

Imam Bonjol's Grave Inspires Freedom, Spirituality



Wahyuni Kamah

About seven kilometers from the North Sulawesi capital of Manado, venturing toward Tomohon, a small statue of Indonesian national hero Tuanku Imam Bonjol stands resiliently on the left side of the road to greet passersby.

The white, stone carving depicting one of the nation's most historically influential leaders signals drivers they are approaching Lotta — a quaint, peaceful village not very different from the other quiet communities scattered in the Pine-leng subdistrict.

However, what sets Lotta apart from its neighboring areas is the *gonjong*-style gate that welcomes residents and visitors as they enter the village confines. Typically found in the Minangkabau highlands, the upturned ends of the structure are an exact duplicate of the roofs adorning the traditional houses of West Sumatra. The same distinctive shape stands guard over the final resting place of Imam Bonjol, who died and was buried in the village in 1884.

A familiar figure to the people of Indonesia, the national hero's image appears in the Rp 5,000 (41 cents) note, and his name graces a plethora of buildings and street signs across the archipelago.

Imam Bonjol was born in Bonjol, West Sumatra, in 1772 with the name Muhammad Syahabuddin — one of several monikers he adopted throughout his life, the other being Peto Syarif. He was given the honored title of “*Tuanku*” (roughly translated as “My Lord”) when he became a Muslim scholar, or *ulema*, and leader of his hometown.

He was said to have been a practitioner of *tariqa*, a branch of Sufism, who later battled at the forefront of Indonesia's struggle against Dutch colonization.

Imam Bonjol's name is synonymous with the Padri War that took place in Pagaruyung from 1803 to 1838, which erupted as a civil war between *Kaum Padri* (Islamic purists) and *Kaum Adat* (traditionalists).

The former, with whom Iman Bonjol sided, fought to develop a more Islamic society in Minangkabau, strictly opposing gambling, alcohol and tobacco consumption as well as cock fighting — all of which were common practices in the area at the time.

Realizing they were no match for their opponent, the people of Kaum Adat approached the Dutch for help in 1821, adding further complications to the already heated conflict. The desperate move backfired and the group joined forces with the Kaum Padri to fight a common colonial enemy in 1833.

Four years on, Dutch troops sieged Bonjol in a five-month struggle that ended in the fall of the subdistrict and the surrender of its leader.

Imam Bonjol was subsequently sent to Cianjur, West Java, where he remained in exile for two years. Fearing his influence was beginning to flame the rebellious spirit of the local residents, the Dutch once again moved him, this time to Ambon, Maluku. Colonial officials had one aim: to completely disconnect the increasingly influential figure from his family and compatriots.

In 1839, at the age of 65, Imam Bonjol was transferred to Lotta in Minahasa. Isolated from the outside world, his only companion was his loyal assistant, Apolo Mindo, with whom he spent his days farming and reciting prayers.

He remained in the small village until his death in 1854. Word of his passing, however, was not reported until 10 years later. Imam Bonjol never married.

His remains now rest in a pavilion that, with its traditional *gonjong* roof, is difficult to miss. The structure sits on 1,875 square meters of lush greenery that work to shade its tiled interior from the

The quiet village of Lotta in North Sulawesi is home to the resting place of Imam Bonjol, one of Indonesia's most inspirational leaders. JG Photos/Wahyuni Kamah

hot sun. A relief of the renowned hero riding a white horse and leading his loyal followers into battle decorates the right wall.

The tombs caretakers are descendants of Imam Bonjol's faithful companion Apolo, who fell in love and married a local girl. The steadfast family has dedicated their lives to caring for the pavilion and keeping watch over the man who helped spur the country's fight for freedom.

Ainun Mindo, 74, is Apolo's great-granddaughter and fourth generation caretaker of the tomb. According to her, the pavilion was originally a wooden hut which has undergone several renovations over the past 160 years.

“We take care of this tomb voluntarily,” said Ainun, who depends on donation from visitors to maintain the complex. Despite financial constraints for maintenance, she and her family are happy to take care of the grave.

Meanwhile, the resting places of Apolos and his descendants are located in a small cemetery next to Imam Bonjol's tomb. However, they are not as well maintained as that of their leader.

“You can see the site where Imam Bonjol used to pray in the back,” she added, referring to a spot close to the Malalayang River, some 60 meters behind the main pavilion.

A few steps down cemented stairs followed by a short walk through the shrubs take visitors to a small hut on the river side. A large rock resting underneath its wooden confines is said to be the site where Imam Bonjol performed his daily prayers.

