Queen Nzinga (also known as Njinga Mbande or Ana de Sousa Nzinga Mbande) was a 17th-century queen of the Ndongo and Matamba Kingdoms of the Mbundu people in Angola. Born around 1583, she came to power during a period of intense conflict with the Portuguese, who were expanding their slave trade into Central Africa. Nzinga is renowned for her diplomatic acumen, military tactics, and her ability to unify her people against colonial forces. Her reign was marked by her strategic alliances, including with the Dutch, and her efforts to resettle former slaves and develop her kingdom's economy independent of Portuguese influence. In 1622, Queen Nzinga demonstrated her diplomatic skills by negotiating with the Portuguese Governor João Correia de Sousa in Luanda. In a famous incident during this meeting, when no chair was offered to her—a clear sign of disrespect—Nzinga had one of her own servants get down on hands and knees to serve as a human chair for her. This act is often cited as an example of her refusal to submit to the Portuguese and her assertion of her own royal status. Queen Nzinga was a master at forming strategic military alliances. When the Portuguese betrayed a peace treaty, she allied with their rivals, the Dutch, and even led her own troops into battle against the Portuguese. Her military campaigns were characterized by her fearless leadership and her ability to inspire her warriors to fight for the sovereignty of their lands. She was known to be an astute military strategist, which enabled her to resist Portuguese colonization effectively for many years. As a ruler, Queen Nzinga was known for her administrative reforms and her efforts to rebuild a nation ravaged by war and the slave trade. She established Matamba as a sanctuary for escaped slaves and those affected by the war, promoting it as a trading power and a center of resistance. Her reign saw the revitalization of her kingdom's economy as she encouraged the development of agriculture and the establishment of markets, which helped to sustain her people and army. Queen Nzinga embraced Christianity as a strategic move to strengthen her alliance with the Portuguese initially. She was baptized as Ana de Sousa, taking the name of the governor's wife, to form a spiritual kinship with the Portuguese. However, her Christian faith did not stop her from resisting colonial domination. She skillfully used her new religion to gain political leverage while continuing to practice traditional beliefs and customs, illustrating her pragmatic approach to governance. Throughout her life, Queen Nzinga was known for her exceptional intelligence and political acumen. She spoke several languages, including Portuguese, which she used to negotiate with colonial powers. Her ability to navigate complex political landscapes allowed her to play European powers against each other to the benefit of her kingdom. Her deep understanding of international diplomacy was critical in her efforts to keep her enemies at bay and maintain the independence of her people. Queen Nzinga's reign was not without internal strife. She faced opposition from factions within her own court and rival kingdoms. Nonetheless, she managed to maintain her power through a combination of political marriages, espionage, and the formation of a loyal, elite guard composed of women warriors. These female warriors were known for their bravery and skill in battle, and they played a crucial role in Nzinga's military successes. After decades of warfare and diplomacy, Queen Nzinga's efforts to liberate her people from Portuguese control ultimately laid the groundwork for resistance movements that would continue long after her death. Her legacy is one of fierce independence and resistance against colonization. She is remembered as a symbol of struggle and perseverance, and her story has been passed down through generations as an inspiration for those fighting against oppression. Queen Nzinga died on December 17, 1663, at the age of 80. Her death marked the end of an era, but her impact on Angolan history and culture remains profound. She is celebrated as a national heroine in Angola, with streets, schools, and even a city named after her. Her life and resistance to colonial forces are commemorated in songs, dances, and folklore, ensuring that her legacy continues to influence and empower the people of Angola. In modern times, Queen Nzinga's life and legacy have been the subject of scholarly research, literature, and art. She has been depicted in novels, plays, and films, often portrayed as a symbol of empowerment and resistance. Her complex character has been examined in academic circles, leading to debates about her tactics, her role in the slave trade, and her impact on the history of Africa. Queen Nzinga remains a powerful figure in the collective memory of the continent and serves as an enduring icon of female leadership and resilience.