

**THE JURISDICTION OF COURTS  
UNDER THE JUDICIARY REORGANIZATION ACT OF 1980**

By: Jacinto D. Jimenez\*

Because the constitutionality of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 has been challenged before the Supreme Court in the case of *De la Llana vs. Alba et al*, GRL - 57883 – members of the Bar have concentrated their salvos on its effect on the security of the tenure of incumbent members of the bench. In the din of battle, the changes in the jurisdiction of the courts which the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 seeks to introduce have been cast aside. It is the purpose of this article to discuss the effects of the implementation of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 upon the jurisdiction of the courts.

1. Intermediate Appellate Court

A. Special Civil Actions

Section 9 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 provides:

“The Intermediate Appellate Court shall exercise:

1) Original jurisdiction to issue writs of mandamus, prohibition, certiorari, habeas corpus, and quo warranto, and auxiliary writs or processes, whether or not in aid of its appellate jurisdiction.”

Under Section 30 of the Judiciary Act of 1948, the Court of Appeals can issue such writs in aid of its appellate jurisdiction only.

Because of the change in the jurisdiction of the Intermediate Appellate Court, it can entertain special civil actions against public officials whose decisions are not appealable to it, such as, cabinet members and fiscals. It has jurisdiction over special civil actions against judges of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.

Even if a decision of the Regional Trial Court has become final and executory, the Intermediate Appellate Court can act on a special civil action against the Regional Trial Court if issuance of the writ prayed for is proper. Even if a criminal case pending before the Regional Trial Court is appealable to the Supreme Court because the imposable penalty is *reclusion perpetua* or death, interlocutory orders of the Regional Trial Court can be challenged by filing a special civil action before the Intermediate Appellate Court.

---

\*Professor of Law, Ateneo College of Law; A.B., Ateneo; LL.B., Ateneo.

Although the Intermediate Appellate Court can entertain special civil actions even against public officials and courts whose decisions are not appealable to it, still it cannot entertain special civil actions filed against special courts and administrative agencies whose decisions remain appealable exclusively to the Supreme Court. The Intermediate Appellate Court may issue the writs enumerated in the law only against courts and administrative agencies who occupy a lower rank. It cannot issue such writs against courts and administrative agencies which are its co-equals.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Intermediate Appellate Court lacks jurisdiction to entertain special civil actions against the Sandiganbayan, the Court of Tax Appeals, the Commission on Audit, and the Commission on Elections.<sup>2</sup>

By express provision of law, the Intermediate Appellate Court has no jurisdiction over special civil actions against the Control Board of Assessment Appeals and the Minister of Labor and employment, the National Labor Relations Commission, the Employees' Compensation Commission, and the Director of Labor Relations in the exercise of their quasi-judicial functions under the Labor Code.

Section 9 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 states:

"These provisions shall not apply to decisions and interlocutory orders issued under the Labor Code of the Philippines and by Central Board of Assessment Appeals."

#### B. Annulment of Judgments

An action to annul a decision of the Regional Trial Court has to be filed in the Intermediate Appellate Court. Section 9 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 grants the Intermediate Appellate Court:

<sup>1</sup>Iloilo Commercial & Ice Co. vs. Public Service Commission, 56 Phil. 28, 30; Kaisahan Ng Mga Magsagawa sa La Campana vs. Caluag, 112 Phil. 700, 702; Regalado vs. Provincial Commander of Negros Occidental, 113 Phil. 490, 491; Sumilang vs. Castillo, 114 Phil. 1147, 1151; Pineda vs. Lantin, 116 Phil. 1078, 1083; Poblete Constructors Co. vs. Social Security Commission, 119 Phil. 264, 266-267; Afag Veterans Corporation, Inc. vs. Pineda, 122 Phil. 643, 647; Honda Giken Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha vs. San Diego, 123 Phil. 239, 244; Philippine American Life Insurance Co. vs. Social Security Commission, 64 O.G. 9777, 9781; San Diego vs. Villagrancia, G.R. No. L-20411, February 17, 1968, 22 SCRA 592, 596; Belleza vs. Dimson Farms, Inc., 68 O.G. 5719, 5723; Noenoc vs. Vera, 75 O.G. 6294, 6299.

<sup>2</sup>Macud vs. Commission on Elections, G.R. No. L-28562, April 25, 1968, 23 SCRA 224, 229.

"2) Exclusive original jurisdiction over actions for annulment of judgments of Regional Trial Courts;"

This overrules existing jurisprudence which vests the Court of First Instance with jurisdiction over an action for the annulment of the decision of a Court of First Instance.<sup>3</sup>

#### C. Appellate Jurisdiction

Section 9 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 vests the Intermediate Appellate Court with:

"3) Exclusive appellate jurisdiction over all final judgments, decisions, resolutions, orders, or awards of Regional Trial Courts and quasi-judicial agencies, instrumentalities, boards, or commissions, except those falling within the appellate jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in accordance with the constitution. the provisions of this Act, and of sub-paragraph (1) of the third paragraph and sub-paragraph (4) of the fourth paragraph of Section 17 of the Judiciary Act of 1948."

In one stroke, the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 has transferred to the Intermediate Appellate Court the appeal from practically all the administrative agencies. Thus, the decisions of the Securities and Exchange Commission, Board of Transportation, Board of Waterworks, National Telecommunications Commission, Insurance Commissioner, and the Board of Investment will no longer be appealable to the Supreme Court but to the Intermediate Appellate Court instead.

The decisions of the Commission on Elections and the Commission on Audit remain reviewable by the Supreme Court. because this is provided for in the Constitution which is presently in force.

