



THE COSTIGLIOLE CHRONICLE

JUNE 2025

COMING INTO BEING

LIFE CREATING ITSELF



The first three buildings of the GYOGENJI will soon be ready for use. Thank you all for the support!

THIS SUMMER THE TEMPLE IS COMING INTO BEING

How does Zen Master Beppe Mokuza, the initiator and spiritual guide of the Temple, reflect on this huge transformation process?



The GYOGENJI Temple was conceived through the practice of zazen about twenty years ago and carried in the womb of the sangha like an embryo. Four years ago, in 2021, the contractions began to give birth to this new Temple, with the purchase of the old farmhouses and the surrounding land in Costigliole

d'Asti. The Temple began to grow like a child in the womb, nourished by the umbilical cord of active zazen practice.

The Temple grew just as in nature, like a tree that grows from a seed into a plant, it slowly matures, and then – at the right moment - offers its fruits, which can finally be harvested to nourish all those who hunger for truth.

This summer the Temple is coming into being, and the process of its realization is shared in this Chronicle. A profound journey of transformation to become what it has always been from

the very beginning: a place where we practice zazen and express our understanding of the Cosmic Order.

A living example of spirituality meeting biodiversity, sustainability and ecology, for the benefit of all sentient beings.

I am deeply grateful to all of you who support the Temple with your time, your financial contributions, and your positive energy.

I shin den shin – from my heart to your heart

BEPPE MOKUZA

PRESENTATION NEW LOGO

We are very happy to introduce the new logo of the Gyogenji Zen Temple. It depicts the delicate linden blossom: a symbol deeply linked to the territory and the history of the place where our Temple is built: the municipality of Costigliole d'Asti. According to the municipal archives, the toponym "Costigliole" derives from Corte Costeliolae, later transformed into Costigliolis. Although there are no reliable sources, it is assumed that the name refers to a tree particularly widespread in the area: the linden tree.

The logo is also intended to recall, in style and shape, the ancient coats of arms of Japanese families, later adopted by numerous temples in Japan. In particular, it is inspired by the emblems of the two main temples of the Soto Zen tradition: Sojiji and Eiheiiji.

