Erriwak: Journal of Social and Human Studies | ISSN: 2437 - 0363 EISSN: 2602-6767 | Volume: 12 / N°: 11 (2023), p 289-307

The resistance of the famous Jugurtha in Numidia against the Romans between "111 BCA and 104 BCA"

MESSOUAF Youcef[1]

Center for Research in Amazigh Language and Culture, Bejaia, Algeria

m.youcef@crlca.dz

Received: 05/10/2025 Accepted: 12/05/2026 Published: 05/06/2026

Abstract:

King Jugurtha was a fervent defender of Berber independence against any form of foreign domination. He succeeded in fighting and resisting the Romans, who sought to seize the region and its wealth. Jugurtha embodied leadership in the face of foreign ambitions. He advocated for the establishment of a strong and prosperous state, free from Roman influence.

This resistance lasted for years—he aimed to reconquer the land of his grandfather, Massinissa. Jugurtha's name is engraved in history as a strong and independent king; his enemies were unable to capture him in battle. In the end, they succeeded only through manipulation. Today, his name remains a significant symbol in our history, a testament to a people who refused to submit.

Keywords: Berber; Jugurtha; Numidia; North Africa; Massinissa.

***Corresponding author**

1. Introduction

North Africa was a prosperous and wealthy region. The Berbers people settled in this vast territory as the indigenous group. They were in constant contact with other Mediterranean peoples (Phoenicians, Romans, Greeks, Egyptians). The wealth of this region was vast and substantial. The Eastern Phoenicians came to North Africa and settled with the founding of the city of Carthage in 814 BCE (Brunschvig, 1940, p 45). This presence marked a period of exchange between the Berbers and the Phoenicians across all aspects of life. Trade was the main activity of this people, who established commercial centers throughout the region. This presence lasted until 146 BCE, when the Romans managed to end Carthaginian domination across the region (Boulifa, 1925, p 36).

Massinissa, a figure of exceptional stature both politically and militarily, took advantage of the Punic defeats to unite the two main peoples: his own, the Massylii, and those of the Masaesylii, his rival King Syphax's people. Together, they formed a strong kingdom that maintained good relations with Rome (Ait Amara, 2010, p 618). Yugurten, meaning "he has surpassed them," son of Mastanabal and grandson of Massinissa (160–155 BCE – 104 BCE, whose tomb is located in ancient Cirta), was raised at the court of his uncle Micipsa, who upon his death divided his kingdom among Jugurtha and his two sons (Adherbal and Hiempsal, both of whom were later assassinated). Jugurtha, once a major ally of Rome during the Punic Wars, fiercely resisted Roman power for seven years. Major battles were fought, including those of Calama, the Muthul River, and Zama—territories of ancient Numidia, now in present-day Tunisia.

2. North Africa During the Reign of King Massinissa

The Numidian state was a creation of Massinissa. The testimony of Polybius reveals the Greek historian's great admiration for the Numidian king; perhaps he had been taken in by some of Massinissa's own boasting, as the king had sworn to reclaim his father's kingdom and add the territories of Syphax to it. Polybius adds: "This is exactly what happened," noting

further that on the eve of the decisive battle of 202 BCE, "he had brought all of Syphax's former subjects under his control" (Polybius, 1847, p 89).

The Numidian century essentially corresponds to the reigns of Massinissa, Micipsa, and Jugurtha. This period is marked by the Numidian kingdom's relations with Carthage and Rome, particularly the role of the Numidians in the Second Punic War (Walsh, 1965, p 155). It includes the expansion of the kingdom at the expense of Punic territory during Massinissa's reign and Rome's attitude toward Numidia—bordering Rome's first African province—and toward Jugurtha (Camps, 2007, p 87). These issues raise several questions regarding ancient sources, geography, and history, as well as concerning the organization of the kingdom itself, its relations with subjects, with cities, and with territories recovered from Punic control. Research on this period is interesting, even though scholars do not always find satisfactory answers.

