



THE COSTIGLIOLE CHRONICLE

March 2024

TRANSFORMATION FROM THE OLD TO THE NEW

After years of planning, research and reflection, the practical works to build the new Zen Temple started! The project, under the spiritual guidance of Zen Master Beppe Mokuza Signoritti, is more than a building project.

It is a commitment to protect and preserve our planet's precious wildlife and resources while offering a sanctuary for seekers of peace and purpose.

Imagine a place where every stone and tree tell a story of compassion and care. Thanks to the generous donations of all of you and by the continuous support of the Italian Buddhist Union (UBI) this dream will be realized!



Scan to donate

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CONSTRUCTION AND BUILDING OF THE DOJO AND APARTMENTS



THE DEMOLITION OF THE OLD HOUSES

In June 2021 the sangha of Alba bought a terrain of more than 60.000 square meters in Costigliole d'Asti (Piemonte, Italy) to develop the new Zen Centre. It is called: GYOGENJI and means: The Source of Daily Practice. The Italian architect Luigi Duretto designed the new temple.

On the premises two old farmhouses existed and in January 2024 we started the

demolition of these houses to clear the space for the construction of the new Temple.

The tearing down of the old buildings took a few days. We will re-use the wood taken from the old houses, as well as the bricks. After the demolition a big empty space was created to lay the foundation of the new temple.



You can watch a short of the demolition on our Youtube channel



The foundation of the apartments

You can watch a short film of the 3D rendering on our Youtube channel

DOJO AND THE FIRST APARTMENTS

After the removal of the rubble, the excavation and levelling of the ground began, before the foundations of the new Temple was being laid.



Walking on the foundations

CREATING THE NEW ROAD TO ENTER THE NEW CENTRE



THE SURROUNDING GROUNDS

#progetto umanitario

The Italian Buddhist Union financed our Humanitarian Project to restructure our surrounding grounds. The project stands out for the extensive commitment to environmental preservation, confirmed by the planting of 150 fruit trees and the imminent addition of 400 trees for reforestation, as well as the creation of an organic vegetable garden.

We are working with two companies: Pollice Verde and LegaAmbiente, to give new life to the land and the vegetable garden, in full respect of nature for sustainable agriculture. These initiatives, also sponsored by the Italian Bird Protection League and a society to protect the bees (Aspromiele), reflect a profound respect for biodiversity. One of our

objectives is to reduce food supply chains, through the self-production of a vast range of fruit and vegetables and by encouraging production and consumption practices at a local level, promoting the circular economy.

CONSTRUCTING THE TERRACES OF THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

For our community, the vegetable garden plays a fundamental role. In addition to providing self-support for the practitioners, visitors and monks, it is a place of sharing practice, returning to nature, where interdependence with our ecosystem is possible.

To enlarge the vegetable garden, one of our collaborators for the humanitarian project, the Green Pollice Nursery of Asti, removed the earth and soil of the vegetable garden to create three terraces with a total surface area of approximately 3,000 square meters.





When the terraces were ready, we built wooden palisades to strengthen and contain the soil. Resulting in beautifully constructed terraces for our vegetable garden.

You can watch a short of the terraces on our Youtube channel



To work the soil, new tools are needed, so we bought: a motor hoe for milling with a wood chipper, a grass trimmer and a motor pump to distribute sprays to protect plants.



THE SEWING SEASON STARTED

In Zen there is no right time, there is only the here and now.

The meditative practice of Samu, as Master Hakuin Zenji said, is the practice in daily life that is worth 10,000 times the sitting practice. You need complete concentration to become one with the job. So working on concentration during Samu strengthens your concentration in Zazen much faster. Not getting entangled in unnecessary thoughts works well. When extraneous thoughts enter, it is difficult to work well. That is why it is possible to encounter one's true-life energy during concentration in daily work.

In March the first tomatoes were sown, silently, just as seeds in the soil silently take root, take root, express life, and sprout. When the time comes, the flower blooms, the seed sprouts, consciousness expands, and life rejoices.





CREATING THE ORCHARD: FRUIT TREES

This winter we planted more than 150 native fruit trees: apple trees, plums and pears, persimmons, medlars, apricots and cherries. They are trees that do not need pesticides!



PREPARING THE FLOWER GARDEN FOR SPRING

With the help of volunteers from Italy and the Netherlands we enlarged the flower garden, protected some vulnerable plants against the cold of winter and cleared the flowers of the chrysanthemum, which blossomed abundantly till the end of November!



LIPU and the sangha

ANIMALS: PLACING BIRDS' HOUSES

In cooperation with the LIPU (the Italian Bird Protection League) we have installed nest boxes to encourage the reproduction of species such as the Kestrel, the Scops Owl and the Hoopoe and placed feeders for the winter period.

