

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS. BALTAZAR ESTRAÑA, JR., ACCUSED-APPELLANT.

G.R. No. 104906. October 27, 1992

Ponente: GRINO-AQUINO, J.

Read online (full-text search, related cases, audio case brief): <https://batas.org/library/g-r-no-104906/>

GRINO-AQUINO, J.:

Erroneously appealed to the Court of Appeals which certified the case to this Court for final determination, is the decision of the Regional Trial Court, Eighth Judicial Region, Branch 10 at Abuyog, Leyte, in Criminal Case No. 721 entitled, “The People of the Philippines vs. Baltazar Estraña, Jr.,” convicting the accused-appellant of parricide and sentencing him to suffer the penalty of reclusion perpetua and to indemnify the legal heirs of the victim in the amount of P50,000.00.

The Information filed against the appellant alleged:

“That on or about the 30th day of May, 1987, in the Municipality of Mayorga, Province of Leyte, Philippines, and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, the above-named accused, with deliberate intent to kill, did then and there wilfully, unlawfully and feloniously attack, assault, stab and wound one Nenita Lumpas Estraña, his legitimate spouse, with a bladed weapon locally known as ‘pisao’ with which said accused had purposely provided himself, thereby causing and inflicting upon the said Nenita Lumpas Estraña wounds on her body which caused her death shortly thereafter.” (p. 14, Rollo.)

Upon arraignment on February 12, 1988, Estraña pleaded “not guilty” to the crime charged (p. 21, Records).

By the evidence of the prosecution, it was established that the victim, Nenita Lumpas Estraña, was the legal wife of the accused, Baltazar Estraña, Jr. In the afternoon of May 30, 1987, the couple joined Nenita's parents and other members of her family at the Mayorga Beach in San Roque, Leyte, for a swim. Afterwards they went to a party in the house of the prosecution witness, Olegario Nodalo, by the seashore. There, the party guests consumed two gallons of tuba. At 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, all the guests went home, except the Estraña spouses who continued to drink another half-gallon of tuba while quarreling over a stepchild. The couple left Nodalo's house at 8:00 o'clock in the evening. Nodalo accompanied them to the road, but he walked three meters behind them because they continued to argue and exchange heated words. Nodalo saw Baltazar holding Nenita on the shoulder as they walked and heard Nenita shout: “You are no good, you are only backbiting me that I am only your dependent!” (p. 51, Rollo). Shortly thereafter, he heard Nenita cry out “Ouch! I am wounded!” (pp. 5-7, tsn, September 15, 1989) whereupon he ran back to his house for fear that Baltazar would attack him also.

Baltazar arrived alone in his house, his clothes stained with blood. His mother-in-law inquired whether he had a quarrel with his wife, but he answered in the negative. Asked for his wife's whereabouts, he alleged that she had been snatched by unidentified persons. He then proceeded to the municipal building allegedly to report the incident, while his mother-in-law ordered her children to look for their sister. Baltazar, was detained in the municipal jail that night because he challenged a police guard to a fight.

Early the next morning, the lifeless body of Nenita was discovered by churchgoers near the pathway on a grassy

area about two kilometers from her house. It was covered by a towel with nipa and coconut leaves laid on top of it.

Meantime, in jail, Baltazar admitted to his mother-in-law that he killed Nenita because she allegedly bit him during their quarrel. Upon interrogation in the Office of the Chief of Police, he repeated that admission.

The municipal health officer of Mayorga, Leyte, performed an autopsy on the victim and found that she suffered three (3) fatal and penetrating stab wounds in the chest and seven (7) other non-fatal ones on the nipples and abdomen, caused by a sharp-pointed bladed "pisao." She died from loss of blood as a result of her wounds.

The accused did not adduce evidence.

On February 6, 1989, the trial court rendered judgment convicting the accused of parricide, but it appreciated in his favor the mitigating circumstance of voluntary surrender. Applying the Indeterminate Sentence Law, the court sentenced Baltazar Estraña to suffer the penalty of twelve (12) years and one (1) day of prison mayor in its maximum period, to fourteen (14) years, eight (8) months, and one (1) day of reclusion temporal, minimum, and to pay P30,000.00 as civil indemnity for the death of the victim. The full period of his preventive imprisonment was to be credited to the service of his sentence as provided in Article 29 of the Revised Penal Code.