How did Massinissa, a young Numidian king dispossessed of his throne and exiled in 205 BCE, later manage to build the largest North African kingdom of antiquity? It took half a century of extraordinary personal bravery, immense leadership, military command in battle, political acumen, keen observation of both enemies' and allies' weaknesses, as well as diplomacy and openness. Each phase of the determined expansion of his territories deserves to be examined in light of international circumstances and how the greatest Numidian king overcame numerous difficulties (Camps & Chaker, 1985, p 249).

Massinissa, son of Gaia, king of the Massylii, was born around 238 BCE and died in 148 BCE. His youth was split between studies in Carthage and military training. This king left few physical traces. On a bronze coin, his portrait appears, bearded and laurel-crowned, alongside a cartouche bearing the inscription "MSNSN", his name in Latin characters, with the reverse showing an elephant walking to the left. His monogram also appears on several stelae in El-Hofra and some inscriptions in Dougga (Camps, 1960, p 372).

The future king of the Numidians, Massinissa, entered history in Spain during the Second Punic War as an enemy of the Romans, though by an alliance shift, he would later become one of the architects of their expansion in Africa. This prince, the son of Gaia—king of the Massylii—had provided Carthage with a contingent led by his son to fight in Spain against Rome. We do not know how the young prince distinguished himself in that theater of war. Livy merely has Syphax say that "in Spain, he had often set an example of rare valor to both allies and enemies" (Ait Amara, 2016, p 189).

Massinissa took power by force. After the victory at Zama in 202 BCE, he seized several cities belonging to Carthage and reclaimed the two former capitals of Syphax: Cirta and Siga. Massinissa thus became the originator of Numidia's unification, which had previously been divided into two kingdoms: Eastern Numidia, called Massylia, with Cirta as its capital, and Western Numidia, or Massaesylia, with Siga as its capital. Massinissa brought both under his rule. His kingdom's borders stretched from Cyrenaica, near the Great Syrtis, to the banks of the Moulouya River in far-western Mauretania. He ruled for sixty years. His goal was to build, on the ruins of his enemy's holdings, a Numidian kingdom comparable in size to today's North Africa. His vision was to forge a unified and independent African state (Liverani. 2000, p 22).

The victories won by Massinissa over Carthage allowed him to reclaim his father's kingdom—an immense territory. He owed these favorable outcomes to the valor, bravery, and loyalty of his troops, which were well-organized and regularly trained. The army was made up of two contingents: one formed by regular soldiers, the royal guard, and another composed of auxiliary troops conscripted during wartime. The military hierarchy was strictly structured. The king always held supreme command. He also headed a war fleet composed of large ships. Although literary sources—our only reference—rarely estimate his military manpower, they indicate that Massinissa constantly maintained many units ready for combat.

Massinissa's real objective was to take control of all of North Africa east of his kingdom, in order to annex the wealthy Carthaginian cities, regions of intensive and sophisticated agriculture, and the coastal areas facing the eastern Mediterranean. However, he gave himself time to digest his early conquests and extract additional resources. Moreover, until 195 BCE, Hannibal—a still-revered military leader—was in Carthage, and Massinissa chose to act cautiously. It was likely Hannibal's exile that emboldened him; in any case, until 193 BCE, he made no claims. Gabriel Camps pointed out that the "deliberate slowness" of the Numidian king has not been sufficiently appreciated by historians (Camps, 1960, p 367).

Polybius affirms that Massinissa was the strongest and most valiant man of his time: « Massinissa, the King of the Numidians, was the best and most fortunate of the monarchs of our time. ». By day and night, he could remain on horseback without interruption. He feared neither cold nor rain: he was a hardy horseman who rode bareback. At the age of 88, he was still personally commanding his troops and carrying out all his duties as a general and warrior (Polybius, 1847, p 24).

He remained a vigorous man even in extreme old age. Until his death, he took part in battles, mounting his horse without assistance. On campaign, he endured, like the humblest of his cavalrymen, all privations and fatigue (Kadra-Hadjadji, 2013, p 134). Massinissa remains a highly respected king—devoted to his homeland and his origins—who refused Carthaginian domination and vowed to restore the land of his ancestors.

