

## **Who Makes the Fall Happen? A Study of two National Taiwanese Universities’ Experiences of Removing Statues of Chiang Kai-shek**

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### **Abstract**

*Addressing contentious historical figures’ statues and heritages is an issue that perplexes many countries and generates polarised social debates. Taiwanese society has also had a long debate on how to appropriately handle statues of the country’s former leader, Chiang Kai-shek. What has become known as “Fallism” has been quite prevalent worldwide in recent years. Several studies have attempted to delineate this trend in South Africa, Belgium, the UK, and Taiwan under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) rule after 2016. However, no study thus far has focused on who truly makes the fall happen. In this study, the authors examine two Taiwanese cases - National Chengchi University and National Sun Yat-sen University, located in the north and south of Taiwan respectively - and explore these two universities’ experiences of decision-making with regard to the removal of Chiang’s statues. To do so, we examine both quantitative and qualitative data collected through participatory observation and voting results. This study aims to answer the fundamental question of who actually makes the statues fall. The findings of this study enrich the discussion of fallism in the current literature.*

**Keywords:** Chiang Kai-shek statue, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Chengchi University, Taiwan, fallism

### **Introduction**

During 2017 and 2018, two national universities in Taiwan decided to remove statues of Chiang Kai-shek 蔣介石 on their campuses. Although the decisions to make Chiang fall were made on campus, these decisions cannot be considered apart from their appropriate political domestic or international contexts (Stevens & de Seta, 2008). In domestic Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won the 2016 presidential election. During their campaign, the DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen set the goal of “achieving transitional justice” (*luoshi zhuanxing zhengyi* 落實轉型正義) as one of her top five policy priorities. Accordingly, the Tsai administration established the “Transitional Justice Commission” (*Cujin zhuanxing zhengyi weiyuanhui* 促進轉型正義委員會) in 2018, and addressing the issue of Chiang Kai-shek statues became one of the commission’s main tasks. Encouraged by the macro-political atmosphere promoted by the DPP and the party’s emphasis on Chiang as a dictator rather than

a hero, post-2016 a number of student movements have argued for the removal of Chiang's statues from their universities (Muehlbach, 2021; Strong, 2016).

Internationally, the issue of how to address contentious historical figures and the heritage of political leaders has perplexed many societies. In Belgium, a long debate has taken place concerning the historical reputation of King Leopold II and what to do with his statues, many of which are in public spaces and on university campuses (Rannard & Webster, 2020). In addition, both in the UK and South Africa, university students have launched a series of movements discussing the reputations and contributions of an Anglo-South African historical figure, Cecil John Rhodes. Rhodes operated a variety of businesses in South Africa and is highly controversial. He was the Prime Minister of South Africa between 1890 and 1896, at which time the country was under British colonial rule. During his rule, Rhodes not only restricted local voting rights, but also enforced a series of policies that had a significant negative impact on the people of South Africa and undermined their human rights. As Rhodes graduated from the University of Oxford and established a university named after him in South Africa, the students of both universities have had long debates over whether to remove his statues from the campus as part of a wider discussion about trends of decolonization and fallism in the global context (Shepherd, 2020).

As the previous examples demonstrate, Taiwan is not unique in facing difficulties over what to do with previous historical figures and heritages. In fact, many countries and societies have problems finding societal consensus on the issue, as different groups and stakeholders attach contradictory sentiments to these heritages and hence hold various attitudes toward the issue of whether to remove these statues. Notably, many of the movements and protests arguing for the removal of historical figures' statues and heritages have been organized by university students. However, students do not have sufficient power or resources to remove the statues on their own. The possible challenges that students may face include opposition from administrators and disagreement from other university elites. In this respect, making statues and heritages fall is not a linear process and cannot be accomplished by students alone. The actual situation is more complex and involves many power negotiations and sometimes even conflicts between different actors (Matten, 2012).

Unfortunately, the existing literature mainly provides historical reviews rather than answering the critical question of who really makes things happen, as most studies do not take actors' points of view into consideration. To fill this research gap, this study examines the student movements and experiences of removing a historical figure's statues, in this case Chiang Kai-shek, from two Taiwanese national universities - National Sun Yat-sen University 國立中山大學(NSYSU) in Kaohsiung city and National Chengchi University 國立政治大學(NCCU) in the capital city of Taipei. In terms of their location, these two cities are located on the south and north parts of Taiwan respectively. This article aims to identify the dominant decision-makers in the process of statues' removal. Before providing detail about the cases, the next sections briefly outline the history of Chiang Kai-shek in the Republic of China (ROC) and Taiwanese society, and examine the various attitudes and sentiments toward him and his leadership in the Taiwanese political context.

### **Chiang's historical position and his complex reputation**

Even today, evaluating the reputation of Chiang Kai-shek remains a highly controversial and politically contentious issue. Some appreciate his contributions, in particular his assistance to

Dr. Sun Yat-sen in establishing the first republic in Asia, the Republic of China (ROC), in 1912, and his efforts to combat Japan's invasion in the 1930s and 1940s. However, others regard Chiang as a dictator, due to the implementation of a series of repressive policies by his government after the declaration of martial law in 1949. Under this law, his government jailed thousands of people because their political ideologies or beliefs differed from the government's position (Chen, 2008). Chiang's debatable historical position and personal reputation are also revealed in surveys. According to surveys conducted by Wu (2008), 29% of people in Taiwan thought Chiang's contributions to Taiwan outweighed his faults, 30% regarded his contributions as equal to his faults, and nearly 10% of people believed his faults outweighed what he did for the country. Moreover, Ling and Li (2015) found a large generational gap between those aged over 40 and those aged under 40 regarding their perceptions and views of Chiang's leadership, with those over 40 generally more positive toward Chiang. The researchers argued that in general, the younger generation in Taiwan holds more negative views and perceptions toward Chiang. Notably, opinions of Chiang have varied not only among the different generations but also between different administrations. During the presidencies of Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo 蔣經國, the administrations strove to build Chiang Kai-shek's image as that of a national hero. Such purposive constructions of his image and associated political narratives endured for the last four decades of the twentieth century, while the KMT retained power in the central government (Morris, 2018).

