

THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF AND APPELLEE, VS. MELECIO MEJIAS, DEFENDANT AND APPELLANT.

G.R. No. L-1874. January 07, 1949

Ponente: PERFECTO, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/6e1cc59d5346/>

PERFECTO, J.:

Appellant, a resident of Tagana-an, went with his wife in the morning of May 25, 1947, to barrio Opong, Placer, to attend the barrio fiesta. They stayed in the house of Catalina Catubigan where they arrived at 7 o'clock in the morning (46-47). At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, appellant attended a game called "hantak" (23), which is a game for money in which three coins were thrown to a stone with flat top, one foot long and half foot wide.

While the game was going on, Santos Borja, who happened to be tipsy, grabbed the stone, called "hantakan", and threw it in a muddy place where carabaos used to wallow, and it splashed the mud, smearing the white pants of appellant. The game had to stop. Appellant was angered and went away with two companions, to whom he said that Borja will repay for it. The menacing words were overheard by Valeriano Escabal who happened to be near. (23-24). At about 6:30 in the evening, appellant and his two companions went to the house of Felicisimo Astronomo to take "sumsuman," which means taking solid food with tuba. (8). They drank about one garapon of tuba. Appellant was wearing a white undershirt and a dark drawer with red stripes on the sides and a hunting knife. (9). Appellant invited Astronomo to join him at the house of Juliana Diaz where dancing was taking place. Astronomo told appellant to go ahead because he had to dress up first, and appellant and his companions went ahead. After dressing up, Astronomo went to the house of Juliana Diaz, where he found appellant in the porch. Minutes later, Santos Borja came from the hall to the porch for the purpose of spitting, and while in the act, appellant came and stabbed him with his hunting knife. (10). Borja was hit at the back of his left clavicle. He was then giving his back to appellant. After having been hit, Borja jumped from the porch and ran away. Appellant also ran away. Astronomo did the same and went direct to his house. Valeriano Escabal saw the incident when coming up to the house of Juliana Diaz and while still on the third step of the stairs. (24). He saw the stabbing and the protagonists ran away. He also ran away and went home, where he narrated the incident to his wife. (25). Pedro Escabal, who was then dancing, upon noticing that someone jumped from the porch and people in the porch went home, also went home. (35).

The next morning, the corpse of Santos Borja was found lying down, face upwards, on the beach at about fifty fathoms away from the house of Juliana Diaz. The people flocked to see it. (36). That same morning, at about 6 o'clock, appellant warned Felicisimo Astronomo, "If you talk or declare what took place the other night I and my other two companions will kill you." (12-13). That same morning appellant went to the house of Valeriano Escabal to warn him also that if he should talk of what he had seen the last night, "I am going to include stabbing you." (26).

Appellant denied having taken part or been present in the "hantak" game at 3 o'clock in the afternoon of May 25, 1947; having taken "sumsuman" with his two companions in the house of Felicisimo Astronomo; having gone to the house of Juliana Diaz, and having stabbed Santos Borja in the porch of said house. (45-46). He said that he left

the house of Catalina Catubigan only at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon to have a look at the decoration of the school building where a dance was going to be held. After the lapse of about five minutes, he went to see and attend the procession which started at 5 o'clock, (46). After it ended at 6 o'clock, he went back to the house of Catalina Catubigan to take supper and be ready to attend the dance in the school building, to which he went at 9 o'clock, accompanied by his wife. At about 2 o'clock in the early morning, when the dance was over, he went home with his wife. (48). He danced about seven times and, upon request, sang before the public. (49). The next morning he heard people gossiping outside of the house about somebody having been murdered the previous night, and the dead person was Santos Borja from Lakandula, a friend of his. (50). Valeriano Escabal testified against him because the previous year, during the fiesta of Opong, young men from Tagana-an were challenged to a fight by Valeriano Escabal, and appellant took part with the young men of Tagana-an in a fight against the young men of Opong. Felicisimo Astronomo testified against him because he is from Opong, and so with Pedro Escabal because he is a relative of Valeriano Escabal. (51-52).

