

A scarecrow stands in a field of tall grass under a warm, golden sunset sky. The scarecrow is made of straw, wearing a wide-brimmed hat and a light-colored shirt. Its arms are outstretched, holding bundles of harvested grain. The overall scene is bathed in a soft, orange glow.

BAMBANTI

THE SENTINEL OF THE FIELDS

BAMBANTI FESTIVAL ACCLAMATIONS

“The Bambanti is a truly unique festivity as symbolized by the scarecrow believed to dispel pestilence as well as celebrate the Filipino virtues of hard work, strong family values and love for its fertile soil which all helped Isabela become the Rice Granary of the North.”

– **Ms. Bernadette Romulo-Puyat, Former DOT Secretary**

“Parang post card sa ganda ang lugar na ito. Masuwerteng nakasama ako sa coverage ng Bambanti Festival sa Ilagan, Isabela at hindi ko maiwasang mamangha sa aming paglilibot sa lugar na sentro ng agri-kultura.”

– **Elvira Altez, Abante**

“The pace was fast. There was no room for boredom, especially since the contestants performed at their peak level and impressed the full-house crowd so much that shrieks and screams were heard throughout the competitions.”

– **Dolly Dy-Zulueta, Flavors of Life**

“You are officialy amazing!”

– **Pauline Ann Sapinska, Guinness World Records**

“The Bambanti Festival was a feast for the eyes. I was especially impressed by the village and the giant scarecrows, which were very creative, also of course by the enthusiasm of the people.”

– **Amadis Ma. Guerrero, Inquirer Contributor**

“The Bambanti Festival is back with a vengeance.”

– **Benjamin L. Layug, Business Mirror travel writer, travel blogger and book author**

“The ultimate road trip this side of Luzon. Isabeleños will amaze you with their rich culture, heritage, and creativity.”

– **Arabelle Jimenez, Editor-in-Chief, Motourismo**

“#Bambanti2023, the best cultural festival showcasing the beauty of Isabela and its amazing people! Highly organized. Kudos to Albano-Dy tandem! The real gem are the Isabeleños who are disciplined with love & respect for their leaders!”

– **Leony R. Garcia, Travel Journalist/Feature Writer**

“The Bambanti Festival really proved a big image of strong and colorful culture, arts, unity and popularity of Isabela province.”

– **Ann Esternon, Lifestyle Editor**

“The booths, the products, the food, the incredible hospitality, people we have met, the costumes, the dances, the music and everything that unfolds in front of our own eyes. It is so wonderful that your leaders have continued the Bambanti tradition through all these years because it shows the best that Isabela has to boast and to offer. What I love is that it involves the entire population. Everybody participates and that’s a wonderful community which speaks of bayanihan spirit.”

– **Ms. Alice Reyes, National Artist for Dance and Aliw Awards Founder**

“I had a great time at the Bambanti Festival and seen personally the reasons why it won the Aliw Awards for three consecutive years for the Best Festival Practices and Performance.”

– **Ted Claudio, Chief Content Creator**

“A shining example of showcasing a region’s cultural tapestry in a modern setting.”

– **Antonio Delos Reyes, Lifestyle Reporter, Malaya Business Insight**



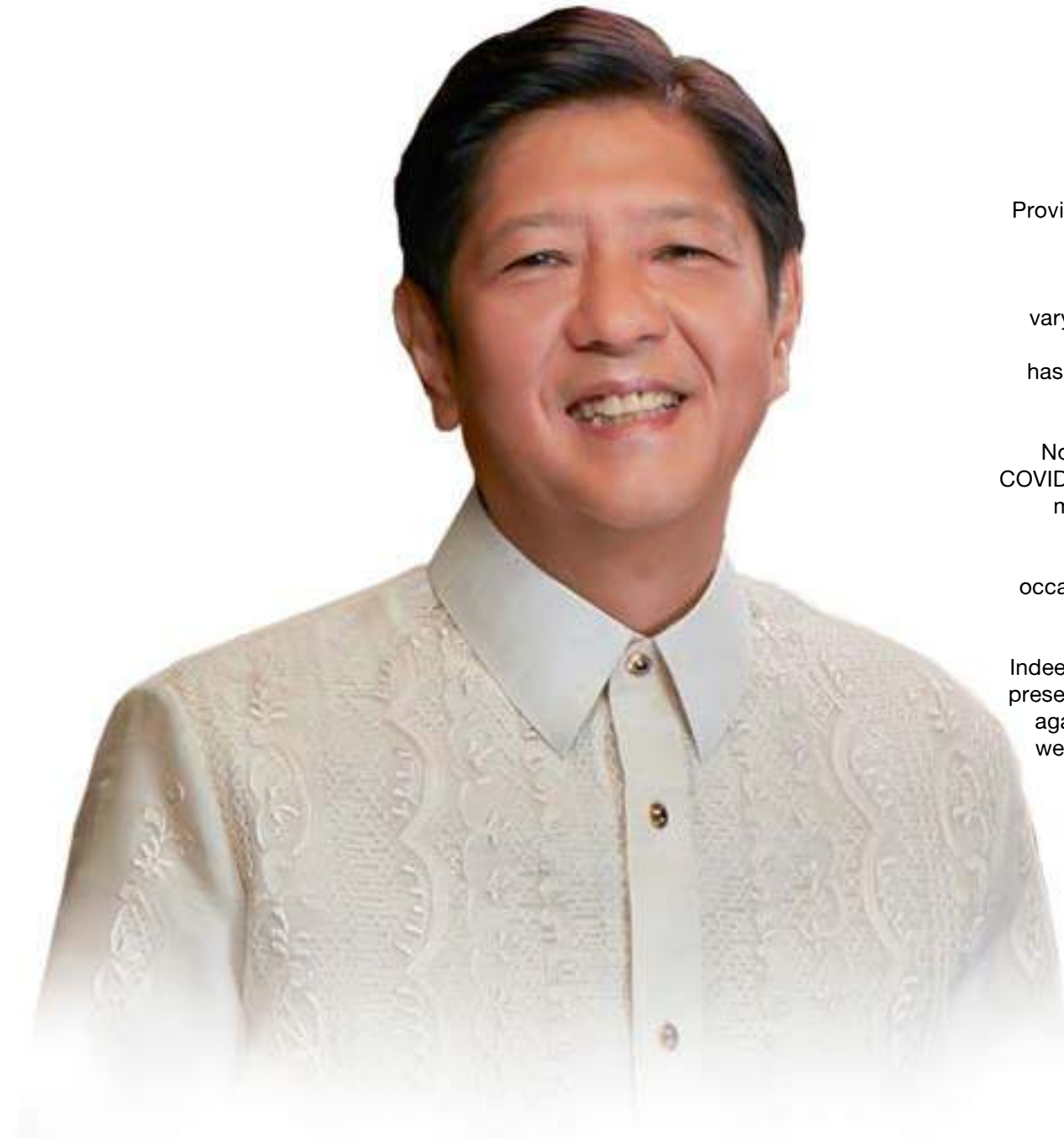
P R E F A C E

The province has been tested by wave after wave of disasters and calamities. Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic plagued our province and disrupted every aspect of our lives. Yet, we stood resilient. No adversary could dampen our spirit to survive and bounce back.

Bambanti Festival was crippled for two years, but it never bowed to the pandemic that tried to bend and break the spirit of the people. This book, crafted with the scribes' burning passion, highlights not only the milestone and comeback of the biggest festival in the province but also the rich culture and resiliency of the Isabeleños.

Archiving the Bambanti breakthroughs of the province requires blood and sweat. Yet we ambitiously pursued this endeavor for the future generations. We hope that those who do not know Isabela will gain in this book a knowledge about the province and its people.

Isabela Provincial Information Office
2 0 2 3



MESSAGE

My warmest greetings to the officials and locals of the Province of Isabela on the publication of your Coffee Table Book, featuring the Bambanti Festival 2023.

As history can attest, the Province of Isabela has welcomed groups from varying backgrounds that, together, have created a culture rooted in genuine appreciation for their origins and their lands. Through this foundation that has been made strong by the openness and unity of the people, the province overcame the great storms and events it has faced over the years.