Estraña appealed the decision to the Court of Appeals (CA-G.R. CR No. 07746) on the lone assigned error that the trial court erred in finding him guilty of the crime of parricide upon insufficient evidence.

On April 21, 1992, the Court of Appeals affirmed the judgment of conviction, but increased the penalty to reclusion perpetua. There is no room for the application of the Indeterminate Sentence Law for the penalty of reclusion perpetua is a single and indivisible penalty, hence, it should be applied regardless of the presence of any aggravating or mitigating circumstances in the commission of the crime. The civil indemnity was increased to P50,000.00 in accordance with applicable jurisprudence.

As the impossible penalty is reclusion perpetua, the Court of Appeals refrained from entering judgment and instead, it certified the case to this Court for final determination as provided in Section 3, Rule 50 of the Rules of Court.

After deliberating on the petition for review, we do not find any compelling reason to disregard the trial court's factual findings in this case for it had the advantage of observing first-hand the demeanor of all witnesses who testified before it and of testing their credibility and truthfulness through cross-examination. Direct evidence of the stabbing is not necessary, because circumstantial evidence has adequately established the identity of the killer, destroyed the presumption of innocence in his favor, and fulfilled the test of moral certainty sufficient to convict him (*People vs. Simene*, 184 SCRA 99; *People vs. Aldequer*, 184 SCRA 1; *People vs. Flores*, 186 SCRA 303).

In *People vs. Agan*, 181 SCRA 856, 859, we ruled that:

"Circumstantial evidence is sufficient for conviction if: (1) there is more than one circumstance; (2) the facts from which the inference are derived are proven; and (c) the combination of all circumstances is such as to produce a conviction beyond reasonable doubt. (Sec. 5, Rule 133, Rules of Court.)"

The circumstances forming an unbroken chain leading to one fair and reasonable conclusion that Baltazar, to the exclusion of all others, is the guilty person, are the following:

1. The Estraña spouses were already quarrelling heatedly inside the house of Olegario Nodalo in the afternoon of May 30, 1987 and when they left Nodalo's house together at 8 o'clock in the evening they were still engaged in heated argument. They had no other companions except Nodalo who walked a few meters behind them and heard the victim's cry: "Ouch, I am wounded!" (pp. 6-7, tsn, Sept. 15, 1989).

2. The appellant arrived home alone and with bloody clothes after eight o'clock in the evening. He announced to his mother-in-law that his wife had been snatched ("guin-agao") (p. 6, tsn, August 17, 1989) by unknown men but he did not explain why he was spared, and why he did not make any attempt to rescue his wife.
3. During his detention in the municipal jail, the appellant admitted to his mother-in-law that he stabbed Nenita because she bit him on the way home. He repeated this admission to the Chief of Police.
4. The next morning, early churchgoers found the victim's body behind nipa plants by the road to the Estraña residence belying the accused's story that his wife was abducted.
5. Appellant did not testify at the trial, although he was ably represented by counsel. He did not make any effort, at any stage of the trial, to refute the serious criminal charge against him.

These inculpatory facts and circumstances are not capable of any other explanation than that the appellant killed his wife. The chain of circumstances occurring before, during, and after the stabbing, of Nenita Lumpas Estraña, linked together, leads to but one indubitable conclusion: that she was murdered by her husband, the herein accused, Baltazar Estraña.

WHEREFORE, the Court finds the accused GUILTY beyond reasonable doubt of the crime of parricide and hereby sentences him to suffer the penalty of reclusion perpetua with the accessory penalties provided by law and to pay death indemnity of P50,000.00 to the legal heirs (children) of the deceased, Nenita Lumpas Estraña, and the costs. He shall be credited in the service of his sentence with the full period of his preventive imprisonment.

SO ORDERED.

Padilla, Medialdea, and Bellosillo, JJ., concur.

Cruz, J., (Chairman), on leave.

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.