

# The Embodiment of Guiyijun's Early Politics in the Cave—Centered on the Donor Portraits of Cave 156 of Mogao Grottoes

Yin Xiao<sup>1,a,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of History and Civilization, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, 710119, China*

<sup>a</sup>*yinxiaohistory@163.com*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding author*

**Abstract:** *The Mogao Caves are a showcase for the political and public life of medieval Dunhuang, China. Grotto 156 of the Dunhuang Grottoes was sponsored by Zhang Yichao, the leader of the Guiyi Jun. In addition to the usual functions of a grotto, it has a strong political function, and the patron's portrait is a concentrated expression of this political function in Cave 156. This paper will begin with the patron portraits in Grotto 156 and, through an analysis of the identities of some of the patrons and a discussion of the arrangement of the patron portraits, attempt to decipher the complex political situation that Zhang Yichao faced during the early years of the Guiyi Jun regime and the measures that Zhang Yichao took to meet this complex challenge as reflected in the construction of his grotto of merit.*

**Keywords:** *Zhang Yichao, Grotto No. 156, portraits of sponsors, politics*

The donor portrait is not only the retention of the Buddha image of Buddhists, but also as a member of the secular society, when the donor is portrayed, it will naturally be affected by the political pattern at that time. He Shizhe was the first to pay attention to the supporting figures in Cave 156 of Mogao Grottoes. Mr. He mainly used the inscriptions of the supporting figures in Cave 156 to verify the basic problems such as the construction age and merit of Cave 156. This research has a great influence, and its viewpoint is basically recognized by the academic community. For a long time, it is the main academic basis for understanding the basic information of Cave 156. Until 2006, Chen Ming paid attention to the word 'Shangshu' in the title of Zhang Yichao's donor portrait in Cave 156, and related to the procedure of drawing the donor portrait in the construction of the cave. On the basis of Mr. He's conclusion, he put forward his own opinions on some basic problems, and further explained the reason why the travel map did not match the title of Zhang Yichao in the corridor. [1] Ji Yuanzhi is more interested in the travel map of Zhang Yichao couple in Cave 156, a special portrait of the provider. He published three major works to discuss the Jingjie system and military system of the Tang Dynasty, as well as the costumes of the characters in the travel map and the polo movement in the Tang Dynasty. [2-4] Sha wutian has a relatively systematic overall interpretation of Cave 156, and the implementation of the part of the donor portrait is a combination of a large historical background. The identity of each donor in the cave and the reasons for its appearance in the cave have incisive insights. [5]

However, senior scholars still leave some research space. As far as we can see, there is no special article. From the perspective of the supporting portraits in Cave 156, this paper discusses the complex political situation faced by Zhang Yichao in the early period of Guiyijun. Therefore, on the basis of previous studies, the author intends to reveal Zhang Yichao's efforts to deal with the complex political situation in the early days of the Guiyi Army, and how it is reflected in the construction of caves, in order to benefit the academic community.

## 1. Basic information of Cave 156 (18, 12)

### 1.1. The location and shape of Cave 156 (12, 12)

The location of Cave 156 is unique. It lies just north of the iconic three-storey window of Cave 130 at the southern end of the cliff face in the southern region of the Mogao Caves. It is relatively high from the ground. It is also notable for forming a small, relatively independent unit from its contemporaries Cave 158, Cave 159 and Cave 161. Cave 156 is a common Buddhist temple cave of the period. The main

chamber is six metres square, with an open west wall, an open front room, and a short flat-roofed corridor with a possible wooden roof (Fig. 1). The shape of Cave 156, a focal point of academic interest, is that of a common cave in the Tubo period. It is clear that although the Gui yi jun was nominally affiliated with the Tang dynasty, the Tibetan influence on Dunhuang remained significant for historical and geographical reasons. Cave 156 is relatively well preserved and a rich source of information.

