WHAT CAN A SUNKEN ROYAL WARSHIP TELL US ABOUT MEDIEVAL WARFARE?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Underwater archaeologists exploring a 500-year-old shipwreck near Sweden have found pieces of medieval chain mail and a chest that may have held weapons or ammunition. The wreck is the Gribshunden, the flagship of King Hans of Denmark and Norway. In 1495, it was sailing towards a meeting intended to strengthen the Kalmar Union, which joined Denmark, Norway and Sweden under one ruler. The ship carried nobles, officials and about 150 German mercenary soldiers. It caught fire and sank while anchored near the Swedish coast. The Baltic Sea has very little salt, so shipworms have not destroyed the wooden wreck as they would in warmer seas. Researchers think the new finds may reveal how armies supplied and equipped soldiers at sea. They are now testing the metal and the chest to discover where they came from and how they were used.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This wreck is more than a collection of old objects. It shows how rulers used ships to display power, move armies and conduct diplomacy. The chain mail also raises questions about soldiers who fought far from home and about the complicated supply systems needed to keep medieval armies equipped.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why would a king take soldiers and weapons on a diplomatic journey?”

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/while-exploring-a-500-year-old-shipwreck-off-the-coast-of-sweden-underwater-archaeologists-discovered-medieval-c