3. The Objectives of Roman Presence in North Africa

Massinissa aspired to rule over a kingdom stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to Cyrenaica, with Carthage as its capital. He did not succeed, and this deeply affected him. It is clear that Roman ambitions for hegemony in Africa thwarted Massinissa's plans (Julien, 1972, p 79). He was embittered against Rome, angered that he had brought mighty Carthage to its knees while others reaped the benefits. The grave diplomatic mistake made by Carthage—turning its back on Massinissa, who had fought for them against the Romans in Spain—had

serious consequences. Had Carthage not betrayed Massinissa, he might have sided with them and supported them against Rome. That might have changed Carthage's destiny—and perhaps the course of history itself. This betrayal reshaped the region's political landscape in favor of the Romans, who gained a strong political and military ally.

Rome remained wary of the Numidian kingdom, which was both an equal and an independent entity. Under King Massinissa, the kingdom grew increasingly prosperous and powerful, with a standing army and significant naval fleet (Mercier, 1888, p 120). In the Roman Senate, Cato the Elder even suspected that Massinissa sought to make Carthage the capital of his Berber empire. Thus, Rome found an obvious solution: destroy Carthage, the object of their envy. This plan was carried out by the Romans, who preferred to eliminate the city and curb Massinissa's ambitions. This power play shattered the Berber king's dream of asserting his strength throughout the Mediterranean region.

The Romans felt compelled to prevent the unification of North African territories under one kingdom with Carthage—a wealthy and strategic center—as its capital. True, Massinissa was old, but there was no guarantee that one of his successors wouldn't carry on his expansionist ambitions, seize Carthage, and establish a vast empire. Rome therefore decided to destroy Carthage, as it could not directly confront the Numidian king. It was difficult for Rome to justify aggression against a loyal and longtime ally, especially one whose support had been critical to Scipio's victory over Hannibal (Ait Amara, 2015, p 572).

There were also many other reasons behind Rome's actions. It was a genuine war; whose objective was the total destruction of Carthage. Historians have emphasized psychological motives—Romans feared Carthaginians. Expansionist policy was another factor. Economic motivations also played a role: The Romans were astonished by North Africa's prosperity (Cazeaux, 2015, p 205). In 153 BCE, Cato, during an investigative mission in Carthage, observed the city's economic revival. At that time, Carthage had repaid all its war debts to Rome, making it seem desirable to compel further payments. Military motives also

mattered: Carthage could regroup and rebuild its empire.

At that time, Massinissa realized he had not achieved all his ambitions. But he knew nothing of Rome's plan against Carthage—a precursor to his own downfall. Diverging interests regarding the destruction of Carthage would alter his relationship with Rome. Massinissa never imagined that the Romans would wage war without his support (Mercier, 1888, p 68). However, determined to crush the rising North African power, the Romans avoided revealing their intentions by not landing on Massinissa's shores. Instead, they sought to win the favor of certain Punic cities, especially Utica, Hadrumetum, Leptis Magna, and Thapsus. Being excluded from the plan to annihilate Carthage enraged Massinissa. When Roman consuls came to him seeking food supplies and troops, he responded that he would only provide them when he deemed it necessary (Julien, 1972, p 57).

At the beginning of 148 BCE, Massinissa's health deteriorated. As Appian noted, he was "crushed by age and illness". Upon his death, Massinissa left three legitimate sons: Micipsa, Gulussa, and Mastanabal. According to agnatic primogeniture, the succession should have gone to Micipsa, the eldest, who was the direct heir regardless of his legitimate status (Saumagne, 1966, p 168). The conditions were thus met for Micipsa's succession. However, Massinissa decided otherwise: each of his sons received an equal portion of the royal inheritance. Historians have tried to explain Massinissa's decision to associate the three brothers—possibly due to Gulussa's enterprising nature and Micipsa's more peaceful character. These arrangements also served to avoid discord within the family.

The events that followed contradicted Micipsa's reputation for passivity—he continued to develop his leadership qualities throughout his reign. Upon reflection, it seems unlikely that Massinissa made a last-minute decision regarding succession. According to G. Camps, the decision may have been made earlier but kept secret until his death, with implementation left to the Roman tribune Scipio Aemilianus, adopted grandson of Scipio Africanus. Massinissa, aware of the internal weaknesses of his kingdom and Roman

expectations, entrusted the fate of his dynasty to Scipio Aemilianus (Camps, 1960, p 364).

