

= Banton , Romblon =

Banton ( formerly known as Jones ) is a fifth @-@ class municipality in the province of Romblon , Philippines . Its territory encompasses the entire island of Banton located on the northern portion of the province and lies on the northern portion of the Sibuyan Sea near the southern tip of Marinduque . It is a town of about 5 @,@ 000 people majority of which speak the Bantoanon language , one of the five primary branches of the Visayan languages .

Banton is thought to be already inhabited by Filipinos since the pre @-@ colonial period , based on analysis of discovered human remains , coffins , an ancient burial cloth and other archaeological finds by the National Museum in the 1930s . The present settlement was founded in 1622 by the Spanish and is the oldest settlement in the province . During the American colonial period , the municipality changed its name to Jones in honor of American congressman William Jones , who authored the Philippine Autonomy Act of 1916 . Today , Banton is one of Romblon 's thriving municipalities , with an economy dependent on copra farming , fishing , raffia palm weaving , and tourism .

= = Etymology = =

The name " Banton " was derived from the Asi word batoon , meaning " rocky " , referring to the mountainous and rocky topography of the island due to its volcanic origin . Another possible origin is the word bantoy , which is the Asi word for the venomous stonefish .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

Banton was already inhabited during pre @-@ colonial times as proven by ancient artefacts such as wooden coffins and skeletal remains found in the island 's caves in 1936 by a team of researchers from the National Museum . Among the artefacts was the Banton Cloth , a piece of a traditional burial cloth found in one of the wooden coffins . It is estimated to be 400 years old , making it the earliest known warp ikat ( tie @-@ resist dyeing ) textile in the Philippines and Southeast Asia . These artifacts are now preserved at the National Museum of the Philippines in Manila .

The municipality of Banton was established by Spanish colonial authorities in 1622 , the first town established in the entire province of Romblon . It was initially founded in a site in Bacoco Hill ( now part of Barangay Hambian ) , south @-@ west of its present site . The administration of the other islands of Romblon were put under the jurisdiction of Banton until 1631 , when Pueblo de Romblon was founded . In 1640 , due to frequent raids by Moros , who looted and pillaged the settlement , the limestone fort called Fuerza de San Jose and the San Nicolas de Tolentino Parish Church was constructed under the leadership of Father Agustin de San Pedro , also known as El Padre Capitan , who was the parish priest of Banton at that time . The construction was completed in 1644 , and in 1648 , San Nicolas de Tolentino was installed as the town 's patron saint . The fort effectively protected the town against further Moro raids .

= = = Modern history = = =

When civilian government was introduced in Romblon by the Americans on 16 March 1901 , Banton was one of the 11 new municipalities reinstated or created . In 1918 , the municipality was renamed Jones in honor of American congressman William Jones , who authored the Philippine Autonomy Act of 1916 that provided for greater autonomy for the Philippines under American colonial rule . In 1959 , Republic Act No. 2158 restored the island to its former name .

In 2013 , Banton was one of the sites of a detailed resource assessment by the Department of

Energy ( DOE ) , along with Maricaban Island in Batangas and Balut Island in Sarangani . The study aimed to determine whether the island can be a site for low enthalpy geothermal power generation . However , no exploitable geothermal resource has been delineated on the island . On 19 March 2013 , the National Museum declared as Important Cultural Property the island 's Guyangan Cave System , where precolonial wooden coffins , remains , and the Banton Cloth were found .

On 15 December 2015 , Typhoon Melor made its fourth landfall over the island as it crossed central Philippines , causing severe devastation .

#### = = Geography = =

Banton lies on the northern portion of the Sibuyan Sea , and is equidistant between Marinduque Island to the north and Tablas Island to the south . It is composed of the main island of Banton and the uninhabited islands of Bantoncillo , Carlota and Isabel , the last two of which are collectively known as the Dos Hermanas Islands . There is also an islet near Tabonan Beach on the north @-@ west of the island .

Banton has a total land area of 3 @,@ 248 hectares ( 32 @.@ 48 km<sup>2</sup> ) . Based on rock petrology , the island is a dormant volcano which lies at the southernmost portion of the Pleistocene @-@ Quaternary West Luzon volcanic arc and may have been active during the Pliocene period . Because of its volcanic origin , the island has a mountainous , rocky topography , with very few patches of flat land suitable for farming . The island 's highest elevation , Mount Ampongo , rises at 596 metres ( 1 @,@ 955 ft ) .

#### = = = Barangays = = =

Banton is politically subdivided into 17 barangays . In 1954 , the sitios of Mahaba , Angomon , Solocan , Kapanranan , and Yabawon were consolidated into the barangay known as Yabawon .