Section 11 of Article XII C of the Constitution which is presently in force provides:

"Any decision, order, or ruling of the Commission (on Elections) may be brought to the Supreme Court on certiorari by the aggrieved party within

<sup>3</sup>Dulap vs. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. L-28306, December 18, 1971, 42 SC RA 537, 545; Gianoan vs. Imperial, 70 O.G. 5982, 5986; Francisco vs. Aquino, 73 O.G. 2183, 2188; Singsong vs. Isabela Sawmill, 76 O.G. 292, 262-263; Investors' Finance Corporation vs. Court of Appeals, G.R. No. 50920, July 5, 1981, 105 SCRA 538, 544; Northcott vs. Pascual, CA - G.R. No. 48648-R, August 12, 1974; Badayos vs. Maya, CA-G.R. No. SP-02436-R, August 27, 1974; Pineda vs. Araneta Institute of Agriculture, CA-G.R. No. 49387-R, September 17, 1974.

thirty days from his receipt of a copy thereof." (Parenthetical expression supplied).

On the other hand, Sub-section (2), Section 1, Article XII (D) of the Constitution which is presently in force, reads in part;

"Unless otherwise provided by law, any decision, order, or ruling of the Commission (on Audit) may be brought to the Supreme Court on certiorari by the aggrieved party within thirty days from his receipt of a copy thereof." (Parenthetical expression supplied)

In accordance with the saving provision of Section 9 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, the decisions of the Labor and Employment, the Employees' Compensation Commission, the National Labor Relations Commission, and the Director of Labor Relations are not appealable to the Intermediate Appellate Court. The decisions of the Employees' Compensation Commission remain appealable to the Supreme Court.<sup>4</sup>

Pursuant to Section 22 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, it is the Regional Trial Courts that have appellate jurisdiction over decisions of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.

All decisions of the Regional Trial Courts are appealable to the Intermediate Appellate Court except in criminal cases in which it imposed the death penalty or *reclusion perpetua* as the penalty and in all cases in which only questions of law are involved. Thus, cases involving petitions for naturalization and denaturalization should be appealed to the Intermediate Appellate Court and no longer to the Supreme Court.

The Appellate Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court under the Judiciary Act of 1948, which the Judiciary Reorganizational Act of 1981 has preserved refers to:

"1) All criminal cases involving offenses for which the penalty imposed is death or life imprisonment, and those involving other offenses which although not so punished, arose out of the same occurrence or which may have been committed by the accused on the same occasion, as that giving rise to the more serious offense, regardless of whether the accused are charged as principals, accomplices, or accessories, or whether they have been tried jointly or separately;

<sup>4</sup> Article 181 of Labor Code.

"4) All other cases in which only errors or questions of law are involved."<sup>5</sup>

If allowing the intermediate Appellate Court to decide a case involving attempted murder, which is not punishable with death or life imprisonment and which was committed on the same occasion as another crime of murder, will not result in conflicting decisions, as when the victims are different, the Intermediate Appellate Court may decide the case.<sup>6</sup>

This ruling is open to question. Even if the victims are different, the decisions may still be conflicting. The Supreme Court may decide the accused was at the scene of the crime and committed the murder, while the Intermediate Appellate Court may rule the accused was not at the scene of the crime and could not have committed the attempted murder. The Supreme Court may find the testimony of the witnesses for the prosecution credible, while the Intermediate Appellate Court may find the testimony of the same witnesses biased, incredible or incompetent.

## II. Regional Trial Courts

### A. Civil Cases

Section 19 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 defines the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Courts over civil cases as follows:

"Regional Trial Courts shall exercise exclusive original jurisdiction:

"1) In all civil actions in which the subject of the litigation is incapable of pecuniary estimation;

"2) In all civil actions which involve the title to, or possession of, real property, or any interest therein, except actions for forcible entry into and unlawful detainer of lands or of lands or buildings, original jurisdiction over which is conferred upon Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts;

"3) In all actions in admiralty over maritime jurisdiction where the demand or claim exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00);

"4) In all matters of probate, both testate and intestate, where the gross value of the estate exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00);

<sup>5</sup> Section 17 of Judiciary Act of 1948.

<sup>6</sup> *People vs. Plateros*, 74 O.G. 8655, 8658-8659.

"5) In all actions involving the contract of marriage and marital relations;

"6) In all cases not within the exclusive jurisdiction of any court, tribunal, person, or body exercising judicial functions;

"7) In all civil actions and special proceedings falling within the exclusive original jurisdiction of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court and of Courts of Agrarian Relations as provided by law; and

"8) In all other cases in which the demand, exclusive of interest or costs of the value of the property in controversy amounts to more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00)."

### 1) Subject Incapable of Pecuniary Estimation

An action for specific performance of a contract is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>7</sup> An action to compel the defendant to accept delivery of the articles to be purchased is for specific performance and is not capable of pecuniary estimation, even if the plaintiff also sought payment of the price, because the payment can be ordered only as a consequence of the specific performance.<sup>8</sup>

If the complaint for specific performance contains an alternative prayer for damages, the prayer for damages makes the specific performance capable of pecuniary estimation. Hence, if the damages prayed for do not exceed twenty-thousand pesos (P20,000.00), it is not the Regional Trial Courts but the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Court, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts that will have jurisdiction over the action.<sup>9</sup>

Since rescission is merely the counterpart of specific performance, it is not capable of pecuniary estimation, even if there is a prayer for damages. The damages cannot be awarded without first inquiring into the question of

<sup>7</sup>De Jesus vs. Garcia, G.R. No. L-26816, February 28, 1967, 19 SCRA 554, 561; Talosig vs. Vda. de Nieba, G.R. No. L-29557, February 29, 1972, 43 SCRA 472, 477.

<sup>8</sup>Manufacturers' Distributors, Inc. vs. Yu Sion Liong, 123 Phil. 537, 542.

