The Ottoman Turks formed the newest of the major forces whose influence encompassed the Gattilusio. Whereas the importance of Byzantium, Genoa and the crusading movement in the affairs of the Aegean dated back long before the Fourth Crusade, the Turks had become an established presence on its shores only in the late thirteenth century, while the explosive transformation of the region by the Ottomans corresponded almost exactly to the period of Gattilusio rule. It is the process of Ottoman expansion which chiefly distinguishes the later period in the life of the fragmented Aegean to which the Gattilusio lordships belong from the decades following the Fourth Crusade. Of all the networks in which the Gattilusio played a part, their relationship with the Turks was the one subject to greatest change over the decades, as the balance of power among the continental Muslim powers swung violently and the ambitions of the maturing Ottoman state developed. The Ottoman polity had begun as a loose-knit warband whose leader was severely dependent on the goodwill of followers large and small; during the period of Gattilusio rule it was transformed into a centralised autocratic empire. In this it differed markedly from the other major networks with which the Gattilusio were entangled, which either had always been or were increasingly becoming diffuse, associative structures. The Ottomans' success in defying the fragmentary norms of the Aegean world, to which Latin, Byzantine and Slavic contenders since 1204 had all succumbed, enabled them to transform the dynamics of that world and initiate a new era of political integration. The interactions of the Gattilusio with the Ottomans constitute a test case of the extent to which rulers closely attuned to the multi-faceted world of the Aegean could adapt to the rise of a power so fundamentally and fatally antithetical to it.

The establishment of the Gattilusio lordships and the critical turning-point in the emergence of Ottoman power were intertwined, both being

promoted directly or indirectly by the earthquake of 1354. Their ready access to the militarily vulnerable and ideologically appealing hunting grounds of the Balkans enabled the Ottomans to transform themselves from one among many similar Anatolian emirates into a power capable of overwhelming all their Turkish competitors and uniting the forces of Turkish Anatolia, a process which in turn strengthened them against their Christian adversaries. This process of mutually reinforcing expansion on both sides of the Aegean reached a climax in the reign of Mehmed II. The capture of Constantinople and the subsequent extirpation of the surviving remnants of the Byzantine world set the seal on the Ottoman conquest of the bulk of the Balkans and Anatolia and their state’s evolution into an empire. The destruction of the Gattilusio lordships formed a part of the wave of annexations on various fronts which followed the fall of Constantinople and encapsulated the transition from one phase of expansion to another. The formation of the Ottoman Empire was thus the grand narrative within which the story of the Gattilusio lordships was played out and which sealed the fate of the world which they exemplified. In the course of this process the entanglement of the Gattilusio in the networks of influence of their Islamic neighbours was deepened and reshaped by the consolidation of military and economic power in the hands of the Ottomans.

Forces of Attraction and Repulsion

The exceptional strength, organisational centralism and aggressive expansionism of the Ottomans set them apart from the other networks of power with which the Gattilusio lordships were most closely connected, by introducing more potent pressures against integration. Whereas the likelihood of those other authorities coercing the Gattilusio, making exorbitant material demands or interfering in their internal affairs was small, the Ottomans possessed both the power and inclination to do so, creating a compelling incentive to avoid being too deeply drawn into their orbit. Thus while in other cases the forces of attraction were left to work relatively unimpeded, where the Turks were concerned they had to compete with strong countervailing urges to escape domination, heightened by religious antagonism.

Conversely, the nature of the pressures in favour of engagement with the Ottomans or with other Muslim powers were clearly distinguished from those applying to Christian networks. The latter could variously