

PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS. EDGAR SADANG, ARNULFO SAYO, AND LEODIGARIO ESPINAR, DEFENDANTS-APPELLANTS.

G.R. No. 105378. June 27, 1994

Ponente: KAPUNAN, J.

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KAPUNAN, J.:

Before us is an appeal from the decision of the Regional Trial Court of Laoag City, Branch 15, in Criminal Case No. 4697-15 for robbery with rape.

On October 20, 1989, the Assistant Provincial Prosecutor of Laoag City filed an information against Edgar Sadang, Arnulfo Sayo, Leodigario Espinar and Joel Maligsay accusing them of the crime of robbery with rape, defined and penalized under paragraph 2 of Article 294 of the Revised Penal Code, as amended. The indictment reads:

"That on or about September 28, 1989, at night time, in Bgy. 14, Bacarra, locos Norte, Philippines and within the jurisdiction of this Honorable Court, all the above-named accused conspiring, confederating and mutually helping one another, then armed with deadly weapons, to wit: two short firearms, one hand grenade and one balisong knife, with intent of gain and by means of violence and intimidation, did then and there wilfully, unlawfully and feloniously take, steal and carry away the following properties belonging to and owned by EUGENIA GALAPON, MARILYN FERMINA GALAPON, LUCIA GALAPON and DOMINADOR ACOB, to wit:

1. Seven (7) earrings valued at P10,000.00;
2. Two (2) pairs of earrings valued at P3,000.00;
3. Two (2) wristwatches, timex and citizen valued at P5,000.00;
4. One (1) camera valued at P3,000.00;
5. One (1) set Betamax with rewinder valued at P10,000.00;
6. One (1) imported textile valued at P400.00;
7. One (1) unit imported chainsaw valued at P10,000.00;
8. Cash, Philippine currency amounting to P3,000.00;
9. Old coins amounting to P5.00;
10. Assorted jewelries (sic) belonging to Lucia Galapon valued at P15,000.00;
11. One (1) cal. 30 smith and wesson valued at P8,000.00;
12. One (1) cal. 45 colt pistol valued at P15,000.00;

13. One (1) nike bag valued at P400.00.

and with a total amount and value of ONE HUNDRED TWO THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED FIVE PESOS (P102,805.00), Philippine currency, to the damage and prejudice of said Eugenia Galapon, Marilyn Fermina Galapon, Dominador Acob and Lucia Galapon to the aforesaid sum of P102,805.00; and, that during and on the occasion of the robbery, the accused EDGAR SADANG and ARNULFO SAYO with the employment of force and intimidation took turns in forcibly having sexual intercourse with MARILYN FERMINA GALAPON against the latter's will and consent.

CONTRARY TO LAW."[1]

On October 31, 1989, appellants Edgar Sadang, Arnulfo Sayo, and Leodigario Espinar pleaded not guilty to the crime charged.[2] Subsequently, accused Joel Maligsay was apprehended, hence, he was accordingly arraigned on June 1, 1990 where he likewise entered a plea of not guilty.[3]

Thereafter, trial ensued with both parties presenting evidence.

In time, the court a quo rendered judgment, the decretal portion of which reads:

"WHEREFORE, Judgment is hereby rendered declaring Edgar Sadang, Arnulfo Sayo, Leodigario Espinar and Joel Maligsay guilty beyond reasonable doubt as principals of the crime of robbery with rape penalized by paragraph 2 of Article 294, in relation to Art. 293, of the Revised Penal Code. They are hereby sentenced to suffer the penalty of reclusion perpetua and ordered to indemnify jointly and severally Eugenia Galapon, Marilyn Fermina Galapon, Dominador Acob, and Lucia Galapon in the amount of P92,805.00 representing the value of the unrecovered stolen items. Further, they are also ordered to indemnify jointly and severally Marilyn Fermina Galapon, the rape victim, in the amount of P30,000.00.

Accused Joel Maligsay is sentenced in absentia having escaped from detention during the trial. Let a standing warrant be issued for his arrest.

SO ORDERED."[4]

The relevant antecedents are as follows:

Private complainants Eugenia Galapon, her daughter Marilyn Fermina Galapon, and the latter's common-law husband, Dominador Acob, were caretakers of a house located at Barangay 14, Bacarra, Ilocos Norte.

