

ROBO-BUDDHISM: TECHNOLOGY, DESIGN, AND SPIRITUALITY IN JAPAN TODAY

Jennifer Robertson

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Visiting Professor, Tokyo University
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January 19th, 2023, 18:00~19:30

In person only

Please register: <https://forms.office.com/r/WJ2NuQxLwX>

Ever since the inauguration of the Humanoid Robotics Project (HRP) in 1998, many Japanese roboticists building humanoids have sought to imbue their gendered robots with kokoro (heartmind, mindful heart). Robotics pioneer Mori Masahiro has claimed that robots have the Buddha-nature (bussho) within them. Recently, the scholarly and popular media alike have announced the advent of “robot priests,” one of which is SoftBank’s humanoid Pepper that debuted in 2015 (and was discontinued in 2021). Another Buddhist robot is Mindar, an “android Kannon” installed at a temple in Kyoto. Pet robots like Sony’s robot dog AIBO and electronic devices like smart phones and laptops are given Buddhist funerals when they breakdown or become outdated. Also explored in this presentation are the motives for growing numbers of Japanese people to employ various technologies to satisfy their spiritual and religious needs.

Jennifer Robertson is Professor Emerita and Affiliate Professor of Robotics Institute at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. She is also Affiliate Professor, Departments of Anthropology and Japan Studies, University of Washington, Seattle. A historical anthropologist/anthropological historian, her seven books and over ninety articles and chapters address a wide spectrum of interdisciplinary subjects ranging from the 17th century to the present. Topics include nativist and social rectification movements, agrarianism, sex and gender systems and ideologies, mass and popular culture, nostalgia and internationalization, urbanism, the place of Japan in Anthropology, sexuality and suicide, theater and performance, votive and folk art, imperialism and colonialism, eugenics and bioethics, and technology and robotics. For more information, visit Professor Jennifer Robertson - Univ of Michigan - Univ of Washington

This event is organized by Noriko Murai (Associate Professor, FLA)

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture: <https://www.icc-sophia.com>



Mindar, An Android Kannon