



## Biography

### Njinga Mbandi

Njinga Mbandi (1581–1663), Queen of Ndongo and Matamba, defined much of the history of seventeenth-century Angola.

The Europeans' mercantilist designs, in particular the development of the slave trade along the southern African coast, drastically changed the political, social, economic and cultural environment of the Kingdom of Ndongo and the entire region. It was against that backdrop that Njinga Mbandi made her mark as an outstanding example of female governance.

Ngola Mbandi Kiluanji, the King of Ndongo, died in 1617. His son, Ngola Mbandi, became the new king but he had neither his father's charisma nor the intelligence of his sister Nzinga Mbandi. In 1622, harried by the Portuguese, he sent Nzinga Mbandi to Luanda as his envoy to negotiate for peace with Dom João Correia de Sousa, the Portuguese Governor. Njinga proved to be an outstanding negotiator and diplomat.



Illustration of Njinga Mbandi by the French illustrator Achille Devéria, 1830.



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In 1624, Ngola Mbandi died. Njinga took power and became queen.

She quickly distinguished herself as an excellent sovereign. Her tactics in warfare and espionage, her diplomatic skills, her ability to forge numerous strategic alliances, and her knowledge of trade and religious issues served her well in tenaciously resisting Portugal's colonialist aspirations until her death in 1663.



Statue of Njinga Mbandi,  
Luanda, Republic of Angola.  
Photograph by Erik Cleves  
Kristensen, 2009.