



Is the Current Mayor of Taipei, Taiwan, Chiang Wan-an, a Descendant of Chiang Kai-shek? A Historical and Genealogical Review

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ABSTRACT

Chiang Wan-an, the current mayor of Taipei (Taiwan), has frequently been described in domestic and international media as the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek, the former leader of the Republic of China. This ancestry has attracted considerable political and historical attention because Chiang Kai-shek and his son Chiang Ching-kuo dominated Taiwan's political system for several decades. However, the genealogical relationship between Chiang Wan-an and the Chiang family contains an important qualification. Chiang Wan-an's father, Chiang Hsiao-yen, was born as Chang Hsiao-yen and claimed to be the biological son of Chiang Ching-kuo and Chang Ya-juo. In 2002, official identification documents were changed to record Chiang Ching-kuo and Chang Ya-juo as his biological parents, and he formally adopted the surname Chiang in 2005. Nevertheless, Chiang Ching-kuo never publicly acknowledged the relationship during his lifetime, and competing claims concerning Chiang Hsiao-yen's biological father have persisted. This paper examines the evidence, historical context, and political significance of Chiang Wan-an's claimed descent. It concludes that describing him as Chiang Kai-shek's great-grandson is reasonable as a description of the established family narrative, but should be accompanied by a qualification concerning the unresolved historical and biological controversy.

Keywords: Chiang Wan-an; Taipei (Taiwan); Chiang Kai-shek; Chiang Ching-kuo; Chang Ya-juo

INTRODUCTION

Chiang Wan-an is one of the most prominent contemporary politicians associated with Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) (Brender, 2022; Hioe, 2022). He was elected mayor of Taipei in 2022 and remains the incumbent mayor. The official Taipei City Government biography identifies him as a former legislator and lawyer and records his educational background at National Chengchi University and the University of Pennsylvania. His family background, however, has attracted almost as much attention as his political career. Numerous international media organizations have described Chiang Wan-an as the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek (Chen, 2024) (Figure.1). Taiwan News, for example, explicitly characterized him as Chiang Kai-shek's great-grandson when reporting his 2022 mayoral campaign. The genealogy is more complicated than this simple description suggests. The critical question is not whether Chiang Wan-an claims descent from Chiang Kai-shek, but whether the intermediate relationship—between his father, Chiang Hsiao-yen, and Chiang Ching-kuo—can be regarded as historically and biologically established.

THE PROPOSED GENEALOGICAL LINE

The claimed family relationship can be represented simply as: Chiang Kai-shek → Chiang Ching-kuo → Chiang Hsiao-yen → Chiang Wan-an. If this lineage is accepted, Chiang Wan-an is the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek. Chiang Ching-kuo was Chiang Kai-shek's son and later became president of the Republic of China (Taiwan) (Esherick, 2010). His acknowledged family included his wife, Faina Chiang Fang-liang, and their children. However, Chiang Hsiao-yen occupied a different and controversial position within the family



history. Chiang Hsiao-yen was born in 1942 as Chang Hsiao-yen. He and his twin brother, Chang Hsiao-tzu, were born out of wedlock to Chang Ya-juo and, according to the family account, Chiang Ching-kuo. The two brothers initially carried their mother's surname. Contemporary historical report records that Chiang Hsiao-yen subsequently sought formal recognition of Chiang Ching-kuo as his biological father. This makes Chiang Wan-an's genealogy dependent upon the validity of his father's claimed parentage.

THE RECOGNITION OF CHIANG HSIAO-YEN

An important development occurred in 2002. Chiang Hsiao-yen obtained an identity document that listed Chiang Ching-kuo and Chang Ya-juo as his biological parents. He publicly stated that he wanted to be included in the Chiang family's lineage. In 2005, he formally changed his surname from Chang to Chiang. The South China Morning Post reported that this represented the culmination of his long effort to be recognized as part of the Chiang family. This legal and documentary history provides substantial support for the family narrative. Nevertheless, it should not automatically be equated with independent genetic proof. Chiang Ching-kuo died in 1988 and therefore never publicly acknowledged Chiang Hsiao-yen as his son during his lifetime. International reporting has emphasized this distinction. The Straits Times, for example, described Chiang Hsiao-yen as an "unrecognised son" of Chiang Ching-kuo and noted that Chiang Ching-kuo never publicly acknowledged the twins.

WHY THE GENEALOGY REMAINS CONTROVERSIAL

The controversy arises primarily from the difference between legal recognition, family testimony, historical documentation, and biological proof. Supporters of the Chiang family account point to Chiang Hsiao-yen's longstanding assertion that Chiang Ching-kuo was his biological father, the subsequent change in official identification documents, his adoption of the Chiang surname, and the political and social circumstances surrounding the family. However, critics have argued that the relationship has not been conclusively established through publicly available DNA evidence. The Taipei Times reported in 2022 that competing theories concerning Chiang Hsiao-yen's biological father had resurfaced during Chiang Wan-an's mayoral campaign. The newspaper noted that some commentators proposed another individual as the biological father and suggested that DNA testing would provide the most definitive answer. Consequently, a rigorous academic treatment should avoid presenting the genealogy as an uncontested scientific fact.

