

YVETTE DUVAL Y EL NORTE DE ÁFRICA TARDOANTIGUA:
YA NO ES SÓLO DECADENCIA Y CAÍDA

Yvette Duval and the Late Antique North Africa: It is Not Just Decline and Fall Anymore

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Abstract

Yvette Duval's publications offer diverse and contrasting aspects about the dynamism of late-antique North Africa. I have underlined the extent to which they were able to exert a considerable influence in recent historiography. The ideas defended in her various articles and books cannot leave anyone indifferent. Discussing them, drawing up a critical assessment, seeing them questioned, does not mean doing an iconoclast's work. On the contrary, it is the best tribute that can be paid to a wo-

Resumen

Las publicaciones de Yvette Duval ofrecen aspectos diversos y contrastantes sobre el dinamismo del norte de África tardoantiguo. He subrayado hasta qué punto pudieron ejercer una influencia considerable en la historiografía reciente. Las ideas defendidas en sus diversos artículos y libros no pueden dejar indiferente a nadie. Discutirlas, hacer un balance crítico, verlas cuestionadas no significa hacer un trabajo de iconoclasta. Al contrario, es el mejor homenaje que se puede rendir a una mujer

man who defended the idea of a multicolored Late Antiquity, far from the stereotypes resulting from the *Aufklärung* of crisis and decadence.

Keywords

French Historian, Historiography, Late Antique North Africa, Late Antiquity, Later Roman Empire.

que defendió la idea de una Tardoantigüedad multicolor, alejada de los estereotipos resultantes de las *Aufklärung* de la crisis y la decadencia.

Palabras clave

Historiador francés, Historiografía, África del Norte de la Antigüedad tardía, Antigüedad tardía, Imperio romano tardío.

YVETTE DUVAL WAS BORN ON 25TH APRIL 1931, in Oujda in Morocco, the country where she spent the most important part of her youth. Coming from a Sephardic Jews family ; a Moroccan father (from the Ben Chettrit' family) and an Algerian mother, she acquired French nationality through her mother, under the Crémieux Decree promulgated in 1870, which granted French citizenship automatically to Algerian Israelites¹. After primary studies in Catholic education, she pursued high quality classical studies at the *Collège de jeunes filles* of Oujda. Then, she continued her studies at the *Lycée de garçons* for her final year, where she met and became friends in particular with Jamel Eddine Bencheikh, the future Franco-Algerian writer. She passed her baccalaureate in 1948, at the very moment of the bloody riots in Oujda and Djerada caused by the tensions of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War in the Middle East². After a year of literary preparatory classes at the high school in Rabat, she left Morocco for France. In Paris, she first enrolled at the *Lycée Fénelon*, then she was accepted at the *École normale supérieure de jeunes filles* (ENSJF) in 1951 where she took courses of André Piganiol, one of the greatest French scholars of the period of the Later Roman Empire³. At the same time, she took the courses of Louis Robert who taught at that time at the *Collège de France* and the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (EPHE)⁴, under whose direction she wrote a dissertation in Greek history and epigraphy for the Diploma of Higher Studies. Attracted by the socio-religious dynamism of Mediterranean societies at the end of Antiquity, she showed afterwards her interest in Late-antique Christianity. During these same years of her undergraduate degree, she established a great friendship with Luce Pietri, Évelyne Patlagean and Monique Alexandre.

In 1954, she married, in the Church of *San Luigi dei Francesi* in Rome, where the three paintings of *The Inspiration of Saint Matthew* of Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio are located, Noël Duval, who was then a member of the *École française de Rome*. In 1955, the

1. Cf. Chouraqui, 1998, pp. 290-297; Michel, 1950, pp. 36-44; Valensi, 2016, pp. 107-108; Winock, 2004, pp. 67-81.

2. On 7th June 1948, riots against Jews broke out in Oujda and in the neighbouring village of Djerada. There were at least forty-two dead and twenty wounded, Jews and Muslims, within a time frame of thirty-six hours, as well as significant material damage. Cf. Kenbib, 2016, pp. 172-176.

3. Cf. Tantillo, 2021.

4. Cf. Sartre, 2003.

young couple left for Tunisia: Yvette as an aggregation scholarship holder; Noël firstly as a curator at the Bardo museum. Later he became an assistant at the Institute of Advanced Studies of Tunis (*Institut des Hautes Études de Tunis*) due to the changes that marked the *Service des Antiquités et des Beaux-Arts de la Régence de Tunis* following the beginning of the independence process of Tunisia⁵. In 1956, after being accepted for the aggregation of history and geography, she started to teach at the *Lycée français* of Carthage. In the fall of 1957, the young couple returned to Paris, as Noël was appointed to the position of assistant lecturer in the ancient history section of the Sorbonne University⁶. For personal reasons, Yvette Duval had to withdraw from her university career for five years, and she returned in 1962 when she was appointed assistant to Roger Rémondon at the University of Lille. Two years later, Yvette Duval left this University to spend a few years at the University of Amiens, before becoming André Chastagnol's assistant at the University of Nanterre.

In 1965, Yvette Duval submitted a PhD thesis project on the martyrological inscriptions of North Africa under the supervision of Henri-Irénée Marrou. She had moved away from the universe of Greek civilisation of her Diploma of Higher Studies⁷, and then focused on Late-antique North African Christianity. Despite that, she did not abandon classical antiquity. Nevertheless, it must be said that this distancing from classical antiquity was not categorical.

In 1977, Yvette Duval successfully defended her PhD thesis (*Doctorat d'État*) at the University of the Sorbonne in front of a thesis jury made up of five university professors: André Mandouze, Paul-Albert Février, Jacques Fontaine, Hans-Georg Pflaum and Charles Pietri⁸. She began to publish papers around this subject in the mid-1960s. Her first academic papers were re-readings and commentaries of Late Antique North Africans Latin inscriptions. Through her collaborations with her husband Noël Duval and with her friend Paul-Albert Février, she had excellent photographs and unpublished documents⁹, as well as the possibility of publishing joint articles¹⁰.

In 1971, the French Anglicist Pierre Nordon, then responsible for creation of departments of humanities at the Paris-East Créteil University, asked her to participate in the launch of the History Department in this university, where she held first the post of Assistant professor then Professor of Ancient History. In this Parisian university, she contributed to the creation, first of all, of a multidisciplinary Research Center (*Des connaissances, des idées et du langage*) bringing together Historians, Sociologists and Linguists. Then she founded, with the French Medievalist Jean-Charles Picard, a research group focusing on Late Antiquity, the High Middle Ages and Early Christianity (*Groupe de recherches sur l'histoire du christianisme*

5. Cf. Gutron, 2010, pp. 87-88.

6. Baratte, Caillet and Metzger, 1995.

7. However, she continued to manifest an indirect interest in the history of Ancient Greece. This interest reflected in some of her book reviews and in her presence in some of Jean-Pierre Vernant' lectures at the *Collège de France*. See as an example Duval, 1966.

