CHAPTER TWO

THE ANCIENT TOPOGRAPHY OF EPICNEMIDIAN LOCRIS

José Pascual

Opountian Lokris and, for that matter, Epiknemidian Lokris too, appears rarely in the ancient writers
—John M. Fossey 1990: 1

Epicnemidian Locris is one of the least explored areas of Greece, and the identification of even major sites is still often controversial
—J. Buckler 1989: 93

1. FRONTIERS AND EXTENSION OF EPICNEMIDIAN LOCRIS

As we have seen, the region which extended westwards from Mt. Cnemis was known as the country of the Epicnemidians whose name came precisely from Mt. Cnemis (945 m asl). This mount with Mt. Callidromus determines the relief and landscape of region. These mountain ranges,

\* The author wishes to express his gratitude to Adolfo J. Domínguez Monedero, Juan Antonio González, Eduardo Sánchez-Moreno, Gloria Mora, Manuel Arjona, Soledad Milán, Nina Kyparissi-Apostolika, Maria-Foteini Papakonstantinou and Petros Kounouklas for their valuable support and assistance, suggestions and understanding. They have made possible the completion not only of this chapter but the whole book.

\*\* Departamento de Historia Antigua. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

1 See Introduction and González et alii Chapter 1.

2 Str. 8.1.3; 9.1.1.

3 Str. 9.4.1: οι δ’ Ἐπικνημίδιοι ἄπε δροὺς τινὰς Κνημίδος. On Mt. Cnemis (38° 44´ 53´´ N; 22° 48´ 21´´ E): Str. 9.4.2; Ptol. Geog. 3.14.9; Mela 2.45; Ps.-Scyl. Per. 61; Plin. NH. 4.27; Diod. 16.33.3; 38.3.

4 The peak of Mt. Callidromus rises to 1,419 metres (38° 44´ 15´´ N; 22° 32´ 40´´ E). Cf. Geisau 1919: 1633–1634 and González et alii in this volume.
Callidromus and Cnemis, which lie along a line that runs approximately NW-SE, also define the boundaries with neighbouring regions (Figure 2.1).

The Epicnemidian Locrians shared a border with the Oetaeans, Malians, Metropolitan Dorians, Aenianians, Phocians and Opuntian Locrians. The north-western border, separating it from Malis, would have started at the end of the Middle Gate of the Thermopylae beyond the Colonos hill, the last stand held by Leonidas and the Lacedaemonians, Thespians and Thessalian, perhaps at the height of Loutra Thermopylon, where there is a small stream called Bouka, halfway between Alponus in Locris and the sanctuary of Demeter in Anthele in Malis.

---

5 Cf. Str. 9.3.1: the Epicnemidian Locrians were neighbours to the Oetaeans and Malians (προσεχεῖς Οἰταίως καὶ Μαλιέως) and the Oetaeans also stretched throughout a part of Locris, undoubtedly, Epicnemidian Locris. Hdt. 7.216: Alponus is “the first Locrian city one comes to, travelling from Malis” (Ἀλπηνοῦ πόλιν, πρῶτην ἐστιν τῶν Δαφνίδων πρὸς τῶν Μηλεῶν). Str. 9.4.10: the Epicnemidians were neighbours to the Aenianians who inhabited Oeta and in between them, that is, between the Epicnemidians and the Aenianians, were the Dorians (τοῖς δ’ Ἐπικνημιδίους Ἀινίδες συνεχεῖς οί τῆν Οίτην, καὶ μέσοι Δωρεῖς). See also Str. 9.4.1.

6 Strabo (9.2.42) says that Locris was situated near Phocis and affirms in the same paragraph that the Opuntian Locrians were bordered by the Phocians and the Boeotians and the Epicnemidian Locrians were neighbours of the Oetaeans and Malians. However, it is without doubt, as we shall see, that Phocis and Epicnemidian Locris not only shared the border in the east, in the Daphnus area, but also in the south, for example, in the Elateia area. Cf. Str. 9.3.2, 15: Elateia dominated the straights that led from Thessaly to Boeotia and Phocis, that is, the Callidromus Passes. See Paus. 10.13.4: the Phocians were separated from the Thessalians by the Hypocnemidian (¿Eastern?) Locrians.

7 In the East, Daphnus at Isiomata near the modern town of Agios Konstantinos was in Opuntian Locris (or Phocis) and so, when it was destroyed, their territory passed to the Opuntian Locrians (Str. 1.3.20; 9.3.1, 17, 4.4).

8 While remaining cautious and acknowledging that a high degree of uncertainty remains, we can establish the approximate ancient borders of Epicnemidian Locris.

9 Thermopylae formed a gorge composed of three narrowings or gates (the West, Middle and East Passes). Heracleia Trachinia in Malis controlled the West Gate of Thermopylae (Decourt, Nielsen, Helly et alii 2004: 710–712 number 430), while the East Gate, some seven or eight hundred metres from Alponus, would have been in Epicnemidia. In our opinion the Middle Gate would also have belonged to Alponus. Strabo (9.4.17) states that in Pylae, ten stades by sea to the west of the mouth of the river Spercheus, Locris ends (καὶ ἡ μὲν Δαφρὶς τέλεσ ἔχει). Pylae refers, without doubt, to the Middle Gate next to which are the thermal springs as noted by Herodotus (7.176.2–3. 198, 201). Thucydides (3.92.1–6) in the measurements he supplied from Heracleia Trachinia to Thermopylae, i.e. forty stades, about seven kilometres, agreed on the location of the Middle Gate. Strabo (9.4.12) also says that Mt. Oeta leaves a narrow pass in the Thermopylae on the coast for those who enter Locrian territory from Thessaly, giving strength to the idea that the Thermopylae served as a border.

10 On the Sanctuary of Demeter in Anthele see Hdt. 7.198; Str. 9.3.7, 4.17, 5.13; Livy 33.35.8 and Nielsen 2004: 664.