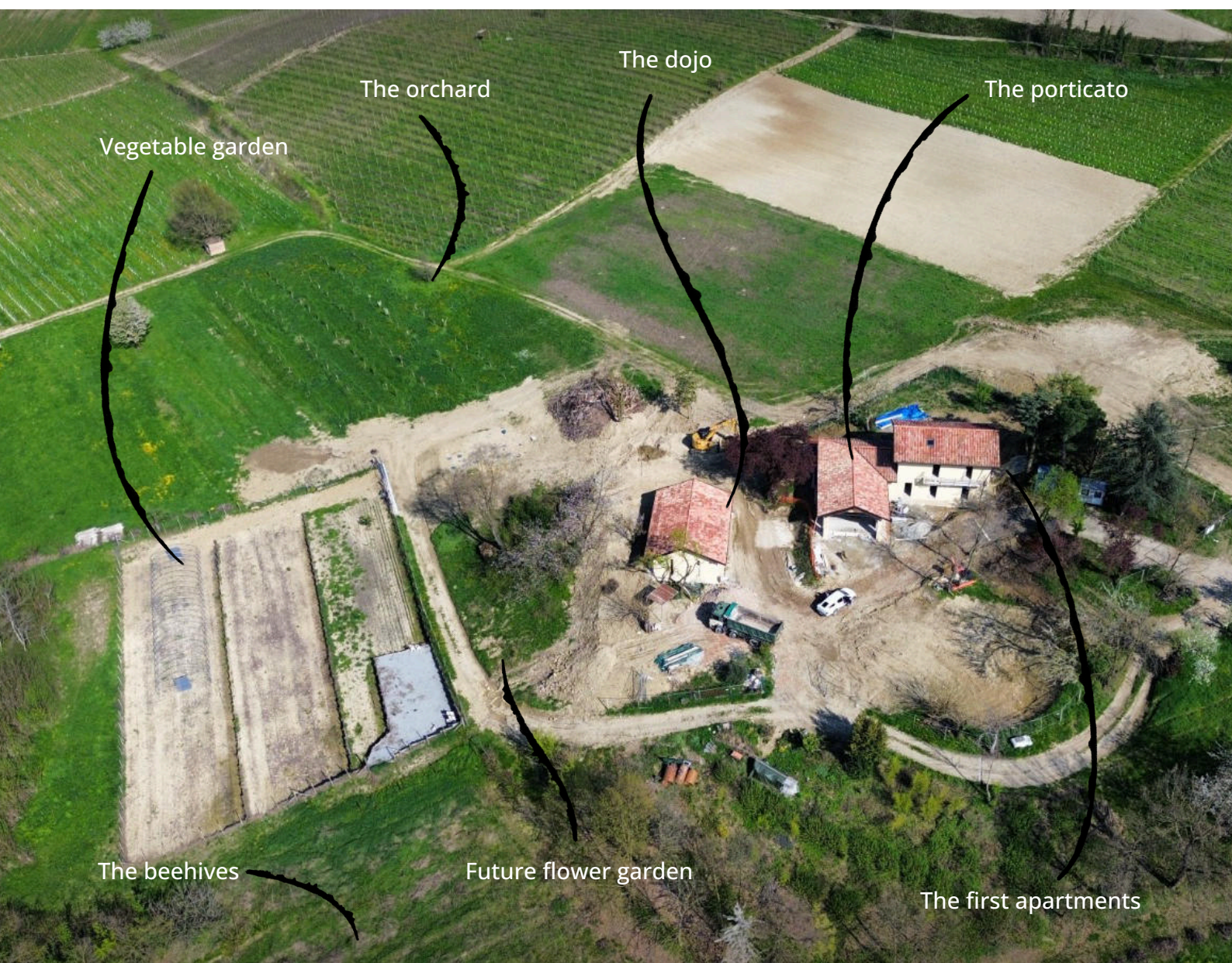
A logo that symbolically unites the temple's homeland and its spiritual roots in Japan.



TEMPIO ZEN
Gyogenji

THE BUILDING PROJECT

The building site, with the dojo at its center. To the right are the first apartments and the porticato, where the communal kitchen will be built. To the left lies the vegetable garden, the future flower garden and the area dedicated to the beehives. At the top we can see the orchard.



CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE OF THE DOJO IN 2025

MARCH



Placing floor heating

APRIL



Pouring concrete floor

MAY



Painting the walls of the dojo



June 2025

MAY



Placing doors and windows

JUNE



Dojo ready with windows



The apartments from the outside



Painting inside



Three zen monks on the balcony

LIVING INTERDEPENDENCE - OUR HUMANITARIAN PROJECT

While the construction site progresses, the vegetable garden grows. When spring arrived in March, we planted the seeds harvested from the previous year: tomatoes, melons, eggplants, onions, garlic, chili peppers, bell

peppers, and more. When the seedlings were strong enough, we transplanted them into the garden, where they are irrigated with collected rainwater.

THE VEGETABLE GARDEN

TOMATO FARMING



From tiny seeds...

Each season, we like to experiment by growing something new. This year, we sowed pak choi, loofah (a very long cucumber), Nagasaki eggplant, long snake watermelon and arkenji (a Japanese fruit) for the first time.



...the tomatoes start germinating



Small plants are transported



Planted and irrigated



The bottles of tomato passata we produced last year were enjoyed to the last drop! Many of you wrote to us to say how much you loved its rich, sweet flavor.

Now, new tomatoes are ripening under the sun, and this year's sauce promises to be even better. Don't miss the chance to taste it — reserve your bottle now to make sure you're among the happy few to receive this year's batch!



Tomato plants growing in the sun

Want to order now? Write an email to: dojo@bodai.it

Supported and tied up to a cane



The first tomatoes arrived in June!

GROWING POTATOES

Last year we grew a very tasty potato called Mona Lisa. We preserved some to sow this spring.