8. Cf. Descombes, 1977.

9. Duval, 2011, 13th April.

10. Duval, 1966; Duval, 1972; Duval and Février, 1969.

antique et haut-médiéval). This research group allowed her to return once again to issues dealt with in her PhD, such as the cult of martyrs and Christian funerary practices during the last centuries of Antiquity¹¹. Inspired by the pioneering work of French Modernist Historian Philippe Ariès¹², Yvette Duval used multidisciplinary approaches; in particular she used socio-anthropological approaches, which allowed her to draw attention to the profound changes that took place, between the age of Augustine of Hippo and that of Facundus of Hermione, in the attitudes of the North African Christians faced with the « hour of death ». After the publication of her thesis, she worked on Byzantine North Africa¹³, the North African Clerics, the geography of the North African Church and the privileged burials (known as *Ad sanctos*).

In 1988, Yvette Duval was chosen by her colleagues to present the annual conference of the *École française de Rome*. At the *Palazzo Farnese*, she explains that at the 4th century onward, the practice of burial close to the tomb of a martyr is well attested in the use and expansion of cemetery churches at the sites of martyrs' graves or shrines¹⁴.

In her book published a few months after this conference¹⁵, she notes that Augustine assimilated the practice of burial in a shrine to that of burial in or near an urban or cemetery church¹⁶. The faithful might have been placing great value on physical proximity to remains of the saint, thereby giving some indication that the Late Antique North African tradition of appealing to the martyrs for support in winning forgiveness for sins continued to guide the actions of the faithful¹⁷. She called back that Augustine's denial of efficacy of physical proximity shaped but did not deny that belief.

After this publication, which was well received by the scholarly community, Yvette Duval continued her reflections on the burials *ad sanctos* until 1996 date of her retirement. However, retirement did not mean for her the end of academic production. At the Institute of Augustinian Studies (*Institut d'Études Augustiniennes*), then directed by her friend Jean-Claude Fredouille, she found a warm welcome and a specialised library which enabled her to write many books and papers. At this institution, she will find her friend Simone Deléani

11. Duval and Picard, 1986.

12. Ariès, 1977.

13. Cf. Duval, 1970; Duval, 1971; Duval, 1980; Duval, 1983; Duval, 1991a.

14. Duval, 1991b.

15. Duval, 1988a.

16. This book begins with a scholarly study of the *De cura gerenda pro mortuis* of Augustin of Hippo written, on 420/421, in response to Bishop Paulinus of Nola, worried by the insistence of a mother asking for her son to be buried in close proximity to a saint burial (pp. 3-21; pp. 23-47). Yvette Duval proceeds after that to a material and typological study of the burial *ad sanctos*, taking into account the region, the fortune or the fame of the deceased (pp. 51-130). The third part of the book attempts to explain the meaning of this popular practice (pp. 131-201). The interest of this synthetic book lies in the paralleling of literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources.

17. Cf. Duval, 1988b.

with whom she planned a new edition of the correspondence of Cyprian of Carthage¹⁸. This last stage of Yvette Duval's life, which begins with her retirement, and which ends with her death in September 2006¹⁹, deserves to be qualified as the most productive part of her life. From that moment on, it was rather the institutional life of the North African Church of the Later Roman Empire that our historian will turn to. Her latest publications have made it possible to reveal a new scholarly identity: the specialist in patristic and Latin literary Sources.

A member of several juries for the defense of masters, theses and habilitation diplomas, Yvette Duval is a full member of several academic boards, including the Committee for Historic and Scientific Works (*Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques*)²⁰, the National Commission for the General Inventory of Monuments and Artistic Wealth of France (*Commission nationale de l'inventaire général des monuments et des richesses artistiques de la France*)²¹, the National Council of Universities (*Conseil national des universités*)²² and the National Commission charged with the responsibility of presenting a list of candidates for the position of director of the *École française de Rome*²³. She is also a corresponding member of the Society of Antiquaries of France (*Société nationale des antiquaires de France*)²⁴, founding member of the research group which specialises in the Christian Topography of Gaul (*Topographie chrétienne des cités de la Gaule*)²⁵, member of the Association of the Institute of Augustinian Studies (*L'Association IAE*) without forgetting her presidency of the French Society of Professors of Ancient History (*Société des Professeurs d'Histoire ancienne de l'Université*)²⁶. Through her work she acquired a very high international profile which enabled her to give a series of lectures in many American, British, Italian and Spanish universities.

The books and articles by Yvette Duval are, undoubtedly, very scholarly, and of a rich erudition, are also easily read. By using terms such as *dynamism* and *metamorphosis* to designate the specificity of the late-antique period in North Africa, Yvette Duval delib-

18. Deléani, 2007, p. 7 : « Yvette Duval ne verra pas l'ouvrage que je présente ici : elle a été emportée par une terrible maladie au moment où j'en écrivais les dernières pages. Il y a quelques années, sachant qu'elle connaissait fort bien l'histoire de l'Afrique du III^e siècle, je lui avais demandé si elle ne voulait pas préparer avec moi la traduction et le commentaire de la *Correspondance de saint Cyprien*. C'est ainsi qu'elle a publié, en 2005, également dans la collection des "Études augustiniennes" (Série "Antiquité" - 176), un livre sur *Les chrétiens d'Occident et leur évêque au III^e siècle. Je dois beaucoup à cet ouvrage savant, qui reprend de nombreux travaux antérieurs en une synthèse claire et neuve. J'y renvoie le lecteur à propos des évêchés dans les provinces africaines, du rôle de l'évêque, de son clergé et son peuple, ou encore des conciles et des instances ecclésiastiques* ».

19. Yvette Duval died on the 8th of September 2006, in the 12th arrondissement of Paris. Cf. Fredouille, 2007; Monfrin, 2006.

20. JORE, n°221, *Arrêté du 30 août 1991*, p. 12400; JORE, n°215, *Arrêté du 12 septembre 2000*, p. 14540.

21. JORE, n°10, *Arrêté du 3 janvier 1990*, p. 525.

22. Anonymus, 1988.

23. JORE, n°23, *Arrêté du 20 janvier 1992*, p. 1368.

24. Gaborit, 2009 [2007], p. 19.

25. Duval, Février, Guyon et al., 1986.

26. Yvette Duval's presidency of the SoPHAU lasted three years; from December 1983 to December 1986. Cf. Couvenhes and Schettino, 2017, p. 48.

erately places herself in a revisionist perspective of late antiquity, begun in France with Henri-Irénée Marrou who was among the first who wanted to break with the humanist vision that made this period a time of decadence and failure²⁷. That is why it seems to us that Yvette Duval belongs to this new historiographical current which proposes to restore the slow process which between the 4th and 8th centuries led to the transformation of the ancient world and the emergence of a proto-medieval civilisation on the basis of a permanent reinterpretation of the Roman and Post-Roman History. She emphasised, in her works, the revival of studies on Late Antiquity and recalls on several occasions that it is a dynamic period. She also expanded her studies beyond North Africa and looked at the entire *Pars Occidentalis* of the Late Antique' Roman World²⁸.

