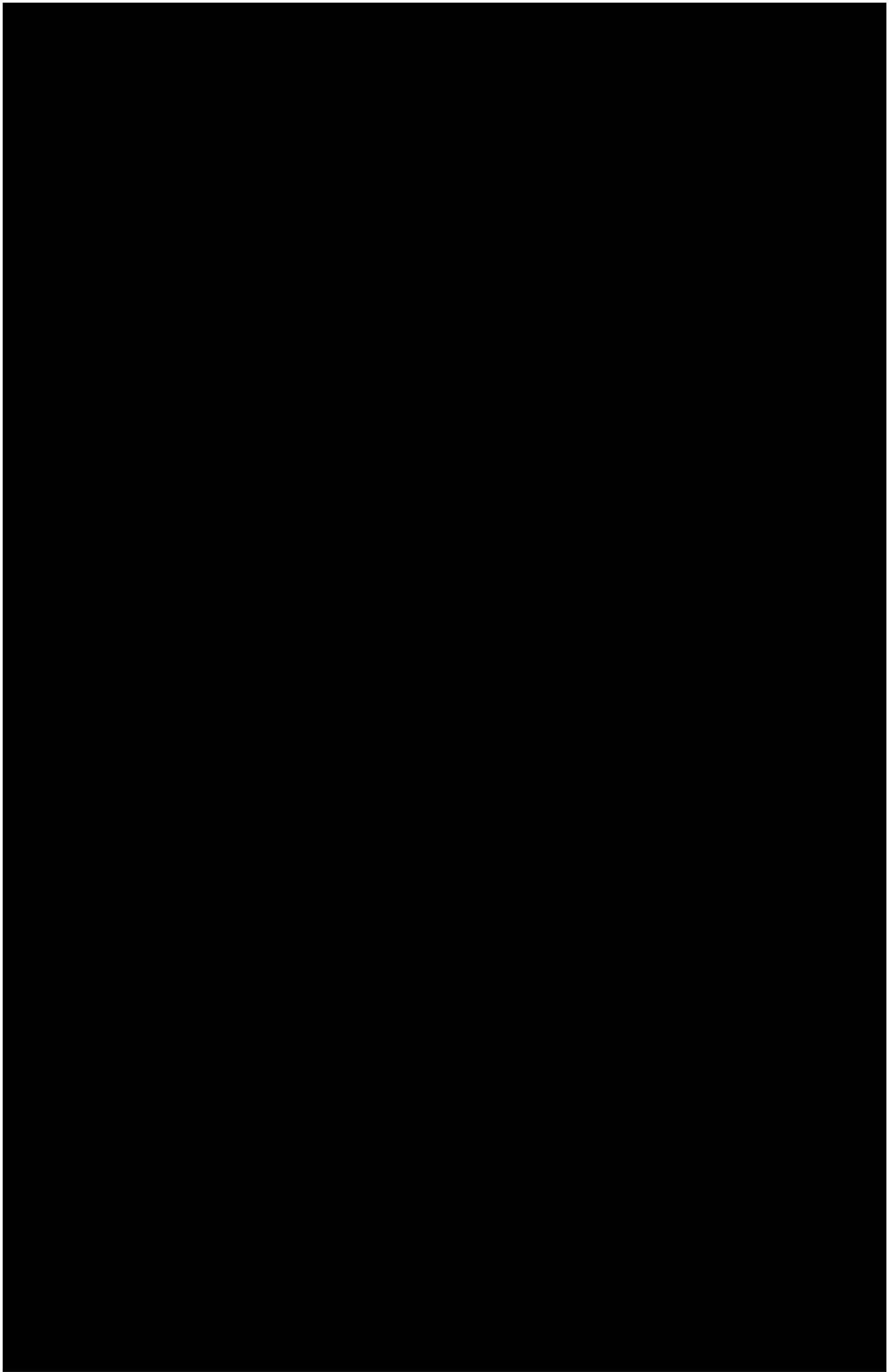


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## THE KUMANO GONGEN

This scene from the *Shinran Shōnin den'e* (1343 Kōei edition), an early picture scroll of Shinran's life, depicts the slumbering Heitarō (*bottom right*) among other pilgrims at a shelter in Kumano Shrine. In a dream Heitarō is confronted by the Deity of the Shrine (*upper left*) for failure to observe proprieties, whereupon Shinran (*upper right*) appears from out of nowhere to intercede on his behalf. The biography reads:

“While in a dream that night Heitarō was visited by a layman who in full dress came out by opening the doors of the Shōjōden, and said to him, ‘Why dost thou hold me in disrespect by not cleansing thyself from impurities?’ When this was said, lo, all of a sudden there appeared the Shōnin directly confronting the layman, who said, ‘He is one who spends his days in the recitation of the name of the Buddha as instructed by me, Zenshin.’ Thereupon the layman holding his *shaku*, respectfully bowed to him and did not utter another word.” (D. T. Suzuki, trans., 1911; slightly amended)

The above hagiographical account appears in the *Life of Shinran* (*Godenshō*) completed by Kakunyo (1270–1351), third heir to the Honganji lineage, in 1295, just thirty-three years after Shinran's death. Kakunyo uses this simple story of Heitarō's dream as an occasion to introduce a sophisticated theological argument that the native Japanese *kamis*, such as the Deity of Kumano Shrine, as well as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, are all manifestations (*gongen*) derived from Amida Buddha.

*Courtesy Higashi Honganji, Kyoto*