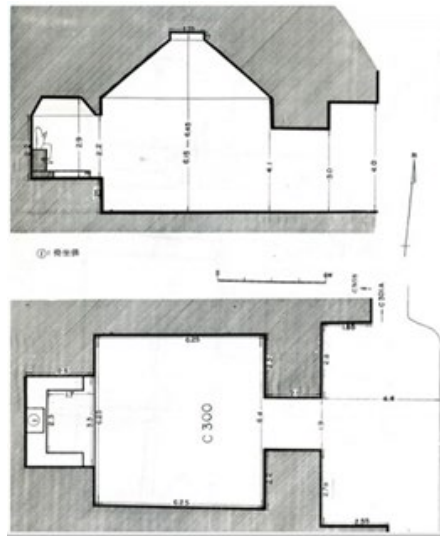


Figure 1: Flat Profile of Mogao Grottoes Cave 156

### 1.2. Recompile donor portrait information

Format We focus on the donor portraits in Cave 156, and the size of the donor portraits is very rare except for Cave 96 and Cave 130 of the Mogao Grottoes. Considering that the shape of Cave 156 is very different from that of Cave 130 and Cave 96, it is a very interesting phenomenon to have a donor portrait of the same size in a medium-sized cave like Cave 156. Here we do a simple combing of the donor portraits in Cave 156. On the south wall of the corridor, there are five male donors like Zhang Yichao and Zhang Huaishen. On the north wall of the corridor, there are three portraits of female donors like Mrs. Song in Guangping. The western niche of the main room is painted with a supporting device. The north and south sides are painted with a supporter holding a banner. The south side shows two bhikshus, three worldly male supporters, and six attendants; the north side shows four bhikshuni, five worldly female supporters, and three attendants. On the south side of the east wall door of the main room there are three male donors, one female donor, and two attendants on the north side. In addition, in the main room, the travel map of Zhang Yichao's army from the lower part of the south wall to the south side of the east wall door (Fig.2) and the corresponding travel map of Mrs. Song from the north wall of the main room to the north side of the east wall door can also be used as special donor portraits.



Figure 2: Part of Zhang Yichao's army travel picture

### 1.3. Exploring the Identity of the Four Bhikkhunis

Cave 156 is the merit cave of Zhang Yichao, the first military governor of Guiyijun, which is recognized by the academic community. On this basis, it is necessary for us to make a simple combing of the identities of these donors in Cave 156 ( Figure 3 ).According to the titles of the patrons of the Dunhuang Grottoes in the past dynasties, they are all referred to by the cave owner, and the title is corresponding. Then, first of all, according to the inscription on the East Gate's ' Dead Mother is Lady Chen of the Song State ', we can basically determine that it is Zhang Yichao's mother. The first old man on the south side of the East Gate should be Zhang Qianyi as Zhang Yichao's father, and the last two

should be Zhang Yichao's brother Zhang Yitan and Zhang Yichao himself.<sup>[6]</sup>



Figure 3: *The Portrait of the Victim on the East Wall Door*

Similarly, according to (Fig.4) the existing title of the fourth body of bhikshuni on the north side of the west niche of the main room, 'sister is nun-Liao Kong', we can judge that her identity should be Zhang Yichao's sister who became a nun, which is also in line with our usual understanding, that is, the portrait of the nun's supporter appears in the non-monks and nuns 'merit cave, usually because of its origin in the merit family.



Figure 4: *Panoramic view of the north side under the western niche of the main room.*

