

# History

## A Brief History of Irosin

### Geologic history



According to geologists who conducted studies and drilled in this area, Irosin was part of a giant volcano more than 40,000 years ago. These geologists have offered three geologic periods in the history of this place: the pre-caldera period, the caldera period and the post-caldera period. The pre-caldera period is described as a sustained activity with intermittent eruptions. About 36,000 years ago, during what is now called the caldera period, a major eruption of this volcano resulted in the construction of a rim which is now called Irosin Caldera. Along the walls of this 11-kilometer-wide Irosin Caldera, several cones and lava domes were formed. The southern wall of this caldera, which includes what is now called Valley View, is currently its most prominent segment and overlooks a broad, flat caldera floor below. Mount Jormajan, a large lava dome, was constructed on the western side of the rim and Mount Maraot Banwa on the eastern side. Bulusan Volcano, Luzon's southernmost active volcano, was constructed on the south. Rising to 1565 meters above the low-lying floor of Irosin Caldera, Bulusan Volcano is the youngest of several cones and lava domes within the caldera. Today, the Irosin ignimbrite, a kind of molten rock found abundantly in

the rivers of Irosin, is considered as remnants of the caldera period.

During the post-caldera period, the heat subsided aided by a vent which is the Bulusan Volcano. Consequently, lush vegetation grew and developed in the area.

### **Spanish Period**

Since the first seeds of development were concentrated on coastal areas, this place, however, is one of the last places in the Philippines to be developed and officially made into a town. Nevertheless, during the Spanish period in the Philippines, in the early 1700's, owing to the beauty and richness of flora and fauna in the area, the inhabitants of nearby coastal places were drawn to the place. The Moro raids that troubled the coastal towns from 1590 through 1896 further sent many people to interior sanctuaries, as far away as possible from coastal areas and thus, many reached this place and settled here. They were the residents who eventually formed the core residents of the barrios and *visitas* that multiplied during the nineteenth century.

At the southern part of the area was *Visita de Buenavista*, the oldest *visita* that was formed in this place. It was one of the oldest barrios of *Pueblo de Bulan* although it was a *visita* of *Pueblo de Bulusan*. At times, it was also called *Visita de Iba* owing to a large *Iba* tree that grew in the place. The present-day barangay Monbon and barangay Gabao were former sitios of Buenavista.

At the eastern part of the area, in what is now barangay San Agustin, a settlement was also formed and the first inhabitants called this place Gin-ay. In about 1840's the village of Gin-ay was made a *visita* of *Pueblo de Bulusan*. A makeshift chapel was built and Saint Michael the Archangel was chosen as patron and thus the place was thereafter called

## Visita de San Miguel.

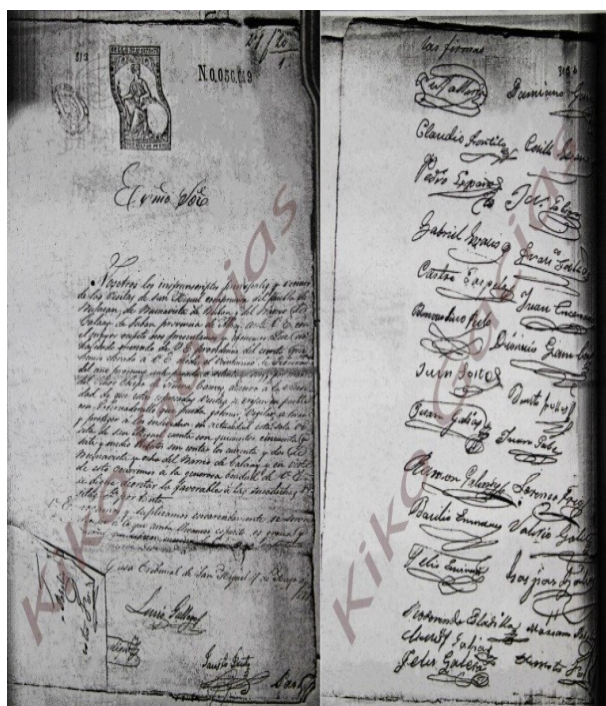
At the northern part of the area, another *visita* was formed and it was called *Visita de Calaay*. Calaay was a barrio of *Pueblo de Juban* but it was a *visita* of *Pueblo de Bulusan*. It included a vast area of what was earlier referred to as *Hacienda de Arquiaga*. Today, Calaay is a mere sitio of barangay Tinampo.