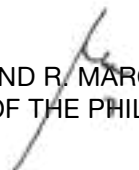
Now that we have again gained a foothold after immense difficulties like the COVID-19 pandemic, we are called to have a deeper sense of community and a more jubilant celebration of the heritage and harvests that we get to enjoy.

For this reason, I congratulate the province for successfully holding the occasion, and I welcome the meaningful conversations and fond recollections about the Bambanti Festival that this coffee table book will inspire.

Indeed, just as the bambanti illustrates, there is much good that is created and preserved when we stand tall in our respective places. I then urge you to stand against stagnation and always rise with industry, creativity, and resilience as we all continue to develop our provinces and nation - our homes amidst any possible challenge that tomorrow may bring.

Congratulations on all your successes, and I wish you all more meaningful encounters with the magnificent province that is Isabela.

FERDINAND R. MARCOS, JR.
PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES





MESSAGE

Assalamualaikum.

My warmest greetings to the people of Province of Isabela as you celebrate this year's Bambanti Festival with the theme, "**Isabela: Pagharap sa Bagong Hamon ng Kinabukasan.**"

I am pleased to join our dear Isabeleños in celebrating this joyous occasion. The gains you have achieved in the past year truly demonstrate the province's enduring commitment to pave avenues of inclusive and sustainable progress across your diverse and flourishing industries.

It is an honor to be part of this longstanding festivity which shows your faith in your religious devotion, pride in your colorful traditions, and determination in building more paths of prosperity.

As you launch another venue for agro-industrial exchange through the Bambanti village, may you carry the trade fair's revelry with optimism as you unite in realizing your potential as a promising ecotourism destination of the country.

As you mark this day of merriment with vibrant displays of craftsmanship and talents, I trust that you will spark stronger unity among your fellow townfolk and uphold your localities' growth and diversity as important components in the tapestry of our nation's socio-cultural identity and economic development.

Lahat para sa Diyos, sa bayan, at sa bawat pamilyang Pilipino.

SARA Z. DUTERTE
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES
SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



MESSAGE

Two years ago, tourism came to a standstill almost overnight. We have seen lives and livelihoods upended by this menace. Home to some 5.4M tourism workers or 13 percent of the total workforce of the country, the Philippines saw tourism workers either displaced, underemployed or worst, unemployed due to business stoppage or closure as brought about by the global pandemic.

This year's Bambanti Festival theme, "**Isabela, Pagharap sa Bagong Hamon ng Kinabukasan**" couldn't be any more apt as we enter the new year with renewed hope under the leadership of President Marcos, who expressed his full confidence and great optimism in the tourism industry becoming one of the major economic pillars for post-pandemic recovery and economic resurgence. That said, there's a lot of optimism and hope that reverberate across our tourism stakeholders.

Tourism, as you very well know, is about shared responsibility between the government and tourism stakeholders. We are successful in areas where LGUs are most involved. The Province of Isabela, therefore, is one perfect example of an LGU that works hand-in-hand with the national government.

Knowing that we have the Isabeleños — and all the proud Filipinos — by our side along with other tourism champions, is truly an assurance that we can all move the tourism industry forward. We have to work hand-in-hand from keeping our country's economy back on the path of progress. We have come a long way as a proud nation, but we still have a long way to go. And it is my hope that with the help of our fellow public servants and the people, we can all look forward to the day that brings us closer to our ultimate goal of a Filipino nation where everybody gets better chances in life, equal opportunities to write their own success stories and create better lives for themselves and their families.

Daghang salamat at mabuhay!

Excerpt from the message of DOT Secretary Maria Esperanza Christina Garcia Frasco during the celebration of Bambanti Festival 2023



MESSAGE

I am pleased to present this coffee table book compiling over 300 photographs that capture glimpses of the 2023 Bambanti Festival – the biggest and grandest festival in the Queen Province of the North. Bambanti (scarecrow) is the ultimate symbol of our people’s industry, vigilance, and resilience, and the central figure of our vast and fertile land.

This puts together words and pictures while constructing a meaningful narrative of Isabela’s glorious heritage and cultural authenticity.

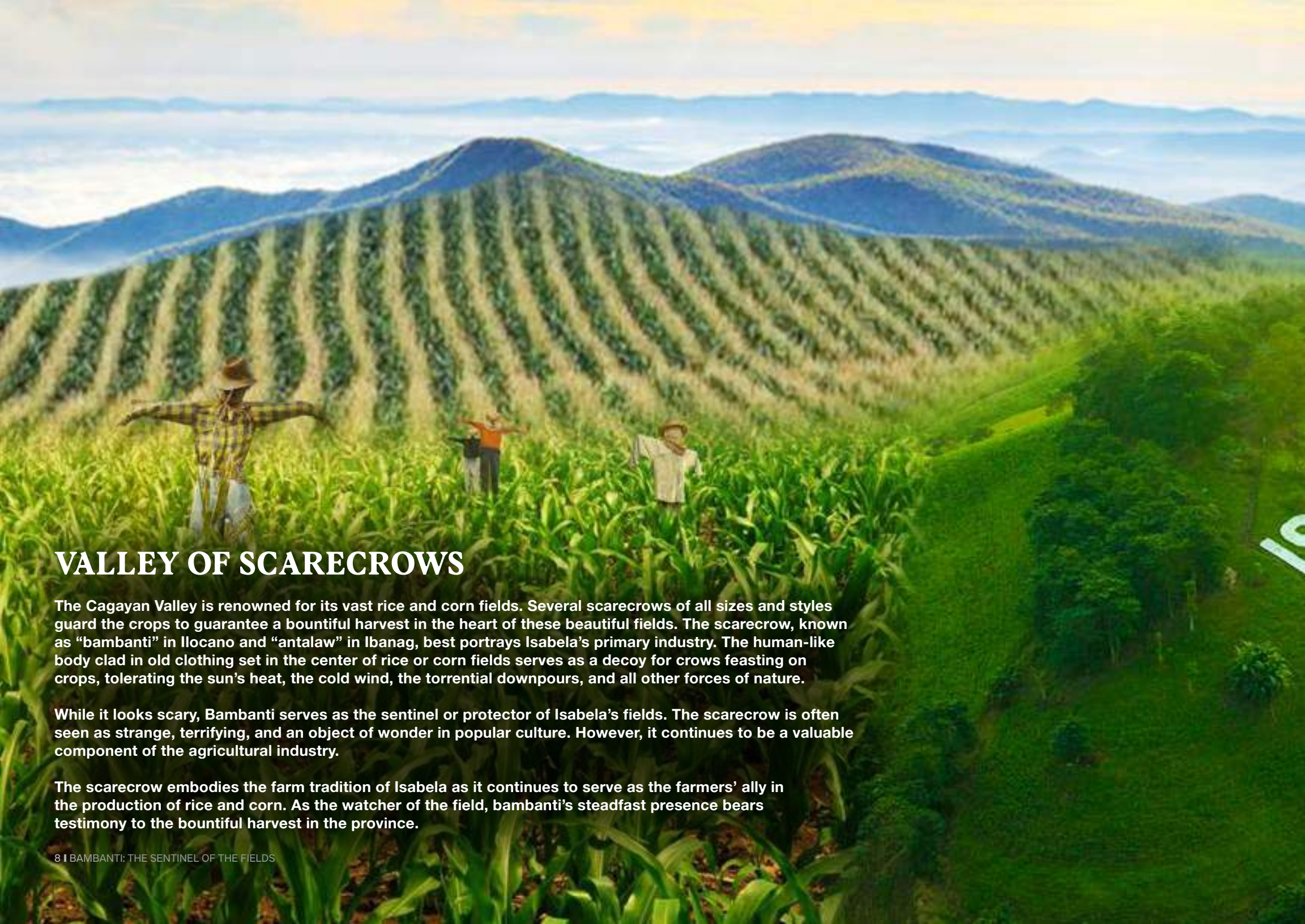
Browsing through its pages, I hope we learn how Bambanti Festival was conceptualized, developed, and evolved to become the mother of all festivals in Isabela while earning national awards and international recognition.

