Queen Ranavalona III was the last reigning monarch of the Kingdom of Madagascar. Born on November 22, 1861, she was named Rakoto Andriana Manjaka Nirina but was later christened as Ranavalona III upon ascending the throne. Her reign was marked by the struggle to maintain the sovereignty of Madagascar against the expanding French colonial empire. Despite her efforts, in 1896, Madagascar was annexed by France, making it a French colony and effectively ending her reign. Before becoming queen, Ranavalona III was a relative unknown. She was chosen to become queen by a council of ministers and other influential people in the kingdom, following the death of Queen Ranavalona II. This decision was influenced by Prime Minister Rainilaiarivony, who sought a queen that could be easily influenced. However, Ranavalona III proved to be a strong and determined ruler, who did her utmost to protect the kingdom's sovereignty. During her reign, Queen Ranavalona III tried to modernize Madagascar and strengthen its international ties. She encouraged the learning of French and English among her subjects, in addition to the native Malagasy language. She also sought to establish diplomatic relations with the United States and Britain. However, these attempts were seen as a threat by France, which had its own colonial ambitions in Madagascar. The Franco-Hova Wars, which led to the French colonization of Madagascar, took place during Ranavalona III's reign. Despite her attempts to maintain peace, including a treaty signed in 1885 that recognized Madagascar as a French protectorate while still preserving its internal sovereignty, the French continued their military aggression. In 1895, they launched a full-scale invasion of the island, leading to its annexation the following year. Following the French annexation of Madagascar, Queen Ranavalona III was initially allowed to remain as a symbolic figure. However, her popularity among the Malagasy people and her continued resistance against French rule led to her being exiled in 1897. She was first sent to the island of Réunion, and later to Algiers, Algeria, where she spent the rest of her life. Despite being thousands of miles away from her homeland, Queen Ranavalona III never stopped advocating for the freedom of her people. She wrote numerous letters to influential figures around the world, including Pope Leo XIII and Queen Victoria, seeking their support for the independence of Madagascar. However, her pleas largely fell on deaf ears. Queen Ranavalona III's exile in Algeria was marked by hardship and loneliness. She was kept under close surveillance by French authorities and was not allowed to have any contact with her subjects back in Madagascar. Despite this, she managed to maintain her dignity and poise, earning the respect of many who knew her. Queen Ranavalona III passed away on May 23, 1917, at the age of 55. Her death was mourned by the Malagasy people, who saw her as a symbol of their lost independence. However, it would be several decades before her body was finally returned to Madagascar. In 1938, her remains were reburied in a royal tomb in the capital city of Antananarivo. Despite the hardships she faced, Queen Ranavalona III left a lasting legacy. She is remembered as a national hero in Madagascar, and her struggle for independence is a source of inspiration for many. Her life and reign have been the subject of numerous books and films, and her image appears on various Malagasy banknotes. In recent years, there have been efforts to rehabilitate Queen Ranavalona III's image and legacy. In 2018, a statue of her was unveiled in Antananarivo, the first in the city's history. This was seen as a significant step towards acknowledging her contribution to the country's history and the struggle for independence. Her story continues to resonate with many, serving as a powerful reminder of the resilience and determination of the Malagasy people.