



THE COSTIGLIOLE CHRONICLE

DECEMBER 2025

DOING ALL WE CAN POSSIBLY DO

Samu, the Japanese word that indicates the time dedicated to manual labour, is an essential part of Zen practice. It brings peace, gives joy, and regenerates our energy. At the GYOGENJI Temple, when we do Samu, the pursuit of a personal goal simply disappears. You just weed, carry wheelbarrows of earth, install electricity, create new terraces, or support the ongoing building work. You connect fully with the here and now and concentrate on what arises moment by moment.

As Zen master Beppe Mokuza often says: "By doing all we can possibly do the result is no longer up to us. From that point on, the Impossible will take over."

The Impossible is a continuous source of deep gratitude and wonder: In December 2025, after two years of intense Samu, the new Dojo finally opened its doors, two apartments are inhabited, and the garden has been reshaped: producing delicious vegetables and colourful flowers.

THE BUILDING PROJECT



ARRIVAL OF THE MASTER AND TWO MONKS

In December 2025, the Spiritual Guide of the Temple, Zen master Beppe Mokuza, moved into the newly built apartments together with two elder monks, Alessandro Do Ryō and Mauro Eidō. From that day on, the Dojo also officially opened, offering zazen practice in the tradition of Sōtō Zen.

Dozens of people have already expressed the wish to visit and practise with us at the Temple, and they are all warmly welcome. Zen master Beppe Mokuza will greet everyone with open arms. We expect visits to begin in the summer of 2026.

Naturally, The Chronicle will keep you informed about the Temple's official inauguration.

FIRST ZAZEN IN THE DOJO

In December, the monks and nuns of the GYOGENJI Temple practised zazen meditation in the new Dojo for the very first time. The atmosphere was serene, filled with deep silence.

When the wooden clappers were struck to indicate the end of zazen, we were all touched by the beauty of the morning light rising over the surrounding hills.



BUILDING OF THE CELLAR

During the summer of 2025, thanks to the generous financial support of the UBI and many donations made by all of you, we started the construction of the cellar, which will be the basis of the future building with professional kitchen, guest rooms and accommodation for the monks. It is a crucial step for the whole project. The work begins with the excavation and removal of the earth.



Digging for the walls



Placing the walls



The roof of the cellar

LIVING INTERDEPENDENCE: OUR HUMANITARIAN PROJECT



THE NEW FLOWER GARDEN

A big transformation took place in the Flower Garden which in April we relocated to the grounds near the natural water well. As samu, done by both residents as well as guests, we did not only reshape the garden, but we also planted many new plants, trees and bulbs and this summer they grew and sparked their colours and fragrances all around, spreading joy and beauty for all to enjoy.