4. Jugurtha the Rebel King: His Life, Resistance, and War Against Roman Colonization

Roman historiography shows a marked interest in Jugurtha, in contrast to other Numidian kings—such as his uncle Micipsa—whose 30-year reign, despite its duration and importance, went largely unnoticed. Sallust's Bellum Jugurthinum remains essential to studying Jugurtha's era (Ait Amara, 2010, p 612). According to modern historians, Sallust's work was both an expression of deep hatred for Jugurtha and a subtle means of attacking his own Roman political enemies.

One cannot comment on Jugurtha's character without mentioning the meaning of his name, found in Latin inscriptions as "Iugurta" or "Iugurtha." The name is of Libyan origin. Experts interpret it as "Yugur-t-en," meaning "he surpassed them" or "he defeated them" (Camps & Chaker, 2004, p 3978). This meaning still exists in modern Berber dialects.

Jugurtha was born in Cirta around 160–155 BCE, and his life ended tragically in Roman prisons in 104 BCE. His father, Mastanabal, was well-versed in Punic and Greek literature and had distinguished himself in the Panhellenic Games, winning several victories in Athens during the Panathenaic Games. His mother, however, was only a servant in the royal household (Kadra-Hadjadji, 2005, p. 43).

Because Jugurtha was an illegitimate child, his grandfather Massinissa excluded him from the royal circle. As a result, he was reduced to ordinary status and had no right to the throne. Nonetheless, he did not live in poverty: like other illegitimate children of Massinissa, he likely received property. As with the children of the elite, he was given a Punic and Greek education in both military and cultural disciplines, like his royal cousins. This explains why, upon his father's death, Jugurtha was adopted by his uncle Micipsa and treated equally to his cousins, Adherbal and Hiempsal. Later in life, Jugurtha married the daughter of Bocchus, king of the Mauretanians—a union that, according to Sallust, did not upset the Numidians. It

remains unknown how many wives Jugurtha had. Among the Numidians at that time, the number of wives varied with the husband's wealth: up to ten for some, more for others, and even more for kings.

Of the three princes, Jugurtha had the strongest character and the sharpest intellect. Being the eldest, he also had combat experience, gained while commanding Numidian troops during the long siege of Numantia alongside the Romans. During his time in Spain, Jugurtha built a network of friendships that neither time nor circumstance could break. Historians emphasize Jugurtha's qualities as a war leader. They portray him as a skilled strategist with great command capabilities, excelling in guerrilla warfare while also engaging in conventional battles—techniques he had learned from the Romans in Spain—and adept at conducting complex diplomacy with the Roman Senate and with Bocchus, King of the Mauretanians, whose alliance he eventually secured.

Jugurtha's military glory sparked jealousy in his uncle Micipsa, who distanced him by sending him—at the head of a contingent—to support the Romans fighting in Numantia, Spain (Saumagne, 1966, pp. 12–14). From 154 to 133 BCE, Jugurtha took part in Rome's wars in the Iberian Peninsula against the Celtiberians, considered some of the best fighters of the time. Jugurtha's charm and popularity grew—not only among the Numidians and Mauretanians but also among the Romans. He won the Romans' admiration during his time at Numantia, quickly gaining importance, carrying out orders with intelligence and enthusiasm, and showing courage in action. Scipio, the Roman general, entrusted him with the most challenging missions. Jugurtha earned the esteem of Scipio Aemilianus, who remained his protector for a long time.

Micipsa had several reasons to be worried: first, his advanced age and concern over leaving his children a secure inheritance; second, Jugurtha's rising popularity and the evident affection the Numidians showed him, which made him untouchable. All of this made Micipsa fear a civil war if he tried to have Jugurtha killed. Knowing that he could not

eliminate such a popular figure by force or trickery, Micipsa came up with another plan: to send Jugurtha into the dangers of the Numantine War alongside the Romans, hoping he would fall either as a hero or by enemy hands. Thus, he gave Jugurtha command of a Numidian contingent and sent him to fight in Spain.

