The protection of cultural heritage in crisis.
A case study of Beijing.

Public talk by Prof. Dr. SU Rongyu, (Academy of Sciences, Beijing)

China has a rich cultural heritage, which, however, always has been in a state of crisis. Later cultures in many cases are built and thrive on the destroyed remnants of former cultural layers. Each increase of the population is accompanied by a boom in the erection of buildings, which in many cases results in the destruction of the cultural heritage of former periods. The population growth and the building boom of the second half of the 20th century and the accompanying societal transformations have resulted in an unprecedented crisis for the protection of cultural heritage in China.

In respect to the buried cultural heritage, we can observe that government organized robbing of tombs in China started as early as 1000 B.C. It has reached an unprecedented scale since the 1980s. During the last 40 years not only Chinese ancient tombs have suffered from destruction but this also extends to the architectural heritage, including religious sculptures and artistic artefacts, houses etc. To some extent the threat to the cultural heritage is increasingly determined by its market value. It is this “tradition” of Chinese governments and the people from which the threat to the cultural heritage originates. Beijing, as one of the most important capital cities of ancient China, in many respects constitutes a representative case.

Monday, December 15, 2014, 6.00 p.m.
Campus Westend, PEG building, room PEG 1.G 131

The lecture is part of the Evening Lecture Series within the IZO’s research project “Protecting the Weak. Entangled Processes of Framing, Institutionalization and Mobilization in East Asia” funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

Su Rongyu is director and professor of Research Center of Traditional Technics and Cultural Relic Scientific Technology, CAS; researcher, IHNS, CAS. He was born in Shanyang, Shanxi Province in 1962. He entered Xi’an Jiaotong University, studied mechanical engineering in 1979; he entered China Science and Technology University as a postgraduate in 1983, and he majored in Natural Science History; once he was advanced visiting scholar and professor in the Technical University of Berlin, visiting professor in American Smithson Academic Society Forbes and German Tuebingen University successively; and he was once appointed executive director and general secretary of China Institute for History of Science and Technology. Now he holds a concurrent post member, China Academic Committee of Archaeology Center, Peking University and vice-president, Science Association for Dongcheng District of Beijing.

Contact person: Prof. Dr. Iwo Amelung, FB 09, Sinology
Email: amelung@em.uni-frankfurt.de