Atilano Leyson, appellant's witness, testified that he saw appellant in the school house dance at about 11 o'clock in the night of May 25, 1947, when, upon the request of the sergeant of police, appellant sang a song in English and he was applauded, although there was no encore. (42-43.)

The evidence on record conclusively shows that, as testified to by the witnesses for the prosecution, appellant Melecio Mejias stabbed to death Santos Borja, while the latter was giving him his back and busy in the act of spitting. Appellant's denials cannot overcome the sincere, positive and impartial portrayal of the facts made by the three witnesses for the prosecution. The fact that appellant attended the school house dance and sang therein does not belie his having been, in the early evening, in the porch of the house of Juliana Diaz to stab Santos Borja. His own witness had not noticed his presence in the school until only at about 11 o'clock on that night.

The three witnesses for the prosecution do not appear to have any relationship with Santos Borja who, according to appellant, was his friend and from Lakandula. That said witnesses should testify against appellant only because the previous year there had been a fight among young men of Tagana-an and of Opong, is too far-fetched to be considered.

The defense offered as documentary evidence, although rejected by the trial court, Exhibit 2, a criminal complaint for robbery against Santos Borja, and Exhibit 3, the latter's confession, for the purpose of showing the deceased's bad moral character. The evidence, instead of helping appellant, would rather corroborate the truth of the "hantak" incident that provoked appellant, because the mud splash spoiled his white pants. Borja was a person from whom the insolent throwing of the "hantakan" could be expected.

The trial court correctly found appellant guilty of murder, qualified by treachery, no modifying circumstance attending.

The appealed judgment sentenced appellant to reclusion perpetua, with the legal accessories, and to indemnify the heirs of the deceased in the sum of P2,000 and to pay the costs. The indemnity must be raised to P6,000, pursuant to the doctrine laid down in (People vs. Amansec,[1] L-927, 45 Off. Gaz., [Supp. to No. 9], 51), and thus modified, the appealed judgment is affirmed.

Moran, C.J., Paras, Feria, Pablo, Bengzon, and Tuason, JJ., concur.

I certify that Mr. Justice Briones and Mr. Justice Montemayor voted for the affirmance of the judgment.—MORAN, C. J.

[1] 80 Phil., 424.

ABOUT BATAS.ORG

Study smarter at BATAS.org

The Philippine bar review and law-school companion built around how your brain actually remembers.

The complete Philippine law library - free for everyone.

More than 100,000 Supreme Court decisions, Republic Acts, and executive issuances - full-text searchable, browsable by category and year, and always free. No paywall, no login. This PDF came from it.

Audio case-brief lectures.

Any decision becomes a podcast-style lecture - facts, issues, ruling, and doctrine - with read-along highlighting and a hands-free presentation mode. Study while commuting, working out, or resting your eyes.

Bar review built on the science of memory.

Complete, sequenced courses for all eight bar subjects, narrated like podcasts and reinforced with retrieval practice and spaced review - the study techniques with the strongest evidence behind them.

The full law-school curriculum.

One subscription unlocks the entire J.D. curriculum - every subject, every lesson, with your progress tracked down to the paragraph so you can pick up exactly where you left off, on any device.

Mock exams that tell you where you stand.

Timed multiple-choice exams graded instantly, with per-subject score breakdowns and focus suggestions that point you at your weakest topics first.

A study planner that keeps you on pace.

Set your schedule and BATAS tells you every day whether you are on track for bar day - and exactly which lesson to take next.

Start free at <https://batas.org>

The law library is free forever - and your first lesson is one click away.

The text of this document is an official public record and remains in the public domain. Formatting, presentation, and compilation © 2026 batas.org.

Downloaded free from the batas.org Law Library. Share it freely - the library is free for every law student, bar reviewee, and practitioner.