



The Way of the Clouds

A thirty-year inner journey

Vincenzo Pane Bansō



Vincenzo Pane Bansō

THE WAY OF THE CLOUDS

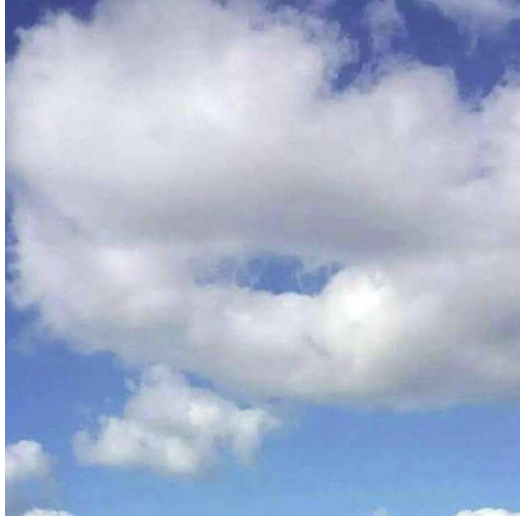
Translated by J. Olpecre

Collana I Romanzi

ISBN: 978-88-98750-2-21

FontanaEditore





*In the clouds a shape
appears
And just as quickly
disappears*



First Cloud

Magical Sicily and the Zen Monastery

That summer Sicily was magical.

The house in the woods, the goat's milk and the honey, the cowbells and their music.

The dynamic meditation led by Nirgio with its explosive energy.

The *kundalini*, the splashing into the sea, the swimming, running, dancing, the sweat, the relaxation, the evening meals, the stars at night and the moon.

I felt reborn.

Back in the city, I ran into a good friend and resumed a relationship that had ended of its own accord.

A couple of days later I left for Scaramuccia, the Zen monastery spoken of by a friend.

I arrived at the house up in the hills near Orvieto in my blue two-horsepower Citroën and parked in front.

And the first feeling I had is that I had been there before.

No one was outside. I decided to go in: there was a room and two practitioners were inside meditating.

I went back outside and waited. A little later Ghencho appeared and told me that if I wanted, I could participate in the session; he quickly explained what to do inside in the room and we went back in together.

At the entrance of the *zendo* (meditation room) there are wooden crates for the practitioners to set their

belongings on and, set off by a curtain, a room with *tatami* mats on the floor. Opposite the entrance there is a small altar where the Master meditates; and to each side of him are places for the practitioners. The *jikjgitzo* (acolyte in charge of the *zendo*) marks time with a bell. Four chimes signal the start of the period of *zazen* (sitting meditation); the same number signals the end.

During that first experience I glanced many times at the bell, hoping that Ghencho who was holding it would signal the end of the session. It was especially difficult for me to maintain the cross-legged position and to stay still.

At afternoon tea I met the Master and immediately felt at ease: it was as if I already knew him and was on the same wavelength.

After tea it was time for a dip in the fountain baths.

Every day at Scaramuccia following afternoon tea, the acolytes put clothes to be washed in a backpack along with a towel, and together with the Master, run down a mountain path three kilometers long to a natural pool connected to a mountain spring.

I was surprised the first time I saw these people calmly take off their clothes and bathe in the rocky tub in their underwear. Later it became normal for me to bathe in this water, which especially in winter is very cold. At the monastery, the clothes washed at the fountain are hung to dry. The *tenzo* (the acolyte who runs the kitchen) prepares dinner and at 6 o'clock dinner is served; from 7 to 9 is *zazen*. Then at 10, it is time to sleep, which takes place inside of

sleeping bags laid out on the *tatami* in the *zendo*.

At 4:30 the alarm sounds and after personal washing, the meditation session begins at 5.

Sutras are recited together with the Master, who afterward goes to a small room to wait for the acolytes to come and give the answer to the *kōan*.

After the meditation session, the *tenzo* prepares a breakfast of rice boiled in plenty of water and takes it to the *zendo*.

Each practitioner has three bowls which are arranged one inside the other and wrapped in a cloth neatly folded.

These bowls are placed behind each practitioner; when it is time to eat they are laid out in a row on the floor in front.

The *tenzo* comes with a pot full of rice and a container bearing olives; in front of each practitioner he stops and fills one small bowl with rice and in another bowl he puts four olives.

They eat in silence and when finished, the *tenzo* comes by and pours tea into the final remaining bowl.

When the tea is drunk, the cups are dried with the cloth and put again behind each practitioner ready for the next meal.

At 8 the work commences and continues until 10:30.

At that point one has tea with the Master and talks casually about a variety of subjects.

At 12 o'clock lunch, and then rest until 2:30 p.m.

Work resumes and continues until tea at 3:30. Then down to the fountain.

I kept these unusual rhythms for several days and then I returned home.



Second Cloud

Cesar the Messenger

After returning from Scaramuccia I met a friend and together she and I went to a concert to hear Cesar, a sitar player, perform at the Psycheros Association.

There he was in the center of the room, dressed in white, playing his sitar.

I liked the music and recorded the concert.

When it was over we had dinner at the Association and I asked him if he wanted to continue the evening at my house. He gladly accepted.

At my house, Cesar set down his sitar and sat in the wicker chair next to my

only piece of artwork (*Gogò*) situated on an easel.

We talked about music, yoga, and other things. I came to realize that Cesar had deep knowledge and asked him if he could teach me what he knew.

He answered by saying that if I wanted the key that would open every door he would give it to me.