In 1876, the outgoing *Alcalde Mayor* of Albay sent a communication to the *Consejo de Administracion de Filipinas* in Manila and made it appear that the *visitas* of San Miguel, Buenavista and Calaay had petitioned to become a separate *parroquia* (parish). This petition was favorably acted upon by the *Consejo de Administracion* and it was elevated to the *Gobernador General* who issued a decree approving the creation of the three *visitas* as a separate *parroquia* on April 28, 1877. A royal decree issued on October 12, 1877 confirmed the *Gobernador General's* decree.



In May 1878, Bishop Francisco Gainza, bishop of Nueva Caceres, conducted a *visita diocesana* in *Partido de Sorsogon* and was discomfited when he discovered anomalies in the creation of the three *visitas* into a new *parroquia*, now called *Parroquia de San Miguel*. First, he found out that the outgoing *Alcalde Mayor* of Albay neglected to take the normal and necessary

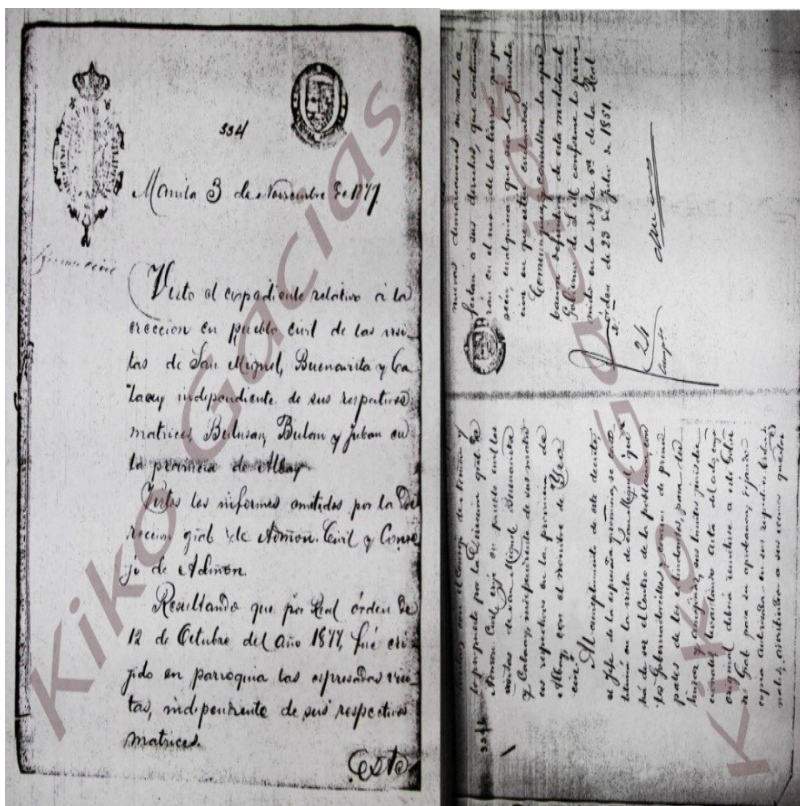
steps which should have first made the three *visitas* into a *pueblo civil*, after which they could become a *parroquia*. Second, he saw that the three *visitas* have already elected their respective *Gobernadorcillos*. In modern parlance, that is just like having a Municipal Mayor for each of the three *visitas* of Buenavista, San Miguel and Calaa. Thus, the parish priest assigned to administer these three *visitas* complained to the bishop that he had had to deal not only with one *Gobernadorcillo* but three. Third, he was dismayed to learn that there was also a *Teniente Actual* of *Visita de San Miguel* who had already assumed that the place was already a *pueblo civil* called *Pueblo de San Miguel* and that he was already the *Teniente Absoluto* of *Pueblo de San Miguel*! Thus, in a letter addressed to the *Gobernador General*, he outlined and complained about these anomalies.



