



[Culion's remodelled fortress-church](#)

by [estan](#) September 27, 2008

The once fortress-church of Culion was remodelled by the American Jesuits in 1936.

Agutaya is in blue In October of 2006, I visited the remote islands of Cuyo and Culion in Palawan for a photography assignment and passed Negros and Iloilo in transit. This is my account of that journey.

To put into context the many Spanish colonial era fortifications that can still be seen around the coasts of Luzon and the Visayas, I've written a more detailed 3-part post at [simbahan.net](#). A summarized [version](#) can also be found in this blog.

This is the 16th of a series The weather was not promising at all when I came to Culion and I was more worried of just having overcast skies. As the church is facing westward, I was hoping that the sun would at least shine, even for a brief moment in the afternoon. With my schedule rather tight, I needed all the luck I need to better photograph the church of Culion as my return flight to Manila will be the next day.

This far flung municipality in the Calamianes, about an hour from the more known and bustling town of Coron was one of the Recollect order's main mission areas and part of a string of important [defense network](#). Like the other fortifications built by the order that includes those in Taytay, Linapacan, Dumarán and Lucbuan (mostly ruined) and the fortress churches of [Agutaya](#) and [Cuyo](#), construction was started in the last two decades of the 1600s. For Culion, it was completed as a stone fort in 1740.



The only bastion that was left intact while the rest of the walls were demolished.



The interior of the church

The location of the fortress-church is the best that I have seen compared to the two other structures featured earlier. Very high up a promontory, more of a cliff, it gives an impressive view of the sea and the neighboring islands. The sheer drop from the remaining bastion to the clear emerald waters below is about a hundred feet.

Unfortunately, when the American Jesuits came here in the 1930s to serve the [biggest leper colony](#) in the world at that time, they found the church quite small for the community. Even if it was still in

good condition, they demolished most of the walls, the stones used to expand the church. Now, only two untouched parts remain: the round bastion located at the back of the church fronting the sea and the main entrance that bears the Spanish coat of arms. One of the bells has markings that it was cast from the McShane Bell Factory in Baltimore, Maryland in 1936.



High up a promontory, the remnant bastion overlooks the sea as an antique cannon seems ready to fire.

The afternoon is rolling in but unfortunately, the sky was still overcast. With no other choice, I set up my tripod and took multiple and bracketed shots so that I can later assemble these at the computer, each time exposing for the sky then exposing for the church. There is also another challenge in photographing the religious structure as it's elevated that, unless you have a rather tall self standing ladder, a straight parallel shot is impossible.

With my task done, I headed to the hotel where I stayed, crossing my fingers that all shots were good. I'm ready to fly back to Coron the next day for my return flight to Manila.

ref.: <http://langyaw.com/2008/09/27/culions-remodelled-fortress-church/>

Look also www.heritage.aboutphilippines.ph