Chiang's reputation has changed significantly since the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP 民進黨) came to power, first serving in government from 2000 to 2008. The DPP's victory heralded the first change in the ruling party in Taiwan since the 1996 transformation of the electoral system had allowed people to directly vote for the president. Under Chen Shui-bian's 陳水扁 presidency (2000 to 2008), the government sought to transform Chiang Kai-shek's personal image and national political narratives, reconstructing him as a bad, authoritarian leader, even a murderer. Chen's administration further regarded statues of Chiang or public spaces bearing his name, such as schools, roads, and infrastructure, as reminders of the terrible authoritarian past of his rule and thus tried to eliminate or remove heritages associated with him. Accordingly, Chen's government implemented a series of policies that can broadly be labelled as *qujianghua* ("de-Chiang-Kai-shek-ification" 去蔣化), renaming roads bearing his name and to removing his statues from many public settings (Musgrove, 2017). For example, in 2007, Chen's administration changed the name of the National Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (*Zhongzheng jiniantang* 中正紀念堂) in Taipei, which has the largest statue of Chiang in Taiwan, to the National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall (*Guoli Taiwan minzhu jinianguan* 國立臺灣民主紀念館) (AsiaNews.it, 2007). Chen's actions encouraged many, including DPP politicians and local governments ruled by DPP mayors, to join this political campaign, arguing for the removal of Chiang's statues and symbolic heritage from their schools, public spaces, and cityscapes. Notably, college students were one such group who enthusiastically participated in the political campaign to remove statues. According to some estimates, from 2000 onwards, Taiwanese college students organized dozens of student movements promoting the elimination or removal of Chiang's statues from their campuses. However, each university experienced different levels of conflict due to varying attitudes toward the issue and differences of opinion regarding the statues' removal (Musgrove, 2017).

### Chiang's statues and paradoxical attitudes toward Fallism in the Taiwanese political context

It is important to understand the historical context in which many Chiang Kai-shek statues were constructed in Taiwan. During Chiang's presidency, to enhance his and the Kuomintang's (KMT) legitimacy on the island, a series of "de-Japanification" (*qu Ribenhua* 去日本化) and "re-Sinification" (*zai Zhongguohua* 再中國化,) policies were introduced and implemented. The re-Sinification policies began in the 1950s and lasted for nearly four decades until the late 1990s. During this period, the KMT government began erecting statues of Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan, portraying him as a strong and powerful national leader. During their presidencies, both Chiang Kai-shek and his son had many statues erected across Taiwan. As Taylor argues, the aim of constructing statues of Chiang and naming main roads of cities and villages after him was to connect Chiang with the island's society and history, and to minimize the disadvantage that Chiang and his government held as newcomers to the island. By constructing his statues and advocating for a traditional Chinese style of architecture, Chiang further aimed to reconnect the national legacies and collective memories of the "old Republic of China" on the mainland with the "new Republic of China" on the island he ruled (Taylor, 2006). According to the Transnational Justice Commission, in 2018, there were still 1,083 Chiang Kai-shek statues in Taiwan. Many of them were located on school and university campuses (Chen, 2018).

However, the question of how to deal with the thousands of Chiang's statues located all around the island has become an increasingly controversial problem today, creating confusion for the Taiwan population as the main political forces hold very different, typically opposing, attitudes toward the issue (Matten, 2012). There are two main political forces in Taiwan. One is known as the Pan-Blue coalition (*fan lan* 泛藍); the KMT is the main political party in this coalition alongside other smaller parties, such as People First Party (*Qinmindang* 親民黨). The parties in this coalition hold different opinions about domestic issues; however, in general, party members within the coalition hold a more positive attitude toward Chiang Kai-shek's leadership and his heritage. Some politicians in the Pan-Blue coalition even believe that, without Chiang, Taiwan and some parts of the mainland might still be colonized by Japan. Therefore, they consider Chiang as a hero for all Chinese ethnic groups (*minzu de jiuxing* 民族的救星). Following from this positive evaluation of Chiang, the Pan-Blue camp opposes the removal of Chiang's statues from Taiwan; by contrast, they believe keeping Chiang's statues on their original sites is critical for the country's historical integrity (Shih & Chen, 2010). The other political force is the Pan-Green coalition (*fan lu* 泛綠). Several political parties could be categorized as belonging to this camp, including the DPP, the New Power Party (*Shidai liliang* 時代力量), and the Taiwan Statebuilding Party (*Taiwan jijin dang* 台灣基進黨). Notably, compared with their Pan-Blue counterpart, the Pan-green camp have quite a different political attitude toward Chiang's leadership and his historical reputation. They make a somewhat negative assessment of the historical legacy of Chiang's authority and tend to regard Chiang as a murderer and unworthy of the people's respect. Thus, they support the removal or dismantling of Chiang's statues (Preker, 2018; Shih & Chen, 2010).

Taylor (2010) also focused on the Pan-Blue and Pan-Green perspectives in his analysis, in which he primarily reviewed historical data on the Qujianghua policies that were implemented by the DPP government. He found that the DPP's Qujianghua policy was not

actually a complete and consistent policy program but rather that the DPP's policy plans were also influenced by many different political and societal forces. For example, the KMT's opposition, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have also participated in what can be seen as a co-construction of Chiang and the Chinese Republic's political narratives and the varied narratives about Chiang at the grassroots level. Thus, Taylor argued that the *Qujianghua* policy applied by the DPP featured a complex array of multidimensional voices and policy agendas, because the DPP does not make policy decisions in a void. However, in reality, the DPP still needs to find a compromise between implementing its policies, achieving its political goals, and navigating different opinions toward Fallism. In addition to the actors in domestic Taiwan, Taylor noted that when discussing different policy options and whether Chiang's statues should fall, a multitude of voices must simultaneously be considered, particularly actors from the other side of the Strait (Taylor, 2009). By admitting the complex nature of contending with Chiang's heritage and the issues of Fallism, Stevens and de Seta (2020) further summarized four main approaches to Chiang's statues and reassessing his heritage in Taiwanese society: displacement, re-contextualization, preservation, and deliberation. They further argued that each approach reflects different sentiments and political attitudes held by decision-makers toward Chiang's statues and his leadership.

The discussion above shows that the issue of Chiang Kai-shek statues and the experiences of how Taiwanese society has addressed this former dictator's heritage have attracted the attention of both domestic and international scholars. However, most previous literature has focused on historical analysis; few studies delve in depth to explore the question of who makes the statues fall. To fill this research gap, this study examines two Taiwanese national universities' experiences of removing statues of Chiang Kai-shek and report who made things happen and let the statues fall, based on firsthand participatory observation data gathered through the first author's full participation in both universities' decision-making processes. The movements organized by students and their deliberation practices on online platforms are also discussed. The next section briefly reviews the historical connections between Chiang Kai-shek and the two universities and explains how his statues came to be erected on campuses.

