### **GROUP 1: Weaving Traditions: Textile Arts in the Philippines**

In this week, students will delve into one of the most iconic and intricate crafts of the Philippines: weaving. This tradition has been passed down through generations, with various indigenous groups developing their own distinctive techniques, patterns, and symbolism. Weaving is not only an art form but a way of expressing cultural identity, spiritual beliefs, and community ties. This week will focus on the study of different weaving traditions, the tools used, and the symbolism embedded in the patterns.

### **1. Study of Various Weaving Traditions in the Philippines**

The Philippines boasts a rich variety of weaving traditions that differ according to geography, culture, and purpose. Each indigenous group has developed unique techniques, designs, and methods of weaving based on the resources available to them. Weaving is a key aspect of their material culture and has been essential for clothing, ceremonial garments, mats, and even currency.

a. Ilocano Weaving (Inabel)  
The Ilocano people, particularly from the Ilocos region in the north, are famous for their Inabel weaving. This traditional handwoven fabric is typically made from cotton and is used to create blankets, mats, clothing, and towels. Inabel fabrics are known for their vibrant colors and intricate patterns, which are often inspired by nature, daily life, and indigenous symbolism. The backstrap loom is the primary tool used for weaving Inabel, which requires great skill and patience to create fine, even patterns.

b. T’boli Weaving (T’nalak)  
The T’boli people, an indigenous group from South Cotabato in Mindanao, are known for their exquisite woven fabric called T’nalak. This fabric is made from abaca (Manila hemp) and is notable for its intricate ikat-dyeing technique, where threads are tied and dyed before weaving, resulting in complex, patterned designs. The T’nalak is considered sacred, and the patterns often represent ancestral stories, spiritual beliefs, and cosmology. The T'boli weavers, usually women, consider the act of weaving T’nalak as a spiritual practice, and the finished products are often used in rituals and ceremonies.

c. Visayan Weaving (Pina, Sinamay, and Hablon)  
In the Visayas, weaving traditions are also rich and diverse. The pina fabric, made from pineapple fibers, is known for its delicate texture and is often used for formal wear such as barong Tagalog and Filipiniana dresses. Sinamay, a fabric made from abaca fibers, is used for more casual clothing and accessories, as well as for hat-making. In the Hablon tradition of Iloilo, the textile is made with cotton and silk threads, and the designs often feature geometric and floral motifs. These fabrics reflect the region's agricultural landscape and social customs.

d. Kalinga Weaving  
The Kalinga people from the northern Philippines are renowned for their intricate weaving techniques, particularly for creating blankets and towels. Kalinga weavers use traditional looms and patterns, often involving geometric shapes and symbols that carry both personal and spiritual meaning. Cotton threads are typically used, and the weaving process is seen as an act of skill and meditation, with weavers believing that their mental state during the process influences the outcome.

### **2. Loom Weaving Techniques: Backstrap Looms, Horizontal Looms, and Pit Looms**

Weaving in the Philippines is primarily done using hand looms, with each loom having distinct characteristics suited to different types of textiles and weaving styles. The type of loom used reflects both the geographical and cultural factors of the region.

a. Backstrap Loom  
The backstrap loom is the most commonly used traditional loom in the Philippines, particularly by the Ilocano, T’boli, and Kalinga peoples. This loom is simple and portable, consisting of a set of wooden rods, a woven strap, and a mechanism that allows the weaver to adjust the tension of the threads. The weaver’s body is used as a frame, with one end of the loom tied around the weaver’s waist and the other end attached to a stationary object (like a tree or a post). As the weaver shifts their body, they can create the desired tension needed for weaving. The backstrap loom is particularly effective for creating narrow strips of fabric like Inabel and T’nalak.

b. Horizontal Loom  
The horizontal loom is another traditional loom used in Filipino weaving, especially by groups such as the T'boli and Ilongot. This loom operates with a horizontal wooden frame, and the threads are wound onto rollers at the front and back. The weaver uses a shuttle to pass the threads through the warp, creating more intricate and detailed designs. This loom is often used to weave larger pieces of fabric such as blankets, tapestries, and ceremonial textiles.

c. Pit Loom  
The pit loom is primarily used in regions where larger pieces of textile are required, such as the Bontoc and Kalinga provinces. The loom is set up with a deep pit where the weaver sits, allowing them to manipulate the fabric more easily. The warp threads are tied to the loom frame, and the shuttle is passed through the threads using a foot pedal or by hand. Pit looms are often used for weaving larger and heavier textiles, such as sashes and mats.

