

Numidian Resistance to Roman Occupation "The Jugurthine War as a Case Study (112 BC – 105 BC)"

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Abstract

This article aims to shed light on a pivotal chapter in the history of the ancient Maghreb: the Jugurthine War, a conflict in which King Jugurtha demonstrated exceptional courage and brilliant military strategy. Jugurtha successfully organized the ranks of Numidian soldiers and cavalry, confronting Roman forces in numerous battles and inflicting heavy losses upon them. He masterfully exploited the Romans' ignorance of the region's complex geography and relied on hit-and-run tactics and surprise ambushes, effectively exhausting the Roman military both psychologically and strategically for seven years.

To address this topic, the study explores the following central problem: What was the nature of the conflict led by the rebel Jugurtha against Rome? This problem branches into several sub-questions, including: What were the true motives that prompted the Romans to declare war on Jugurtha? What were the main phases of this seven-year conflict? What were the consequences of this war, and to what extent did it alter the political landscape of the ancient Maghreb?

To investigate this subject, a descriptive-analytical approach was employed, providing a historical narrative of the events followed by a critical analysis of their dimensions based on available primary sources and specialized secondary literature.

The research is structured around three main axes designed to comprehensively cover the topic and answer the core questions raised. The first axis examines the general political conditions of the ancient Maghreb, the nature of the relations between the Kingdom of Numidia and Rome, and how these factors shaped the personality of Prince Jugurtha. The second axis is dedicated to analyzing the true causes that led the Romans to declare war on the Numidian prince, alongside the chronological phases of the conflict. The third axis focuses on the tragic end of Jugurtha and the geopolitical reconfiguration of the Maghreb following the war.

Ultimately, this study concludes that the Jugurthine War exposed the true expansionist ambitions of Rome at the expense of the Numidian Kingdom. To achieve their goals, the Romans declared war on the Numidian prince; however, failing to secure a decisive martial victory, they resorted to treachery. They orchestrated a conspiracy in cooperation with Jugurtha's father-in-law, Bocchus I, King of Mauretania, which ultimately led to Jugurtha's capture. The Jugurthine War had a profound impact on the political map of the ancient Maghreb, resulting in the expansion of the Mauretanian kingdom into Numidian territories and the installation of a weak client king over the remainder of Numidia, paving the way for its eventual and total Roman subjugation.

Key words : Jugurtha, Bocchus, Marius, Numidia

Résumé

Cet article vise à mettre en lumière un chapitre pivot de l'histoire du Maghreb antique : la guerre de Jugurtha, un conflit au cours duquel le roi Jugurtha a fait preuve d'un courage exceptionnel et d'une brillante stratégie militaire. Jugurtha a réussi à organiser les rangs des soldats et de la cavalerie numides, affrontant les forces romaines lors de nombreuses batailles et leur infligeant de lourdes pertes. Il a magistralement exploité l'ignorance des Romains face à la géographie complexe de la région, s'appuyant sur des tactiques de harcèlement (guerre éclair) et des embuscades surprises, ce qui a effectivement épuisé l'armée romaine tant sur le plan psychologique que stratégique pendant sept ans.

Pour aborder ce sujet, l'étude explore la problématique centrale suivante : Quelle était la nature du conflit mené par le rebelle Jugurtha contre Rome ? Cette problématique se ramifie en plusieurs questions secondaires, notamment : Quels ont été les motifs réels qui ont poussé les Romains à déclarer la guerre à Jugurtha ? Quelles furent les principales phases de ce conflit de sept ans ? Quelles furent les conséquences de cette guerre et dans quelle mesure a-t-elle modifié le paysage politique du Maghreb antique ?

Pour investiguer ce sujet, une approche descriptive-analytique a été adoptée, fournissant un récit historique des événements suivi d'une analyse critique de leurs dimensions, sur la base des sources primaires disponibles et de la littérature secondaire spécialisée.

La recherche est structurée autour de trois axes principaux, conçus pour couvrir le sujet de manière exhaustive et répondre aux questions fondamentales soulevées. Le premier axe examine les conditions politiques générales du Maghreb antique, la nature des relations entre le royaume de Numidie et Rome, et la manière dont ces facteurs ont façonné la personnalité du prince Jugurtha. Le deuxième axe est dédié à l'analyse des causes réelles qui ont conduit les Romains à déclarer la guerre au prince numide, parallèlement aux phases chronologiques du conflit. Le troisième axe se concentre sur la fin tragique de Jugurtha et la reconfiguration géopolitique du Maghreb au lendemain de la guerre.

En conclusion, cette étude démontre que la guerre de Jugurtha a mis au grand jour les véritables ambitions expansionnistes de Rome au détriment du royaume de Numidie. Afin d'atteindre leurs objectifs, les Romains ont déclaré la guerre au prince numide ; cependant, n'ayant pu remporter une victoire militaire décisive, ils ont recouru à la trahison. Ils ont orchestré une conspiration en coopération avec le beau-père de Jugurtha, Bocchus Ier, roi de Maurétanie, ce qui a finalement conduit à la capture de Jugurtha. La guerre de Jugurtha a eu un impact profond sur la carte politique du Maghreb antique, entraînant l'expansion du royaume maurétanien sur les territoires numides et l'installation d'un roi client affaibli sur le reste de la Numidie, ouvrant ainsi la voie à sa soumission totale et définitive par Rome.