### **Chiang's statues at NSYSU and NCCU: An Introduction**

The original Sun Yat-sen University was in fact established in 1924 in Guangzhou by the founding father of the ROC, Dr. Sun Yat-sen. At the time, the university was named Guangzhou University 廣州大學, as it was located in Guangzhou city center. The university changed its name from Guangzhou to Sun Yat-sen University following Dr. Sun's death in 1925 to honor his role and contribution in establishing the country of ROC. The KMT government did not immediately re-establish the university after they lost the civil war against the CCP and retreated from mainland China to Taiwan and thus the NSYSU was not re-established in Kaohsiung until the 1980s. As Dr. Sun was the founder of the university, it is easy to understand why the university has a statue of Sun; however, the question of why Chiang's statue stands beside that of Dr. Sun at the NSYSU is rather more interesting, as Chiang had no direct relation to the NSYSU. The first university president of NSYSU was Huan Lee 李煥, who was a student of Chiang Ching-kuo. Moreover, the university was founded at the instigation of the state as a national university, and obtained its primary financial support from the government (National Sun Yat-sen University, 2020). These two reasons gave the first university president strong motivation to please the national leader at the time, Chiang Ching-kuo, hence the decision to erect a statue of his father to honor his legacy as part of the

new university construction project. Accordingly, the NSYSU has a statue of Dr. Sun seated, as well as a statue of Chiang standing beside him. Both statues were erected in 1985, and the statues are placed close together in the same location (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1: The original Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek statues on the NSYSU campus. NSYSU (2020b).*

NCCU's connections to Chiang Kai-shek and the KMT government can be traced back to 1927, when the KMT established its Central Party School in Nanjing to cultivate its own political cadres. The KMT government reopened the university in 1954, soon after relocating to Taipei, because of its critical role in cultivating and training the government's medium to high position employees (National Chengchi University, 2006). As the university had a close relation with Chiang, the university erected its first statue of Chiang in the university library in 1967, and a second statue was erected in 1986 on the university's mountain campus (Tsai, 2017).

As can be surmised from the varied perceptions held by Taiwanese people toward Chiang Kai-shek and his leadership, dealing with the numerous Chiang Kai-shek statues erected across the country during his and his son's presidencies has been an important but contentious issue since the 1990s, since when Taiwan has experienced rapid social, economic, and democratic transformations. After the 1990s, when Taiwanese society experienced a major wave of political democratization, an increasing number of social and political forces emerging from the grassroots have generated deep and widespread reflection on heritage concerning the country's former dictator (Wu Chien-Jun, 2020). Influenced by the atmosphere of political democratization, the statue removal issue has also inspired several student movements on different Taiwanese university campuses.

At NSYSU, the student movement arguing for the statues' removal began in 2016, when the NSYSU student association began to discuss the issue internally. In July of 2016, the association tried to add the issue to the university committee meeting agenda. However, the university refused to discuss their proposal at that time. Instead, the meeting chair announced that the students' proposal for the removal of the statue removal would be discussed at the next meeting in October 2016. At the October meeting, supporters and opponents of the statues' removal held a fierce debate.<sup>1</sup> As the university could not navigate the conflicting points of

<sup>1</sup> This information comes from the first author's field notes, taken in 2017.

view during the meeting, the NSYSU president decided to establish a new committee to investigate the issue. The committee comprised 14 members, only three of whom were student representatives. The university president announced that the aim of this committee was to collect diverse viewpoints and propose solutions to the problem of removing the statue in the subsequent year, 2017 (Liao Yuwen, 2017). In NCCU, back in 2012 when the NCCU student movement began, students had established a new association known as NCCU Wildfire (Zhengda yehuo zhenxian 政大野火陣線). This association played a vital role later in the movement. In April 2016, NCCU Wildfire cooperated with the NCCU student association to try to add the issue of statue removal to the university's discussion agenda, but the university refused their proposal. NCCU Wildfire tried again in 2017, and as at NSYSU, the NCCU president decided to establish a committee to collect different points of view and propose possible solutions (NCCU, 2017).

As seen above, the students' proposals to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues in question were not accepted by the relevant university authorities when the issues were first raised. However, there have been some changes in the situation post-2016, after the DPP returned into power and at which point, Tsai Ing-wen's government made achieving transitional justice a priority. As the macro-political environment changed, university authorities thus had stronger motivations toward taking students proposals into consideration so as to reflect the central government's stance toward Chiang. On the other hand, as these two universities are both national institutions and receive significant support from the Ministry of Education regardless of other finances or academic funding, the macro-political environment and character of the national universities have become critical driving forces in making the fall of these statues a possibility at these two institutions.

Notably, even when some positive political factors that might promote the fall of the statues are present, the student advocacy for bringing them down may still face challenges or oppositions, as the elites of both institutions hold varying attitudes and sentiments toward Chiang and his statues. It is naïve to believe that university elites would stand aside and satisfy the student demands while ignoring elite preferences. Both university elites and students prefer to make universities' decisions reflect their attitudes toward Chiang and the different preferences concerning the issue of statue removal. Since this issue is controversial and politically sensitive, there may be conflict between elites and students' preferences. The paper thus examines how NSYSU and NCCU made their decisions regarding the removal of Chiang Kai-shek statues on their campuses and tries to uncover who made the statues fall.

### **Top-down and Bottom-up Decision-making Models and the Online Platform iConcern**

There are two models for making decisions in political theory. The first is the elite model, in which the decision-making process stems from a top-down approach and is dominated by a small number of political or social elites rather than by the public. The model primarily thus reflects the preferences and political interests of the elite and ignores the voices of the public in discussing or deciding policies. For this reason, the decision-making process of this model has been criticized by scholars for not following democratic ideals because its lack of attention to public participation in politics. By extension, it can have negative impacts on social mobility and increase inequality between the minority elite and the majority public. In addition, a top-down decision-making model may also reduce government and public organizations' motivation to respond quickly to the needs of the masses. The second model is the pluralistic



model. It differs from the former in adopting a bottom-up approach and emphasizes allowing different people with varying viewpoints and interests to participate in the decision-making process through mutual exchange. Accordingly, the decision-making process of public policymaking is considered the result of competing interest groups, with no individual or minority group dominating the entire decision-making process and thereby determining the final outcome. In this model, the power hierarchies between elites and the public are equal in the decision-making process, and both voices are taken into consideration simultaneously. A main advantage of applying this decision-making approach is that different points of view and group interests can be represented and included, thus reducing the inequality caused when different power hierarchies and levels of capital are held by different groups of people. However, it is time-consuming to include various viewpoints and interest groups in the process of decision-making and policy discussion (Kuo, 2007; Kymlicka, 2002; Young, 2000; Lester & Stewart, 2000; Dahl, 1998).