Scipio's message to Micipsa, as reported by Sallust, confirms Jugurtha's qualities:

"Your beloved Jugurtha has shown unmatched valor in the Numantine War. His merit has won our hearts. You have in him a man worthy of you and of his grandfather." (Sallustre, 1999, 43)

At first, Micipsa was proud to have such a brilliant nephew, believing that Jugurtha's virtue would bring glory to his reign. Indeed, the good of the kingdom required that supreme power be passed to someone capable of maintaining Massinissa's legacy. Jugurtha demonstrated all the physical and moral traits required for leadership.

Micipsa had no choice but to legitimize Jugurtha if he wished to preserve the dynasty, in accordance with custom. And so he did. On his deathbed, he reminded Jugurtha of this act, as Sallust wrote:

"You were but a little child, Jugurtha—fatherless, without hope or means—when I called you to share in the inheritance of my crown, thinking that such kindness would earn me from you the same affection as from my own sons, should I have any." (Sallustre, 1999, 47)

Up to 133 BCE, Jugurtha stood as the sole heir, with no legitimate rival according to Numidian tradition. But this changed in that same year when Micipsa had two sons: Adherbal and Hiempsal. He then planned to designate them as direct heirs to the throne.

Massinissa had previously established a system of "triumviral" rule, which replaced the principle of primogeniture. Micipsa intended for the same principles to be applied after his death. Jugurtha thus became co-heir to the kingdom, along with his cousins. Micipsa had even considered assigning Jugurtha to military leadership—acknowledging his skill—while

his own sons would handle civil affairs, without dividing the kingdom's territory.

After Micipsa's death, the heirs gathered to pay final respects and discuss the kingdom's affairs. During deliberations, Hiempsal showed open contempt for Jugurtha by sitting to the right of Adherbal, thereby denying Jugurtha the seat of honor—traditionally the middle seat among the Numidians (Ait Amara, 2019, p 70). While discussing how to govern the kingdom, Jugurtha proposed revoking all decisions made by Micipsa during the last five years of his life, claiming the king had become senile and irrational. Hiempsal agreed without hesitation—ironically during the very period in which Jugurtha had been legitimized by Micipsa. Infuriated by his cousins' arrogance and fearing they might ally against him, Jugurtha waited for the right moment to have Hiempsal assassinated.

Relying on the protection and connections he had within the Roman nobility, Jugurtha believed Rome would not react to his actions. Over a few short years, he eliminated his cousins and other Massylii who might have had claims to the throne. Hiempsal was the first to be killed, in Thirmida. Adherbal, who tried to avenge his brother, was forced to flee to Cirta, where he was later captured and executed after surrendering. His death was followed by the massacre of Italian merchants who had helped defend the city (in 112 BCE). This time, Rome responded by declaring war on the King of Numidia. According to Sallust, most of the population supported Adherbal, but the best soldiers sided with Jugurtha, who was poised to rule over all Numidia.

Since the assassination of his brother Hiempsal, Adherbal had lived in constant fear. He repeatedly lodged complaints with the Roman Senate, which went unanswered. Historians often attribute Rome's inaction to Jugurtha's past service to the Republic. Rome's policy of hesitancy may also be explained by the looming threat of rebellion among the Gallic tribes. For his part, Jugurtha also sent emissaries to Rome, tasked with securing influential support. Sallust reports that Jugurtha's envoys were loaded with gold and silver—first to reward old friends, and then to win new ones. According to Sallust,

everything came down to corruption. He himself harbored strong hostility toward Rome's corrupt conservative nobility.

The Italians had significant influence over Adherbal's decisions. It became increasingly clear that power had shifted into the hands of these foreigners, who were de facto ambassadors of Roman policy (Berthier, 1981). Jugurtha was outraged to discover that the kingdom was already under Rome's control through these merchants. He sought a way to free himself from this semi-dependence. It's difficult to provide a detailed analysis on this point, as only a single, pro-Roman source is available. Jugurtha wanted to break with Rome's influence and pursue the unification of Numidia. His goals directly opposed Roman interests in Africa. Roman policy aimed to preserve political and economic stability by establishing colonies, securing grain supplies, recruiting auxiliary troops, and enabling the settlement of numerous merchants.