mots-clés: Jugurtha, Bocchus, Marius, la Numidie

Introduction

The Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage concluded with a decisive Roman victory and the utter destruction of Carthage in 146 BC. Upon its ruins, the Romans established their first footholds in North Africa, creating a province designated as *Provincia Africa* (the Roman Province of Africa). This triumph allowed Rome to extend its hegemony across the Mediterranean, firmly securing control over strategic islands such as Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, and the Balearics. Following this maritime

expansion, the Romans turned their attention toward the territories of the Kingdom of Numidia. However, they encountered resilient resistance from the indigenous population, who fiercely rejected Roman encroachment. This resistance was spearheaded by the Numidian Prince Jugurtha, who waged a grueling military campaign against a succession of Roman consuls for seven years (112–105 BC), displaying extraordinary valor and exceptional strategic acumen.

The significance of this study lies in shedding light on the volatile political conditions that engulfed the Numidian kingdom following the demise of King Micipsa, and the subsequent internecine power struggle among the three successors: Hiempsal, Adherbal, and Jugurtha. Furthermore, this topic underscores the imperialistic intentions driving Roman intervention in Numidian affairs. The Roman Senate closely monitored the developments of this dynastic rift until they secured the definitive *casus belli* required to intervene and formally declare war on Jugurtha.

A survey of the existing literature reveals that the Jugurthine War has garnered considerable attention from modern scholars who have examined the conflict from various analytical perspectives. Among the most prominent studies is the work of historian Mohamed Douib, *The Jugurthine War*, which offers a direct Arabic translation of ancient Latin texts. Unquestionably, Stéphane Gsell's monumental work, *Histoire de l'Afrique du Nord*, remains indispensable; he dedicated a substantial portion of his fifth volume to the Jugurthine War, drawing heavily from available classical sources—most notably Sallust—while maintaining a critical and cautious methodological approach toward his narratives. This research also relies on *The Roman Occupation of the Maghreb* by Mohamed El-Bashir Chenneti, which provides comprehensive historical data, alongside *Political and Economic Development in Numidia* by Mohamed El-Hadi Harsh, whose analytical insights greatly facilitated our comprehension of the historical trajectory of this study.

An analysis of Jugurtha's policy reveals that he consistently pursued a liberationist strategy, keenly aware of Rome's expansionist ambitions and its geopolitical goals in the region. By successfully unifying the Numidian kingdom under his singular rule, Jugurtha deeply alarmed the Romans, who viewed the emergence of a centralized, unified Numidian state as a direct threat to their interests and sphere of influence in North Africa. Consequently, an open clash between the two powers became entirely inevitable.

The central problem of this study revolves around investigating the nature of the seven-year conflict between Jugurtha and the Romans. This overarching problem branches into the following sub-questions:

- What were the true motives underlying this conflict?
- What were the chronological and strategic phases of the Roman campaigns against Jugurtha?
- What were the ultimate geopolitical consequences resulting from this war?

To address this problem, this study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. This methodology entails collecting and presenting historical data, followed by a critical analysis of key points regarding the nature of the conflict, its developmental stages, and its final outcomes.

This research draws upon a framework of classical primary sources that documented the Jugurthine War. Chief among these ancient texts is *Bellum Iugurthinum* (*The Jugurthine War*) by the Roman historian Sallust. However, engaging with this text requires a high degree of methodological caution and historical criticism, given the author's distinct political background, personal ambitions, and the contemporary accusations of corruption and extortion levied against him. The socio-political context in which Sallust drafted this monograph suggests partisan motivations, as he primarily utilized the

Numidian conflict to expose the systemic corruption, decadence, and abuse of power within the Roman senatorial aristocracy.

In addition to Sallust, this study incorporates other classical authorities, such as the geographer Strabo, whose work *Geography* provides essential insights into the socio-political conditions and human geography of the Numidian kingdom and the wider Maghreb. Finally, we have consulted *Natural History* by Pliny the Elder. Although Pliny's encyclopedic work is not a direct narrative of the military operations, it remains an invaluable asset for the researcher. It provides crucial data regarding the regional topography, ecological characteristics, and the distribution of indigenous tribes during that era. Its primary value lies in reconstructing the geographical and ethnographic backdrop against which these historical events unfolded, thereby enabling a comprehensive understanding of the broader historical context

1. The Early Life of Jugurtha

Jugurtha, the son of Mastanabal (hareche, 2013: 205), was born in 160 BC (Messerhi, 2009: 53) during the lifetime of his grandfather, Massinissa. Little is known about his childhood and upbringing, as ancient sources rarely mention them. A notable exception is the Roman historian **Gaius Sallustius** (Sallust), who, in his work *The Jugurthine War*, describes Jugurtha's youth:

“He was strong and handsome like the Numidians, passionate about horse riding according to Numidian customs, fond of archery and racing with his peers, and spent most of his time hunting” (Sallust, 1933: VI)

Sallust also notes that Jugurtha's humility toward his people, his tireless activity, and his sharp intelligence earned him the love and trust of the Numidians (Sallust, 1933: VI). Initially, his uncle, King Micipsa, was pleased with these qualities—courage, intelligence, boldness, and prudence—believing that Jugurtha's bravery would bring glory to the Numidian kingdom.

However, Micipsa later grew anxious and suspicious upon realizing that the young man had become highly influential while his own sons were still minors (Sallust, 2008: V-7). Jugurtha's rising popularity caused the king to fear that, after his death, Jugurtha might seize the throne and bypass Micipsa's biological heirs (camps, 2009: 290).