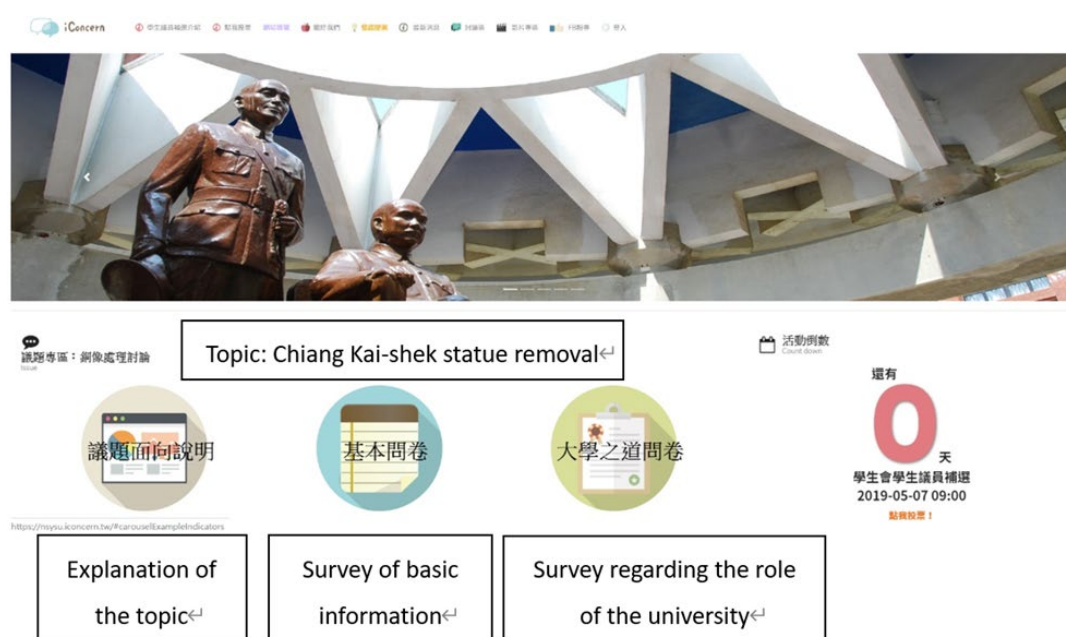


Figure 2: the iConcern online platform page, iConcern (2018)

These two decision-making models are not mutually exclusive. Decision-makers sometimes apply both models at the same time, particularly when dealing with highly contentious issues such as the removal of statues in this study. Taking the NSYSU and NCCU experiences as examples, the university administrators were not willing to make decisions about the statues on campus, as the faculty and students have somewhat varying attitudes and sentiments toward the contentious issue of Chiang-related heritage. Accordingly, both universities used an online platform - iConcern, developed by the first author and her research team - to help universities collect opinions. As the universities' practices of democratic deliberation were conducted through digital experiences, in the following paragraphs the authors further discuss how the online platform iConcern was used in assisting these universities in collecting public opinion.

The iConcern online platform was created in 2017 by the first author and her research team to explore the issue of removing Chiang Kai-shek statues at NSYSU and NCCU. The main goal for this platform was to assist both universities in collecting the opinions of students,



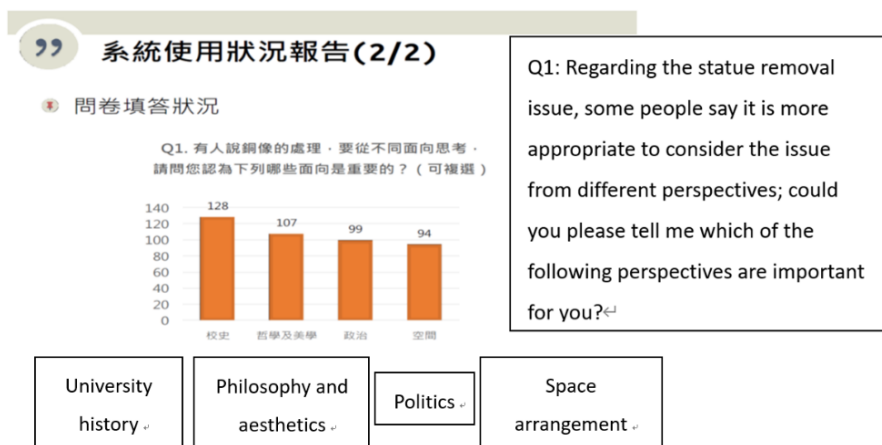
faculty members, and university staff on the issues before making their final decision. To encourage users to freely express their opinions on the issue, the iConcern platform established a discussion forum. In the forum, all users could freely write their thoughts or start new discussion topics. Rules were established to maintain a neutral and peaceful environment where users could discuss the issues. For example, the platform manager could delete messages containing hate speech or radical narratives. In addition, the platform offered four discussion domains, namely, university history (*xiao shi mianxiang* 校史面向), philosophy and aesthetics (*zhexue yu meixue mianxiang* 哲學與美學面向), politics (*zhengzhi mianxiang* 政治面向), and space arrangement (*kongjian mianxiang* 空間面向), as those who cared about statue removal considered multiple perspectives rather than a single viewpoint (Liao Da-Chi, 2018).

To explore these two universities' decision-making processes and their experiences of using iConcern in collecting public opinion from among university members, the data in this article consist of three parts: the first author's observation as a participant during the decision-making process at these two universities, online discussions and voting results from the iConcern platform, and the universities' decision-making records. It also examines the literature relating to the issues.

## Decision-making Processes and Digital Deliberation Practices of Two Taiwanese Universities

### Case One: National Sun Yat-sen University

Notably, users of the NSYSU iConcern online platform and the student association hold quite different attitudes toward the issue of removal. For student association members, removing the statue was an imperative issue to be solved as soon as possible. However, according to Figure 3, only 26 of the 209 online questionnaire participants (12.5% of all respondents) felt that removing the statue was important to them. Approximately 35% of online respondents indicated that removal is not an urgent issue for them; moreover, 65% of users rated the level of urgency in removing Chiang's statues from the NSYSU campus below level five, indicating that for most NSYSU iConcern online users, removing the statues was not an important issue for them in the context of their campus life. In addition, with regard to the discussion domains, the online respondents were most concerned with the statues' historical linkages with the University, followed by philosophy and aesthetics, and then politics. Space arrangement was the least of the respondents' worries.



