



To Chew or Nut to Chew: An Ethnographic Study of the Socio –Cultural Role of Betel Nut (*Areca catechu*)

in the Life of the Ilocanos

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Should *YOU* chew Betel Nut?



Betel nut chewing is a social practice that articulates boundaries between groups of ethnicity. The choice to chew arises from the socially constructed nature of chewing appetites and show modern habits and traditional rituals of betel nut chewing cultures

Betel nut chewing is the social and symbolic life of the ilocanos. The habit of chewing is a practice of antiquity.



This study will contribute in the literature pool by focusing on the lived experiences of old folks including the young's with the intention of providing scientific knowledge to improved their knowledge about its effects to health aspects understanding of betel nut as defined, experienced and practiced in the community setting.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



The purpose of the study is to explore the social- cultural role of the betel nut in the life of the Ilocanos

Specifically, it aims to:

- 1).determine the reasons influencing the use of betel nut as a “gum” particularly among
 - a. The elderly folks
 - b. The younger generation
- 2).determine the extent of scientific knowledge of the users on the value and risks of using the betel nut as a “gum”
- 3). Capture the social and cultural imprints of the betel nut based on the observed practices, conversations and stories during the “mama” sessions.

Research Design

This study makes use of a qualitative research employing ethnographic approach

Sources of Data

The municipality of Cagayan Valley served as the place of the study.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Theme 1: Betel nut is defined as used for social and cultural enhancement.

Further, informant 08 shared that “sipud pay adda puot ko, bua ket kanayun/parte ti biagmin, dakami nga sanga-pamilya mangmangan kami bua. Pamedped ti bisin, pagpabara ti bagi nu tyempo lamiis. Dagitay apong mi ket usaren da pay nga atang, nayunanda ti arak, sigarilyo ken dadduma pay nga kaugalian da nga inayun.” Informant 09 added that “bua ket usaren mi nga agas ti bisin ken bannog, aphrodisiac, pagatang mi pay nu tyempo ti minatay.” Mamati kami nga dagitay espiritu nga madi makitkita ket daytoy ti kayat da nga maiyatang. This simply picture out the that family closeness has been highlighted when somebody shares the idea of partaking the betel nut and in is also deeply rooted in their religious undertaking. It really describes the anthropological perspective wherein culture is descriptive and inclusive. The presence of betel nut is a must in the ceremonial plate, as betel nuts are believed to increase prosperity. The nut is offered to guests, along with a betel leaf, as a mark of respect. As informant 10 and 12 shared that, “nu awan balon mi nga ited nanang wenno tatang mi idi, agitugot kami ti bua ta gatangen dagitay memestra kada memestro mi. Malagip mi pay nga adda pinna-contest pay ti kadakkelan nga maitugot na nga bua.”

The three themes main themes that emerged from the analysis were:

► Theme 1: Betel nut is defined as used for social and cultural enhancement.

Theme 2: Betel nut is defined as means for economic alternatives within the boundaries of survival

Theme 3: Betel nut is defined as factor in health related problems and medicinal approach

Theme 2: Betel nut is defined as means for economic alternatives within the boundaries of survival

Informant 01: Nabayagak agus usar / mangmangan ti bua'n. isu ti past time ko nu awan ub ubraek. Kada malpas nak mangan, mangan nak ti bua. Naalisto a pagpapalpa, pagikkat ti umay/suya. Nu mabisin nak ta awan ti sabali nga makan, mangan nak ti bua. Uray nu ibagbaga da nga makapabangsit ti ngiwat ken makamantsa ti ngipen nangan nak latta ta isu ti mangpabara ti bagi aglalo nu tyempo ti lamiis." Further, informant 03 agreed and added that "aglaklako nak pay ti bua, adda umay agang angkat kanyak nga market vendor." Moreover, informant 06 noted that "dakami nga managpuyat, ag ngal-ngal kami to bua nga nalaukan pay ti gawed ken apog. Ta patyen mi nga isu ti mangpamurmuray kenjami ken mangriing ti mamaturog nga diwa mi."

Theme 3: Betel nut is defined as factor in health related problems and medicinal approach

The use of plants and plant products as medicines can be traced as far as the beginning of human civilization. From culture to the other, medical plants are very important in survival and battle for life.

