

FIRST DIVISION

[G.R. No. 96923, May 24, 1996]

**THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES, PLAINTIFF-APPELLEE, VS.
RENANTE PARAGUA AND EDGARDO PARAGUA, ACCUSED-
APPELLANTS.**

D E C I S I O N

HERMOSISIMA, JR., J.:

This is an appeal from the decision^[1] of the Regional Trial Court, Branch 55, Lucena City, the dispositive portion of which reads:

"WHEREFORE, the Court hereby finds the accused Renante and Edgardo, both surnamed Paragua guilty beyond reasonable doubt as principals of the crime of Murder qualified by treachery, as defined and penalized under Article 248 of the Revised Penal Code, and appreciating the mitigating circumstance of minority in favor of accused Edgardo Paragua only, and after applying the Indeterminate Sentence Law, hereby sentence Edgardo Paragua to suffer an indeterminate penalty ranging from TWELVE YEARS and ONE (1) DAY of reclusion temporal, as minimum, to SEVENTEEN (17) YEARS and FOUR (4) MONTHS of reclusion temporal, as maximum, and Renante Paragua to suffer the penalty of reclusion perpetua both accused, jointly and severally, to indemnify the heirs of Dennis Baladad in the amount of P7,000.00 by way of actual damages, P30,000.00 by way of compensatory damages; and to pay the costs of this action proportionately.

SO ORDERED."

The antecedent facts, as found by the trial court, are as follows:^[2]

"Bartolome Umila is a childmate of Dennis Baladad and the barriomate of the two (2) accused. On December 3, 1988, at about 8:30 o'clock in the evening more or less, he was at the house of Diosdado Sinag at Barangay Limbon, Sariaya, Quezon. With him were the latter, a certain Nelson, Isidro Camu, Raul Ilaog and Leody Leonor. He was seated with Dennis Baladad while the others were making 'Nilupak.' The accused Renante and Edgardo Paragua were also seated in the same row where he and Dennis Baladad were seated. Seeing Renante Paragua making a cross, Bartolome Umila asked for whom the cross was and Renante Paragua answered that the cross was for him (Bartolome Umila) and Dennis Baladad. Bartolome Umila and Dennis Baladad did not do

anything after Renante Paragua made such answer, and after about six (6) minutes, both accused left the place of Diosdado Sinag.

After the lapse of ten (10) minutes, Bartolome Umila and Dennis Baladad likewise left the same place and proceeded towards the house of Dennis Baladad. However, while Bartolome Umila was walking ahead of Dennis Baladad, he suddenly heard the latter uttered the following: 'Inay ko po,' and when he turned a flashlight towards his back, he saw Dennis Baladad being stabbed by the two (2) accused with a 'gulukan.' He saw further that Edgardo Paragua held Danilo Baladad with his left hand and stabbed the latter with his right hand. While the other accused, Renante Paragua, also stabbed Dennis Baladad.

Bartolome Umila then tried to help Dennis Baladad but when he tried to approach him, Renante Paragua lunged at him. To avoid getting stabbed, he ran away from the scene towards their house where, upon arrival and after gaining his composure, he told his parents about the incident. His parents accompanied him back to the place of the incident but they found Dennis Baladad already dead thereat. Bartolome Umila subsequently proceeded to the house of Dennis Baladad and informed the people thereat about the stabbing incident."

The appellants argued that the trial court erred in:^[3]

- 1) holding that accused-appellants killed the deceased Dennis Baladad.
- 2) holding them guilty of the crime of murder.

It is appellants' contention that the trial court convicted them only on the basis of the lone testimony of the eyewitness, Bartolome Umila, notwithstanding the fact that Umila's testimony is not worthy of belief because it is unlikely for a person who had witnessed a murder to run to his parents' house without even informing the victim's parents first, since the victim's parents ought to be more interested in giving aid to the victim. Furthermore, appellants alleged that no motive has been established for the killing.^[4] Also claimed is that the testimony of Umila raises doubt as to the identity of the killers because he said that the report made by Teodoro Baladad which was entered in the police blotter made manifest the fact that the suspects were unknown (Exhibit 1). Consequently, the trial court allegedly committed an error in finding them culpable for the death of the victim.

We find the appeal to be without merit.

In the absence of evidence to show any reason or motive why witnesses for the prosecution testified falsely, the logical conclusion is that no improper motive existed and that their testimony is worthy of full faith and credit.^[5] The defense of the accused is hinged on alibi and denial, which warrant the least credibility or none at all. Both accused testified that they were already home when the stabbing incident happened, Edgardo had come from a "lupakan ng saging,"^[6] while Renante had come from the ricefield.^[7] Both allegedly arrived home at around nine o'clock in