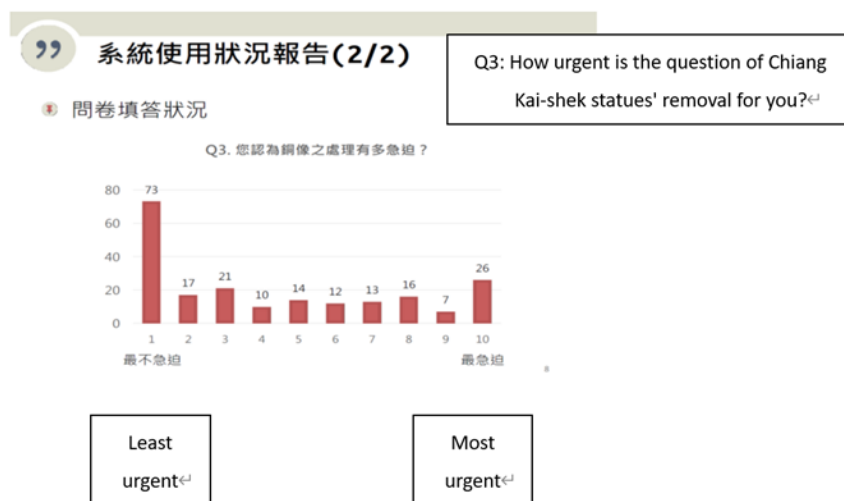


Figure 3: Online voting results from NSYSU users, *iConcern* (2018)

It is revealing to note how one user (brownbird203, an NSYSU alumnus) on the *iConcern* platform expressed his emotional connection with NSYSU in terms of the university's history:

I didn't choose to study at NSYSU for the beautiful views but because I wanted to follow the example of our national father, Sun Yat-Sen. NSYSU is special to me. I want to carry on the revolutionary cause for all Chinese, whether in Taiwan, in China, or in the rest of the world. I want to save our ROC—a suffering country. I want to make the ROC a major player on the world's stage again. I want to silently swear in front of the statues of the fathers of our nation, Sun Yat-Sen and Chiang Kai-shek, especially at midnight, that I will try to carry on their revolutionary cause (brownbird203, 2018).

Not only does this user associate his feelings with the revolutionary actions led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in combating the previous dictatorship of the Qing dynasty and establishing the first democratic republic in Asia in 1911, the Republic of China, but he also expresses his Chinese identity by linking himself to the history of Sun Yat-sen and NSYSU. In addition, brownbird203 specified his Chinese identity with the ROC rather than with the PRC on the mainland today. The user expressed his opinion indirectly at the end of his comment, implying that he does not agree with removing the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and Sun Yat-sen. Many users' comments on *iConcern* clearly indicate that users attached quite different emotions to the statues of Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, and in general, many more online users hold positive feelings toward the statue of Sun Yat-sen than toward Chiang's. This type of positive emotion toward Dr. Sun further influenced university online users' subsequent options and answers to the survey.



Figure 4: Deliberative democracy activities held by the first author and her research team.  
Permission provided by the first author for use.

Additionally, to entice more university students to participate in these pioneering campus deliberative practices and to encourage students to elaborate their opinions toward the issue, the first author and her research team organized several offline activities promoting the event, hoping to attract as much attention from university stakeholders as possible. These events included a mass media press conference, a citizen café, and a “statues week” including short talks, a student debate contest, and public hearings (*gongtinghui* 公聽會), both on and off campus (Liao *et al.*, 2020).

After collecting all the comments and opinions regarding the statues’ removal from online users and participants in offline activities, the first author and her research team sent those comments and opinions to the university statue committee. By reviewing the online and offline comments and opinions, the committee devised three options for the university assembly to consider: to leave the statue as it was, move it to another location on campus, and to move it off campus. Since NSYSU had two statues, one of Sun Yat-sen and the other of Chiang Kai-shek, they also suggested considering the issue of removal separately for each statue. In addition, NSYSU held a university assembly meeting on 3 December 2017 to discuss the statues’ removal, where they considered the comments made online and offline and the committee’s suggestions. At the assembly, 34 of 44 representatives voted to support the university in organizing a university-wide vote with regard to the statues’ removal. Following the decision of the university assembly, NSYSU held a university-wide vote April 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The university publicized the voting event on the university website’s home page. All students, faculty and staff could participate by logging into their university account (NSYSU, 2017).

According to the first author’s first-hand observations, some high-ranked NSYSU administrators did spend time discussing how to design the criteria for vote calculation so that the results of voting could fulfill the university elites’ expectations. Two complex methods

were formulated by university elites for conducting the university-wide vote and tallying the results. First, they decided to adopt a single-step voting system rather than a two-step approach, even though the latter was recommended by many survey experts. The two-step approach would have involved first asking voters whether they support removal of Chiang's or Sun's statues. If a voter answers "agree to move" to the first question, the second step asks them whether to move the statues to other places on campus or off campus. Instead of using the two-step survey method, a one-step question which directly asked where would be appropriate to relocate the statues to was devised by elite figures in the university. Three options, to leave in its original spot, to move somewhere on campus, and to move off campus, were presented simultaneously. Clearly, outcome distributions will differ between the two-step and single-step methods of questioning. The second slightly devious method formulated by the university elites was the criteria for calculating the voting results. They combined the results of the two removal options to reflect a unified decision in favour of moving, instead of counting the relative majority among the three options (see Table 1). In addition, the university elites formulated some additional calculation criteria with the intention of making it easier for the removal options to surpass the stay option, namely, it was that decided that "If the proportion of [votes for] 'stay in place' is higher than 50%, then the statue will stay in place" and "If the proportion of 'stay in place' is lower than 50%, the statue will be moved away from its current location." Although these methods were designed by a few individuals, they were approved by the university assembly, because most participants did not pay attention to these details.<sup>2</sup> Notably, the voting results were relatively consistent with the university elites' original expectations and legitimized the final decision to remove Chiang's statues.

Voting options	Votes	Percentages
Sun Yat-sen statue to remain where it is	3,113	62.93 %
Sun Yat-sen statue to move elsewhere on campus	871	17.61 %
Sun Yat-sen statue to be removed from campus	963	19.47 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to remain where it is	2,311	46.72 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to move elsewhere on campus	869	17.57 %
Chiang Kai-shek statue to be removed out from campus	1,767	35.72 %

*Table 1: Results from the NSYSU online vote, iConcern (2018)*

The results of the university-wide vote were announced on 20 April 2018. In total, 4,947 NSYSU students and staff participated in the vote. Table 1 shows the results. Most voters felt that the statues of both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek should remain, rather than be removed. Most voters, approximately 63%, supported Dr. Sun's statue remaining in its original

<sup>2</sup> This information comes from the first author's field notes, 2018.

place, while less than 20% voted to remove the statue from campus entirely. The option to remove Chiang's statue attracted the support of only a relative minority of voters, with 17.57% and 35.72% expressing that the statue should either be moved elsewhere on NSYSU or removed from NSYSU, respectively. However, about half of voters (47%) supported the option to keep the Chiang Kai-shek statue on campus. As the figures above show, it is clear that the question of removing Chiang Kai-shek's statue was more controversial than Sun Yat-sen's. This difference is likely due to the different historical reputations of the two figures and the paradoxical opinions held by the Taiwanese public and members of the university (NSYSU, 2018).