Clearing the weeds

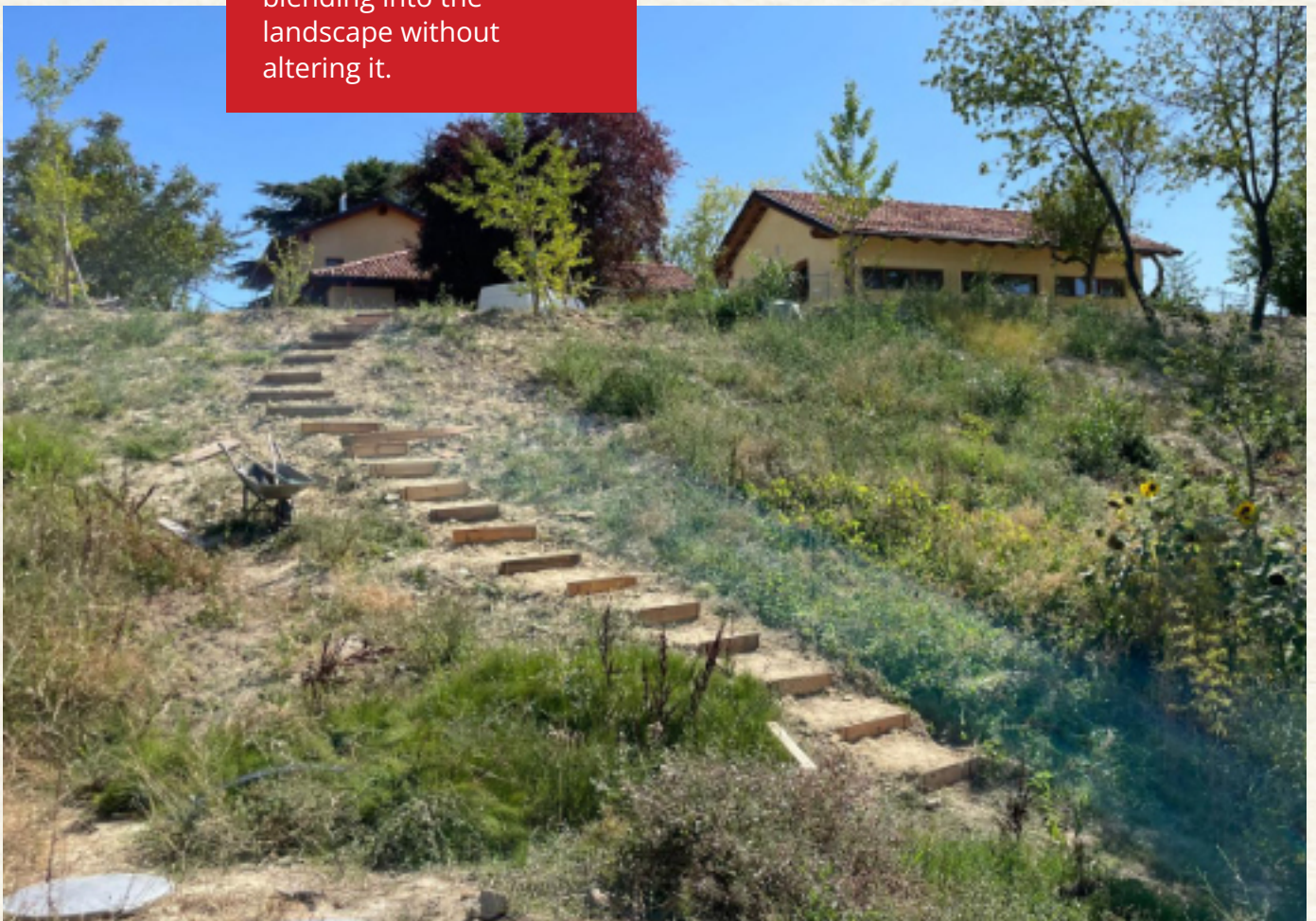
SAMU



Planting new flowers

CONSTRUCTING A STAIRCASE BETWEEN THE DOJO AND THE GARDEN

To allow access from the top of the hill, where the dojo, the refectory and the lodgings are located, to the vegetable garden and the flower garden located below, master Beppe Mokuza together with some practitioners, designed and constructed a handmade staircase in earth and wood. The staircase is designed in such a way as to respect and harmonize with the natural environment, blending into the landscape without altering it.



BUDDHA ARRIVES



Master Beppe Mokuza
"planted" a Buddha
Statue in the Flower
garden to transmit the
spirit of Awakening (Bodai
Shin) to all plants, flowers
and visitors!



