

Title:

People of the Philippines v. Marcelino Dadao, Antonio Sulindao, Eddie Malogsi (deceased), and Alfemio Malogsi

Facts:

On July 11, 1993, at 7:30 PM, in Barangay Salucot, Talakag, Bukidnon, Philippines, Marcelino Dadao, Antonio Sulindao, Eddie Malogsi, and Alfemio Malogsi allegedly conspired to murder Pionio Yacapin. Armed with guns and bolos, they reportedly attacked and shot Yacapin, causing his death. The prosecution's primary witnesses, Ronie Dacion (14 years old) and Edgar Dacion (12 years old), both stepsons of the victim, and Nenita Yacapin, the widow, testified to witnessing the murder. Additional testimonies from Bernardino Signawan, SPO2 Nestor Aznar, and Modesto Libyocan corroborated these accounts.

In their defense, the appellants presented alibis supported by testimonies from Police Inspector Vicente Armada, who noted negative paraffin test results, and several other individuals. However, these testimonies mainly came from family members and friends with vested interests.

Procedural Posture:

1. The trial court (RTC of Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon, Branch 11) convicted the accused of murder (January 31, 2005), sentencing them to reclusion perpetua and ordering monetary damages.
2. Upon appeal, the Court of Appeals affirmed the conviction with modifications on the damages (May 16, 2011).
3. Further appeal was made to the Supreme Court, focusing on issues of the sufficiency of evidence, credibility of witnesses, and alleged errors in appreciating qualifying circumstances.

Issues:

1. Whether the prosecution failed to prove the appellants' guilt beyond reasonable doubt.
2. Whether the trial court erred in discrediting the evidence presented by the defense.
3. Whether the trial court improperly appreciated the qualifying circumstance of abuse of superior strength, which was not alleged in the Information.

Court's Decision:

1. ****Sufficiency of Evidence and Credibility of Witnesses****: The Supreme Court affirmed the lower courts' findings, giving considerable weight to the trial court's assessment of the

credibility of the prosecution's witnesses, specifically noting that these witnesses had no ill motive and their testimonies, despite minor inconsistencies, were consistent on material points.

2. **Evaluation of Defense Evidence**: The High Tribunal rejected the defense of alibi, emphasizing that positive identification by credible witnesses holds more weight than alibi. The paraffin test results were deemed inconclusive for exoneration.

3. **Appreciation of Aggravating Circumstance**: The Court determined that treachery, and not abuse of superior strength, was the qualifying circumstance used to elevate the crime to murder. This was substantial and warranted the conviction for murder.

Doctrine:

- **Treachery**: Treachery as an aggravating circumstance is present when the means of execution are deliberate, swift, and unexpected, ensuring no risk of retaliation or defense by the victim.
- **Positive Identification vs. Alibi**: Positive and credible identification of the accused by witnesses prevails over the defense of alibi, especially when the latter is uncorroborated.
- **Paraffin Test**: The negative result of a paraffin test is not conclusive proof of innocence.

Class Notes:

- **Murder** (Art. 248, RPC): Defined and penalized; composed of treachery, evident premeditation, or similar circumstances.
- **Alibi**: An inherently weak defense unless corroborated convincingly by disinterested witnesses.
- **Treachery** (Art. 14, RPC): Ensures execution without risk to the offender from the victim's potential defense.
- **Paraffin Test**: Non-conclusive as sole evidence for determining recent firing of a gun.
- **Reclusion Perpetua**: Penalty applied when no aggravating or mitigating circumstances balance the evidence.

Relevant Statutes:

- **Article 248, Revised Penal Code (RPC)**: Defines and penalizes murder.
- **Article 14, RPC**: Defines treachery and other aggravating circumstances.
- **Article 63, RPC**: Guides the imposition of penalties when prescribed by law.

Historical Background:

This case reflects the ongoing judicial process in the Philippines, focusing on serious crimes

and ensuring due process for the accused while balancing witness testimonies against alibis and technical evidence. The decisions hinge heavily on witness credibility and the consistent application of statutory interpretation and established jurisprudence by the courts. The doctrines reaffirmed in this case continue to inform Philippine criminal law application today.