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**Indonesia, §III: Central Java**

**III. Central Java**

The central portion of the island of Java, where wide, fertile lowland valleys lie between several large, active volcanoes, became the first centre of Javanese political and cultural power well over 1000 years ago. Explosive growth from the early 19th century to the mid-20th has made this one of the most densely populated areas in the world. Today most of some 80 million ethnic Javanese reside in Central Java alongside a significant Chinese minority. Islam is the religion of the vast majority of Javanese, many of whom also maintain significant animist and Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and practices. Various Christian sects have made converts mainly in the cities. While urban centres have developed around royal courts and elsewhere, the population remains predominantly rural and agrarian, connected to the cities through a complex patchwork of territorial and political allegiances. Extensive social stratification fostered by Javanese nobility is still evident in use of linguistic levels and deferential behaviour.

The music and practices associated with Central Javanese *gamelan*, an ensemble of varying composition usually including numerous metallophones and gongs as well as other instruments, are the main topic of this entry. From the late 20th century other types of music have been performed and consumed in Central Java, yet while certain types of popular music may receive great exposure (see §VIII, 1 below), gamelan music (*karanwan*) continues to constitute the distinctively Javanese medium of musical expression.
These sources are taken from the **Dance, Theatre and Wayang** section of the **Bibliography** under **Bali** (Indonesia, §II: Bali, Lombok and Sumbawa) by **Lisa Gold**.

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