2.To eliminate this threat, Micipsa considered plotting against his nephew, but fear of his own people and of those loyal to Jugurtha prevented him. The king feared that depriving his sons of their inheritance might incite a rebellion among the Numidian masses, with whom Jugurtha had gained immense popularity. Therefore, Micipsa devised a cunning plan: he sent Jugurtha at the head of a Numidian contingent to assist the Romans in their wars in Spain (Ghanem, 2010: 165). In doing so, Micipsa hoped that Jugurtha's reckless bravery would lead to his death on the battlefield, while simultaneously currying favor with Rome (Sallust, 2008: VII-2). Through this strategy, the king aimed to achieve two goals with a single action: secure Roman goodwill and eliminate the threat posed by his nephew (Ghanem, 2010: 164-165).

3. Jugurtha and the Numantine War

In 134 BC, during the Numantine War, Micipsa dispatched his nephew Jugurtha at the head of Numidian forces to support the Roman commander Scipio Aemilianus. In Spain, Jugurtha became well-acquainted with the Roman soldiers, mastered their combat techniques, and earned both their

admiration and the personal trust of Scipio (hareche, 2013: 206). Scipio praised him publicly before the Roman army and later, in private, advised him to cultivate strong relations with the Roman people. Upon Jugurtha's departure, Scipio sent him back with a letter addressed to Micipsa, stating (Ghanem, 2010: 166): **“Your nephew Jugurtha displayed extraordinary bravery in the Numantine War, which I am certain will please you greatly. He has become dear to us for his services, and I will do my utmost to ensure he is equally esteemed by the Senate and the Roman people. As your friend, I congratulate you; you possess a man truly worthy of you and of his grandfather Massinissa...”** (Sallust, 1933: IX).

4. Dispute over Succession

Some historians interpret the content and purpose of Scipio's letter as an implicit urge for Micipsa to hand over power to Jugurtha, who had fully earned Roman admiration. Jugurtha's victorious return heightened Micipsa's anxieties, prompting him to adopt a more conciliatory approach toward his nephew. He ultimately decided to adopt Jugurtha, making him a partner in governance in the hope of securing his loyalty and ensuring the fair treatment of his own biological sons after his death (Ghanem, 2010: 166).

Micipsa formally adopted Jugurtha in 120 BC. When the king later fell gravely ill, he gathered his three sons—Adherbal, Hiempsal, and Jugurtha—to offer them his final counsel. Addressing Jugurtha, he said (Ghanem, 2010: 166): **“You were a small, orphaned, penniless boy when I took you in, and I have raised you to inherit the throne. I acted with no other wish than that your love for me should equal the affection my own sons bear me. Your bravery has strengthened our alliance with Rome. I implore you to treat your cousins with kindness and to rely on fraternal bond rather than outsiders. For what friend is more worthy of devotion than a brother?”** (Sallust, , 1933: X).

He then addressed his biological sons (Ghanem, 2010: 167) : **“Adherbal and Hiempsal, respect and honor this extraordinary man. Emulate his bravery, and strive to ensure it is never said that the son I adopted surpassed those I begot myself”** (Sallust, 2008: X-8). Finally, he urged the three of them to cooperate and remain united, advising (hareche, 2013: 206): **“I leave you a kingdom that will stand strong if you govern in harmony, but will crumble if you do not. For through unity, small states grow great; through division, even the mightiest empires collapse”** (Sallust, 1933: X)

Following Micipsa's death in 118 BC, the three successors met to discuss state affairs. Jugurtha proposed abolishing several decrees and ceremonial practices established by Micipsa during the final three years of his life, arguing that they were detrimental to the kingdom's welfare—such as granting the Italian merchant community in Cirta excessive freedom regarding residency and the grain trade (Ghanem, 2010: 167-168). Hiempsal eagerly agreed, mockingly suggesting that this abolition should also extend to Jugurtha's own adoption, which had occurred during that very same three-year period. Hiempsal was fatally unaware of the gravity of his insult. His provocative words struck Jugurtha deeply, and the latter resolved to respond at the appropriate time and in his own manner (Ghanem, 2010: 167-168). Driven by contrasting ambitions and volatile personalities, the three brothers failed to find common ground—a friction Sallust identifies as the root cause of the conflict. Unable to reach a political compromise, they agreed to partition the kingdom and its treasury. This outcome ran

entirely counter to Jugurtha's ultimate ambitions, prompting him to dispatch an assassin who murdered Hiempsal in 117 BC. (Harich, 2014: 47)

The historian Sallust recounts the assassination as follows: "Hiempsal was staying at the house of an acquaintance in the city of Thirmida. By chance, the homeowner was a close associate of Jugurtha, who held him in high regard and admiration. Jugurtha contacted this man and formed a pact to assassinate Hiempsal. In return, Jugurtha showered him with promises and persuaded him to guide a detachment of Jugurthine soldiers to Hiempsal's residence. The Numidian complied, leading Jugurtha's soldiers under the cover of night. They stormed the house, searching for Hiempsal; they slaughtered some of the guards in their sleep and cut down others who attempted to resist. They ransacked hidden corners, battered down doors, and spread chaos and terror everywhere. Finally, they discovered Hiempsal hiding in a servant's quarters, where he had fled in a blind panic. The Numidians severed his head and brought it to Jugurtha, as ordered..." (Sallust, 1933: XII).