The succession war waged by Jugurtha in Numidia can be viewed from different perspectives. The conflict began with a family dispute and escalated due to the presence of Italian merchants, eventually expanding. Although the merchants' activity may have benefited the royal treasury, it also posed a threat to sovereignty. Jugurtha was concerned that his country's wealth was falling into foreign hands. These merchants, granted permission by Adherbal and Roman authorities, were even armed to defend Cirta's walls. In effect, an armed colony had been established there.

War against Rome became a condition for the survival of Jugurtha's kingdom—and a way to restore the vast realm once ruled by his ancestor, Massinissa, who had built a unified Numidian state (Brett, & Fentress, 1996, p 68). The war unfolded in two phases. In the first, Roman pride was wounded. Under the command of the consuls Bestia and Albinus, the initial two years of the campaign were disastrous. The generals, accused of being bribed with Jugurtha's gold, proved incompetent. In Rome, the people were outraged, and the war divided Roman opinion.

The second phase marked the beginning of real war: Metellus, the incorruptible, resolved to lead a serious campaign. But Jugurtha was cunning—at times pretending to surrender, only to resume fighting; sometimes defeated, only to rebound quickly. He consistently reacted swiftly to setbacks, recruiting rapidly among Numidian tribes. The loyalty of the people enabled him to field new contingents and keep the war going. However, his alliance with his father-in-law Bocchus proved to be a strategic error (Ait Amara, 2018, p 46).

The new consul Metellus first restored discipline in the Roman army and launched a series of raids that weakened Jugurtha. Once again, the king claimed he was ready to make peace and appealed to the Roman people's sense of tolerance. Metellus' successor, Marius, achieved several successes against Jugurtha: capturing Capsa (modern Gafsa), launching a long-range campaign near the Mulucha River, and recapturing Cirta between 109 and 107 BCE.

5. The Capture of Jugurtha and the Beginning of Romanization

For guerrilla warfare to succeed, three conditions must be met: support from the civilian population (for logistics, intelligence, and shelter), mobility, and surprise. Jugurtha demanded that his army deploy every form of harassment against the Romans: "He was so cunning, knew the terrain and art of war so well, that it was hard to say whether he was more dangerous present or absent, more formidable in war or in peace." (Sallustre, 1999, p 23)

The Numidian cavalry was elusive. Mounted on sure-footed horses able to traverse the roughest paths, they frayed Roman nerves—constantly appearing out of nowhere. Even at night, the slightest sound could spark panic.

Jugurtha also mastered the element of surprise. His harassment tactics involved transforming part of his cavalry into a strike force while holding the rest in reserve in hidden locations (McCarty, 2022, p 220). Marching by night along unfrequented paths, Jugurtha and his warriors often ambushed isolated enemy soldiers, killing or capturing many before

vanishing as quickly as they had come.

The goal of these tactics was to confuse and wear down the enemy—launching repeated attacks, striking dispersed troops, creating constant insecurity, luring soldiers into venturing out in small groups and massacring them without fear of counterattack. Jugurtha and his warriors understood that indirect strategies often cost fewer men and were better suited for resisting a stronger opponent. Such methods were those of skilled generals (Ait Amara, 2010, p 48).

His key ally was Bocchus, King of Mauretania. But this alliance proved fatal. Bocchus prioritized preserving his own kingdom and chose to side with the Romans over solidarity with his son-in-law. He handed Jugurtha over to Sulla, Marius' quaestor. After eight years of exhausting warfare, Jugurtha was captured thanks to the betrayal of Bocchus—"the unworthy father-in-law"—who was rewarded with part of Numidia (Jallet-Huant, 2006, p 45).

In 105 BCE, the Roman army won most battles while Bocchus seized western Numidia (the former Massaesylian territory). Eager to win Rome's friendship, Bocchus welcomed Sulla's proposals and delivered Jugurtha to the Romans (105 BCE) (Lancel, 2003, p 78). On January 1, 104 BCE, Jugurtha and two of his sons were paraded in Marius' triumph. Thrown into the Tullianum prison, Jugurtha was strangled on Marius' orders after six days of hunger and thirst.

