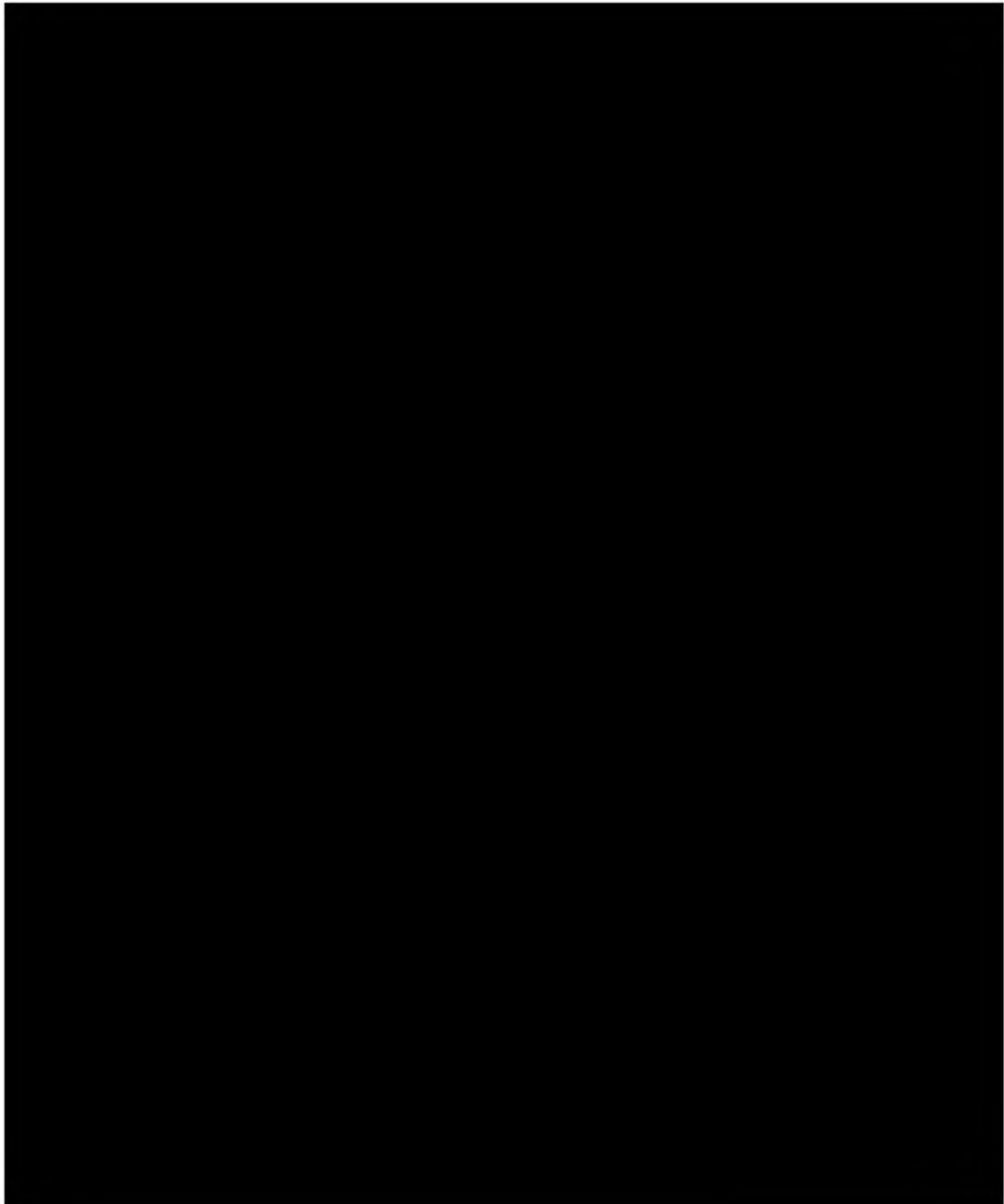


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SHINRAN SHŌNIN

This life-size sculpture in wood by an unknown artist is said to show Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262) at the age of sixty-three. The statue, enshrined at Hōon-ji in Tokyo, in whose possession it has been since it was carved during the Kamakura period (1199-1333), was originally presented to Shōshin-bō (1187-1275), founder of the Hōon-ji and one of the most devoted followers of Shinran, by the Master himself, as a memento to the faithful in the Kanto area.

There is a temple tradition in Hōon-ji, that when Shinran and Dōgen (1200-1253) once met in Kamakura, so well did each appreciate the other's point of view that they exchanged nenju (a string of invocatory beads) and hassu (the fly-whisk of a Zen master). This explains why Shinran, a Pure Land priest, is holding the Zen master's symbol of office. Another unusual feature, the absence of the white neck scarf that Shinran is shown wearing in other, later portraits, also suggests that this is an early likeness.

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