BUILDING A WOODEN HOUSE FOR SHELTER

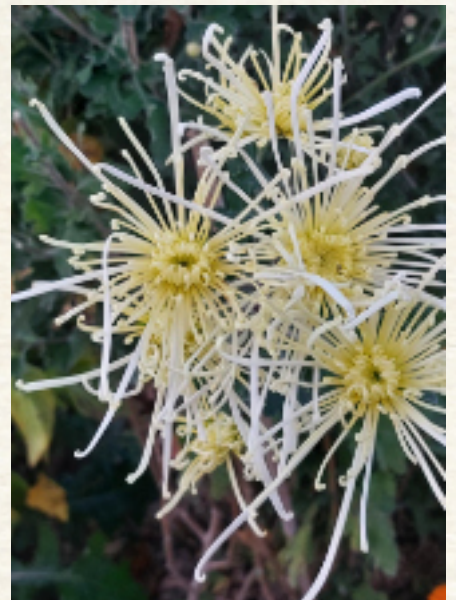
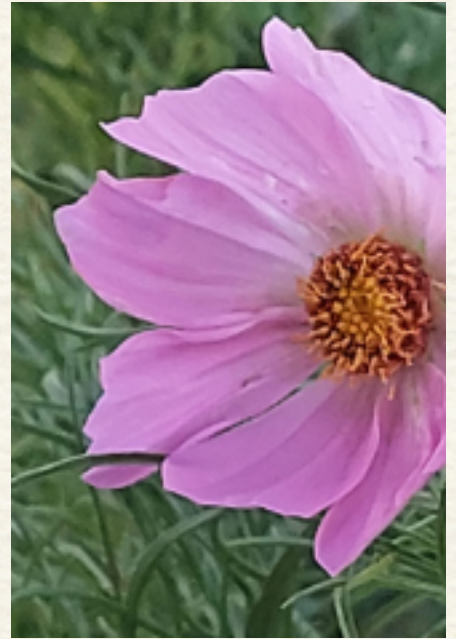
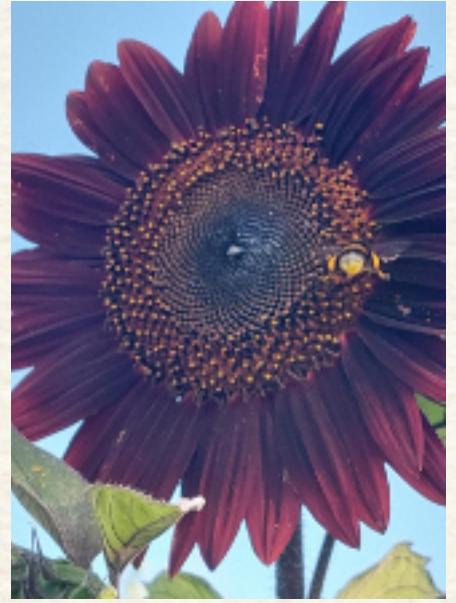


CREATING A MEETING POINT NEAR THE WELL

In April 2025 we moved the Flower garden to a new position near the authentic water well. While working in the garden, by reshaping and restructuring the design, we experienced a profound peace in taking our pauses in the garden itself. We all felt a strong regenerating energy,

probably because we were sitting between two different water points. The old well on the right and on the other side the newly created water tanks which collect all water from the rain. We enjoyed many happy moments while resting after samu!





THE VEGETABLE GARDEN



The fertile soil, the abundant sunshine, the refreshing rains: our vegetable garden prospered and offered the possibility of doing samu.

SAMU



Bundling onions



Picking tomatoes





Onion



Garlic



Pumpkin



Cauliflower

HARVESTING OUR PRODUCE

The vegetables from the temple are available for those who want to eat healthy and biodynamic food - a real cure-all for body and soul. Write to us to find out more!



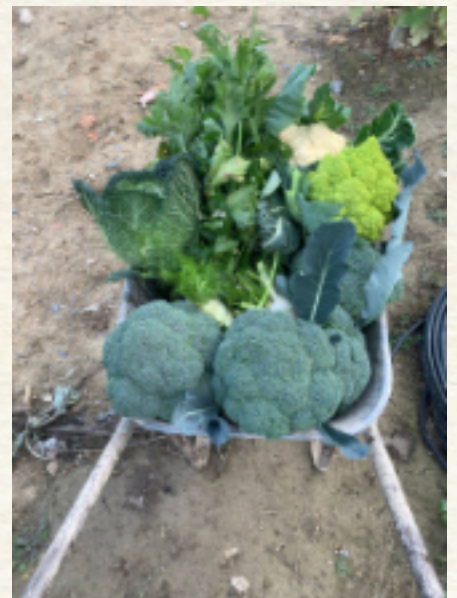
Potatoes



Green beans



Tomatoes



Broccoli

CONSTRUCTING A WOODEN STORAGE HOUSE IN THE VEGETABLE GARDEN



Step one



Step two



Step three

PREPARING THE GREENHOUSE

Thanks to an important economic effort, we purchased the cover for the new greenhouse of the garden. So, we will be able to grow fresh vegetables even in winter.



Step one



Step two



Step three



Step four



Step five

HELPING THE TEMPLE BY DOING SAMU

At the Gyogenji Temple every person is important. Each one of us finds their own role in the community. One person is responsible for supervising the construction, another for the vegetable garden, and yet another for the flowers or making a staircase. We all get the chance to make ourselves useful and we discover a new way to connect with nature, ourselves and others.