<sup>9</sup>Cruz vs. Tan, 87 Phil. 627, 630; Arabejo vs. Intino, CA-G.R. No. 46695-R, April 14, 1975.

whether or not the contract should be rescinded.<sup>10</sup>

An action to compel the defendant to execute a conveyance of land he sold is cognizable by the Regional Trial Court, because the legality of the conveyance is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>11</sup>

A dispute as to who as between two lessees is entitled to the possession of a fishpond is not capable of pecuniary estimation, because it involves a determination of the validity of the contracts of lease upon which the lessees are basing their claims.<sup>12</sup>

The same holds true of a dispute involving a market stall.<sup>13</sup>

The validity of a mortgage is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>14</sup> The same is true of the validity of the assignment of a chattel mortgage.<sup>15</sup>

Whether or not a contract of lease should be interpreted to contemplate automatic renewal is not capable of pecuniary estimation and cannot be decided in an ejectment case.<sup>16</sup>

An action to compel the defendant to reduce in writing his partnership agreement with the plaintiff and to render an accounting is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>17</sup>

An action to enjoin the enforcement of a circular prohibiting the disbursing officer from paying the salary of the plaintiff to a person he has authorized with a power of attorney to receive it, on the ground that the circular violates the right to enter into contracts, is not capable of pecuniary

<sup>10</sup>Lapitan vs. Scandeo, Inc., G.R. No. L-24668, July 31, 1968, 24 SCRA 479, 482; Bautista vs. Lim 75 O.G. 5866, 5869; Singsong vs. Isabela Sawmill 76 O.G. 292, 262.

<sup>11</sup>Arroz vs. Alojado, G.R. No. L-22153, March 31, 1967, 19 SCRA 711, 714

<sup>12</sup>De Revero vs. Halili, 118 Phil. 901, 907

<sup>13</sup>Ruperto vs. Fernando, 83 Phil. 943, 946.

<sup>14</sup>Bunaoyog vs. Tunas, 106 Phil. 715, 717; Igot vs. Oyao, 12 CAR (2<sup>S</sup>) 702, 707.

<sup>15</sup>Singsong vs. Isabela Sawmill, 76 O.G. 292, 262-263.

<sup>16</sup>Vda. de Murga vs. Chan, G.R. No. L-24680, October 7, 1968, 25 SCRA 441, 448

<sup>17</sup>Dizon vs. Barriento, CA-G.R. No. 37734-R, December 12, 1973.

estimation.<sup>18</sup>

An action for the annulment of the decision of a Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court, or Municipal Circuit Trial Court is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>19</sup>

An action for support is not capable of pecuniary estimation, as it involves a determination of the relations of the parties and the right to support created by such relations.<sup>20</sup>

### 2) Real Property

The Regional Trial Court has jurisdiction over an action involving title to real property or recovery of ownership and possession, even if the damages claimed do not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00). The damages are merely incidental to the question of ownership.<sup>21</sup>

However, an action to recover not more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) as damages for the demolition of a house is within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts. The house, once demolished, ceases to be real property. The action does not involve title to real property but a sum of money, even if the plaintiff asks to be declared owner of the demolished house, as this is merely incidental to the recovery of damages.<sup>22</sup>

### 3) Admiralty

Under Sub-section (d), Section 44 of the Judiciary Act of 1948, all admiralty cases, irrespective of the value of the property in controversy or the amount of the demand, are cognizable by the Court of First Instance exclusively. However, under the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, it is only if the claim exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) that the

<sup>18</sup> Republic vs. Judge of the Court of First Instance of Lanao del Norte, 72 O.G. 5014, 5018.

<sup>19</sup> Vda. de Ursua vs. Pelayo, 107 Phil. 622, 624.

<sup>20</sup> Baito vs. Sarmiento, 109 Phil. 148, 149.

<sup>21</sup> Ago vs. Buslon, 119 Phil. 461, 469; Carpena vs. Manalo, 111 Phil. 685, 688; Pajarillo vs. Manahan, 99 Phil. 1000, 1003.

<sup>22</sup> Biceria vs. Teneja, 116 Phil. 969, 970.

case will fall under the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Courts. If the claim does not exceed this amount, the case should be filed in the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts.

### 4) Settlement of Estate

Subsection (e), Section 44 of the Judiciary Act of 1948 vested the jurisdiction over proceedings for the settlement of estates, whether testate or intestate, exclusively upon the Court of First Instance, irrespective of the value of the estate. Under the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980, if the value of the estate does not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), the estate proceeding should be brought in the Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court, or Municipal Circuit Trial Court. It is only if the value of the estate exceeds this amount that the Regional Trial Court will have jurisdiction over the proceeding.

If the deceased was married, in determining the gross value of his estate, it is not only his share in the conjugal partnership of gains but the value of the conjugal partnership of gains that must be considered.<sup>23</sup>

### 5) Sum of Money

The Regional Trial Court exercises jurisdiction over actions in which the demand or the value of the property in dispute exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00).

The jurisdiction is based on the amount which the plaintiff seeks to recover in the complaint and not on the amount actually awarded by the court.<sup>24</sup> This is a solution based on pragmatism, because the actual award cannot be determined until after the case has been decided. If the actual award were to be the basis, should the Regional Trial Court award not more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), it will have to nullify all proceedings and require the parties to litigate all over again.

