The first Palace, built by Fatih after he conquered Istanbul, was found in the district of Beyazid where the University is situated now. Fatih lived there for about 15 years; then he ordered for a new palace to be built in Saray Burnu. Fatih's new Palace was composed of separate buildings and parks built on thousands and thousands of square meters land. The new palace was surrounded by walls and towers on the sea side. There were seven entrance, three in front and four opening to the sea.

The main entrance which was called «the door of the kingdom» opened to Sultan Ahmet Center. The first court of the Palace after the main entrance contained buildings of Ministry of Finance and «Enderun Hospital». The second gate, called Middle entrance, was built with two towers on each side. Through this middle door only the Sultans could pass on horseback. Other statemen had to dismount the horses before they cross the entrance. The court opened to the middle gate was an immense one and used for ceremonies. The famous hall with the cupola was built in this court. This hall was used for the cabinet meetings, and for receiving the foreign Ambassadors by the veziers. The third gate which opened to the court of «Enderun» the Palace School, was used during the wars. The flag used to be brought to the front of the entrance and the procession began and crossed the third gate.

The most interesting part of the new Palace, among many other quarters, was the Harem. The Sultan used to live with a huge number of women. These Harem quarters were famous for the struggles, intrigues and murder among women because of jealousy. Many remarkable lady Sultans of the Ottoman Empire lived in these buildings, many young princes and sultans were murdered in the rooms of Harem, such as Sultan Ibrahim, Selim the III. and Mustafa IV.

The Harem divided into quarters according to rank. The parts immediately after the entrance were occupied by «Kizlar Agasi», Aga for Girls, and his negro eunuchs. These men were the guardians and were responsible for the ans' quarters and the Harem. After the iron door came the maids' rooms and then one after another, came the quarters of the ladies of the Harem.

The highest place and rank in Harem's security there was an iron door between the «Guardi-Sultan» Queen Mother then came the Sultan, first ladies, favorites. First ladies usually numbered five or six and they used to take place according the their priority, such as first lady, second lady, and third, fourth and fifth. In case of death each one jumped to a higher degree automatically. Each of the five use to have separate quarters.

The apartments of the Queen mother were two-storied, and consisted of reception rooms, two bed-
rooms and bath and an adjoining praying room to the bedroom.

Sovereigns used to have a bed-room, a bath and living quarters and a library in Harem. The princes and unmarried princesses also, lived in the Harem. For the crown princes’ apartment there used to be an iron door which was always locked, and a crown prince waited behind that iron door for their day to come to rule.

On the 19th century the way of living for the crown princes were completely changed: they were left free, that means they lived as they chose.

Topkapi Palace is a good example of our old Turkish architecture, design, wood, china and marble work. Specially Harem quarters are unique.

The New Palace took the name Topkapi, in the 18th century.

The Old Palace
Fatih built his first palace in 1454, in Beyazit at the palace where the University is situated today. After the New Palace was constructed, this old palace had been reserved for the late Sultan’s mother, wives and servants. After the coronation of the new sovereign, his mother used to move to the New Palace with a big ceremony. The Sultans used to visit their predecessors mothers and wives during the holidays and payed them their respects.

The old Saray was burned partly in 1617 but restored again. When Mahmud II ordered the abolition of the Janissaries, the Old Palace was assigned to the new army and the women residing there were taken to the New Palace, Topkapi.

Dolmabahçe Palace
At the place where Dolmabahçe Palace is situated today, there were two other buildings, Beşiktaş Palace and Dolmabahçe castle. The sea in front of the castle was filled in the times of Ahmed I and Osman II. The Dolmabahçe Palace itself was constructed by Abdulmecit, in 1854 and had four five million in gold. Although the Palace build according to the 19th century architecture it also carries our characteristic designs here and there.

The facade of Dolmabahçe Saray is two hundred eight four meters. A wing which is called Queen Mothers quarters which cuts the main building perpendicularly is ninety five meters. The reception, mother Sultan’s and the Sultan’s quarters contain two hundred rooms. There are eight big halls and each carry a name, such as entrance hall, ceremony hall, blue hall and Harem hall. The halls have a considerable dimensions, for instance, six of them are 43, one of them is 47 and the smallest is 35 meters of length. Some of the rooms were named after they had become a scene for some historical events.

There are seven wide stairways with crystal banisters leading to the ceremony hall on the second floor. The other stairs for service are about seven also. The first lift was installed when Atatürk was residing at the Palace and taken suddenly ill.

The Dolmabahçe Saray contains several gates, to be exact, there are eight of them altogether. Two are
the main gates and others are called Queen mothers, crown prince’s gates, furniture door kitchen entrance etc.

The out and inside decorations of Dolmabahce Palace were carefully designed. A sort of blueish marble was used from Marmaris Island for outer parts and lots of crystal, water marble and fine wood and others were the precious elements for inside walls of the building. The Palace was exquisitely furnished according to the 17 and 18 century french taste. The famous paintings which decorate the rooms were collected by Sultan Aziz himself on his European tour. The chandeliers, Bohemian and silver candlesticks are also rare collections. The chandelier which is hanging in the ceremony hall weighs four and the half tons and contains seven hundred fifty bulbs, was a present from Queen Victoria, when the Palace was constructed.

Many sovereigns lived and received foreign royalties in Dolmabahçe Saray.

Four years after the proclamation of the republic, Atatürk came to Istanbul and resided the Palace. He also received foreign kings, Shahs, and statesmen in Dolmabahçe, when he was in Istanbul. At one of his stays he was taken ill and he died in the room number 71.

Mualla ABUT