DID ELIZABETH I REALLY WRITE HER ANGRY LETTERS HERSELF?

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

New research suggests that some of Elizabeth I's most famous letters were edited by the men who worked for her. Historians examined more than 500 letters from the Tudor queen, including messages about Mary, Queen of Scots, and James VI of Scotland. Around 3,000 letters written during Elizabeth's reign still survive, but most were written down by secretaries rather than by the queen herself. One secretary, Francis Walsingham, appears to have made some letters sound even angrier or friendlier than Elizabeth's first drafts. This may have been deliberate. Strong language could frighten an opponent, while warmer language could persuade someone to cooperate. The research does not prove that Elizabeth had no control over the letters. Instead, it suggests that royal messages were often teamwork, with secretaries helping shape the queen's public voice.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

Letters can look like direct evidence of what a famous person thought, but they may have been copied, edited or shaped by other people. This changes how we view Elizabeth I, who has often been described as naturally fierce or hot-tempered. Her letters may show careful political planning rather than simple emotion. The story is a reminder to ask who created a historical source and why.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

"How can secretaries change what we think a ruler really believed?"

Source: Smithsonian Magazine

https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/who-wrote-elizabeth-is-most-scathing-letters-new-research-suggests-the-tudor-queens-male-secretaries-revised-her-corre