In the morning I woke up and made coffee.

We did exercises together. He explained the Sun Salutation to me along with some breathing exercises.

Cesar had spent ten years in India studying the sitar while on his spiritual journey. He was headed to California, where he intended to start a school teaching yoga and sitar.

Because of bureaucratic problems with a lost passport he was going to be in Italy for at least a month and planned a series of concerts in various cities.

I offered the hospitality of my house and he gladly accepted.

In the evenings Cesar would play the sitar and tell us of his experiences in India. My friend Gaia and I listened quietly, filled with joy and admiration.

At one point he said: "Life is a labyrinth with an infinite number of doors to open. The key is the awareness of breath."

It was the key I had asked for at our first meeting.

Cesar told us he learned tantric yoga from an Indian master whom he had been following in India.

One evening he taught us reverse breathing, the basis of the practice of tantric yoga.

There was a light, free-floating energy to those evenings that made us feel good.

Cesar would leave periodically to do the concerts and then return after a few days.

One evening we got together and started doing yoga, and immediately an enormous heat started to build in the room.

At the end of the exercises we began to meditate. Cesar chanted the mantra *om*.

After the meditation, Cesar played the sitar as we sat there excited, letting ourselves be enveloped by the positive vibe: at this moment I had the

clear feeling that everything is perfect just as it is.

One weekend we went to the thermal baths in Saturnia to learn how to do Indian massage according to Cesar's technique.

We left on Saturday morning in the car of a friend of mine who was interested in coming along, and in Saturnia we met up with a friend of Cesar's who had come from Rome.

We stayed in a small hotel near the thermal baths.

In the afternoon, Cesar started teaching us how to do the Indian massage.

Before dinner we went to the stream with hot water where there are also small waterfalls.

After dinner Cesar played the sitar in the hotel lounge and entertained the guests.

Sunday morning we returned to the stream and continued the massage lesson.

On one of the last evenings that Cesar spent with us, he dispensed some thoughts in English for me:

"Dear Vincent, you know your life, your light, you know how to value the good gifts that we were given. Life is a journey into infinity.

We are creators of our reality.

The small space we have spinning around on this globe can explode at any moment.

The secret of creation is within us.

We must strip ourselves bare to look into the depths of our being."

To Gaia he devoted these thoughts:

"Dear Gaia, I wish you all the best in the world. God has created some truly wonderful things.

Be ready to face the light of all this energy, the magical and mysterious world.

You know for sure that love and feeling depend entirely on us.

We will be full of the world and the infinite universe."

Credits

THE WAY OF THE CLOUDS

by Vincenzo Pane Bansō

Translated by J. Olpecre

Cover Design by Rocco Fontana

© 2015 Fontana Editore, Corso
Ausugum, 98, 38051 Borgo
Valsugana (TN)

editore@fontanaebook.it

www.fontanaebook.it

ISBN 978-88-98750-2-21

All rights reserved. No part of this book shall be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, by any means, electronics, mechanical photocopying, recording, or otherwise

without written permission from the publisher.

Vincenzo Pane Bansō



Vincenzo Pane Bansō was born in Sicily in 1954, and lived from 1977 to 2010 in Tuscany. Today he lives in Sicily and spends much of his time on the beautiful beach in Cefalù. With his smartphone he photographs the clouds above which appear and then disappear, expressing impermanence.

In the clouds a shape appears and just as quickly disappears.

The Way of the Clouds is the way of liberation that he has worked out over thirty years of inner searching.

In reality it is a non-way, because, like the clouds, it is ever changing.

Vincenzo had the good fortune of practicing Zen Buddhism for many years at the Buddhist Temple of Zenshinji at Scaramuccia (Orvieto) directed by Master Engaku Taino, from whom he received the Japanese name Bansō, meaning: Ban (ten thousand), So (idea, images). He thus entered into a teaching transmitted from master to student down from Buddha himself.

Thanks to this fundamental experience, he was able to choose a

path after a serious illness which led to a miraculous recovery.

In this book, he describes the Way by which he reached the realization that everything is perfect as it is.

Indice

In the clouds a shape appears	3
And just as quickly disappears	4
First Cloud	4
Magical Sicily and the Zen	5
Monastery	5
Second Cloud	12
Cesar the Messenger	13
Third Cloud	20
Poetry, Ginsberg, and	21
Castelporziano	21
Fourth Cloud	27
The Poetry Festival in	28
Montepiano	28
Fifth Cloud	33
Scaramuccia and Zen Practice	34
Sixth Cloud	45
Skiing and the Wall of Ice	46
Seventh Cloud	53
Illness	54

Eighth Cloud	64
Climbing the Glacier	65
Ninth Cloud	74
Paths of Healing	75
Tenth Cloud	88
The Roar of the Year The Chan of a Lifetime	89
Beginning the Journey	102
International Festival of Poetry - Castelporziano 1979 - 1	103
International Festival of Poetry - Castelporziano 1979 - 2	104
International Festival of Poetry - Castelporziano 1979 - 3	105
Master Engaku Taino in zendo at Scaramuccia	107
Master Yamada Mumon	108
Master Yamada Mumon and Master Engaku Taino at Shofukuji Monastery in Kobe	109
The Fountain Baths near Scaramuccia	110
Skiing in Abetone	111
Skiing in Abetone - 2	112

Climbing in Chamonix	113
Vincenzo Pane Bansō - On the beach in Cefalù	114
Credits	115
Vincenzo Pane Bansō	117
Catalogo 2015	120