### **3. Understanding Patterns and Symbolism in Woven Textiles**

One of the most fascinating aspects of Philippine weaving traditions is the deep symbolism embedded in the designs. Each pattern carries a specific meaning, often related to the weaver’s environment, beliefs, and community life. Understanding the symbolism in these patterns is essential to appreciating the cultural significance of the textiles.

a. Ilocano Weaving Patterns  
In Ilocano weaving, geometric patterns often symbolize elements from nature, such as the sun, mountains, and rivers. These patterns also reflect the community’s agricultural lifestyle, with some designs representing the rice harvest or fertility. The Inabel fabric’s vibrant colors may also indicate the weaver’s social status or personal beliefs.

b. T’boli Weaving (T’nalak) Patterns  
The T’nalak is rich in spiritual and symbolic meaning. The patterns, often inspired by dreams, are believed to be divinely revealed to the weavers. These designs include motifs such as spiders, serpents, mountains, and stars, representing the natural world and the T’boli cosmology. The process of weaving T’nalak is sacred, with weavers often seeking guidance from ancestors and spirits before starting their work.

c. Kalinga Weaving Patterns  
Kalinga textiles often feature geometric shapes such as triangles, diamonds, and zigzags, each representing elements like mountain ranges, rivers, and family lineage. These patterns are used in different forms of clothing and ritual items and are often believed to offer protection or bring good fortune to the wearer.

d. Visayan Weaving Patterns  
In Visayan weaving, floral and geometric patterns are common. These patterns often symbolize nature and the cycle of life, reflecting the region's agricultural traditions. In Pina weaving, the delicate nature of the fabric also symbolizes the elegance and refinement of the region's culture.

**GROUP 2**: "Pottery and Clay Crafts in Philippine Indigenous Crafts"

**Introduction to Pottery in the Philippines**

* **Definition**: Pottery refers to the art of shaping and firing clay to create functional and decorative items such as bowls, jars, and figurines.
* **Importance**: Pottery plays a significant role in daily life, culture, and tradition, providing essential tools for cooking, storage, and ritual use.
* **Materials Used**: Local clay, water, and natural pigments.
* **Cultural Significance**: Pottery is often passed down through generations and reflects the unique identity of each indigenous group.

**Historical Background**

* **Early Pottery**: Pottery in the Philippines dates back over 5,000 years, with archaeological evidence found in sites such as the **Callao Cave** and **Manunggul Jar**.
* **Traditional Techniques**: Indigenous Filipino potters use ancient methods such as hand-building and coil techniques, with little or no modern equipment.
* **Cultural Transmission**: Pottery-making skills are typically passed down within families, especially among women.

**Pottery in Different Regions of the Philippines**

1. **Cordillera Region**
   * Famous for **burnay**, sturdy jars used for storing food, water, and rice wine.
   * Pottery is often intricately decorated with patterns and symbols.
   * **Example**: The **Ibanag people** of the Cagayan Valley are known for their black pottery, which is often used for cooking.
2. **Ilocos Region**
   * Known for **burnay pottery**, which is often used for fermentation (e.g., making vinegar).
   * **Example**: The pottery of **Vigan** is known for its strong, rustic, and functional forms, such as jars and cooking pots.
3. **Mindanao Region**
   * The **B'laan and T'boli tribes** are known for their beautiful pottery, often used for ceremonial purposes.
   * **Example**: **T'boli pots** are often intricately decorated with symbolic motifs, especially during traditional rituals.

**Key Techniques in Philippine Pottery**

* **Hand-building**: Potters shape clay by hand, forming coils and slabs. This method is common in many indigenous communities.
* **Coiling**: Rolling clay into long, snake-like coils, then stacking and smoothing them into shapes like bowls or jars.
* **Pinching**: Using fingers to pinch the clay into various shapes, often for small vessels or figurines.
* **Wheel-Throwing**: Although not widely used in traditional Filipino pottery, some regions have adopted this method, especially in modern pottery.
* **Firing**: Pottery is traditionally fired in an open pit or kiln, often with wood or other natural materials as fuel.
  + **Example**: **Burnay** pots are fired in outdoor kilns, using local firewood to create their durable, dark surface.

