

Interview with Wang Xiaolong

Interview with Wang Xiaolong, a longtime resident in the area with ties to several government administrators, police and village residents.

Interviewer: What is your impression of the transformation of Wudang Shan over the past years since it opened up (*kaifa*)?

Wang Xiaolong: Actually there's hardly been any noticeable transformation at all. The government always talks about things they do to improve the area, but it's mostly just talk. There may be a new road, but the area is still quite backward (*luohou*). There's been no fundamental change. The management and administration of the area is simply not OK (*bu xing*).

Interviewer: What areas of administration do you find fault with and what areas would you like to see changed?

Wang Xiaolong: Firstly, they haven't done nearly enough to promote Wudang Shan to the outside world. The Daoist spirit is grand and lofty, yet it still hasn't received full consideration and treatment outside of the area, and especially overseas. They have simply failed to promote the richness of Daoist culture.

Secondly, the implementation of new laws in the area at the local level has been treated in a half-assed manner (*tuotuolala*).

Interviewer: You speak of implementation at the local level. What influence in your estimation has UNESCO and the World Cultural Heritage stipulations had on creating new laws and regulations and furthermore, their local implementation?

Wang Xiaolong: As far as I know, UNESCO has almost no influence on the actual implementation of laws. Their pressure existed while Wudang Shan was still a candidate, but not really much afterwards. Several years ago when Wudang Shan had just become a World Cultural Heritage Site the Secretary General of the United Nations, then Boutros Boutros-Ghali, came here amid big fanfare and announced all the changes that would start taking place. But after the celebration was over, there's been little if any perceptible changes in the way things are done here.

Interviewer: Do you know of the program for the relocation of mountain residents? Any opinions?

Wang Xiaolong: This is another example of the backward manner of local administration. The program began with much fanfare, but has now been upset by corrupt officials. I'll give you an example: When they demolish a home local officials handle the compensation money. They are the middlemen between the national government and the local residents and handle the distribution of funds to the villagers. But somewhere along

the process they [the local officials] end up with the majority of the money in their own hands. No one knows exactly how much they take, but we do know that they have authority at the local level and they use it to enrich themselves. Corruption is a major problem holding back the development of the Wudang Shan area.

Interviewer: Do you know any of the displaced residents personally?

Wang Xiaolong: Certainly, many were in the Purple Cloud Village. I know that their compensation money was far too little. If you already have money saved, then moving is nothing but a hassle. But most of these people have absolutely no savings and so a forced move for them is absolutely devastating. They get 180 yuan per square meter! This is a ridiculous sum, because everyone knows that it takes at least 400-500 yuan per square meter to buy a house in Laoying. No one can afford this with such a small compensation.

They receive a payout for moving (*rentou fei*), but not being able to buy a house, they end up spending the compensation on other things to get by. They spend it slowly, but when it's gone what will they do? Now not only are they homeless [no place to sleep], but they no longer even have a place to grow crops. When they once could grow their own food, now they have to buy it - an added expense for people already very poor.

Interviewer: Any final thoughts?

Wang Xiaolong: Yes, just this: the laws and regulations recommended by UNESCO could do a lot for the development of Wudang Shan but none of these measures have really been put into practice. Even the program for the relocation of mountain residents has only really begun this year, after they've been talking about it since 1991. If local government officials really wanted to change things, they would have. They are simply half-assed in their efforts.