The significance of ethnoculinary foodways to indigenous peoples: a look at Pawpaw and the Ichavayan of Batanes, Philippines

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Abstract: This paper is about the traditional method of fish drying --- locally known as 'pawpaw' --- practiced among the Ivatan*s of Batanes in the northernmost part of the Philippines. Specifically, it examines both the functional and symbolic aspects of this ethnic foodway and elucidates its continued significance to the everyday life of the community.*

A Pang of Hunger

Consisting of ten islands with a total land area of 230 square kilometers and territorial waters spanning some 4,500 square kilometers (Mangahas, 1994) the islands and waters of Batanes comprise the northern most province and territory of the Philippines. Even amongst Filipinos, it remains a distant and even foreign place[1]. Two rather extreme images make-up the general picture in the minds of the average Juana and Juan dela Cruz who are not from there: first, it is best known to be constantly at the mercy of typhoons, disappearing during weather report animations underneath swirling clouds; second, especially in recent years --- thanks to tourist testimonies on blogs and social media networks as well as print and local television features about the province --- it is seen (sometimes bordering on the sensationalized and exoticized) as a "best kept secret" and a must-go travel destination in the Philippines both for backpackers and holiday-makers, boasting of pristine waters, picture-perfect hills, impressive cliffs, serene boulder beaches and postcard worthy stone houses. Though these images are founded --- geographically Batanes is one of the most typhoon-hit areas in the country while on the other hand, the area itself is (in my opinion at the very least) truly breathtaking --- there is more to this province than these two generalizations make out.

[1] In actuality, the same can be said about many areas in the country; whether due to the lack of opportunity or motivation to visit such places or to the difficulty of accessing a particular area, many places in the Philippines are known only as vague anecdotes to those who are not from there.

Beyond these simple images that tickle the fancy of non-academics, the islands have much to offer to scholars from various fields of the social sciences, owing much to the fact that Batanes has been and still is home to the Ivatan, the indigenous ethno-linguistic group who comprise majority of the population of the province. It is these people, in the intricacies of their history, their language, their culture and life-ways, both past and present, that one would be able to find an astounding wealth of knowledge and narratives. I believe that it is in these matters that the real "best kept secrets" Batanes has to offer can be found ---ones that allow us to enrich the collection of human knowledge and enliven intellectual discourse. Without a doubt, I am not alone in my sentiments; scholars have written about Batanes and the Ivatan in the areas of linguistics (Hidalgo, 1998; Larson, 1974; Maree, 2012; Reid, 1966; Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1957, 1958;), archaeology (Baretto, Mijares & Santiago, 2003; Campos, 2013; Bellwood, & Dizon, 2005; Dizon & Mijares, 1999; Dizon and Santiago, 2012; Faylona, 2003; Hung et al., 2007; Mijares & Jago-on, 2001; Paz, 1999; Szabo et al, 2003; Solheim, 1961), history (Hidalgo, 1996; Hornedo, n.d.) and ethnography (Blolong, 1996; Hornedo, 1977, 2000; Mangahas, 1993, 1996). However, despite a wealth of studies already available, there are still gaps in information or at the very least a need for a deeper understanding of the on-goings in the area. It remains that there are questions that need answering as well as questions that need asking thus, Batanes is undoubtedly still a fertile area for research.

This is where this paper enters the picture as it hopes to tackle one of the identifiable gaps in the literature --- specifically an exploration into Batanes cuisine and Ivatan foodways. My decision to look at the province's food in particular as an area of inquiry may be initially met with skepticism or be even quickly dismissed as a futile, even pointless endeavor by the uninformed or misinformed outsider. I myself was once in the same frame in the beginning --- trapped in a notion of extremes; like others, I asked myself: what could there be in an area consistently bombarded by storms but meager fare, edible at best, consumed solely for the purpose of survival in such a harsh environment? I soon realized that such assumptions of gastronomic stagnation and monotony coupled with the idea of the food in Batanes playing a single utilitarian function are nothing but huge misconceptions --- ones that are shattered quite completely as the first morsel of *ichan*[2] harvested from its lands and waters touches the tongue.

[2] An Ivatan term for viand or side dish such as fish, vegetables, meat, etc.

The cuisine and foodways of the Ivatan are more colorful and more vivid than most outsiders know or acknowledge. Their menu is one of dynamism and variety conducted by the tempo of the tides and times; for although daily fare is essentially basic (usually rice accompanied with a single *ichan*), a symphony of tastes are produced as their limited ingredients (the bounty of the sea and earth) and their culinary techniques, (always moving back and forth in the categories of the raw, the boiled, the roasted and more recently, the sautéed and fried) come together. The way they cook and the way they eat reverberate not with a drone of inescapability but with the melody of accomplishment and enjoyment. All in all, it is one of outstanding freshness and natural flavors, bursting forth and lingering not only on the palate but in memory leaving much room for it to be further chewed upon and digested.

Conventional wisdom says that "one should not bite of more than one can chew". I decided to narrow down my inquiry to what the Ivatans in their language[3] call *pawpaw*. By definition, *pawpaw* is an Ivatan term which refers to "salted, smoked, or sun-dried fish, meat, or octopus" (Maree, 2012) yet is used commonly by the locals to refer to both the process and end product of preserving seafood, usually fish, through salting and drying. On the surface, one may see it as just another regional variation of dried fish, similar in process and outcome --- save for the minor idiosyncrasies regional variants often posses --- that occurs all over the archipelago. However, in a conversation[4] I had with my field advisor prior to departing for fieldwork coupled with preliminary observations during the first couple of days of my stay, I believed that it could not have been as simple as that. During the start of my field visit, *pawpaw* would almost always pop up whenever conversations and chats with the locals would touch upon their foodways and what they usually eat. Those that I spoke to then would say that it is one of their traditional foodstuffs which they continue to make and consume up to this day --- "*gawaiin talaga namin iyan dito…specialty ng Batanes* (that [*pawpaw*] is something we really do here…it is a specialty of Batanes)," as explained by a fish stall vendor in Basco[5]. Furthermore, the constant presence and commonality of *pawpaw* in the area --- displayed in every storefront in Basco that sold

[3] Ivatan is also the name used to refer to their language with which several dialects exist. Aside from Ivatan, Filipino is also widely used (usually when dealing with those who cannot speak Ivatan) and at times, English.
[4] My field advisor Professor Edwin Valientes, who also happened to be an Ivatan hailing from Ivana, mentioned that the copious amounts of seafood dried during the summer serve as their "supply" so to speak during the periods of the year when fishing was not possible (personal communication, January 2013).
[5] The capital city of Batanes found on Batan Island. Of all the places in Batanes, Basco is said to relatively be the "most urbanized".

seafood, hanging visibly outside quite a number of the houses, and served often as part of our own meals --- was also clearly noticeable early on. The thought of a local traditional foodway that is still widely practiced within the context of Batanes piqued my curiosity and led me to believe that the significance of *pawpaw*, as far as Ivatan culture and everyday life is concerned, would be different from the plethora dried seafood that appear in other parts of the country.

Why do the Ivatan continue to preserve seafood in this manner? How do the present-day Ivatan see and treat this traditional foodway and what does it mean to them? What implications does the increased amount of connection to the rest of the country and the world (mostly in the form of tourism and information) have for this foodway? These are just some of the questions I had in mind as I sought to investigate what the significance[6] of *pawpaw* could possibly be --- specifically, I wanted to find out and unravel **where and how the Ivatans situate *pawpaw* in relation to the other aspects of their culture and daily life and how this contributes to its continued practice**. Accordingly I sought to: (a) provide an ethnographic account of *pawpaw*; (b) determine the contexts and circumstances of their daily life related to the *pawpaw* complex[7] and how it is situated in them; and finally, (c) understand the significance *pawpaw* holds as it continues to exist in their present realities.

