

LIFE AND HISTORY OF SHINNYOJI

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Why in 2020 should someone practice Zen and what does this little common and inflated word mean?

My father always told me, “Why go bother a religion that you don’t belong to, that originates so far from our way of thinking?”.

At the Temple, the intensive Retreats of Practice and the Rōhatsu Vigil are opened by singing the Hymn of Shinnyoji, they are always closed by thanking the participants for giving life to the Practice, rather than going to a happy hour or drinking a spritz with friends, or watching the soccer game or watching races on TV.

What urges someone to Practice Zen?

I started “seriously” sitting in Zazen when I realized that in everyday life, I no longer laughed, I “sneered”. I had lost the capacity to laugh and smile.

More and more people visit the Temple, all ages, from all over. They come driven by a search from within, from something that inside of themselves takes up a lot of space and dignity. They often arrive full of ideas, concepts, perceptions, expectations and curiosities to discover.

Some arrive because they read a book about Zen or Buddhism, others because they heard something about meditation and want to understand, “if it’s good for me, if it’s what I am looking for, if it can be useful to me”. Many arrive because they are going through, or recently gone through, a difficult moment of their lives and they feel like they need to change something, very few simply want to Practice Zen.

So why Zen and not another Practice?

When Arianna came to Shinnyoji, she was very unhappy with herself and angry at the whole world. Furthermore, in her reasoning, which give the expression of her educational and professional background, she was not able to think about anything that she hadn’t already analyzed, understood and decided was inarguably “true” or “correct”.

Alessio thought that he was born under a bad star, he scraped through life with anger and irony, when deep down, he was terribly unhappy and depressed, always in search of new intellectual stimuli.

Surely, we all look for solid certainly, permanent happiness and stability, security instead of anxiety.

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Deep down, we all look for a way to change our lives, but once we find ourselves in front of the solid possibility of change, we retreat with dismay and most of the time, we run away. It is much easier, and surely from a certain point of view, it is less work to stay tangled in our knots, in our cages, where we know how to move around and what to expect.

A Practice done with *mushin*, the originally pure heart-mind, will change your life. And so the first question is, “Does one really want to change their life and confront the challenge of change?”. A Zen Practice is an encompassing practice, that spreads through your everyday life 24/7. There is a famous Zen saying, “Moving in each moment as if we are in the company of our Teacher”.

What is the intrinsic and deep meaning of this phrase in 2016? It means to decide to Awaken to your own Buddhahood, in respect for each sentient being.

It means to undergo a training and interior research that finds its dashes of awareness in the silence of Zazen and in Samu Practice, manual work. It means to carry the spirit of Zazen in every movement of your everyday life.

Today who is interested in reaching the Satori, Illumination?

If we dispel the myth that a quantum leap can suddenly happen in any given moment of our lives, if this does not have years, existences, eons of intense, humble and conscientious Practice behind it.

Living with the spirit of *mushotoku*, of non-attainment, that can be mistaken with the spirit of loss, it is simply carrying out your life with a wider vision, that transcends your own needs and attachments, to open up to an altruistic good toward all sentient beings.

In order to arrive at a mere glimpse of understanding of this disposition of spirit, you must impose upon yourself and undergo a training that allows us to abandon our individual selves, our restricted vision of the world, to open up to the vastness of the Universe, of Truth and the world *as it is*.

Training that surely passes through the understanding of a Form, that gets us used to slowing down resistance and the judgements of the ego.

A Form that, in the power of its ritual, leads us to the footsteps of the Buddha and Ancient Patriarchs.

A Form that in its always identical repetition, in the essentiality of its movements, in the non-questioning, in the non-doing, but simply being, it forcefully unhinges our judgements and prejudices, our individualistic vision of our existence.

A strong and constant Practice, that at times confronts us and obliges us to then overcome what we wrongly believe to be the limits of our psycho-physical powers. In some moments, a sort of way of

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surviving, that naturally brings us to touch, to be aware, that we are much more than we think we are - we have an infinite amount of unexplored resources, in that we are Buddha-Nature, Buddha on the Path the Awareness.

This is the extraordinary, that what the Buddha taught through putting into action the First Turn of the Dharma Wheel in the Statement of the Four Noble Truths, each of us experiencing it and manifesting it on yourselves.

In the months, that added up become years, in which I was trained at the Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery - a Japanese training Monastery, now also for foreigners - I felt on myself and in the Spirit inside of me, moments in which I lived at the edge of my strength, with my mind that opposed my determination, setting off a bitter battle to not demolish the bulwarks of the ego.

When someone talks about the spirit of non-attainment, about living the Practice for Practice, this is the example. The effort needed to live an extreme moment does not give the possibility of living it for any purpose, even if it's to reach Illumination. There is no space in the mind in these moments for intentional aim. Further along in time, looking back, we understand it is exactly there where we are able to abandon something, to open up to more *other*.