Let the pages of this coffee table book remind us of Isabeleños’ shared experiences in reawakening our cultural pride with optimism that amidst modernization and acculturation, the Bambanti Festival would continuously be practiced, preserved, and protected – an heirloom worth passing to the next generation.

As we share images, words, and insights, may we rediscover Isabela’s sense of identity. If we lose it, we may as well have lost the essence of who we are.

This book reflects creativity, resourcefulness, and passion for creating Isabela’s identity – a continuing story in affirming our position as the premier agriculture hub of the Philippines.

HON. RODOLFO T. ALBANO III
GOVERNOR
PROVINCE OF ISABELA



VALLEY OF SCARECROWS

The Cagayan Valley is renowned for its vast rice and corn fields. Several scarecrows of all sizes and styles guard the crops to guarantee a bountiful harvest in the heart of these beautiful fields. The scarecrow, known as “bambanti” in Ilocano and “antalaw” in Ibanag, best portrays Isabela’s primary industry. The human-like body clad in old clothing set in the center of rice or corn fields serves as a decoy for crows feasting on crops, tolerating the sun’s heat, the cold wind, the torrential downpours, and all other forces of nature.

While it looks scary, Bambanti serves as the sentinel or protector of Isabela’s fields. The scarecrow is often seen as strange, terrifying, and an object of wonder in popular culture. However, it continues to be a valuable component of the agricultural industry.

The scarecrow embodies the farm tradition of Isabela as it continues to serve as the farmers’ ally in the production of rice and corn. As the watcher of the field, bambanti’s steadfast presence bears testimony to the bountiful harvest in the province.

ISABELLA
THY WILL BE OUR



THE RISE OF GIANT SCARECROWS

For generations, scarecrows made out of hay, straw, leaves, grasses, wood chips, rags, and old clothing were a common sight in the vast agricultural lands of Isabela. The province's golden fields are studded with bambantis created by Isabeleños, who rely on a bountiful crop for their livelihood to protect their rice fields and corn fields from birds and other pests. Although inanimate, these scary human-shaped mannequins serve as a friend and a source of hope to our humble folks and resilient farmers.

During the Bambanti Festival celebration every January, a month of beginnings and intense growth, these scarecrows morph threefold in the Queen Province of the North. The celebration, aptly called the “mother of all festivals” in the province with 34 municipalities and three cities participating, draws locals and foreigners. The festival has bloomed into a full-blast event involving all the sectors in the province. It runs for a week, exhibiting the best Isabela has to offer – from world-class products, its rich heritage and culture, the people's ingenuity, and delightful cuisine. The week-long festival allows guests to get acquainted with the cultural diversity of the province and immerse themselves in its fascinating cultural traditions.

But there is more to the Bambanti Festival than just scarecrows. The festival is celebrated primarily as a communal gesture of thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest and resiliency, strength, and resoluteness of the Isabeleños.

Bambanti Festival is a noble representation of the Isabela farmers' determination to earn, financially support their families, and contribute to their communities' growth. It is a great reminder of their perseverance, resourcefulness, and unceasing vigilance to protect their farms and farm produce.

The event also commemorates the province's agricultural bounties, rich culture, history, and faith in the Great Provider. At the festival's core is the creation of the giant scarecrows, which have earned the festival its immense popularity.

BEYOND THE FIELDS

Agriculture is the major industry in the land of scarecrows - the top corn producer and second highest palay producer in the country. The sufficiency level for rice surplus production in Isabela is 457.78% (PSA, 2022). About 78.15% of Isabela's rice produce is sold to Metro Manila and other provinces.

Beyond the great, fertile fields of the Queen Province of the North lies the rich history that shapes Isabeleños' traits today. The Bambanti, a helping hand of humble folks who diligently till the land and nurture crops, is the ultimate symbol of the strength and vigilance of the Isabela folks.

Isabela home to 1.7 million people distinguished for the same strength and vigilance inherited from their gallant forefathers. This gallantry is manifested in their ability to rise above any adversity. Though battered by natural disasters almost every year, Isabeleños remain strong and undamped.

The COVID-19 pandemic caused the loss of more than 2,000 Isabeleños, disrupted the local economy, and drastically reduced employment due to business closures. It took a heavy toll on most livelihoods, and loss of income and job opportunities were overarching challenges. The African Swine Fever (ASF) caused shrank hog production, and inflation rose to unprecedented heights due to the Ukraine-Russia crisis. Still, we remain steadfast, unbowed, unbent, and unbroken.

In the fields are the golden grains of hope guarded by bambantis. Beyond the fields are the episodes of adversities that continue to shape our distinct traits, foremost of which is the ability to bounce back as our will to fight is firmly rooted in the belief that God Almighty would never abandon us.

Through it all, we remain steadfast. We may falter and fall, but we will rise again, fortified by our vision and faith. We will stand as one for we are resilient.





“We now celebrate the resilience and diligence of the Isabela farmers that made the province as the country’s biggest corn and rice surplus producer. The City of Ilagan is the Corn Capital of the country and we have the town of San Mateo as the Mongo Capital of the Philippines. It is also the province that supplies rice to Metro Manila.”

**Vice Governor Faustino
“Bojie” G. Dy III**





“We are happy to report that we have successfully bounced back after the pandemic with a high GDP in 2022. Celebrating this year’s Bambanti Festival after two years of the pandemic is not only for the awards. It is celebrated primarily as a common gesture of thanksgiving for the bountiful harvest and the resiliency of the Isabeleños.”

Governor Rodolfo T. Albano III

An aerial photograph of a large stadium during a parade. The field is filled with hundreds of dancers in colorful costumes, some in yellow and red, others in blue and white. The stands are packed with a large crowd of spectators. The stadium is surrounded by trees and buildings. The text 'PARADE OF SCARECROWS' is overlaid on the left side of the image.

PARADE OF SCARECROWS

The Bambanti Festival 2023 street dance competition at the Isabela Sports Complex on January 27, 2023 was more than a colorful scarecrow parade. It was a celebration of the people's optimism, zeal, and resilience.

Over 2,000 dancers were greeted with screams and roaring applause as the competing cities and municipalities showed off their progressive, dynamic grooves. Much like the other festivals around the country, the highlight of the Bambanti Festival 2023 was the street dance competition consisting of individual and synchronized choreographies.

facebook.com/traveltayoph







STREETDANCE COMPETITION

This year, 20 contingents, divided into Category A and B, paraded in bright-colored scarecrow costumes and performed three-minute dance routines about their towns' popular folklore, industry, environment protection and conservation, and pandemic resilience.

Under Category A, Cauayan City, Alicia, and Jones nailed the competition with their costumes in different hues, solid formations, and lifts. San Agustin, Quirino, and Sta. Maria dominated Category B with their scintillating props and fluid choreography. The street dance competition was a spectacular show of talent, creativity, choreography, and music.



‘GAWAGAWAY-YAN’

Cauayan City's street dance contingent rocked the Isabela Sports Complex with their Gawagaway-yan dance performance and zestful chants. The lively music complemented their gleaming smiles, boosting the morale of the spectators.

Gawagaway-yan, a Gaddang word meaning bountiful livelihood and merriment, traces the ancestry of Cauayeños from the ethnolinguistic group Gaddang and recognizes the diversity of the cultural groups residing in Cauayan City.



BAYAN NG ECHAGUE MENGAL FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG ROXAS PINAKBET FESTIVAL



LUNGSOD NG ILAGAN MAMMANGI FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG SAN PABLO BAKA FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG JONES PINILISA FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG BENITO SOLIVEN SABUNGANAY FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG STA. MARIA MABBANGA FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG SAN MATEO BALATONG FESTIVAL



BAYAN NG ALICIA BALITOK TI ALICIA



LUNGSOD NG SANTIAGO BALAMBAN FESTIVAL





STREETDANCE SHOWDOWN

The Dance Showdown Competition offered a glimpse of the rich history and culture of the different cities and municipalities. Thousands of people flocked to the Isabela Sports Complex to witness contingents from 17 towns, and three cities trumpet their world-class festival dance performances.

