The history of Epicnemidian Locris throughout the Classical period (480–323 BC) was marked, as in other periods, not just by the ambitions of its neighbours, but also, given the geopolitical situation in the region, by the conflicts for hegemony between the major Greek powers: Sparta, Athens, Boeotia and finally Macedonia. Certainly Epicnemidian Locris was surrounded by states, such as Thessaly and Phocis, that sought to control the Passes connecting Northern Greece to central Greece and the Peloponnese and vice versa, which provoked bloody confrontations between Locris and its neighbours, but its strategic importance, including control of shipping through the Euboean Channel, transcended the limits of the region’s immediate vicinity so that the great Greek states also tried to control Epicnemidian Locris. Unable meet these threats with their own forces, the Epicnemidian Locrians and the Eastern Locrians as a whole generally established an alliance with the Greek hegemonic powers, particularly with the Boeotian Confederacy or with Thebes, when the Confederacy did not exist. Whether Boeotians or Thebans, they were the only power that could guarantee a degree of security against their neighbours, but, obviously, because of the

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1 Str. 9.4.15.
2 From the strategic point of view, while Trachis, before 426, and Heracleia Trachinia after that date, controlled the western entrance to the Pass at Thermopylae, the Epicnemidians controlled the eastern exit or East Gate. So it could be said that the purpose of Heracleia Trachinia guarding it was really to control the whole of the Pass and, therefore, also the Epicnemidian part. Another series of passes in Epicnemidian Locris, such as the Kleisoura, Fontana and Vasilika Passes, traversed Mt. Callidromus, giving access to the Cephisus valley, Phocis, Boeotia and Attica. Another route went inland between the south side of Mt. Cnemis and the northern foothills of the Callidromus towards Aabae and Hyampolis (Paus. 10.35.1). From Hyampolis there was a direct route (Paus. 10.35.5), to Opus and Orchomenus (Paus. 10.1.3, 35.1), thus penetrating into Boeotia. This route could have been the main route between Thermopylae and Opus rather than a hypothetical road along the coast. About all of these routes Cf. Sánchez-Moreno in this volume.
unequal balance of power between them, it was an asymmetrical association that made the Locrians to some extent dependent for their foreign policy on the Boeotians or Thebans. Together with the conflicts and relations with their neighbours and the interference of the Greek hegemonic powers, the relationship with Opuntian Locris, the other region of Eastern Locris to the east of Mt. Cnemis, was the third fundamental element for understanding the history of Epicnemidian Locris in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. The importance of this relationship will be studied in the second part of this chapter.

Little is known about the period between the end of the Second Persian War and the mid-fifth century. Around 476 the Spartan king Leotychidas sent an expedition to Thessaly against the Aleuads family. This aristocratic family had medised in the course of the Second Persian War and the expedition must have been intended as a reprisal against the Thessalian factions and poleis that had embraced the Persian cause. Leotychidas must have reached Larissa, the Aleuads’ native city and, although on his return he was deposed on the charge of having accepted bribes from Aleuads, the expedition probably had some success. The campaign would have consolidated Spartan rule not only over the whole of Thessaly but also over much of central Greece, and if this did not happen immediately after the Second Persian War, the Eastern Locrians would then have entered an alliance with the Lacedaemonians, a relationship that lasted into the middle of the century when the Athenians began to become involved in the area. Although we do not know the exact route that Leotychidas took, the expedition may also have been evidence that Sparta controlled the Thermopylae Pass at that time, giving it access to Thessaly. Certainly the Eastern Locrians do not appear amongst the victors that dedicated a column in Delphi, which accords with their medisation after Thermopylae and their presence on the Persian side at the battle of Plataea. However, they do not appear to have been attacked after the war by the victors either, as happened to the Thebans and the Thessalians. Perhaps they were able to claim that Leonidas had authorised them to withdraw from Thermopylae and they had been forced to go over to the Persians after the Greek defeat in the Pass.

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3 Hdt. 6.71–72.  
4 Paus. 3.7.9–10.  
5 Hdt. 9.86–88.  
6 Paus. 3.7.9.