Samu, work that is done without expectation or reward, is an important part of daily life and is done during set hours of the day. It follows a precise rhythm and is done in silence. This promotes concentration and directs attention to studying yourself.

Anyone who comes here, as a Buddhist or as a layman, helps by working the soil by his or

her own hands. Doing so you experience the rhythm of nature, the cycle of sowing, planting, watering, weeding, and harvesting. You will learn to understand the organic growth of crops and are less preoccupied with your thoughts and habits, while focusing on your actions and direct experiences.

DANIELE - ITALY IN JULY



The construction of the staircase perfectly represents my brief experience with samu in the Temple, because I wasn't confident it could be done in such a short time, nor that I was capable of it. But the trust that Zen master Beppe Mokuza gave me, together with the warmth with which the entire sangha welcomed me, made it possible. Thank you for the insight to have more faith in life, and in myself.

MARTIN - THE NETHERLANDS IN JUNE



Weeding the vegetable garden

During the summer and fall of 2025 many people visited the Temple to offer their time and energy to do Samu. It is with great pleasure that we want to thank all of you!

INGRID - THE NETHERLANDS IN JULY



Clearing bamboo sticks of the tomatoes

MARIEKE - THE NETHERLANDS IN AUGUST



Weeding the garden

MARJOLEIN - THE NETHERLANDS IN SEPTEMBER



Watering the garden



We collected small pieces of mosaic from the broken tiles of the old farms which were torn down to make room for the new Temple. These broken tiles were scattered all around the premises. We collected them and placed them on the clay steps of the staircase, creating a colourful path between the big buddha at the start to the small buddha on top, which we made ourselves from the clay of the garden.



RUDOLF AND CARO - THE NETHERLANDS IN NOVEMBER



Weeding the garden

SJAAK - THE NETHERLANDS



Installed the kitchen in the apartment

MARJANNE ETSU DO -
THE NETHERLANDS
IN NOVEMBER



During samu, whether I am painting sumi-e, weeding in the garden, or selecting tomatoes, I always experience a deep connection with the sangha, the environment and nature.

ERIK - THE NETHERLANDS IN NOVEMBER



Pampas grass symbolizes abundance, grace, protection, hope and new beginnings!

VOICES OF THE SANGHA

Paolo Tai Gyo (meaning The Great Practice) Scagliola (55) - from the Alba Sangha, Italy



Mara Demichelis (54) from the Alba Sangha, Italy

When and where did you meet zen master Beppe Mokuza?

Paolo It was 2004. My working life as a journalist and digital communication expert was hectic – I had a communications agency and was publisher of free-press magazines – and I felt the need for some space to "decompress" and slow down. I was curious about meditation, and while researching I came across the website of the Mokusho zen dojo in Turin.

I decided to try it. The first time I got up very early in the morning to reach the dojo in time for morning zazen. When I rang the bell, someone opened the door who immediately caught my attention: I had never seen a zen monk and didn't really know what to expect, but his penetrating gaze and his gentle yet determined manner impressed me. The first thing he asked me was: "Why have you come?". I didn't know what to answer right then, and perhaps I didn't answer him because I didn't know myself. But that day Beppe Mokuza Signoritti – who would become a zen master years later – opened much more than a door for me: he opened the door to the zen universe and to a deep friendship that would last for many years to come.

After the first zazen – in which I think I couldn't sit still for more than 10 minutes at a time – we did the genmai ceremony and I remember having a hysterical laugh. Beppe had

told me we would have breakfast, and I was expecting a cappuccino with a croissant! After breakfast, Beppe left the dojo with his red bicycle and said to me: "Look, it's all I own." That person, that world was as far from me as it could possibly be, and perhaps that's why I was attracted to it: his manner, his sincerity, his irony.

Mara In the same year, 2004, not particularly convinced but curious and attracted by the meditative experience, I followed Paolo to the dojo in Turin, leaving our son Mattia, only four years old, with my mother. I travelled at dawn to sit in the morning silence, in pain, with feelings of discomfort appearing everywhere and thoughts running through my mind without any connection between them. Every session was suffering and confusion.

How come you invited Beppe to start a dojo in Alba?

