Power and reputation at the court of Louis XIII

The career of Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes (1578–1621)

SHARON KETTERING

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For everyone who made this book possible

Contents

Illustrations

Abbreviations

A.A.E.	Archives des Affaires Etrangères, Paris
A.C.	Archives communales
A.D.	Archives départementales
A.N.	Archives Nationales, Paris
A.N., M.C.	Archives Nationales, Minutier Central
B. Arsenal	Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, Paris
B. Avignon	Bibliothèque municipale d'Avignon
B.I.F.	Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France, Paris
B. Inguimbertine	Bibliothèque Inguimbertine, Carpentras
B. Méjanes	Bibliothèque Méjanes, Aix-en-Provence
B.N.	Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris
B.N., Ms fr.	Bibliothèque nationale, Manuscrits français
B.N., CC Colbert	Bibliothèque nationale, Cinq Cents de Colbert
DBF	*Dictionnaire de biographie française*, eds. R. d'Amat et al.
Fr Hist	*French History* (journal)
Fr Hist Stud	*French Historical Studies* (journal)
Rev hist	*Revue historique* (journal)

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Introduction: Luynes and the historians

Charles d'Albert, duc de Luynes, a favorite of Louis XIII, died of scarlet fever at about three o'clock on the afternoon of 15 December 1621 at the château of Longuetille near Condom in southwestern France. This was the headquarters of the royal army besieging the little Protestant town of Monheurt several leagues away.[1] As constable or commander-in-chief of the army, Luynes had been blamed when the siege of Montauban had to be lifted in the previous month, although he had not been the field commander. Anonymous pamphlets accusing him of incompetence and cowardice had circulated throughout Paris at this time, and more than 100 pamphlets attacking him had appeared between 1620 and 1622.[2] In fact, there was a flood of political pamphlets on all topics during Louis XIII's reign, about 3,300 titles in all.[3] Their devastating impact on Luynes's reputation is the subject of this book, which is a revisionist study seeking to rehabilitate his reputation and improve his historical image. Luynes was a shrewd politician who controlled the distribution of royal patronage at court, so this book is also about the impact of his patronage power on court politics. Richelieu, who succeeded Luynes as a minister favorite, learned much from him, although he never admitted it.

François Du Val, marquis de Fontenay-Mareuil, thought Luynes had little intelligence or ability. Unpopular royal favorites were often ridiculed and criticized by their contemporaries. Fontenay-Mareuil wrote in his memoirs, "… this great and powerful man found himself abandoned and despised during his illness and afterward. During the two days he lay dying, no one wanted to remain in his bedchamber, although the doors were always open so anyone could enter as if he were the least important of men. When they transported his body to be buried at his duchy of Luynes, instead of priests praying for him, I saw servants playing cards on his coffin while waiting for their horses to be fed."[4] This famous anecdote, demonstrating the fickleness of fortune, delighted contemporaries.

Fontenay-Mareuil, however, did not accompany Luynes's coffin on its

journey northward to the Loire valley – no one from the court did – so he could not himself have seen servants playing cards on its lid. Had this story been repeated to him by an eye-witness or was it apocryphal? An epidemic of scarlet fever was raging in the army at the time, causing numerous deaths. No one wanted to be near Luynes for fear of catching this highly contagious disease, which Fontenay-Mareuil did not mention in his memoirs either. The king's doctors had forbidden him to enter Luynes's rooms when the severity of his illness became apparent, which Fontenay-Mareuil also failed to mention. He noted only that the king had stopped going to see Luynes when he became seriously ill, and added that the king did not show sorrow or unhappiness at the news of his death. Instead, he rode out at once for Damazan, and did not accompany the coffin on its journey northward. François de Bassompierre, another courtier who disliked Luynes, noted the king's hasty departure and surmised, wrongly, that Luynes was out of favor.[5]

A stony-faced Louis XIII saddled up and rode out upon hearing of his favorite's death because he did not wish to show grief in public. He had refused to show emotion in public from an early age.[6] Héroard, his doctor, mentioned his great distress at Luynes's sudden illness and death, giving that as the reason he departed so suddenly for Damazan on 15 December. He did not stay long, riding to Casteljaloux on 17 December, Bazas on 18 December, Pruignat on 20 December, and Bordeaux on 21 December where he stopped with a stomach ailment and stayed to celebrate Christmas.[7] Flight is not the response of an uncaring individual.