A true transformation become flesh, skin, bone, marrow, blood and nourishment of our lives. Something that marries into our skin in a subtle and permanent way, in such a way that it becomes a natural process, without decisiveness of our minds, without rationally realizing it, because it does not pass through a conceptual equation.

What is left in Japan in 2016 of the forging power of Zen Practice taught and preached by Dōgen Zenji, in his homeland, after his return from China where he encountered his Teacher and reached Illumination?

Those who, in the Land of the Rising Sun still live in the Spirit of the Way believe that Zen will resurrect in the West with a new vigorous and authentic Spirit.

Us in Italy, in Europe, we have this great task of transmitting and reviving the Original Spirit of the Way, conjoined with our contingent reality and mediated through our identity.

It is a great challenge, considering that the intellectual approach to Zen Tradition, popularized by a slew of translated texts, commented upon and reworked from their original language to European languages, created the first barrier to penetrate the authenticity of the Teaching.

If we add the individual spirit to this, the self-referenced vision of within, lacking the inclination toward a community and social spirit, typical in Japan and Eastern thought in general, far away

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from our presenteeism and egocentricity, we can understand the great difficulty of flourishing the “Right Vision” of Zen.

My Teacher always says, “We don’t speak about Zen, Dōgen Zenji never spoke about Zen, but rather, about Zazen. We don’t approach the theme of Buddhism, but rather, we encounter the Buddha Way.”

I personally believe that these two affirmations give the literal right key to be able to start a walk in Italian Zen, European Zen, Zen outside of Japan.

Committing to the centrality of Zazen and not in an “-ism” that becomes a caste, a superfluity, interest and power, is the only way to plow the lines of the new Buddha Way in the West.

Looking back at Arianna and Alessio, emphasizing the difficulty they found in Practice in respect to the fear of change, feeling “off the rails”, different from normal movements.

The loss of keeping a clean, empty, clear mind in 2016, which comes from media bombardments and colonization of the occult, which today attack most people’s unconscious minds.

I understand, at the beginner of their Practice, the innocence of telling everyone their experience, thinking that, through their words of testimony, others can approach the Way and the disappointment that comes with it. Zen is for everyone, but not everyone is for Zen.

I understand their fear in interpersonal relationships, most of all in work life, where their actions transformed by Practice can confirm in others the judgement of a weak, remissive or non-competitive behavior.

Approval that it is not a synonym for fragility or submission. Accepting, welcoming the world as it is, embracing one’s karma and riding the energy of the moment, awaiting what life has to bring us, it is the fruit of a very long course and the demonstration of the extreme force of our Buddha-Nature. At the same time, not wanting to change others, but respecting their karmic path and not preaching to them, is the tangible proof of understanding that everything is perfect as it is and that each person, in their current existence, has their dharmic position, the result of their karma in the Samsara Cycle.

Accepting Reality as it is isn’t an act for losers, it isn’t just to feel good, on the contrary, it’s the opening of the heart, it’s the fruit of the effort and courage to widen one’s horizons to the comprehension of the universality of One and all dharmas. It is awakening to the Ultimate Truth. It is not asking for what is not given. It is accepting your own karma as a cathartic expedient of transformation.

The warning to Arianna and Alessio is not to identify with their karma, but believing, having faith in the Way made by the Buddha and experiencing change.

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Following the Way is beginning with an act of faith, trust, in the course that the Buddha indicated, that is not dogmatic, as it is possible to personally encounter it, living this experience.

How can one accept the figure and role of a Teacher in Italy in 2016?

What is his/her meaning and what significance does a Teacher have in Zen Practice?

In the Zen Tradition, the Teacher has a central, preeminent and essential role. Surely, we are the best Teacher of ourselves: the historic Shakyamuni Buddha, in his "Last Lecture" *Yuikyōgyō* before entering in Nirvana, invited his students to not have other Teachers outside of themselves.

Surely our parents, our children, our loved ones are our Teachers, but during the training period, in the time of education of our Practice, it is impossible to avoid the meeting with a good Teacher and following him or her with trust and respect. In the original Tradition of Zen, it is said that our Teacher, for us, is our Buddha. Dōgen Zenji teaches in the *Shōbōgenzō* that if we don't find a good Teacher it is better to stop practicing the Way and that meeting one's own comes from merits from past lives.

The Teacher is the custodian of the Tradition: the testimony of the Lineage, after having overcoming the various stages of Initiation and having received the Transmission of the Dharma from his or her own Teacher, that in turn, had received the same from their Teacher, this is who transmits the Lineage, that pours their own bowl into the bowl of their student.