Very innovative in several aspects, Yvette Duval's historical approach is in line with the model proposed by the Belgian historian Henri Pirenne when he speaks about the end of the Ancient World following the Arab conquests of the 7th century²⁹. For her, the progressive movement of Arabisation and the Islamisation of North Africa created a deep cultural, religious and political gap between the Byzantine North Africa and the Early Islamic Ifriqiya. But contrary to what she thought, the territorial organisation of the Arab Ifriqiya of the 8th and 9th centuries was based on the existence of a few large cities of the Late Antique period which served as administrative and commercial centres for the surrounding countryside³⁰. Alongside this survival of the ancient urban fabric, the greater part of the North African populations were converted fairly rapidly to Islam. Though the North African episcopal hierarchy had disappeared, some Africans continued to confess Christianity; thus presenting themselves as the last heirs of the late antique North African civilisation. At the beginning of the 20th century, twelve funerary steles were discovered in En-Gila, a region situated fifteen kilometers south of Tripoli that has now been overcome by the desert. The funerary monuments, dating from 945 to 1003, were erected in remembrance of three who had died – Andreas, Petrus and Maria. One of the deceased was referred to as *judex*, which was probably an indication of his role as a leader in the Christian community in En-Gila in the second half of the 10th century. Other inscriptions included simple eulogies and prayers for the deceased. Furthermore, other inscriptions distinguished by a *barbaric* Latin, reveal a vague understanding of the Scriptures, which were probably cited from memory, as this is the case with *Ps* 31: 2, *Ezk* 37: 3-6 and *Lam* 1: 12. Three other epitaphs, also written in *poor* Latin, were discovered between 1928 and 1961 in Kairouan. These documents, dated 1007, 1019 and 1046, provide evidence for a Christian community with a leadership structure in North Africa's leading Islamic city, four centuries after the Arab conquest. Another inscription mentions Firmus who served as a *lactor*. The inscription from 1007 of the Dionysian era also mentions the date

27. See on this topic Blaudeau, 2021; Lepelley, 1999; Markus, 2009; Pietri, 2008; Vessey, 1998.

28. Cf. Duval, 1986; Duval, 1991c; Duval, 1993; Duval, 1997; Duval, 2002a.

29. Cf. Brown, 1974; Cameron, 2023, pp. 45-51; Pirenne, 1937.

30. Cf. Fenwick, 2020a; Fenwick, 2020b; Fenwick, Dufton et al. 2003; Mahjoubi, 1983; Mahjoubi, 1986; Milanese, 2003.

397 *anno infidelium*, which, of course, refers to the Muslim Year of the Hejira³¹. And likewise concerning the maintenance of the Latin language within the North African Christian community until the end of the 12th century³², there have also been some survivals of fluent Latin in the Maghreb. This is reflected in some of the North African toponyms, like the current locality of Fossato, in the Djebel Nefoussa, which keeps the memory of Fossatum situated in the military territory of the Roman limes; or the current toponym of K'frida which keeps the Latin roots of the old toponym of the *centenarium* of Aqua Frigida ; or even the toponym of Hergla which recalls, after a series of deformations, the toponym of Horrea Caelia.

However, she seems more involved in the terminological debate that animates the historians of her generation. She recalls on several occasions in her books and articles that the Lower Empire and Late Antiquity are two alternative definitions for the same historical period. She specifies that this synonymy implies an opposite judgement, negative in the first case and positive in the second case. From her point of view, this semantic evolution also makes it possible to go beyond the classic vision which goes back to Montesquieu who presents the 4th and 5th centuries as a period of endless crisis, opposite to an era vibrant with renewal³³.

Yvette Duval considered herself as the upholder of a relativist and optimistic conception of history and warned against the risk of the nationalist approach to Ancient History, which had become fashionable in the Maghreb countries since the 1960s³⁴. In many of her academic lectures, she recalled the dangers of nationalist anachronism. She also mentioned that the introduction of new concepts is not always accompanied by the renewal of historical thoughts which instead require a neutral approach.

Yvette Duval's books are partly revisionist, they were probably written in reaction to several preconceived ideas which made the last centuries of Antiquity the synonym of the Dark Ages. Edward Gibbon was partially responsible for this long-standing view, although he mainly saw in Christianity the true and degenerative force behind the Empire's demise. Du-

31. Cf. Dufourcq, 1979; Duval, 1991; Handley, 2004; Idris, 1954; Lewicki, 1976; Mahjoubi, 1964; Mahjoubi, 1966; Nsiri, 2020; Prevost, 2007; Seston, 1936; Talbi, 1990.

32. Cf. Lancel, 1981; Lewicki, 1953; Mahjoubi, 2007.

33. The fall of the Roman Empire was an important topic that preoccupied the philosophers of the *Aufklärung*. For them, nothing was more astonishing than the decadence of the Romans after their legendary greatness. This is why they wondered about the reasons for this decline. Indeed, Bossuet, a 17th century French preacher and writer, studied the fall of Rome in the third part of his *Discours sur l'Histoire universelle* published in 1681. On the other hand, Montesquieu addressed this theme in many of his writings, namely: *Esprit des lois*, *Dialogue de Sylla et d'Eucrate*, *Tibère et Louis XI* and *Considérations sur la grandeur des Romains et de leur décadence* published in 1734. In this book, Montesquieu emphasised the weight of customs and traditions, as well as their role in the functioning, then in the dysfunction of Roman institutions. Indeed, he explained the decadence of the Romans by the impossible existence of an eternal government. The 4th and 5th centuries were thus the centuries of the death of a political system and of a great universal empire. On this point, Montesquieu is very similar to Machiavelli, but he adds the idea that not only the change in ancient Roman virtues (essentially from the Republican era) that caused the end of the Roman Empire but also the change in his political philosophy (since Constantine) who accelerated this fall.

34. Cf. Lepelley, 2005; Lepelley, 2021; Mahjoubi, 1997; Mahjoubi, 2000; Mattingly, 1996; Thébert, 1978.

val's comprehensive reassessment of cultural and religious situation of Late Antique North Africa helped to overturn earlier pessimistic interpretation who considers this period as one of instability, religious violence and permanent revolution against Roman presence.



Photo 1: Yvette Duval with her husband Noël Duval in the Late 1950s.
Photo: Duval family Archives (with the permission of the Duval Family).

Enjoying the Saints in Late Antique North Africa: The Case of *Loca sanctorum Africae*

During the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, Late Antique archaeology in North Africa has progressed considerably thanks to the efforts of historians such as Noël Duval and

Paul-Albert Février³⁵. Archaeological excavations have multiplied in the centre of Tunisia (especially in the region of the High Steppes) and in Algeria³⁶, making it possible to better understand the origin of the cult of saints as well as the phases of Christianisation of North African cities between the 6th and 7th centuries³⁷. The epigraphic documentation sheds big light on this period of upheaval³⁸, and the contribution of more explicit data provided by the archaeological excavations is essential. In this perspective, the work of Yvette Duval, primarily her PhD thesis, constitutes a source of information of great wealth. As a result, there is no doubt that it encouraged and still encourages specialists to resume the interpretation of certain funerary monuments.

Yvette Duval understood well from the beginning of the 1960s that North Africa offers a privileged field of study. In her PhD thesis, she resumed the incomplete investigation of the historian Paul Monceaux³⁹. In terms of form, the first volume of the work is formed by the corpus of the martyrological inscriptions of the provinces of Africa (247 inscriptions)⁴⁰. The documentary analysis is detailed, it gives a large place to the study of the archaeological context, while underlining its limits, and thus provides archaeologists with a solid comparative basis⁴¹. It is also worth mentioning the descriptions of the monuments and the complete bibliography, all ordered according to a geographical classification. The second volume of the book outlines the history of the cult of the martyrs. This synthesis, which affects many other aspects than those strictly dependent on epigraphic sources, significantly enhance our understanding of the organisation of burials, liturgical arrangements related to the worship of relics or deposition ceremonies.