Based on this principle, we can infer that the other three bhikshuni are probably Zhang Yichao 's sisters, or at least should be close to Zhang Yichao 's blood relationship. Of course, some scholars have pointed out that the four-body bhikshuni image on the north side of the western of the main room can be regarded as corresponding to the two-body bhikshuni image on the south side. His identity may be the representative of the higher position of the bhikshuni in the Dunhuang monk group at that time. But if so, we have to consider two questions. First, whether it is out of the tradition of grotto portraits, or simply from the perspective of aesthetics 'pursuit of symmetry, it seems to be a more appropriate choice to use two bhikshuni on the north side of the niche to correspond to two bhikshuni on the south side. 2. Cave 156 as Zhang Yichao 's merit cave, eligible monks and nuns in the cave, if they have no blood relationship with them, they must be very famous monks at that time, but the problem is, through the existing data, we found that the influential monks at that time, but Fa Cheng, Hong Bian, Fa Rong, Wu Zhen and other few people, and these people, not all can guide the identity of the monk into cave 156. Therefore, if the four bhikshuni images on the north side of the western niche of the main room are to be regarded as corresponding to the two bhikshus on the south side, at least two conditions should be met. 1. Among the Dunhuang monks at that time, at least three bhikshuni who matched the identity of Hong Bian and Facheng were found. 2. Zhang Yichao's sister - Liao Kong was indeed well versed in Buddhism, at least it would have been possible for people at that time to see that her Buddhist accomplishments corresponded to the appearance of famous monks like Hong Fan and Fa Cheng without feeling abrupt. According to the above analysis, the four bhikshuni statues on the north side of the west niche of the main room should be Zhang Yichao's sister, or at least a clan member who was close to Zhang Yichao, and not a representative of the higher status bhikshunis in Dunhuang Monastery at that time. Zhen Binglin believes that the five women after the four-body bhikshuni on the north side should be Zhang Yichao's wives. If this is the case, then the first woman after the bhikshuni should be Zhang Yichao's first wife, Guangping Song, the second is Mrs. Suo, the fourth is Mrs. Fu, and the third and fifth are

indecipherable due to inscriptions, so there is no way to determine their surnames, but based on the appearance of "My uncle's wife is Fan Yang Lu" in Cave 94 of the Mogao Grottoes in Zhang Huaishen's Merit Cave, it can be assumed that these two bodies should be one of them should be Mrs. Lu.

According to the Dunhuang Grottoes, men and women appear in appropriate combinations, and since there is a female feeder appearing as a "lady," a male counterpart is of course essential. In fact, the third figure on the south side of the niche under the west wall of the main room should serve this purpose, as the first figure behind the two leading monks is traditionally arranged according to the corresponding order of precedence, so in the context of Cave 156 as Zhang Yichao's merit cave, it should be him. According to scholars, the first body of the niche under the south side of the niche should be Hong Fan, who was the first capital monk of the Returned Army, while the two bodies of the Supporters after Zhang Yichao should be his two sons, Zhang Huai Ding and Zhang Huaishen.<sup>[7]</sup>

Therefore, the general identity of the supporters under the niche on the west wall of the main chamber (Fig. 5) is clear, except for the second body of the chief monk on the south side, which should be Zhang Yichao's four blood relatives and five wives on the north side, and Hong Fan, Zhang Yichao, and his two sons on the south side.



Figure 5: An overview of the west wall of the main room

## 2. Monk Fa Cheng's identity

After the initial clarification of the first body offering to the bhikkhu statue, the monk who followed closely and independently of the bed kneeling to make offerings (Fig. 6), we tentatively inferred that it should be Guan-Fa-Cheng (vgos chos grub) as Zhang Yichao's teacher.