Echague wowed the crowd with their winning historical dance reviving the story of the Yogad Tribe who sailed from Mindanao decades ago. They gave the audience goosebumps adding to the crisp night breeze.



BAYAN NG ALICIA



Spectators did not have to go to Disneyland to watch an enchanting and formidable performance. With the jaw-dropping presentation from Alicia, the force of their music's beat could chain the audience to the rhythm. Their brisk hand and foot movements made them distinct from other contingents.

BAYAN NG RAMON



BAYAN NG STA. MARIA

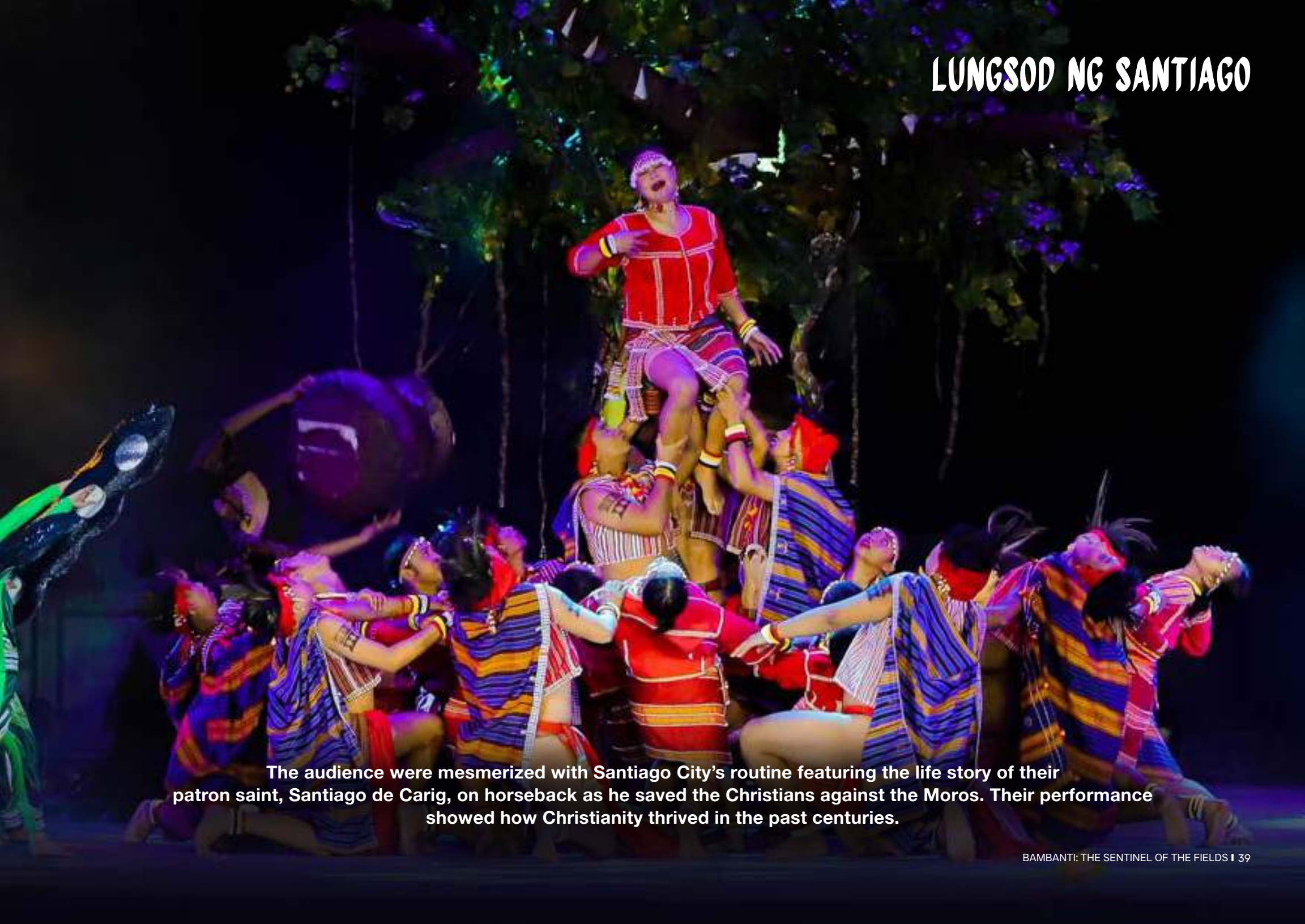




BAYAN NG SAN MATEO



LUNGSOD NG SANTIAGO



The audience were mesmerized with Santiago City's routine featuring the life story of their patron saint, Santiago de Carig, on horseback as he saved the Christians against the Moros. Their performance showed how Christianity thrived in the past centuries.

BAYAN NG ROXAS





LUNGSOD NG CAUAYAN



BAYAN NG ANGADANAN



BAYAN NG BENITO SOLIVEN



With solid choreographies, clean successions, and fluid storylines from the 20 contingents, Bambanti Festival once again proved that it deserves all the accolades it has earned through the years.



BAYAN NG ECHAGUE



BATTLE OF FESTIVAL KINGS AND QUEENS

Candidates for the Festival King and Queen competition flaunted their striking, radiant, and symbolic costumes at SM Cauayan City. The designers were deeply committed to promoting traditional Isabeleño handiwork and craftsmanship. Their work drew inspiration from Isabela's folklore and local festivals celebrated in their cities and municipalities.

BAYAN NG SAN AGUSTIN



BAYAN NG QUIRINO



LUNGSOD NG ILAGAN



Isabelleño designers valiantly exhibited their creativity. With nods to the province's vibrant culture and the joyous spirit of Isabelleños, the event was a glorious celebration of the elegance and ingenuity of emerging design talents.

BAYAN NG JONES



BAYAN NG REINA MERCEDES



BAYAN NG RAMON



BAYAN NG ALICIA



LUNGSOD NG SANTIAGO



Angelo Calalang

BAYAN NG ANGADANAN

The Festival Kings and Queens captured the hearts of spectators with their intricate costumes. Nothing from their creations was ordinary. Even corn husks and rice hulls were spun like royal attires. Few were crowned victorious in this battle of creativity, but every costume was a winner deserving recognition from the public eye.



THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

Brimming with vibrant colors and loud, lively music of exuberance, the Bambanti Festival 2023 highlighted the resiliency of Isabeleños while displaying their native expertise in making crafts out of indigenous materials.

The festival served as a platform for the branding and marketing of Isabela. Farmers and artisans worked nonstop to design and build enormous booths and bambantis for the event. Entries from Isabela's various cities and municipalities encapsulated the arts, crafts, culture, history, commerce, industry, and ecology of the province and the people they represented.





Visitors and tourists purchased indigenous handicrafts, including the province's extensive assortment of locally-made, OTOP-certified items from each town and city.



BURGOS
ISABELA: PAGHARAP SA BAGONG PAMANAHEG SA MARUKASAN
BAMBANTI FESTIVAL

QUIRINO
ISABELA: PAGHARAP SA BAGONG PAMANAHEG SA MARUKASAN
BAMBANTI FESTIVAL

ISABELA:
PAGHARAP SA BAGONG
PROVINCE OF ISABELA

DUMANON KAYO

ABANTE QUIRINO
TULUY - TULOY TI
BAYAN NG QUIRINO





Lifestyle products crafted in Isabela revealed the superior manufacturing and creative skills of emerging artisans and entrepreneurs. Goods on exhibit and sale included hand-crafted home accessories for eating, entertaining, and the bedroom and living room spaces, such as furniture, linens, and home décor.



There were scarecrows portraying mythological creatures, farmers, native-dressed maidens, and warlords. Many were intricately adorned with corn and rice grains.







Others were fashioned from handwoven multi-colored mats, while some were embellished with rattan, dried fish, fishing net, brightly-painted coconut husks, and an array of beans in varying hues, shapes, and sizes.



Above all, the booths represented hope and optimism for a brighter future, fostering change and strengthening people's faith.