In case of conflict between the amount claimed in the allegation of the

<sup>23</sup> Fernandez vs. Maravillo, 119 Phil. 860, 866

<sup>24</sup> Dionisio vs. Puerto, G.R. No. L-39452, October 31, 1974, 60 SCRA 471, 477; Firestone Tire & Rubber Co. vs. Delgado, 104 Phil. 920; Fernandez vs. Gala-Sison, 96 Phil. 282, 284; Talsa vs. Panlilio, 95 Phil. 104, 105; Lim Bing It vs. Ibantay, 92 Phil. 799, 800; Oteng vs. Tan Kiem Ta, 61 Phil. 87, 91; Tan Lee Po vs. Amparo, CA-G.R. No. 5615-R. June 23, 1950; Plasadas vs. De Castro, CA-G.R. No. 26525-R, February 20, 1960; Manila Surety & Fidelity Co., Inc. vs. Sison, (CA) 67 O.G. 1549, 1551.

complaint and the amount sought to be recovered in the prayer, the jurisdiction will be based on the prayer.<sup>25</sup>

The jurisdiction is based on the totality of the claims of the plaintiff.<sup>26</sup> If the plaintiff pleaded several causes of action against the defendant in the complaint, the totality of the claim in all the causes of action will serve as the jurisdictional basis.<sup>27</sup>

The following items are included in determining the totality of the claim of the plaintiff:

- a) Consequential damages;<sup>28</sup>
- b) Moral Damages;<sup>29</sup>
- c) Exemplary Damages;<sup>30</sup>
- d) Attorney's fees;<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Celosa vs. Villarina, CA-G.R. No. 13571-R, October 10, 1956; Leoncio vs. Lustre, 12 CAR (2S) 167, 170; Pyramid Insurance Co., Inc. vs. Buan, CA-G.R. No. 56044-R, December 29, 1977.

<sup>26</sup> Despo vs. Sta. Maria, 98 Phil. 305, 307; Republic vs. Ledesma, G.R. No. L-31863, April 30, 1970, 32 SCRA 603, 604.

<sup>27</sup> Soriano vs. Omila, 97 Phil. 62, 65; Campos Rueda Corporation vs. Sta. Cruz Timber Co., Inc., 98 Phil. 627, 630; Vda. de Rosario vs. Justice of the Peace of Camiling, 99 Phil. 693, 695; Hodges vs. Repospolo, 103 Phil. 330, 333; Land Settlement & Development Corporation vs. Munsayac, 112 Phil. 359, 364; Sapico vs. Manila Oceanic Lines, Inc., 119 Phil. 299, 300; Norton & Harrison Co. vs. Valdez, CA-G.R. No. 12931-R, November 28, 1955.

<sup>28</sup> Oteng vs. Tan Kiem Ta, 61 Phil. 87, 91; Gutierrez vs. Ruiz, 94 Phil. 1024, 1029; Vasquez vs. Doromul, CA-G.R. No. 49332-R, November 29, 1977.

<sup>29</sup> Reyes vs. Yatco, 100 Phil. 964, 967; Enerio vs. Alampay, 71 O.G. 7571, 7973; Ratillo vs. Tapucar, 73 O.G. 4112, 4114; Palanca vs. Alejandro, 13 CAR 1029, 1032.

<sup>30</sup> Enerio vs. Alampay, 71 O.G. 7571, 7573; Ratillo vs. Tapucar, 73 O.G. 4112,

<sup>31</sup> Suanes vs. Almedo-Lopez, 73 Phil. 573; Carlos vs. P.J. Kiener Construction, Ltd., 100 Phil. 29, 31; Reyes vs. Yatco, 100 Phil. 964, 967; Manila Blue Printing Co., Inc., vs. Teachers College, Inc., 103 Phil. 151, 152; Salon vs. Figuracion, G.R. No. L-23036, January 27, 1967, 19 SCRA 146, 147; National Marketing Corporation vs. Marquez, G.R. No. L-25553, January 31, 1969, 26 SCRA 722, 725, Philippine Education Co., Inc. vs. Manila Port Service, G.R. No. L-26424, April 25, 1969, 27 SCRA 1031, 1034; Fuentes vs. Paler, CA-G.R. No. 18421-R, May 29, 1959; Leoncio vs. Lustre, 12 CAR (2S) 167, 169; Vasquez vs. Doromul, CA-G.R. No. 49332-R, November 29, 1977.

Thus, only interest and costs of suit are excluded.<sup>32</sup>

According to one decision, if the complaint prayed for moral and exemplary damages and did not specify any amount but left it to the discretion of the court, the case should fall within the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court, because the subject matter is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>33</sup> The better rule seems to be that if an action is filed in the Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court or Municipal Circuit Trial Court and the complaint prayed for moral or exemplary damages without specifying the amount, the plaintiff waives any amount which when added to his other claims will exceed the jurisdiction of the court.<sup>34</sup>

Where four (4) heirs sued to recover from the defendant, more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) which represents a sum of money their father entrusted to the heirs, and they prayed that each of them be given one fourth of the amount and the shares of each will not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) still it is the Regional Trial Court that has jurisdiction over the case. Their separate interests in the estate of their father is different from the cause of action, which is only one, i.e., the right of their father to the money he entrusted to the defendant.<sup>35</sup>

In foreclosure of chattel mortgage, even if the sum to be recovered is not more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), if the value of the chattel whose foreclosure is sought is more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) the action should be filed in the Regional Trial Courts.<sup>36</sup> For the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts to have jurisdiction, both the value of the chattel mortgaged and the amount demanded must not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Maconcer & Co., Inc. vs. Yangtze Insurance Association, Ltd., 51 Phil. 789, 793; Suanez vs. Almedo-Lopez, 73 Phil. 573, Carlos vs. P.J. Kiener Construction, Ltd., 100 Phil. 29, 31; Philippine Education Co., Inc. vs. Manila Port Service, G.R. No. L-26424, April 25, 1969, 27 SCRA (1031, 1034; Leoncio vs. Lustre, 12 CAR (2S) 167, 169.

<sup>33</sup> Puno vs. De los Reyes, CA-G.R. No. 47572-R, October 29, 1974.

<sup>34</sup> Singson vs. Aragon, 92 Phil. 514, 518.