In terms of the relative majority, the results of the university-wide vote did not support removing both Chiang's and Sun's statues. However, the rules of the vote established before the voting event made the fall happen for Chiang's statue ("stay in place" below 50%) but not for Sun's statue ("stay in place" over half). The university then decided to remove Chiang's statue but keep it somewhere on campus, which was the least popular option (17.61%) among the three choices given to students.

Accordingly, the decision-making processes at NSYSU show that students were the main initiators, both organizing the movement promoting the fall on campus and in putting the removal proposal on the university's agenda. However, they could not really make the statues fall solely through their own actions. Furthermore, both the voices from the university publics and university-wide voting result might only play a minor role in the deliberation processes, because these opinions might be viewed as a supplementary reference for the decision maker. The most crucial part of making the fall decision, as revealed by the NSYSU case, is that a few elites designed the rules for the vote and vote counting methods in advance, in a highly sophisticated fashion.

### Case Two: National Chengchi University

To deal with the question of the removal of Chiang Kai-shek's statues at NCCU, the annual university assembly also decided to organize a special statue committee in 2017. The committee's responsibilities included collecting staff and student opinions and providing the university assembly and president with possible solutions. As the university was also aware, the removal issue was highly contentious due to the university's special, close relationship with Chiang. Rather than deciding how to deal with the statues alone, the university leadership decided to collect and hear different stakeholders' opinions before making a decision. Moreover, so as to collect opinions effectively, the NCCU also invited the first author to assist the university, implementing the online platform iConcern as a complementary channel for collecting different viewpoints. The iConcern platform was used for holding discussions and collecting votes on options for removal of the statue in May 2017 (Liao Da-Chi, 2018).

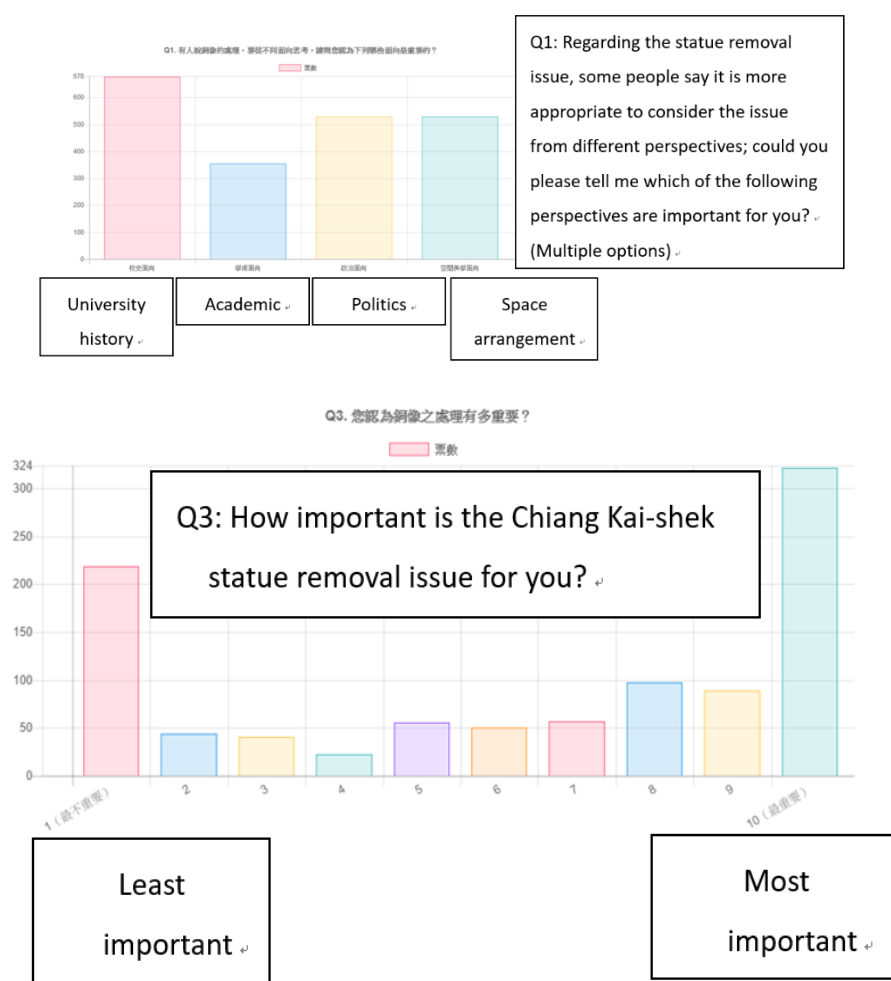


Figure 5: Online voting results from NCCU users, *iConcern* (2018)

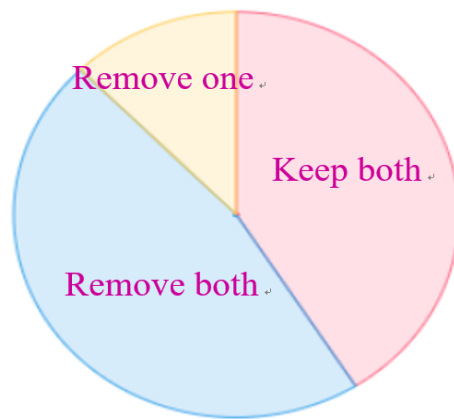
Throughout May, all NCCU students and staff could log onto the platform via their university accounts, share their points of view regarding the issue, and participate in the online poll. That month, a total of 1,044 people, including students, professors, and staff from NCCU, participated in online voting and expressed their opinion on the issues. As Figure 5 shows, a majority of NCCU online users felt that the statue removal issue was very important to them. Similar to the users at NSYSU, most NCCU platform users considered and discussed the issues through the lens of university history, given that Chiang Kai-shek was the founding principal of the university. Users were less concerned about politics and space arrangement, but philosophy was the least important dimension aspect overall for NCCU online users. It is interesting to compare Figures 3 and 5, which reveal differences between the online users of NCCU and NSYSU, as the users at these two universities show some divergent interests regarding the four dimensions of the issue highlighted for discussion via *iConcern*.

