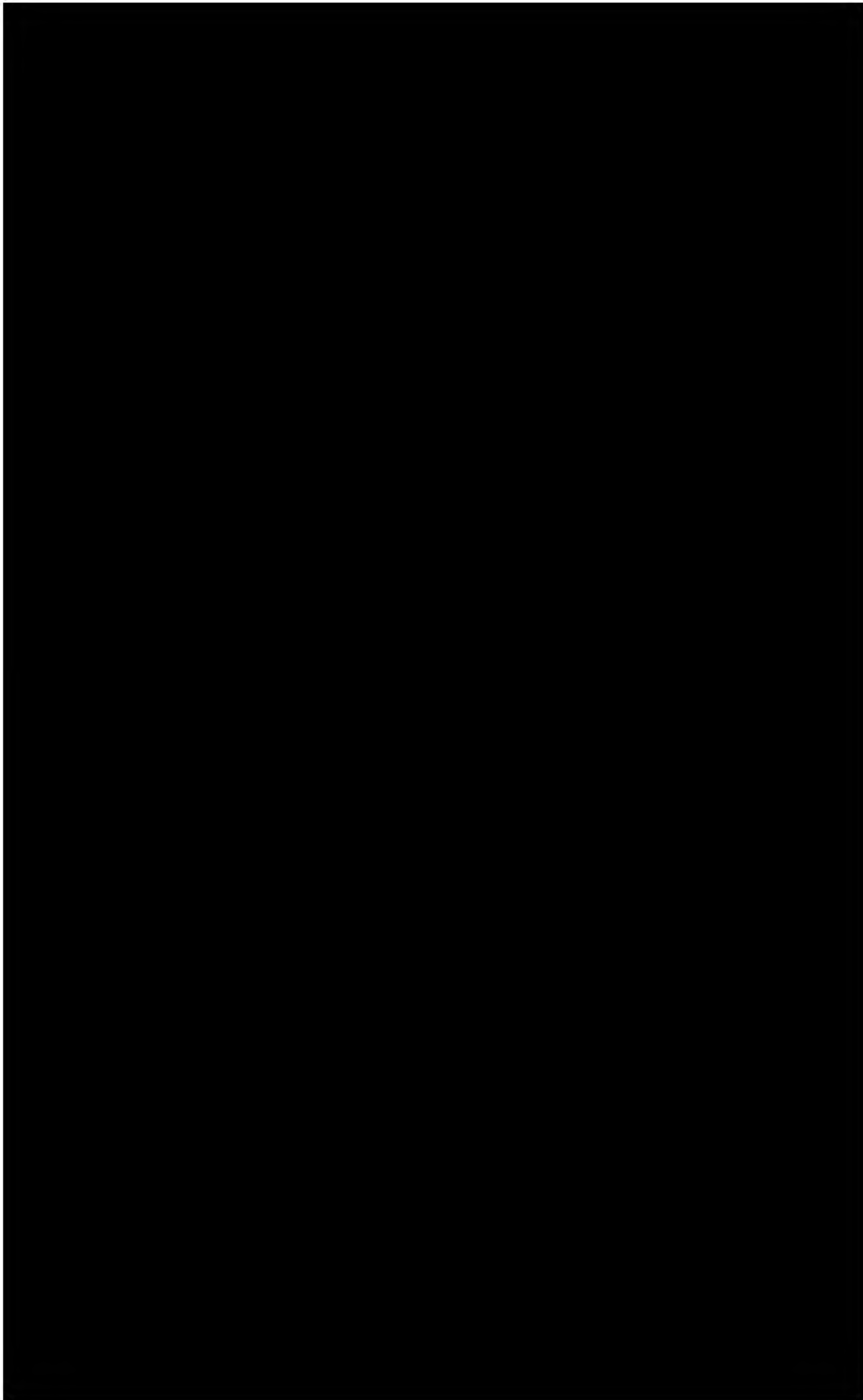


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## MYŌE SHŌNIN

An aura of unworldly calm pervades this Muromachi era portrait of Myōe Shōnin (1173–1232) of Kōsanji Temple in Togano-o, near Kyoto. A classic figure in soot-black robes, Myōe placed great emphasis on the rigorous practice of the Buddhist Way. Born to a samurai family, Myōe was orphaned at the age of eight and sent as a novice to Jingoji Temple in Takao, where he studied Shingon Buddhism under Mongaku (d. 1205). At the age of 19, he went to the Tōdaiji Temple in Nara where he studied Kegon Buddhism. After a few years, however, disillusioned with the lax attitude toward practice and vain arguments of his fellow monks, he returned to his native Arita, in present-day Wakayama prefecture, seeking a quiet place to pursue his meditation. From ages 21 to 34 he lived an ascetic life in various hermitages in the hills surrounding the Arita River valley. In 1206, he received a grant of land from the retired emperor Gotoba (r. 1183–1198) in the district called Togano-o in Takao, and founded the temple of Kōsanji still standing today. For the remainder of his life he studied and lectured there until his death at the age of 60.

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