

# 150 Years of Japanese-German Relations:

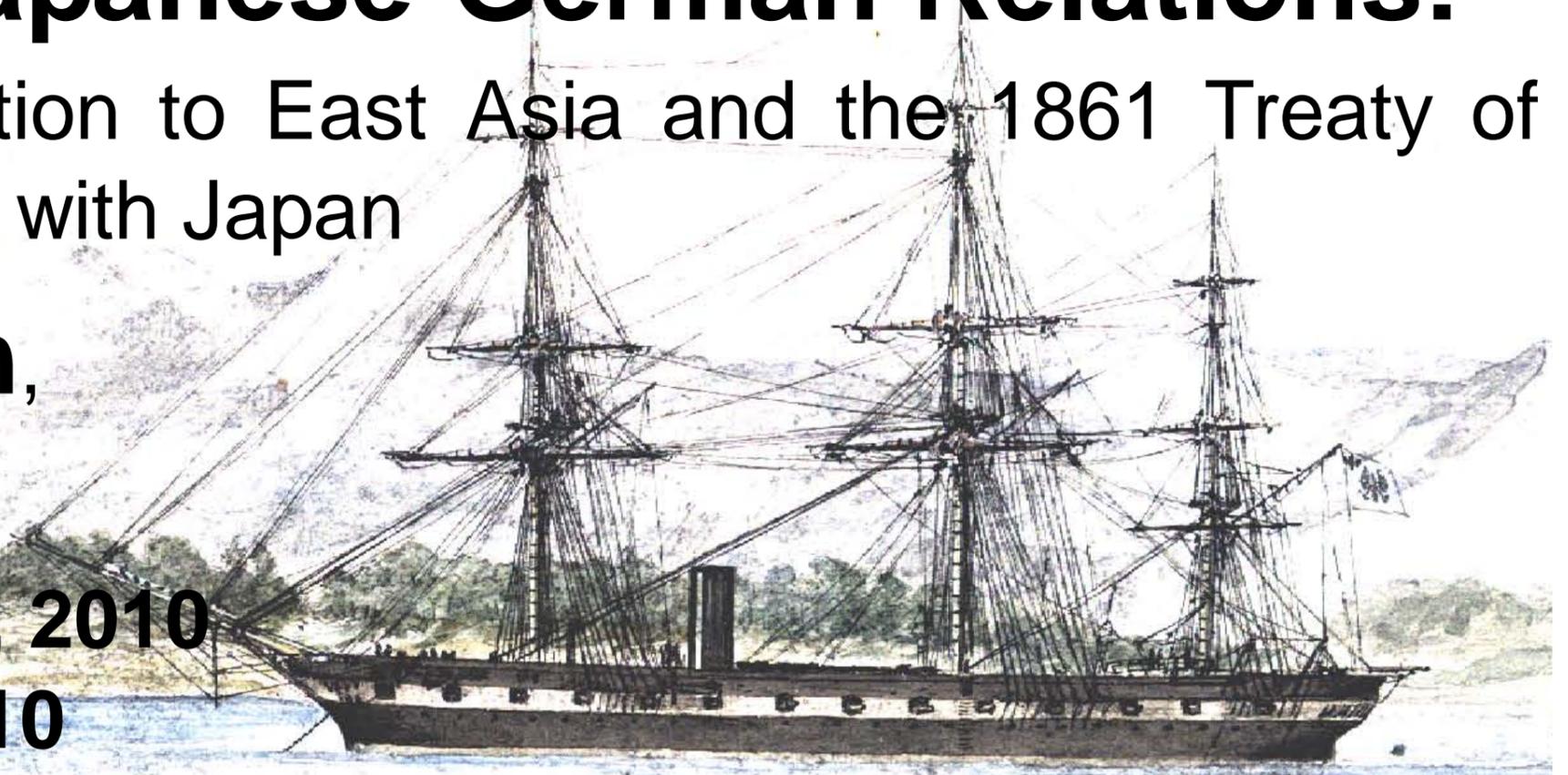
## The Prussian Expedition to East Asia and the 1861 Treaty of Amity and Commerce with Japan

**Dr. Bernd Martin,**

Freiburg University

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After the opening of Japan by U.S. warships in 1853/4 a number European powers followed suit in order to gain commercial advantages by forcing Japan to sign “unequal treaties”. Prussia, then the most powerful German state, saw the opportunity of strengthening her leading role in the process of German unification by organizing an expedition to the Far East. In 1859, the small Prussian navy was mobilized to carry both a scientific and a diplomatic mission to China, Japan and Siam. The main aim was to establish diplomatic relations with the three East Asian states on behalf of the states of the German Customs Union (Zollverein). After almost five months of tiresome negotiations with the Shogunate in Edo, the mission in Japan actually failed (while it succeeded later on in China and Siam). The Shogunate refused to sign treaties with 32 German states pretending to have no idea of the complex situation in Germany. However, a treaty was concluded between Japan and Prussia on 24 January 1861. This treaty was the beginning of a special and very intensive bilateral relationship, eventually culminating in the Japanese-German alliance in the Second World War.

Bernd Martin is Professor emeritus of Modern History at Freiburg University in Germany. His main subjects of research are the history of the Second World War, Polish history, contemporary history of Germany and East Asia and German-Japanese relations. He is author of a number of books on these issues including “Japan and Germany in the modern world” (1996).

Lecture in English / No registration required

Sophia University Institute of Comparative Culture Office: +81-(0)3-3238-4082 / [diricc\(at\)Sophia.ac.jp](mailto:diricc(at)Sophia.ac.jp)

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