Since NCCU had two Chiang Kai-shek statues, one located in the university library and the other positioned on the mountain campus, two questions were raised on the *iConcern* online platform during the vote to explore NCCU staff and students' opinions and attitudes toward the issue of statue removal. The two questions were as follows: (1) How would you deal with these two Chiang Kai-shek statues on campus? and (2) Which statue is your priority for

removal? For the first question, a total of 445 users selected the option “both Chiang Kai-shek statues should be removed” (accounting for 42.6% of all voters), while 422 users chose the option “both Chiang Kai-shek statues should remain” (accounting for 42.3% of all voters). Notably, only a few users at NCCU (142 users, 11.8%) chose the option to “only remove one of the two Chiang Kai-shek statues.” The results from NCCU’s online vote showed the university students and staff held quite polarized opinions and attitudes toward the issue of statue removal. Moreover, regarding the second issue - which one should be removed - most NCCU platform users demonstrated their preference for removing the statue inside the university library; however, several NCCU users did support removing the Chiang Kai-shek statue from the mountain campus. As the voting outcome was too polarized to establish a consensus, the NCCU university leadership did not decide to organize a university-wide vote, as they believed the activity might generate further conflict among different university stakeholders with diverse opinions.

Q5. 您認為要如何處理政大校內二座蔣中正銅像？

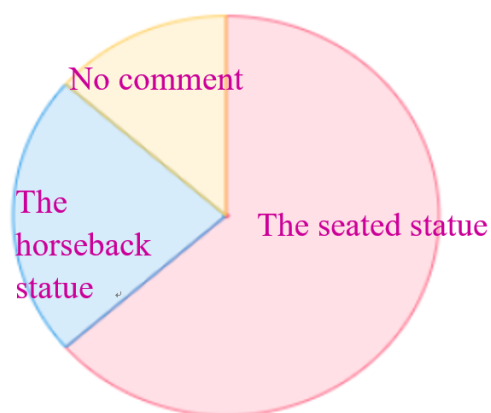
全部保留 全部遷移 遷移一尊



Q5: What's your opinion in regard to dealing with the two Chiang Kai-shek statues at the National Chengchi University campus?

Q5.3. 若Q5選擇遷移一尊，要移哪一尊

圖書館坐姿銅像 後山騎馬銅像 無意見



Q5.3: If you could only remove one statue, which one do you think should be removed?

Figure 6: Voting results from NCCU iConcern users on the removal of statues, iConcern (2018)



Instead, they took the online discussions and voting results collected by the iConcern platform directly to a meeting of the university assembly for further discussion, which was held on 8 September 2017. The university invited all 79 of its staff and student assembly representatives to vote and choose which removal option they preferred. Importantly, the university held two rounds of voting during the assembly meeting. The first-round vote was to determine whether to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues. Forty-two assembly representatives (54%) voted to remove the statues, 36 representatives (46%) supported keeping the statues and not moving them, and one vote was void. Therefore, because most of the assembly representatives supported the statues' removal, the university decided to remove the statues. The second-round vote was to determine how to remove the statues of Chiang Kai-shek and how many statues to remove. Forty-three representatives (55%) voted to remove one statue, 22 representatives (28%) voted to remove both statues simultaneously, and seven votes were invalid. Based on these results, the NCCU university assembly eventually decided to remove the seated statue of Chiang Kai-shek in the university library but leave the statue erected at the mountain campus. This decision was taken even though the university assembly decision differed from online users' general preferences and hence did not reflect public opinion on the statues.

It should be noted that NCCU and NSYSU applied different strategies in their decision-making regarding the removal of the statues. Although both universities utilized the iConcern online platform to assist them in collecting different opinions and arguments, in contrast to NSYSU, NCCU did not hold a university-wide vote and made its decision based on the votes of the handful of representatives who sat on the university assembly. Thus, without holding a university-wide vote, the final decision on removal of the statues as made by the NCCU assembly representatives had less legitimacy as compared with NSYSU's decision. However, the authors were curious as to why the NCCU assembly representatives chose the least popular course of action of removing one statue - instead of removing both or removing neither, both of which as individual options had more support. During the first author's participant observation, an NCCU professor and assembly representative shared the difficulties of the struggle that representatives faced when they tried to find a practical solution to the statues' removal during the assembly. He said:

...you know, it was quite difficult for us to find a practical solution as the voting results were so polarized. The majority of online users either supported removing or maintaining both the Chiang Kai-shek statues. How could we [the assembly] balance such polarized viewpoints? It was mission impossible. If we decided not to remove both statues, then it would make the other side angry. Similarly, if we decided to remove both of the statues, then the opposite side would not accept it. So, I thought the decision made by the assembly representatives to remove one of the Chiang Kai-shek statues but leave the other in its original place was a compromise.... you know...the university really did try to appease the two groups (The first author's field note, 2018).



*Figure 7: The damaged Chiang Kai-shek statue on NCCU's mountain campus. Picture courtesy of Prof. Lee Yeau-Tarn 李酉潭 of NCCU.*

The above narrative, recorded in the first author's field notes, show the difficulties that the NCCU assembly representatives faced in finding a practicable solution over the issue of the statue, as the staff and students' online voting results revealed polarized preferences. Thus, the university leadership decided to take back authority in making the decision about this highly contentious and polarizing issue and made a final compromise decision to remove the university library Chiang Kai-shek statue but to leave the statue erected on the NCCU mountain campus in its original place, even though this decision did not reflect most NCCU members' perspectives.

Since the final decision made by the assembly meeting obtained insufficient support from students and members, the legitimacy of the final decision was compromised. As this decision was imperfect, a group of university students held a protest and cut one leg off the Chiang Kai-shek statue that had been left on the mountain campus (Taipei Times, 2019).

Table 2 below summarises how the two universities addressed the issue of statue removal:

<b>Name of university</b>	<b>National Sun Yat-sen University</b>	<b>National Chengchi University</b>
<b>Statue year of construction</b>	1985	1967, 1986
<b>Number of statues on campus</b>	One Chiang Kai-shek statue and one Dr. Sun Yat-sen statue, situated together	Two Chiang Kai-shek statues, one located in the university library and one located on the mountain campus
<b>When the student movement for the statues' removal began</b>	2016	2012
	Although the student movements at these two universities began at different times, students' proposals to remove the Chiang Kai-shek statues were not included in the universities' discussion agendas until the 2017-18 academic year, following the resumption of DPP government in 2016.	
<b>Opinion collection procedures</b>	Most university elites realized how sensitive the issue was and how important it was to carefully address the issue in a democratic manner at university campuses. These two universities utilized the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting the various opinions held by the university public. These opinions were not decisive.	
<b>University decision on removal of the statues</b>	NSYSU decided to move Chiang's statue but keep Sun's in its original place.	NCCU decided to remove Chiang's statue from the library but keep the one on the mountain campus where it was.
	These two universities' final decisions did not reflect a majority of university public opinion or online users' preferences regarding the statues removal, although both universities used the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting views from the different university stakeholders.	
<b>Who made the fall happen?</b>	<p>At first glance, students at both universities seem to have played an important role in organizing the student movements and in actively proposing removal of the statues.</p> <p>In reality, key university elites remained crucial, formulating the rules of the voting that substantially guided the decision-making process.</p>	