<sup>35</sup> Ganaban vs. Bayle, G.R. No. L-28864, November 27, 1969, 30 SCRA 369, 371.

<sup>36</sup> Seno vs. Pestolante, 103 Phil. 414, 415; Evangelista vs. Reyes, 119 Phil. 314, 317; Good Development Corporation vs. Tutaan, 72 O.G. 11357, 11359.

<sup>37</sup> Trinidad vs. Yatco, 111 Phil. 466, 469

Even if the amount claimed in the complaint is less than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00), if the defendant sets up a compulsory counterclaim for more than this amount, the Regional Trial Court will acquire jurisdiction over the case. The filing of the counterclaim cures the jurisdictional defect.<sup>38</sup>

## B. Criminal Cases

Section 20 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 provides:

"Regional Trial Courts shall exercise exclusive original jurisdiction in all criminal cases not within the exclusive jurisdiction of any court, tribunal or body, except those now falling under the exclusive and concurrent jurisdiction of the Sandiganbayan which shall hereafter be exclusively taken cognizance of by the latter.

Section 32 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 defines the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts over criminal cases as follows.

"Except in cases falling within the exclusive original jurisdiction of Regional Trial Courts and of the Sandiganbayan, the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts shall exercise:

"1) Exclusive original jurisdiction over all violations of city or municipal ordinances committed within their respective territorial jurisdiction; and

"2) Exclusive original jurisdiction over all offenses punishable with imprisonment of not exceeding four years and two months or, a fine of not more than four thousand pesos, or both such fine and imprisonment, regardless of other imposable accessory or other penalties, including the civil liability arising from such offenses or predicated thereon, irrespective of kind, nature, value or amount thereof: Provided, however, that in offenses involving damage to property through criminal negligence, they shall have exclusive, original jurisdiction where the imposable fine does not exceed twenty thousand pesos."

Section 4 of Presidential Decree No. 1606 reads in part:

"The Sandigan shall have jurisdiction over:

"a) Violation of Republic Act No. 3019, as amended, otherwise known as the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, and Republic Act No. 1379;

<sup>38</sup>Ago vs. Buslon, 119 Phil. 461, 465; Zulueta vs. Pan American World Airways, Inc., G.R. No. L-28589, January 8, 1973, 49 SCRA 1, 5.

"b) Crimes committed by public officers and employees, including those employed in government-owned or controlled corporations, embraced in Titles VII of the Revised Penal Code, whether simple or complexed with other crimes, and

"c) Other crimes or offenses committed by public officers or employees, including those employed in government-owned or controlled corporations, in relation to their office."

The concurrent jurisdiction of the Court of First Instance and the Sandiganbayan and the concurrent jurisdiction of the Court of First Instance and the City Courts and Municipal Courts has been abolished. Thus, the Regional Trial Courts have jurisdiction over all criminal cases, except the following:

1. Violations of city or municipal ordinances;
2. Offenses punishable with imprisonment of not more than four (4) years and two (2) months, or a fine of not more than four thousand pesos (P4,000.00), or both such imprisonment and fine;
3. Offenses involving damage to property through criminal negligence where the imposable fine does not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00);
4. Violations of Republic Act No. 3019 and Republic Act No. 1379;
5. Crimes committed by public officers and employees embraced in Title VII of the Revised Penal Code; and
6. Other crimes or offenses committed by public officers or employees in relation to their office.

For an offense which is punishable by imprisonment or fine or both to be cognizable by the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Court, both the imprisonment must not exceed four (4) years and two (2) months and the fine must not exceed four thousand pesos (P4,000.00). If either penalty exceeds this limit, the case will be cognizable by the Regional Trial Court.<sup>39</sup>

Accessory penalties are not considered in determining which court has

<sup>39</sup>People vs. Cuello, 111 Phil. 410, 413-414; People vs. Purisima, 72 O.G. 5539, 5543.

jurisdiction over a criminal case, as they do not modify the principal penalty.<sup>40</sup>

The subsidiary imprisonment in case of inability to pay the fine is also not included in determining the criminal jurisdiction.<sup>41</sup>

The additional penalty for habitual delinquency should not be included in determining which court has jurisdiction, because habitual delinquency is not a crime but is merely a factor to be considered in determining the total penalty.<sup>42</sup>

The ceiling of four (4) years and two (2) months imposed on the penalty of imprisonment which the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts may impose as a basic penalty is equivalent to the medium period of *prison correccional*.<sup>43</sup>

Although *destierro* has a maximum duration of six (6) years, a crime punishable with *destierro* is cognizable by the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts, because in the scale of penalties, *destierro* is lower than *arresto mayor*.<sup>44</sup>

However, the prosecution for death or physical injuries inflicted under exceptional circumstances under Article 247 of the Revised Penal Code is cognizable by the Regional Trial Court, even if the penalty is *destierro*, Article 247 of the Revised Penal Code provides in part:

"Any legally married person who, having surprised his spouse in the act of committing sexual intercourse with another person, shall kill any of them or both of them in the act or immediately thereafter, or shall inflict upon them any serious physical injury, shall suffer the penalty of *destierro*."

This provision does not define a crime but grants an exempting circumstance. The accused will still be charged with parricide or homicide. The fact that there are exceptional circumstances does not affect the nature of the

<sup>40</sup> People vs. Fajardo, 49 Phil. 206, 210

<sup>41</sup> People vs. Caldito, 72 Phil. 263, 267

<sup>42</sup> People vs. San Juan, 69 Phil. 347, 349;

<sup>43</sup> People vs. Blanco, 85 Phil. 296, 297 Article 76 of the Revised Penal Code.