Relying on ambassadorial dispatches, historian Berthold Zeller noted that boatmen taking Luynes's embalmed body by river to Bordeaux had carelessly knocked it about and damaged it, then had trouble finding somewhere to shelter it for the night.[8] An eye-witness, the comte de Souvigny, an army lieutenant general who was on the Bordeaux docks when the body arrived, noted that it was in a simple coffin without funerary trappings, surrounded only by servants and baggage without an entourage of priests or anyone of rank accompanying it, a significant social slight.[9] The coffin rested in the Bordeaux church of the Chartreux overnight, and then went by river to Blaye where it was put on a cart traveling north to the Loire. It was taken upriver by boat to Amboise to rest in a funerary chapel, and then transported to Tours for a funeral service in the lovely gothic cathedral of Saint Gatien.

On 11 January 1622, Luynes's coffin arrived at the river quai beneath the medieval fortified bridge on the street leading to the cathedral. Members of the city's religious orders carrying white candles met the coffin, and escorted it to Saint Gatien. The government newspaper, the *Mercure françois*, reported that thirty men on horseback rode first in the funeral cortege, followed by five pages on horses draped in black, then members of the city's six religious orders on

foot carrying white candles, a Swiss guard on horseback dressed in mourning, a dozen Swiss guards on foot in mourning with their halberds pointed down, and ten of Luynes's household gentlemen in mourning on foot in five ranks of two carrying white candles. The coffin came next, draped in black velvet with a white satin cross on its top, resting on a bier drawn by six horses, followed by four of Luynes's household officials on foot in mourning, and finally by one hundred men on horseback. The coffin was met at the church door by the cathedral canons, and placed in the choir for an all-night vigil.

The funeral service the next day was attended by the governor of Tours, Gilles de Souvré, his two sons, and members of the municipal government and presidial court of Tours. Souvré, the king's governor, had helped to launch Luynes's career, but he had not liked Luynes, and he was present only in an official not in a personal capacity. The king had stayed in the southwest for Christmas, so no other courtiers were present. Afterward, the coffin was taken to Luynes's nearby château for burial.[10] An impressive public funeral had been held for him in Tours where his duchy was, and his passing had been marked with the proper respect if not with lavish display.

Relying upon the dispatches of the papal nuncios and the Florentine and Venetian ambassadors, historians Louis Batiffol and Berthold Zeller emphasized the casual treatment of Luynes's coffin on its journey northward, and ignored the funeral procession after it arrived. Zeller noted that the cathedral canons had refused to receive the body, and had only agreed after the king had angrily insisted, which is dubious because the king was not there. In contrast, the *Mercure françois* reported that the canons had waited respectfully at the church door to greet the coffin, and then had held an all night vigil for it. Batiffol noted that numerous witnesses had seen servants playing cards on Luynes's coffin.[11] In fact, only one witness, Fontenay-Mareuil, had reported the card-playing incident, which he could not have seen himself because he was not there. Batiffol and Zeller did not describe the funeral procession because it had not been mentioned in their sources, the dispatches of the Italian ambassadors, who had not been there either. The Florentine ambassadors and papal nuncios were friends of the Queen Mother, Marie de Médicis, and delighted in repeating court gossip ridiculing Luynes. She loathed Luynes, whom she blamed for the violent deaths of her favorites, Concini and his wife, and for her own exile from the court. She considered him a dangerous enemy, an attitude which the ambassadors shared, and their dispatches always criticized him.