The Search for Similar Flavors

Over the years, studies with food at center stage have gained and continue to gain momentum within various disciplines. In fact, from being marginalized and deemed as an inconsequential matter, it has since then become a mainstay in the generation of both knowledge and new perspectives deployed in an array of discourses. Indeed with flourishing journal publications regarding the field of food studies such as Gastronomica, Journal for the Study of Food and Society, and Food and Foodways to name a few, as well as the amount of scholarly work produced each year from all over the world, one can clearly see that the appetite for understanding such an intrinsic aspect of our existence is voracious (Counihan and Van Esterik,

[6]That is of course if this "significance" is not just another case of an anthropologist revelling in his own musings and seeing glimmers of what was never there in the first place.

[7] From this point onward, "pawpaw complex" shall encompass the following: seafood preserved in a particular way, the process of preservation itself, storage, consumption and treatment of the aforementioned item.

2008). Arguably, food is one of, if not the first of our primary needs as humans; it is in essence a biological necessity as the in-take of food provides us with energy and nutrients necessary for our basic functions and continued survival. Outside of this, or rather in tandem with it, food, the desire to eat (or not to eat) and the act of eating (or not eating) are entwined in the webs of the circumstantial and motivational. It contributes towards the attainment of feelings and senses of fulfillment, pleasure, comfort, disgust and loathing among others (all of course in varying degrees); they are triggers of a whole spectrum of emotions --- positive and negative --- and are attached to both individual and collective memory and consciousness. Furthermore, food is also a vehicle for a myriad of meanings; its interpretations, value, even how an individual or a community determines what falls under the category of "food" in the first place, are dependent on particular contexts and by those who give and derive sense from it. Anthropologists too have recognized the importance of food and of what may be gained from scrutinizing it. A review by Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois (2002) provides us with a glimpse of the extensive literature in existence regarding this matter; they show that food has numerous aspects and facets approachable from several paradigms, which in their own right are interesting, relevant, and insightful yet also contribute to the refinement of anthropological theory, method and ultimately enhance the discourse and debate within and outside the discipline.

As a result, a myriad of frameworks have thus sprung up. Two approaches, often used in the anthropological study and analysis of food are the paradigms of cultural materialism and symbolic theory, as advanced by some introductory texts in anthropological theory as being on opposing ends. For example, building on Julian Steward's cultural ecology (2008), Marvin Harris, one of the main proponents of the cultural materialism paradigm, proposes that "that human social life is a response to the practical problems of earthly existence" (1979) wherein cultural facets and activities such as foodways are essentially adaptations to their surroundings which therefore explains the principal reason why something is done the way they are done. Although he does not discount the possibility that food may have symbolic meanings, in the case of his studies on the cows of India (2008a) and the taboo on pigs by Jews and Moslems (2008b), he still argues that what takes precedence and determines the eating habits of a community are the practical aspects that respond to their economic and environmental circumstances. On the other hand, the approach of symbolic theory is rather broad but may be said to be grounded loosely on Saussure's model of signs wherein food is treated as the signifier while it's meanings

the signified. This paradigm includes views from both structuralists such as Claude Levi-Strauss who in presenting the so-called "Culinary Triangle" writes that food transforms both physically and in meaning as it moves from one defined category to another (in Counihan & Van Esterik, 2008) and Roland Barthes who asserts food and foodways as a system of communication which present entire social environments and realities (in Counihan & Van Esterik, 2008) as well as from interpretavists like Mary Douglas who operationalizes food as a code whose messages appear in the social events that are expressed allowing us to "decipher a meal" (1972).

In the Philippines, material on food is also relatively plentiful, majority of which is tailor-made for the consumption of the general public as well as those with more than just a passing fancy: these include numerous cookbooks, food magazines, foodie and restaurant guides, newspaper features and online on blogs and social media networks. The more academic material (of which quite a number are suited as well for the general reader) also cover a broad range of topics from nutrition and hunger (Abad-Santos, Edillon, Piza, de los Reyes & Diokno, 2008; Dalisay, 2003; Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2006), studies and developments in the field of agricultural and fisheries (Espino & Atienza, 2001; Yap, 1999), studies focused on description and significance of particular food or foodway, regional studies on food, food history (Alegre, 1992; Cordero-Fernando, 1992; Panlilo & Sta. Maria ed., 2005) and even ethnographies (Ewing, 1963; Lawless, 2008; Magat, 2002; Wallace, 1983). Doreen Fernandez however deserves special mention; within the domain of Filipino food studies, her contributions are invaluable. Her works cover many areas and situations, all of which show the value of food not only as an object to be consumed but as something culturally produced and made significant (Fernandez, 1994, 2000; Fernandez and Alegre, 1988, 1991). Food for her is a both a looking glass and a mirror with which the Filipino can see oneself as well as one's reality; she brought into the mainstream food as a cultural item which is shaped and shapes the minds and identity of Filipinos

Amidst this abundance however, information regarding the culinary ways of Batanes, let alone *pawpaw*, is scarce and hard to come by. Fenix's short anecdotal essay (2005) recounts the foods she had eaten during her visit to the Ivatan Center and to Batanes, whetting the palate with a descriptive account of the tastes and ingredients of the dishes as well as their preparations while noting the incorporation of some dishes from outside Batanes yet lacks any discussion on

why such foodways exists or what they mean to the Ivatan. On the other hand, ethno-histories such as those by Hidalgo (1996) and Hornedo (2000) --- in the span of a few pages --- touch on the items of food with which the people of Batanes subsist on. They include partial description on when and how they are grown or obtained establishing the Ivatan as fisher-farmers, the two activities being intimately related in the context of traditional Ivatan subsistence strategies. *Pawpaw* is mentioned briefly in both these works: Hidalgo writes that it was "technology developed to preserve their catch" and that these were dried during *rayuun*[8] on beaches while Hornedo says something similar, adding that it is the excess of their catch that is turned into *pawpaw* and that "the surplus of these fish dried in the sun and wind are kept for *amyan*[9] when fishing is impossible". Though it was not thoroughly expounded, that the practice of preserving fish through drying among the Ivatan is one that has deep historical and cultural roots was an underlying assertion in both these entries. With regards to process and purpose, I believe a clue can be found in Professor Maria Mangahas' masteral thesis on *Mataw* fishing (1993) and Blolong's article on Ivatan cultural adaptations to typhoons. In a section entitled "Winter Foods", she discusses the transformation of a whole *arayu* or dolphin fish into dried fillets which is considered as economically valuable; she writes:

> Dried fillets of *arayu* is a very traditional food item in Ivatan life. They are kept hanging or stacked in the storage area over the hearth (paya') where preserved by the smoke, they comprise a reserve food supply. Mahatao residents tell of how their stored food—consisting of dried *arayu* and *luñis* or fired pork immersed in its own lard to preserve it—were carefully hoarded by their elders because they had to last for the cold winter months when typhoons came…the winter season is a time of few food options.
>
> (Mangahas, 1993)

Blolong operates along the same line, contextualizing dried *arayu* as one of the culturally specific coping mechanisms the Ivatan have and make use of in the face of typhoons; he writes:

> The *dorado* and *diban* caught after the ceremony by fishing crews composed of closely related males are treated, like *uvi*, as a symbol of the life and continuity of the Ivatan people and so are never sold. They are

[8] The Ivatan term for the "summer" season; discussed in further detail in a succeeding section.
[9] The Ivatan term for the "winter" season; discussed in further detail in a succeeding section.

preserved as food for typhoon months by salting, drying in the sun, and then hanging in the kitchen to be smoked for longer preservation.

