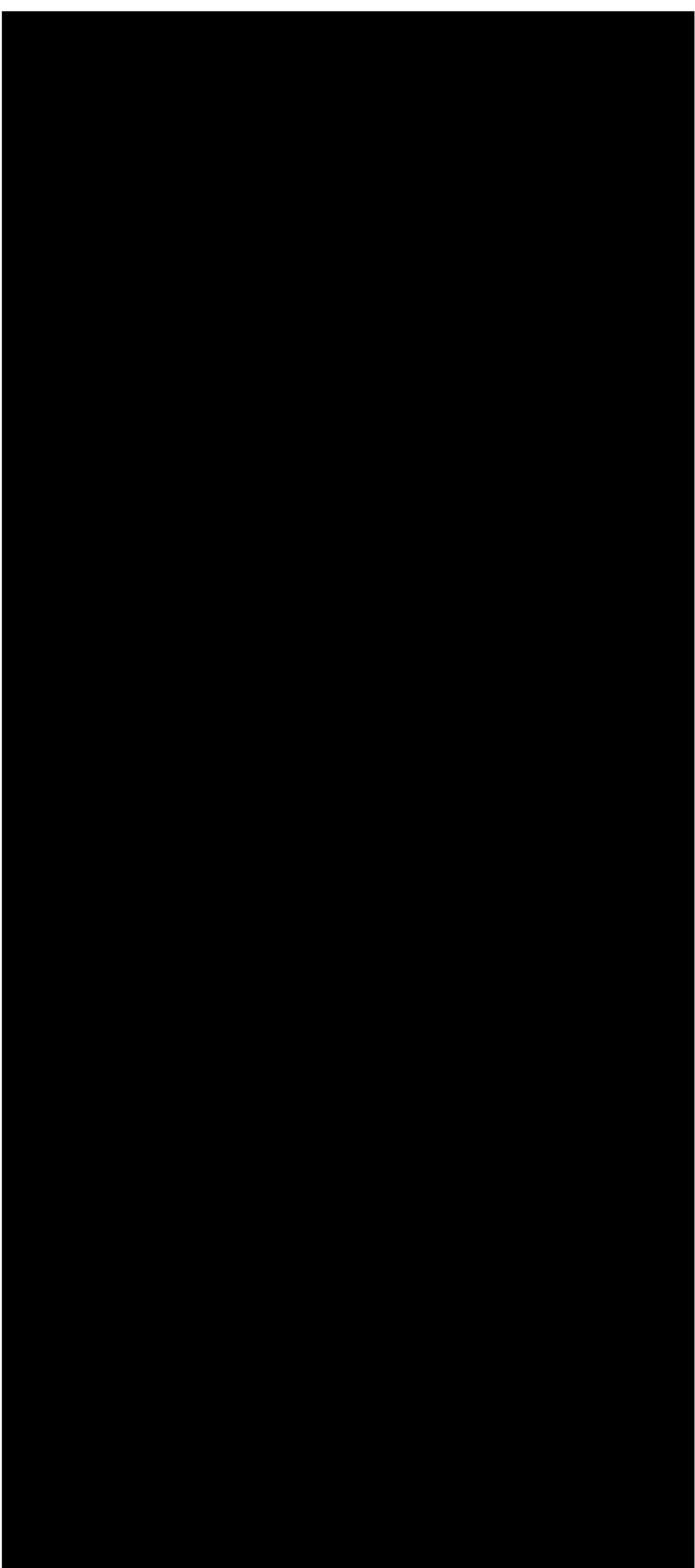


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PORTRAIT OF RENNYO, AGE SIX

There are numerous portraits of Rennyo as a young child. These were perhaps inspired by the *Legacy of Rennyo Shōnin*, a biography of Rennyo first published in 1679. Compiled in the early sixteenth century some years after Rennyo's death in 1499, the *Legacy* relates the tragic story of how Rennyo was separated from his mother at age six, never to see her again. This episode would have great appeal among Shin followers who understood his struggle as their own and is invariably woven into accounts of Rennyo's life. Rennyo had to overcome many difficulties before he could make his mark as the eighth hereditary leader of the Honganji. Due to his effective campaign, the Honganji witnessed a sudden growth in size and importance during his lifetime. In his final years Rennyo recalled the childhood incident and had a portrait done, to which he inscribed the following poem:

Hotei is my real name,
Though I called myself Kōtei.
Separated from my mother at age six,
I shall pass away in Meio 8 [1499],
Having reached the age of eighty-five.

The original portrait seems no longer to exist. This painting, a seventeenth century work, shows him as a young lad seated and wearing a *kanoko* or fawn-spotted kimono. Other portraits show him standing. *Portrait on silk, 45.6 × 103.8 cm.*

Courtesy Higashi Honganji, Kyoto