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**Japan, Korea and 1597:** \_\_\_\_\_

By NICHOLAS D. KRISTOF

**KYOTO, Japan**— When they invaded Korea 400 years ago, Japanese samurai warriors brought back priceless porcelain, ingenious metal type for printing and noses and ears hacked off the corpses of tens of thousands of Koreans. In one of the world's more grim war memorials, a 30-foot-high hill here in the ancient Japanese capital marks where the noses and ears were buried.

Few Japanese outside Kyoto know of the Ear Mound, but almost all Koreans do. In Japan, even among those who have heard of it, the Ear Mound is largely seen as a bizarre relic of little relevance today. To many Koreans, it is a symbol of a Japanese cruelty that could return at some point in the future.

The Ear Mound dates from Japan's plans to conquer China and divide it among Japanese lords. Korea was in the way, so Japan assembled some 200,000 troops in 1592 and launched an invasion, setting off a war that lasted six years and by some accounts killed more than one million Koreans -- close to one-third of the country's population at that time.

The samurai in those days often cut off the heads of people they had killed as proof that their deeds matched their stories, but it was impossible to bring back so many heads by boat to Japan. So the samurai preserved the noses and sometimes the ears of those whom they killed, soldiers and civilians alike. Most of the noses were cut off corpses, but some Koreans reportedly were not killed and survived for many years without noses or ears.

The Japanese troops brought back barrels that may have contained the noses or ears of 100,000 Koreans, scholars say, but these numbers are unreliable. Japan's rulers displayed the noses and ears to Japanese subjects, apparently as a warning not to challenge the authorities, and then buried them and dedicated the Ear Mound on Sept. 28, 1597.

Some 700,000 Koreans live in Japan, mostly descendants of forced laborers brought here early in this century, and it often disturbs them that Japan does not show more remorse for the occupation of Korea from 1905 to 1945.

On the other hand, some Japanese argue that Koreans and Chinese have vastly exaggerated the scale of the suffering and that in any case atrocities are simply an unfortunate part of any war.

"One cannot say that cutting off ears or noses was so atrocious by the standard of the time," read a sign that stood in front of the Ear Mound in the 1960's. That was taken down, but it still angers Koreans that Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Japanese leader who organized the invasion, is treated in Japan as a national hero because of his actions within Japan.

Over the last decade Japanese school textbooks have made enormous strides in recounting the brutality of the period honestly. Fifteen years ago, not a single textbook referred to the Ear Mound, but it is common in this year's textbooks, and so eventually this bit of history may become much better known in Japan. "Now about

half of all high-school history textbooks mention the Ear Mound," said Shigeo Shimoyama, an official of Jikkyo, a publishing company that in the mid-1980's became the first textbook company in Japan to include a reference to the mound. Mr. Shimoyama said that at that time the Education Ministry objected to the reference as "too vivid."

Koreans react to the Ear Mound in different ways. When Park Chung Hee was dictator of South Korea in the 1970's, some of his officials urged that the Ear Mound be leveled because it was shameful for Koreans. Other Koreans have suggested that the mound be relocated to Korea to appease the spirits of the dead. But most say that the mound should stay in Japan as a reminder of past savagery, and in any case Japan treats the Ear Mound as a national landmark and would be unwilling to return it.

The Ear Mound is not mentioned in most guidebooks, and it attracts few Japanese or foreign tourists. But children in the Hiroshima public schools, who are particularly sensitive to war because of the atomic bombing there, are regularly bused to Kyoto to see the mound and ponder the suffering that Japan has inflicted on its neighbors.

The money the Japanese Government allocates to maintain the Ear Mound in Kyoto is insufficient and so several Japanese and Korean volunteers cut the grass and clean up the mound as well. "As a Japanese, I feel badly for what we did to the Korean people, and so I try to do something to make up for it," said Shiro Shimizu, 83, a volunteer who lives next to the Ear Mound.

"The lesson for today is that we should respect human life," Mr. Shimizu added. "In times of peace, this would never have happened. So I hope we will always be able to maintain peace."

**Directions: Use complete sentences, restate the questions, and answer on lined paper. The letter next to the question indicates which paragraph the question is referring to.**

1. Why do you think more Koreans than Japanese know of this mound?
2. Why did samurai cut off noses and ears? (own words!)
3. Why are they uncertain about how many noses or ears were brought back from Korea?
4. What is the meaning of remorse? A. regret      B. enthusiasm      C. pride      D. understanding
5. Why was the sign taken down?
6. Why do you think Japanese textbooks hadn't mentioned the mound until recently?
7. Should the mound be relocated to Korea? Explain your reasoning.
8. If you were a tourist in Japan, would you visit the mound? Explain your reasoning.
9. What is the meaning of allocates? A. fixes      B. takes      C. gives      D. resolves
10. Create an appropriate title for this article and put it on the line on the top of page 1.