THE COMPONENT

CITY OF IBADAN: THE DREAMS OF A LIVEABLE CITY

The transformation of Ibadan into a booming city in Olofinboba Valley developed from a simple "Dreams of a City" of the Ibadan people. From the time of its formation, it evolved into a movement leading to the construction of the Municipality of Ibadan into a Component City.

Ibadan will take the next decade together, the new Ibadan citizens a new vision, that is the "Dream of a Liveable City".

This is the total perspective of the City of Ibadan BOOTH, a composite of the different phases of a liveable city, the dream of every Ibadanite, a vision of the City of Ibadan in the future. This is in accordance with the theme of this year's Ekusunba Festival: **SAYO PACHAKAP AN BIYODUN (AMEN NG KINABURASAN)**

MAKAN KEN MAINUM

The Bambanti Festival's Makan Ken Mainum, now on its seventh year, highlights native ingredients and culinary skills of young Isabeleños aged 9-14.

Chef Cocoy Ventura said that the event was an opportunity to let the youth appreciate the abundance of local cooking ingredients in the province and spark their passion for cooking. They were a breath of fresh air. They provided novel ideas that seasoned experts have yet to discover.









For the culinary menu, local beef, poultry, fish, and vegetables were served. A team from one of Isabela's coastal towns exploited lobsters found in local waters to flavor the coconut-braised heart of a palm tree. One group prepared meatballs with carabao meat and a cream sauce made with carabao milk. Another team's local chicken was simmered in a delicate broth until soft enough to fall off the bone. It was served with ginger-green onion oil.



One group developed a delightful beverage using raw cucumber and wild passion fruit as the base, complemented with honey and calamansi juice. Another team created an enticing drink by layering butterfly pea flowers, yellow bougainvillea, and rose extracts with dayap, cucumber, and lemongrass.

It was not only a rare opportunity for the youth contestants to showcase their talents but also a chance to have fun while doing what they liked most.



Sauce

- 1/2 cup Whipping Cream
- 1/2 lb Lean Meat
- 1/2 cup Flour, Salt and Pepper (Anglaise)
- 1/2 cup Breadcrumbs
- 2 Eggs
- 1/2 cup Calamansi
- 1/2 cup Oil for Frying
- 1/2 cup Tofu (Pan-fried)

Sauce

- 1/2 cup Squash
- 1/2 cup Lima Beans
- 1/2 cup Cloves, Garlic (minced) or Garlic Powder
- 1/2 cup Onion (minced) or Onion Powder
- 1/2 cup Salt
- 1/2 cup Pepper Powder
- 1/2 cup Cooking Oil
- 1/2 cup Water





On a sunny afternoon, to kick off the grandest festival in the province, a total of 9,260 runners from the provincial government, local government units, Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, Higher Education Institutions, public and private high schools, cooperatives and other sectors laced up for the TAKBO PARA SA E-LIB NI BRO. As the crowd multiplied at the Queen Isabela Park, the spirit of volunteerism and enthusiasm of the Isabeleños to contribute to a laudable cause was once again manifested.

Isabeleños from all walks of life swayed their hearts out during the Zumba dance at Queen Isabela Park. The dance featured high and low-intensity intervals that helped improve the cardiovascular fitness of the participants before lacing up for the fun run.







The provincial government strives to empower the Isabeleño youth by conducting worthwhile recreational activities. In 2022, the iRUN for TAAL registered 13,270 runners. The provincial government made great strides in pursuing the 2023 Bambanti Festival's TAKBO PARA SA E-LIB NI BRO. The P1,108,810 proceeds of the event will benefit the digital library for the youth to solve the problem of traditional book deterioration in the province and, at the same time, cultivate the youth's declining passion in reading.



RAVE PARTY

FEATURING CELEBRITY DJ TOM TAUS

After the Fun Run, the participants were awed by the Rave Party in the evening featuring celebrity DJs, guests, and dancers. They were also mesmerized by the Grand Fireworks Display that concluded the first day of the multi-awarded festival in the North.



2023 BAMBANTI FESTIVAL

START

FUN BIKE CHALLENGE



ISABELA, PAGHARAP SA BAGONG HAMON NO KINABUKASAN

25-KM FUN BIKE CHALLENGE

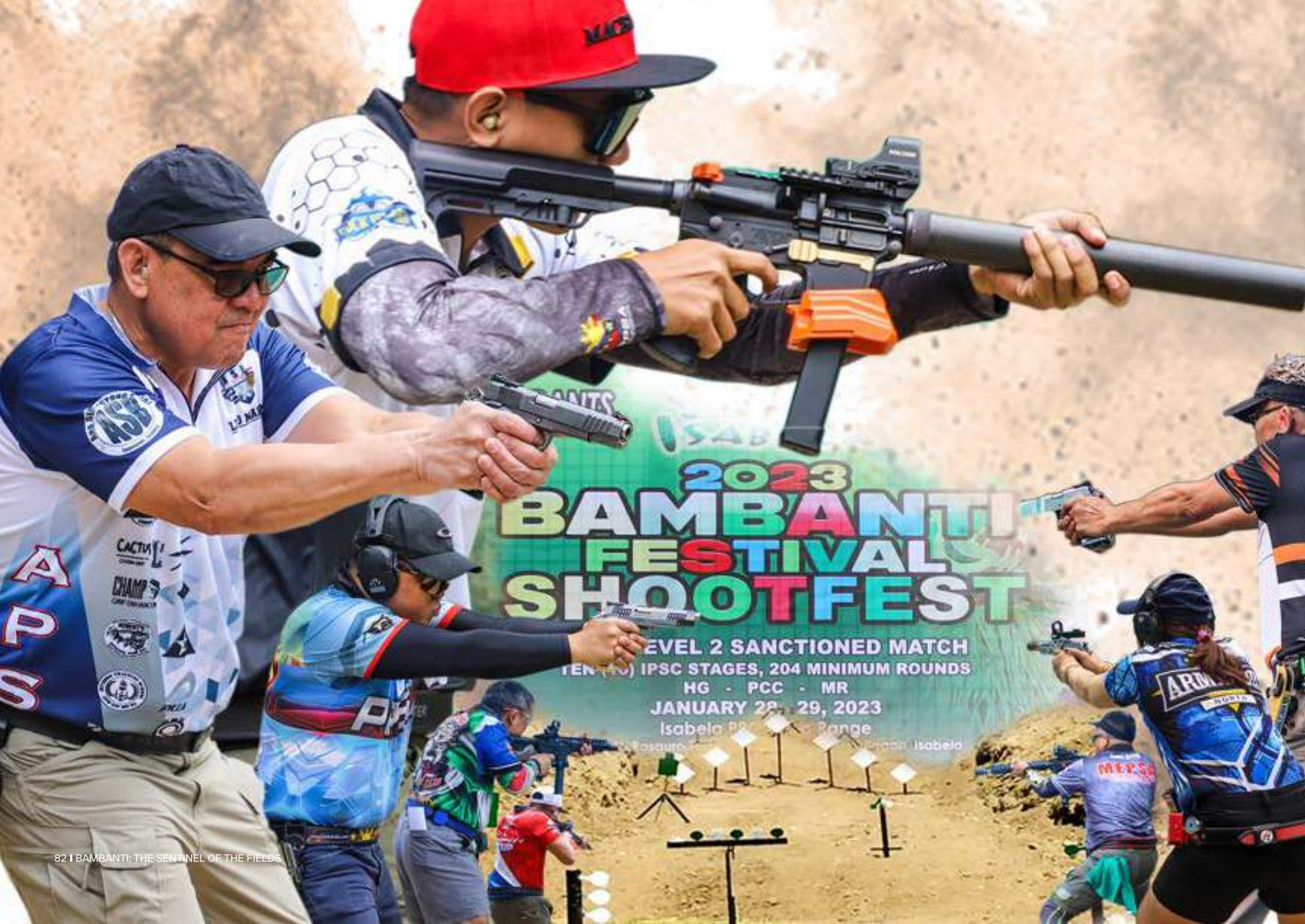
The 25K Fun Bike was a sports highlight at the Bambanti Festival 2023, promoting the health benefits and fun of cycling in the province. The 332 cyclists who completed the 25-km route were given finisher medals, including special prizes.