Although even a bad Teacher can be considered good, because it gives light to the black holes in which one mustn't fall in Practice, if we want to follow the Way in religious terms, to progress in our way it is necessary to follow a good Teacher who, while adopting *Upaya*, expedients and different methods for each student, since each person has their own world within them, that comes from Compassion and from the First *Pāramitā*, *Dāna*: generosity.

At Shinnyoji, we have the great Honor-burden of transmitting one of the most ancient Lineages in Japan: Lineage of the Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery in Kanazawa, that was founded in 1289 by Tettsu Gikai Zenji (1219-1309), the third Abbot of the Eiheiji Monastery, the main Temple of the Sōtō School, who received the Teaching from his Teacher Dōgen Zenji (1200-1253).

Keizan Jōkin Zenji (1268-1325), follower of Tettsu Gikai Zenji, was the second Abbot of Daijōji. In 1321 he received a gift in a Temple in Noto where he founded Sōjiji. This was the origin of Sōjiji in Yokohama.

This is how Daijōji, through the work of its first Abbots, has a strong connection with the two main Monasteries of the School Sōtō: Eiheiji e Sōjiji.

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It was in the Daijōji Monastery where Keizan Zenji held his Teishō, Dharma Teachings, upon the Denkoroku “The Transmission of the Light”, text from 1300 that narrates the Transmission of the Dharma from Teacher to disciple, from the historic Buddha Shakyamuni until Kōun Ejō Zenji.

At the end of my training at Daijōji, receiving Assignment from my Teacher to bring up students and transmit his Lineage in the West, with all of my effort and the best of my Awareness, until the protection of the Ancient Patriarchs of Daijōji, I have undertaken the of translating the immeasurable gift to Shinnyoji.

Being in Italy with limited financial budget, not having access to funds from Japan or other grants, our urban Temple has the typical layout of a Florentine building, a structure build in the first decades of the 20th century.

Purchased in 2009, the currently the permanent Seat was inaugurated on April 25th of that year. It began on the ground floor where the Temple is located with a basement Guest House, with a capacity of 14 people, including a private garden.

In the Zendo, the Meditation Hall, only Zazen and Sutras are practiced. The Sangha has a small library for studying Zen and Buddhist texts in Italian, Japanese, English and Chinese.

In the garden, the stone-slab Stele is hung with “Shinnyoji” written in calligraphy by Teacher Paola Billi and a maple tree, a gift from our neighbor, Yumiko san, who is from Japan, from her family’s Zen Temple, planted by the Sangha four years ago.

The Temple’s door is always open for everyone to come and go, regardless of any orientation or belief, at any level of commitment. I always repeat, as the Buddha taught, “Take what you need”, I also allow a lot of autonomy with the practice of the reciting the Sutras, one can choose whether or not to participate. Therefore, whether one has a more lay approach to Zen or a more religious vision, the impact with the reality of the Temple is definitely engaging. It is one thing to think of a place where you try to meditate and have an experience that is often initiated by a simple curiosity, other situation is to immerse yourself in the “nothing special” of our Practice and in its ritual.

The Practice at Shinnyoji is expressed in different ways according to the effort given by the Practitioners, namely, those who have received an Ordination and are upon the Way of the Buddha, in comparison to those who just come to the Temple to meditate, as if it were for health benefit.

Those who receive a Monastic Ordination in the Daijōji Lineage become testimonies of the Tradition and along with the Teacher, have the assignment of preserving and caring for it. This translate to not only wearing an outfit, but is concentrated in a way of life, in a way of being that is applicable also in life as a layperson.

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Zen inspired by the Daijōji guidelines is practiced at Shinnyoji, fitted into the Italian context. Zen that contemplates the original Form and ritual, even in a brief way, far from the rigid aesthetic formalism, inspired by the Practice that I learned from my Teacher during the ten years of training at Daijōji, reconfirming the connection with the Origin.

The search lead me all the way to Japan, but my imprint and evolution in the Way, have the focus in the manifestation of the Buddha's Compassion. Every Teacher brings him or herself: in my Teaching, I particularly put emphasis on Zazen, Compassion, Servitude, and Harmony of the Sangha.

However, beyond any adjustment, mediation or update of the Origins that a Teacher want to bring, to make Zen Tradition more accessible and understandable, what is fundamental for those who go within the Path, is to keep in mind that the path is definitely not simple as it seems from the outside, as suggested by the vision of the essentiality of the Practice.

The difficulty of domesticating the ego, the aware willingness of accepting and managing the change that occurs from Practice, the "sitting and simply being", subjecting to a discipline, having to let judgements and prejudices fall, the strongholds of our defensive selves are the obstacles that must be confronted.