Informant 02 admitted that “long time eater nak ti bua ta isu ti ipagarup ko nga nangpababa ti cholesterol ko. Diay kinasugpet na aglalo nu nayunam apog, gawed ken tabako. Naimas isu nga makay-ayo nga kanen. Nu tyempo ti lamiis, pabaraenna ti bagi.” this verbal note of the respondent is very much clear that betel nut has been considered as therapeutic agent wherein it is attached deeply to the culture.

EXTENT OF THE SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE OF THE USERS ON THE VALUE AND RISKS OF USING BETEL NUT AS A GUM.

It has also been reported that areca nut exerts a direct antimicrobial effect against oral bacteria. Although little known about the cariostatic properties of areca suggested that the betel stain, which coats the surface of the teeth may act as protective varnish.

Some conditions like active menstrual flow, abortions, impotence, are conditions that are potentially serious causes of chewing betel nut.

The healing properties found in this plant is due to virtues, traditional practices and experiences by the respondents.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, the sustainable properties for a long time resources should be highlighted. This is the reason why community folk that the culture behind every and health-related effects of herbal nut are not. This then will package the holistic understanding of the material and immaterial culture of the people. That the culture is the base and the foundation of every human development and can initiate pharmacological and phytochemical advancements. The flexibility to balance socio-economic resources and its status can also encourage holistic change and development. Thus, in order to attain fulfillment, there should always be changing and broad understanding of the things around or simply the order of things in the ecosystem. The ecology is always there, and it is then the responsibility of every human being to understand and reflect and discover the benefits of it.

● DISCUSSION ●

A value system is one of the important elements in Filipino culture (technology, ecology, economics, physiology, etc.). To understand the complexities and richness of the Filipino culture, it becomes necessary to essentially search and discover and interpret meaningfully these subcomponents which can furnish a relevant package and totality in the appreciation of Filipino behaviour.

Culture, therefore, becomes a framework, a paradigm of looking at reality. It serves as a norm or a basis of understanding, of judging a particular point of view. Modern culture tries to promote a more socio-economic process by enshrining the individual with autonomy, freedom and rationality. This brought about industrialization in the advent of science and technology as a result of human being's domination of culture. Man becomes the center and measure of culture. Because of his/her stable self-consciousness, he/she alone can lead individuals to the promise land of economic prosperity and scientific revolution.