From the Provincial Capitol grounds to Gayong Gayong Sur to Gayong Gayong Norte and back to the capitol, the bikers traversed through rough, narrow roads not only for the finisher medal but also for their self-fulfillment.



2023 BAMBANTI FESTIVAL FINISH

FUN BIKE CHALLENGE



2023 BAMBANTI FESTIVAL SHOOTFEST

LEVEL 2 SANCTIONED MATCH
TEN (10) IPSC STAGES, 204 MINIMUM ROUNDS
HG - PCC - MR
JANUARY 28 - 29, 2023
Isabela Range
Posauro, Isabela



Gun enthusiasts had the chance to show their skills at the Bambanti Shoot Fest at the Isabela PPO Firing Range, Baligatan, City of Ilagan hosted by MEPSA Gun Club. The two-day fest comprising 10 IPSC stages with 204 minimum rounds was an exciting, fun, and competitive event.

1st BAMBANTI GOLF TO

Sponsored by: VICE



TOURNAMENT 2023

GOV. BOJIE DY III

Jan. 28-29, 2023



The 2023 Bambanti Festival Golf Tournament was held at the Isabela Golf Club, Baligatan, City of Ilagan on January 28-29, 2023. The well-participated sports event provided the participants with a wide range of mental and physical benefits.

GRAND CONCERT PARTY

Since safety protocols eased out, the province took advantage of the influx of tourists by culminating the celebration with a Grand Concert Party.

The crowd went wild as Asia's Soul Supreme KZ Tandingan and OPM band Agsunta rocked the Isabela Sports Complex that capped off the festival's last day.







KZ Tandingan blew away the audience with her performance. Her powerful voice, which was spiced up with live vocal effects, gave the pop songs she sang a beautiful revamp.

OPM band Agsunta also delivered an impressive acoustic and soft melodic rock rendition of Filipino songs.

A vibrant night scene at a music festival. Two female DJs are performing on a stage. The DJ on the left is wearing a black jacket and has her right arm raised in a 'rock on' gesture. The DJ on the right is wearing a black top and headphones. They are behind a DJ booth with Pioneer equipment. A large, energetic crowd is visible in the foreground, many with their hands raised. The background features large screens and colorful stage lighting.

MUSIC FESTIVAL

FEATURING LOCAL DJs

Bambanti Festival 2023 also offered a melodious night as the audience witnessed performances from the multi-day Music Festival featuring Angel Villaronte, DJ Dom, and local bands Maria Clara, Comic Superstition, and Bandang Isabela. They made the huge crowds wild and ecstatic.



Sentro ng **AGRI** *Kultura*



THE SONGS OF RESILIENCE

Local choreographers, singers, bikers and skaters, Sining Tanglawan, and Whiplash Dance Company performed their hearts out at the Isabela: Pagharap sa Bagong Hamon ng Kinabukasan Musical directed by Mr. Monino S. Duque.

The musical finale was incredible, breathtaking, and touching. The whole stadium erupted with screams, applause, and jumps. It was a thanksgiving tribute to the Almighty for helping Isabeleños survive the pandemic.

The claim that the province had recovered from coronavirus disease was solidified when the contingents from 17 municipalities and three cities merged at the center stage. The songs of resilience undoubtedly strengthened further the spirits of Isabeleños.



NAGUILIAN

The SM Cauayan City was on fire with Ms. Naguilian's Arnis-Likha Anyo presentation. Her thunderous screams and striking skills as a warrior symbolized the courage and power of Isabeleño women.

BURGOS

Ms. Burgos showed intense lifts and powerful floorwork moves in her contemporary dance presentation. Her legendary dancing skills set the tone of the talent competition.

ROXAS

The audience was mesmerized by the passionate performance of Ms. Roxas. Her storytelling prowess through contemporary dance made her distinct from other candidates.

ECHAGUE

Ms. Echague showcased a contemporary dance with her complex yet bewitching and skillful lifts. She is undoubtedly an amazing dancer.

LUNA

Ms. Luna gave a festive Polynesian vibe with her enthralling Tahitian dance. Clad in an

elaborate and alluring dress, witnessing her performance is an unforgettable experience.

QUIRINO

"Everyone is beautiful" was the message of Ms. Quirino in her singing performance. Her outfit transformation from elegance to simplicity definitely highlighted her message.

STA. MARIA

Ms. Sta. Maria showed a contemporary dance performance. Her modest dancing moves offered a good show.

GAMU

Ms. Gamu performed a romantic contemporary dance number. Her fluid and breathtaking routine captivated the hearts of the audience.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES COMMUNITY

The IP Community must be proud of their queen. When she performed her modern ethnic dance, she was absolutely unstoppable.

CAUAYAN CITY

Ms. Cauayan City satisfied the thirst of the audience with her balancing skills in her thrilling Binasaan folk dance performance.

SAN MANUEL

Ms. San Manuel's poker face complemented her lively and aggressive Paso Doble dance performance. Her staccato movements, striking body poses, and flamenco style footwork were remarkable.

BENITO SOLIVEN

Culture enthusiasts were hooked on Ms. Benito Soliven's Singkil dance. Her high level of accuracy while dancing through the timing and rhythm of bamboo sticks was exceptional.

SAN ISIDRO

With her dramatic contemporary dance number, Ms. San Isidro did a splendid performance. Her graceful movements were enthralling.

SAN PABLO

Ms. San Pablo was an absolute game changer with her 2-in-1 performance. She transitioned from a fierce martial arts dance show to an elegant ballroom dance routine.

TUMAUINI

Ms. Tumauni rocked SM Cauayan City with her masterful drumming skills, delighting the audience with her unique performance.



THE QUEENS' SPOTLIGHT



Arlene “Girlye” Dy-Maranan, along with Bambanti 2023 directors Bernard Maybituin and Monino Duque, was awestruck with the impressive performances of the Queen Isabela 2023 candidates.

Miss Universe Philippines National Director Shamcey Supsup-Lee looked stunning during her visit at the Bambanti Festival 2023.

She thanked Isabeleños for the kind hospitality and never-ending food. She was also hooked on the creative booths, local products, and talents of Isabeleños.

“Glad to have witnessed not just Ms. Queen Isabela 2023 but also the different booths of each municipality. They are super creative; they highlighted the local products and talents of the people of Isabela,” she said.





QUEENS OF HERITAGE

The candidates had a grand time honoring the heritage of their cities and municipalities as they paraded their creative attires during the Grand Coronation Night. The competition was a rich source of inspiration for new design interpretations and application of innovative techniques.

In the last few years, the costumes have become more elaborate and ornate. They were refreshingly different and endlessly fascinating on many levels. The local artists' choice of materials, crafting features, colors, and other clothing details reflected the heritage of the province. The boldest costumes from this year's competition featured a live dove, fish scales, mascara, and rosary, among others.