Blolong (1996)

Unfortunately, both works focus specifically on *arayu*; though they expound in much detail on the description, contexts and interpretations of this particular fish there is no mention of how these dried fillets figure in with other forms of dried seafood, or rather is there no direct reference to the concept or category of *pawpaw* in the first place.

As many a chef would say as they taste an incomplete dish, "there's something missing." At least with the literature available, it seems that the *pawpaw* complex is truly something that has yet to be sufficiently explored thus making the study even more compelling to pursue.

A Recipe to begin With

Data for this study was gathered during the 2013 field season of the [10]Anthropology Field School from April 17, 2013 to May 13, 2013. The study was conducted mainly in Chavayan on the island of Sabtang and among the Ivatan of the area or the Ichavayan[11]. It is the south eastern most *baranggay*[12], demarcated under the category of "rural" some 8.02 kilometers away from Centro, the primary access point (via ferry from Ivana) and port of the island (Sabtang Municipal Government, 2010). At the time of my field work in the summer of 2013[13], there were 36 households where each household was generally engaged in two or more of the following activities to provide for their livelihood: fishing, farming, animal rearing, government/public employment, and private employment.

[10] The Anthropology Field School is a fieldwork course conducted annually by the Department of Anthropology, University of the Philippines, Dilaman as part of its undergraduate curriculum; Batanes was the field site chosen for the 2013 season.
[11] The "I" which appears in "Ivatan" is a derivational affix in their language which generally means "people of…" when translated into English; thus "Ivatan" may actually be read as "people of Vatan" (in reference to the island of Batan). This is used by the locals at times to refer to which part of Batanes they hail from i.e., those from Chavayan would at times refer to themselves as "Ichavayan".
[12] A baranggay is a geo-political subdivision common throughout the Philippines.
[13] Summer in the Philippines generally begins towards the end of March until the end of May.

Several techniques were used to gather data in order to fully maximize the opportunity of immersing in the community. First, an active and constant recording of field notes and observations and the keeping of a field journal was done throughout the fieldwork proper. Structured interviews were conducted with 11 key informants composed of 8 fishermen and 3 women; these informants were referred to us by the *baranggay* captain of Chavayan as well as by several community members (which include the key informants themselves). Informal interviews intertwined in the daily interactions and conversations with the people of Chavayan --- from time to time, over a couple of drinks[14] and copious amounts of *pulutan*[15] --- served to verify and enrich the information obtained from the former technique. Two qualitative surveys with relatively small sample sizes determined through convenience sampling were also conducted for supplementary purposes: the first looked into the design and common features of their kitchens and the second regarding possible patterns of fishing activity and *pawpaw* consumption during both *rayuun* and *amyan*.

To a certain degree, this research took an inductive approach, following loosely the research design espoused by Grounded Theory (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Walker & Myrick, 2006). As a framework, it is a particular method wherein an empirical set of data is analyzed in order to come up with a "theory grounded in data" which seeks to explain distinct cases (as opposed to grand theories). Grounded Theory has many variations (for a better discussion see Walker & Myrick, 2006) yet implicitly underlying majority them is the centrality of the perspective of the respondent --- not that everything the informant says is taken as the truth, but it is this emic understanding of themselves that is pieced together and scrutinized by the anthropologist.

The data used in this study --- perceptions and descriptions of *pawpaw*, the intricacies of the process of making it, patterns of cooking, storage and consumption as well as related contexts--- was coded and arranged based on the commonalities and patterns which arose. These were then subjected to a two-step analysis: the first step analyzed the visible relationships the codes had with the goal of fleshing-out the significance *pawpaw* had in the contexts it found

[14] It was during these drinking sessions with the locals which, sometimes included one or two of our key informants as well, that we were able to hear some of the more vivid accounts they had to share. It seems that, In the right situations at least, alcohol can become one of ethnographer's best companions.

[15] A term used in several areas in the Philippines to refer generally to food consumed in accompaniment with the drinking of alcohol (see Alegre, 1992).

itself in while the second step takes the previous analysis and frames the emerging phenomenon as possible reasons for the continuity of this traditional practice in the different spheres of people's lives. These analyses of course were also informed by existing paradigms which look at food --- namely those from the cultural materialists and the symbolic theorists[16]. As this was preliminary study on *pawpaw,* rather than a theory, it was used to generate a conclusion or at the very least, a hypothesis to the inquiry posited at the beginning of this paper.

The First Bite

A Fisherman at Twilight

On the corner of D. Lima Street and Sta. Rosa Street I bumped into Noli Gabilo, a fisherman and one of my key informants as he was in the middle of preparing the evening's supper, fish *linaneg*[17] with salt and ginger. Seated with him on low stools were Auntie[18] Felie, an elderly man, in his late 60's, and another woman whom I only knew by face. Uncle Noli invited me over to join them and share a few rounds of gin; seeing as it was as good a time as any, I obliged. As I pulled up a stool, he introduces me to the elderly man by the wall, Jose Habana one of the older fishermen in Chavayan; I had come at the right time Uncle Noli told me as Uncle Jose was just about to prepare the *dibang*[19] to become *pawpaw*. I asked Uncle Jose if it was alright to watch him at work and to which he replied with a silent nod. About eighteen *dibang* remained on the table; the catch that day had been average, not too much, not too little he said as he smiled and shook his head.

He brings out a knife with single-edged blade and a rounded belly that tapered down towards the tip; this was his *ngaru*[20]. Taking a medium sized fish he begins scraping off the scales with the edge of his *ngaru.* De-scaled, he places the fish on a small *vagatu*[21] and first

[16] In this way, I am able to reconcile the two for I believe that both by themselves only provide "half the story"; that when taken together, we are able to serve a complete platter.
[17] An Ivatan verb which means "to be boiled"
[18] "Auntie" and "Uncle" is appended by younger individuals to the names of older individuals in present-day Chavayan as a way of showing respect and not just as a means of expressing kinship ties.
[19] The Ivatan term for flying fish .
[20] A knife of several subtly varying forms and sizes yet are all used specifically and only for fish.
[21] The Ivatan term for a wooden chopping block.

removes the head, just after its larger lateral fins, the ones that spread out as it soars out from the water, then with a quick chop, the tail. What came next was a series of slices, each slice done with utmost care and precision, the kind only someone with years of experience is capable of. The first cut divides the fish into two still-joined parts, one separated from the bone the other still attached. First he orients the dorsal side of the fish towards his body and cuts the fish open on this side following the fish's vertebra careful not to slice through the fish's ventral end; its pale, pink flesh was now teasingly exposed, gleaming with freshness. He turns the tail-end of the fish towards him and makes an incision on the side without the bone, running parallel to the spine, again careful not to slice all the way through the fish. He transfers his attention to the other part and cuts through, the dorsal bones connected to the spine beginning from the head going to the tail; he runs his knife under the spine in the cut he had just done, making another third part. He makes a similar incision in that part and with that, we arrive at the final fillet: 3 joined sections, the top part still attached to the spine while the middle and bottom portions separated. With the filleting done, he begins to remove the bits that flies find as attractive places to lay their eggs; he scrapes of the innards of the fish and using the tip of his *ngaru*, removes the main blood vessel from the spine then washes it thoroughly in water to remove as much of the blood as possible. He pokes a hole in the top part and threads trough it a piece of string from a sack then places his *ngaru* on the table. This he says, is what the 17 other *dibang* will look like. The next steps, which he no longer demonstrates, is the application of salt on the fillets after which they are hung on a *ralawan*[22], and left to dry in the wind and the sun. When these are dry enough, he told me he would bring them inside and hang them in their *kusina*[23] where they will be further dried and preserved, flavored even, by the smoke of their *rapuyan*[24]. As *rayuun* comes to a close, he tells me that he would place all the *pawpaw* he had accumulated throughout the fishing season in tin or plastic biscuit cans, "*mga itatabi para sa amyan* (something set aside for winter)*."*