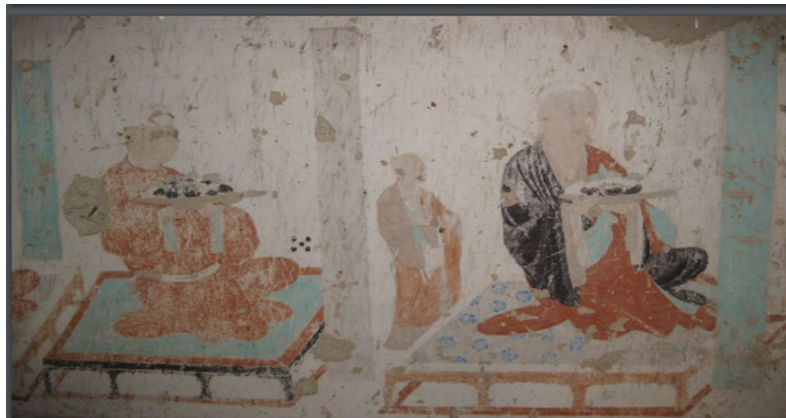


Figure 6: Overview of the south side of the niche

The reasons are as follows: First of all, it is based on the personal relationship between Zhang Yichao and Facheng. Zhang Yichao is a devout Buddhist who once followed Facheng to learn Buddhism and called himself 'a disciple of Buddhism'<sup>[8]</sup>. At the beginning of the establishment of the Guiyijun regime, Zhang Yichao invited Facheng from Xiuduo Temple in Ganzhou to come to Shazhou. He lived in Kaiyuan Temple and mainly talked about the translation of 'Yoga Master's Land Theory'. The P.4660 Sikong (Zhang Yichao) Fengguo in the 'Great Tang Shazhou Sutra Translation of Three Tibetan Great Virtues Wu Heshang Miao Zhenzan' is a clear proof. Zhang Yichao's respect for Facheng can also be explained by P.2913V 'Tang Dunhuang Translation of the Sanzang Wu Monk Miao Zhenzan' and P.4640 'So Wu Monk Zanwen' in the 'Taibao Qin, Recommended as a National Teacher'. Taibao refers to Zhang Yichao after the enfeoffment. He invited Facheng to become the 'National Teacher' of the Guiyijun regime, which shows the status and influence of Facheng in Dunhuang at that time. The reason why Facheng, who was born in Tubo, changed his mind about returning to the root of the fallen leaves and was willing to come to Shazhou was mainly due to the invitation of his disciple Zhang Yichao. Even

in the construction of Cave 156 itself, we can see Zhang Yichao's respect for his teacher Facheng. Wang Huimin believes that Cave 156, Cave 161, and the combination of earth pagodas directly above Cave 161 are the "Dusha Shentang" mentioned in Dunhuang literature. Sha Wutian also believes that Cave 161 is the Merit Cave of Facheng through textual research<sup>[8]</sup>. If so, it is not difficult to see the intimacy of the relationship between teacher and disciple through the arrangement of the two teachers and disciples.

Furthermore, the relationship between the statue of Bhikshu and Facheng can also be proved by the construction time of the cave. According to the latest research in the academic circle, the construction time of Cave 156 in Dazhong can be advanced to about 2 years ( 848 ), while the construction time in Dazhong is about 10 years ( 856 )<sup>[5]</sup>, which is exactly the time when Facheng was invited by Zhang Yichao to return to the sandbar and act in the sandbar. Therefore, the time when Facheng returned to the Sha Zhou roughly coincides with the time when Cave 156 was built. We all have reason to believe that there will be a place for the two monks in front of the statues of the two monks in the western niche of the main room of Cave 156. In particular, it was at such a special time that Facheng moved from Ganzhou to Shazhou.

In view of the fact that some scholars have suggested that the second body of the monks might be the judgment of Tang Wuzhen, we believe that the possibility is not great. The reasons are as follows: First, the status of Wuzhen is not sufficient. According to Rong Xinjiang's research, Hong Bian was the chief monk, and Farong should be the deputy monk. However, Dr. Zheng Yinan believes that Farong was promoted directly from Dusenglou to Dusengtong, and did not hold the position of deputy monk<sup>[9]</sup>. However, this does not change the fact that during Hong Bian's tenure as Dusengtong, Farong was still the de facto number two in the official monk system of the Guiyijun regime. The fact that Farong succeeded Hong Bian as the second Dusengtong of the Guiyijun regime was a strong proof of this. Imagine, if Farong is not qualified to appear in Zhang Yichao's merit cave, how can the status under him be qualified to appear in Cave 156?

On the other hand, the legal merits of "recommended as a national teacher" are different. His status is enough to support his appearance in his disciple Zhang Yichao's merit cave. Second, Wuzhen's identity as a disciple of Hong Bian is not appropriate. As a disciple of Hong Bian and an important assistant in Buddhist affairs, Wuzhen actively participated in Zhang Yichao's struggle to overthrow Tubo and was also appointed to the capital. It can be seen that Wuzhen is the trademark of Hong Bian's proud disciples.

### 3. Some thoughts on the statue of the provider in the corridor of Cave 156

We focus on the arrangement relationship between the three groups of five-body support portraits on the south side of the corridor. We have made it clear that it is Zhang Yichao who appears alone as the first group of supporters; the second body alone as a group of supporters is Zhang Huaishen as Zhang Yichao's nephew. The last group of three, Sha Wutian believes that two of them are Zhang Yichao's two sons, and the other may be one of Zhang Yichao's sons-in-law<sup>[10]</sup>.