At around 6:30 in the evening of September 28, 1989 while the complainants and other members of their family were watching a home movie, four armed men appeared on their front porch (azotea).[5] Dominador Acob switched on the porch light and saw a gun pointed at him.[6] He was told not to be afraid because they were members of the NPA and they just wanted to enter the house and to eat for they were hungry.[7]

Acob complied with the request, opened the front door[8] and four men armed with guns, a hand grenade and a knife entered.[9] Once inside, the four armed men identified in court as the four accused, searched the house and asked for keys and money.[10] When they were told that the occupants had no money and that the only key they had was the key to the gate, Edgar Sadang and Arnulfo Sayo grabbed Eugenia Galapon and Marilyn Galapon and brought them to the second floor of the house.[11] Sadang demanded money from Marilyn, threatening to rape her and kill her common-law husband if she refused.[12] When she could not give any, she was taken into one of the rooms by Sadang.[13] There, she was sexually assaulted by Sadang. With a gun pointed at her, he tore open her house dress (duster), ripped off her panty, forced her to lie down on the bed, went on top of her and had sexual intercourse with her forcibly, all the while threatening to kill her if she offered any resistance.[14] While this abuse was going on, Eugenia, Marilyn's mother, was made to stand at the door of the room to witness the rape while she was guarded by Sayo who was armed with a knife.[15] When Sadang finished taking advantage of

Marilyn, he went out of the room and took Eugenia away from the door. Sayo, on the other hand, followed suit and raped Marilyn while threatening to kill her if she resisted.[16]

Thereafter, Sadang and Sayo brought Marilyn and Eugenia to another room to look for valuables.[17] Sadang and Sayo then forcibly opened a wooden trunk ("baul" as is commonly known in local parlance) and an aparador and took the following items, viz: (a) assorted jewelry; (b) clothing materials; (c) a chainsaw; (d) an electric drill; and (e) two guns, all of which belonged to the family of Lucia Galapon, owner of the house who was abroad at that time.[18]

Later, Sadang and Sayo brought Eugenia and Marilyn to the groundfloor where the two other armed men, later identified as Joel Maligsay and Leodigario Espinar, were guarding Dominador Acob and the rest of the family.[19] The four malefactors continued to search the house and took nine pairs of earrings, a camera, a home video unit (Betamax) with rewinder, two wristwatches and P3,000.00 in cash, all belonging to Eugenia and Marilyn Galapon and Dominador Acob from a bodega and a medicine cabinet.[20] They then assembled the said occupants in the living room and after threatening them with death if they reported the incident to the police authorities, left the house at about 11:00 in the evening.[21]

Afraid that the armed men will make good their threat, the victims did not report the incident to the police.[22] Neither did Marilyn Galapon, the rape victim, submit herself for medical examination.[23]

Two weeks later or on October 16, 1989 to be exact, herein private complainants were asked to go to the Bacarra Police Station to identify a suspect apprehended by the police.[24] Said private complainants identified Edgar Sadang as one of the four armed men who robbed them on September 28, 1989 and as the first robber who raped Marilyn.[25] Later, they were taken to the PC Headquarters in Camp Juan, Laoag City where they identified another suspect, Arnulfo Sayo, as one of the armed robbers and the second robber who raped Marilyn.[26] Said positive identification was done in the investigation room of the said headquarters and in the presence of police investigator, PC Sgt. Monico Dolloog.[27] Leodigario Espinar was likewise identified as one of the robbers. On May 10, 1990, Joel Maligsay was apprehended and was later on identified in open court by Eugenia and Marilyn Galapon.[28]

Subsequently, the police authorities recovered the stolen chain saw and electric drill from the house of one Petronilo Espejo of San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte who told police investigators that it was Edgar Sadang who offered the items to him for sale.[29]

Based on the foregoing, the court a quo rendered the aforequoted judgment of conviction, hence, the instant appeal.