<sup>44</sup> Ely Chin Hua vs. Dinglasan, 86 Phil. 617, 620; People vs. Santos, 87 Phil. 687, 688; Delos Angeles vs. People, 103 Phil. 299, 296.

crime.<sup>45</sup>

If the penalty for a crime does not exceed imprisonment for four years and two (2) months or a fine of four thousand pesos (P4,000.00) or both, the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts will have jurisdiction over the case, even if the civil liability exceeds twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00). The jurisdiction of the court is determined by the penalty. The civil liability cannot thwart the jurisdiction of the court over the criminal case. Otherwise, the jurisdiction conferred by law can be nullified by the offended party by claiming an indemnification of more than twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00). However, any civil liability in excess of twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) will be deemed waived.<sup>46</sup> If the offended wants to recover more than this amount, he should file an independent civil action.

The penalty for qualified seduction is *prison correccional* in the minimum and medium periods.<sup>47</sup> The penalty for simple seduction is *arresto mayor*.<sup>48</sup> Conviction for seduction carries with it the civil liability to acknowledge and support the offspring.<sup>49</sup>

The Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts have jurisdiction over seduction, even if the accused may be ordered to acknowledge and support the offspring. It is the penalty that is the basis for determining jurisdiction. The civil liability to acknowledge and support the offspring is immaterial, because it is merely incidental.<sup>50</sup>

### C. Other Cases

#### 1. Special Civil Actions

Section 21 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 reads in part:

"Regional Trial Courts shall exercise original jurisdiction:

<sup>45</sup> People vs. Araquel, 106 Phil. 677, 683

<sup>46</sup> Paringit vs. Masakayan, 112 Phil. 861, 867

<sup>47</sup> Article 337 of the Revised Penal Code.

<sup>48</sup> Article 338 of the Revised Penal Code.

<sup>49</sup> Article of 349 of the Revised Penal Code.

<sup>50</sup> People vs. Fontanilla, G.R. No. L-25394, June 28, 1968, 23 SCRA 1227, 1236



"1) In the issuance of writs of certiorari, prohibition, mandamus, quo warranto, habeas Corpus and injunction which may be enforced in any part of their respective regions,"

The Regional Trial Court cannot issue writs of certiorari, prohibition, mandamus and injunction against any court or administrative agency whose decision is appealable to the Supreme Court or the Court of Appeals, because such court or administrative agency is the co-equal of the Regional Trial Court.<sup>51</sup> Thus, the Regional Trial Court cannot issue a writ of injunction against the Employees' Compensation Commission,<sup>52</sup> Social Security Commission,<sup>53</sup> Securities and Exchange Commission<sup>54</sup> Philippine Patent Office,<sup>55</sup> Commission on Elections,<sup>56</sup> Board of Transportation, Board of Waterworks, and National Telecommunications Commission,<sup>57</sup> Neither can the Regional Trial Court enjoin the National Labor Relations Commission. As the successor of the Court of Industrial Relations, it has the same rank as the Regional Trial Court.<sup>58</sup>

Any writ of injunction issued by the Regional Trial Court is enforceable within its region only. Thus, it cannot enjoin the performance of an act outside its region.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *Kaisahan ng Mga Manggagawa sa La Campana vs. Caluag*, 112 Phil. 700, 702; *Bellezo vs. Dimson Farms, Inc.* 68 O.G. 5719, 5723.

<sup>52</sup> *Sumilang vs. Castillo*, 114 Phil. 1147, 1151; *San Diego vs. Villagrancia*, G.R. No. L-20411, February 17, 1968, 22 SCRA 592, 596; *Noznoc vs. Vera*, 75 O.G. 6294, 6299.

<sup>53</sup> *Poblete Construction Co. vs. Social Security Commission*, 119 Phil. 264, 266-267; *Philippine American Life Insurance Co. vs. Social Security Commission*, 64 O.G. 9777.

<sup>54</sup> *Pineda vs. Lantin*, 116 Phil. 1078, 1083; *Afag Veterans Corps, Inc. vs. Pineda*, 122 Phil. 643, 647.

<sup>55</sup> *Honda Giken Kogyo Kabushiki Kaisha vs. San Diego*, 123 Phil. 239, 244.

<sup>56</sup> *Macud vs. Commission on Elections*, G.R. No. L-28562, April 25, 1968, 23 SCRA 224, 229.

<sup>57</sup> *Iloilo Commerical and Ice Co., vs. Public Service Commission*, 56 Phil. 28, 30; *Regalado vs. Provincial Commander of Negros Occidental*, 113 Phil. 490, 491.

<sup>58</sup> *Ambrosio vs. Salvador*, G.R. No. L-47651, December 11, 1978, 87 SCRA 217, 221.

<sup>59</sup> *Acosta vs. Alvendia*, 109 Phil. 1017, 1021-1022, *Samar Mining Co., Inc. vs. Arnado*, 112 Phil. 678, 682; *Central Bank vs. Cajigal*, 116 Phil. 1375, 1379; *Hacbang vs.*

Likewise, the Regional Trial Court has no jurisdiction over a petition for habeas corpus where the respondents are residing outside its region.<sup>60</sup> However, even if the respondent is residing or is holding office outside the region of the Regional Trial Court, if the act sought to be enjoined is being done within the region of the Regional Trial Court, it can enjoin the performance of such act.<sup>61</sup>

If the only question being raised in a special civil action against a public officer is the correctness of his decision, the case may be filed in the region where the petitioner resides, even if the public officer is holding office outside the region. Otherwise, the docket of the Court of First Instance will be clogged and litigants with limited means will, in effect, be denied access to the courts.<sup>62</sup> However, if in addition to asking for judicial review of the decision of the public officer, the petition prays for the issuance of a writ of