It was his turn for a shot; he brings a glass filled with gin and water to his lips and downs it in one gulp. He hands me the fillet he just made and lets me admire his handiwork; his face was expressionless yet I could feel him beaming with pride. In every motion he went through, not a single movement was wasted; doing what he did was, at least to my eyes, second nature to

[22] The Ivatan term for wooden or bamboo poles where the processed pieces of pawpaw are hung to dry.
[23] The Ivatan term for kitchen.
[24] The Ivatan word for a two-point or three-point fire place still used by many households in cooking their daily meals; it is usually wood-fires that are tended here.

him and needless to say I was in awe the whole time. He was a man formed and forged by the waves and the wind; the fillet that dangled before my eyes was his masterpiece.

Pawpaw as an Item of Food

It must be understood at the very beginning that *pawpaw* does not pertain to a single, specific item of food but rather is used broadly by the Ivatan for the variety of seafood preserved through a process --- known by the same name[25] --- of salting, drying and smoking. It is in attaining this characteristic, of being preserved through a particular method that a creature of the sea becomes and is recognized as *pawpaw*. At exactly which point in the making process does this recognition take place is not clearly or definitively marked but rather is dependent on when the one making it identifies an item of seafood as successfully preserved (which is a highly subjective matter). They simplify this mental acrobatics when speaking to or dealing with *Ipulas*[26], however by equating *pawpaw* (at any stage) to "*daing"* or "*isdang tuyo*" in Tagalog and "preserved" or "dried fish" in English.

The first time I came face to face with *pawpaw* also happened to be the very first meal I had in Batanes. Cooked by the sister of our field advisor for breakfast, it took the form of unassuming fillet of dried *dibang*, still glistening from the shallow oil it was fried in, served with steaming white rice and a salad of chopped tomatoes, and minced garlic and ginger. As I strolled by the storefronts of Abad Street in Basco[27], I saw more and more of it. Eventually, it became quite clear as I spent my days following the beat of Chavayan, savouring every meal and interaction I had with the people there, that *pawpaw* is indeed a feast for the senses.

Uncooked, they come in assortment of shapes and sizes dictated by what it was when it was still swimming in the waters: fish like that of *dibang* are parted from their head and tail and filleted; small fish such as *ched*[28], are sliced in such a way that its original figure is still visible;

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[25] In the realm of Philippine cookery, it is not strange that the item of food as well as the process involved in creating it would share the same name (See Fernandez and Alegre, 1988). Pawpaw, as it is used by the Ichavayan (and by Ivatans in general), is on the same plate, invoking both the fare and the method by which it comes to be made.

[26] A term used by the Ivatans to refer to a non-Ivatan.

[27] A street in the provincial capital located on the island of Batan where majority of stores selling everything from produce to dry goods are to be found.

[28] The Ivatan name for a small striped fish caught at the edge of the rocky area where the waves crash ("kalawangan" in Ivatan).

large *uyu*[29] is cut into smaller pieces or strips, easily mistaken for pork or beef at first glance; *kuyta*[30] is stretched and flattened out, the outcome resembling a cartoon character after an unfortunate mishap with a steam roller. Whatever form they take however, they all share the tell-tale signs of having much of their moisture removed: visually, dried-up vestiges of their former selves; their color muted shades of brown and black with patches of white and grey soot from smoking. They are generally rough and slightly oily to the touch; thicker, meatier pieces are tough much like jerky while thinner kinds tend to snap like brittle. They have a strong and pungent aroma that some may find disagreeable but is overall not overwhelming; it is of a natural, innate fishiness and is far from the odor of something old or on the way of rotting.

Cooked, another character they posses is revealed. The vast majority of *pawpaw* lend themselves well to the repertoire of culinary techniques the Ivatan have at their disposal; depending on how they are handled, they can become moist and succulent, crisp and crunchy, and practically anything in between. Their flavor is chiefly the unadulterated essence of the sea creature, not bastardized, but gently coaxed and heightened by the salty and smoky tones imparted by the preservation process. Served alone, they match well with the neutral character of steamed white rice; the Ichavayan tell me that a serving of *pawpaw* is able to carry an entire meal with a taste reminiscent of the sea and the breeze. In combination with other ingredients, *pawpaw* melds well with sour tones such as vinegar or tomatoes and does wonders, I am told, when cooked with the subtler tasting vegetables. All in all, it always seems to bring to the fold a gastronomic experience that is simple yet oh so very intricate.

The Ichavayan tell me that *pawpaw* are not made equal; like with any item of food there are the "bad" ones, "good" ones, and "really good" ones. As a preserved food, the standards by which they distinguish the quality of *pawpaw* are taste and shelf-life. Taste, according to them, is a subjective matter but they maintain that a good piece of *pawpaw* achieves a balance between the innate flavor of the seafood and the salty-smoky tones gained from the preservation process. Shelf-life on the other hand refers how long a piece of *pawpaw* remains edible and how well it is able to retain its flavor. Talking with various fishermen of Chavayan, it seems that the shelf life of *pawpaw* can be as short as six months to a little over a year and a half

[29] The Ivatan term for shark.
[30] The Ivatan term for octopus.

(though one of my informants proudly claimed that his remains edible for a lifetime). Generally speaking the longer a piece of *pawpaw* remains edible whilst retaining its flavour --- especially the natural flavour of the seafood --- the better its quality is. Though of course the grade of the seafood is a factor in determining the excellence of any *pawpaw*, quality seems to hinge more on (and is reflective of) the skill of the one making it. Thus it is thought that one with no skill or knack of making *pawpaw* would, even with the best seafood, only be able to make *pawpaw* of poor quality while on the flipside, those who are very skilful have the capability to turn even mediocre seafood into delectable pieces of *pawpaw*.

The *Pawpaw* Process

The process of making *pawpaw* is an activity that always accompanies their recognized fishing season which takes place during *rayuun.* Over the course of this period a stock of *pawpaw* is actively and steadily built; by the time the season ends it is stored away, much like other preserved foods, for future use.

Now how the knowledge and techniques involved in this particular method of preservation came about, as far as the Ichavayan (or the Ivatan for that matter) is concerned, remain unknown to me. Among the Ivatan in actuality, many other materials are subjected to a process of drying yet is marked with the term *kulay*[31] but *pawpaw* seems to stand on its own as a specific procedure for drying and preserving seafood. In both the collective community consciousness of the Ichavayan and their individual memories (the older members of the community included), the practice has been done, and is done in this particular way as far as they can recall and has been around "*noong panahon pa ng mga ninuno namin* (since the time of our [the Ichavayan's] ancestors)". My informants say that making *pawpaw*, at least at present, may be done by anyone as long as they are familiar with the process.