However, in a resolution dated January 31, 1993, the trial court resolved to dismiss the appeal of accused-appellant Arnulfo Sayo for failure of his counsel de parte to file his appeal brief within the reglementary period.[30]

On February 3, 1993, accused-appellants Edgar Sadang and Leodigario Espinar filed their joint brief and ascribed to the court below the following errors, to wit:

"I

THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN GIVING EVIDENTIARY WEIGHT TO THE INCONSISTENT, UNRELIABLE, UNWORTHY AND INCREDIBLE TESTIMONIES OF PROSECUTION WITNESSES EUGENIA GALAPON AND MARILYN GALAPON RELATIVE TO THE IMPUGNED INCIDENT.

II

THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN NOT DISREGARDING THE IDENTIFICATION MADE BY THE PROSECUTION WITNESSES OF ACCUSED-APPELLANT EDGAR SADANG AS ONE OF THE PERPETRATORS OF THE CRIME CHARGED.

III

THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN CONCLUDING THAT MARILYN GALAPON WAS SEXUALLY ASSAULTED BY ACCUSED-APPELLANT EDGAR SADANG CONSIDERING THAT SHE DID NOT OFFER ANY TENACIOUS RESISTANCE AND THAT SHE FAILED TO SUBMIT HERSELF FOR MEDICAL EXAMINATION.

IV

THE TRIAL COURT ERRED IN NOT GIVING EXCULPATORY WEIGHT TO THE DEFENSE OF ALIBI INTERPOSED BY ACCUSED-APPELLANT EDGAR SADANG CONSIDERING THE FACT THAT HIS IDENTIFICATION WAS HIGHLY DUBITABLE.

V

THE TRIAL COURT GRAVELY ERRED IN CONVICTING ACCUSED-APPELLANTS EDGAR SADANG AND LEODIGARIO ESPINAR OF THE CRIME CHARGED DESPITE THE FACT THAT THE PROSECUTION FAILED TO HURDLE THE EXACTING TEST OF MORAL CERTAINTY."[31]

The appeal fails to persuade.

The guilt of the accused-appellants for the crime of robbery with rape had been proved beyond all reasonable doubt.

As defined by law, robbery is the taking of personal property belonging to another, with intent to gain, by means of violence against, or intimidation of any person, or using force upon anything.[32] In the case at bench, the prosecution has sufficiently established the fact that herein private complainants were robbed of valuables by four armed men on that fateful night of September 28, 1989. The testimonies of Marilyn Galapon and Eugenia Galapon are clear on this point.

Marilyn Fermina Galapon testified on direct examination:

"q Now after Arnulfo Sayo had already raped you, what transpired next, if any?

a We went out of the room and they continued to look for valuables inside our house, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q Were they able to take anything inside that room that you mentioned?

a There were, sir.

q What are those items, if you know?

a Jewelries (sic) of the owner of the house, chain saw and two guns, sir.

q What else, if any?

a Betamax, rings, earrings and many more but I can no longer remember the others, sir.

q Who among the two was ransacking the "bawl"?

a Sadang was the one who ransacked the "bawl" and Sayo the aparador, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q And after that, what transpired next?

a We went down, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q And what happened downstairs, if you know?

a They opened our medicine cabinet and there they took nine pairs of earrings, two watches and no more, sir."[33]

On cross examination, the same witness testified:

"q x x x All your aparadors were unlocked, is it not?

a They were locked, sir.

q And how did they open them?

a They forcibly opened, sir.

q And in that aparador, that is where the jewelries (sic) were placed?

a No, sir.

q Where?

a On the wooden trunk, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q So after ransacking upstairs, they also ransacked downstairs?

a Yes, sir.

q But they did not take anything downstairs?

a Our money amounting to P3,000.00, our two (2) watches and jewelries (sic) including one (1) camera and betamax, sir."[34]

Corroborating the foregoing testimony, Eugenia Galapon declared on direct examination:

"q You stated that Sadang searched your aparador and others, can you recall what items was taken by him?

a Yes, sir.

q What are those items that were taken?

a They took jewelries (sic), clothings, camera, flashlight, Betamax rewinder, chain saw, two watches, and they also took our money, sir, and P5.00 old coin."[35]

On cross examination, the same witness testified:

"q Then these four persons who claimed to be NPAs have to farce you to bring out your money and jewelries (sic)?