If this judgment is correct, then we may be able to see the complex forms of clues within the Guiyi Jun at that time through the three groups of five donors on the south side of the passage of cave 156. Why should Zhang Huaishen, as Zhang Yichao's nephew, Zhang Yichao has two sons in the premise, still be able to follow behind him? And from the pictorial information conveyed by the donor portrait on the south side of the corridor, there is no doubt that it emphasizes Zhang Huaishen's position above Zhang Yichao's two sons. However, in the Dunhuang literature S.4504 'Wishes' and S.1164 'Back to Wishes', through the description of the author's wishes to 'Shangshu (Zhang Yichao) children', we get that Zhang Yichao has the idea of cultivating his children into heirs, which can also be obtained. After Zhang Yichao entered Chang An, his son contacted Kang Hengan and others, and paid close attention to the evidence of the situation in Shazhou. So how should Zhang Yichao explain this contradiction in behavior?

Yang Xiuqing pointed out, '(Zhang) Yi Tan's contribution to the building of the Guiyi Jun is no less than Zhang Yichao's, and he plays an important role in the Guiyi Jun<sup>[11]</sup>. The reason why he was willing to retreat again and again and finally make a first move was because he had reached an agreement with Zhang Yichao.

And this agreement is probably the reason why Zhang Yichao named his nephew as his successor when he had children. This gives us a lot of inspiration. Yang Baoyu and Wu Liyi, through a careful study of P.3804 'Scripture', believe that it should have been made in August of the seventh year of Xiantong ( 866 ), and the 'Shangshu' children in P.3804 'Scripture' are two young boys<sup>[12]</sup>, indicating

that Zhang Huaiding and Zhang Huaiquan should be relatively young at this time, and this can also be supported by the portraits of Zhang Huaiding and Zhang Huaiquan on the south side of the west niche of the main room of Cave 156 ( Fig. 7). The reason why they can kneel side by side on a small bed couch is precisely because they are younger and shorter.



Figure 7: Zhang Yichao and his two sons

According to the epitaph of ' Zhang Huaishen,' he died in this county on February 22, the first year of Dashun ( 890 )<sup>[13]</sup>. As we know, Zhang Huaishen was born in 831 AD and died in 890 AD. So in Xiantong 7 years ( 866 ), Zhang Huaishen should have been thirty-five. Therefore, Zhang Huaishen, Zhang Huaiding and Zhang Huaiquan are cousins in name, but in terms of age, they are completely two generations. Zhang Yichao was born in A.D.799, and had already passed the age of Huajia in 866. Although Zhang Yichao, who was old and had a son, was willing to hand over the power of Hexi to his son, he was helpless that the two sons were too young to bear this heavy responsibility. Therefore, either out of expediency or out of the previous agreement with his brother, he had to go to Chang 'an when he was forced to go to Chang 'an ( even if he was not forced to go to Chang 'an, Zhang Yichao had to consider the issue of the head of the Guiyi Army after his death. ) handed over the power of Guiyijun to Zhang Huaishen as his nephew. This decision is obviously not made in one day, which explains why on the south side of the passage of Cave 156, Zhang Huai 's deep swing is ahead of Zhang Huaiding and Zhang Huaiquan.

#### 4. Conclusion

Cave 156 of Mogao Grottoes, as the merit cave of Zhang Yichao, the first Guiyijun Festival envoy, is a milestone in the construction history of Mogao Grottoes. Compared with other caves, Cave 156 is particularly influenced by politics. After Zhang Yichao 's leadership in expelling the Tibetans in 848, the new Guiyijun regime was not stable. As the merit cave of Zhang Yichao, Cave 156 reflected Zhang Yichao 's efforts to consolidate his rule within the Guiyijun in the early days of the Guiyijun from one side. From the site selection of Cave 156, the selection of two guide monks under the western alcove of the main room in the cave, and even the arrangement of the order of the supporting portraits on the south side of the corridor, all these aspects, either explicitly or implicitly, reflect the efforts of Zhang Yichao 's Uniting Guiyi Army to influence various forces. Cave 156 is not only Zhang Yichao 's merit cave, but also a tool to consolidate personal rule by using the power of religion. Even its political attribute far exceeds the religious attribute that should have been ranked first in the cave.

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