

THE NEW HUMAN REVOLUTION
A NOVELIZED HISTORY OF THE SOKA GAKKAI
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Shin’ichi Yamamoto tells a young women’s division member in Italy: ‘We need wisdom to survive in society. Wisdom is also vital for us to win in our efforts to spread Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and to win in life in general.’

On the way to Pompeii, the group stopped at a shop selling cameos, a famous Italian handicraft. As they watched a craftworker carving a delicate relief in a seashell, Shin’ichi Yamamoto said to Sumiko Kojima: “Such shells are usually just tossed away, but they use them to produce such exquisite, precious handicrafts. That is wisdom.

“We need wisdom to survive in society. Wisdom is also vital for us to win in our efforts to spread Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and to win in life in general. We can bring forth wisdom by thinking seriously about what needs to be done while tapping into our powerful life force through chanting daimoku sincerely, with a strong sense of responsibility and mission.”

Shin’ichi bought some cameo broaches, cuff links and other handicrafts to give as gifts and presented one of the broaches to Ms. Kojima. He was concerned about the future of this young woman, who had come all alone to Italy to study. Ms. Kojima planned to stay in Italy after completing her studies, but Shin’ichi knew that trying to make a living as an artist would not be easy.

Moreover, the Yamagishis, who were in Italy because of Mr. Yamagishi’s job, would return to Japan in a few years. Ms. Kojima would then have to become a key figure among the members in Italy. Shin’ichi was counting on her to establish herself firmly in Italian society, so that she could be an active, productive leader of kosen-rufu in that country. He wanted her to become strong.

They boarded their taxis again and, as they continued on their way, Mount Vesuvius, one of Europe’s few active volcanoes, loomed on their left. It had last erupted two decades earlier, in 1944, but it presented a quiet, serene picture to Shin’ichi and his companions as they gazed at it from the car window.

“You all know the famous Italian folk song ‘Funiculì-Funiculà,’” Shin’ichi said. “That song mentions a ‘mountain of fire,’ and that mountain is Vesuvius. The song was written, I’ve heard, to commemorate the completion of a cable railway up the mountain.”

Soon they arrived at the ruins of Pompeii. In Roman times, the city had prospered as a commercial center and resort for the Roman nobility. It was destroyed by an eruption of Vesuvius in 79 CE and buried under a thick layer of volcanic ash. In the mid-18th century, it was rediscovered. Continuing excavations revealed its glorious past.

After viewing the exhibits in the museum at the ancient city’s entrance, Shin’ichi and his party wandered the ruins. Ms. Kojima did her best to interpret in Japanese the explanations of their guide, an elderly Italian man.

Pompeii lay in roughly an oval shape about 1,320 yards from east to west and 715 yards north to south. Following a path through the ruins known as the via Marina, they came upon the Forum, the center of life in Pompeii, the site of the city’s temples and public buildings.

They passed through the gate on the north side of the Forum and began to walk the

stone-paved streets, which were lined with stone houses and public baths. The ancient buildings, though many of them roofless, presented a clear picture of the town's prosperity before the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.

The guide stopped in front of one of the houses and pointed out a lovely mosaic of a dog at the entranceway. "This is known," he said, "as the House of the Tragic Poet. It served as the model for the home of the hero in the famous novel *The Last Days of Pompeii*."

Edward Bulwer-Lytton, a British journalist, poet, playwright and politician, wrote *The Last Days of Pompeii*. In the autumn of his 30th year, the London-born Bulwer-Lytton traveled to Italy and visited the ruins of Pompeii. Standing there, he envisioned the destruction of the prosperous ancient city and was overcome with emotion. He set down those imaginings and feelings in his epic historical novel.

Shin'ichi and his group went on to look at a number of other dwellings, shops, a theater and a subterranean prison. Beautiful frescoes and sculptures survived in many of the homes. As the small party made their way along the stone-paved streets, their steps echoed hollow through the ruins. But what bustle and noise must once have filled these streets, as the citizens of Pompeii went about their daily business!

Shin'ichi looked up to see the proud form of Vesuvius towering above the rows of houses. There were two peaks: The taller, with the active volcanic crater, was 4,198 feet high. To the right was a high semicircular ridge known as Mount Somma, the result of a previous eruption, its sides sloping gently downward. It was some 1,900 years earlier that Vesuvius' eruption had ended time for the city of Pompeii. Two thousand people, around 10 percent of the city's population of 20,000, are said to have died in the eruption.