Welcoming the Law of Impermanence, *mujō*, the confrontation with the role of the Teacher and the transience/relativity of our thoughts and the Reality as it was taught by Dōgen Zenji and the contents of the Dharma transmitted by the Buddha, that give us knowledge of our karma and the work to transform it, the difficulty of recognizing the Buddha-Nature in every being and in everything, become more motives for nearly unsurpassable torment and unease.

One can practice at any level of commitment, but what is truly important is that, in any measure, we dedicate ourselves to Practice, it is done with a pure heart, *mushin*, without reinventing our way of understanding, following the principles of the Dharma and observing them.

Deep research of the Way is for everyone a continuous effort of realigning oneself to the Law of the Buddha, it is going beyond the obstacles, sometimes true crucibles, the resistance of our ordinary mind, so that the Way is not an opinion, it is non-negotiable, it is not questionable.

The Way stems from insights or considerations in the moment of our mind: "Now yes, later now, then maybe, we'll see, I'll check." It comes from our mood, from the conclusions of our reasoning and deductions. The way isn't a question of near or far or any distance: *everything is perfect as it is*.

There is also not a preferred Way, a better Way than another: each has its specification, that resounds mainly from its heart, this is why it is more comprehensible.

There isn't an "absolute" for a better or worse way, behavior or attitude of practicing.

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Also, for those who with a long-term commitment, it is necessary to always have extreme honesty in Practice and in making yourself aware of where you are and how you are proceeding, rather than hiding behind an excuse or show. Even if the eyes just for an instant, remember that it will no longer be possible for them to reclose, but by their discretion, they can ignore and forget that vision.

No problem, it is just us who decides whether or not to create new grooves in our minds. There isn't any judgement, only awareness and decisiveness on where we want to go, how we want to conduct our existence, seeing how the Way is not something that we can sell, domesticating for pleasure and profit, or degrade it for consent or approval for the well-being section of the supermarket.

The Way is Wonderful, Untransmissible and Inexpressible.

Everything else is our karma, that doesn't have anything to do with our Buddha-Nature, with the Spirit of Awakening.

The Way is non-negotiable. It is simply beyond every duality. It's pure. Pure Dharma. Pure Source. Pure Origin. It is our mind that is not always ready and climbs on mirrors and tried to oppose it by creating tricks, masks and illusions. The Way is constantly in front of our eyes and sings itself, in the status in which nothing is missing and nothing is in excess.

Therefore, the advice to Arianna and Alessio is applying yourself with perseverance, humility and effort in the Zen Way, to later find yourself, through a long path of transformation and Awakening without beginning or end, with new awareness, search for harmony and thankfulness, to drinking a spritz, meeting friends for happy hour, cheering for a favorite team or player, without attachments, far from any type of spiritual arrogance, feeling One with the entire Universe.

Rev. Iten Shinnyo Marradi



Shinnyoji, year 2020

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1. The Teacher Anna Maria Iten Shinnyo Marradi

Reverend Anna Maria Iten Shinnyo Marradi founded and directs as the Teacher and Abbot of Shinnyoji Florence Sōtō Zen Temple.

She met her Teacher in August 2002 at her first Practice retreat at Tōkōzan Daijōji di Kanazawa, where Reverend Tenrai Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi is the 72nd Abbot.

And so, she began her path that brought her to Japan twice per year, for long periods of training under the loving guidance of her Teacher.

Two years later, on August 6th, 2004, she received with the Tokudō Ceremony, the monastic vows and the Buddhist name Iten Shinnyo, where “I” means Italy, “Ten” means sky, “Shin” truth and Nyo “This is”, therefore: “Sky of Italy This is Truth”.

On April 16th, 2007, Daijōji held a “Dharma Debate” at the Hossen Ceremony.

On June 5th, 2008 she received the Shihō, the Dharma Transmission, Dempo, by her Teacher, and the same year on June 21st at Eiheiji and June 22nd at Sōjiji, the two main Sōtō Zen Temples in Japan, with the Zuisse Ceremony conferred the Jyūshoku level, officially becoming the Abbot of Shinnyoji.

Another two years later, on February 8th, 2010, she received the Nitōkyōshi level, that allows her, according to the Order of Japanese Sōtō School, to confer Ordinations.

The possibility became even more concrete for Shinnyo Rōshi to carry out the Assignment entrusted to her from her Teacher: teach students, take care of the Temple, preserve and transmit the ancient Daijōji Lineage of throughout Europe.

It was in this spirit that Reverend Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi attended the first Ordinations at Shinnyoji and later sent Rōshi to a higher level from Daijōji, to help Shinnyo Rōshi in the celebration of the Ordination Ceremonies.