The entire process begins with a choice on what exactly to make into *pawpaw*. Clueless and naïve landlubbers with no sea-legs to speak of (such as myself) would guess that almost all seafood that are caught and eaten fresh can be turned into *pawpaw* --- this is not the case. The Ichavayan are selective with what they turn into *pawpaw;* summarizing what my informants

[31] An Ivatan verb which means "to dry"; examples of such materials include plant fibers used as for roofing and for the vakul (an indigenous head gear) as well as other foodstuff such corn, garlic and vunos (dried stalks of Gabi)

have told me, they make use of three criteria, all of which are of equal importance. What can be said to be the first consideration is the availability of seafood to be turned into *pawpaw*. When fishermen bring in their catch and divide it, the portion meant to be turned into *pawpaw*, usually the last portion to be set aside, is what they perceive to be the surplus of sorts or that which they will not sell or consume in the next few days; when no such is perceived, this portion is not made at all. The second consideration lies in the flesh of the seafood and how suitable it is to be dried in the first place; it must be sturdy enough, in that it will not disintegrate or become mushy mess at any point of the process. Third is flavour and palatability; of course, there is no point in going through all the effort for something that they don't even want to eat. According to them, not all seafood retain their flavor or are *masdup*[32], when they are dried while some take on bothersome qualities such as becoming too tough or causing an itchy sensation in the lips and mouth being thus not suitable to be turned into *pawpaw*. The thought process is not as tedious or as systematic in actual practice. It is something they breeze through as it is something that comes naturally to them, a part of the system of understanding they have been immersed in. With the exception of deciding if there is enough to turn into *pawpaw*, the other two criteria are determined not so much in a decision making process than it is a turning back to long standing and long held folk knowledge.

Getting into the actual handling of the foodstuff, what I picked up from the many conversations (and shots of alcohol) I had with some of the fishermen of Chavayan, one can sum up the *pawpaw* making process as such: an item of seafood is cleaned and readied to undergo the preservation procedure; once done a preservative, usually salt is applied then it is left out to dry and brought in and stored when finished. Prepping, application of a preservative ingredient and drying are the core procedures of the *pawpaw* making process. However, much like many things in cooking, there is no one, exact, infallible way of making *pawpaw*, only a fundamental series of steps, motions and considerations that never disappear, that are fine-tuned and carried out incorporating the *diskarte,* the personal style of the one preparing it.

Owing to the large variety of seafood amiable to the process, quite a number of variations occur in how an item of seafood is prepared for the application of the preservative ingredient and the drying stage that include cutting, trimming, filleting and cleaning (the resulting forms I've

[32]An Ivatan adjective which means "delicious" or "tastes good".

illustrated partially in the previous section). Any variation would however take into account two major considerations: first it should be dealt with in such a way that as much of the blood, guts and nasty bits that flies love laying their eggs in, are removed; second, the final fillet must be thick enough that there is still "something you can chew on" but should also be thin enough to be able dry quickly and efficiently.

Salt is the essential preservative ingredient in making *pawpaw*; without salt, it cannot become *pawpaw*. The salt is said to prevent the fish from going bad before it manages to dry completely as well as being a sort of repellent for flies and other insects. Those I spoke to say that one must always ensure that the salt is properly absorbed by the piece of seafood or else they end up wasting the rest of their effort on something already rotten and inedible. There are several camps with regards to how salt is applied each saying theirs is the best way --- some would rub and massage salt over newly rinsed pieces while others place salt first in a container and coat the pieces by dipping it, one side followed by the other; yet another would declare that soaking the pieces in salt overnight is the way to go. Other additives can also be thrown into the mix; some of my informants these impart a sort of extra character to their *pawpaw*. The most common addition we were told is *silam*[33], preferably the native variety made from sugar cane though white vinegar would also suffice; mixed with the salt then rubbed onto the item of seafood or the item itself dipped into the mixture, the *silam* is said to also repel flies aside from adding a secondary flavour. Pepper and garlic make for an "extra special" *pawpaw* but is only done so if time and ingredients permit. For the most part, purists reign supreme so to speak and majority of *pawpaw* remain preserved with only salt.

Once salted, the pieces of seafood are hung outside their houses on a *ralawan* to dry, soaking in the sun and the breeze anywhere from a day to as long as a week. The drying stage of the process also presents several variations in technique. The length of time they leave it out is majorly dependent on the weather conditions during the period of drying (i.e. the intensity of the sun and the strength of the wind). Leaving it out longer they say ensures better preservation resulting in a longer shelf-life but has a downside of the meat becoming tougher than they fancy. Those who make *pawpaw* would always try to strike a balance between the two, this they remark being much a matter of personal preference. On the *ralawan*, each fillet is usually hung and

[33] The Ivatan term for vinegar.

strung individually, either with plant fibers (such as those from abaca or a particular kind of banana tree) or materials which wash up on the shore (such as sacks and straw). In instances when there are a lot to be dried, usually fillets or cuts of shark, some fishermen opt to skewer them first on smaller, thinner sticks made of bamboo or wood. Each skewer accommodates as many pieces as possible, spaced so that the pieces do not stick to one another; these skewers are then the ones tied and hung on the *ralawan* maximizing the space a single pole has room for. Some fishermen told me that, from time to time, they also make use of "drying aids", small additions or modifications to the seafood which they claim, helps quicken the drying process. Two common methods they employ are the following: the first is the addition of two incisions which result in two openings which allow the wind to pass through it; and the second is the incorporation of pieces of bamboo or wooden sticks on the piece of seafood itself in order to make it *manikal*[34] thus expanding the surface area exposed to drying elements (the wind and the sun) and allowing for an even drying while ensuring that it does not clump together or collapse on itself as it dries. A few of those I spoke to also remarked that these additions, especially the latter, contribute to the aesthetics *pawpaw* has since one would usually end up with an even piece of seafood that doesn't bend or sag in different directions; it becomes more visually pleasing in their sentiments and therefore more appetizing.

Then there is smoking. Smoking, one could say, may be considered as the addition of another preserving (and flavoring) ingredient or as part of the drying process, or even as both and depending on who you ask, smoking over or near the *rapuyan* as it is used in daily cooking is deemed as either necessary or as an optional step. Though who say smoking necessary and those who maintain it optional believe that smoking contributes to the preservation process further prolonging shelf life as well as protecting it from pests, those in the former maintain that the preservation process is not complete until it is subjected to at least some amount of smoking; those in the latter on the other hand say that it need be done only as a substitute for drying outside in the instances of summer showers or of prolonged durations of little sun[35]. Based on my observations however, whether an Ichavayan believes it a necessary step or not, the *pawpaw* they make would inevitably be subjected to smoking at one point or another. After being dried

[34]An adjective in Ivatan which means "stretched" or "stretched out".

[35] During our stay, we experienced such a time; for 3 days towards the end of April, the skies remained grey and gloomy.

outside, the *pawpaw* are brought in and hung somewhere inside their *kusina*. A traditional Ivatan *kusina*[36] is detached from the main house structure (either a separate structure altogether or just outside the main house) and also functions as a storage area for various goods and materials (agricultural implements, fishing gear, cooking pots, baskets, firewood, garlic, onions, corn, etc) aside from being the cooking area. These kitchens are designed as compact, enclosed spaces with high ceilings, few windows, and usually one or two doors; such a design provides limited ventilation keeping the entire area generally warm, sometimes even stifling. When any activity involves firing up the *rapuyan* an Ivatan *kusina* becomes very much like a sauna but instead of steam, you have smoke filling up and circulating in the place as evidenced by the layers (of varying thickness) of black *aliw*[37] on almost every corner, even on the ceiling of the structure of course, on the things kept within it. In this way, whether it's tied it to a pole hanging over their *rapuyan* or on one of the beams of their *paya*[38] or away from it on suspended hooks or directly tied on the very foundations of the *kusina*, as long as it is inside the structure, the *pawpaw* will inevitably be smoked.