Paolo The first zazen sessions were like hell for me, I couldn't sit still, but I forced myself to continue because I was strongly attracted to that world. My work prevented me from attending regularly, but after about a year, as my friendship with Beppe intensified, in 2005 I proposed that he come and open a zen centre in Alba. I believed that something like that was missing and that the area would respond well to the initiative.

Mara Traveling from Alba to Turin was very demanding and

I always had to organize myself to leave my young son with my mother and manage to get back in time for work. I saw the importance of giving ourselves the opportunity to keep zazen in our lives and, why not, also to make our city more involved one day. We were fortunate to meet Beppe who shared this idea and made this dream his own.

He opened the door to the zen universe and to a deep friendship that would last for many years to come

How did the dojo start?

Paolo We started in 2005 with a small group at our house, one day a week. There was Beppe, some friends and sometimes Alessandro. We practiced in the hallway!

In 2006 we moved to a space in the centre of Alba, where we remained for about three years. Thanks to the promotion I did in my magazines and on the website that I had created, people came – there was always a certain flow. In that same year we also organized the first sumi-e course in my office. I also created a website dedicated to his sumi-e art, and that's how Beppe's zen painting began to spread throughout Europe, attracting practitioners and art enthusiasts from different countries.

In 2009 we officially founded

the association and opened the real dojo: the Bodai Dojo. In the meantime, Beppe had permanently moved to Alba.

Mara The practice in our home hallway brings back unforgettable moments. Afterwards there were long discussions on deep themes to which it leads you, but also friendly chats over a good pizza. Our house has remained permeated with those moments even today, and perhaps that's also why Paolo and I still gather there in the morning for brief zazen sessions, on days when we can't reach the dojo. In our house there's no shortage of zafus and there's even a very small one, given to Mattia when we took him to do zazen at the age of five. Children also need to know silence and, regardless of whether they then decide to practice or not, it's an experience that stays with them.

Paolo, when did you do your ordination as a Bodhisattva?

Paolo I received ordination as a bodhisattva in 2009 from master Roland Yuno Rech.

Those were years of very intense and hectic work, and I tried to attend as I could, but the closeness of Beppe and Alessandro – who also worked with me for a long period until his ordination as a monk – was a great help, even in difficult moments of my life.

At the time I still didn't know it, but I had always been affected by a condition called ADHD, an attention deficit with

hyperactivity that involves difficulty maintaining concentration. A mind that constantly jumps from one thought to another, and physical and mental hyperactivity that makes it almost impossible to sit still. It's like having an engine always running, a radio that never turns off.

I believe it was precisely this deep need that brought me closer to zen: the instinctive need to find an antidote to this inner storm, the desire to finally be able to stay still, in silence, with myself. Zazen was exactly what I needed. But paradoxically, ADHD made zen practice also my greatest challenge: sitting motionless for 30 or 40 minutes was – and still is – a struggle against my own neurological nature. Alessandro saw my difficulties in sewing the rakusu – sewing also requires that prolonged concentration that is so difficult for me – and sewed one for me. I am still deeply grateful for that gesture.

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A place where practice could be imperfect, discontinuous, difficult, and yet genuine

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Mara, when did you decide to sew your rakusu? Why?

Mara My path was very different and much longer. For many years I sat in zazen doubtful that anything special would ever come to me by simply sitting breathing in front of a white wall. I had intensely wanted to go to the Alba dojo

together with Paolo, but in the following years the dojo continued its work without me, touching and attracting people in a way that I couldn't grasp.

At times I tried again to sit in zazen, alone in my house, while Paolo appeared and disappeared from the dojo, also struggling. From afar I perceived the power of this thing, but the fragments of calm that I sometimes glimpsed always blocked in a breath that wasn't free and in a contracted posture.

Then COVID came. In 2020 I began to sit in zazen every Saturday online, accepting to do it in the imperfect way that seemed to belong to me. After COVID, I discovered cancer as an unwelcome guest, which gave me the need to take care of myself. Was zazen something that didn't belong to me? I continued like this until, on November 25, 2023, I entered the Alba dojo with circumspection. I began to sit with them every Saturday.

In January 2024 I started sumi-e painting with monk, and three months later, Alessandro, on April 28, something happened. After the end of zazen, for the rest of the day and the following days, I found a deep and natural breath. I had encountered zen. Now I am sewing my rakusu to become a Bodhisattva, because what I desire is to bring the breath I found sitting in zazen into my daily life, into everyday actions.