To correct the anomaly, through the advice of Bishop Gainza, the new *Alcalde Mayor* directed the *principales* of the three *visitas* to petition to officially become a *pueblo civil*. Hence, on May 17, 1878, Don Lucio Gallego, who assumed the title of *Teniente Absoluto* of both *Visita de San Miguel* and



*Pueblo de San Miguel*, together with the *principales* of the three *visitas*, complied as directed. With the favorable endorsements of the *Alcalde Mayor* of Albay and Bishop Francisco Gainza, bishop of Nueva Caceres, the *Consejo de Administracion* in Manila duly endorsed the petition for the *Gobernador General's* approval. On November 3, 1879, *Gobernador General* Domingo Moriones y Murillo issued a decree making the *visitas* of San Miguel, Buenavista and Calaaay a new *pueblo civil* with the name of *Pueblo de Yrocin*.



With its official establishment, the new pueblo soon prospered. In 1888, during the term of Padre Esteban Rivera as parish priest and Anacleto Galarosa as *Capitan Municipal*, the Catholic church was constructed on its present site. The site, which is considered as the highest place in the poblacion, is now accessible through 73 cemented steps and an access road. At the foot of the church hilltop, a *municipio* with a *casa tribunal* was also constructed.

## **Revolution against Spain and the American Period**

During the revolution against Spain, many Irosinons became active in the movement. During the incumbency of Luciano Gabito (1894-1899), an underground movement was organized in the municipality and the Spaniards, fearing an uprising, sent Spanish troops to the town and imposed curfew hours. Members of the Spanish troops were called *Casadores* and members of the underground movement were called *Hombres Rebeldes*. Padre Pascual Gacosta (1898-1914), parish priest of *Parroquia de San Miguel*, was charged with rebellion and was imprisoned in Manila. The resistance movement was able to successfully establish a short-lived government in the town under Col. Emeterio Funes. However, when the Americans came, the army of Col. Funes proved too weak compared to the invaders. Col. Funes fled and later surrendered to the American forces.

During the American occupation, in 1904, an American soldier named Charles Carter established a primary school in the town with the help of local inhabitants. A temporary school building was constructed and it later became the Irosin Central School. In 1913, during the term of Zacarias Conspecto (1913-1914), the market which was located in Barangay San Agustin was transferred to the present market site. In 1917, during the term of Nicasio Navarro as *Presidente Municipal*, the civil cemetery was established in the municipality for the benefit of the non-Catholics. Irosinons also began to play active roles in national politics. In 1926, during the Commonwealth period, Juan Alegre, a resident of what is now barangay San Juan, in a place which is now occupied by Elavil, became a senator. However, there were some maladies that occurred, too. On December 24, 1932, continuous rains claimed

scores of lives and thousands worth of properties. There were floods and erosion of lands. More or less, eight hectares in area were eroded in Inulpacan, a place which lies midway the barrios of Lamboon and Patag. Out of it gushed water, sand and mud which soon joined the flows of the Cadac-an river. A year later, the Cadac-an River dike was built. Also, on April 26, 1935, the town was hit by a strong typhoon which caused tremendous destruction, both in human lives and properties. Big and small buildings were destroyed including the Roman Catholic church atop the hill.

