

How Cold War South Korea Shaped The American Evangelical Empire

In the aftermath of World War II, the world became divided into two major camps: the capitalist West, led by the United States, and the communist East, led by the Soviet Union. This division, commonly known as the Cold War, had far-reaching consequences for global politics, economy, and culture. It also played a significant role in shaping the American evangelical empire, particularly in relation to South Korea.

During the Cold War, South Korea emerged as a strategic ally of the United States in its fight against communism. The country, devastated by the Korean War in the early 1950s, embraced democracy and capitalism with the assistance and guidance of the American government. As part of its efforts to contain communism, the United States supported evangelistic activities in South Korea, leading to the rise of an evangelical Christian movement in the country.

The American evangelical empire, which refers to the global network of evangelical Christian organizations and institutions influenced by American religious values, found fertile ground in South Korea due to the shared goal of countering communism. Evangelical missionaries from the United States saw South Korea as a battleground where they could combat atheistic communism by promoting Christianity.

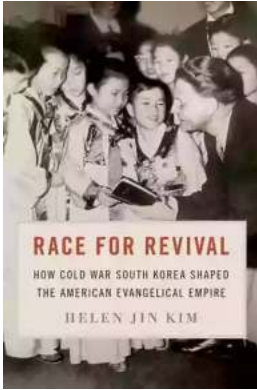
Race for Revival: How Cold War South Korea Shaped the American Evangelical Empire

by Helen Jin Kim(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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The involvement of evangelical missionaries in South Korea was not solely aimed at spreading religious beliefs but also had political undertones. By supporting the rise of Christianity, the United States hoped to create a counterbalance to the communist North Korea. The Cold War context made the American evangelicals view South Korea as a strategic partner in the ideological battle against communism.

With the backing of the United States, evangelical Christianity gained significant influence in South Korean society. The Korean Christian population grew rapidly, with churches and other Christian institutions established throughout the country. These organizations played a crucial role in shaping the cultural and social fabric of South Korea, promoting American values and ideals along the way.

Furthermore, the evangelical movement in South Korea gained power and wealth, with some pastors becoming influential figures in society. The political influence of these pastors often extended beyond the religious sphere, as they sought to shape public policy in line with their evangelical beliefs.

The American evangelicals also influenced the education system in South Korea. Missionary schools, funded by American evangelical organizations, were

established across the country, offering education that incorporated both Christian values and American ideals. These schools became highly regarded, attracting students from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

The close relationship between the American evangelical empire and South Korea extended to the realm of media as well. American evangelical organizations, recognizing the power of mass media in shaping public opinion, invested in radio stations and television networks in South Korea. Through these platforms, they could disseminate their religious and political messages to a broad audience.

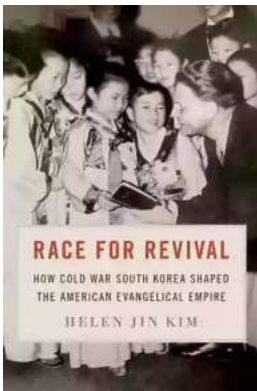
As the Cold War continued, South Korea remained a strategic ally of the United States. The American evangelicals maintained their influence in the country, actively participating in anti-communist campaigns and supporting South Korean governments that aligned with their religious and political views.

However, the influence of the American evangelical empire in South Korea was not without controversy. Critics argued that it undermined the country's cultural identity and independence by imposing American values and ideals. Moreover, the growing wealth and political power of evangelical pastors led to accusations of corruption and abuse of power.

Despite the controversies, the American evangelical empire left an indelible mark on South Korea. Its influence is still evident today, as Christianity remains a prominent religion in the country. The teachings and beliefs of American evangelicals continue to shape the moral and ethical framework of many South Korean individuals, families, and communities.

The Cold War era significantly impacted the American evangelical empire, with South Korea emerging as a vital battleground in the ideological battle against

communism. Through strategic alliances and support from the United States, evangelical Christianity gained immense influence in South Korean society. This influence extended not only to religious practices but also to education, media, and politics. While the American evangelical empire's role in shaping South Korea was not without controversy, its impact can still be seen today. The story of how Cold War South Korea shaped the American evangelical empire is a testament to the intricate connections between global politics, religion, and culture.



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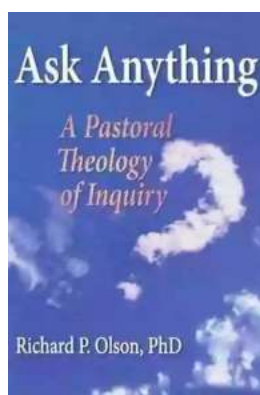


In 1973, Billy Graham, "America's Pastor," held his largest ever "crusade." But he was not, as one might expect, in the American heartland, but in South Korea. Why there?

Race for Revival seeks not only to answer that question, but to retell the story of modern American evangelicalism through its relationship with South Korea. With the outbreak of the Korean War, the first "hot" war of the Cold War era, a new generation of white fundamentalists and neo-evangelicals forged networks with

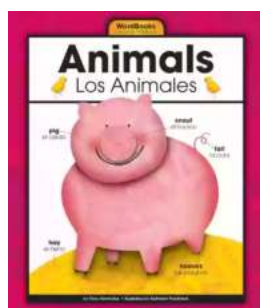
South Koreans that helped turn evangelical America into an empire. South Korean Protestants were used to bolster the image of the US as a non-imperial beacon of democratic hope, in spite of ongoing racial inequalities. At the same time, South Koreans used these racialized transpacific networks for their own purposes, seeking to reimagine their own place in the world order. They envisioned Korea as the "new emerging Christian kingdom," that would beat the American evangelical empire in a race for revival. Yet these nonstate networks ultimately foreshadowed the rise of the Christian Right in the US and South Korea in the 1980s and 1990s.

Employing a bilingual and bi-national approach, *Race for Revival* reexamines the narrative of modern evangelicalism through an innovative transpacific framework, offering a new lens through which to understand evangelical history from the Korean War to the rise of Ronald Reagan.



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