News of Hiempsal's assassination spread rapidly, causing a widespread uproar throughout the kingdom. The Numidians quickly split into two factions: while the majority sided with Adherbal, the elite forces rallied behind Jugurtha. Leveraging this military advantage, Jugurtha subjugated numerous Numidian cities and brought nearly the entire kingdom under his control. In response, Adherbal dispatched a delegation to Rome to inform the Senate of his brother's murder and report the critical situation in Numidia (Sallust, 1933: XIII)

Adherbal prepared to confront his cousin, but his forces collapsed during their first encounter with Jugurtha's army in 116 BC, forcing him to flee to the Roman province of Africa and ultimately to Rome itself (Harich, 2014: 47-48). Meanwhile, Jugurtha sent his own envoys to Rome to justify his actions and present his position, having effectively seized control of all Numidia (Amrane, 2017: 357).

Before the Roman Senate, Adherbal passionately condemned Jugurtha's actions, highlighting the broader danger of his ambitions. He sought to win over the senators by emphasizing his absolute loyalty to Rome, pairing his pleas for aid with flattery. Sallust records his speech: "My father, on his deathbed, ordered me to govern the Kingdom of Numidia merely as your administrator, recognizing that the right and authority over it belong entirely to you. He instructed me to remain as faithful and devoted to the Roman people in war and peace as possible, and to view you as allies just as my father did. I hoped to find in your military strength sufficient support to reclaim and protect my threatened throne from the vile and arrogant Jugurtha, who has openly disdained your authority. I am, after all, the grandson of Massinissa, a steadfast friend and ally of the Roman people..." (Sallust, 1933: XIV). In contrast, Jugurtha's representatives delivered a brief statement, relying far more on the heavy bribes they distributed among the senators than on the justice of their claims. They argued that Hiempsal had been killed by the Numidians themselves due to his insufferable arrogance and poor governance, and claimed that Adherbal was an unprovoked aggressor. They requested that Jugurtha be judged by his actual conduct rather than the words of his enemies (Sallust, 1933: XV). Following the departure of both delegations, the Senate debated the matter. Influenced by Jugurtha's wealth, many senators openly sided with his envoys, mocking Adherbal's grievances and praising Jugurtha's martial bravery. Only a small faction deemed Adherbal's claims just, insisting that he be aided and that severe vengeance be exacted for Hiempsal's murder (Sallust, 2008: XV-2.3).

Ultimately, the Roman Senate opted for a diplomatic compromise, sending a commission led by Lucius Opimius to partition the kingdom between Adherbal and Jugurtha in 116 BC. As a result, the

eastern part of Numidia, adjacent to the Roman province of Africa, was awarded to Adherbal (cheniti, 1985: 34-35), while the western part was granted to Jugurtha. Sallust notes that the western portion was wealthier and more populous (Harich, 2014: 48). Cependant, geographical and historical analyses of North Africa based on Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* indicate that the eastern region actually possessed greater structural advantages, containing a higher concentration of cities and the largest population density (Pliny, 1850: II-1). Strabo also notes that King Micipsa had invested heavily in eastern Numidia, particularly regarding economic and urban expansion. He fortified and embellished the capital, Cirta, constructing grand palaces and ensuring that its robust population could field ten thousand cavalry (Strabo, 1867: III-13).

Although Jugurtha feigned acceptance of this Roman partition (Harich, 2014: 49), he secretly planned to annex Adherbal's territories. He soon launched a predatory raid into the eastern kingdom, returning with abundant spoils and captives in the hope that Adherbal would retaliate, thereby providing a *casus belli*. When Adherbal refused to be provoked, Jugurtha escalated his campaign (Harich, 2009: 181-182), aggressively pursuing his cousin to Cirta and laying siege to the capital in 113 BC (Julien, 1983: 156). Jugurtha attempted to storm the city using protective mantlets, siege towers, and various engines of war, eager to force a surrender before the ambassadors Adherbal had sent to Rome could return (Sallust, 2008: XXI-3).

During the blockade, a Roman delegation led by Marcus Aemilius Scaurus arrived to mediate. Jugurtha, however, managed to delay their entry into Cirta, allowing the siege to drag on for five months. Despite strict Roman directives to cease hostilities and resolve the dispute through diplomacy (Harich, 2014: 49), Jugurtha intensified his assault, tightening the noose around the capital (Sallust, 1933: XXI). Adherbal managed to send another desperate plea to Rome (Si el-hadi, 2013: 96). Though Rome dispatched a subsequent embassy, it yielded no results. Exhausted by a grueling fifteen-month siege, the Italian residents within the city walls pressured Adherbal to surrender in the summer of 112 BC, under the assumption that their Roman status would protect them (Harich, 2014: 49-50).

When the city gates were finally opened, Jugurtha's forces executed a brutal sack. He not only executed Adherbal under torture but also slaughtered all Numidian soldiers who had resisted and massacred the entire Italian merchant community (Nushay, 2010: 174). The fall of Cirta and the slaughter of these Italian citizens caused widespread outrage in Italy, leaving the Senate with no choice but to declare war on Jugurtha (Harich, 2014: 50).