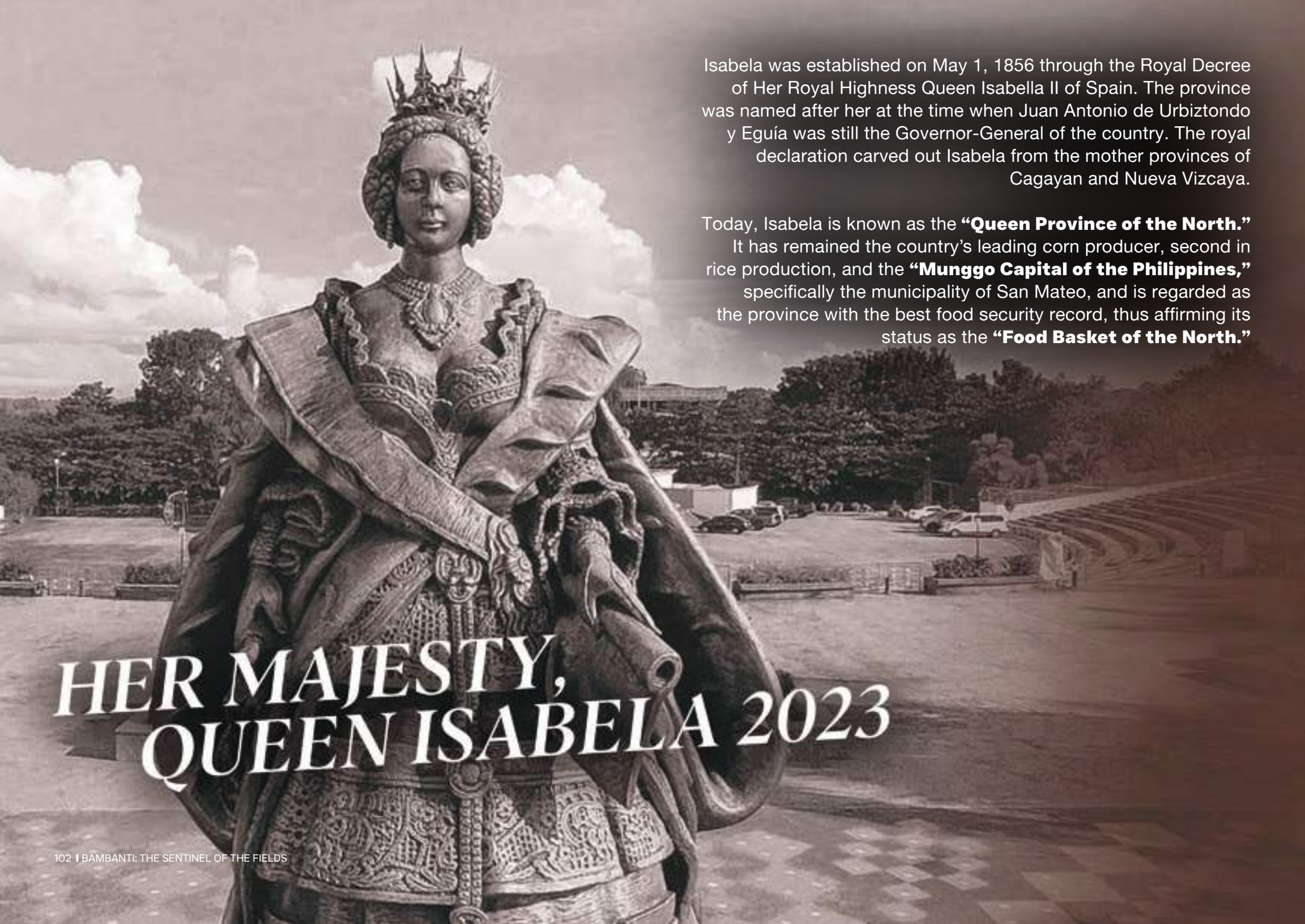
QUEENS OF THE NIGHT

The Search for Queen Isabela 2023 evening gown competition was spectacular.

Beauty and elegance were qualities the stunning candidates highlighted during the show. They looked like the Roman goddess Venus in their gowns created by Albert Andrada, the man behind the blue serpentine gown worn by Pia Wurtzbach on her coronation as Miss Universe 2015.







Isabela was established on May 1, 1856 through the Royal Decree of Her Royal Highness Queen Isabella II of Spain. The province was named after her at the time when Juan Antonio de Urbiztondo y Eguía was still the Governor-General of the country. The royal declaration carved out Isabela from the mother provinces of Cagayan and Nueva Vizcaya.

Today, Isabela is known as the **“Queen Province of the North.”** It has remained the country’s leading corn producer, second in rice production, and the **“Munggo Capital of the Philippines,”** specifically the municipality of San Mateo, and is regarded as the province with the best food security record, thus affirming its status as the **“Food Basket of the North.”**

HER MAJESTY, QUEEN ISABELA 2023



“As someone raised by a single parent, I was taught first-hand how education could be the sole inheritance my mother could give me. With my Queen Isabela journey, it is my firm stand that education is a social equalizer and life changer for every youth. When a child can go to school, he can project a positive cycle of change within himself, his family, and the community.”

On an exceptionally chilly night in late January, a new “queen” with her education advocacy was crowned to “reign” over the country’s second-largest province in a fierce and surprising competition. The pageant was held at Queen Isabela Park, which lies in front of the provincial capitol, the province’s seat of power. The vast park and province were named after Queen Isabella II of Spain, whose reign lasted from 1833 to 1868.



Catherine Joy Lucero Legaspi, from San Manuel, Isabela overpowered 29 other candidates. She was the choice of the board of judges composed of Miss Universe 1984 third runner-up Desiree Verdadero Abesamis, world-renowned designer Albert Andrada, New York-based businessman Danny Pagsambugan, acclaimed filmmaker Jeffrey Jeturian, and Miss Universe 2011 third runner-up Shamcey Supsup Lee.

Catherine's journey was arduous. Despite the strong pressure, she radiated confidence and elegance.

“To be honest, that night was exhausting. I was out of energy and didn't believe in my performance. All I wanted was for the show to be over, to be home and rest. But the table turned, and unexpected things happened,” Catherine said.

Queen Catherine will reign with a purpose, believing that small acts of positivity can bring significant change.

“I will continue to be a Queen with a purpose. I want to be remembered as someone who is a standard of beauty, kindness, and generosity,” she said.



Photo shows (from left) Alicia's Cherry Lee Garlijo, 2nd runner-up; Ramon's Johanna Trisha Cinco, Queen Isabela Culture and Arts; San Manuel's Catherine Joy Legaspi, Queen Isabela 2023; Ms. Cauayan City Julie Mae Villanueva, Queen Isabela Tourism; and Ms. Indigenous Peoples Community Jaycel Lumauig, 1st runner-up.

A HARVEST OF AWARDS

The Bambanti Festival's harvest of awards is devoted to the industrious farmers who endure the excruciating heat of the sun to provide staples for our tables. Above all, it is dedicated to the Almighty, who blesses us with a bountiful harvest.

THE PEARL AWARDS

The Bambanti Festival gained the most coveted recognition in the 2022 Pearl Awards for Best Tourism Practices given by the Department of Tourism (DOT) and Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines (ATOP) as the Grand Winner for Best Tourism Festival as a Thanksgiving for a Bountiful Harvest during the awards night of the 23rd ATOP National Convention on October 27, 2022 at Taal Vista Hotel, Tagaytay City.

Bambanti Festival bested Misamis Oriental's Kuyamis Festival, first runner-up, and Tabuk City's Matagaoan Festival, which settled as second runner-up.

Isabela won its first Pearl Award in the same category in 2018, making it a "back-to-back winner" at the 2022 award ceremonies, which covered 2019, due to the halt imposed by the pandemic.

The ATOP-DOT Pearl Awards are given annually by the Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines and the Department of Tourism to recognize outstanding efforts made by people in the tourism industry, particularly local government units, in maintaining their respective cultural histories.

ALIW HALL OF FAMER

Isabela's Bambanti Festival was hailed "Hall of Famer for Best Festival Practices and Performance" at the 31st Annual Aliw Awards held at The Manila Hotel on December 13, 2018, being a three-time winner from 2015 to 2017. The Bambanti shared the Aliw Awards stage with Filipina Broadway actress-singer Lea Salonga and singer Erik Santos who were named "Entertainers of the Year."

The Aliw Awards is an award-giving body that recognizes live performances in the Philippines and abroad, aiming to elevate Philippine live entertainment standards through awards, workshops, and seminars.