*Leyte. Autobus Co., Inc.*, 118 Phil. 110, 116; *Alhambra Cigar & Cigarette Manufacturing Co., Inc. vs. Regional Administrator of Regional Office No. 2*, 122 Phil. 355, 362; *People vs. Mencias*, G.R. No. L-19633, November 28, 1966, 18 SCRA 807, 810; *Lo Chi vs. De Leon*, 64 O.G. 6201, 6205; *Zamboanga General Utilities, Inc. vs. Secretary of Agriculture & Natural Resources*, G.R. No. L-21275, July 31, 1967, 20 SCRA 881, 885; *Cudiamat vs. Torres*, G.R. No. L-24225, February 22, 1968, 22 SCRA 699, 698; *National Waterworks & Sewerage Authority vs. Reyes*, G.R. No. L-28597, February 29, 1968, 22 SCRA 905, 909; *De la Cruz vs. Gabor*, G.R. No. L-30774, October 31, 1969, 30 SCRA 325, 327; *Police Commission vs. Bello*, 67 O.G. 4491, 4497; *Tan vs. Sarmiento*, 71 O.G. 6987, 6989; *Paper Industries Corporation of the Philippines vs. Samson*, 72 O.G. 3191, 3199; *City of Davao vs. De los Angeles*, G.R. No. L-30719, May 26, 1977, 77 SCRA 129, 131; *Mendoza vs. Cruz*, 76 O.G. 5992, 5696; *Insular Veneer, Inc. vs. Cruz*, CA-G.R. No. 49488-R, June 10, 1971, *Southern Pacific College, Inc. vs. Secretary of Education*, CA-G.R. No. 40203-R, July 31, 1971; *Associates Anglo-American Tobacco Corporation vs. Guimbo*, 17 CAR (2S) 109, 114; *Consolidated Bank & Trust Corporation vs. Vallejos*, CA-G.R. No. SP-01030, June 18, 1973; *Canlas vs. Nasser*, CA-G.R. No. 01885-SP, October 15, 1973; *Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. vs. Castillo*, CA-G.R. No. 02182, January 11, 1974; *Alabado vs. De Guzman*, CA-G.R. No. 40874-R, No. 40874-R, June 26, 1974; *Crumb vs. Secretary of Agriculture & Natural Resources*, CA-G.R. No. 39555-R, September 8, 1975.

<sup>60</sup> *Rafael vs. Puno*, 73 O.G. 5946, 5990.

<sup>61</sup> *Decano vs. Edu*, G.R. No. L-30070, August 29, 1980, 99 SCRA 410, 417; *Gonzales vs. Secretary of Public Works & Communications*, 64 O.G. 2923, 2925; *Director of Bureau of Telecommunications vs. Alegaen*, G.R. No. L-31135, May 29, 1970, 33 SCRA 368, 379; *De Guzman vs. Moreno*, 5 CAR (2S) 990, 993; *Municipality of Malalag vs. Animas*, CA-G.R. No. 01356-Sp, October 18, 1972; *Almeda & Ting vs. Pineda*, CA-G.R. No. SP-01220, December 8, 1972.

<sup>62</sup> *Gayacao vs. Executive Secretary*, 121 Phil. 729, 733; *Macailing vs. Andrada*, G.R. No. L-21607, January 30, 1970, 31 SCRA 126, 134-135.

injunction, the act sought to be enjoined must be performed within the region of the Regional Trial Court in order for it to have jurisdiction over the case.<sup>63</sup>

Where an electric company had its principal office in Quezon City, the court of Quezon City was held to be vested with jurisdiction to enjoin it to re-connect electrical service in Dagupan City. The reason given for such ruling was that the act to be enjoined was being done in Quezon City, because the employees in Dagupan City were merely carrying out the orders of the officers in Quezon City.<sup>64</sup>

This decision is not in harmony with the pronouncement in *Gonzales vs. Secretary of Public Works and Communications*, 64 O.G. 2923 and *Director of Bureau of Telecommunications vs. Alegaen*, G.R. No. L-31135, May 29, 1970, 33 SCRA 368. In those two (2) cases, subordinates of a public officer were carrying out his orders in a place which was outside the territory where the public officer was holding office. Yet, the Supreme Court ruled that it was not the court in the place where the public officer was holding office but the court in the place where his subordinates were carrying out his order that had jurisdiction to enjoin the performance of that act. Those two (2) cases represent the better rule.

## 2. Ambassadors

Section 21 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act also confers upon Regional Trial Courts original jurisdiction:

"2) In all actions affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls."

The ambassador, public ministers and consuls referred to here are the diplomatic and consular representatives of foreign countries accredited to the Philippines and not the diplomatic and consular officers of the Philippines assigned abroad.<sup>65</sup>

A criminal case filed against an accused who assaulted a foreign diplo-

<sup>63</sup>Palawan Lumber & Plywood Co., Inc. vs. Arranz, 65 O.G. 8473, 8476; *Director of Forestry vs. Ruiz*, G.R. No. L-24882, April 30, 1971, 38 SCRA 559, 566.

<sup>64</sup>Dagupan Electric Corporation vs. Pano, G.R. No. L-49510, January 28, 1980, 95 SCRA 693, 713.

<sup>65</sup>Ex Parte Gruber, 269 U.S. 302, 303.

matic or consular representative does not fall within the scope of this provision. It is not the diplomatic or consular representative but the State who is affected by such case.<sup>66</sup>

## D. Appellate Jurisdiction

Section 22 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 reads in part:

"Regional Trial Courts shall exercise appellate jurisdiction over all cases decided by Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts in their respective territorial jurisdiction."

The Regional Trial Court has no appellate jurisdiction over the decision of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts in election cases.

Section 191 of the Election Code of 1978 provides:

"A sworn petition contesting the election of a barangay officer should be filed with the proper city or municipal court (Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts under the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980) by any candidate for the same office who has filed a certificate of candidacy within ten days after the proclamation of the election." (Parenthetical expression supplied)

Section 196 of the Election Code of 1978 reads:

"The decision of the city, municipal or municipal district courts (Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts under the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980) in the case stated in Section 191 hereof shall not be appealable and shall immediately be final and executory."