5. Jugurtha's War Against the Romans

Determined to avenge the massacred Italian citizens after Jugurtha's seizure of Cirta, the Romans sought to restore their geopolitical influence and status in North Africa. From Rome's perspective, this stability could only be achieved by re-partitioning the kingdom among the surviving Numidian princes in accordance with their previous agreements.

However, Jugurtha was prepared for their reaction. He adopted a strategy of calculated firmness, occasionally feigning submission and obedience to preserve the hard-won unity of his kingdom. To demonstrate this apparent compliance following the Cirta incident, he dispatched an embassy to Rome led by his own son and two close confidants, tasked with pacifying the angry Senate (Ghanem, 2010: 172).

Sallust notes that Jugurtha had heavily provisioned this delegation with gold to bribe and manipulate the senators (Sallust, 1933: XXVIII). Yet, upon reaching Rome, the envoys were barred from entering the city. They were starkly informed that unless Jugurtha unconditionally surrendered himself and the Numidian kingdom to Roman authority, Rome would formally declare war. Although a faction of the Roman public and elite initially opposed the conflict—either out of sympathy for Jugurtha or fear of the heavy toll in wealth and human lives—the Senate ultimately resolved to dispatch the consul of that year (111 BC) to command the military campaign (Ghanem, 2010: 172).

5.1. The Campaign of Consul Lucius Calpurnius Bestia

In 111 BC, Rome dispatched Consul Lucius Calpurnius Bestia to Numidia (Florus, 1865: III-2), assigning him command of the legions and selecting Marcus Aemilius Scaurus as his chief advisor (Gsell, 2007: 151). The Roman armies departed from mainland Italy, marched to Rhegium, crossed over to Sicily, and from there disembarked on the African coast (Sallust, 1933: XXVIII). Upon his arrival, Bestia captured several Numidian cities but refrained from advancing deeper into the territory. Recognizing the consul's hesitance, Jugurtha successfully persuaded Bestia to halt military operations and conclude a peace treaty. Sallust heavily criticized the consul for this agreement, accusing him of treachery, accepting bribes, and betraying the supreme interests of the Roman Republic. However, Bestia also required a swift truce to return to Rome and secure his political standing for the upcoming consular elections of 110 BC.

The Roman Senate flatly rejected the treaty brokered by Bestia. Instead, they summoned Jugurtha to Rome to appear before the Senate, aiming to investigate the true extent of his willingness to submit to Roman authority (cheniti, 1985: 36). Jugurtha attended the hearing alongside his trusted commander, Bomilcar, to face the formal reading of the charges against him (Farhati, 2009: 156). Once again, Jugurtha weaponized corruption; by heavily bribing Gaius Baebius, a Tribune of the Plebs (Si el-hadi, 2013: 98), Jugurtha secured a tribunician veto that exempted him from having to answer the accusations under cross-examination (Sallust, 1933: XXXIII).

Despite this temporary legal maneuver, the treaty between Bestia and Jugurtha was definitively nullified as suspicions of widespread corruption grew into an absolute certainty. Bestia's political opponents leveraged these rumors of bribery to launch fierce attacks against him, ultimately convincing the Senate to withdraw its confidence, establish a judicial commission, and renounce all imperial commitments made to the Numidian king (cheniti, 1985: 36).

While still in Rome, Jugurtha boldly orchestrated a plot that led to the assassination of Prince Massiva, a member of the Numidian royal family who had fled to Rome to claim the vacant throne (Ghanem, 2010: 173). Following the execution of this daring crime, Jugurtha famously mocked the capital upon his forced departure, declaring: "A city for sale, and doomed to swift destruction, if only it can find a buyer!" (Sallust, 2008: XXXV-9). Once the Romans uncovered Jugurtha's direct complicity in the murder, they ordered his immediate expulsion from the city. The Senate then resolved to punish him severely by resuming full-scale hostilities, granting the incoming consul of 110 BC complete military command (Ghanem, 2010: 173).

5.2. The Campaign of Consul Spurius Postumius Albinus

Rome organized a retaliatory campaign against the Numidian king, officially declaring Jugurtha an enemy of the Roman Republic. Command of this campaign was entrusted to Consul Spurius

Postumius Albinus, who reorganized the demoralized Roman forces stationed in the province of Africa before marching westward toward Jugurtha's territories (Sallust, 1933: XXXVII). Jugurtha intercepted the advancing legions using guerrilla tactics, successfully entangling the Roman commander in an exhausting war of attrition (Ghanem, 2006: 81). Having been stationed in Africa for an extended period, the Roman legionnaires had gradually lost their discipline amid a climate of inactivity and ease. Conversely, Jugurtha's Numidian troops were highly skilled in hit-and-run warfare, relying heavily on ambushes while carefully avoiding open battlefield confrontations (Aggoune, 2006: 54).

With the onset of winter, Albinus temporarily transferred command of the army to his brother, Aulus Postumius Albinus, and returned to Rome to oversee the consular elections (Gsell, 2007: 157). In the consul's absence (Ghanem, 2010: 173), Aulus launched an aggressive winter campaign. He marched his troops swiftly through harsh weather to reach the fortress of Suthul, where he believed Jugurtha's royal treasury was stored. His primary objective was to launch a surprise assault and seize this wealth (Ghanem, 2010: 157).