## **World War II**

On December 8, 1941, the Japanese Imperial Army bombed the Pearl Harbor and within a short period of time, every part of the country including Irosin was under Japanese control. On December 12, 1941, Japanese soldiers landed in Legaspi and a detachment soon occupied Irosin. The people of the town fled to the mountains and the Japanese soldiers, finding no town official and people in the town, ransacked the municipal office and the abandoned houses. In January 1942, the Japanese Army stationed permanently in the town and the military command appointed Casiano Janer as Municipal Mayor. After a few months, he was removed and Feliciano Ejercito was appointed in his lieu. Not long after the appointment of Ejercito, a Japanese civilian named Tanaka was shot to death in barangay San Pedro by an unidentified assassin. Mayor Ejercito was held responsible and was arrested, tortured, and later killed in Sorsogon by Japanese soldiers. On August 1, 1943, Japanese forces surrounded the poblacion and summoned the people to the public plaza. Houses were ransacked and a number of people were accused as guerrilla suspects and were later arrested and killed.

## **The 14 WW II Martyrs of Irosin**

A number of Irosinons joined the guerilla movement against the Japanese forces. Some were with the Salvador Escudero, Sr. group but many were with the Col. Lapuz group, both groups however, were at odds with each other. One day, during a clandestine meeting held at Palogtoc, barangay San Isidro, the guerillas were attacked and captured by the Japanese army. A few, including the future Municipal Councilor Jose Tagum, were able to escape. Most of them, however, 15 of them, were captured. They were brought to a house beside the former Toll Bridge in Caluscos and tortured. When the night came, one guerilla – Ananias Balmes – taking advantage of strong rains and darkness, was able to escape. At the break of dawn, the remaining 14 guerillas were made to march to the other side of Toll Bridge, in a place where *cabugawan* grew. They were forced to dig their own grave, massacred and their remains were fed to the dogs. Only two of these Irosin martyrs were identified: Pascual Hugo and a certain Futol.

## **Post-WW II**

After World War II, the town steadily progressed. On July 6, 1946, Irosin Junior High School, which later became Gallanosa National High School, was established. 10.5 hectares of the lot were donated by Pedro Hitois Gallanosa and 2.5 hectares, including a former civil cemetery, were from Pedro Fruto. During the incumbency of Severino Fortes as Municipal Mayor (1964-1967), the Charity Hospital, which later became the Irosin District Hospital, was constructed. The water system and electrification of the town were likewise established. Sacred Heart Academy which later became College of the Holy Spirit of Irosin and now Holy Spirit Academy of Irosin, was also established. In 1982, Veritas College of Irosin was founded by Msgr. Eladio T. Palces.



## **Charting the Future**

Today, Irosin is a thriving second class municipality which, due to its strategic location, is acting as a transit point to adjacent towns and a gateway to Masbate and Samar Islands. Due to its central location, it is considered as the economic center of at least five nearby towns. Hence, part of the programs of the current administration is the establishment of an Irosin National Agency Center that will house offices of national agencies such as Land Transportation Office (LTO), Regional as well as Municipal Trial Courts, (RTC & MTC) Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) and others.

Irosin is also fastly becoming a tourist destination. With its abundance in water, it is now poised to become the springs resort capital not only of the province but of the entire Bicol region. Several choices of hot, sulfuric spas, lukewarm as well as cold springs are now available and more tourist destinations and activities are being introduced and developed. Likewise, the current administration is focusing on the development of local eco-tourism and has already spearheaded the development of Lake Irosin at barangay Patag. The lake, which features endemic flora and fauna, is accentuated and made more appealing with the development of two nearby falls – the Naglalahaw and Malungoy-lungoy Falls. Similarly, an eco-landfill park, also at barangay Patag, is now being made as a model of effective ecological garbage disposal system for other local government units.

Moreover, response to pressing needs are being prioritized by the current administration. Among these are the following: 1. A civil cemetery to augment and solve the problem of cramped up and overcrowded Catholic cemetery; 2. A transport terminal to regulate and decongest traffic; 3. A bigger people's center; 4. The eradication of scistosomiasis; and 5. A more efficient water system.

Indeed, Irosin has already come a long way. From a humble landlocked area, it has turned into the trade and economic center of at least five adjacent coastal municipalities, its former mother towns including. Indeed, the future is brightest in these parts. And as a local slogan sums it all up:

*An Irosin baga man lang an asin. Pirme ini may asim!*