21,000 --> 00:36:24,000

Basically like taking a baseball bat and cracking somebody's head.

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00:36:28,000 --> 00:36:33,000

Before long, the remains of the weapons themselves begin to appear in the river sediments.

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00:36:34,000 --> 00:36:36,000

It wasn't like a croquet mallet.

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00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:40,000

It was basically a stick with a giant head on it for bashing.

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00:36:41,000 --> 00:36:46,000

We're talking hand-to-hand combat, people bashing each other with bludgeoning weapons.

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00:36:47,000 --> 00:36:49,000

The archaeologists are stunned.

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00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:56,000

This appears to be the first concrete evidence in northern Europe of a large bronze age battle.

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00:36:57,000 --> 00:37:00,000

The remains of the bronze age warriors are still in the river.

283

00:37:01,000 --> 00:37:04,000

The remains of the bronze age warriors are still in the river.

284

00:37:05,000 --> 00:37:08,000

The remains of the bronze age warriors are still in the river.

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00:37:09,000 --> 00:37:21,000

In Germany's Tolensa River, divers discover remains of hundreds of bronze age warriors killed in battle more than 3,000 years ago.

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00:37:22,000 --> 00:37:29,000

What started with one find, with one human bone, with a stone projectile point in it,

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00:37:30,000 --> 00:37:34,000

snowballed and escalated into this mass burial site.

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00:37:36,000 --> 00:37:41,000

The immense scale of the battle shocks scientists and historians.

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00:37:43,000 --> 00:37:48,000

It becomes clear that this was the site of a huge bronze age battle.

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00:37:49,000 --> 00:37:54,000

In some ways it was really the World War of the Bronze Age.

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00:37:56,000 --> 00:38:01,000

Before this find, there had been no known conflict of this size north of the Alps.

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00:38:02,000 --> 00:38:07,000

Compared with more sophisticated civilizations in the Near East and Greece,

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00:38:08,000 --> 00:38:15,000

Bronze Age Europe was long believed to be a cultural backwater, where violence was restricted to small groups of men.

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00:38:16,000 --> 00:38:23,000

But the Tolensa River site suggests a battle involving as many as 4,000 warriors.

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00:38:24,000 --> 00:38:29,000

These are major undertakings. This is not a rudimentary society that can put this together.

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00:38:32,000 --> 00:38:39,000

It kind of forced researchers to rewrite their understanding of what was happening in this region in the Bronze Age.

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00:38:46,000 --> 00:38:49,000

But the biggest mystery of all remains.

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00:38:50,000 --> 00:38:54,000

Who were these men and what were they fighting over?

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00:38:55,000 --> 00:39:01,000

There obviously was a battle at Tolensa. The question is why there?

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00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:08,000

Why did all these warriors come from all around Europe to fight in this river?

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00:39:09,000 --> 00:39:15,000

Could a new discovery in the murky waters of the Tolensa River provide the answer?

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00:39:19,000 --> 00:39:25,000

They found right below where the bodies were, layer of bodies, layer of bodies, bridge.

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00:39:27,000 --> 00:39:32,000

A series of oak piles and posts preserved within the Tolensa River sediments

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00:39:33,000 --> 00:39:37,000

are identified as the remnants of a Bronze Age bridge.

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00:39:39,000 --> 00:39:46,000

Further excavation reveals that the bridge seems to have been connected to a vast causeway

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00:39:47,000 --> 00:39:54,000

that once spanned the entire marshy valley, allowing people to cross even during times of flood.

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00:39:55,000 --> 00:40:03,000

This was a very surprising find because the traditional perspective of the Bronze Age is small farming clans, very small groups.

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00:40:04,000 --> 00:40:12,000

If there was a long causeway across the river, that would suggest that there was a major infrastructure going on.

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00:40:13,000 --> 00:40:19,000

This bridge was probably the only crossing place over the Tolensa River for many miles around,

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00:40:20,000 --> 00:40:23,000

which would have made it a key point on an important trading route.

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00:40:24,000 --> 00:40:31,000

This was clearly a major thoroughfare, a major travel route for people within that part of Europe.

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00:40:33,000 --> 00:40:39,000

Bridge crossings are vitally vitally important, transporting goods, let alone accessing raw materials.

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00:40:40,000 --> 00:40:50,000

Historically, many battles have been fought around bridges, from the Romans through to World War II, Vietnam and Iraq.

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00:40:51,000 --> 00:41:00,000

River crossings are always these kind of high priority targets because they provide a way of moving either people or goods.

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00:41:00,000 --> 00:41:11,000

Experts agree that the bridge must have played a vital role in the battle of Tolensa, but exactly what that role was, we can only speculate.

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00:41:12,000 --> 00:41:17,000

Maybe one side was fighting with the other over control of this bridge.

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00:41:18,000 --> 00:41:21,000

Another theory is that there could have been an ambush.

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00:41:22,000 --> 00:41:27,000

Given the fact that there were so many combatants and they had come from so far afield,

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00:41:28,000 --> 00:41:38,000

in my opinion, suggests what we have really here is evidence of one of the first examples in the early Bronze Age of a large scale war.

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00:41:41,000 --> 00:41:48,000

Nobody knows for sure why thousands of warriors fought to the death beside the Tolensa River all those years ago,

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00:41:48,000 --> 00:41:52,000

but the incredible finds make one thing very clear.

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00:41:54,000 --> 00:42:05,000

The solutions to some of humanity's most ancient and enduring mysteries still lie hidden in the murky underwater realm, waiting to be discovered.