However, the fortress of Suthul was heavily fortified, situated at the edge of a rugged mountain and surrounded by a plain that winter rains had transformed into impassable swamps. Despite these treacherous conditions, Aulus foolishly initiated a siege (Gsell, 2007: 157). Exploiting Aulus' tactical naivety, Jugurtha feigned a panicked retreat through rough terrain and dense forests to lure the Romans deeper into the interior. He deliberately projected weakness, sending envoys to Aulus to seek a peaceful reconciliation and request the lifting of the siege (Ghanem, 2010: 175).

As Sallust notes, Jugurtha simultaneously targeted the Roman leadership, successfully bribing several centurions and cavalry officers into promising to desert or abandon their posts. Once his psychological and covert operations had guaranteed success, Jugurtha launched a sudden night attack on the Roman camp. Taken completely by surprise, the Roman soldiers panicked. Chaos erupted in the pitch-black darkness, and the legionnaires scattered blindly, unable to mount an organized defense (Gsell, 2007: 157).

The resulting Battle of Suthul in 110 BC ended in a decisive victory for Jugurtha, marking his most significant military triumph over Rome. The shattered Roman forces were compelled to retreat beyond the *Fossa Regia*, effectively evacuating all Numidian territory. This humiliating defeat threw Rome into absolute panic. Jugurtha forced Aulus into a dishonorable peace treaty that favored the Numidian kingdom (Ghanem, 2006: 81), which included a clause dictating that the surviving Roman army must entirely evacuate Numidia within ten days (Ghanem, 2010: 175).

When news of the disaster reached Rome, Spurius Albinus' political reputation was shattered. He rushed back to Africa to seek vengeance and restore his family's honor, but he found his remaining legions thoroughly demoralized, undisciplined, and plagued by insubordination. Roman historians largely attribute the failure of these initial campaigns to Rome's ignorance of the North African terrain and a fatal underestimation of Jugurtha's strategic genius (Aggoune, 2006: 54-55).

5.3. The Campaign of Consul Quintus Caecilius Metellus

Following the humiliating Roman defeat at Suthul, Rome fully recognized Jugurtha's military prowess and his unyielding determination to defend his sovereignty (Ghanem, 2010: 175). Consequently, the Senate appointed Quintus Caecilius Metellus, who had been elected consul for 109 BC, to assume supreme command of the African theater. Metellus arrived in Africa in the spring of

that year to take control of the legions. His mission was exceptionally challenging due to the severely deteriorated state of the Roman army, whose discipline had completely eroded and whose morale had collapsed under previous commanders. To restore order, Metellus instituted rigorous training. He then marched his rehabilitated forces into Numidia, establishing a heavily fortified base near Vaga before advancing southwest toward the Muthul Valley (Aggoune, 2006: 55). The consul was accompanied by two highly capable legates, Publius Rutilius Rufus and Gaius Marius, both of whom possessed sharp political acumen and exceptional military skill (Ghanem, 2010: 157).

Metellus actively sought a decisive pitched battle to reclaim Roman honor and capture the Numidian king, with his ultimate target being the strategic capital of Cirta (Al-Aqoun, 2006: 55). Accordingly, he summarily rejected all peaceful overtures dispatched by Jugurtha. The two armies eventually clashed in the fiercely contested Battle of the Muthul. In this engagement, Jugurtha cleverly deployed his forces along a desolate, brush-covered ridge to monitor and ambush the advancing enemy. Metellus, detecting the trap, reordered his columns and directed a detachment under Rutilius toward the river to secure a water supply and establish a basecamp.

Jugurtha remained concealed until the main Roman column under Metellus descended into the arid plain opposite his positions. He then ordered two thousand infantrymen to occupy the mountain pass the Romans had just vacated, effectively blocking their line of retreat. Concurrently, he instructed Bomilcar to intercept Rutilius' detachment, preventing them from establishing a camp or reinforcing Metellus. Jugurtha then ordered his main force to charge down the ridge, striking the vulnerable flank of the Roman legions and throwing their ranks into immediate disorder.

During the battle, Jugurtha utilized a highly sophisticated tactical maneuver: avoiding sustained, direct hand-to-hand combat, the Numidian cavalry launched swift charges and feigned panicky retreats. This maneuver successfully lured fragmented Roman units away from their defensive lines and into rugged, pre-arranged kill zones, where hidden Numidian forces surrounded and annihilated them (Harich, 2014: 53-54). Despite heavy losses and intense heat, Roman discipline eventually prevailed; Metellus and Marius managed to rally their veterans, drive the Numidians from the high ground, and secure a tactical breakthrough, though Jugurtha's core army escaped largely intact.

Following the battle, Metellus remained encamped for four days to treat the wounded, distribute military decorations, and deliver a crucial morale-boosting speech praising the legionnaires' resilience (Aggoune, 2006: 58). Recognizing that conventional warfare in unfamiliar terrain was too risky against an elusive enemy, Metellus fundamentally shifted his strategy to a brutal scorched-earth policy. He plundered Numidian agricultural resources, systematically dismantled fortifications, torched unaligned towns, and executed populations to terrorize the locals and deter them from aiding the Numidian king (Harich, 2014: 54).

In 108 BC, Metellus attempted to capture the strategic city of Zama Regia but was repulsed by its stubborn defense. However, he successfully seized the key strongholds of Vaga and Thala, both of which Sallust notes contained portions of Jugurtha's royal treasury (Zeghib, 2012: 99). Pressed by these losses, Jugurtha retreated further south into the arid interior, establishing a new operational base in Gafsa. There, he aggressively recruited and trained warriors from the nomadic Gaetuli tribes.