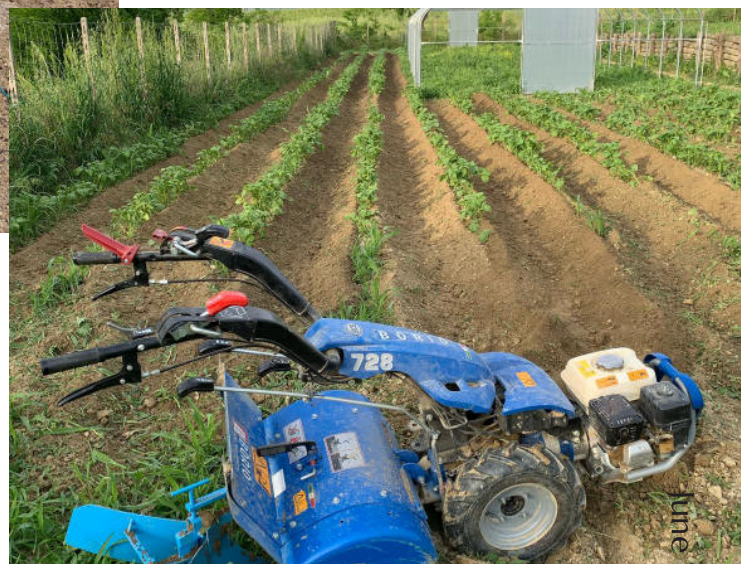
From seed...



...to soil



Creating a field of potatoes



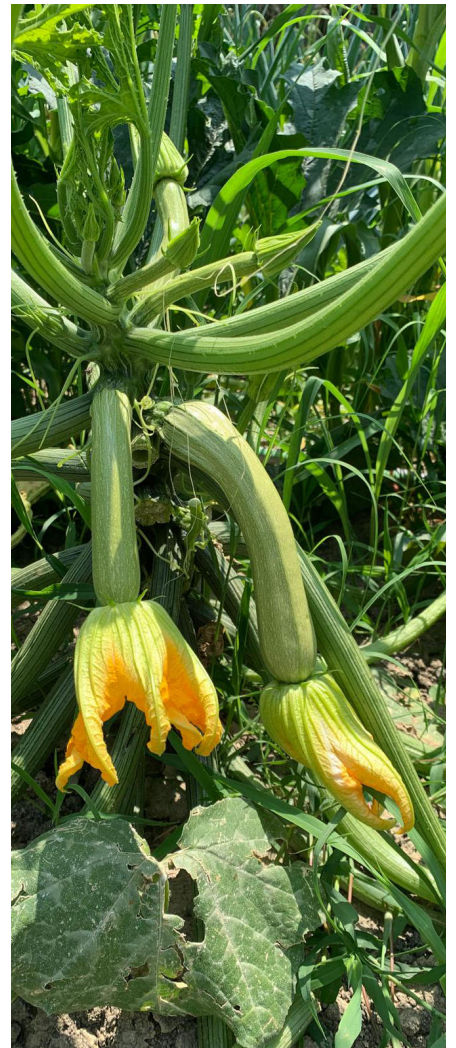
To be harvested in July



Onions



Garlic



Flowering zucchini

PLANTING NEW TREES

We welcomed over 40 new trees to their new home at Gyogenji: Ginkgo biloba, maples, mimosas, lindens, and cedars — just to name a few.

They were planted around the dojo and the houses and are being carefully watered to help them withstand the summer heat.



THE FLOWER GARDEN

Due to construction, we had to move the flower garden to a new location near the water-well. This required a lot of preparation, moving soil, digging and planting to create a new flower garden!



Step 1: Preparing the new flower garden



Step 2: Cleaning the soil



Step 3: Moving flowers in the rain



Step 4: Buying new flowers



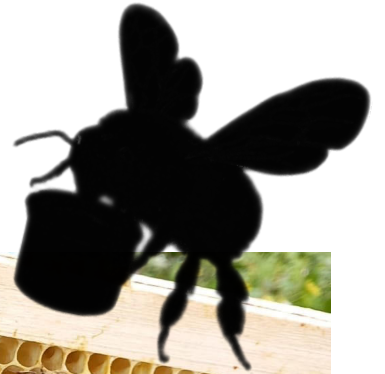
Step 5: Planting new flowers



Step 6: A fresh start!