Cardinal Richelieu, a client of the Queen Mother, wrote a fantastic account of Luynes's death. He reported that when the favorite was dying, he rose from his sickbed to burn papers locked in a casket, which were magic charms and treaties with the Protestants. The charms had been acquired from magicians who had given him herbs to put in the king's shoes and powder to put

in his clothes. (Richelieu insisted that an Italian magician had been strangled on Luynes's orders.) The treaties were supposedly the result of numerous secret trips that Luynes had made to see the Protestant leader, the duc de Rohan, although in reality he had gone only once and not in secret. In a conversation with his old friend Contades, Luynes was supposed to have avowed that he sought to reach an agreement with the Protestants in order to safeguard his future in case he lost favor.[12] Malice and spite characterized the accounts of Fontenay-Mareuil and the ambassadors, but Richelieu's account demonstrated rancor and a deep-seated animosity.

Unpopular favorites seldom left behind their own accounts of their years in power, and are usually known only through their detractors.[13] Traditionally, favorites have suffered from a bad press, which was the case with Luynes as these accounts of his burial demonstrate. Favorites were never viewed objectively by contemporaries who envied and resented their success. What was written about them depended upon when the writer was at court, if he was writing immediately after events or years later, whether he was a rival or a client, what his loyalties were, and whether he was dependent upon patronage or not. Historians relying upon hostile contemporary sources have dismissed Luynes as an inept mediocrity. Their sources have included the memoirs of envious courtiers such as Fontenay-Mareuil and Bassompierre who wrote their accounts years later; political enemies such as Richelieu who deliberately maligned Luynes; anonymous satirical pamphlets; hostile ambassadorial reports repeating dubious court gossip; and biased contemporary histories.[14] Was Luynes really the timid, indecisive bungler that historians have claimed he was?

Contemporary historians wrote biased accounts because they needed patronage. Without financial means of their own, they needed the support of patrons to write, usually in the form of pensions or employment in great households. Their need to please a patron and their continuing need for patronage determined what they wrote.[15] The king, his family, favorites, and ministers distributed extensive patronage, so historians needing financial assistance filled their work with propaganda glorifying the monarchy in order to secure and keep their patronage.[16]

Luynes's political enemies, particularly Richelieu and his successor Mazarin, were the patrons of contemporary historians, and gave royal pensions to those who portrayed them and their policies in a favorable light.[17] Richelieu employed a number of historian-clients to write polemical defenses of him and his ministry. They used documents supplied by him, submitted their work to him for correction and approval, and were rewarded financially.[18] The portrayal of Luynes as a timid, inept bungler originated in the anti-Luynes pamphlets commissioned by the Queen Mother that Richelieu incorporated into his

memoirs. These distortions and inaccuracies were repeated by Richelieu's historian-clients and historians who relied upon his memoirs such as Gabriel Hanotaux whose work influenced that of Louis Batiffol. A contemporary propaganda campaign, therefore, became the basis of the traditional historical interpretation of Luynes's career.

Richelieu despised Luynes whom he savaged in his memoirs in a devastating character assassination that significantly influenced later historiography.[19] He described Luynes as weak, cowardly, deceitful, and disloyal. He insisted that Luynes had duped the king into favoring him, and manipulated the king by surrounding him with his own relatives and friends who kept everyone else away. Arrogant and ambitious, Luynes had begun to act as if he were king, and because he was low-born without civility, he was often high-handed and rude. His family was Italian, so he had the attitudes of a foreigner, which was why he was tyrannical and authoritarian. Richelieu accused Luynes of greedy self-interest in advancing a horde of dependents, although he would advance an even larger horde himself, and he insisted that Luynes had persuaded the king to murder Concini, alienated the king from his mother, and treated her harshly by exiling her from the court, although he himself would later exile her from France.[20] The Cardinal ended his diatribe on the favorite's deficiencies with the comment that his death "seemed to be a God-sent deliverance from evil."[21]