35. Cf. Baratte, 2019; Duval, 1992; Duval, 2004; Gran-Aymerich, 2001, pp. 261-263; Gutron, 2014; Inglebert, 2021.

36. For the archaeological situation in Algeria just after its Independence, see Bouchenaki, 2022.

37. The Byzantine government placed its stamp on the North African Church by extensive renovation and decoration of the existing building that fallen into disrepair under the Vandal use. It also undertook construction of new basilicas. The arrangement of space within the churches was modified to fit the Byzantine Eucharistic ritual: the altar was moved closer and sometimes connected directly to the apse in which the bishop and presbyters sat. Large and elaborate pilgrimage churches, such as that at Bir F'touha, were constructed. Unfortunately, the literary evidence for Christian practice is more limited than it had been in the early 5th century. Cf. Ben Abed-Ben Khader, Fixot, Bonifay and Roucole, 2004; Baratte, Béjaoui, Duval et al. 2015; Béjaoui, 2015; Duval, 1958; Duval, 1969; Duval, 1971; Duval, 1971-1973; Duval, 1997; Février, 1965; Février and Duval, 1991; Gui, Duval and Caillet, 1992; Ennabli, 1997; Miles and Greenslade, 2020.

38. Cf. Duval and Prévot, 1983; Ennabli, 1975; Ennabli, 1982; Ennabli, 1991.

39. Ennabli, 1990, pp. 42-43 : « *L'enquête d'Y. Duval sur les inscriptions martyrologiques a repris la numérotation continue adoptée par pp. Monceaux pour son enquête sur les inscriptions martyrologiques et fondée sur les provinces antiques, Carthage étant placée en tête du classement. Mais l'auteur avoue avoir hésité à prendre une autre méthode possible : celle qui aurait privilégiée le contenu des inscriptions* ».

40. Duval, 1982.

41. Béjaoui, 2006, p. 27 : « *Le culte des saints de l'Afrique chrétienne est un thème qui a été au cœur des principaux travaux de Mme Yvette Duval et auquel elle a consacré un ouvrage majeur, le fameux *Loca sanctorum*, devenu depuis sa publication en 1982 un livre de référence pour les spécialistes de la période* ».

Yvette Duval notes in her book, following the publications of Peter Brown⁴², that the cult of relics presents in Late Antique North Africa the same forms as in the other Latin provinces of the Late Antique Mediterranean world. With rare exceptions, the relics that circulated widely and in large numbers from the beginning of the 4th century are all representative: earth, fabrics, liquids sanctified by contact with holy remains in tombs or relics⁴³.

At the beginning of the fourth century, the veneration of a martyr is indicated in some texts by the practice of carrying pieces of the body, usually bone, presumably in small caskets. In a conflict dated before the outbreak of the Diocletian persecution, the matron (*clarissima femina*) Lucilla was rebuked by Caecilianus, still a deacon, for kissing (*libare*) the bone of a reputed martyr before taking the Eucharist. She was apparently carrying this relic with her during the Eucharistic service. Caecilianus objected, Optatus of Milevis explained (I, 16), not to the veneration itself but to her preference of the relic over the Eucharistic food. This may give a general idea about the mental and social atmosphere which surrounded the worship of the Saints' relics in the Late Roman North Africa.

In the early fifth century, the martyrs continued to be regarded as privileged dead, enjoying a status higher than that of the others but still incomplete as they waited for Resurrection⁴⁴. Augustine's sermons on the feasts of martyrs and his reports of the miracles associated with the relics of Saint Stephen give ample evidence that the faithful regarded the martyrs as intercessors who could either perform extraordinary deeds or win them as favours from God. Yvette Duval recalls that Augustine did not challenge the practice of asking favours from martyrs⁴⁵, even though the miracles attributed to the martyrs complicated the question of their relationship to the congregation. Some scholars have noticed a development in Augustine's acceptance of the miraculous. Many historians note his lukewarm reception of miracles early in his career and his emphatic publishing of them later⁴⁶. Though his enthusiasm for the miraculous seems to have increased after the establishment of the cult of Stephen in North Africa, Augustine never denied the possibility of miracles performed at the martyrs' shrines⁴⁷.

After her quick reminder of the reality of the cult of martyrs in North Africa in the time of Augustine, Yvette Duval notes that the practice of honouring the martyrs and relying on their continuing good will toward the continuity of the living is well attested in the mosaic covers tombs. The so-called martyrs' chapel at Thabraca had several examples of individuals who may have been honoured as martyrs, or at least particularly revered among the dead⁴⁸. She also points that the faithful demonstrates their personal fervour or their gratitude to saints by proclaiming their name and thus perpetuating their memory. The specificity of the martyr cult lies precisely in this remembrance. Hence the omnipresence of the word *memoria*

42. Brown, 1971; Brown, 1981.

43. Duval, 1982, pp. 455-458.

44. Duval, 1982, pp. 543-545; Duval, 2004.

45. Duval, 1982, pp. 545-550; pp. 624-632.

46. Cf. Fraïsse, 2003; Lancel, 2006; Lepelley, 2009.

47. Cf. Duval, 2006a.

48. Duval, 1982, pp. 91-93.

marturum serves to designate all the forms of memory around which the cult of the martyrs crystallises, i.e. all the places, all the objects, all the forms of this cult⁴⁹.

Yvette Duval draws attention to the fact that from the beginning of the 5th century, the practice was established of consecrating the altars by depositing relics. This practice later became widespread in buildings that do not have holy tombs. However, the ceremony of the deposition of the relics, and therefore of the consecration of the altar, is known to us by a series of *procès-verbaux*, unique documents in the West: North Africa is the only region of the *Pars Occidentalis* where the churches have preserved intact the traces of these first consecrations, which elsewhere have disappeared during a continuous occupation and successive repairs. These inscriptions briefly but completely evoke the ceremony, the choice of dates, the origin of these, the actors of the ceremony (one or many bishops). The day of the deposition of the relics becomes one of the feasts of the local church whose anniversary is celebrated, like the *natalis* of the martyrs⁵⁰.

These centres developed around the martyr tomb are characterised by the reliquary under the altar⁵¹, or simply by a cenotaph marking a place consecrated by their life or their *passio*, rise from the 4th century religious buildings. The basilicas *ad corpus* are dedicated to the martyrs whose tomb shelters. Progressively during the 5th century, the other churches took on the name of one of the most prestigious saints, whose relics consecrated the altar⁵². The ceremonies in honour of the martyrs are celebrated there, in particular, during the anniversaries of the *passio* or the deposition of the relics. Parallel to these official celebrations by the clergy, there developed more spontaneous manifestations of cult towards the martyrs which illustrated the personal links of the North Africans with their patron saints⁵³.

Yvette Duval also mentions that the ties of the Christians with the patron saints also materialise through the offerings to the martyrs, often after a vow. Whereas after the 4th century, only buildings donated by clerics were mentioned in honorary inscriptions – as in the case of the chapel built by Bishop Alexander of Tipasa⁵⁴ –, North African Christian epigraphy continues to provide us with information about the generosity of the simple faithful who consecrated parts of religious buildings or elements of liturgical furniture to their saints⁵⁵.