Jugurtha's epic can be summed up as follows: "After a meteoric rise, Jugurtha suffered a catastrophic fall, descending into Hell." (Sallustre, 1999, p 48)

But he deserves credit for having kept the Roman legions at bay in a war that Rome only won through betrayal. Jugurtha's war was the first and last attempt during the Republican era by African kingdoms to resist Roman domination.

6. Jugurtha as a Symbol of North African Independance

Berber heroes who resisted Roman imperialism and served as forerunners of 19th-

and 20th-century nationalists occupy a prominent place in the political mythology of the Maghreb. Royal figures like Massinissa and his grandson Jugurtha remain central in Maghrebi political discourse and the historiography of North Africa. Today, Jugurtha is part of the Maghreb's heritage—a source of pride for the Berbers. This legacy contributes to shaping national identity. As a historical figure, Jugurtha is celebrated by the Berber people and the broader North African community. A living legend, his status likely crystallized during French imperial and the Algerian War of Independence. A Berber warrior, Jugurtha continues to inspire admiration to this day (Lancel, 2003, p 156).

This is evident in the writings of historians of the Berber world. Of all the Africans who played a major role in Berber history, Jugurtha stands out as the most illustrious—especially in our time, when the Berber people seek emblematic figures like Massinissa, Tacfarinas, and the Kahina. Jugurtha is the most celebrated. His admirers attribute to him the highest qualities of a war leader—nurtured in his youth by the daring exploits of his ancestor Massinissa, who had transformed the small Massylian kingdom into an empire encompassing most northern Berbers—Massylii, Masaesylii, and parts of the Gaetuli. Having inherited this great Numidia, Jugurtha saw it as his duty to preserve its breadth and continue the mission of Massinissa and Micipsa (Camps, 2007, p 36).

In the 20th century, during colonization, Algerian intellectuals sought to reassert their identity by exploring the region's ancient history and its pantheon of Berber heroes. Jugurtha came to represent the North African—or more specifically, the Berber—in his most complete form: a hero whose historical destiny carries mythical significance. According to Tassadit Yacine, Jean Amrouche's work aimed to turn the historical figure of Jugurtha into a myth during colonial conquest. The "eternal Jugurtha" emerged as a response to colonial ideology, opposing the Latin symbolism used to justify French imperialism (Amrouche, 2000, p 40).

During French imperial, Jugurtha became a symbol of Berber resistance to foreign domination. His figure stood as a banner against the French occupier, who faced the Berber fighter turned mythic "Eternal Jugurtha." After North African countries gained independence, Jugurtha became a reference point for some leaders who viewed themselves as heirs to the Berber king. Today, Jugurtha remains a source of pride for the Berber people (Brett, & Fentress, 1996, p 123). This article's primary goal is to show how ancient African history serves contemporary needs—specifically, how Jugurtha's image was used during the French imperial of Algeria, how it served as political inspiration for post-independence leaders, and how it is perceived today by the Berber people.

To Sallust, Jugurtha was a rebel. But today, a new image emerges from modern articles and historical essays. First, Jugurtha is seen as the typical Berber hero—a resistance leader against Roman invasion and a defender of Numidian independence. His heroic status eclipses the rebel image presented by Sallust. In this modern view, he is rooted in Berber culture. Secondly, Jugurtha has come to symbolize Amazighness, a cultural and political identity that itself expresses resistance to Roman imperial. In this interpretation, the Romans faced determined resistance from the Berber people. Jugurtha stands as the vanguard of Berber efforts to achieve independence and unify North Africa.

7. Conclusion

Jugurtha's ambitions were grand: to rule over all of North Africa, to free it from foreign influence—whether political or commercial—and to put an end to the policies of his uncle and cousins. To achieve this, he had no choice but to eliminate them. Unfortunately, the timing did not favor him: Rome saw in Jugurtha's rise a threat to its African interests and identified him as a formidable military leader (Ait Amara, 2010).

Jugurtha offers two life lessons. During colonization, he became a symbol of resistance—an icon of the struggle for liberation in a continent deeply scarred by millennia of conflict. Today, he is a national symbol, part of the historical heritage of ancient Africa,

remembered as a leader who resisted Rome, alongside other figures such as Syphax and Tacfarinas. Jugurtha deserves renewed attention—perhaps even rehabilitation. If we cannot wholly redefine him as a freedom fighter resisting Roman rule, he is at least rightly seen as a resilient opponent of empire. For his contemporary supporters, Jugurtha's only goal was to liberate North Africa from Roman imperialism.

