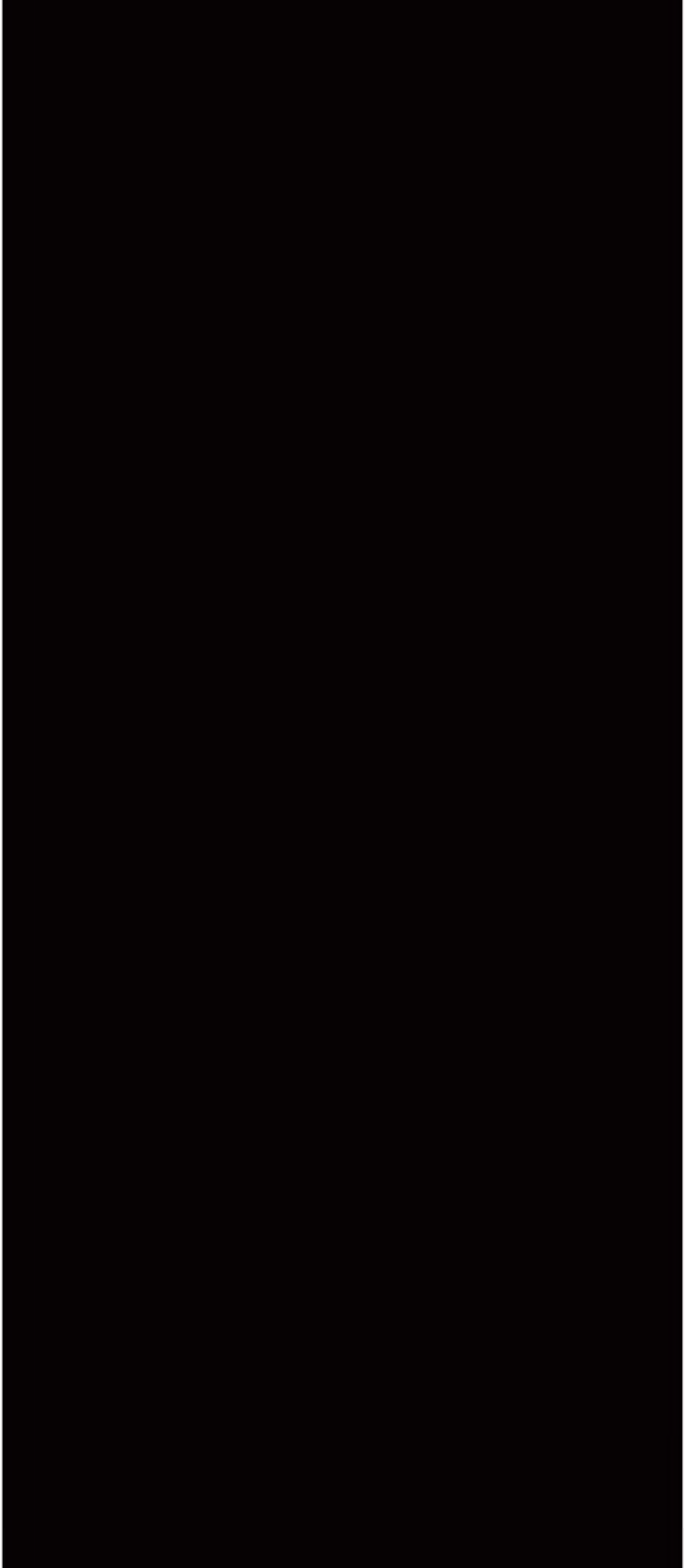


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## ASAHARA SAICHI

Asahara Saichi (1850-1932) is one of the better-known of the myokonin, the humble people of pure faith in the Shin Buddhist tradition. A maker of geta (wooden footwear) in a small village, he wrote thousands of vivid, artless verses expressing his religious insights. Together these comprise a priceless record of Japanese spirituality.

The picture on the left was drawn by the painter Wakabayashi Shungyō in 1919. The horns on Saichi's head were drawn at Saichi's request: they symbolize his "devil's heart." The verse on the painting was written in 1920 by Umeda Kenkyō, the priest of Anrakuji and Saichi's teacher for nearly thirty years. Kenkyō, though priest of a small country temple, was a man of great learning, eventually earning the highest scholastic ranking in the Nishi Honganji sect of Shin Buddhism.

His verse reads:

He with horns is Self, he with prayerful hands is Dharma;  
Dharma, fully embracing Self, softens the deeds of body,  
mouth, and mind.

With the cause of the flaming wheel of desire extinguished, the  
ambrosial heart is replete;

While still alive, he is welcomed by the Lotus Dais of the Pure  
Land.

*Courtesy of Umeki Takeko and Kawasaki Photo Studio, Yunotsu*