Yvette Duval noted in her work that from the beginning of the 4th century, the tombs of the martyrs became the centre of religious buildings: In Carthage and elsewhere in Africa, archaeologists have identified basilicas outside the urban areas that seem to have been built in the 4th and following centuries to serve as shrines for the veneration of martyrs⁵⁶. Unlike

49. Duval, 1982, pp. 595-606.

50. Duval, 1982, pp. 550-580.

51. Cf. Duval, 1962-1965.

52. Duval, 1982, pp. 455-474.

53. Duval, 1982, pp. 582-585; Duval, 2006b.

54. See Lepelley, 1998.

55. Duval, 1982, pp. 587-594.

56. Cf. Ennabli, 2000.

the buildings used for regular congregational worship, these were designed to facilitate the circulation of large numbers of people.

Yvette Duval's thesis reminds us that, in North African Late Antique context, the term *memoria sancti* designates no longer a small memorial monument, but a building for religious use⁵⁷. These religious buildings remain closely linked to the tombs they shelter, linked to the earthly death of martyrs⁵⁸.

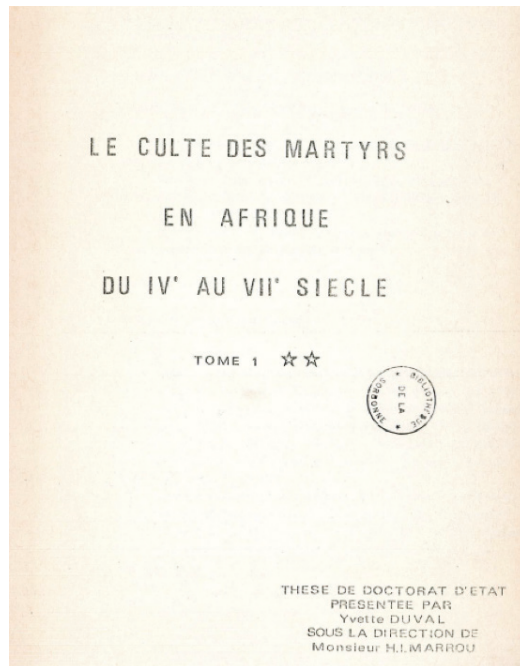


Photo 2: The Front Page of Yvette Duval's PhD. Photo: Mohamed-Arbi Nsiri (with the permission of Paris-Sorbonne University).

During the proto-Byzantine period (6th - 7th century), the great distribution of the relics of saints and apostles perhaps reflects a deliberate policy of Rome towards the Church in Africa; and especially the sending of many Roman relics after the Justinian's conquest undoubtedly attests to the concern of the papacy to help the African community to restore its prestige and its heritage after the Vandal century⁵⁹. Eastern relics also appear around this period: with the Byzantine military advancement and the intensification of direct relations between Africa and Constantinople, these relics become much more frequent in the deposits, where they stand alongside the modest relics of local martyrs. The Eastern saints thus tend to partly replace the Italian saints for the consecrations of the altars. But above all, they present,

57. Duval, 1982, pp. 601-603.

58. Cf. Duval, 2006c.

59. Duval, 1982, pp. 633-657.

compared to the late Roman period (4th - 5th century), new characteristics: alongside the most illustrious saints others of lesser renown ones are now represented in North Africa by relics, such as the Egyptian couple Victor and Corona.

The presence of the biblical saints, already remarkable from the 4th century, accelerated during the Byzantine period. Yet the biblical saints and especially the Virgin, did not remain confined to Africa in the field of iconography⁶⁰; they were the object of a cult very early on but, it seems, supported more by the hierarchy than by popular fervour⁶¹. We know well from the texts the official establishment of the Marian cult, probably from the Late Roman period, and its slow diffusion in North African cults.

Yvette Duval thesis highlights that the early cult of the martyrs in Late Antique North Africa was characterised by a reliance on their intercessory influence to win favours from God. This work is an example of a larger body of scholarship utilising the evidence of material remains to better understand the popular religious practices of African Christians of the last centuries of the Antiquity.

Religion and Identity in Late Roman North Africa: About Yvette Duval's Approaches

In her research devoted to Christianity of the Later Roman Empire, Yvette Duval's work focused on a series of comprehensive studies in which she defined the North Africans Christian communities during the Pre-Constantinian Era. The results of her surveys marked a real methodological turning point especially with regards to the Latin toponymy of the North African bishoprics and the treatment of the episcopal correspondences, especially that of Cyprian of Carthage. Already, the first part of the work entitled *Les chrétientés d'Occident et leurs évêques au III^e siècle* essentially consists of a series of prosopographical and toponymic clarifications which allowed the historians to critically reconsider several African bishoprics and the North African synods of the 3rd century⁶². Many of these clarifications are useful of great service to historians working on Roman North Africa. Moreover, the map included in this volume, a map of the bishoprics of the third century identified in Africa Proconsularis and in Numidia, is recommended for its clarity and convenience: the list of bishoprics, with their Latin names and modern equivalences, is very useful. The geographical context of the North African bishoprics of the 3rd century was already the subject of two papers published in the 1980s⁶³. In her article published in 1984, Yvette Duval, and through a critical reading of the list of signatories of the *Sententiae episcoporum numero LXXXVII de haereticis baptizandis* and the Letters of Cyprian of Carthage, was able to list more than 125 bishoprics in

60. See Béjaoui, 1997.

61. Duval, 1982, pp. 615-624.

62. Duval, 2005, pp. 15-98.

63. Duval, 1984; Duval, 1987.

Africa in the middle of the 3rd century; including 87 bishoprics identified at the Council of Carthage of September 256. For the period between the death of Cyprian of Carthage and the very beginning of the 4th century, the sources mentioned only a few names of bishops and clerics⁶⁴. However, it is evident that the number of episcopal sees must not have diminished during the relative peace which followed the persecution of Emperor Valentinian.

Yvette Duval subsequently notes that in the forty years that followed the Decian persecution, the North African Church grew and developed considerably. This development was particularly evident through the North African Church councils which increased in frequency especially during Cyprian of Carthage episcopate⁶⁵. Synods and councils became a part of African Church's tradition. From 251 to 254, four councils took in Carthage to address the problem of *Lapsi* – those who denied their faith during the persecution of 249/250⁶⁶, yet desired re-entry into the church. Three other councils met, between spring 255 and September 256, to decide the fate of those who had been baptised in schismatic or heretical church, yet also desired communion with the Catholic Church⁶⁷.

Yvette Duval was able to demonstrate that the 3rd century marked a historical turning point since it announced the beginning of the institutionalization of the North African Church, despite the situation of instability due to the persecutions. She is also interested in the North African Christians and their many identities in the Late Roman Period with a particular focus on the different terms used for the self-identification⁶⁸.

Still concerning the 3rd century, Yvette Duval showed that the establishment of a new bishop required the collaboration of the bishops of other church communities. Each local church had a single bishop whose office was symbolised by the commissioning of Peter as the foundation of the church. A bishop was elected only upon the death or deposition of his predecessor; thus, individual bishops were not responsible for the selection and installation of their own successors. The candidate was chosen through the collaboration of the people and clergy of the church in question (*electio a clero et populo*) and the bishops of the neighbouring churches⁶⁹. For example, Cyprian never reported the procedure of his own ordination but did provide information on others⁷⁰.