In power for only five years when he died, Luynes was overshadowed by the two larger-than-life individuals between whom he was sandwiched, his predecessor as a royal favorite, the widely despised Concini to whom he was often compared, and the brilliant but vindictive Richelieu who ruthlessly crushed his enemies, and worked hard to destroy Luynes's reputation both before and after his death. Because there is little direct evidence, historians have been forced to rely upon circumstantial evidence in analyzing Luynes's motives and actions. There are almost no documents in Luynes's own words giving his version of events because most of his family papers were destroyed by fire in 1649 and 1944.[22] His letters tended to be short, polite, and formulaic without much substance, and there are almost no administrative documents expressing his views because being a favorite was an unofficial if influential position. Although he became a minister eight months before he died, Luynes tended to remain in the shadows. He said little in public to avoid arousing the king's jealousy, and committed nothing to paper in order not to leave a prejudicial paper trail. This evidential problem, and the widely accepted negative assessments by well known historians such as Louis Batiffol and Gabriel Hanotaux, have made Richelieu's attack influential to this day.[23]

The Cardinal's animosity and the bias in histories based upon his memoirs justify another look at Luynes. The traditional historical interpretation needs revision. A more critical reading of contemporary printed sources such as

pamphlets, the Paris newspaper the *Mercure françois*, the journal of the king's doctor, and courtiers' memoirs provide new insight into his actions, while archival sources provide new information about his origins, family, and friends. This book has emphasized French sources as being more objective and reliable than the Italian and Spanish ambassadorial correspondence upon which many historians have relied. An extensive secondary literature published during the twentieth century has been of inestimable value. The new secondary literature alone justifies another look at Luynes. What follows is a more positive assessment of his career as a favorite, and long-overdue recognition of his contributions to Louis XIII's government.

Luynes had a caring father-son relationship with the young king, whom he guided to the best of his ability and helped learn how to govern. His understanding reassurance became the model for Richelieu's later relationship with Louis XIII. Luynes became in turn a personal, a political, and then a minister favorite, and he influenced decision-making through private conversations with the king, serving in general as a moderating influence. He regularly attended council meetings, voted with a group of conservative council members, favored negotiation and compromise, and mediated between opposing factions on the council. Acting as the king's spokesman, messenger, and go-between, he supervised the distribution of royal patronage, which he used to secure the cooperation of the court nobility. Luynes was ambitious, greedy, and sycophantic as most courtiers were, and he was defensive about his unpopularity, but his faults have been exaggerated. Overall, his good qualities outweighed his bad, and he made significant contributions to the early years of Louis XIII's government.

Luynes became one of the most powerful men in France. Accumulating a large fortune, he became a duke and peer, constable or commander-in-chief of the army, and acting keeper of the seals. He created a large noble clientele that included an informal group of his own political advisers, and he launched a vigorous multi-media propaganda campaign against the pamphleteers' attacks on him. He established an independent power base in the important border province of Picardy, which he expanded to include Normandy, the Ile-de-France, and Paris, and his power base was instrumental in helping him to suppress the Queen Mother's revolt against the new regime. He advocated a non-interventionist foreign policy until the problem of Protestant disobedience could be solved, and he accompanied the king on his 1621 campaign against the Protestants. He was not cowardly, vacillating, or inept, whatever his enemies may have claimed.

This book provides another look at Luynes untainted by the malice of Richelieu. Demonstrating the bias in contemporary sources, it sifts through numerous distortions and half-truths to set the record straight by asking, what kind of a man was he? How greedy and ambitious was he? What type of influ-

ence did he have, and how did he use it? How much of what has been written about him is true, and how much is false? What follows, therefore, is as much about Luynes's detractors, and what they had to say about him, as it is about the favorite himself, and for this reason throws light upon a dark, unpleasant corner of Richelieu's personality that is often ignored by historians.