On April 1st, 2013, she was named to SōtōShū Shūmuchō, the Sōtō Zen Administrative Official, Kokusai Fukyōshi for Europe, missionary Teacher authorized to the diffusion of Zen Buddhism outside of Japan. Within this role, she participates in the annual Seminars and Conferences of the Centre Européen du Bouddhisme Sōtō Zen, at the Gendronnière Temple, in Blois, France, and the recurring official Ceremonies organized by Sōkanbu Europe, such as the 650th Anniversary of the death of Gasan Jōseki Zenji, second Abbot of Sōjiji, the 50th Anniversary of the death of Teacher Taisen Deshimaru Rōshi.

On June 9th, 2013 she received from her Teacher the title Director of the European Section of Sekai Zen Senta – World Zen Center – Association founded by Reverend Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi in the

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Ancient Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery, with the vision of unifying Zen teaching and the Practice in a Universal Center, the Sangha. Within this project Shinnyo Rōshi, along with her students, sit next her Teacher during the annual cycle of International Conferences of the WZC.

In April 2016, she was recognized by the Ministry of Religion, enrolled in the registration of the Italian Buddhist Union.

She occasionally holds Teachings in various Centers and Dōjō where she is invited to conduct days of Practice or hold conferences.

At the end of August 2015, the publisher Shinichi Fukuda came to Florence, journalist and editor of the *Hokkoku Shimbun* newspaper in Kanazawa to complete her work on a publication about the 5th Anniversary of the Fukushima tsunami.

The book, *Five Years After Fukushima. 100 Great Monks*, was published in Japan in February 2016 by Hokkoku Shimbunsha, was written with the intention of instilling spiritual peace and new hope and faith in the victims of this terrible catastrophe. It tells the stories of one hundred famous monks, expressed through a symbol chosen as a message of new hope. In the book, the Calligraphy is paired with a presentation from the Teachers themselves and their Temple, with an explanation of the meaning of the chosen work and photo of the Abbot and their Temple.

The original Calligraphy in the book were later sold in auction for charities, among them was the Japanese Red Cross, the funds were entirely donated, along with a part of the book, to the residents of the places hit by the Tohoku and Kumamoto earthquakes where, in April 2016, the strong shakes created much damage.

Shinnyo Rōshi's first meeting with Zen occurred at the beginning of the 70s when she discovered the book, *101 Zen Stories* at the Feltrinelli bookstore, after reading a some of the stories, she suddenly felt a resounding echo in her heart-mind that amazingly filled her with a touching joy. It was uncovering a step that she already knew, that had already belonged to her, that returned to vibrate like a tuning fork, radiating in every note. And so, she began her research, return from different places and times that first lead her to, during a time when there was no Zen Practice in Italy, to practice Yoga by the Himalayan Teachers Tradition. During this Practice, she went to India at the beginning of the 90s and received the Initiation in the Himalayan Yogi at Dehradun, in Uttar Pradesh, by her Teacher Swami Rama (1925-1996), founder of the Himalayan Institute of Yoga Science and Philosophy, practicing at the Sadhaka Grama Ashram in Rishikesh. In January 1995, upon returning from Practice at the Ashram, she met a practitioner from The Circle Ensoji Monastery of Milan at a seminar in Florence, he told her about this place and at a preliminary meeting, introduced her to the Abbot and founder Teacher Tetsugen Serra.

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From 1995 – 2000 she practiced Zen under the guidance of Teacher Tetsugen Serra from the The Circle Ensoji Monastery, at the Jukai Ceremony on September 25th, 1999, with the Dharma name Myō Shin, Marvelous Heart.

In those five years of intense Practice, during which she also helped established the hillside Sanbōji Monastery, named by Teacher Tetsugen Serra who ran the Florentine Dōjō from The Circle Ensoji Monastery in Milan.

In September 2000, Shinnyo Rōshi began to feel the culminating necessity to take on other educational experiences to respond to the call that she was feeling stronger and stronger within herself, which brought her to practice at diverse Dōjōs for two years in Italy and other places in Europe until the event that brought her to discover the original Zen and meet her Teacher in Japan.

In 2001, she participated in a Sacred Pilgrimage at Allahabad in India, at the Maha Kumbh Mela as a gesture of thanks to her Teacher Swami Rama, who passed to the next life in 1996 and invoked protection for his next spiritual path.

Few months after her return from India, she met Prof. Hideyuki Doi on a train to Bologna, he had just received the responsibility from Todai University in Tokyo of opening in Florence, the first Seat of Todai outside of Japan. Through her meeting with Prof. Doi, nephew of Reverend Giko Mase Rōshi, who at the time was Abbot of Daijōji and Abbot of the Kogenji Temple in Toyama, this opened the path that lead her to Reverend Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi, the Japanese Teacher from whom she received Transmission.

From that year through 2008 she was at the Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery for the summer-autumn season to complete her training under the guidance of her Teacher, the Abbot.