Based on *Epistularium Cypriani*, Yvette Duval noted that Cyprian's writings - especially his extensive extant correspondence - bear witness to a much wider range of clerical

64. Duval, 2001a.

65. Yvette Duval notes that the first known North African council was convened in Carthage in 220 under the leadership of Agrippinus. There a great number of Bishops from Proconsularis and Numidia gathered to learn about Bishop Calixtus of Rome's penitential legislation for adulterers. She further mentions the existence of other North African synods which took place between 236 and 240 under the presidency of Donatus of Carthage, Cyprian's immediate predecessor. Cf. Duval, 2003.

66. Duval, 1995a; Duval, 2000a; Duval, 2001b.

67. Duval, 2005, pp. 99-135.

68. Duval, 2005, pp. 141-166.

69. Duval, Pietri and Pietri, 1992; Duval, 2001c; Duval, 2002b.

70. Duval, 2005, pp. 251-282.

offices than do those of Tertullian⁷¹. At the same time, they show relatively little concern for non-clerical roles within the Christian community. Unlike Tertullian, Cyprian bears witness to a series of minor clerical offices that include subdeacons, acolytes, readers, and exorcists⁷². The office of the exorcist is the least well attested and there is no clear description of what it entailed. Both acolytes and subdeacons appear in the letters of Cyprian as messengers who were tasked with delivering episcopal correspondence and, in the case of acolytes, material assistance. Both seem to have received monthly stipends from the community. The readers, or *lectores*, are the only of these minor offices for which we have clear sense of their liturgical function. In addition to carrying correspondence, they read the texts of scripture in the assembly and assisted the presbyters in instructing catechumens.

Cyprian included the deacons as among those responsible for governing the Christian community. Though the deacons were not the regular ministers of rituals, Cyprian granted them the authority to baptise and to reconcile penitent sinners in cases of emergency. They served the cup at the Eucharistic celebration, and a deacon accompanied a presbyter for the purpose of celebrating the Eucharist with the confessors in prison. Deacons served as the bearers of important episcopal correspondence and may have had responsibility for the church's material resources.

The presbyters ranked beneath only the bishop in terms of prominence and range of responsibilities. They were seated alongside the bishop in a place of honour in the assembly, and in the absence of a bishop presbyters took full charge of the churches in both Rome and Carthage. In this situation, Cyprian dealt with the presbyters in Rome as equals. Though presbyters do not seem to have offered the Eucharist when the bishop was present, they were nevertheless regularly authorised to do so otherwise, both for the confessors in prison and when the bishop was not present in the assembly. Importantly, Cyprian described this as a right that he had the authority to rescind. Presbyters were entrusted with baptising catechumens and reconciling penitents in cases of emergency, and some were also responsible for instructing catechumens in preparation for baptism. The Carthaginian presbyters may also have been responsible for communities in different regions of the city. They were also employed as bearers of particularly important episcopal letters and were entrusted with expanding on such letters verbally. Alongside these more expansive responsibilities, presbyters also seem to have received a higher stipend and to have been subject to a minimum age requirement⁷³.

At the beginning of the 4th century, a series of judicial procedures associated with the Diocletianic Persecution and the consequence of episcopal failure during this period provide clear indicators of functioning of the *Seniores*, within the Christian congregations in Late Roman North Africa⁷⁴.

71. Duval, 2005, pp. 236-249.

72. See for this topic Baslez, 2016, pp. 146-150.

73. Duval, 2005, pp. 261-318.

74. Duval, 2000b, pp. 5-11.

Yvette Duval was also interested in the 4th century North African church. The *Gesta apud Zenophilum* – which are the records of a hearing held in 320, during which the report of an imperial visitation at the church of Cirta in 303 was read⁷⁵ – caught her eyes.

To begin her analysis, Yvette Duval recalled the historical context of the document: the bishop at the time, Paulus, may have been executed for his refusal to cooperate. One of his subdeacons, Silvanus, was recorded as turning over a sacred vessel to the Roman authorities. This same Silvanus subsequently was a candidate bishop for the church in conflicted election. The *Seniores* and the local people strongly objected to Silvanus because he was generally known to have committed apostasy⁷⁶. They were, however, overcome by pressure from his supporters, including prostitutes and a gladiator named Mutus⁷⁷.

Yvette Duval recalls that dozen years later, Silvanus got into a violent conflict with one of his deacons, Nundinarius. This deacon sought the assistance of neighbouring bishops to resolve the dispute. Purpurius of Limita, a long-time associate to Silvanus, advised him to employ the clergy and *Seniores* to resolve the conflict. Purpurius himself then wrote directly to them: the language of his letter clearly indicates that he expected the *Seniores* to exercise a judicial role. A second bishop, contacted by Nundinarius, also wrote to the clergy and the *Seniores*, urging on them the responsibility for resolving disputes without recourse to secular courts⁷⁸.

As these events were transpiring in Numidia, a division was developing within the church in Carthage, to which its *Seniores* contributed. Bishop Mensurius was arrested and sent to Rome for trial. Before leaving, he committed the treasure of the church to the *Seniores* for safekeeping. He took the precaution of entrusting an inventory to an old woman in the congregation, who was to deliver it to his successor in case he did not survive. Once Caecilianus was elected bishop of Carthage and received the inventory, he found that the *Seniores* were unable to account for the treasure⁷⁹.

In the investigation of the charge of apostasy against Felix of Abthugnos⁸⁰, the Donatist *Seniores*, rather than the clergy of the church, were the actors in the imperial judicial procedure⁸¹. Here, Yvette Duval focuses on the *Acta purgationis Felicis* which exonerated Felix of Abthugnos of collaboration. Her results provide a better understanding of relationships between civil and ecclesiastical authorities as well as between the church in Carthage and the rest of Africa.

At Abthugnos as at Cirta, we see - through Yvette Duval's analyses - that the distinctly benevolent neutrality of a former *duumvir* led to the decision of the proconsul against the

75. Duval, 1995b; Duval, 2000b, pp. 21-63.

76. Duval, 2000b, pp. 65-99.

77. Duval, 2000b, pp. 141-144.

78. Duval, 2000b, pp. 168-203.

79. Duval, 2000b, pp. 213-244.

80. According to a Latine inscription discovered by Naidé Ferchiou the toponym would be Abthugnos and not Abthugni as noted by Yvette Duval. Cf. Ferchiou, 1989; Ferchiou, 1997 [1993-1995]; Lepelley, 2020, p. 253, n° 34.

81. Duval, 2000b, pp. 247-286.

Donatists, which, for a time at least, allowed the emperor to finish by deciding in favour of Caecilianus of Carthage, and therefore against Donatus. But the situation at Cirta in 320 was more complex, and undoubtedly more difficult for the imperial power to dominate, since the trial is of a criminal nature, it only targets one man; and therefore, the condemnation of the Donatist bishop did not put an end to the schism in the Cirtean Church. However, we see that the accusations fabricated by the Donatists to have the Catholics – defined by their opponents as *traditores* – condemned are brandished here against Silvanus by one of his clerics, who is a member like him of the Donatist Church of the city⁸². Yvette Duval argues that apart from that, the situation created at the trial of 320 appears paradoxical: the governor of the province is called upon to judge to condemn an accused of having, in fact, obeyed in 303 the orders of the imperial power. Indeed, among the crimes of Silvanus, only the thefts and embezzlement were liable to a criminal trial which should also have condemned his accomplices⁸³.

