

**Philosophy Institute Opens Russian Branch
Courtesy of SGI NEWSLETTER
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The Institute of Oriental Philosophy, founded by SGI President Ikeda in 1962 to help make Asia's philosophical heritage accessible to people throughout the world, opened an office in Russia today.

This branch, located in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, is the IOP's latest to be established outside Japan. Other foreign offices are located in the United Kingdom, India and Hong Kong.

The Institute of Oriental Studies and the IOP agreed on this academic exchange last November. Founded in 1818, the Russian institute has been a pioneer of Eastern studies in Europe. Its many accomplishments include the publishing of a Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra (the first time in book form), research on the Silk Road and the Buddhist scriptures, and the assembly of an extensive archive of ancient manuscripts. There are currently 101 scholars conducting research there.

President Ikeda has held many dialogues and formed friendships with a number of the Russian academy's staff, including Yuri Petrosyan, former director of the academy's St. Petersburg chapter and presently an honorary member of the academy's board of trustees, and Margarita Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya, a noted authority on the Lotus Sutra.

In his message for the opening, read by IOP Director Yoichi Kawata, Mr. Ikeda stressed the vital role religion plays in developing the human spirit amidst continual scientific and technological growth. The purpose of religion, he stated, is to provide people with spiritual nourishment and bring out their compassion for others. The SGI leader further asserted that a true religion of the people has the sublime power to transform conflict into harmony, division into unity.

To commemorate the opening, a book exhibition titled "Toward a New World of Humanism — Works by Daisaku Ikeda and the Publications of the Soka Gakkai" was on display at the new center. A two-day symposium was also held, May 30 and 31, where researchers of both institutes discussed the theme "The 21st Century and Religion."

The IOP conducts independent research into topics such as Buddhist thought, comparative religion and the interrelations between religion and science and religion and society.

It also sponsors a variety of exchanges between Western and Eastern scholars through seminars, symposia and public lectures.

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