#### = = = Climate = = =

As part of Romblon , Banton is classified under Type III of the Corona climatic classification system . This type of climate is described as having no prominent wet or dry seasons . The wet season , which usually occurs from June to November can extend up to December during the onset of the southwest monsoon . The dry season from January to May may sometimes have periods of rainfall or even inclement weather .

#### = = Demographics = =

According to the 2015 census , Banton has a population of 5 @,@ 536 people . The island municipality is sparsely populated with a population density of 170 / km<sup>2</sup> ( 441 / sq mi ) . According to the Department of Interior and Local Government ( DILG ) and the Commission on Elections ( COMELEC ) , in 2013 , there were 3 @,@ 694 registered voters in Banton , spread over 31 electoral precincts . Of this figure , 1 @,@ 794 are male registered voters , while 1 @,@ 900 are female .

#### = = = Language = = =

The island 's inhabitants speak the Asi language | Bantoanon language , one of three major languages spoken in Romblon and one of five primary branches of the Visayan language family . The island 's inhabitants were the first speakers of the language throughout the province , having spoken it since precolonial times . From Banton , the language spread to other island like Maestro de Campo , Simara , and in the towns of Calatrava , and Odiongan in Tablas Island .

David Paul Zorc , a linguist from the Australian National University whose expertise is on Philippine languages , notes that Asi speakers may have been the first Visayan speakers in the Romblon

region . He also suggests that Asi may have a Cebuano substratum and that many of its words may have been influenced by the later influx of other languages such as Romblomanon .

#### = = Economy = =

Banton has a primarily agricultural economy , with copra farming and fishing as the main sources of livelihood . There is also an indigenous raffia palm handicraft industry . Other crops grown in the island are root crops ( such as cassava , sweet potatoes ) , fruits and vegetables . The locals also engage in livestock raising for local consumption , and small @-@ scale shipbuilding of wooden boats and launches .

Due to the island 's rocky topography and lack of a stable supply of freshwater , rice production is difficult in the island . Rice from Mindoro , Marinduque or Quezon is supplied to the island by local traders . In recent years , the island has also become a small tourist hub for Asi expatriates and foreign tourists from the United States and other countries .

#### = = Tourism = =

Banton is an eco @-@ tourism and heritage destination due to its beaches , diving sites , caves , churches and Spanish @-@ era fortifications .

#### = = = Heritage sites = = =

Being the oldest settlement in Romblon , Banton has several Spanish @-@ era fortifications and churches , as well as American @-@ era houses . These include Fuerza de San Jose , Banton Church , the old campanile made of limestone at Everlast in Barangay Poblacion , and a limestone watchtower at Onte in Barangay Toctoc . There is an American @-@ era house at Pinagkaisahan in Barangay Poblacion which used to be the Ugat Faigao Museum but now serves as a sari @-@ sari store . The Asi Studies Center for Culture and the Arts ( also in Everlast ) serves as an information center for the Asi language and Banton history , as well as depository of Banton 's archaeological and cultural artifacts . The Church of San Nicolas de Tolentino also has a small museum of pre @-@ colonial and Spanish @-@ era artifacts .

#### = = = Natural formations = = =

Caves are Banton 's well @-@ known natural formations . The Guyangan Cave System , situated at the boundary of Barangay Toctoc and Togbongan , has seven caves , some of which were inhabited during pre @-@ colonial times , and is now an Important Cultural Treasure as declared by the National Museum . Guyangan Hill , where the caves are situated , also has a natural view deck called Manamyaw overlooking Barangay Poblacion and the Sibuyan Sea . On a clear day , the islands of Sibuyan , Romblon , and Tablas , as well as Burias Island , can be easily seen from Manamyaw . The island has several rock formations as well . Punta Matagar in Barangay Poblacion is a pointed rock formation in the shape of a spear or arrow head . In Barangay Banice , on the southern portion of the island , lies a rock arch said to be the anchorage of " Lolo Amang " , a mythological figure in Romblon 's nautical folklore similar to the Flying Dutchman .

#### = = = Beaches = = =

Several beaches dot Banton 's coast including Macat @-@ ang , Tabonan , Mahaba , Recodo , Togbongan , Mainit , and Tambak beaches . Some like Macat @-@ ang , Tabonan , and Tambak are white sand beaches , while others , like Togbongan , are pebbled and rocky . The island 's waters are also well @-@ known dive sites , with corals that serve as breeding ground for groupers , snappers , sharks , and stingrays .

