

LIBEADA PROCESO DESPO, PETITIONER AND APPELLEE, VS. HONORABLE ANDRES STA. MARIA, ET AL., RESPONDENTS AND APPELLANTS.

G.R. No. L-6903. January 31, 1956

Ponente: REYES, J.B.L., J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/bb886151e27d/>

REYES, J.B.L., J.:

Appeal from an order of the Court of First Instance of Manila annulling an order of the Municipal Court,, also of Manila, in Civil' Case No. 19777 thereof, dismissing defendant's counterclaim for lack of jurisdiction;. over the same, and ordering the respondent Municipal Court to proceed with the hearing of the case including said counterclaim.

It appears that on March 22, 1952, Cristeto Reyes filed a detainer (termed "ejectment") case against Librada Proceso Despo in the Municipal Court of Manila. Defendant Despo filed an amended answer denying the allegations of the complaint charging that she was fraudulently induced to become .a lessee, and prayed, by way of counterclaim, for the recovery of the total sum of P6,000 Under 5 causes of action, to wit:

- (1) First cause of action—P500 for alleged improvements introduced by defendant in the premises;
- (2) Second cause of action—P2,000 for moral damages allegedly suffered by defendant because of the untimely removal and demolition of the apartment in question;
- (3) Third cause of action—P1,000 for compensatory damages allegedly suffered by defendant because of the demolition of her shop at the apartment in question;
- (4) Fourth cause of action—P2,000 for exemplary or correctional damages because of alleged fraudulent dealings of plaintiff with defendant; and
- (5) Fifth cause of action—P500 for attorney's fees.

Plaintiff moved for the dismissal of defendant's counterclaim on the ground that the aggregate sum claimed therein exceeded the jurisdiction of the Municipal Court; and finding the motion meritorious, the Municipal Court ordered the dismissal of the counterclaim. . Wherefore, defendant filed a petition for certiorari in the Court of First Instance of Manila, charging the Municipal Court with grave abuse of discretion and excess of jurisdiction in dismissing her counterclaim. The Court or First Instance of Manila granted the certiorari, held that the counterclaim in question was within the jurisdiction of the respondent court because each separate cause of action thereunder was for an amount not in excess of P2,000, and, as-already stated, annulled the order of dismissal and directed the Municipal Court to proceed with the hearing of the case including the counterclaim. From this order of the Court of First Instance of Manila, plaintiff Cristeto Reyes appealed to this Court.

The appeal must be sustained. In the recent case of Soriano vs. Omila, 97 Phil., 62, promulgated May 21, 1955 (51 Off. Gaz. [No. 7] 3465), this Court held that .the jurisdiction of a court depends, not upon the value or demand

in each single cause of action contained in the complaint, but upon the totality of, the demand in all the causes of action. The, aggregate, sum of P6,000 demanded under defendant's counterclaim being beyond the , jurisdiction of the Municipal Court of Manila, said court " correctly dismissed the same for lack of jurisdiction.

In the case of *Go vs. Go*, 95 Phil., 878 (June 30, 1954), we drew a distinction between a claim composed of several accounts each distinct from the other and arising out of different transactions, and another which is composed of several accounts, arising out of the same transaction; and we held that in the first case, the claims may be joined in a single action even if the total amount demanded exceeds the jurisdiction of the justice of the peace court, but each account furnishes the test of jurisdiction; while in the second case, the claims should be stated in one cause of action and cannot be divided for the purpose of bringing the case within the jurisdiction of the inferior court, and jurisdiction is determined by the total amount claimed. The present case falls within the second class; for all the five items of damages demanded under defendant's counterclaim admittedly arose out of one and the same transaction—the alleged untimely demolition of the apartment from which she was ejected by plaintiff. Hence, defendant cannot be permitted to divide or split her cause of action into several claims for the purpose of bringing the same within the jurisdiction of the municipal court. The totality of the amounts demanded in her counterclaim furnishes the test of jurisdiction; and as it exceeds P2,000, it falls within the jurisdiction of, and must be filed in, the Court of First Instance.

In support of its opinion that the Municipal Court had jurisdiction over defendant's counterclaim because each separate cause of action thereunder was for an amount not in excess of P2,000, the Court of First Instance of Manila cited the cases of *Argonza, et al. vs. International Colleges*, (90 Phil., 470) dated November 29, 1951, and *Soriano y Cia. vs. Jose*, 47 Off. Gaz. (12 Sup.) 156. Both cases cited are not in point, for there, several plaintiffs having separate and distinct claims against the same defendant were allowed to litigate together under the rule on permissive joinder of parties, there being a question of fact common to, and a right of relief arising out of the same transaction in favor of, all of them (section 6, Rule 3, Rules of Court) ; and while the totality of the claims of the several plaintiffs exceeded the jurisdiction of the inferior court, we held that the demand of each claimant furnished the jurisdictional test, and so the justice of the peace court had jurisdiction. Pointing out the difference between the case of several plaintiffs with separate claims suing under the same complaint, and that of one plaintiff, alleging in one complaint several independent causes of action, like the case at bar, we said:

"The petitioner believes that the joining of plaintiffs having separate' claims should be controlled by the principle bearing on the court's jurisdiction in suits where one plaintiff alleges in one complaint several independent causes of action, in which case it is the aggregate amount which determines the jurisdiction.. But there is a fundamental difference between such cases and. one like that before us. In the first,, the total demand accrues to one person, while in the latter only part of the combined demand, which does not exceed the jurisdictional amount, pertains to a single plaintiff. In other words, the court takes into account what one party would recover and not what is adjudged to all the parties or some of them." (*Soriano y Cia. vs. Jose*, supra.)

The order appealed from is, therefore, reversed, and the order of the Municipal Court of Manila dismissing defendant-appellee *Librada Proceso Despo's* counterclaim is affirmed. Costs against defendant-appellee. So ordered.

Parás, C. J., Padilla, Montemayor, Reyes, A., Jugo, Labrador, Concepcion, and Endencia, JJ., concur.

Bautista Angelo, J., concurs in the result.

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.