Notes

1 Eugène Halphen, ed., *Journal inédit d'Arnauld d'Andilly 1621* (Paris, 1891), pp. 102, 104.
2 *Recueil des pièces les plus curieuses qui ont esté faites pendant le règne du Connestable M. de Luynes* (Paris, 1628), *Requeste présentée au Roy Pluton par Conchino Conchini* (1620), p. 73; *Le Comtadin Provençal* (1620), pp. 83–4; *La Chronique des Favoris* (1622), p. 465; *Plaintes de l'espée de M. le Connestable* (1621), pp. 149–50; *L'Horoscope du Connestable* (1621), pp. 152–3; *Le Passe Par-Tout des Favoris* (1620), p. 156.
3 Hélène Duccini, *Faire Voir, Faire Croire* (Paris, 2003), pp. 10–14.
4 Fontenay-Mareuil, François Du Val, marquis de, *Mémoires du Messire Du Val*, ed. Louis Monmerqué, 2 vols. (Paris, 1826), I, 525. "… cest homme sy grand et sy puissant se trouva neanmoins tellement abandonné et mesprisé, tant dans sa maladie qu'après sa mort, que pendant deux jours qu'il fust à l'agonie, à peine y avoit-il un de ses gens qui voulust demeurer dans sa chambre, les portes en estant tousjours ouvertes, et y entrant qui vouloit, comme sy c'eust esté le moindre des hommes; et quand on porta son corps pour estre enterré, je crois, à sa duché de Luynes, au lieu de prestres qui priassent pour luy, j'y vis de ses valets jouer au piquet sur son cercueil, pendant qu'ils faisoient repaistre leurs chevaux."
5 Ibid.; Bassompierre, François de, *Journal de ma vie. Mémoires du maréchal de Bassompierre*, ed. Edouard de Chanterac, 4 vols. (Paris, 1870–77), II, 174, 395.
6 A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII. The Just* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 139–46; Madeleine Foisil, *L'Enfant Louis XIII* (Paris, 1996), pp. 85–6, 112.
7 Jean Héroard, *Journal*, ed. Madeleine Foisil, 2 vols. (Paris, 1989), II, 2797–9; *Journal d'Arnauld 1621*, p. 104.
8 Berthold Zeller, *Le Connêtable de Luynes* (Paris, 1879), p. 271.
9 Baron Ludovic de Contenson, ed., *Mémoires du comte de Souvigny*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1906–9), I, 81.
10 *Mercure françois*, 25 vols. (Paris, 1605–44), VII (1621), 930–1; Jean-Antoine Pithon-Curt, *Histoire de la noblesse du Comté Venaissin*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1743–50), IV, 173; Henri Griffet, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIII*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1758), I, 326; Héroard, *Journal*, II, 2802–3.
11 Zeller, *Le Connêtable de Luynes*, p. 271; Louis Batiffol, "Louis XIII et le duc de Luynes," *Rev hist* 102 (1909), 270–1; *Mercure françois*, VII (1621), 930–1.
12 Charles, comte Horric de Beaucaire, ed., *Mémoires du Cardinal de Richelieu*, 10 vols. (Paris, 1907–13), III, 175–7; *Recueil*, *Remonstrance à Théophile* (1620), p. 122; *La Sybille françoise* (1620), p. 281; B.N., imprimés Lb 36, *La Magie des Favoris* (1619).
13 J.H. Elliott and L.W.B. Brockliss, *The World of the Favourite* (New Haven, 1999), p. 304, n. 4.
14 Madeleine Bertaud, "Louis XIII vu par quelques mémorialistes," *La Cour au miroir des mémorialistes, 1530–1682*, ed. Noémi Hepp (Paris, 1991), pp. 77–88.
15 Mario Biagioli, *Galileo Courtier* (Chicago, 1993), pp. 1–101, 112–20; F.E. Sutcliffe, *Guez de Balzac et son temps* (Paris, 1959), pp. 17–42.
16 Orest Ranum, *Artisans of Glory* (Chapel Hill, 1980), pp. 148–96; Roland Mousnier, ed., *Richelieu et la culture* (Paris, 1987), pp. 124–37; Joseph Klaits, *Printed Propaganda under Louis XIV* (Princeton, 1976), pp. 3–34; Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven, 1992), pp. 23, 25, 76, 153, 185; Joseph Bergin and Laurence Brockliss, eds., *Richelieu and His Age* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 202–35.
17 Ranum, *Artisans of Glory*, pp. 103–68; Mousnier, *Richelieu et la culture*, pp. 69–137; William Church, *Richelieu and Reason of State* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 82–101, 461–504.
18 Robert Knecht, *Richelieu* (London, 1990), p. 177; Orest Ranum, "Richelieu, l'histoire et les

historiographes," *Richelieu et la culture*, pp. 125–37; Françoise Hildesheimer, *Richelieu* (Paris, 2004), pp. 498–526.