Furthermore, Jugurtha forged a powerful diplomatic alliance with King Bocchus I of Mauretania (Harich, 2014: 54), convincing his neighbor that Roman imperial expansion would not stop at Numidia's borders if left unchecked. This geopolitical alliance was formalized through a political marriage, with Jugurtha wedding the Mauretanian monarch's daughter. Amidst these shifting

diplomatic tides, political maneuvering in Rome led to Metellus being recalled, and his ambitious legate, Gaius Marius, was elected consul and granted supreme command over the African campaign (Ghanem, 2010: 177).

5.4. The Campaign of Consul Gaius Marius and the Betrayal of Jugurtha

One of Rome's most prominent military commanders, Consul Gaius Marius, assumed leadership of the African campaign following his election in 107 BC (Aggoune, 2006: 63). His primary objective was the absolute capture of Jugurtha. Marius heavily reinforced the legions in Africa with fresh troops from Rome, summoned Latin and Italian allies, and mobilized Roman subject states. Crucially, he enacted a revolutionary military reform by opening voluntary enlistment to all Roman citizens regardless of property qualifications, effectively creating a professional standing army from the *capite censi* (Sallust, 1933: LXXXIV).

Marius sailed from Italy and disembarked at Utica. Before launching major offensive operations, he focused on logistical organization and securing supply lines, appointing Aulus Manlius as his deputy (Aggoune, 2006: 64). Upon learning of Marius' arrival, Jugurtha and Bocchus I separated their forces and retreated into rugged, inhospitable terrain. This was a deliberate tactic orchestrated by Jugurtha, who hoped to compel Marius to scatter his forces, thereby creating an opportunity for a devastating surprise attack (Harich, 2014: 56).

After initial skirmishes near Cirta proved inconclusive, Marius realized that minor tactical engagements would never bring a definitive end to the war. He shifted his strategy to targeting fortified towns and supply hubs, calculating that Jugurtha would be forced to abandon guerrilla tactics to defend them. Gafsa was among the primary strategic strongholds targeted and systematically destroyed during this offensive (Harich, 2014: 56). Gafsa—large, heavily fortified, and situated in an arid, nearly inaccessible region—was vital to the Numidian war effort. When Marius forced its inhabitants to surrender, he enacted a brutal punishment: the town was razed, the adult population executed, and the remaining civilians sold into slavery (Nushay, 2010: 186). Sallust notes that the capture of this seemingly impregnable stronghold vastly heightened Marius' prestige, securing him immense popularity among the Roman populace (Sallust, 1933: XCII).

Following the sack of Gafsa, Marius advanced further westward, devastating cities along his path despite sporadic Numidian resistance; most settlements were abandoned by their populations, who fled in terror after learning of Gafsa's grim fate (Sallust, 2008: XCII-3). By 106 BC, Marius reached the Mulucha River, the natural boundary separating Jugurtha's Numidian kingdom from Bocchus' Mauretania. There, atop a sheer mountain ridge, stood a formidable fortress where Jugurtha stored a massive portion of his royal treasury and military supplies. The stronghold was accessible only via a single, dangerously narrow mountain path (Sallust, 1933: XCII).

The fortress stubbornly withstood a Roman siege for several days until a Ligurian auxiliary soldier, while searching for water, discovered a hidden, precarious path leading up the rocky cliffs (Sallust, 1933: XCIII). He immediately reported his discovery to Marius, who utilized the route to launch a synchronized surprise assault, successfully capturing the fortress and seizing Jugurtha's wealth (Harich, 2014: 57).

This deep westward penetration into the Mulucha Valley deeply alarmed King Bocchus I, who feared a Roman invasion of Mauretania. Capitalizing on the Mauretanian king's anxieties, Jugurtha persuaded Bocchus to merge their forces for a rapid counter-offensive toward Cirta. The Numidian

king managed to retake the city in the summer of 106 BC, forcing Marius to execute a grueling march back eastward to recapture it. Two massive, chaotic battles ensued near Cirta, but Roman tactical discipline eventually prevailed. Jugurtha was forced to flee the battlefield, allowing Marius to enter Cirta victorious in 105 BC (Harich, 2014: 58).

Following Jugurtha's defeat and Marius' re-establishment of control over eastern Numidia, Bocchus I recognized that the strategic balance of power had shifted in Rome's favor. He dispatched two of his closest advisors to initiate peace talks. Marius responded by sending his deputy Manlius alongside his ambitious Quaestor, Lucius Cornelius Sulla (Sallust, 1933: CII). This diplomatic opening marked a new phase of the war, allowing Marius to transition from costly military maneuvers to covert diplomacy (Hareche, 2013: 58).

During the initial summit, the historian Appian records that the Mauretanian king took a defiant stance, placing the blame for the hostiles on Marius by declaring: **"...if arms were taken up, the fault lies with Marius, who trespassed upon lands that I [Bocchus] had seized from Jugurtha..."** (Sallust, 2008: CII- 12.13). Sallust, however, provides a different perspective, stating that Sulla took the lead in the negotiations after Manlius deferentially ceded the floor to him despite his junior rank. Sulla presented the Roman position with superior rhetorical persuasion (Sallust, 2008: CII-4), prompting a polite response from Bocchus, who claimed he had only taken up arms to defend his kingdom (Sallust, 1933: CII).