8. Bibliography

AIT Amara, O. (2010). *Jugurtha stratège et tacticien*. Africa Romana, XIX, pp. 601-622.

Ait Amara, O. (2015). *La Numidie et ses habitants dans l'Africa Romana* : *Historiographie*. Africa Romana, *XX*, pp. 569-580.

Ait Amara, O. (2016). *Le rôle de Massinissa dans la deuxième guerre punique*. La Numidie, Massinissa, et l'histoire (pp. 169-201). Constantine : CNRPAH.

Ait Amara, O. (2017). *Massinissa et la sédentarisation du peuple numide*. Vie et genres de vie au Maghreb antique et Moyen-âge (pp. 23-42). Sousse : Simpact.

Ait Amara, O. (2018). *Les guerriers de Jugurtha*. Vita Latina, N° 197-198, pp. 25-50.

Ait Amara, O. (2019). *Jugurtha et la conquête du pouvoir en Numidie.* IKOSIM, N° 8, pp. 65-82.

Amrouche, J. (2000). *Eternel Jugurtha.* Paris: Editions du Qui.

Berthier, A. (1981). *La Numidie, Rome et le Maghreb.* Paris: Picard.

Boulifa, A. S. (1925). *Le Djurdjura à travers l'histoire : depuis l'Antiquité jusqu'à 1830 : organisation et indépendance des Zouaoua).* Alger: Bringad, Imprimeur-Éditeur.

Brett, M., & Fentress, E. (1996). *The Berbers*. Blackwell. Oxford, Royaume-Uni.

Brunschvig, R. (1940). *La Berbérie orientale sous les Hafsides des origines à la fin du XVe siècle, Tome 1.* Paris: Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient.

Camps, G. (1960). *Aux origines de la Berbérie, Massinissa ou les débuts de l'histoire*. Lybica, *volume VIII, N° 1*, pp. 360-380.

Camps, G. (2007). *Berbères : mémoire et identité.* Marseille : Actes Sud.

Camps, G & Chaker, S. (2004). *Jugurtha. De la grande à la petite Numidie.* Encyclopédie Berbère, pp. 3975-3979.

Camps, G & Chaker, S. (1985). *Agellid.* Encyclopédie Berbère, N° 2, pp. 248-250.

Cazeaux, M. (2015). *Massinissa comme modèle moral.* Massinissa, au cœur de la consécration du premier Etat numide (pp. 199-227). Constantine : HCA.

Jallet-Huant, M. (2006). *Les rois numides et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord par les Romains.* Paris : Presses de Valmy.

Julien, C.-A. (1972). *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord, Tunisie, Algérie, Maroc, des origines à la conquête arabe.* Paris : Payot.

Kadra-Hadjadji, H. (2013). *Massinissa, le Grand Africain.* Alger: Casbah Editions.

Kadra-Hadjadji, H. (2005). *Jugurtha, un berbère contre Rome.* Alger: Barzakh.

Lancel, S. (2003). *L'Algérie antique, de Massinissa à Saint Augustin.* Paris: Editions Mengès.

Liverani, M. (2000). The Garamantes: A fresh approach. *Libyan Studies*, *31*, 17-28.

McCarty, M. M. (2022). *Empire and worship in Roman Africa*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, United Kingdom.

Mercier, M. (1888). *Histoire de l'Afrique Septentrionale, depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à la conquête Française (1830) Tome 1.* Alger: Ernest Leroux.

Polybe. (1847). *Histoire générale, XXXVI.* Paris: Charpentier, Libraire-Éditeur.

Sallustre, C. (1999). *Guerre du Jugurtha.* Paris: Belles-Lettres.

Saumagne, C. (1966). *La Numidie, et Rome. Massinissa et Jugurtha.* Paris: PUF.

Walsh, P. G. (1965). Massinissa. *The Journal of Roman Studies*, *55*(1-2), 149–160.

Appendices

Appendix 01 :

Figure 1: North Africa at the Time of Massinissa

