There exist a number of historiographical problems regarding the history of late medieval Old Phokaia, of which the most basic concern its identity. The town currently known as Foça (Phokaia) or Eski Foça (Old Phokaia) is located at the western extremity of the peninsula north of the mouth of the River Gediz (Hermos). Yeni Foça (New Phokaia) lies on the same peninsula's north side, considerably closer to the main landmass. There has been some debate as to whether these correspond directly to the medieval settlements bearing the equivalent names, and it has been argued that the names have in fact at some point been reversed. More recent analysis has dismissed this proposition and reasserted the identity of the modern towns with their medieval namesakes, though only on the basis of circumstantial evidence. In fact this point can be demonstrated directly from a contemporary source, an Anconitan portolan dated to between 1435 and 1444. This describes the approaches to each port, placing New Phokaia at the end of an inlet between two capes, which is in turn within a larger gulf, while referring to a group of four small islands located just off Old Phokaia. This description corresponds unambiguously to the situation of the homonymous modern towns. This is unsurprising in the light of the fact that the principal alum deposits in the region are to be found not on the peninsula itself, though a secondary deposit does exist there, but some distance inland, north-east of its base. Founded to afford greater convenience and security to those exploiting the alum mines, the establishment of New Phokaia is only comprehensible if it gave significantly better access to the principal sites of extraction than the old town.

There has been a widespread supposition in past scholarship that the Gattilusio lords held Old Phokaia through an appalto or similar concession from the Mahona of Chios. This seems to originate with the assertions of Carl Hopf. After its capture
by the Genoese in 1346 the port had passed back into Byzantine control at the time of Leo Tsyvos’s revolt and attack on Chios in 1347. It was thereafter held under nominal imperial authority by the Kalothetos family. According to Hopf it was then definitively restored to Genoese control by Pietro Recanelli in 1358. This claim is however unsupported by any known source: Hopf cites Gregoras at this point, but the passage in question makes no mention of such an event. It is evident that if any such conquest did occur it was swiftly reversed. This is established by an order from the Patriarch of Constantinople to the Metropolitan of Smyrna in April 1363, which makes clear that Old Phokaia was still in the hands of the Kalothetoi at that time. This reality is reflected by a silence in the Genoese documents in contexts where one might reasonably expect Old Phokaia to have been mentioned if it was indeed under Genoese control, such as a Chian document of 1362 referring to the possibility of the loss of New Phokaia, but making no reference to the old town.

The agreements renewing the territorial concessions of the New Mahona of Chios in 1373, 1385, 1413 and 1436 did confer upon them the Genoese commune’s right to govern Chios, New Phokaia and Old Phokaia. However, as legal documents prescribing claimed rights, these need not have corresponded to the facts on the ground. Genoa and the Mahona had presumably never relinquished their claim to the two Phokaias deriving from the annexation of 1346, even while one or both were governed by the Kalothetoi.

The next indication of Old Phokaia’s practical situation after 1363 is the reference to its capture by Venetian forces in 1379, during the War of Chioggia. This...