



# KETĀBĶĀNA-YE MELLI-E TĀJIKESTĀN

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**KETĀBĶĀNA-YE MELLI-E TĀJIKESTĀN** (Taj. Kitobķonai millii Tojikiston), the National Library of Tajikistan, located in Dushanbe.

Tajikistan National Library was established on 1 January 1933 on the groundwork of the Dushanbe city library. Named after the outstanding Persian poet Abu'l-Qāsem Ferdowsi, the library in 1993 was granted the status of national library (Borodin, p. 121; Salimov, p. 3). In 2007, Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon commissioned the construction a new building for the Tajikistan National Library to be located in the heart of Dushanbe near the Palace of the Nation, that is, the presidential palace. The foundation stone was laid on 4 September 2007 by the president ("Iftitoh," p. 2), who on that occasion officially announced that every year the 4th of September must be celebrated in Tajikistan as the Day of the Book. The new building of the library, looking onto Rudaki Park, was officially opened on the eve of Nowruz, 20 March 2012 (ibid.). The former building of the Tajikistan National Library (Kitobķonai Firdavsi; [Figure 1](#)) has become a children's library.

The impressive, nine-story white building ([Figure 2](#)) of the new Tajikistan National Library, which is portrayed on the 200-somoni banknotes, is an example of the gigantomania shown by the Tajik government in the post-Soviet period. Hailed as the largest of its kind in Central Asia ("Kitobķonai millii Tojikiston," p. 2), the new library stands 52 m high on an area of 44,078



m<sup>2</sup>, with 25 reading halls, 1,458 seats, and 10 conference halls. It also has a canteen that accommodates 558 people, and a café with 215 seats. The number of employees is reported as 520 (“Iftitoh,” p. 2; Salimov, p. 3).

With its 28-stack rooms, the library has a capacity for ten million books (Salimov, p. 3; Zarindast). The library’s international partners (Iran, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Azarbaijan) have contributed journals and books. Information about the actual holdings of the library are contrasting: 2.5 million according to an expert estimate (Zarindast) vs. over 6 million items officially, of which 3.1 million were acquired from the Ferdowsi Library and 2.6 million were donated by various Tajik and foreign public institutions and by Tajik citizens, and there are 500,000 books in electronic format (Salimov, p. 3). The library has a shelf catalogue and an electronic catalogue available onsite but not online yet. The library publishes *Dunyoī kitob* (since 2012), which replaced *Kitobdor* (2006-10), the periodical of the former Ferdowsi Library.

*Manuscripts.* In May 1933, the scientific research unit of the Tajik People’s Commissariat for Education transferred the first collection of manuscripts to the Ferdowsi Library, where a Department of Oriental Manuscripts started its activity in 1934 (Komilzoda, p. 24). In 1953, a part of the manuscripts’ fund of the Ferdowsi Library (3,290 manuscripts) was transferred by government decree to the [Tajikistan Academy of Sciences](#), where a Department of Oriental Studies and Handwritten Heritage was created in 1955 (ibid.; Rahimov, p. 44). From the 1950s onward, the Department of Oriental Manuscripts of the Ferdowsi Library continued its activity of gathering manuscripts and lithographed books as they became accessible in the country. By 1999, the library’s holding had come to over 16,000 rare books, 2,206 of which were manuscripts: 1,494 in Persian, 546 in Arabic, and 166 in Turkic languages (Dodhudoeva et al., p. 40). By 2009, the number of manuscripts had increased to 2,256 (Komilzoda, p. 24).

In 2012, when the fund originally located at the Ferdowsi Library was moved to the new building of the Tajikistan National Library, the number of manuscripts was 2,267 (“Kitobkonai millī”). The manuscripts are related to several subject areas: history, hagiography, religion, ethics, Sufism, medicine, philosophy, geography, literature, biography, and memoirs (Dodhudoeva, p. 40). The range of the manuscript holdings of the library spans seven centuries (13th-19th centuries) and includes the works of outstanding Persian classical authors, among them [Ferdowsi’s](#) *Šāh-nāma*, [Sa’di’s](#) *Golestān* and *Bustān*,



Hafez's *Divān*, Jāmi's *Toḥfat al-aḥrār*, Bidel's *Divān*, and other works (Komilzoda, p. 24). The manuscripts are catalogued by Yunusov and Karomatulloeva (*Fehrast*, covering over 300 items) and Bahrāmiān and Yunosof (over 1,200 items).

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