Storage and Consumption of *Pawpaw*

The *pawpaw* made throughout *rayuun* are kept hanging inside the *kusina* until the end of the fishing season --- when the conditions change and fishing activities become more and more infrequent. During this time, all the *pawpaw* they have accumulated are transferred to what they refer to as "*Safety"*. A person or a household's "*Safety"* is essentially their supply of *pawpaw*, stored in one or more containers and the act of setting aside *pawpaw* in this way is marked [in Tagalog] by the phrase "*Ilagay sa Safety*". The containers used are usually sacks, biscuit tins or plastic buckets kept in some corner of the *kusina* not really hidden, but out of plain sight. They usually include leaves of *gagad* to keep insects and other pests from their supply. The only explanation I encountered for why *pawpaw* is only transferred to their respective "*Safety"*-s towards the end of the fishing season stemmed from an old superstitious belief that putting it in

[36] Some households in Chavayan (as well as many households on the island of Basco) already make use of gas stoves for their cooking needs. In the case that a household in Chavayan has both, the rapuyan is still used in the preparation of certain things (such as hogwash) or in situations where in cooking something on a gas stove is seen as inefficient (such as for big amounts in of food) or expensive (LPG gas is something not easily accommodated in the budget of majority of the households).

[37] The Ivatan word for soot.

[38] An Ivatan term which refers to a shelf over the rapuyan used to store corn, food and sometimes tools and equipment.

one's "*Safety*" any earlier would make fish harder to catch for everyone for they [the fish] are "led to believe" that the fishermen already have enough. This superstition I heard from the older fishermen of Chavayan and some of the younger ones were also aware of it; in practice however, whether they believed the superstition or not, all the fishermen I conversed with told me that they usually only put the pawpaw they have accumulated in their respective "*Safety*"-s once the fishing season is at its end.

Pawpaw remains in a household's "*Safety"* until the need for it arises, which in practice, essentially means whenever the household decides or hankers after it. Based on the survey conducted, *pawpaw* is consumed throughout the entire year, however compared to that of *rayuun*, there is a slight increase in consumption during the months of *amyan*. Summarizing the responses, meals that included *pawpaw* (in any form) ranged from 0-2 meals over a three day period during the former season while during the latter season, *pawpaw* was present anywhere from 3-6 meals over a three day period. It seems that the consumption of *pawpaw* is not situation specific (i.e. consumed only when weather is bad) but rather is treated as a part of the entire supply of food that they have at their disposal. Of course, it must still be remembered that certain circumstances affect the "necessity" or at the very least "desirability" that *pawpaw* be included in the day's menu. One such instance fishermen themselves tell me is that as long as a supply of fresh seafood is readily accessible or available[39], they would tap that before turning to the *pawpaw* they have in possession. This would also imply that the less one is able to go on fishing ventures, the more likely they are to make use of the *pawpaw* supply they have on hand.

Pawpaw and other Contexts of Ichavayan Life

The *pawpaw* complex does not and must never be believed to occur in isolation. In every conversation and interaction, it soon surfaced that this complex is suspended in the three deeply interlocked and interrelated contexts of Ichavayan life: their environmental conditions, their culture of fishing, and their foodways.

Even to the casual observer, the ecology of Batanes is unlike anywhere else in the Philippines. These environmental conditions, particularly the climate, serve as the backdrop in which any aspect of Ivatan culture unfolds; without implying any strict sense of determinism

[39] This of course peaks during the fishing season in the months of rayuun

(though I am sure it will sound as such), much of the daily activities in Chavayan is still dependent on the conditions of the weather. They generally divide the year into two seasons characterized by aspects which are relatively prevalent in each. *Rayuun* sets in at the beginning of March lasting until a little after the end of May and is marked predominantly by warm, dry and sunny days; prevailing wind systems and currents during this time result in a sea state which they express to be calmer and easier to navigate and traverse for longer durations[40]; as mentioned before, the peak of fishing occurs during this season. *Amyan* on the other hand begins as September enters remaining until February and is marked by predominantly cold, wet and cloudy days; due to the prevailing wind systems and currents at this time, they maintain that sea-fearing conditions, though not making activities impossible, are oftentimes unfavourable and more treacherous[41]; planting activities (which include tending to their crops) are said to be the usual activity during this time.. Apart from these two seasons, the months of June to August (sometimes extending up to mid-September) is recognized as the period when majority of the typhoons hit and are at their strongest. During this time, or rather whenever typhoons hit, daily activities --- whether that involves going out to sea or going to their scattered plots of land in the , hills and mountains behind Chavayan --- tend to dwindle if not come to a complete halt.

Fishing is both a practice and a knowledge system central to the Ichavayan, integrating a range of beliefs, techniques and material culture deployed for the purpose of tapping the wealth of the waters that surround them. It combines a keen familiarity and understanding of the weather patterns, the rhythm of the wind and the waves and the nature of the sea creatures they aim to catch. This is evident in the collection of traditional fishing styles the Ichavayan posses learned through watching and eventually joining their elders from the time they are young, polished and mastered through their constant use; *panayrin*[42], *maychasunbun*[43], *nanawuy*[44], and *mataw*[45] are just some of the examples that Mariano Gecha, another old fisherman, shared with me. Fishing is viewed by them as a skill, however the traditional rhetoric rooted in their belief in

[40] They sometimes equate rayuun (linguistically and conceptually) to tag-init [Tagalog] and summer [English].
[41] They sometimes equate amyan (linguistically and conceptually) to tag-lamig [Tagalog] and winter [English].
[42] Hook and line fishing that makes use of stone sinkers; hooks tied to the line are changed depending on the size of the fish that are sought to be caught.
[43] Spear or harpoon fishing; fishermen dive in the deep sea in wait for the large sea creatures.
[44] Fly-net fishing done near the shoreline where the waves crash; the size of the fish caught depend on the mesh-size of the net.
[45] The use of live flying fish in catching large dolphin fish (see Mangahas, 1993; 1996).

the *anitu*[46] which surrounds the success of any fishing venture is placed partly "in the hands" of the fish (or other sea creatures) themselves. As some of the fishermen explained to me, the denizens of the sea are not caught because they are outwitted or outplayed by the fisherman, but because they allow themselves to be caught. According to their sentiments as well, fishing is primarily a venture for supplying their daily subsistence demands; it is not exhaustive and is seldom solely for an individual's personal gain. To illustrate, *payatain*[47] are almost always given, occasionally *pamakan*[48] as well, and the only instances when a fisherman keeps an entire catch is when there is almost no catch to speak of (which they apologize profusely and promise to repay them next time). Today, fishing using so-called "modern" materials such as nylon threads and techniques such as the towing of a net behind a motorized boat is also seen in the whole area of Batanes albeit in varying degrees. In Chavayan for example, the two seem to co-exist --- modern materials are usually incorporated into traditional fishing gears and boats with out-rigger motors are used in tandem with traditional fishing methods[49]; the use of solely "modern" techniques and materials I am told , is more often seen in places like Basco. I was sadly not able to investigate fully the feelings the fishermen of Chavayan had towards the use of modern fishing techniques and materials by Ivatan fishermen though it seemed that the use of "purely modern" methods to them was something done by those whose primary intent was to sell and profit from their catch. Furthermore negative sentiments towards the use of modern fishing methods usually arose in the context of foreign fishing vessels (they say these are usually from Taiwan or China) whose means are viewed as exhaustive and detrimental.

Their foodways serve not only to fulfil a basic human necessity but are also indicative of how well they have grown attuned to it their environment. Both knowledge and practice are passed on from the older generation to the younger through observation and participation, seasoned by the experiences of lifetimes. Though each would inevitably have their own personal preferences when it comes to food, the penchant for freshness, especially when it comes to

[46] The anitu are spirits in the traditional Ivatan belief system (see Hidalgo, 1996 & Hornedo, 2000).