We support the birds during this winter period by giving them sunflower and flax seeds as nutrients. They love it! Within a few hours everything disappears!



You can watch a short of the bird house on our Youtube channel

MEET THE SANGHA: EMI SALA PEUP (41) FROM ALBA, ITALY



JO SHIN - PURE FAITH

Secretary of the Bodai Dojo and the International School of Sumi-e.

Responsible for the archive of the library and training of foreign Zen practitioners staying in Alba.

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My real home

In 2014 I met the Sangha of Alba for the first time at a Festival of the Orient in Milan and I painted my first bamboo with the guided test at the sumi-e stand. I was strongly attracted by this method of painting and, a few months after the Festival, I participated in a workshop led by the master Beppe Mokuza where I practiced zazen for the first time. I immediately felt a very strong bond, and, in the following years, I came to Alba for as many workshops as possible. Zen changed my life. Sitting on a pillow with my legs crossed can sometimes still be very painful for me, even now, after 10 years of practice. But in zazen I can be in touch with my true Self. Daily practice gives me energy, joy, and peace of mind. I found what I was looking for after many years of searching.

Crying in the bathroom

At first, it was difficult for me to combine sumi-e and zazen with my daily life. At the time I was living in Monza, 200 kilometers from Alba, and I was working full-time. I came to Piedmont whenever I could, even if only for two days, and when I had to leave Alba to return to Monza, I found myself crying in the bathroom of the dojo: it was heartbreaking for

me to leave this place perceived as home. From the first encounter with the practice and with the Sangha I clearly understood that in Monza there was neither my real home nor my real family, but it took me six years of coming and going to close with my old life and start a new one here.

Covid

The lockdown due to Covid in 2020 decreed for me the breaking point, a point of a definitive no return. During the lockdown I was unable to reach Alba, I was prevented from meeting the sangha, practicing zazen together, doing samu in the garden. After six months of torture and torment, as soon as the authorities permitted me to travel outside the region, I came to Alba and I understood that the time had come for me to move over permanently. I still remember the moment when everything became clear and simple, exactly. During the samu in the garden I planted leeks and the next day, due to the cats' nocturnal raids on the cultivated land, I had to free the seedlings from the soil that had given way from the edges and that suffocated them. For me this was a visualization of my state: like these little seedlings I was suffocating, burying myself under the weight of other people's

expectations, desires and sufferings. It was time for me to really love myself and do something just for myself for the first time in my life. I needed a place where I could grow.

Dream

In 2017 I heard Beppe talking about this great dream: to build a Zen center on the hills of the Langhe to welcome as many people as possible and organize more retreats. From the very first moment I said to myself: "I feel that I want to be part of this project!" and since 2018 I have set aside all my savings (30,000 euros) to be able to donate them once we had found the right place. Finally, in 2020, two months after my move to Alba, Beppe found the sangha in Costigliole d'Asti!

Right now, I still need a job to make a living. I am a teacher in a kindergarten with children from 3 to 6 years old. Before starting my working day, I practice zazen with the sangha and during the holidays I participate in all the seminars and sesshins. I really like my job but one day – I don't know when yet – I will leave it and leave my apartment in Alba to live in the Temple of Costigliole, because I want to devote myself full time to Zen and practice.

EMI

INSPIRATION

Recently we started an Instagram- account:
#zen.temple.gyogenji

Ariane Mercier, who lives in Alba, is responsible for the account, and she publishes a post twice a week. "Instagram is effective, fast and is very visual in creating a direct online-connection. It is always updated: you take a picture, and you post it immediately. Through this medium people feel more close and inspired to live the story of the new Temple together with us.

What's more, Instagram uses a very neat lay-out to store your posts and images. It is more modern than Facebook and on Insta we reach out also to a young generation. In a very short time, more than 600 people started to follow our account and this number is still growing every week.

Viral

We discovered that people especially like those short videos, they're called reels that lasts less than 2 minutes. In January we published a reel of three trucks that were driving downhill to start the construction works for the new Temple. The only thing we added was a catchy phrase and our enthusiasm and this reel went viral! To our surprise it reached more than 50.000 views all over the world!"



You can watch the viral reel on our Instagram



HOW TO JOIN AND SUPPORT OUR PROJECT?

- a. Adopt a fruit tree, a bamboo, a plant, a cat or a beehive. Price: €50 a year, €250 for life.
b. Do samu or work on the terrain.
c. Make a donation. Email us: dojo@bodai.it
Or visit us: www.zentemple.it



Donations are gratefully received to help us carry out the maintenance and renovation of the new Zen Center of Costigliole d'Asti:

You can also donate through credit card by scanning the QR code:

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