

Ayala museum



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Little did we know, when we were sent on a field trip to the Loyal Museum, what we would see there. All that we were told was that it was an "educational field trip" and something to do with Flanagan. Net's advocacy of anything and everything Filipino. So, we were really in for a treat when we set foot on the fourth floor of the museum and a short film started to play the moment we stepped inside the sliding doors. "Gold of Ancestors: Crossroads of Civilization", it began, and went on to show some gold artifacts that had been found on archaeological digs all over the country.

We were mesmerized from the very first one. Then, just beyond the small chamber where we were viewing the film, we caught sight of the display cases containing the very artifacts that were now flashing on the screen. After that, we could hardly wait to go and see them up close. We saw golden bangles, rings, and necklaces, earrings, tiaras and studs, belts, bowls, cups and hilts of weapons. I was fascinated when I saw the burial masks, with stylized features engraved in the gold. I thought: forget ancient Egypt, it turns out the Philippines has its own!

Aside from the burial masks, there were also "orifice coverings", shaped like the eyes, the nose and the mouth. I guess if the dead couldn't afford a whole mask, they could just go for the important parts! Whew! Move over, King - rut! Aside from the burial masks, I was also fascinated with the Kina, a small vessel shaped like a mythical woman-bird, who appeared to be holding some kind of jug. Her eyes looked serenely out at the people who had come to see her. There was also the bluntly, an anthropomorphic plaque depicting the head of a lady with what seemed like an elaborate hairdo or headdress.

I also drooled over a cuff or wrist ornament, as wide as a sleeve and intricately worked, so that the gold mesh was like lace. The information on it said it weighed 204 grams. Heavy! There were also earrings so big and so heavy that we all wondered how the owner could possibly have worn it without getting his or her ears torn. My personal favorite, however, was a beautiful belt (I know someone's snickering while reading TLS!). Catalog No. 81. 5175, weighing 575. 1 g, measuring 68. Xx CM. Circa 10th 13th century.

It was made of fine mesh, with a zigzag design running along its length, and two golden plaques ornamented with granules of gold painstakingly arranged into stylized designs. Oh, I could have stood there and stared at it forever! Then, there was the piece De resistance: the UAPITA or Sacred Thread, weighing almost 4 kilos (yeah- peeve!), strikingly similar to one depicted in the 16th century Boxer Codex, said to be the earliest description of the people of the Philippines in a Western language. Copy of which can be found in the exhibit. The UAPITA was supposed to be draped around the neck then attached to the wrist. Wow, the person who wore that must've been pretty strong! What was striking about these artifacts was that they seemed so Pinto to me. There were at least two necklaces or bracelets that were woven bangle- Tyler: take four flat strips of gold and weave a fifth one back and forth across it, the reminded me of the legs of a modern armchair made of into because it had the same basket-weave technique.

Some of the other items were decorated simply by poking holes in the gold to create a lacy pattern. The tiaras were created by cutting a sort of fringe in a strip of gold, then bending them back and forth to make a crown-like design. Seeing the exhibit made all of us walk a little taller and prouder. We

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had always read about the treasures of other lands, like Egypt and Troy; now we know that we have our own! Mayhap nag Philippians!