The boulder initially stood in the middle of the river, but the crashing waters of a 2006 flood moved it to the opposite riverbed. Ainun and her family then managed to bring the prayer rock back to the current side and built a small hut around it to allow visitors the chance to pray in solitude on the very same spot Imam Bonjol had spent hours each day.

More than just a religious site, the tomb has been a draw to both domestic and local tourists fascinated by the rich and inspiring history of national hero whose life — and death — became a symbol of hope for Indonesia.

“What sets Lotta apart from its neighboring areas is the *gonjong*-style gate that welcomes residents and visitors as they enter the village confines



2014 UPCOMING EVENTS

INDONESIA

05 DEC



2PM WORLD TOUR 'GO CRAZY' IN JAKARTA | 5 DEC 2014 | ISTORA SENAYAN, JAKARTA

The Popular Korean idol group 2PM who just recently proved its mighty power in Korea and Japan after releasing the newest album “Go Crazy” and “Midaretemina”.

15 NOV



STARBOL INDONESIA: STAR INDONESIA VS STAR LEGEND | 15 NOV 2014 | GELORA BUNG KARNO, JAKARTA

Wanna meet Real Madrid legends such as Cannavaro, Michel Salgado, Guti Hernandez, Fernando Morientes, Fernando Redondo and Roberto Carlos? Come and meet them all.

26-29 NOV



SUNBLAST ULTRAGLOW FESTIVAL | 26, 28, 29 NOV 2014 | CANGGU CLUB, BALI

SUNBLAST BALI PROGRAMMING team has hand picked an incredible collection of DJ artist from around the world to drop the ultimate party.



SNOWBAY WATERPARK TMII

Waterpark with imaginative, artistic snowy mountain atmosphere covering 70% most of the area, gives the best high-end water attractions, extraordinary experience, and combines waterplays.



KIDZANIA JAKARTA

A unique EDUTAINMENT CENTER for children between 4 to 16 years old and their parents. It is a kid-sized replica of a real city, with streets, buildings, retail and different vehicles going around the City.



DISNEY LIVE! THREE CLASSIC FAIRY TALES | 5-9 NOV 2014 | TENNIS INDOOR SENAYAN

Prepare to step into a world wonder where wishing is only the beginning and dreams really do come true in Disney Live! presents Three Classic Fairy Tales. DON'T MISS IT!



JUNGLELAND, ADVENTURE THEMEPARK | SENTUL NIRWANA, SENTUL CITY BOGOR

Located in Sentul Nirwana area, Sentul City - Bogor, Jungleland Adventure Theme Park has an area of 35ha with more than 41 rides and attractions that can be enjoyed every day.

SINGAPORE



ZOUKOUT 2014 | 12-13 DEC 2014 | SILOSO BEACH SENTOSA, SINGAPORE

As ZoukOut celebrates its 14 years of dance, music, we also take a moment to celebrate the journey of this outdoor festival experience.



ST. JEROME'S LANEWAY FESTIVAL SINGAPORE | 24 JAN 2015 | GARDENS BY THE BAY, SINGAPORE

Laneway Festival Singapore returns to the spacious pastures of The Meadow, Gardens By The Bay. Laneway Festival Singapore will continue to define itself with its A+ line-up.



PETER PAN, THE NEVER ENDING STORY | 27 NOV - 30 DEC 2014 | RESORT WORLD SENTOSA

RACE START SEASON 2 IN SINGAPORE RUNNING MAN | 29 NOV 2014 | THE STAR THEATRE

HI-5 HOUSE HITS TOUR 2014 | 5 - 6 DEC 2014 | THE STAR THEATRE

MAMMA MIA! | 13 - 30 NOV 2014 | SANDS THEATRE

HOBBASTANK LIVE IN SINGAPORE | 30 NOV 2014 | THE COLISEUM, HARD ROCK HOTEL, SENTOSA

DISNEY LIVE! PRESENTS THREE CLASSIC FAIRY TALES | 22 - 30 NOV 2014 | SANDS THEATRE



Outlets:

KIOSTIX Box Office (Ruko Golden Boulevard R2 38-39 Tangerang) | Pacific Place (5th floor) | Pluit Village | PX Pavillion St. Moritz | Pejaten Village | Cibubur Junction | Lippo Mall Kemang | Gajah Mada Plaza | The Plaza Semanggi | Mall Artha Gading | Plaza Indonesia | Bandung Indah Plaza Palembang Square | Mall Alam Sutra

WWW.KIOSTIX.COM



@KIOSTIX | Hotline: 021 53163240