2. The Shinnyoji Temple

The "**Shinnyoji**" Temple was founded in September 2004 and is officially recognized by Reverend Ryushin Azuma Rōshi, the 72nd abbot of the Daijōji Monastery in Kanazawa, Japan. An official calligraphy seal upon a wooden table declares: "Shinnyoji Daijōji Italy Betsuin" which in English means: "Shinnyo Temple, Italian Seat of the Daijōji Monastery".

And so Florence has its first Zen Temple belonging to the Japanese Sōtō School: www.sotozen-net.or.jp within the official Temple circuit authorized outside Japan.

Among the other initiatives that Shinnyoji participates in every year, as civil entity are: the Florentine inter-religious meetings organized by the association "A Temple for Peace" and since 2016 adheres to the project "Room of Prayer and Silence" and the Protocol, the only one of its kind

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in Italy with the University Hospital Department in Careggi, University of Florence and the Health Department of Tuscany, along with 14 religious groups present in the region and involved with the hospital, thanks to which the recovered patients at Careggi can have spiritual assistance from their chosen religion.

3. Practice at Shinnyoji

Zazen

- Mondays 7:30 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
- Thursdays 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 – dedicated to beginners

Zazenkai

- Once per month

Zen Courses for Beginners consist of 6 meetings. The lessons are aimed with the intent of introducing a newby to a path approaching Zen Practice and strengthening the Way for those who already practice according to the Sōtō Zen Buddhist Tradition.

Zazen and reciting the Sutras occurs four times per week in Sino-Japanese and in Italian.

Every month a Sesshin and Zazenkai are held in which Shinnyo Rōshi holds a Teishō inherent to the Study Path, with in-depth study on the Precepts and Fundamental Texts on Zen, she also receives private talks with students. The ritual meals at the Temple are vegetarian and consumed in a simplified version of Oryōki, that includes Chōshuku at breakfast, the preparation of Okaiu.

The Ordinations, celebrated once a year after a rigorous protocol also hold the Taking Refuge Ceremony, Sanbō-kie.

Those who have received Sanbō-kie and Jukai wear a Samu-e and Rakusu inside the Temple, the monks wear an Okesa.

In virtue of the close relationship Shinnyo Rōshi that has with her own Teacher, the practitioners at Shinnyoji may occasionally participate in Practice in Japan at the Daijōji Monastery.

They occasionally hold conferences and study days on the History and Linguistics of Buddhist texts, poetry, art and haikus.

The Rōhatsu Vigil, Nehan-e and Gōtan-e are celebrated annually. Wedding ceremonies are held as well as periodic funeral commemorations.

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4. The Sangha of Shinnyoji

The Sangha of Shinnyoji is composed of Ordained, students and regular practitioners, within the work world who, while their family and personal lives, enliven and support the activities of the Temple and contribute to its maintenance

The nucleus of the Sangha is made up of Monks and Bodhisattvas that have been following the Teacher for over 15 years, diving life to Practice at the Temple.

Once a month the Teacher organizes a meeting with the Ordained Sangha where together, the Temple's needs, activities and projects are discussed.

In the spirit of our Monastic Tradition, annual courses are held at the Temple on Zen Calligraphy by Calligraphy Masters Nicola Piccioli and Paola Billi from the FeiMo School of Contemporary Calligraphy.

With work and efforts of the Shinnyoji Sangha, the tri-monthly Newsletter *EkiZen* was started in Fall 2009, published on the website, it is a period diary that illustrates the lives of the Sangha and Temple through testimonies, reflections, poems, stories, images and realizations.

www.zenfirenze.it was set up in 2004 and is periodically growing and updated with programs and visits at the Temple with adding content of conferences held at Shinnyoji and with *Ekizen* in Italian and English.

5. Biography of the Reverend Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi, 72nd Abbot of the Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery in Kanazawa, Japan

2014-2016 he traveled to China, Taiwan and Holland to give "Seppō", Dharma Teachings as founder of the Sekai Zen Senta.

2013 In the ancient Tōkōzan Temple of Daijōji, he founded the Sekai Zen Senta - WZC (World Zen Center) with the purpose of unifying the Teaching and the Practice of Zen within one Universal Center (Sangha) where anyone, irrespective of creed, age, political beliefs and gender can practice and study Zen.

2008 Nominated President of the Sōtōshū Sanzendojo Association, of which more than seven hundred Japanese Sōtō Zen Temples belong.

2008 He organized the 700th Anniversary of the death of Tetsu Gikai Zenji, Founder of the Daijōji Monastery, planning the restoration for the Monastery building and preparations for Commemorative celebrations.

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2003 Named Dōchō (Teacher of Instruction in a training monastery) at the Daijō-ji Monastery.