How do you both help the dojo and the sangha?

Paolo In those years I helped a lot with communication: I created the first website for the dojo, wrote articles in my free-press magazines to promote activities, generated publicity. We also organized a conference by Zen master Roland Yuno Rech in Alba. My experience as a journalist and communicator was useful in making zen known in the area.

Mara As a lawyer, I provide legal support to the Bodai Dojo association – from formal establishment to administrative matters that have arisen over time.

Paolo The practice has been difficult and with long interruptions. It's difficult to reconcile intense work, with its difficulties and practice. For me it improved when ADHD was diagnosed: there's a new awareness of diversity and acceptance. Finally understanding why sitting in zazen was so difficult for me allowed me to be kinder to myself and to continue the practice without judging myself.

What did you witness over the years as the sangha in Alba slowly grew?

We saw many people arrive, some stay, others leave. We saw monks move from Turin to Alba to support the dojo. We saw the sangha grow silently but constantly, root after root. The most beautiful thing was seeing how Beppe and the sangha managed to create a space of authenticity and welcome, where everyone could bring their difficulties – like ours – without judgment.

A place where practice could be imperfect, discontinuous, difficult, and yet genuine.

“

It's not just a matter of zen practice: it's a deep friendship, a relationship that has been built day by day, zazen after zazen

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How do you feel about the new Temple in Costigliole?

Paolo We are deeply happy that from this beginning from the hallway of our house, from that small intuition of 2005 – together with Beppe the temple was born.

From the first days in Alba Beppe said: "We will build a temple on these hills!" Obviously, the vision was powerful, but at the time it seemed truly unrealizable to me. Instead...It's like seeing a seed planted twenty years ago become a tree.

Mara It's a magnificent work. We dreamed about it; Beppe and the monks of Bodai Dojo made it real. It's the fruit of their work and of many sacrifices.

Do you follow Beppe to the new Temple? Even if it is 25 km from where you live? Why?

Paolo Yes, we will try to continue the practice at the temple as much as possible and help as we can, despite the distance. After twenty years, Beppe – who has meanwhile become a zen master – and the sangha are part of our lives.

It's not just a matter of zen practice: it's a deep friendship, a relationship that has been built day by day, zazen after zazen. Beppe saw us in our difficulties, in our struggles, in our returns and absences. He was a fixed point when we needed it. The sangha is a community that supported us in difficult moments. Twenty five kilometers are nothing compared to the path we have walked together. We want to be there, as at the beginning, when everything was born in our hallway.

Mara Yes. The practice of zazen at the temple offers us contact with nature and the sharing of the meditative moment with other monks. The energy we receive is indescribable. We are also considering looking for accommodation near the temple – perhaps a mobile home or an apartment in Costigliole – to be closer and be able to participate more intensely in the life of the temple.

Inspiration - From Bodai Dojo to Bodai Ju

The GYOGENJI Temple is located in the village of Costigliole d'Asti. In the name the word Tiglio is present, and "Tiglio" means Linden Tree in Italian. On the premises a lot of characteristic Linden trees are growing, offering beneficial shade in summer. In the logo of the Temple the three typical forms of the Linden tree are combined into one design: the leaves, the flowers and the buds.

It is a very particular term, because in Japan Bodai ju means above all the "Bodhi tree", that is, the fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*) under which the Buddha reached enlightenment. When that tree arrived in Japan from India and China, by analogy the linden tree was also called so, which has leaves similar to those of the *Ficus religiosa*.

So today, if you say Bodai ju, in Japan they can mean the linden tree as a physical tree, but with all the symbolic connotation of the "sacred Bodhi tree".

So, the Bodai Dojo cherishes the Bodai ju with great respect!



The linden tree (genus *Tilia*) in Japanese is said: 菩提樹 (ぼだいじゅ, bodai ju)

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.

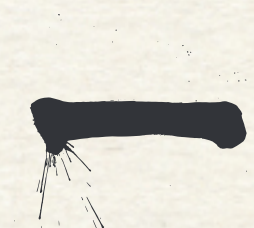
You will receive regular updates on how your support contributes to biodiversity and the regeneration of nature.

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



少然一庄



“EVERYTHING YOU GIVE,
YOU GIVE TO YOURSELF

RUMI (1207-1273)