

Abstract Dr. Jeremy E. Taylor:

“ ‘Qu Jiang hua’: Re-appraising debates about the remnants of Chiang Kai-shek’s reign on Taiwan”

A number of events which occurred in Taiwan in the final months of the Democratic Progressive Party’s reign over the island—including the burning of the Caoshan Guest House on Yangmingshan, the renaming of the Chiang Kai-shek International Airport, and plans to have Chiang Kai-shek’s body interred (after years of lying ‘in state’)—prompted political and media commentators to speak Taiwan as being in the throes of a process of ‘de-Chiang Kai-shek-ification’ (*qu Jiang hua* 去蔣化). Up until March this year, the sense was that, in the context of a second-term DPP administration, Taiwanese society was finally burying the ghosts of its authoritarian past, and seriously attempting—at the level of government and generally within Taiwanese society—to remove the physical and symbolic relics of Chiang Kai-shek’s reign and the personality cult that was constructed around him.

Yet by looking at this process over the longer term, the picture becomes more complex. Despite the recent invention of the phrase ‘*qu Jianghua*,’ one could well question the extent to which ‘de-Chiang Kai-shek-ification’ represents anything new. The removal of the physical remnants of Nationalist rule from the Taiwanese landscape is a process that has been attempted by various agents for well over a decade now. Yet the fact that this issue appears never to have completely gone away, and that the perceived need to dispose of the remnants of Chiang’s rule (and Chiang himself) continues to be raised at regular intervals, suggests that this process is far from simple, and that it is perhaps not even entirely achievable. Did *qu Jianghua* as it occurred under the DPP represent a final attempt to purge Taiwanese history of Chiang Kai-shek’s influence ‘once and for all,’ or was it just one instance in a much longer—and arguably irresolvable—debate about the nature of Taiwan’s recent past?