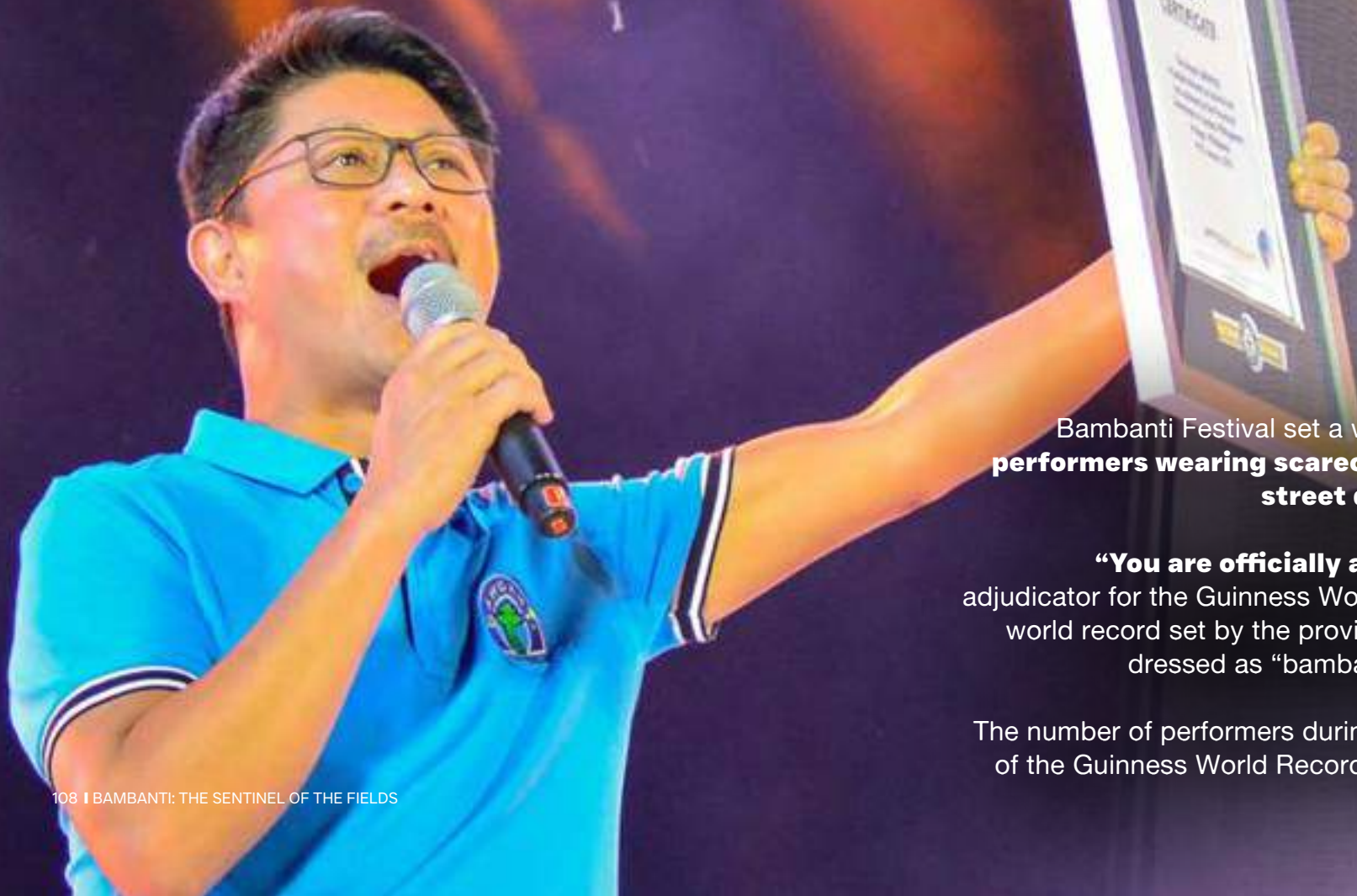


 ASSOCIATION OF TOURISM OFFICERS OF THE PHILIPPINES
PEARL AWARDS
27th ANNUAL BEST TOURISM FESTIVAL OF THE PHILIPPINES

"BAMBANTI FESTIVAL"
PROVINCE OF ISABELA
GRAND WINNER
Best Tourism Event (Festival)
As Thanksgiving for a Successful Harvest

Given this 27th day of October, 2023,
during the 27th ATOP National Convention
held in Tagaytay City, Province of Cavite.





Bambanti Festival set a world record for Guinness when **2,495 performers wearing scarecrow costumes did a simultaneous street dance number** in Iligan City, Isabela.

“You are officially amazing!” said Pauline Ann Sapinska, adjudicator for the Guinness World Records, after proclaiming the new world record set by the province for the largest gathering of people dressed as “bambanti” (the Ilocano term for scarecrows).

The number of performers during the event exceeded the prerequisite of the Guinness World Record of 250 performers who danced at the same time for five minutes or less.



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POPULAR FESTIVALS IN ISABELA

MAMMANGI FESTIVAL (CITY OF ILAGAN) MAY 25 TO 31

Corn production was one of the significant farming activities among the first ethnic inhabitants of the Corn Capital of the Philippines, the Ibanags, who were referred to as “Mammangi” or corn farmers. Mammangi Festival is celebrated every May to give tribute to the strength, industry, resiliency, and perseverance of typical Ilagueño farmers.

GAWAGAWAY-YAN FESTIVAL (CAUAYAN CITY) MARCH 31 TO APRIL 14

Gawagaway-yan Festival is observed every last week of March to the second week of April as a thanksgiving for the city’s progress and development. Gawagaway-yan, a Gaddang word meaning bountiful livelihood and merriment, traces the ancestry of Cauayenos from the ethnolinguistic group Gaddang and recognizes the diversity of the cultural groups residing in Cauayan City.

MENGAL FESTIVAL (ECHAGUE) OCTOBER 1 TO 31

Mengal Festival is a month-long celebration of Echague’s culture, history, cuisine, beauty, and hospitality. Held every October, the festival honors the courageous Mengals, a Yogad term used to describe the clever warriors who advanced a struggle for freedom against the Moros.

BAKA FESTIVAL (SAN PABLO) JANUARY 15

San Pablo, the northernmost town with vast cattle ranches, is known for its Baka Festival. Held every mid-

January, it aims to promote the local cattle industry in the province.

PAGAY FESTIVAL: BALITOK TI ALICIA (Alicia) SEPTEMBER 28

Pagay Festival aims to uphold the town’s cultural identity and heritage and to promote the municipality’s primary agricultural product called pagay, an Ilocano word for rice.

It demonstrates how the town’s industrious people put their hearts into the laborious, muscle-numbing work in the fields to produce the golden grains.

PANSI FESTIVAL (CABAGAN) JANUARY 23

Pansi Festival is an annual event in Cabagan, which falls on the 20th to 25th day of January as a tribute to the town’s thriving native noodle industry.

Pansi is an Ibanag term for pancit and is considered the most popular local noodle dish not only in Cagayan Valley but also in the entire Philippines.

BALATONG FESTIVAL (SAN MATEO) 1ST WEEK OF MAY

The Balatong Festival of San Mateo honors the mung bean, which has become an added source of income for the town in between rice harvests.

The first-ever annual celebration of the Balatong Festival started in 2008 when the town folks found the solution to their problem of reduced harvest yield due to chemical-intensive farming.

KANKANEN FESTIVAL (CABATUAN) NOVEMBER 4 TO 6

The municipality of Cabatuan is the home of the Kankanen Festival. The annual occasion showcases various native cakes and pastries made from sweet rice every November.

The festival aims to enrich the cultural heritage of Cabatuan, especially in the culinary preparation of native delicacies.

BATO ART FESTIVAL (LUNA) SEPTEMBER 28

Bato Art has become a symbol of Luna’s potential for the industry. Luna’s creative and artistic potential has grown significantly by utilizing the stones, allowing interested citizens to turn their passions into income-generating activities. Such initiatives further highlighted Luna’s appeal as an emerging town.

BALAMBAN FESTIVAL (SANTIAGO CITY) MAY 1 TO 4

Balamban Festival, previously called Balamban Butterfly Festival, is the founding anniversary of Santiago City every first week of May. Balamban, an Ilocano term for butterfly, is a cultural dance of lowland Christians that originated in Santiago City.

The dance depicts the graceful movement and fluttering of butterflies that throng Dariuk Hills’ scented gardens. The festival gears towards the proud display of the cultural identity of its people, fostering unity and thanksgiving for the valuable work of farmers and an abundant harvest.



BAMBANTI

THE SENTINEL OF THE FIELDS