**Functional and Ceremonial Pottery**

1. **Functional Pottery**
   * Everyday items like jars, cooking pots, and water containers.
   * **Example**: The **Bontoc tribe** of the Cordillera region creates large clay pots for cooking rice and other staple foods.
2. **Ceremonial Pottery**
   * Pottery used in religious rituals or rites of passage.
   * **Example**: The **T'boli people** create special pots used in **weddings** and **harvest rituals**. These pots often feature intricate designs symbolizing fertility and protection.

**Clay Craft in Philippine Indigenous Culture**

* **Symbolism in Pottery**: Pottery often carries cultural and spiritual significance, with designs symbolizing nature, the spirit world, and family.
  + **Example**: Pottery from the **Kalinga people** features geometric designs representing fertility, water, and growth.
* **Materials Used**: In addition to clay, natural pigments such as red, yellow, and black are used to decorate pottery.
* **Craftsmanship**: Pottery is considered an art form, with many potters spending years perfecting their craft and maintaining traditional techniques.

**Contemporary Pottery and Preservation**

* **Modern Influence**: While traditional pottery techniques are still prevalent, contemporary potters in the Philippines have integrated modern aesthetics and materials into their work.
  + **Example**: Potters in **Taal, Batangas** now create decorative pieces like vases and figurines that combine traditional styles with modern designs.
* **Efforts to Preserve Traditional Pottery**: Many cultural organizations and local governments are working to preserve and promote traditional pottery techniques through workshops and festivals.
  + **Example**: The **Vigan Pottery Festival** celebrates the rich history of pottery in the region, bringing attention to the preservation of indigenous methods.

**The Role of Pottery in Philippine Society**

* **Cultural Heritage**: Pottery represents the history, identity, and traditions of Filipino communities, often acting as a marker of their social and cultural status.
* **Economic Importance**: In some communities, pottery remains an important source of income, with many potters selling their creations in local markets and at festivals.
* **Example**: Pottery made by **Vigan artisans** is highly valued both locally and internationally for its craftsmanship and historical significance.

**Challenges Facing Pottery in the Philippines**

* **Decline in Traditional Pottery**: The younger generation may not be as interested in learning traditional pottery-making skills, leading to the decline of certain pottery traditions.
* **Competition with Industrial Pottery**: Mass-produced ceramics and plastic containers have impacted the demand for traditional pottery.
* **Preservation Efforts**: Local artisans, government organizations, and NGOs are actively working to promote and sustain the craft of pottery through education, tourism, and fairs.

**GROUP 3: Introduction to Basketry and Fiber Arts**

* **Definition**: Basketry refers to the craft of making baskets and other woven items from natural fibers, while **fiber arts** encompass the creation of textile-based crafts, such as weaving, knotting, and braiding.
* **Importance**: Basketry and fiber arts are essential in daily life, providing tools for storage, transport, and ceremonial use.
* **Materials Used**: Indigenous Filipinos use local materials such as bamboo, rattan, palm leaves, and other natural fibers.
* **Cultural Significance**: These crafts are passed down through generations and hold cultural, spiritual, and economic value.

**Historical Background of Basketry and Fiber Arts**

* **Ancient Roots**: Basketry and fiber arts have been practiced in the Philippines for thousands of years. Early Filipinos used woven baskets, mats, and textiles for various purposes, from practical use to spiritual rituals.
* **Traditional Techniques**: Indigenous groups use techniques such as **coiling**, **plaiting**, and **interlacing** to create intricate and functional designs.
* **Cultural Transmission**: Skills are traditionally passed from generation to generation, especially among women, and play a role in community bonding.