HOW ARE OUR BEES DOING?

This year, two new bee families have joined the temple's apiary. Now there are four active families on the premises. The favorable weather conditions this spring supported the hives in gathering nectar and pollen from acacia, allowing the colonies to grow strong and healthy. They have already produced a lot of new honey!



Reserve your honey now
to make sure you don't
miss out!

Pre-order by sending us
a mail: dojo@bodai.it



VOICES OF THE SANGHA: PRACTICE IN JAPAN



Zen monks Alessandro Do Ryu Sarotto and Alain Keigyo Plaignaud, two disciples of Zen Master Beppe Mokuza, traveled to Japan to take part in an intensive Zen retreat (Ango) at Kotaiji Monastery in Nagasaki. They returned to Europe in April. The Chronicle asked Alain Plaignaud (68) how he feels about the experience.

Participants of an Ango live together 24 hours a day, with no privacy and isolated from the outside world. A strict hierarchy is established by title and date of arrival at the monastery. The ceremonies are numerous, long, and complex, while total presence and awareness are required in execution (choreography, singing, instruments), especially in front of an audience. Meals are often eaten in oryoki, and serving and eating require flexibility, speed, and precision.

Practicing like this was very intense for me, mainly because of the language barrier—despite my efforts to learn Japanese—and the difficulty in understanding and imitating the monks' ceremonial roles and etiquette, which were seldom explained. I was lost during the first month and frustrated during the second.



Then, suddenly, I felt a deep sense of letting go, my view of many aspects of my environment changed, and the third month was calmer. At the same time, I felt much more compassion for everyone. During teisho (teachings from the Master) and readings, I learned a lot about the rules laid down by Dogen and Keizan, about the sense of

being a monk; and through practice, how this applies in Japan today.

I now understand, on the one hand, the deep reasons behind the Japanese monastic organization, even if this model is too different from ours to be applied in Europe. On the other hand, it has become obvious to me the necessity to have a perfect appearance and to contribute perfectly to the ceremonies.

Practicing again in the Bodai Dojo in Alba – for example as a second or first assistant – I experience more concentration and make less mistakes than before. In Japan I could really go beyond my personal attitudes and attachments. It showed in my bodyweight: I lost 20 kilos!

ALAIN

HELPING THE TEMPLE BY DOING SAMU

Erik Ganzeboom (66) from
Arnhem, the Netherlands



Samu in the vegetable garden

Erik Ganzeboom spent five weeks this spring in Alba doing samu in the garden of the new Temple. He met Zen Master Beppe Mokuza during a sumi-e workshop in Nijmegen in 2022. As an agricultural professional with a focus on bamboo, he was initially drawn to painting bamboo in the sumi-e style. But it was the practice of zazen that left the deepest impression. When Erik heard about the Temple's vegetable garden, he immediately offered his help as a gardener.



Practicing zazen in Alba

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Last November, I had the opportunity to take early retirement. This opened the door for me to spend more time at the Zen project in Costigliole in April and fulfill my wish to work as a gardener for the Temple.

Spring in Italy was unusually cold and wet this year, so I couldn't start working in the garden right away. This gave me the unexpected chance to sew my rakusu under Mauro's guidance in the dojo. During zazen, I was also invited to take on the role of second assistant and to wear a kimono.

I learned a lot from the members of the sangha.

Later, when the weather improved, I began samu in the garden — mostly planting tomatoes and potatoes. We also relocated the flower garden near the well and reorganized the plants. Working in the garden, the experiences in the dojo, and daily zazen all made me feel truly welcomed and at home in the sangha.

I never thought it would be possible, but I really felt free and happy!

ERIK

INSPIRATION FROM THE NETHERLANDS



WORKSHOP ZEN MEDITATION AND SUMI-E IN THE NETHERLANDS

Together with the Dutch sangha, Zen master Beppe Mokuza organized a 5-day workshop in February 2025 in the North of the Netherlands at the NIVON-House Allardsoog.