2002 Named the 72nd Abbot of the Daijō-ji Monastery in Kanazawa.

2001 Council Member of University of Komazawa.

1995-2002 Provost of the Women's University for Buddhist Studies in Komazawa.

1996-2002 President of the Japanese Association for Buddhist Studies: Nihon Bukkyōgakkai.

1996-2002 President of the Association for Indian Buddhist Studies in Japan: "Nihon Indogaku Bukkyōgakkai" Japanese Society for Indian Studies.

1995 Received the prize "Tokyo to Korosha kyoiku bumon" from the Tokyo Prefecture on Education, for whom they have dedicated a lifetime of youth education.

1987 Ph.D Doctorate in Research in Buddhist Literature from University of Komazawa.

1969 Received the prize from the Association of Indian Buddhist Studies in Japan: "Nihon Indogaku Bukkyōgakkai".

1965 Published "Studies on Kanjin-in hon Denkōroku" and later published many books on Buddhist themes.

1964 Received the Shihō (Passage of the Dharma) from Rev. Matsumoto Ryūtan Roshi, 68th Abbot of the Daijō-ji Monastery in Kanazawa.

1962 Completed Masters in Buddhist Studies from the University of Komazawa.

1960 Graduated in Zen Buddhist Studies from the Buddhist Studies at the University of Komazawa.

1954-1955 Practiced in the Sōtō Zen School of Sōji-ji.

1935 Born in Kyoto in a Shingon School Temple.

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6. The Lineage of Daijōji

Bibashi Butsu Daioshō	Shishibodai Daioshō	Keizan Jōkin Daioshō
Shiki Butsu Daioshō	Bashashita Daioshō	Meihō Sotetsu Daioshō
Bishafu Butsu Daioshō	Funyomitta Daioshō	Syugan Dōchin Daioshō
Kuroson Butsu Daioshō	Hannyatara Daioshō	Tessan Shikaku Daioshō
Kunagonmuni Butsu Daioshō	Bodaidaruma Daioshō	Keigan Eishō Daioshō
Kashō Butsu Daioshō	Taisō Eka Daioshō	Chūzan Ryōun Daioshō
Shakyamuni Butsu Daioshō	Kanchi Sōsan Daioshō	Gisan Tōnin Daioshō
Makakashō Daioshō	Daii Dōshin Daioshō	Shōgaku Kenryū Daioshō
Ananda Daioshō	Daiman Kōnin Daioshō	Kinen Hōryū Daioshō
Shōnawashu Daioshō	Daikan Enō Daioshō	Taishitsu Chisen Daioshō
Ubakikuta Daioshō	Seigen Gyōshi	Kokei Shōjun Daioshō
Daitaka Daioshō	Sekitō Kisen Daioshō	Sessō Yūho Daioshō
Mishaka Daioshō	Yakusan Igen Daioshō	Kaiten Genju Daioshō
Bashumitsu Daioshō	Ungan Donjō Daioshō	Shūzan Shunshō Daioshō
Butsudanandai Daioshō	Tōzan Ryōkai Daioshō	Chōzan Gen-etsu Daioshō
Fudamitta Daioshō	Ungo Dōyō Daioshō	Fukushū Kōchi Daioshō
Barishiba Daioshō	Dōan Dōhi Daioshō	Myōdō Yūton Daioshō
Funayasha Daioshō	Dōan Kanshi Daioshō	Hakuhō Genteki Daioshō
Anabotei Daioshō	Ryōzan Enkan Daioshō	Gesshū Sōko Daioshō
Kabimora Daioshō	Taiyō Kyōgen Daioshō	Manzan Dōhaku Daioshō
Nagyaharjuna Daioshō	Tōsu Gisei Daioshō	Chitō Shōgen Daioshō
Kanadaiba Daioshō	Fuyō Dōkai Daioshō	Itsunyū Kakumon Daioshō
Ragorata Daioshō	Tanka Shijun Daioshō	Donzui Zenmyō Daioshō
Sōgyanandai Daioshō	Chōro Seiryō Daioshō	Bukkai Tenryū Daioshō
Kayashata Daioshō	Tendō Sōkaku Daioshō	Tengan Donryū Daioshō
Kumorata Daioshō	Secchō Chikan Daioshō	Kōzan Kakuryū Daioshō
Shayata Daioshō	Tendō Nyojō Daioshō	Gettan Shunryū Daioshō
Bashubanzu Daioshō	Eihei Dōgen Daioshō	Hongyō Genshū Daioshō
Manura Daioshō	Kōun Ejō Daioshō	Sogetsu Ryūtan Daioshō
Kakurokuna Daioshō	Tettsu Gikai Daioshō	Tenrai Ryūshin Daioshō
		Iten Shinnyo Daioshō

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7. The Tōkōzan Daijōji Monastery in Kanazawa, Japan

Daijōji is a Zen Monastery belonging to the Sōtō School with its seat in the city of Kanazawa in the Ishikawa Prefecture. It is a part of the Tōkōzan Buddhist denomination, Monastery for training, it was formally known as ShoJurin, then later as Kinshihō.