[47] A share given to those who helped the fisherman in any way (i.e. lending him equipment, accompanying him on the fishing trip, aiding him as he lands his boat, etc.); these helpers tend to be relatives, friends or neighborsof the fisherman. The actual amount of each share varies depending on the total amount of the catch as well as the help offered.

[48] A share given "for free" to relatives or friends whose household does not have a fisherman when a catch is especially abundant; again, the actual amount varies.

[49] During the time of my field work, 6 boats with outboard motors and 5 traditional tatayan-s (a 1-2 person boat which is rowed) were present and in use in Chavayan.

seafood is one that can be said to be a cultural inclination; though by no means is it held by every single individual and is of course realized in varying degrees, many Ichavayan have said (and many a plate of *kinilaw* has proven) that to a large extent, fresh is best. The households of Chavayan on average perceive themselves to be able to eat sufficiently majority of the year; by this they mean 2-3 full meals a day. They do share with me that there are a few times in the year when they experience "a want", whether in terms of quality or quantity of food, yet for most of them, they say they have not really experienced a situation so dire that they perceive themselves to be in a state of starvation. On that note, daily cooking as I am told is not governed by extravagance or indulgence but by a regulated satisfaction of eating "just right". They utilize to the fullest what is available and abundant at different points of the year not only in terms of flavor but also in terms of supply. They stand by their traditional food and traditional cooking techniques yet are also able to adapt those from the *ipula* such that each always serves to highlight an ingredient's natural character[50]. Like in their fishing activities, "modern" or rather food and foodways "from the mainland[51]" have entered the picture. These of course have not replaced or overhauled the ways they eat and the food they eat rather they have been incorporated --- again much like in fishing, in varying degrees --- in their already existing foodways. Some prefer these new foods (on bases of taste, convenience, price, etc.) while others perceive food from the mainland, particularly canned and instant foods, as being "filled with chemicals; in the case of the latter, such foods are avoided or in more cases, only used and consumed sparingly. One of the women of Chavayan told me as well that it would be depending solely on food from the mainland would be something difficult to do, at least in Chavayan, for several reasons. Though the arrival of ships bringing goods[52] is more frequent in the present, they are still dependent on the conditions at sea; this supply line is always at the risk of being cut, sometimes for a prolonged period of time[53]. Furthermore, majority if not all the goods that Batanes receives from the mainland are dropped off at the main port in Basco on Batan island.

[50] Some traditional dishes identified distinctly by the Ichavayan are tabtab (a dish made from the grated bulb at the base of a banana plant mixed with minced meat or fish) and lunyis (a pork dish that is slow rendered in its own fat thus preserving it; toted to be the Ivatan adobo) while traditional techniques of preparation which the Ichavayan generally identify are boiling (nilaneg), roasting (pinasu), and kinilaw (raw seafood or meat seasoned usually with vinegar onions and garlic). Ipula preparations on the other hand include sautéing and frying which have become a regular mainstay since the time cooking oil became more widely available.

[51] By mainland, they usually mean the Island of Luzon.

[52] These ships usually come from either ports in Manila or ports in Cagayan Valley.

[53] An instance some of the older members recall happened sometime in the 1987 when a very strong typhoon hit the islands.

This means that the owners of *sari-sari* stores[54] in the island of Sabtang would have to make a trip to Basco or get their stock delivered to Sabtang; again this is dependent on the fact that the crossing from Batan (at the port in Ivana) to Sabtang (at the port in Sentro) is possible. During the time of my fieldwork, around 12 households, roughly a third of the community, had refrigerators however refrigeration is also something that cannot be relied upon as electricity in Chavayan is cut each day from 12:00 midnight to 6:00 in the morning

Chewing Upon This

In (to quote James Clifford) an over-the-shoulder-reading of their reading of themselves, I believe *Pawpaw* is still very much significant to the Ichavayan of today. The *pawpaw* complex finds itself situated in the area of intersection of the three contexts mentioned prior and its continued existence in my opinion is founded on two reasons: its status as a veritable staple and as an item of ethnic cusine which expresses "Ivatan-ness".

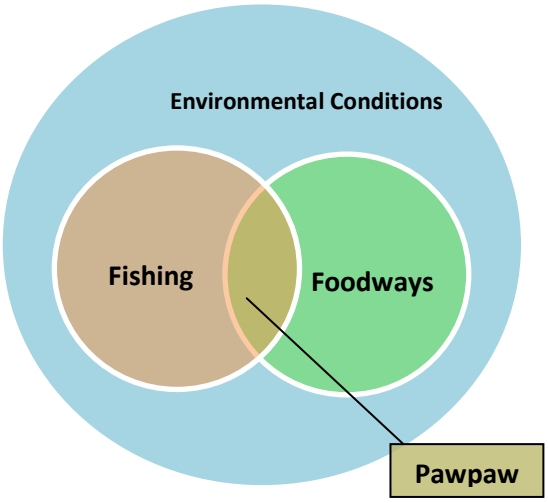

Figure 1. Conceptual visualization of the relationships of environmental conditions, fishing and foodways; the *pawpaw* complex finds itself in the intersection of these three key contexts.

Each year, *rayuun* comes and the days start getting warmer. Though there is always a chance that conditions may take a turn for the worse, overall, the currents and winds are more stable and predictable; the seas are calmer and more traversable. It is also during this time that

[54] Small general merchandise stores run from a household common throughout the Philippines. Most of the items they sell are snacks, candies, softdrinks, alcoholic beverages, cooking ingredients and items for personal hygiene.

the migratory *dibang* and *dorado* make their way through the waters of Batanes. With conditions that allow them go out to sea more frequently (almost each day, up to twice within a day including the possibility of setting out during the late night or early morning) and stay out for longer (anywhere from 4 to 8 hours) coupled with higher odds of bringing in a bounteous catch each time, the fishing season goes into full swing. The Ichavayan make use of their knowledge and their repertoire of traditional fishing techniques, sometimes coupling it with modern ones in order to make the most of this opportunity that only comes once a year. Many a fisherman are able to do just that, enjoying for a time an abundance of freshness; even after all the necessary shares are given, one would still have enough to eat for the next 2 or 3 days, enough to sell and enough to turn into *pawpaw*. As fishing activities continues so too does the making of *pawpaw;* in this way, a steady supply is put together. A are few pieces eaten, some are given away to relatives or friends but most are kept hanging somewhere inside their *kusina* until the end of *rayuun*. By the end of May, the air gets colder and the seas more fickle; by and by, *rayuun* and their fishing season come to a close. The *pawpaw* they have accumulated are migrated to sacks, tins or plastic containers where they remain, set aside until they are needed --- and indeed they will be needed. As the typhoons come and as another year's *amyan* makes itself felt, the pelagic *dibang* and *dorado* have vanished from the waters of Chavayan; fishing, especially the kind that requires one venture out in the sea becomes difficult, at certain times impossible. There is a drop in the frequency (once a week if conditions are manageable enough) and duration (some 2-3 hours) thus resulting not only in a drop but an uncertainty in the general supply of fresh seafood available. They turn therefore to their supply of *pawpaw,* readily available and accessible, not only as a source of seafood, but as a staple used in tandem with other ingredients that become abundant during this time (usually vegetables); this they rely on until the winds of *rayuun* return when once again, the cycle begins anew.

