One of Japan’s most puzzling National Treasures is the assemblage of embroidered fragments known as the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara. Documentary evidence indicates that the fragments are the remains of two artifacts: a pair of shūchō (embroidered curtains) representing Tenjukoku (Land of Heavenly Lifespan) made in the seventh century, and its thirteenth century restoration, called a mandara (Sk. mandala). These documents also reveal that both artifacts were associated with Prince Shōtoku (574–622), traditionally acknowledged as the father of Japanese Buddhism. For this reason, the assemblage was categorized as an example of early Buddhist art.

By analyzing the scant visual evidence, this lecture will demonstrate that the subject represented on the embroidered curtains was not Buddhist, but that included designs found in tombs and funerary artifacts from China and Korea. The use of a common East Asian visual vocabulary might be related to the fact that the designers and the supervisor of the seventh-century artifact were members of important immigrant kinship groups that played a key role in the transmission of continental culture.

Chari Pradel is a Professor in the Department of Art at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, where she has taught since 2004. Her publications focus on Japanese religious art, especially works associated with Prince Shōtoku, such as “Shōkō Mandara and the Cult of Prince Shōtoku in the Kamakura Period,” *Artibus Asiae* 68.2 (2008) and “Portrait of Prince Shōtoku and Two Princes: From Devotional Painting to Imperial Object,” *Artibus Asiae* 74.1 (2014). Her book *Fabricating the Tenjukoku Shūchō Mandara and Prince Shōtoku’s Afterlives* (Leiden: Brill, 2016) will be in the market soon. While an ICC Visiting Scholar, she is researching the Hasedera engi narrative scrolls.

No RSVP necessary / Lecture in English