Beyond a great mastery of epigraphic sources, Yvette Duval demonstrated great knowledge when dealing with literary, patristic and legal sources from the 4th and 5th centuries. The treaties of North African Christian authors of this period appeared to her both as texts of faith, and therefore testimonies of the history of Christianity, but also as historical documents. This critical reading of the sources enabled her to construct a clear vision of the relation between religion and identity for the first Christian communities of late Roman North Africa.

A Monographic Study: Lambaesis and the Problem of the Urban Slowdown in the Late Antique Numidia

Yvette Duval's monograph on Lambaesis is part of a series of works devoted to the Church of Late Antique North Africa. As she says in her introduction, she proposes to study all the sources that have a direct or indirect relations with the history of this Numidian city⁸⁴. The first part of her work is thus devoted to examining the mentions of Christians in the sources of the early Roman Empire. This re-reading of literary and patristic sources allows her to

82. Cf. Lepelley, 1981, pp. 391-395.

83. Cf. Duval, 1998.

84. Duval, 1995c, pp. 16-17: *«Je me propose d'examiner dans la présente étude le dit et le silence des sources sur Lambèse chrétienne jusqu'à l'invasion arabe : il va de soi que je n'entreprends pas une histoire générale de la ville pendant ces quelques cinq siècles, laquelle ne pourrait d'ailleurs se fonder que sur une reprise des fouilles dans l'ensemble du site. Je m'en tiendrai, dans une première partie, à faire le point – à la lumière des travaux récents, mais aussi par une relecture minutieuse des sources textuelles – sur ce que l'on peut savoir de l'Église lambésitaine et son clergé, et de la place réelle tenue par sa communauté de fidèles dans la chrétienté africaine, depuis l'époque glorieuse où la ville est auréolée du prestige de la Troisième Légion et de son rang de capitale, jusqu'à la fin de la Numidie romaine. J'envisagerai dans la seconde partie ce qu'on pourrait appeler la survie de Lambèse dans le mythe, d'abord en étudiant l'usage fait par certains historiens byzantins sur l'Afrique, usage qui souvent dépasse leur contenu réel, ensuite en examinant les diverses localisations attestées par les textes de la bataille livrée par 'Uqba en 683, et en confrontant essentiellement avec les données archéologiques».*

highlight two observations: first of all, most sources testify to the presence of several Christians in the army, but this does not concern the *Legio III Augusta*⁸⁵. The second sighting was about the dynamism of the Christian community of this city. It is evident that sources of this period, according to Yvette Duval, do not allow us to glimpse many Christians linked to the city of Lambaesis. However, there is still a Christian community in this city since it has a bishop who plays a decisive role in the Church of Numidia in the middle of the 3rd century, as Cyprian of Carthage himself attests⁸⁶.

Lambaesis, which housed the headquarters of the *Legio III Augusta* despite a brief break between 238 and 253⁸⁷, remains during the Tetrarchy an important administrative and strategic centre⁸⁸. However, this administrative and military capital also played a central role in the Church of the province of Numidia from the 3rd century. It has had a bishop since the 240s, which would attest to the existence of a small community of believers in the city and its surroundings, although the sources are rare. The bishop of the city acts as the head of the Numidian Church. Already the arrogance of Privatus, who, condemned by an African council, appealed to Rome – and the success of his intrigues in 252 against the recently elected Cyprian of Carthage prove his prestige and his local power⁸⁹. Januarius, who succeeded him on the episcopal throne of the city, although subject to Cyprian, appeared on his side clearly as the spokesperson, with the primate of Africa, of his Numidian colleagues who referred to him for their various problems⁹⁰. But of this privileged position of the bishop of the city, as it appears from the correspondence of Cyprian, we know nothing more during the period named by scholars *Little Peace of the Church*, in other words, the period following the persecution of Valerian. Yet after that there is silence. Lambaesis is not mentioned in connection with any of the fourth century African councils, nor the Conference at Carthage in 411 between the Donatists and Catholics. Material evidence for Christianity in and around the city in the form of buildings and inscriptions is minimal. In contrast, the rest of central and southern Numidia has produced an unparalleled accumulation of early Christian remains of every sort.

The second part of her monograph continues the investigation for the Vandal then Byzantine periods until the Muslim expansion⁹¹. This period is also seeming to be marked by a virtual absence of the city from the sources of the 5th and 6th centuries. This means that the eloquent pages written by Charles Diehl about the flourishing cities of the Aurès Mountains can therefore no longer be retained⁹².

85. See Hilali, 2016.

86. Cf. Hilali, 2016, pp. 77-104.

87. Much of the following discussion was covered more deeply in Le Bohec, 1989, pp. 456-461.

88. See Benseddik, 2013; Lepelley, 1981, pp. 416-425.

89. Duval, 1995c, pp. 78-80.

90. Duval, 1995c, pp. 82-86.

91. Duval, 1995c, pp. 111-150.

92. Diehl, 1896, p. 43: « *Après avoir, vers la fin du V^e siècle, secoué l'autorité des successeurs de Genséric, les montagnards de l'Aurès n'avaient pas tardé à descendre dans les plaines fertiles qui bordent le massif à l'est et à l'ouest, et chassant devant eux les colons romains épouvantés par les razzias incessantes, ils avaient pillé*

Subsequently, several pages are devoted to the battle of Lambaesis in 683, which is an important episode in the conquest of the Maghreb by the Arab General ‘Uqba ibn Nāfi’ al-Fihri⁹³. After having shown that the toponym of Lambaesis does not appear in the Late Antique North African sources⁹⁴, but that it is a restitution of the translators, Yvette Duval rejects the other localisation proposed to consider in the last chapter a new hypothesis⁹⁵. This is to situate the battle on the site of the fortress of Belezma⁹⁶, next to the town of Lamasba⁹⁷. Belezma-Lamasba offers good elements for the identification: the city is of primary importance according to Arab sources, the fort, of which Noël Duval gives a description in an additional note, is likely to have stopped the progress of General ‘Uqba⁹⁸. The results of this research by Yvette Duval confirm the existence of an urban slowdown and an economic crisis in some areas of Late Antique Numidia.

Looking at the way research has evolved since the publication of Yvette Duval’s book, we observe that it has gone through a series of important stages. The first was marked by the *revisionism* of Claude Lepelley, who recognised, following the discovery of the new letters and sermons of Augustine of Hippo⁹⁹, that the end of the Roman presence in North Africa was also marked by the harshness of the condition of the most modest people, especially in

et détruit toutes ces villes florissantes, Lambèse, Diana Veteranorum, Thamugadi, Bagai, qui avaient porté la civilisation sur les hauts plateaux de Numidie ».

93. On this topic refer to the works of Kaegi, 2010, pp. 229-237.

94. Denys Pringle is cautious as to the existence of an enclosure or a garrison in the city for the Byzantine period because, he underlines, the only attestations of these forces in Lambaesis in the 7th century are in the Arabic sources of the 14th century. The author judges them too late for them to be able to establish facts six and a half centuries earlier. Cf. Pringle, 1981, p. 282.

