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SHŌTOKU TAISHI

Prince Shōtoku, 574–622, one of the most revered figures in the annals of Japan, distinguished himself in many areas of national life. To his influence more than any other single factor may be ascribed the final adoption of Buddhism by Japan. This representation of the prince as a young child is based on an early legend. At the age of three, he is said to have faced toward the east, pressed his hands together before him in *gasshō* (the posture shown here), and repeated the words "*Namu Butsu*"—*I place my trust in the Buddha*. The present statue dates from the latter part of the thirteenth century. It is one of the finest examples of its type, the earliest of which belong to the Kamakura period, 1192–1333, when worship of Prince Shōtoku as the first patriarch of Japanese Buddhism reached its peak. *Height, 68.2 cm.*

Courtesy of the Gangō-ji, Nara