

Louise-Hippolyte

Sovereign Princess of Monaco (1697–1731)

The eldest daughter of Prince Antoine I of Monaco (1661–1731) and Marie de Lorraine-Armagnac (1674–1724), **Louise-Hippolyte** found herself, in the absence of a brother, as the heiress to the Monegasque throne at the turn of the eighteenth century. Her parents had six daughters.

Unlike Salic law, which governed the Kingdom of France and excluded any transfer of the crown via women, the will of Jean I Grimaldi (1454), which set out the rules for succession applicable to the princely dynasty, stated that a woman could pass on sovereignty, provided that her husband was a Grimaldi.

In the fifteenth century, it was a distant cousin from the Antibes-Cagnes branch of the family who married the Monegasque heiress.

A marriage for the dynasty

In Louise-Hippolyte's case, it was decided that her husband, who would be selected from outside the Grimaldi family, would need to give up his own name and coat of arms to take those of his wife. Jacques IV of Goyon-Matignon (1689–1751), from a family with roots in Brittany and Normandy, thus became Jacques Grimaldi, the first to bear the name, on his marriage to the princess on 20 October 1715. Their marriage contract was signed on 5 September in the royal study at Versailles, while the court was still mourning Louis XIV, who had died a few days earlier. In a sign of just how significant the Monegasque succession issue was, this was almost certainly the first document to have been signed by the young King Louis XV.

The couple had nine children, born between 1717 and 1728. The family lived primarily at the Hôtel de Matignon in Paris and at the Château de Torigni in Normandy. The intimate correspondence from the princess to her husband, which is kept in the Palace archives, shows a loving wife and a mother who took a keen interest in her children's education.

A reigning princess

Louise-Hippolyte became the sovereign following the death of her father on 21 February 1731. The princess arrived in Monaco alone on 14 April, and despite her declared intent to reign jointly with her husband ("we will govern together"), she received the oath of her subjects alone at the Palace on 26 and 27 April, for Monaco and Roquebrune, and on 30 April in Menton. Faced with an administration that appeared to want to force at least an association with her husband and which preferred a prince, the princess sought to defend her prerogatives. During public prayers, Louise-Hippolyte asked to be named "together with the prince", but pushed back when it was explained to her that "the husband always precedes his wife". Her royal seal features only her first name, Louise, but brings together two shields, symbols of an alliance, comprising two Grimaldi coats of arms.

Keen to assert her full authority abroad as well, Louise-Hippolyte was very careful to ensure that the wording of the tribute which she was obliged to pay to the King of Sardinia for the eleven twelfths of Menton and Roquebrune was absolutely identical to that paid by her father in 1716.

The princess died in Monaco on 29 December 1731 due to a smallpox epidemic. In 10 months, she had only been able to promulgate five edicts: against the free bearing of arms (5 May); against defamatory lampoons and songs (20 May); on the dumping of rubble (1 July); on the maintenance of roads (27 July); and on the regulation of butchery (18 August).

Louise-Hippolyte attempted to invent in Monaco a female exercise of power that did not exist, since Jean I's will, which gave her dynastic legitimacy, did not specify the actual roles of the heiress and her husband.