19 Denis-Louis-Martial Avenel, ed., *Lettres, instructions diplomatiques et papiers d'état du Cardinal de Richelieu*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1853–77), VII, 473, n. 2; Victor Tapié, *France in the Age of Louis XIII and Richelieu*, trans. D. McN. Lockie (Cambridge, 1974), p. 94; Eusèbe Pavie, *La Guerre entre Louis XIII et Marie de Médicis* (Angers, 1899), p. 621; Batiffol, "Louis XIII et le duc de Luynes," *Rev_hist* 103 (1910), 50; Joseph Bergin, *The Rise of Richelieu* (New Haven, 1991), p. 164.

20 Beaucaire, *Mémoires de Richelieu*, I, 304–7, III, 164–97.

21 Ibid., III, 197.

22 *Frondeurs* in 1649 burned to the ground Luynes's country house of Lésigny-en-Brie south of Paris, destroying its contents including family papers. Retreating Germans set fire to most of the remaining family papers in the courtyard of the château of Luynes in 1944. On the evening of 24 August 1944, a group of *maquisards* (resistance fighters) ambushed a retreating German troop convoy near Maillé, the village below the château. Regarding the village as a terrorist base, German troops the next day massacred 124 of its 627 inhabitants, using machine guns, grenades, and bayonets, and set fire to the buildings. The stone château itself was not put to the torch, but family property and furniture were piled in the courtyard and burned. Robert Gildea, *Marianne in Chains* (New York, 2002), pp. 314–15, 384–5.

23 Louis Batiffol, "Louis XIII et le duc de Luynes," *Rev hist* 102 (1909), 241–64; 103 (1910), 33–62, 248–79; idem, *Le Roi Louis XIII à vingt ans* (Paris, 1910), pp. 478–573; Gabriel Hanotaux and the duc de La Force, *Histoire du Cardinal de Richelieu*, 6 vols. (Paris, 1893–1947), II, part 2, 209.

1

A falconer from the Comtat

Richelieu wrote in his memoirs that Luynes's grandfather had been a canon of the cathedral of Marseille, and that his grandmother had been the canon's housekeeper. Since her family name was Albert, the implication was that her son, Luynes's father, had been illegitimate and low-born. According to Richelieu, the family had been forced to move to Tarascon after Luynes's mother had stabbed a butcher to death in his shop for insulting her when he tried to collect the money that she owed him.[1] Anti-Luynes pamphlets declared that the favorite's father had been of humble birth, penniless, and illiterate, and that he had been foreign-born, a Protestant, a soldier of fortune, and an adventurer. None of this was true. Richelieu and the pamphleteers had fabricated it all to destroy Luynes's reputation and favor with the king.

The Albert family had been governors of the Rhône fortress town of Pont-Saint-Esprit for nearly two centuries when Luynes was born. Located on the river's western bank, the town anchored the only bridge to cross the Rhône between Vienne and Avignon. Thomas Platter, a Swiss visitor, noted that his boat had sailed with the speed of an arrow under the stone-paved bridge of eighteen arches, which was twelve hundred paces long with fortified towers at either end and in the middle.[2] Still in use today, its narrow arches have been replaced by a single wide span. These narrow arches were dangerous because they could hole or capsize a boat that got too close to their pilings. Henri III and his court were traveling down the Rhône from Lyon to Avignon in November 1574, when the boat carrying the household officials of the king's sister capsized at Pont-Saint-Esprit, drowning everyone. The town's governor, Honoré d'Albert de Luynes, the favorite's father, received a letter of thanks from the Queen Mother, Catherine de Médicis, for aiding the royal party.[3]