a They just ransacked the house and got our jewelries (sic) from the medicine cabinet and upstairs, sir." [36]

On the fact of rape, Marilyn Fermina Galapon categorically declared:

"q Now when you were already inside the middle room as you have stated with respect to Edgar Sadang, what happened?

a He tore my duster, sir.

q And thereafter, what transpired?

a He removed my panty and let me lie down on the bed, sir.

q After x x x he forced you to lie down on the bed, what transpired next?

a He went on top of me and fucked me, sir.

q Why did you not cry for help at that time?

a Because a gun was poked on the left side of my head, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q And after that, what transpired next, if any?

a His companion followed in raping me, sir.

q Who?

a Arnulfo Sayo, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q How did Arnulfo Sayo rape you?

a The same with Edgar Sadang, he went on top of me and raped me, sir. . . fucked me.

q Why did you not call for help that time when Arnulfo Sayo was raping you?

a Because he was pointing his knife on the left side of my head, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q Now after Arnulfo Sayo had already raped you, what transpired next, if any?

a We went out of the room and they continued to look for valuables inside our house, sir." [37]

x x x x x x x x

"q Now despite of that, you did not make any resistance?

a I made resistance but because the gun was poked on my head and he said he will kill me, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q Now when Edgar Sadang was already on top of you, where was the gun that he used . . where was the gun Edgar Sadang was holding?

a It was placed on the bed but he was holding it and pointing the gun at my head, sir." [38]

Eugenia Galapon who witnessed the said sexual assault as she was standing at the door of the room while Sadang

was raping her daughter testified on direct examination:

"q You said that you were at the door of the room where your daughter was raped?

a Yes, Your Honor."

x x x x x x x x

"q Was the door open?

a Yes, Your Honor.

FISCAL MANUEL:

"q Kindly explain before this Honorable Court how Edgar Sadang raped your daughter?

a Edgar Sadang told my daughter that if she does not follow to his likes she will be killed.

q Why did you not help your daughter when you have seen that Edgar Sadang is raping her?

a How can I help her if we will talk they will kill us, sir.

"q Who told you that?

a Edgar Sadang, sir."[39]

On cross examination, the same witness testified:

"q Because you saw your daughter lay in the bed you presumed that she was raped?

a She was really raped and I really saw her being raped (inlungat).

q You saw she was being raped because the fact is that Edgar Sadang is on top of her?

a Yes, sir, he really went on top of my daughter."

x x x x x x x x

"q You did not see because the room was very dark at that time, isn't it?

a No, sir, it was very bright because I was ashamed to look of (sic) them of their push and pull position so I moved my face.

q You mean to say that because you ashame (sic) of their position so you did not see anything?

a I saw him holding a gun but I cannot remember where was that gun pointed.

q You better answer my question. My question is because you (sic) ashame to see your daughter, isn't that when Sadang was on top of your daughter, you turned your head because you cannot bear to look your daughter being raped?

a No, sir, because when he inserted his penis, I was still looking at them.

q You mean to say that when his penis was inserted, you saw them?

a I saw them, sir."

x x x x x x x x

"q What kind of resistance was your daughter did?

a My daughter resisted and she even informed Sadang that she has husband but Sadang threatened her to be killed (sic).[40]

On the crime of rape, appellants insist that the absence of medical examination, the non-presentation of the victim's torn panty in court, and the lack of resistance on the part of the victim, are fatal to the case of the prosecution.

We do not agree.

The absence of medical findings by a medico-legal officer does not disprove the commission of rape.[41] Medical examination is not an indispensable element in the prosecution of rape;[42] neither is the presentation of the victim's torn panty fatal to the prosecution's case.[43] The testimonial evidence adduced on behalf of the People was sufficient to establish that the crime of rape had indeed been committed. Furthermore, had Marilyn subjected herself to medical examination, the same would have been fruitless. The sexual assault happened on September 28, 1989 while the identification of the perpetrators was done only on October 16, 1989, a clear 18-day period after the harrowing incident occurred. In fact, had there been no apprehension, the victims would not have complained for fear of their lives. With respect to the lack of tenacious resistance on the part of the victim during the rape, it would suffice to state that the victim was unable to resist because of the threat to her life. Sadang was armed with a gun pointed at the victim's head when he ravished her.[44] Under Article 335, paragraph 1, of the Revised Penal Code, rape is committed by having carnal knowledge of a woman by using force or intimidation. Hence, rape may be committed even if no force is used. Intimidation is sufficient, and this includes the moral kind such as threatening the victim with a gun or knife.[45] Therefore, when appellant Sadang threatened the victim herein with a gun during the sexual assault, intimidation was present constituting his act as rape.