95. Duval, 1995c, pp. 131-150.

96. About this site, see Duval and Pietri, 1975.

97. Duval, 1995c, pp. 151-163.

98. Duval, 1995c, pp. 165-168.

99. In 1969 the Austrian Academy of Sciences began to catalogue the Augustine manuscripts in the libraries of Europe (some fifteen thousand volumes in all). In 1969 Johannes Divjak, an Austrian scholar, came to Marseille to work on the project. To the delight of Augustine’s scholars, Divjak discovered at the *Bibliothèque municipale de Marseille* a manuscript of letters that included twenty-nine letters of Augustine that were totally unknown. The manuscript in question had been produced about the year 1440 for the Duke René of Anjou. This manuscript was known, but it had never been closely examined. It was assumed that an elegant late medieval manuscript could hardly contain any new work of an author as ancient and as frequently copied as was Augustine of Hippo. Hence the surprise of Johannes Divjak when he found that in a standard collection of Augustine’s letters there were twenty-nine other letters, of which twenty-seven (many of them very long) were utterly unknown. Scholars of Augustine were satisfied that they are genuine. Few years later, in a similar way, the French scholar Francois Dolbeau discovered, in 1990, that a manuscript in the *Wissenschaftliche Stadtbibliothek Mainz* contained a group of twenty-six of the sermons of Augustine whose continued existence had been unknown. Taken together, these newly discovered documents have introduced several uncertainties and they caused scholars to revise some conclusions regarding Late Roman North Africa. Cf. Chadwick, 1983; Dolbeau, 1993; Ebbeler, 2017.

the countryside¹⁰⁰, facts that today appear characteristic of late Roman society but that traditional sources only rarely mention¹⁰¹. Fully aware of the role played by the Church in the development, Yvette Duval also largely contributed to showing that this impoverishment of the North African cities of Late Roman period did not lead to the obliteration of municipal authorities, but to the beginning of a change which would be increasingly visible from the Justinian's era. The idea of the decline of urban life, which remained a lively subject of discussion among scholars, then consequently shifted to another barrier, both chronological and psychological: the Vandal conquest. The unfortunate reputation that accompanied the Vandals, in France particularly since the end of the 18th century¹⁰², obviously weighed heavily on the establishment among researchers and favoured the view that their invasion of North Africa was one of the major causes of the decline and ruin of cities.

The second stage is marked by the idea of progress in rupture¹⁰³. This idea is based on the observation of the field and epigraphic analyses relating to the persistence in particular of municipal structures and groups of notables in certain cities¹⁰⁴. On the other hand, we should not lose sight of the fact that these documents, however important they may be, remain occasional and do not necessarily predict the real situation of African cities at the end of Antiquity. Therefore, if the stages that lead from the Roman city to the proto-medieval period have become clearer, there are still gray areas that weigh on the conclusions that we draw on this process: too many cities still did not precisely reveal their face during the last part of Antiquity. The case of Lambaesis studied by Yvette Duval is one of those *mysterious* cases still to be studied more closely.

At the end of her book, Yvette Duval points out the trend recorded in Lambaesis of major abandonment and progressive decay, which could be extended to many Numidian sites. This transformation should maybe be seen in connection with the situation of insecurity and the weakness of the central power in this region. Lands were progressively abandoned and the productive centres in the Numidian cities were reduced in size and subdivided into small units¹⁰⁵. In this complex situation arrived the Arabs, although it seems from the description of the Medieval Arabic sources that they found a still rich country, with many olive groves¹⁰⁶. The data collected lack the chronological precision to determine whether these sites were inhabited continuously from the Byzantine to the Arab period, or whether they were abandoned and then reoccupied. Continuity of use of the same types of olive presses for instance indicates some continuity in economic activity.

100. On this see Lepelley, 2003; Lepelley, 2006a.

101. Cf. Brown, 2002; Caner, 2021; Dossey, 2010.

102. Cf. Bourgeois, 1980; Merrills, 2009; Roberto, 2020, pp. 255-267; Wolff, 2017.

103. On the rise and fall of the cities of Roman North Africa, the following studies have proven useful : Baratte, 2018; Caillet, 2021; Leone, 2007, pp. 232-279; Lepelley, 1992; Mahjoubi, 1978, pp. 137-429; Mahjoubi, 1982; Nsiri, 2018.

104. Cf. Lepelley, 2006b; Modéran, 1996.

105. Cf. Leone, 2003.

106. For a fuller discussion of this contextual issue, see Moukraenta Abed, 2014.



Photo 3: Yvette Duval in the early 1980s. Photo: Duval family Archives (with the permission of the Duval Family).

Yvette Duval seems well aware of the complexity of the new methodological approaches necessary to better understand the complex period of Late Antiquity. Her resistance to address new types of sources can be justified by her classical training. Without stating it categorically, she thinks that the Medieval Arabic sources completely neglected urban life in Late Antique and Early Islamic North Africa¹⁰⁷. Nevertheless, several historians of her generation tried to acquire and read these sources to identify ancient sites of North Africa. These remarks take nothing away from the importance of her book on Lambaesis which remains a book, patiently compiled, and characterised by an in-depth analysis. Nothing is left to the hazard of imprecision and everything is based on ancient literary sources re-examined with insatiable curiosity, in the light of new philological bases, renewed cartography and, as far as possible, advances recorded by the archaeology and epigraphic data.

107. Since the 1970s, several studies have highlighted the contribution of Medieval Arabic Sources to a better knowledge of Late Antique North Africa. Cf. Benabbès, 2015; Benabbès and Mkacher, 2021; Beschouch, 1986; Mansouri, 2006; M'Charek, 2018; Mkacher, 2017; Mkacher, 2020; Mkacher, 2022; M'rabet, 1995; Modéran, 2001; Modéran, 2003, pp. 685-810; Modéran, 2010; Moukraenta Abed, 2015; Siraj, 1995; Siraj, 2001; Talbi, 1971.

Conclusion

Yvette Duval is one of the most original and important Africanists of our time. If, especially since the 1970s, many historians have tried to lower or destroy the barriers between Roman Africa and late-antique North Africa, very few have had the courage – the very audacity – to study the two periods at the same time. Yvette Duval is one of them, in the front row. The most fundamental aspect of her interests and research concerns the religiosity and mentality of North Africans during Late Antiquity. The culmination of her reflection is presented in books published mainly after her retirement. Her historical approach also led her to take an interest in North African society, the administrative organisation of the Roman provinces of Africa and the religious conflicts of this period.

Yvette Duval has exploited – and often revealed – the documentary value of texts and objects hitherto more or less neglected by historians. She was able to manage and interpret literary texts, epigraphic and archaeological documents. Her research on the cult of saints in late-antique North Africa is both fascinating and disconcerting: fascinating by the new perspectives it brings to the functioning of the cult of the saints, disconcerting by the contradictions of its own thought. Indeed, she sought to know how the cult of the saints is a novelty that breaks the pagan borders between Heaven and Earth, between the City and the cemetery, between the altar and the tomb. To achieve this, she repudiates in her PhD thesis an explanatory model on two levels, popular religion opposed to that of the elites. For her, the new phenomenon is characteristic of a social reality, led by the bishops, true impresarios, who orchestrate the worship of the saints and make the tombs of the martyrs a public place.

Yvette Duval was also encyclopedic in her learning, and extremely rigorous and exacting in her scholarship. At the same time, she was a generous historian, and socially outgoing colleague to her s friends and graduate students, and a respected teacher. She taught large lecture courses on Roman history, filling lecture halls with students on subject matters not guaranteed to draw crowds.

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