Utilizing his immense political and psychological acumen, Sulla successfully eroded Bocchus I's resolve, convincing the king to abandon his son-in-law, Jugurtha (Ghanem, 2006: 86). Bocchus subsequently sent an embassy to Rome to formally request an alliance. The Roman Senate responded with calculated pragmatism: **"...The Senate and the Roman people do not forget either favors or injuries. They forgive Bocchus his error because he regrets it; they will grant him the friendship and alliance of Rome when he has truly earned it..."** (Sallust, 1933: CIV).

Upon receiving this imperial directive, Bocchus I requested that Marius send Sulla back to his court to finalize the terms of the treaty (Sallust, 1933: CV). Sulla accepted the highly perilous mission, marching safely through hostile territory under the armed escort of Bocchus' son, Volux (Nushay, 2010: 189). The secret meetings were heavily monitored by Dabar, a Numidian massylian who served as Jugurtha's agent but was secretly loyal to Bocchus and the Romans (Harich, 2014: 59). Convinced that his own political survival depended on Rome, Bocchus resolved to betray his son-in-law. Operating under Sulla's instructions, Bocchus led Jugurtha to believe that the Romans were ready to negotiate a permanent peace treaty (Ghanem, 2006: 87). Jugurtha was instructed to attend the final conference unarmed as a sign of goodwill. The Numidian king fell blindly into the trap; upon his arrival at the meeting site, his bodyguard was slaughtered in a sudden ambush, and Jugurtha himself was chained and handed over to Sulla in the late summer of 105 BC, effectively ending the Jugurthine War (Harich, 2014: 59).

6. The End of Jugurtha

Upon his return to Rome, Gaius Marius celebrated a magnificent triumph on January 1, 104 BC, during which a humiliated Jugurtha and his two sons were paraded in chains before the Roman populace. Following the triumphal procession, the deposed Numidian king was cast into the subterranean dungeon of the Tullianum (the Mamertine Prison), where he died of starvation on the seventh day of his confinement (Harich, 2014: 60).

7. Consequences of the War

The Jugurthine War concluded with Jugurtha's total defeat and a decisive Roman victory, triggers profound political and territorial shifts across North Africa:

- **Territorial Partition:** The geopolitical map of Numidia was radically altered. In exchange for his crucial alliance and betrayal of Jugurtha, King Bocchus I of Mauretania was rewarded with western Numidia, annexing roughly one-third of the kingdom's total territory into his own realm (Ghanem, 2010: 179).
- **A Weakened Monarchy:** The remaining eastern portion of the Numidian kingdom was granted to Gauda, Jugurtha's younger half-brother. Gauda was a ruler of weak character and failing health, whom Sallust described as mentally and physically compromised—ensuring he would remain a compliant client king under Rome's shadow (Harich, 2014: 60).
- **Agrarian Colonization and Roman Control:** The Roman Senate integrated substantial portions of Numidian land into the public domain of the Republic (*ager publicus*), following their standard imperial practice of territorial acquisition. Furthermore, agrarian laws passed in 103 BC—largely orchestrated by the tribune Lucius Appuleius Saturninus—granted land allotments of up to 100 *iugera* (approximately 25 hectares) to Marius' veterans of the Jugurthine War, initiating a deep Roman agricultural colonization of the region (Ghanem, 2010: 179).

8. Conclusion

Based on the preceding study of Jugurtha's resistance against the Roman occupation, it is evident that this subject, despite its significance, still warrants further rigorous research to elucidate certain historical truths that remain shrouded in ambiguity. It has been demonstrated that from the moment the Romans set foot in the Maghreb following the fall of Carthage, they coveted the region's resources and potential. This ambition explains their continuous intervention in the affairs of the Numidian Kingdom on one hand, and their persistent fabrication of pretexts to declare war on Jugurtha on the other.

Despite the advancement and formidable strength of the Roman military machine during that period, the Romans encountered immense difficulties in suppressing Jugurtha's resistance. The latter succeeded in inflicting significant defeats and casualties upon the Roman forces by employing guerrilla warfare and hit-and-run tactics, which exhausted the Romans and drained their efforts for several years. Furthermore, the study of the Jugurthine War reveals that the Numidian, Gaetulian, and Mauri tribes were overwhelmingly opposed to the Roman presence in the region—a collective stance that prolonged the conflict and complicated the Roman mission to extend their hegemony.

Faced with this critical situation, the Romans realized that victory could only be achieved by dismantling the domestic front and weakening the political and military alliances that existed in the ancient Maghreb. Ultimately, the Roman commander Sulla succeeded in winning over the Mauretania King, Bocchus I, utilizing various methods of coercion and enticement. This led to the betrayal and surrender of Jugurtha to the Romans, thereby ending his resistance. Consequently, it can be argued that diplomatic and political maneuvers played a decisive role in resolving the conflict in favor of the Romans, alongside other military factors.

Following the suppression of Jugurtha's resistance, the political map of the ancient Maghreb underwent significant transformations that aligned with Roman expansionist policies in the region.

The Romans installed Gauda, Jugurtha's brother, on the Numidian throne, providing them with greater leverage to influence the kingdom's affairs and direct its policies to serve their imperial interests. This move appears to have been part of a broader Roman strategy aimed at consolidating influence within the Numidian Kingdom as a precursor to establishing absolute control over the region, prior to expanding their hegemony into the Mauretanian Kingdom.

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