It was founded in 1289 by Tettsu Gikai Zenji (1219-1309), the third Abbot of the Eiheiji Monastery which is the main Sōtō School in the Fukui Prefecture, in the second year of Shoo, in the Kaga region, in the Nonoichi Province, under the protection of the Toagshi family.

In 1302, Keizan Jōkin Zenji (1268-1325), the disciple of Tettsu Gikai Zenji, became the second Abbot of Daijōji. Called the Mother of the School, he later founded the Sōjiji Monastery and his descendants developed the Sōtō School, it eventually became the most diffused Buddhist School in Japan.

In 1311, he was succeeded by Kyōon Unryō from the Rinzaï School. This succession was likely made possible through the observance of the Jippōjūji system, according to which a Zen Temple could have an Abbot belonging to another School. However, Kyōon Unryō 's name was eventually erased, perhaps for lacking a good relationship with Daijōji and in 1338, Meihō Sotetsu became the third Abbot.

In 1340, Daijōji was the preferred Temple by the Shōgun Ashikaga Takauji, but later burnt due to war destruction. Thanks to the contributions from a vassal from Toshinaga Maeda, the Temple was moved to the Honchō neighborhood, within the city of Kanazawa.

At the beginning of the Edo Period (1603-1868) it was moved to the Hondachō neighborhood within the same city, becoming one of preferred Temples of the Honda family, the head of the noble vassals in the Kaga property.

In 1671, Ghesshū Sōko Zenji became the 26th Abbot and, along with Manzan Dōhaku Zenji, the 27th Abbot, worked on the reconstruction of the Temple, under the protection of the Honda family. Daijōji was built on the construction model of ShichidoGaran, "Zen monastery of seven buildings", typical of Sōtō School monasteries.

The Buddha Hall was reconstructed by the National Cultural Heritage, some buildings of the monastic complex were reconstructed as a Cultural Heritage by the Ishikawa Prefecture.

Of the four main Monasteries in the Eiheiji Lineage, Daijōji is one of most significant.

Ghesshū Sōko Zenji and Manzan Dōhaku Zenji, followers of Dōgen Zenji's teaching, introduced the denomination "Kiku Daijō" for Daijōji, meaning "Monastery of rigorous Zen training", this reputation was widely diffused in the entire country.

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The two Abbots were later called the Re-founders of the Sōtō School, for having renewed and revived the Rules and having scrupulously and severely followed them. Still today, Daijōji is a Monastery dedicated to monastic training.

In 1697 its current location was established. At the beginning of the Meiji Period there was a turbulent time during the Haibutsu Kishaku phase, the historic movement that pushed for the expulsion of Buddhism in Japan.

During the 50s the Showa epoch (1926-1989), Itabashi Kōshū Zenji became Abbot of Daijōji, then as an assistant, in 2001, came Reverendo Tenrai Ryūshin Azuma Rōshi, former Dean of the University of Komazawa for Women.

8. Tettsu Gikai Zenji

Tettsu Gikai Zenji was born in 1219 in Inazu in the Echizen Province – ancient name of the Fukui Prefecture – and died on October 14th, 1309. He belonged to the Fujiwarashi family.

After studying in Kyoto when he was 23 years old, he became a disciple of Dōgen Zenji, founder of the Sōtō Zen School, and he moved from Kyoto to Eiheiiji to be near his Teacher and practice under his guidance.

During his years of study and practice he obtained great trust with Dōgen Zenji and after the death of his Teacher he took a trip to China where he visited many temples and monasteries compiling a detailed documentation called “Gozanjissatsuzu” in which he reproduced the configuration of the structure and furnishings of temples, illustrating it through drawings, reliefs and meticulous descriptions of the places he visited.

This precious document, the “Gozanjissatsuzu”, was later known as a Cultural Artifact of Japan.

Once Tettsū Gikai Zenji returned to his homeland he restored and expanded the Eiheiiji Monastery and renovated the Rules of Monastic Life. This is why he was named the Re-founder of Eiheiiji and succeeding Koun Ejo Zenji, he became the third abbot.

He later left Eiheiiji and went to Nonoichi in Kaha – the ancient name of the Ishikawa Prefecture – where he founded the Daijōji Monastery.

Tettsu Gikai Zenji in the 90 years of his long life observed the austere style of Practice transmitted by Dōgen Zenji, disciplining himself in everyday life and conducting an existence in unity with the Truth transmitted by Shakyamuni Buddha.

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