



PRINCE SHŌTOKU AT AGE TWO

The sculpture, “Prince Shōtoku at Age Two,” depicts Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622) with his hands placed in prayer. Some seventy dedicatory objects, including forty-five documents, had been placed within it at the time of its dedication, believed to be in 1292. The sculpture arrived in the United States in 1936. Preliminary research at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston seems to have been stalled by the deterioration in U.S.-Japan relations. The sculpture came to the Fogg Museum at Harvard University (now Harvard Art Museums) in 1979, following publication of John M. Rosenfield’s English-language article on the sculpture ten years earlier. Unfortunately, research stalled once again as the article did not circulate widely in Japan. Since 2016, an international, interdisciplinary project on the sculpture, now involving scholars in a wide variety of disciplines on three continents, has been investigating the sculpture and its contents. At Harvard University, Rachel Saunders, Angela Chang, Penley Knipe (Harvard Art Museums), Greg Lin (Harvard Center for Nanoscale Systems), Melissa McCormick, and Ryūichi Abé (East Asian Languages and Civilizations) continue to work with Chikamoto Kensuke, Abé Yasuro, Abé Mika (Nagoya University), Seya Ai (Tokyo National Museum), and Seya Takayuki (Kanazawa Bunko) on the project.

The statue is made of Japanese cypress (*hinoki* 檜) and is comprised of assembled woodblock construction with polychromy and rock-crystal inlaid eyes. It measures H. 67.9 × W. 24.8 × D. 22.9 cm. Photographs of most of the dedicatory objects are available online at the Harvard Art Museums website (accession number 2019.122): <https://harvardartmuseums.org/exhibitions/5756/prince-shotoku-the-secrets-within>.

Prince Shōtoku at Age Two (Shōtoku Taishi Nisaizō), Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, Partial and promised gift of Walter C. Sedgwick in memory of Ellery Sedgwick Sr. and Ellery Sedgwick Jr., Photo © President and Fellows of Harvard College, 2019.122.