Appellant in trying to cast doubt on prosecution witness Eugenia Galapon's credibility alleged the following "inconsistencies" and/or "improbabilities" in the latter's testimony, to wit:

(i) Eugenia testified that her daughter Marilyn was wearing a "black dotted with white" duster when molested. The apparel was later presented in court during which, the defense counsel manifested its color to be blue with green, red, white and pink prints.[46]

(ii) Eugenia claimed that she was investigated in the morning of October 16, 1989 albeit her sworn statement disclosed that she was investigated at about 1:30 in the afternoon of the same day.[47]

(iii) Eugenia said that "she was able to recognize Joel Maligsay as one of the intruders because of the latter's mole at the right cheek. Joel indeed has a mole but it was on the left cheek.[48]

(iv) Eugenia averred that the nearest house from the crime scene was 100 meters to the north and that there was no house at the eastern side. On ocular inspection, it was noted that there was a house 14 meters to the east of the crime scene.[49]

(v) Eugenia testified that she did not see Sayo rape her daughter although in her sworn statement, she stated that the rape was committed "in front" of her.[50]

(vi) Eugenia claimed that a gun was poked at her while Marilyn identified the weapon poked at her mother as nothing but a knife.[51]

(vii) Eugenia failed to make an outcry while her daughter was being ravished -- a circumstance that is contrary to human nature.[52]

(viii) Eugenia's identification of appellants is dubious as such startling occurrence was sufficient to distort her recollection.[53] And,

(ix) Eugenia and her family did not report the incident immediately to the authorities because, in truth, there was nothing to report.[54]

The inconsistencies referred to by the defense as basis to discredit Eugenia's testimony are de minimus which are not sufficient to blur or cast doubt on her straightforward attestations, and such inconsistencies must rather be viewed as adding credence and veracity to the spontaneity of her testimony.[55] The supposedly inconsistent statements given by Eugenia are clearly susceptible of coagmentation as to what actually transpired that evening.[56] In the case of *People vs. Custodio*[57] citing *People vs. Muñoz*,[58] this Court declared that:

"The fact that the witness fails to mention a particular detail of an incident, especially when testifying on different occasions, does not per se undermine his credibility. The nature and difference of the proceedings involved and the questions propounded therein as would or would not succeed in eliciting the details desired are only some of the factors to be considered. What is controlling is the consistency of the witness in relating the significant and indispensable components of the principal occurrence. We have held that a few discrepancies and inconsistencies in the testimonies of witnesses referring to minor details, and not in actuality touching upon the basic aspects of the whys and wherefores of the crime, do not impair their credibility."

The circumstances cited by appellants do not, at all, indicate fabrication and falsehoods. At best, they merely reflect the witness's sincerity, candor, and at times, her illiteracy. Thus, despite the minor inconsistencies in Eugenia's testimony (which we find insignificant and inconsequential to discuss singly), it is believable on the whole as a coherent narration of what transpired that evening. Moreover, assuming *arguendo* that Eugenia's version must be disregarded, the same would not result in the acquittal of the appellants, the said testimony being merely corroborative of Marilyn's narration.

Finally, the constitutional presumption of innocence vigorously invoked by the appellants cannot be applied in the instant case where the guilt of the accused had been proven beyond reasonable doubt. It is true that the Bill of Rights guarantees that any person accused of a criminal offense is presumed innocent until the contrary is proved,[59] and the quantum of evidence required by law to overcome this presumption, and to justify any criminal conviction is proof beyond reasonable doubt.[60] However, this is not to say that there should be absolute certainty in every criminal conviction. What the law requires the prosecution to adduce is only that degree of proof which produces conviction in an unprejudiced mind[61] or at least, moral certainty that the offense was committed.[62]

WHEREFORE, premises considered, the judgment appealed from is hereby **AFFIRMED** but **MODIFIED** with respect to the indemnity awarded to Marilyn Galapon. The same should be increased to P50,000.00 in line with recent jurisprudence. Costs against appellants.