Charles d'Albert de Luynes was the sixth generation of a sword noble family that had emigrated from Florence into the upper Rhône valley in the late fourteenth century. They had owned fiefs in the valley for nearly two centuries when he was born. His great-great-great-grandfather, Thomas Alberti, had

been the *viguier* or royal judge of Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1415, and the youngest of his three sons became the town's governor. He established the family tradition of serving as its governor, and was named to the Order of *Saint Michel* for his services to the crown.[4] Luynes's grandfather, Léon, an infantry captain who was killed in the Italian wars, changed the family name to d'Albert, and married Jeanne de Ségur of Marseille in 1535 for a dowry of 10,000 livres and the Provençal fief of Luynes. His only son, Honoré, was born five years later. He styled himself the sieur de Luynes, although he was only coseigneur or part owner of this fief, and he, too, served the crown as an infantry captain.[5]

Honoré d'Albert de Luynes, the favorite's father, had begun his military career at the age of thirteen when he joined the French army that invaded and occupied Corsica in 1553.[6] He styled himself "capitaine de Luynes" after he became captain of an infantry company in the regiment of Sarlabous in 1565.[7] Four years later he was named a knight in the Order of Saint Michel, probably through the patronage of Henri de Montmorency-Damville, governor of Languedoc, who wrote the duc d'Anjou a letter on 12 September 1570 praising his services to the crown.[8] Honoré purged the Pont-Saint-Esprit garrison of Protestant soldiers after Damville had named him its commander the previous February. He was appointed governor of Pont-Saint-Esprit in 1573, and again in 1576, because he was a staunch Catholic, and the king wanted this important military fortification in the upper Rhône valley safely in Catholic hands. Damville also named him colonel of the Languedoc provincial militia and a provincial artillery officer for annual salaries of about 300 livres each, and governor of the fortress town of Beaucaire in the lower Rhône valley. The king named him governor of Beaucaire again in 1580. Honoré had been serving the crown faithfully for nearly forty years when he died in 1592.[9]

In March 1573, he had married Anne de Rodulf, daughter of the seigneur de Limans, an Italian noble family who had settled at Mornas in the late fifteenth century.[10] Her dowry included 3,000 livres, a pension of 400 livres a year, joint ownership of the fief of Mornas, and property in the village of Mornas to which her husband added a house and lands that he purchased. The family home was in Mornas.[11] A fortified medieval château still clings to the cliff above this village, which stands on the eastern side of the Rhône thirteen kilometers north of Orange.[12] Mornas was a fief in the Comtat Venaissin, which was a papal principality governed by a vice-legate with Avignon as its capital. The Comtadins considered themselves French, but they were papal subjects and in customs and speech more Italian than French.[13]

When and where Luynes was born is controversial. He concealed his family's Florentine origins because his enemies insisted on comparing him to the despised Florentine favorite Concini.[14] Luynes declared that his paternal kin were Languedocian French, ignoring the fact that his family home was at

Figure 1 The Rhône River Valley.

Mornas in the Comtat Venaissin. Genealogical documents produced to support his candidacy for membership in the Order of *Saint Esprit* declared that the Albert family had come from Languedoc, and that the Provençal branch of the family included families of the feudal nobility.[15] Although Richelieu's disdainful comments about his dubious birth have been widely accepted, Luynes came

from a solidly respectable family of the Midi sword nobility.[16] The Albert de Luynes were members of the *noblesse seconde* of the upper Rhône valley. They were not doubtful or obscure provincial nobles.[17]

The traditional date of Luynes's birth is 5 August 1578, and most historians agree he was born sometime during that year. There is less agreement about where he was born. Some sources give his birthplace as Mornas in the Comtat Venaissin, making him Comtadin by birth and a papal subject.[18] Other sources give Pont-Saint-Esprit as his birthplace, making him Languedocian and French by birth.[19] Existing documents do not allow certainty about when and where he was born.[20] The absence of his name in local baptismal records may be explained by the tradition that he was baptized in the Paris abbey of Saint Denis in 1592, which would have been his naming baptism, not his birth baptism.[21] There are no records confirming this date either, and such a belated baptism must be regarded with caution because postponement until adolescence was unusual, although delay among the nobility was common. Lacking evidence to the contrary, Luynes's traditional date and place of birth of 5 August 1578 at Mornas in the Comtat Venaissin have been accepted here.