## == Festivals ==

Banton has annual religious and cultural festivals . The Sanrokan festival showcases the local tradition of sharing food , especially viand , among neighbors and starts from Holy Saturday up to Easter Sunday . The festival has two phases : the Sanrokan sa Barangay ( sharing of food in the villages ) and the Sanrokan sa Poblacion ( sharing of food at the town proper ) . Parlor games such as chasing the pig and palosebo ( climbing a greased bamboo pole to claim a prize ) are held during the celebration . This is followed by the Hanrumanan ( meaning " souvenir / legacy " ) street dancing and parade . Meanwhile , every year , on 10 September , the entire island pays tribute and homage to the town 's patron saint , San Nicolas de Tolentino through the Biniray festival . Holy mass is held during feast day , followed by the parading of the saint 's image around town . This leads to a fluvial parade around the island , with each village giving homage to the saint . Bantoanons also hold an annual Via Crucis during the Holy Week and Flores de Mayo in May .

## == Local Government ==

Pursuant to the Local Government Code of 1991 , the Banton municipal government is composed of a mayor ( alkalde ) , a vice @-@ mayor ( bise alkalde ) and eight members ( kagawad ) of the Sangguniang Bayan or town council , alongside a secretary to the said council , all of which are elected to a three @-@ year term and are eligible to run for three consecutive terms . Banton 's incumbent and long @-@ time mayor is Jory Faderanga of the Nacionalista Party while the incumbent vice @-@ mayor is Rolo Fainsan , who ran as an independent candidate .

The barangays or villages , meanwhile , are headed by elected officials , the topmost being the Punong Barangay or the Barangay Chairperson ( addressed as Kapitan ; also known as the Barangay Captain ) . The Kapitan is aided by the Sangguniang Barangay ( Barangay Council ) whose members , called Barangay Kagawad ( Councilors ) , are also elected .

In 2011 and 2013 , Banton was a recipient of the Seal of Good Housekeeping from the Department of Interior and Local Government ( DILG ) . As recipient of the award , the local government was rewarded with one million pesos from the Performance Challenge Fund of the DILG for use in local projects . The Seal of Good Housekeeping is a mechanism which tracks the performance of local government units , " specifically in the areas of local legislation , development planning , resource generation , and resource allocation " .

## == Infrastructure ==

### == Utilities ==

Electricity in the island is supplied by a 0 @. 326 MW diesel power plant of the Romblon Electric Cooperative ( ROMELCO ) . However , electricity service is only available in early morning , from 4 : 00 to 6 : 00 a.m. and at night , from 5 : 00 to 11 : 00 p.m. , due to limited fuel supplies . As for water supply , potable water for drinking and washing comes from water pumps , artesian wells , springs , and rainwater collection tanks in individual homes . The island has access to cellular phone and Internet service through Smart and Globe . Terrestrial and cable television service are also available .

### == Transportation ==

As seas surrounding Banton can be rough during the wet season , the best time to visit the island is from March to May during the dry ( summer ) season . This is also the typical time for Asi families living in Metro Manila or abroad to visit the island since it coincides with the Lenten season and barangay fiestas . Within the island , the main forms of transportation are passenger motorcycles ( known elsewhere as habal @-@ habal ) and motorized boats . A circumferential road connects the

17 barangays of Banton to each other .

By sea : Banton is accessible via wooden launches and motorized boats that regularly travel from Lucena City , Quezon . Tourists and visitors can also take RORO vessels that ply the Manila @-@ Odiongan , Batangas City @-@ Odiongan , or the Roxas @-@ Odiongan route . From Odiongan , Banton can be reached by jeepney and motorized boat via Calatrava , Romblon . Another RORO route is from Lucena City to Boac or Mogpog in Marinduque . From these towns , travelers can take jeepneys to Buenavista , which is only three hours away from Banton . Another alternative route is through Pinamalayan , Oriental Mindoro by motorized boats .

By air : The closest airport with active airline service is Tugdan Airport in Alcantara , Romblon . Philippine Airlines operates three weekly flights to Romblon from Manila . From Alcantara , Banton can be reached in five to six hours by jeepney and motorized outrigger boats from Calatrava .

= = Education = =

Banton has a high literacy rate owing to the establishment of several public elementary and secondary schools . All schools in the island are administered by the Department of Education ( DepEd ) . The main public elementary school , Banton Central School , and the main secondary school , Banton National High School , are both located in the main village of Poblacion . There are public elementary schools as well in the villages of Balogo , Banice , Libtong , Nasunogan , Tan @-@ ag , Tungonan , and Tumalum ( shared with the village of Lagang ) . Another secondary school , Tungonan National High School , is located in Tungonan .

= = Gallery = =