SO ORDERED.

Cruz, (Chairman), Davide, Jr., Bellosillo, and Quiason, JJ., concur.

[1] Information, pp. 1-2; Original Records, pp. 1-2.

[2] Original Records, pp. 16-17.

[3] Original Records, pp. 39, 44.

[4] Decision, p. 25; Original Records, p. 166.

[5] TSN, June 4, 1990, p. 8.

- [6] Ibid.
- [7] Id., at pp. 8-9.
- [8] Ibid.
- [9] TSN, February 12, 1991, p. 6.
- [10] Id., at p. 8.
- [11] Id., at p. 9; TSN, June 4, 1990, pp. 9-10.
- [12] Ibid.
- [13] TSN, February 12, 1991, p. 9.
- [14] Id., at pp. 10-11.
- [15] Id., at p. 10; TSN, June 4, 1990, pp. 10, 12-13.
- [16] Id., at pp. 13-14.
- [17] Id., at p. 15.
- [18] Ibid.
- [19] Id., at p. 16.
- [20] Ibid.
- [21] Id., at p. 17.
- [22] Ibid.
- [23] Ibid.
- [24] TSN, February 12, 1991, p. 40.
- [25] Ibid.
- [26] Ibid.
- [27] Ibid.
- [28] TSN, June 4, 1990, p. 46.
- [29] TSN, March 19, 1991, pp. 3-8.
- [30] Rollo, p. 54.
- [31] Rollo, p. 65.
- [32] Article 293, Revised Penal Code.
- [33] TSN, February 12, 1991, pp. 14-16.
- [34] Id., at pp. 35-36 and 42.
- [35] TSN, June 4, 1990, p. 13.
- [36] TSN, July 23, 1990, p. 19.

[37] TSN, February 12, 1991, pp. 10, 13-14.

[38] Id., at p. 30.

[39] TSN, June 4, 1990, pp. 10-11.

[40] TSN, December 11, 1990, pp. 4, 5, 6, and 8.

[41] People vs. Base, G.R. No. 92124, May 6, 1991, 196 SCRA 688.

[42] People vs. Angsioko, G.R. No. 44223, August 13, 1984, 131 SCRA 486.

[43] People vs. Corro, G.R. No. 62673, May 15, 1991, 197 SCRA 121.

[44] TSN, February 12, 1991, p. 30.

[45] People vs. Villamayor, G.R. Nos. 97475-76, July 18, 1991, 199 SCRA 472; People vs. Hortillano, 177 SCRA 729.

[46] Pp. 7-8, Appellants' Brief; Rollo, pp. 71-72.

[47] Pp. 8-9, Id.; Id., at pp. 72-73.

[48] Pp. 9-10, id.; Id., at pp. 73-74.

[49] Pp. 10-11; Id., at p. 74.

[50] Pp.13, id.; Id., at p. 76.

[51] p. 14, id.; Id., at p. 77.

[52] p. 15, id.; Id., at p.78.

[53] p. 17, id.; Id., at p. 80.

[54] Pp. 17-18, id.; Id., at pp. 80-81.

[55] People vs. Collado, No. 88631, April 30, 1991, 196 SCRA 519.

[56] People vs. Custodio, G.R. No. 96230, May 27, 1991, 197 SCRA 538.

[57] Id., at p. 543

[58] 163 SCRA 730.

[59] Article III, Section 14(2), Constitution.

[60] Rule 123, Section 2, Rules of Court.

[61] Rule 133, Section 2 and Rule 131, Section 2, Rules of Court; People vs. Fernando, G.R. No. 60409, December 1, 1987, 156 SCRA 35; People vs. Ola, G.R. No. 47147, July 3, 1987, 152 SCRA 1; People vs. de Guzman, G.R. No. 68951, June 16, 1988, 162 SCRA 145.

[62] People vs. Felipe, 115 SCRA 88; People vs. Dramayo, 42 SCRA 59; U.S. vs. Lasada, 18 Phil. 90.

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