*Table 2. Comparison of contexts and removal procedures regarding Chiang Kai-shek statues at NSYSU and NCCU. Table compiled from data collected by the authors as part of this study.*

### **Who makes the fall happen? Reflections on the two cases**

Firstly, although the student movements at these universities began at different times, the window of opportunity for discussion about the removal issues only opened under DPP rule, particularly after 2016 when the DPP president Tsai Ing-wen took power and announced her government's goal of achieving transnational justices. In this macropolitical atmosphere, many university students were encouraged to organize student movements arguing for the removal of Chiang's statues from their campuses. The macropolitical atmosphere played an important role in setting the stage to make the removal issue salient. When the KMT were in power, removal issues were less likely to receive attention from society or university authorities as the KMT consistently expressed a more positive attitude toward Chiang and certainly supported the preservation of Chiang's statues.

Secondly, the status of the universities is an important factor. Both NSYSU and NCCU are national universities and obtain most of their financial funding and academic support from the central government. In this regard, both university presidents and their appointed administrative leaders were strongly motivated to incorporate student-authored proposals for the removal of statues into the university agenda under DPP rule as they reflected the political ideology of the ruling party. This factor is important, as it helps explain why both university presidents began to place students' removal proposals on the agenda and to allow discussion of the relevant issues between 2017 and 2018.

Third, it is important to consider the role of students during the decision-making process. Students played an important role in organizing the movements, participating in discussions, promoting their proposals for statue removal with the expectation that they would be included in the university's discussion agenda. However, it was impossible for the statues to fall through students' actions alone because both universities regarded students' voices and voting outcomes as merely references for making their own decision, and not decisive. In reality, students' deliberations could not bring about the removal of the statues because the experience of the decision-making processes at both universities demonstrate that participating in the processes of deliberation and decision-making costs too much time and effort (Lo, 2010). The above phenomenon was clearly demonstrated by the fact that at both universities, the number of online users who participated in the online vote was much higher than the number of users who participated in the discussions on the forum. Specifically, at both universities, thousands of users voted; however, fewer than 50 online users participated in the discussions on the forum. Moreover, based on the authors' observations of online participants, most online discussions and messages posted by users on the forum were one-off posts, meaning that the platform users did not really follow others' messages and replies; rather, they only expressed their own opinions. The platform users had very limited mutual interaction and communication over the issue of statue removal, which reduced the effectiveness of using online platforms to promote deliberation on these two campuses.

In this regard, if students were not the key actors, then who was the key person who made the decision? To answer this question, the role of university leaders must be considered. As Taiwan is a vibrant and young democratic country, citizens expect their voices be taken into account in the government's decision-making processes. Similarly, the elites of both universities realized how sensitive the statue issue was and understood that some students were actively participating in the movement and held strong opinions in favour of the removal of the

Chiang Kai-shek statues from their campuses. In addition, the leaders at these two universities knew that it might generate further conflict if they retained decision-making powers in this instance solely for themselves, thereby excluding the voices of students and the wider university public. Therefore, to respond to students' requests for participation in the decision-making process and the expectations of democratic fulfilment held by Taiwanese society, the university elites at both universities did not make the decisions on their own. Instead, they established statue removal committees and used the online platform iConcern to assist them in collecting different opinions from the public. By doing so, the university elites made the processes appear as though they were following a bottom-up rather than a top-down decision-making model. However, it is naïve to believe that the university elites would stand aside and wait for final decisions to be made that only reflected the opinions of a few activist students. The decision-making processes at both NSYSU and NCCU show that the university elites were definitely not bystanders and did not passively wait for the voting results. In contrast, they hid behind the formal procedures and played critical roles in the background, deciding the rules of the game, the methods for tallying the votes, and the issues included in the discussions and the direction discussions should take. Importantly, the university elite(s) could consist of an informal small group or a formal committee. In NSYSU, there were a few university elites and representatives overseeing the process, while at NCCU, the statue committee held the power in the decision-making process. Although there are some differences between the two universities, generally, the statue removal decisions at these two universities were ultimately made by a small number of university elites rather than the public, and the final decisions did not correspond to the majority's preferences or the outcomes of the online opinion survey.

Accordingly, the cases of NSYSU and NCCU show that both the macro-political environment and the national character of the universities were important factors in creating the political space for discussion of the removal of statues and in motivating university elites to follow national leaders' political deeds and ideologies. Unfortunately, although students seemingly played critical roles in bringing the statues down, in reality, their voices and forces only played a symbolic role in the entire process, as their viewpoints were mainly regarded as references for others to use in their decision, rather than a decisive factor in and of themselves.

## **Conclusion**

In this study, the authors explored the experiences of removing Chiang Kai-shek statues at two national universities in Taiwan, NSYSU and NCCU, and identified the key actors in the process, exploring the different roles of students and university elites. The authors also fill a research gap in the existing literature, which has mainly focused on historical reviews of fallism, but which has not reflected on different actors' perspectives and roles. This study shows that it would be impossible to remove the statues with only the students' actions since the key actors were in fact a minority of elite university figures, rather than the student majority. University elites designed the rules of the game in making the final decisions. As both university administrators and elites had incentives to deal with the removal issue, they actively intervened in the decision-making procedures and further manipulated the final outcomes. By examining the experiences of removing statues at NSYSU and NCCU, the authors believe that this study can enhance the depth in discussion concerning the issues of fallism in the international literature. Currently, addressing contentious historical figures' statues and heritages is a salient issue in not only Taiwanese society but also other countries such as Belgium, South Africa,

and the United Kingdom. However, most of the fallism literature does not incorporate different actors' roles or answer the fundamental question about who makes the statues fall. This study attempted to fill this gap and highlighted that students may only act as initiators. In reality, students do not have enough power to actually achieve the fall of a statue. Instead, the university elites who hold administrative power, were more influential since they were able to formulate the rules of the game, which substantially framed the outcomes. Based upon the experience of the two national universities in question, the conditions that make elites willing to make efforts to tackle complex heritage issues relating to contentious historical figures depends upon both the political environments they are facing and the financial resources they are relying on. Accordingly, who makes the fall happen? The answer may require a multiple-dimensional approach and venture beyond merely the observation of superficial phenomena.

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