

Wudang Shan Special Administrative Region Government Office

Interview with Shu Tao, a representative of the Wudang Shan Special Administrative Region Government Office.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what the 'Special' in 'The Wudang Shan Special Administrative Region' stands for?

Shu Tao: There is actually nothing special about our regional government. It is simply a matter of wording. It was adopted in 1997.

Interviewer: The Statistics Bureau of the Regional Police Office gave me population statistics for the Wudang City. They stated a present population of 48,000 having risen from 42,000 in 1994 and 35,000 in 1984, a 37% increase over the last twenty years. What factors in your estimation could account for this population rise?

Shu Tao: Well, people have moved here from other poorer areas. If one region is poor and the other rich, then the poorer residents will want to come to the richer area in hopes of getting rich themselves.

Interviewer: Has the program for the relocation of mountain inhabitants into the city (*dui hexin jingqu nonghu yilv banqian*) had an effect on these figures?

Shu Tao: Very little.

Interviewer: Can you give me an idea of the average yearly income in the area over the last twenty years?

Shu Tao: In 1984, before Wudang Shan was opened up the average yearly income was around fifty yuan. By 1994, the average yearly income had risen to 879 yuan for rural residents and about 5,000 yuan for those within the city. This year the average yearly income for rural residents has risen to 2,150 yuan and 10,000 yuan for city residents. These are among the many beneficial effects of the Wudang Shan Scenic Area upon the town and its population.

Interviewer: Can you tell me some figures for the yearly amount of tourists and revenue generated from entrance fees?

Shu Tao: Last year was actually the first year that the total amount of visitors actually declined. This was due to the SARS outbreak. In 2002, we had about 35,000 visitors generating approximately ten million yuan. Despite last year's exceptional circumstances generating a decline in total figures, we have experienced an almost 25% increase in visitors every year. We are very optimistic about a significant influx of tourists in the near future.

Interviewer: Where do the funds for administrative expenditures originate?

Shu Tao: Administration of the park and maintenance such as roads, fire prevention and garbage retrieval comes from local, regional, provincial and national government assistance. A second source of revenue is the ticket fee at the main gate that is over seventy yuan per person.

Interviewer: Are any of these funds used for the protection and preservation of individual temples?

Shu Tao: Yes, temples survive on such assistance coupled with the revenue from entrance fees.

Interviewer: Are their private investments made? International and/or domestic?

Shu Tao: There have been no international investments, but there have been several large domestic investments, both from private organizations and individuals.

Interviewer: Can you elaborate on the reasoning behind the program for the relocation of mountain inhabitants? When did it start and what are your hopes for the future?

Shu Tao: Well this program has actually been around for a long time. Removal of locals from the scenic area has been a goal of various government agencies since the opening of the area in 1981. The program didn't really start in earnest until 1997, when its implementation was accelerated.

As for the reasoning behind the program, we view Wudang Shan as a commodity product (*shangpin*). Just like marketing and selling a product it needs to look good to appeal to customers. If you want guests, both Chinese and from abroad, you want the place to look good, to look authentic. Moving the residents has helped us accomplish this goal.

A second reasoning behind this program lies in our ecological preservation efforts. We hope to protect the natural environment for future generations. The locals have had a very bad effect on the local environment in areas such as waste disposal, illegal poaching and the retrieval of firewood from protected forests. By moving these mountain residents to the city we are aiming towards ecological protection.

Interviewer: From what I've noticed the hotels and stores set up in the area as well as the relatively recent influx of tourists have had a negative effect on the surrounding environment, producing a rather large amount of pollution and rubbish – and possibly far worse than what locals could do.

Shu Tao: Yes, but these the government can monitor hotels and stores closely through the management and administrative system for the scenic area. There is no feasible way to monitor the local residents.

Interviewer: What method is employed to determine which residents leave and when? How many have been moved up to this point?

Shu Tao: We have discussions with mountain residents to decide which residents leave, when they leave, and what can be done when they arrive in Laoying. There have been 400 families moved since 1997.

Interviewer: Will there be additional hotels and other such tourist facilities built in the area to compensate for the expected influx of tourists?

Shu Tao: This is as stated by the law, not allowed.

Interviewer: Why are additions not allowed?

Shu Tao: It would have a harmful effect on the area, creating pollution.

Interviewer: What then will be done to meet visitor demand?

Shu Tao: In the past, tourism infrastructure in the area was far too backward (*luohou*), so we have worked to improve the situation. This is necessary for the development of tourism in the area. We will expand tourist facilities at the base of the mountain. Tourists will be able to eat, drink, seek entertainment and lodging in Laoying and then ascend the mountain for daily excursions. We will begin issuing multi-day passes for this reason.

Interviewer: Is the law preventing the construction of new buildings in keeping with any UNESCO stipulations?

Shu Tao: Yes, but the authority behind it lies in our state law.

Interviewer: What then about the massive development at the foot of the mountain?

Shu Tao: Yes, but this is set aside for a parking lot (*tingche zhan*).

Interviewer: And the proposed buildings depicted in the billboard alongside the construction site?

Shu Tao: This will be a reception center and holiday village.

Interviewer: This is within the scenic area, correct?

Shu Tao: Well, yes. But not really. Anyway, it's at the bottom.

Interviewer: What are your hopes for the future of the Wudang Shan Scenic Area?

Shu Tao: Firstly, we hope for the first-class protection of cultural relics. Secondly, we hope Wudang Shan can attain prominence around the world as a cultural scenic area. We

hope its reputation will bring great fame and visitors from around the world. Thirdly, we hope for a clean and pure environment.

Interviewer: Can you explain what methods you have implemented already to meet these goals?

Shu Tao: For the first, namely the protection of cultural relics, it'd be best to speak with someone from the Cultural Relics Bureau. As for propagation of Wudang Shan's wonders worldwide we've initiated several programs with the Propaganda Bureau. We encourage movie and television programs of the area, as well as newspaper and magazine articles. We therefore do our best to facilitate the requirements of producers and journalists. We've set up an internet site to help reach international audiences, though it's only in Chinese. Lastly, we encourage the Wudang Gongfu Troupe to travel around China and overseas to do demonstrations of our local martial arts and so help promote the region.

Interviewer: Do you help fund these trips overseas?

Shu Tao: No, they rely on their own funds to travel overseas. We facilitate some of the administrative formalities for such travel, like helping them get the proper permits and such.

Interviewer: And the third aim, namely: environmental protection?

Shu Tao: Our efforts to protect the environment include setting up forest-fire prevention centers as well as four garbage disposal centers.

Interviewer: Who covers the cost of garbage removal for private businesses and residents?

Shu Tao: This is a government responsibility.