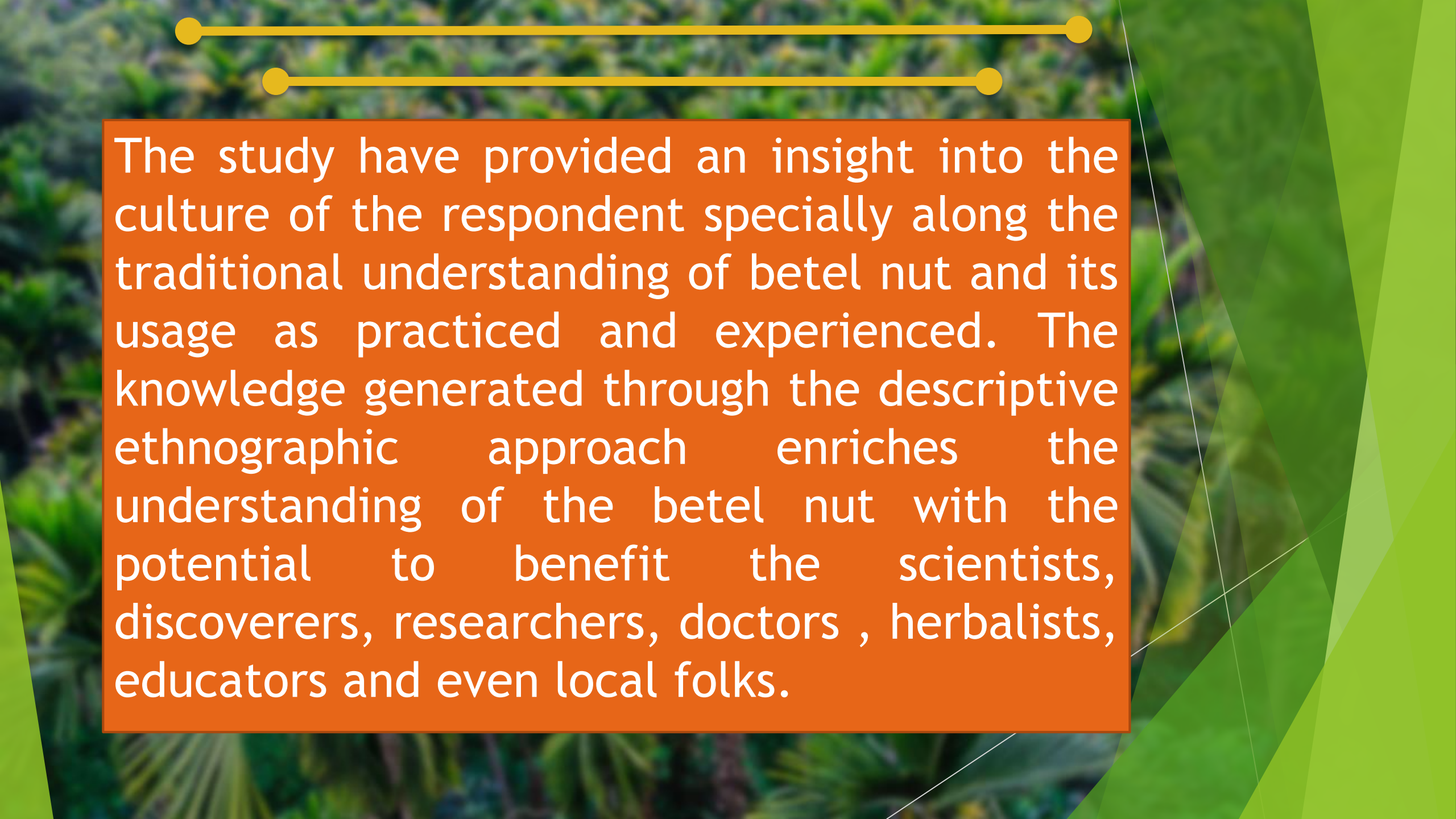
On the other hand, respondents in the present study admitted that betel nut is one of the very important plants that makes their culture rich and also helps them in their economic status. Betel nut is not only a plant that has many uses but is considered a part of their life. In the quest for cultural development, the respondents believed that the plant is a source of every individual's satisfaction.

The lived experiences of the respondents in this study explores the understanding of betel nuts and its relation to culture confirmed that betel nut is not only for physiological satisfaction but also used as medicine for various common diseases. The findings revealed that eating betel nut is not only used for a past time activity, but is deeply rooted in their culture wherein even in the early history of man is already part of their spiritual offerings. This claim of the respondents is similar to the experiences of the early tinguians in Abra in Cordillera that according to them, the spirits need betel nuts for their journey all throughout eternity.

On the other hand, betel nut is a great factor in the satisfaction of physiological scarcity. This was reflected in the claims of the informants wherein they narrated the story behind their traditional backgrounds.



The chewing of betel nut show the richness of their culture; in particular, their traditions, beliefs and their way of living. It presents a wide range of traditional and scientific investigations on the assumptions of truths and philosophical understanding in the nature of reality. The culture of the people is not only focused on survival and dialectical development and understanding of the phenomena but also covers the discovery of something that arouse their cognitive intuition yet noble activity. Further, it also extends not only along physiological satisfaction and economic development but also on health related concerns.



The study have provided an insight into the culture of the respondent specially along the traditional understanding of betel nut and its usage as practiced and experienced. The knowledge generated through the descriptive ethnographic approach enriches the understanding of the betel nut with the potential to benefit the scientists, discoverers, researchers, doctors , herbalists, educators and even local folks.

Recommendation

It is recommended to know also the

The results of the study can be a starting point for further research in a certain aspect of underlying mechanisms and biochemical compounds included in this beneficial traditional and cultural undertaking in other places effect so as to enrich the potential of the plant for the utilization in modern medicine. Further, it encourages research using other methodologies such as quantitative, chemical analysis or integrated researches.

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**THANK YOU VERY MUCH
FOR LISTENING**

