**DE GLORIA ALCIBIADIS. ALCIBIADES’ MILITARY VALUE AND ITS RELATION TO HIS DOXA IN PLUTARCH’S ALCIBIADES**

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In the treatise commonly called “De gloria Atheniensium”, Plutarch argues that the Athenians should be held more in repute for their successes in war than for their contributions to the fine arts. However, the famous generals whose achievements are lauded were not only active on the battlefield but were also politically engaged within the city.¹ In the *Comparationes* that follow most pairs of *Vitae Parallelae*, Plutarch himself often draws a distinction “between military achievements and qualities on the one side and political deeds, virtues and vices on the other.”² So the following question presents itself: how did the Chaeronean conceive the relation between the military skills of his heroes and their own fame? The present paper will focus on the *Alcibiades*. We will examine whether Alcibiades is presented as a man of great military value, and, if so, to what extent this is said to have provided him with glory or doxa (δόξα) among his contemporaries.

**Alcibiades as a Soldier**

1.1. In the *Comparatio Coriolani et Alcibiadis*, Plutarch states that “Alcibiades was often of service to the Athenians, both as a soldier and as a commander” (4.1). In the *Alcibiades* itself, however, he does not give a prominent place to the exploits of the protagonist as a private soldier. We are only told that the young Alcibiades distinguished himself in the campaign of Potidaea (7.4) and protected Socrates during the rout following upon the Athenian defeat at Delium (7.6). The contrast with the

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¹ Plutarch established a dichotomy of political and military functions in fourth century BC Athens (*Phocion* 7.5–6). He was probably wrong; see Tritle (1987); idem (1992) 4271–4272; Roberts (1987). I would like to thank Prof. C.B.R. Pelling for his valuable comments and Dr. J. Beneker for checking my English.

² De Blois (1992) 4583. See e.g. *Comparatio Solonis et Publicolae* 4.1–2; *Comparatio Aristidis et Catonis* 2.4; *Comparatio Periclis et Fabii Maximi*; *Comparatio Agidis et Cleomenis cum Tiberio et Gai o Graccho* 3.2–4.1.
Coriolanus, the first Life of the pair; is striking. Plutarch not only recounts Marcius’ feats in the decisive fight against Tarquinius Superbus (3.1–2) and the battle of Corioli (8–9) but he also states that the Roman performed deeds of valour in all the other campaigns in which he served as a soldier (4.3).

This difference in focus reflects a difference in characterization. Plutarch portrays Marcius as a military man in heart and soul, a true child of the times in which the Romans made valour (ἀνδρεία) stand for virtue in general (ἀρετή) (Coriolanus 1.6). His education is limited to physical training and exercises in arms (2). Alcibiades is a much more sophisticated character. He receives a liberal education (Alcibiades 2.5–7) and benefits from his conversations with Socrates (4.1–4; 6.1–5). Furthermore, he does not hesitate to resort to devious methods when his physical strength does not suffice to gain victory (2.2–3).

1.2. In the light of the foregoing, it does not come as a surprise that one finds more contrasts between the two heroes if one studies the relation between their soldierly exploits and the doxa they enjoy in their youth. With regard to military honours, it is noteworthy that Alcibiades receives only one prize of valour (Alcibiades 7.5), while Marcius’ officers are said to have been striving with one another in their efforts to do him honour (Coriolanus 4.3; see also 10.1–11.1). Moreover, the Athenian apparently did not truly deserve his reward. According to Alcibiades 7.4, Alcibiades and Socrates both distinguished themselves in the battle of Potidaea but in the end the former fell wounded and had to be rescued by the latter. Therefore, Plutarch argues, the prize of valour should have gone to Socrates (7.5). The generals, however, were anxious to crown Alcibiades with glory because of his social standing (ibid.: οἱ στρατηγοὶ διὰ τὸ ἔξωμα τῷ Ἀλκαβανδῷ σπουδάζοντες ἐφαίνοντο πειρατείναι τὴν δό-ξαν). In short, the military honour bestowed on the young soldier did not correspond to his actual merits on the battlefield. This certainly does not hold true for Marcius. The Potidaea affair contrasts in par-

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3 On the order of the Coriolanus and the Alcibiades, see Ziegler (1907) 26–32; Pelling (1986) 94–96; Duff (1999) 205–206 (with n. 3).
5 Duff (1999) 216 points out that the contrast between Marcius’ physical training and Alcibiades’ philosophical education is highlighted by the metaphorical use of wrestling terms in Alcibiades 4–6.
6 The same motive is mentioned in Plato, Symposium 220e; see Russell (1966) 41.