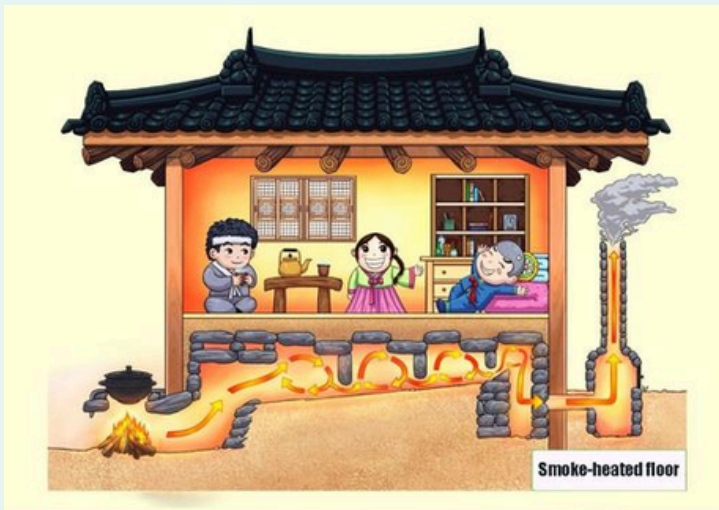


MESSICK'S KOREAN CULTURE LESSONS

Lesson #2

HOME SLEEPING

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MESSICK'S KOREAN CULTURE LESSON #2: HOME SLEEPING

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Whereas China took the Western approach of using chairs and sleeping in beds, and Japan used tatami mats to sleep, Koreans have traditionally slept on a heated 'ondol' floor covered in laminated paper. Although this is starting to fall out of popularity, it is still a widespread practice. Although a poll from Statistica last year found that 80% of Koreans are happy to sleep on a bed, 43% will still sleep on the floor too. Sleeping on the floor is now a practice more common among elderly and rural people compared to younger people. There are a multitude of reasons for why sleeping on the floor maintains popularity, including beliefs about improved posture, regulating body temperature, a more earth-centered



sense of connection, and it can be more practical and cost-efficient in small households (compared to purchasing furniture that takes up space). Prior to the introduction of Christianity in Korea in 1945 when they were liberated from Japan, it was a country more focused on Confucianism than either Japan or China. Sleeping on the floor may also be consistent with lasting Confucian ideas of humility and respect. The ondol flooring heating systems (in homes that include them) would often use water pipes or electricity to heat the floor, which would provide warmth while sleeping. There would still be a mat, pillows, and blankets used when sleeping on the floor. There are many depictions and types of ondol flooring but I've provided one playful example of a floor heated by smoke alongside a real-life example of a traditional home that has a similar setup.