CHIANG WAN-AN AND THE POLITICAL MEANING OF ANCESTRY

The significance of Chiang Wan-an's ancestry extends beyond genealogy. Chiang Kai-shek remains one of the most consequential and controversial figures in modern Taiwanese history. His government established authoritarian rule in Taiwan following the Chinese Civil War, while his political legacy remains viewed very differently by different sectors of Taiwanese society. Chiang Wan-an entered politics under a surname strongly associated with this historical legacy. During his mayoral campaign, his connection with Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo received considerable attention. The Taipei Times reported that Chiang Wan-an publicly referred to his ancestral relationship and even associated his given name, "Wan-an," with Chiang Ching-kuo. At the same time, Chiang Wan-an has sometimes emphasized that his political qualifications should be evaluated independently of his family history. This tension illustrates a broader phenomenon in democratic politics: hereditary political identity can simultaneously function as an electoral asset and a political burden.

HISTORICAL ASSESSMENT

From a historiographical perspective, three levels of conclusion should be distinguished. First, Chiang Wan-an is widely identified in public records and international reporting as a great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek. This is not a fringe characterization; it has been repeatedly used by major media organizations. Second, the immediate genealogical link is based principally on Chiang Hsiao-yen's claim that Chiang Ching-kuo was his biological father, together with subsequent official documentation and surname changes. Contemporary reporting confirms that this claim became formally incorporated into his identification records. Third, the biological question is not completely free from historical controversy. Chiang Ching-kuo's lack of public



acknowledgment during his lifetime and the absence of publicly demonstrated DNA evidence mean that scholars should distinguish between the established family narrative and independently verified biological certainty. Thus, the academically safest formulation is: Chiang Wan-an is widely recognized and publicly described as the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek through his father, Chiang Hsiao-yen, who was formally identified as the biological son of Chiang Ching-kuo; however, the biological lineage has historically been disputed because Chiang Ching-kuo did not publicly acknowledge Chiang Hsiao-yen during his lifetime.

CONCLUSION

The answer to the question "Is Taipei Mayor Chiang Wan-an a descendant of Chiang Kai-shek?" may be therefore yes, according to the established family narrative and the official recognition subsequently accorded to his father, but with an important historical qualification. But his refusal to undergo DNA testing raises suspicions. If Chiang Hsiao-yen was indeed Chiang Ching-kuo's biological son, as the family has maintained and as official documentation eventually recorded, Chiang Wan-an is unequivocally Chiang Kai-shek's great-grandson. Nevertheless, academic writing should not ignore the controversy. Chiang Ching-kuo did not publicly recognize Chiang Hsiao-yen as his son during his lifetime, and questions concerning biological paternity have periodically resurfaced. The most defensible scholarly position is consequently not that Chiang Wan-an's ancestry is simply "proven" or "false," but that he is publicly and institutionally recognized as a descendant of the Chiang political family, while the underlying biological genealogy remains historically contested. This distinction is especially important because Chiang Wan-an's ancestry has political significance in contemporary Taiwan. His family name connects him directly to one of the most consequential political dynasties in modern Chinese and Taiwanese history. His election as Taipei mayor consequently represents not merely the career of an individual politician but also an intriguing continuation, and transformation of the Chiang family's political legacy within Taiwan's democratic system.

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(1) All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

(2) The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

(3) Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants involved in the study.

(4) This work does not include animals as subjects

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Figure Captions

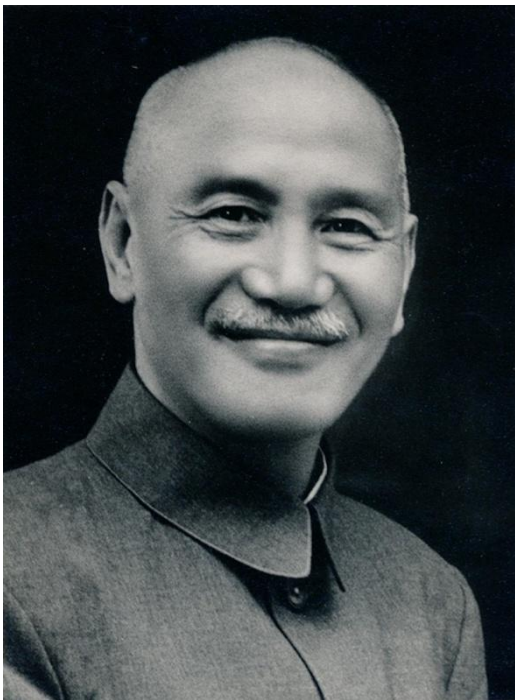


Figure.1 Chiang Kai-shek