In Chavayan life, the role of the *pawpaw* complex is as a response to issues of food security posed by their environmental circumstances yet is heavily built upon and guided by enduring folk knowledge and local common sense. Though fishing activities never completely cease, they are still faced with conditions wherein at certain points of the year, the risks involved in any fishing venture (low-yield in terms of what is invested, accidents, injury, even death) clearly outweigh the profits. Rather than face such a period only as it comes, they instead maximize the abundance brought by *rayuun* not by indulging in its bounty as it goes on but

rather by only partaking of what is necessary and setting aside the rest for a literal, rainy day; indigenous delayed-gratification. In a fishing community such as that of Chavayan where one of their staples is seafood, periods such as *amyan* or instances when the islands are hit by typhoons which minimize the access to their staple may be viewed as situations that would result in relative "food" insecurity. Because of the supply of *pawpaw* they have prepared beforehand however, this state is never reached --- put another way, because they have their supply of *pawpaw* in the first place they do not feel deprived and perceive themselves to still have sufficient access to food. Indeed, even during *amyan* when fresh seafood is not so much scarce than it is difficult to access, their "*Safety*"-s used in tandem with other available ingredients, allow them to be able to eat well --- albeit sometimes groaning over the lack of more varied choices --- more often than not. Furthermore *pawpaw* is no mere emergency ration or in a category of food that is "eaten when there is not else to be eaten". Blolong (1996) was right in saying that it is an adaptive measure but to deem it as a way of "coping" ---especially since the term itself has the connotation of struggle and "getting by" --- is something I find a bit problematic. Rather than being just a food for coping, *pawpaw* seems to serve as one of the staples in their foodways, taking center stage during certain points of the year. The production of *pawpaw* is one that entails a significant amount of care and effort not only to come up with an ample, well preserved supply but to make them *masdup*. Though fresh seafood may place higher in many an Ichavayan's list of preferences, pawpaw is not eaten with feelings of disdain or inadequacy; it is something enjoyed, even craved for. Furthermore, one can even say that it responds as well satisfying the penchant for freshness, at least at a symbolic level. For as they always seek to preserve the seafood after they are caught as soon as they can (following Levi-Strauss' line of thought that drying and smoking, is firstly associated with "natural transformation" as well as with the category of the "raw" [2008]), the process of making *pawpaw* can be said to be an attempt to not only physically preserve the seafood but to "preserve its freshness" as well; thus "materially" fresh seafood may be in short supply, but there is plenty of "figuratively" fresh seafood available in the form of *pawpaw*. It is clear that this role of the complex directly benefits the household (as it is also usually produced at this level) in terms of providing for their food supply yet when one considers that, especially in a community like Chavayan --- where many of your neighbours are actually your relatives and those of them who aren't are probably people they have known all their lives and have fostered some sort of

communal bond with --- the complex itself aids in assuring the food security of the entire community. Both at a household and at a communal level, this way they are able to face an interlude of uncertainty with a supply that is certain[55], already prepared, and present.

Pawapaw is seen by the Ivatan to be a part of their traditional cuisine. Even in the midst and influx of foreign foods and foodways, it has maintained its position as a staple as it is well adapted and suited for the circumstances the islands experiences. It is one that does not rely on practices and technologies that have been relatively been recently incorporated or are still in the process of finding where they fit It is founded on what has always been there and what has always been done. The effort invested during *rayunn* on fishing trips and in the production of *pawpaw* is reaped when needed; in the words of many of the Ichavayan, "(in Tagalog) *Basta't masipag ka, hindi ka magugutom sa Batanes*[56]*."* A supply of *pawpaw* constitutes an image of the abundance of the fishing season and the consumption of *pawpaw* invokes not a sense that they are starving, but that they are managing, usually in relative comfort. Its other identification as "*Safety*" is also very telling; it does not only mean an insurance against insufficiency, but also something that is safe and familiar, something one can eat without feelings of anxiety. Unlike canned goods or instant foods, *pawpaw* is deemed as "natural", the seafood they have grown to be used to, albeit in a different form. They know where it came from, how it was made, even who made it making them feel secure and furthermore it has the peculiarity of not only preserving the seafood itself but symbolically preserving the innate freshness it possesses.

The whole complex is a product and practical application of their folk knowledge and beliefs which have been passed down through generations of Ivatan since time immemorial. In its continued practice and consumption, the pawpaw complex exposes the younger generations to the wisdom of their mothers and fathers and their parents before them. It does not maintain or restrict their everyday life to "the old ways" but rather, ensures that a connection to aspects and values of their culture which they recognize identifies them as Ivatan, remains and continues. Indeed during my last day in Chavayan, Uncle Jose and his wife as well as Uncle Noli and Auntie Felie gave me several pieces of *dibang* they themselves had made into *pawpaw*. It was a an edible memento, a reminder not only of the time I spent in Chavayan, but of the people and

[55] At the very least, more certain than the prospected yield of any fishing venture during the time of typhoons and amyan.
[56] "As long as you are hardworking, you won't go hungry in Batanes."

the way of life there; as Uncle Noli said, "(in Tagalog) *Para di mo kami makalimutan. Kapag ma-miss mo kami, kainin mo lang iyan.*[57]" This aspect of the *pawpaw* complex in my observation (something I regrettably realized only when I was about to leave) is something that the people of Batanes are re-appropriating and deploying as a response to the increase of tourism the area has been experiencing in recent years; aside from being just an item of subsistence for the Ivatan themselves, it has gained the aspect of being something of monetary value. *Pawpaw* ---even the traditionally prestigious fillets of *arayu*--- has become a material good within the monetary-based exchange system and are sold readily to tourists (of which traditionally, these are never even brought out of the islands) in Basco packaged by some as a "piece of Batanes and Ivatan culture" one can bring home; it capitalizes on its character shared experience and tradition marketing it as a souvenir that expresses and captures "authentic Ivatan-ness".

A Craving for More

Particular seafood preserved through a distinct but highly flexible process combining salting, drying and smoking, the way it is stored, the way it is cooked, the way it is consumed; these taken all together comprise the *pawpaw* complex. It is a distinct foodway that the Ichavayan trace through their individual and collective memories back to their ancestors, embedded in certain indigenous knowledge systems regarding environmental conditions, fishing and other foodways. *Pawpaw* is no mere alternative food but is a staple in its own right; it is done up to this day by the Ichavayan as means of accumulating a palatable, secure and assured food supply while fishing is at its peak in preparation for a period of the year when the supply of fresh seafood is uncertain. Furthermore it facilitates the passage of indigenous knowledge by the community to its members as well as a means to express their cultural identity as Ivatans. It is an ethnoculinary foodway which reveals an aspect of who they are; in its constant creation, consumption and deployment, they continue to assert and to maintain it as theirs.

In one conversation I had with Uncle Mariano while I was there, he nostalgically told me that back when his body had the blessing of youth, the street by Chavayan's sea wall filled with *pawpaw* upon *pawpaw*, hanging in the wind and the sun as if they were streamers for a fiesta;

[57] "So that you will not forget us. If you miss us, just eat this."

such days are gone he says and he laments that they may never come again. Just a week ago I was in touch with one of the teenagers I got to know in Chavayan. I asked her how this year's *pawpaw* making was going and she responded, "*Super dami po*[58]". Here we have two accounts from two different generations which paint two contrasting pictures; what this tells me essentially is that there is so much still left in the study of *pawpaw*.

An intellectual and certainly, a gastronomic adventure is before us, one that we must face with an inquisitive mind and an empty stomach. We have barely begun to dig in; this is but the first bite in what I perceive to be a long, filling and delicious meal.

[58] This would roughly translate to "very plentiful."

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