**Basketry in the Philippines**

1. **Bamboo Basketry**
   * Baskets made from **bamboo** are widely used for fishing, hunting, storing rice, and carrying goods.
   * **Example**: The **Tagbanua** people of Palawan are known for their intricate bamboo baskets used in fishing and gathering.
2. **Rattan Basketry**
   * **Rattan** is a flexible, durable material used to make furniture, bags, and storage baskets.
   * **Example**: The **Ifugao** people use rattan to create baskets for storing rice, while **Bontoc** baskets are used for carrying goods during trade.

**Fiber Arts in the Philippines**

1. **Abaca Weaving**
   * **Abaca** is a type of banana plant native to the Philippines, and its fibers are used to weave textiles such as mats, bags, and clothing.
   * **Example**: The **Bicolano** people of the Bicol Region are renowned for their fine abaca woven products, such as bags and ropes.
2. **Pandan Leaf Weaving**
   * **Pandan leaves** are commonly used in weaving mats, baskets, and decorative items.
   * **Example**: The **Samar-Leyte** region is famous for its **pandan leaf woven bags** and **hats**, which are both functional and decorative.
3. **Ikat Weaving**
   * **Ikat** is a dyeing technique where the threads are tied and dyed before weaving. The result is intricate, patterned textiles.
   * **Example**: The **T'boli** people of Mindanao are known for their **T'nalak** fabric, which uses the ikat technique to create symbolic designs.

**Common Techniques in Basketry and Fiber Arts**

1. **Coiling**: A technique where long, flexible strands are spiraled into a circular shape and stitched together to form baskets and containers.
   * **Example**: **Palawan baskets** are often made using the coiling technique.
2. **Plaiting**: Braiding or weaving strands of material together, typically used for making mats and bags.
   * **Example**: **Boholano** baskets are often created by plaiting palm leaves.
3. **Interlacing**: Weaving materials over and under each other to form intricate patterns, commonly used for making baskets, trays, and mats.
   * **Example**: **T'boli** use interlacing to create both functional and ceremonial items.

**Examples of Filipino Basketry and Fiber Arts**

1. **Woven Bamboo Baskets**
   * **Example**: The **Bontoc** baskets are commonly used to carry rice, while **Kalinga baskets** are used for rice storage.
2. **Pandan Leaf Bags**
   * **Example**: **Samar-Leyte's** woven bags are used for everyday carrying and are sold in local markets.
3. **Abaca Mats**
   * **Example**: **Bicol abaca mats** are known for their durability and unique designs.
4. **T'nalak Fabric**
   * **Example**: The **T'boli tribe** creates T'nalak, a beautiful textile woven from abaca fibers, known for its geometric patterns, often representing dreams and spiritual beliefs.

**Functional and Decorative Uses of Basketry and Fiber Arts**

* **Functional Uses**:
  + **Storage**: Baskets for carrying rice, vegetables, and goods.
  + **Food Preparation**: Baskets used for drying or sifting grains, or for storing harvested crops.
  + **Transportation**: Woven items like baskets and mats are used for trade, transporting goods, or even as mats for resting.
* **Decorative Uses**:
  + **Rituals**: Some baskets and woven items are used in ceremonial contexts, such as wedding rituals, harvest festivals, and religious rites.
  + **Art**: Fiber arts are used to create artistic designs on bags, mats, and textiles that often showcase intricate patterns.

**The Role of Basketry and Fiber Arts in Filipino Society**

* **Cultural Significance**: Basketry and fiber arts carry symbolic meaning in many communities, representing community unity, the connection to nature, and spiritual beliefs.
* **Economic Importance**: These crafts provide a livelihood for many rural communities, with baskets, bags, and woven goods sold in local and international markets.
* **Example**: The **Aeta** people of Zambales craft bamboo baskets that are highly prized for their quality and durability, providing an important income source for the community.

**Challenges and Preservation of Basketry and Fiber Arts**

* **Decline of Traditional Practices**: The younger generation may not be as interested in learning traditional weaving skills, leading to a decline in the craft.
* **Competition with Mass-Produced Items**: Mass-produced plastic or machine-made products have displaced traditional woven items in the market.
* **Efforts to Preserve and Promote**:
  + Cultural programs, festivals, and workshops are being organized to raise awareness about the importance of basketry and fiber arts.
  + **Example**: The **Manila FAME** trade fair promotes indigenous crafts, including baskets and fiber art products, helping to connect local artisans with international buyers.