

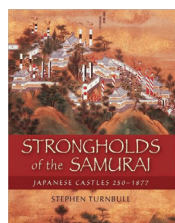
much soul searching. The report, a project of the United Nations, was compiled by Arab intellectuals, sociologists, and economists. Its unflinching assessment of the three benchmarks for development—knowledge, freedom, and women's empowerment—showed that there were endemic problems. Poor technological and scientific development, poor educational levels, non-existent or weak political institutions (unions and professional organizations), overbearing governments, and the exclusion of women from the economic and political spheres were all widespread in Arab nations.

Diner, a professor of modern history at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the director of the Simon Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at the University Leipzig, Germany, analyzes how the Middle East, which led in cultural, mathematical, and scientific innovation during Europe's Dark Ages, lost momentum. His books include *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism, and the Holocaust*; *Cataclysms: A History of the Twentieth Century from Europe's Edge*; and *America in the Eyes of the Germans: An Essay on Anti-Americanism*.

Following World War I, the Ottoman Empire was divided by the European victors. The Republic of Turkey was formed and its secular government abolished the offices of the caliphate. The caliph was seen as the successor to the prophet Muhammad and was the political leader of the Islamic world. Turkey's decision still influences Muslims worldwide and is considered by some to be an abomination.

Diner believes that the preference for oral transmission of the Koran and the difficulty in learning high Arabic (as opposed to spoken Arabic) meant that the Arab world was slow to embrace the printing press. According to Diner, "Islamic purists saw these modern machines as work of the devil challenging God's control over time. They challenged both belief and believers. Such speeding up of the world's pace could only end badly." That led to a sharp partitioning of knowledge between the educated and the uneducated. He asserts that the interpretation of the Koran as the perfect word of God, with nothing missing nor extra, and the desire of some pious Muslims to achieve perfection by living as the prophet Muhammad did in sixth and seventh centuries, means that people must always look to history for answers.

Diner's book is a deep and thorough analysis of the causes of the problems identified by the AHDR that will be of interest to followers of Middle Eastern history and politics and those looking to understand the differences with the West. (February) *Deirdre Simmott*



Strongholds of the Samurai: Japanese Castles 250-1877

Stephen Turnbull
Osprey Publishing
Hardcover \$24.95 (272pp)
978-1-84603-413-8

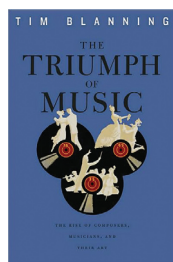
The samurai—the ancient warriors of Japan—were renowned for their battlefield skills of horsemanship, archery, and sword fighting. Yet they often waged war from or against fortified positions in anything from basic wooden stockades to the wondrously elaborate castles which are now tourist attractions.

The long history of Japan and its centuries of bitter warfare provide the backdrop for this elaborate and exhaustively researched book. From the very first fortifications of CE 250 to the birth of modern Japan in the late nineteenth century, strongholds were a critically important part of Japanese life. They provided protection for the *daimyo* ("great names" or feudal lords) and their samurai armies, along with communities of farmers, small landowners, and peasants. The author describes in vivid detail the many different types of fortresses used over the centuries and in the varied regions of Japan, and along the way the reader appreciates a good deal of the country's rich military history.

The author is one of the world's pre-eminent military historians, and he is particularly well qualified to pen this highly technical book. He has traveled throughout the Far East and has vast experience with Japanese culture. His expertise and crisp writing style has rewarded him with the Canon Prize of the British Association for Japanese Studies and a Japan Festival Literary Award. He is able to skillfully describe ancient happenings to create empathy for those long dead, as when he depicts a horrific scene in 1572 when attackers set fire to castle buildings and women and children flung themselves to their deaths from the mountain crags rather than be taken alive: "The castle burned to ashes, so that, even now when the site is dug, baked rice may be found."

The many photographs and illustrations help make sense of the detailed descriptions. The cover itself is eye-popping, evoking visions of armies engaged in an epic battle at a sprawling mountain fortress. Also of great assistance is the glossary of Japanese terms and the author's adeptness at smoothly entwining English definitions to the necessary Japanese words he uses in his writing. This book will appeal most to the reader who has a solid background in Japanese, though it can be enjoyed at a more peripheral level by those with a casual interest in pre-modern Japan. (March) *Alan J. Couture*

MUSIC



The Triumph of Music: The Rise of Composers, Musicians and Their Art

Tim Blanning
Belknap Press
Hardcover \$29.95 (432pp)
978-0-674-03104-3

In the 1960s, it seemed as if music were a primal force that could help change the world. Various music festivals embraced the power of music as a means of fostering peace and love, and demonstrators at political rallies swayed to music that united sometimes disparate parties in a common cause. What makes music such a powerful force, and how can we use its energy to understand our own humanity? How did it rise to take center stage in such a fractious time, and is it does it retain such power today? What roles did individual composers and musicians play in elevating music to its new status as the liveliest of all the arts? Blanning's splendid examination of the evolution of music from the Middle Ages to the twenty-first century attempts to answer these and other questions.

According to Blanning, while music always seduced its listeners—from the ancient balladeers whom Plato condemns and Aristotle celebrates—it came into its own as a singular art form in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when composers rose to fame in much the same way that rock stars rose to fame in the twentieth century. Blanning examines five ways in which music moves from the periphery of the arts to the center. Drawing on examples ranging from Mozart and Beethoven to Bach and Irish rocker Bono, he demonstrates that when the status of the composer and musician changed, when music demonstrated a new purpose, when new places and spaces celebrated music alone, when new technologies allowed musicians to express themselves in new ways, music was liberated from the straightjacket in which society had put it and it rose to prominence in several cultures.

Blanning points out the ways that in the early nineteenth century, for example, perceptions of music's purpose had changed. "This period marked a major shift in the way music was regarded. Instead of writing something recognized as ephemeral, to be played once or twice and then discarded, composers aspired to create works that would become a permanent part of the classical repertoire." By the 1980s, he contends, music had triumphed so successfully that it could be said that "music is the religion of the people."

Blanning's superb book joins several others, such as Daniel Levitin's *The World in Six Songs: How the Musical Brain Created Human Nature*, that explore the tremendous influence of music on human nature and society. Blanning's study conducts everyone whom music touches on a marvelous journey from music's earliest roots to its central place in contemporary society. *Henry L. Carrigan, Jr.*