In fact, there is some circumstantial evidence that Mornas was his birthplace. Luynes's father was the governor of Pont-Saint-Esprit, and the family home was thirteen kilometers south across the bridge in Mornas. Luynes's mother, Anne, died there six years later while her uncle was the town's governor.[22] It seems likely that she would have remained in the family home for her confinement in August 1578 because her husband could easily have ridden across the bridge to see her, and there was popular unrest in Pont-Saint-Esprit at the time.[23] It seems unlikely he would have allowed a heavily pregnant wife whose first child had died in infancy the year before to remain in Pont-Saint-Esprit when a popular revolt was brewing. On the other hand, if Luynes was born in the spring of 1578 or in the previous year, he could have been born in Pont-Saint-Esprit when Anne was living there with her husband before the troubles began.

The court career of Luynes's father

Honoré d'Albert de Luynes was not a soldier of fortune who sold his services to the highest bidder, although he has often been described in this way.[24] He was a devout Catholic royalist who fought for a legitimate Catholic monarchy during the religious wars. Ambitious and seeking advancement, he went to court in the autumn of 1573, hoping to profit from a recent marriage connection to Joseph de Boniface, sieur de La Molle, a favorite of the duc d'Alençon and master of his wardrobe.[25] The timing of his trip, however, proved disastrous. In March 1574, a

few months after his arrival, La Molle was implicated in a treasonous conspiracy against Charles IX led by the duc d'Alençon, the king's youngest brother, and Honoré was also implicated. The conspirators, who had been meeting openly in Alençon's court apartments, included Henri de Navarre; La Molle; the prince de Condé; the comte de Coconas who was Alençon's guard captain; Guillaume de Montmorency-Thoré and Charles de Montmorency-Méru, the younger brothers of Henri de Montmorency-Damville, who had remained in the south in his government of Languedoc; and Henri de La Tour, vicomte de Turenne, their nephew. In an ambitious gamble, Honoré began to attend these meetings with La Molle, thereby attaching himself to Alençon's fortunes.

Alençon and Navarre had planned to escape the king and his court by fleeing to Sedan where they would be met by 300 horsemen under Turenne's command. La Molle was put in charge of their escape, but he bungled it, and news of their plans reached the Queen Mother. She told the king, and he immediately put the two princes under heavy guard and ordered the arrest of La Molle, Coconas, and about fifty supporters. La Molle and Coconas were beheaded in April.[26] Honoré had left Paris as soon as the conspiracy was discovered, and Coconas implicated him by saying that he had gone to the meetings in Alençon's apartments, and then had gone south to prepare the princes' retreat into Languedoc where they would be under Damville's protection.[27] As a result, the *Parlement* of Paris on 21 May 1574 ordered the arrest of twenty-one men including the capitaine de Luynes, who was named for carrying treasonous letters from the duc d'Alençon to Damville. Honoré, however, was already safe in the south under Damville's protection.[28]

The new king, Henri III, considered Honoré unreliable as a former conspirator and Damville's client, so he gave his government of Pont-Saint-Esprit to another Comtat gentleman, capitaine Pierre d'Anselme, sieur de Joucas.[29] A ray of sunlight penetrated the darkness, however, because the fortunes of Alençon had improved. Henri III had married, but he never had any children. So, his younger brother became the heir presumptive and received the title of duc d'Anjou. With the additional income, Anjou was able to quadruple the size of his household, so Honoré rode north in the autumn of 1575, hoping to benefit from this change in the duke's fortunes.[30]

The new duc d'Anjou had already proven himself loyal to those who were loyal to him. His household list of 5 August 1576 contains the names of six participants in the La Molle-Coconas conspiracy.[31] Honoré had received a place as an ordinary chamberlain in February 1576, but he must have given it up soon afterward because his name does not appear on the August list.[32] His annual salary as a royal governor was 1,500 livres, but his salary as a household chamberlain would have been only 600 livres, and he needed the extra money for his growing family.[33] Besides, life in the Midi was cheaper than at court,