PARTICIPANTS

In total there were 48 participants from six different countries aged between 28 and 78: The Netherlands, Italy, Norway, Germany, France and The United Kingdom.

Among them, we welcomed 21 beginners who participated in zazen and sumi-e painting for the first time.



ZAZEN

Zazen was held twice a day in the dojo - once in the morning and once in the evening.





SUMI-E PAINTING

Sumi-e painting sessions were held in the gym.



THE BOUTIQUE

The shop was set up in the living room.



THE SERVICE TEAM

Who were responsible for serving food to all the tables.



THE TENZO AND THE KITCHEN TEAM

They cooked three meals a day for 7 days.

REACTIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

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You think you're simply signing up for a Sumi-e (Zen painting) course, but then a world of infinite possibilities opens up. Days are spent practicing seriously and intensely in a 'monastic' environment, immersed in the Dutch countryside. All the while enjoying the company of pleasant and admirable people who have chosen to commit themselves to creating a better 'film' script for their lives.

Thank you to Zen Master Beppe Mokuza. He is someone of whom you can only say: he couldn't have done anything else with his life, and he couldn't have done it any better. He is the type of Zen Master I thought only existed in books set in Japan. What a fortune to have met him in this lifetime.

SILVIO

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Thank you for an impressive week in Allardsoog. I am completely inspired by both zen and painting again! And through contacts with all those nice people who organized it and with each other!

ANNEKE

“

I look back on the inspiring week with great pleasure! I feel I like doing more sumi-e again and also will do meditation more often.

TINEKE

“

I look back on very special and inspiring days. And I really enjoyed making a contribution by helping to clean the kitchen. With warm feelings and gratitude.

JOKE



JOIN THE WORKSHOP
NEXT YEAR

A new workshop will take place in Allardsoog in The Netherlands from February 3rd to 8th, 2026.

To receive the brochure or book your spot, send an email to sonja@sumi-e.nl

HOW TO SUPPORT GYOGENJI TEMPLE

DONATIONS

The Gyogenji Temple exists thanks to the generous donations of practitioners and supporters. Every contribution, big or small, helps us to:

- Complete the construction work.
- Expand and care for green areas.
- Develop reforestation and regenerative agriculture projects.
- Offer educational programs for children and teenagers.

ADOPT AND PROTECT

By adopting a tree, plant, or animal from the Temple, you actively participate in our mission to protect the environment: €50 per year or €250 for a lifetime adoption.

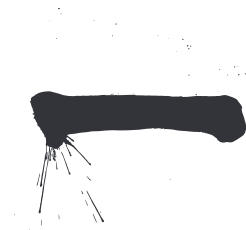
You will receive regular updates on how your support contributes to biodiversity and the regeneration of nature.

VOLUNTEER

Manual work (samu) is an essential practice in the Zen tradition. As a volunteer, you can contribute to:

- Maintaining the Temple grounds.
- Caring for green areas.
- Participating in reforestation projects and event management.

Volunteer opportunities are available for short-term (weekends/one week) or long-term periods (one month or more), offering a unique experience of personal growth within the monastic community.



HOW TO DONATE

Donations are gratefully received through bank transfers:

Zen Bodai Dojo Association

IBAN: IT21Y0853022505000000045799
BIC: ICRAITRREQ0

ANBI-STATUS IN THE NETHERLANDS

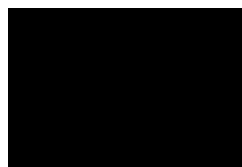
The Bodai Doji Zen Association manages the Temple and is recognized in the Netherlands as a Public Benefit Institution (ANBI). With the ANBI status, donations to the GYOGENJI Zen Temple become tax deductible and no gift tax is levied.

RSIN Number: 823997765

BEQUESTS

A bequest to Gyogenji Temple is a gesture that leaves a lasting legacy. Including the Temple in your will means supporting spirituality, sustainability, and community for future generations.

For more information, contact us at dojo@bodai.it



自然之道



“EVERYTHING YOU GIVE,
YOU GIVE TO YOURSELF

RUMI (1207–1273)