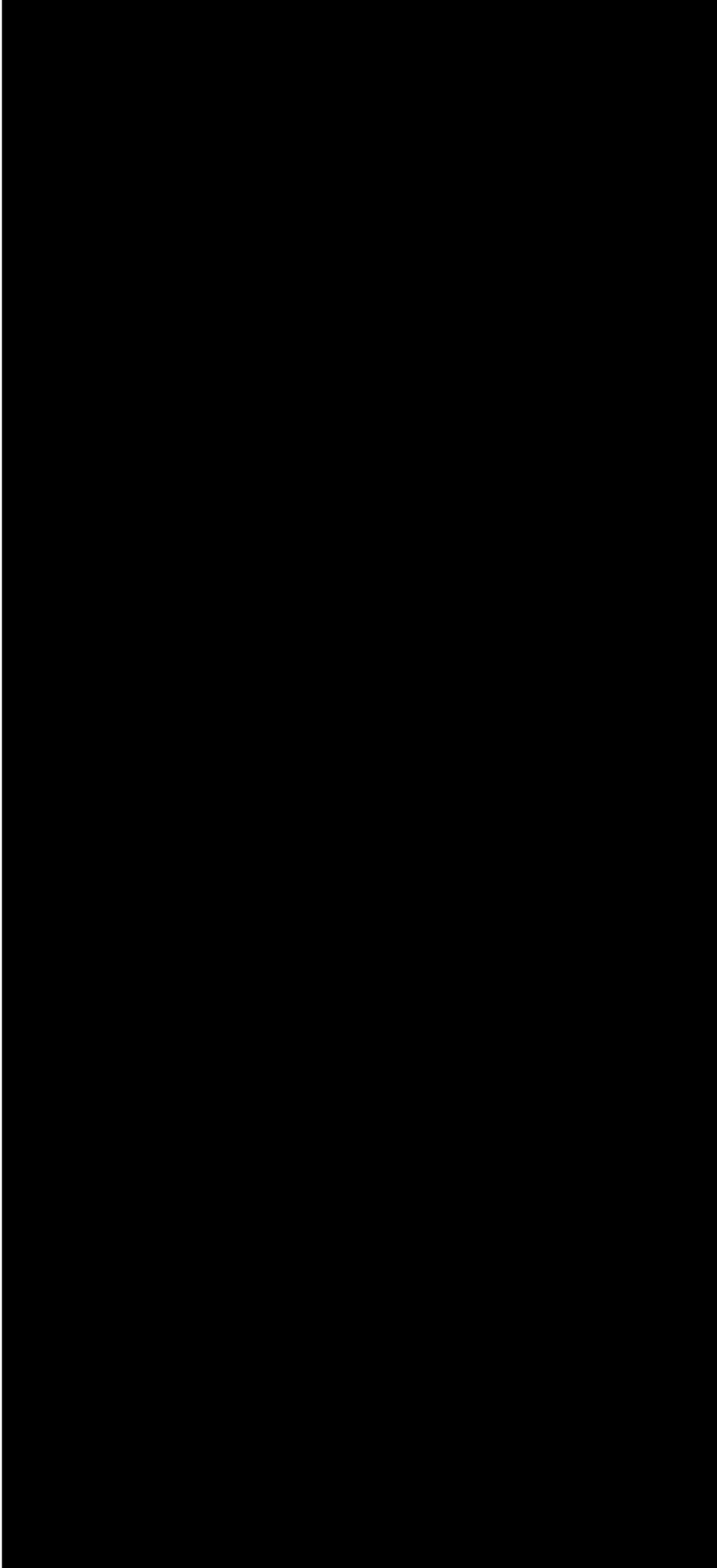


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THE FIFTH PATRIARCH

Depicted in this ink brush painting is the Fifth Patriarch Hung-jen (Gunin; 601–674) in his previous life as the seeker Tsai-sung, an aged tree planter. As the story goes, Tsai-sung was eager to train under the Fourth Patriarch Tao-hsin (580–651), but was judged to be too old to spread the Dharma. In consolation, the Fourth Patriarch told him he would consider him if ever they met again. Tsai-sung thus contrived to reenter the womb and have himself reborn. At the age of seven, he presented himself to the Fourth Patriarch. Impressing him with his knowledge of Buddha-nature, as well as baffling him with his obscure family origins, young Hung-jen was later bestowed the robe of transmission, making him the Fifth Patriarch.

This legendary account is alluded to in the inscription attributed to the Chinese Zen master Ch'iao-yin Wu-i (Shōin Goitsu; *d.* 1334). A fuller version of the story appears in the fourteenth century Japanese work *Denkō roku* [Transmission of Light] by Keizan Jōkin (1268–1325), the Sōtōshū version of Zen history which holds Dōgen as central. Interestingly, the episode of the aged tree planter does not appear in the *Ching-te ch'uan-teng-lu* (*Keitoku dentō roku*), Tao-hsüan's Zen history compiled in 1004, on which the *Denkō roku* is based. It was conceivably developed as a clever pedagogical device to explain why Hung-jen was so spiritually advanced at such a young age.

The period in which Hung-jen lived is of particular interest to modern scholars as they seek to determine the actual development of Zen history apart from the received history of traditional account. It is during this peak period of Zen activity that the so-called split between Northern and Southern schools occurred, with numerous branches of different lineages being formed. It is also known that the early Zen schools included nembutsu ritual in addition to meditation, and that their practices may even have influenced the development of the Chinese Pure Land tradition.

This Yüan dynasty painting, which dates to the fifteenth century, is regarded in Japan as an Important Cultural Asset. 86.3 × 36.1 cm.

Courtesy Fukuoka City Museum of Art