Despite this provision, the decision of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts can be appealed to the Supreme Court on questions of law, because the Supreme Court cannot be deprived of its appellate jurisdiction over questions of law.<sup>67</sup>

Section 9, Article X of the Constitution which is presently in force states:

<sup>66</sup>U.S. vs. Ortega, 11 Wheaton 467, 469

<sup>67</sup>Baloria vs. De Guzman, G.R. No. L-33097, September 30, 1971, 41 SCRA 224, 230.

"The Supreme Court shall have the following powers.

xxx      xxx      xxx

"2) Review and revise, reverse, modify, or affirm on certiorari, as the law or the rules of Court may provide, final judgments and decrees of inferior courts in —

xxx      xxx      xxx

'3) All cases in which only an error or question of law is involved.

### III. Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts

#### A. Criminal Cases

The jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts over criminal cases was discussed in connection with the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Courts.

#### B. Civil Cases

Section 33 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 defines the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts over civil cases as follows:

"Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts shall exercise:

"1) Exclusive original jurisdiction over civil actions and probate proceedings, testate and intestate, including the grant of provisional remedies in proper cases, where the value of the personal property, estate or amount of the demand does not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00) exclusive of interest and costs but inclusive of damages of whatever kind, the amount of which must be specifically alleged; provided, that where there are several claims or causes of action between the same or different parties, embodied in the same complaint, the amount of the demand shall be the totality of the claims in all causes of actions, irrespective of whether the causes of action arose out of the same or different transactions; and

"2) Exclusive original jurisdiction over cases of forcible entry and unlawful detainer; provided, that when, in such cases, the defendant raises the question of ownership in his pleadings and the question of possession cannot be resolved without deciding the issue of ownership, the issue of ownership shall be resolved only to determine the issue of possession."

#### 1. Sum of Money

According to this provision, if the plaintiff joins several defendants in one action, his claim against all defendants should be added together to determine which court has jurisdiction over the case. In the same vein, if several plaintiffs with separate claims against the same defendant join in one action, the claims of all the plaintiffs should be added together to serve as basis for determining jurisdiction.

According to the Supreme Court, if the complaint in an action filed in the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Court or Municipal Circuit Trial Court involves contracts and claims for exemplary damages without specifying its amount, the plaintiff will be deemed to have waived any claim for exemplary damages which when added to his other claims will exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00).<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, the Court of Appeals has held that the case should be considered as falling within the jurisdiction of the Regional Trial Court, because the claim is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>69</sup> The decision of the Supreme Court is the better rule. When the plaintiff chose to file the case in the Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court, or Municipal Circuit Trial Court, he was aware that its jurisdiction is limited to twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00). Hence, he must be deemed to have waived any claim in excess of this amount.

The Supreme Court has decided that an action to fix the period for the payment of an obligation falls within the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts if the amount does not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00)<sup>70</sup> On the other hand, according to the Court of Appeals, the action is cognizable by the Regional Trial Court, because the subject matter is not capable of pecuniary estimation.<sup>71</sup> The latter ruling seems to represent the better view. The subject matter of the action is not the amount to be paid but the period when the payment should be made.

The Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Court have jurisdiction over an action for interpleader if the amount involved does not exceed twenty thousand pesos (P20,000.00).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>68</sup> *Singson vs. Aragon*, 92 Phil. 914, 918

<sup>69</sup> *Arabejo vs. Intino*, CA-G.R. No. 46695-R. April 14, 1979.

<sup>70</sup> *Patente vs. Omeda*, 93 Phil. 218, 224.

<sup>71</sup> *Arrieta vs. Cusi*, CA-G.R. No. SP-01106, June 27, 1972.

<sup>72</sup> *Makati Development Corporation vs. Tanjuco*, G.R. No. L-26443, March 29, 1969, 27 SCRA 401, 403.

With the grant to the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts and Metropolitan Circuit Trial Courts of the power to grant provisional remedies without any distinction, it seems they can issue writs of preliminary injunction and appoint a receiver. However, any writ of preliminary injunction should be enforceable only within the region of the court as in the case of the Regional Trial Court.

## 2. Ejectment

The Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Metropolitan Circuit Trial Courts have jurisdiction over ejectment cases irrespective of the amount of damages which the plaintiff is trying to recover in the case. The damages are merely incidental.<sup>73</sup>

The jurisdiction of City Courts to decide on the merits, the question of ownership in ejectment cases has been repealed.

## C. Delegated Cases

Section 34 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 provides:

"Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts may be assigned by the Supreme Court to hear and determine cadastral or land registration cases covering lots where there is no controversy or opposition or contested lots the value of which does not exceed twenty thousand pesos, such value to be ascertained by agreement of the respective claimants if there are more than one, or from the corresponding tax declarations of the real property. Their decisions in these cases shall be appealable in the same manner as decisions of the Regional Trial Courts."

Under the previous law, it was the Court of First Instance who was authorized to assign cadastral or land registration cases to the City Courts and Municipal Courts.<sup>74</sup> Under the Judiciary Act of 1980, it is the Supreme Court who makes the assignment.

The decision of the Metropolitan Trial Court, Municipal Trial Court or

<sup>73</sup>Hahn vs. J.M. Tuason & Co., Inc., 72 Phil. 93, 99; Lao Leng Hian vs. Almedo Lopez, 83 Phil. 617, 618; Rosario vs. Carandang, 96 Phil. 849; Gozon vs. Barrameda, 120 Phil. 364, 366; De la Cruz vs. Yulo (CA) 50 O.G. 1698, 1661; Baton vs. Santos, CA G.R. No. 35089-R, January 31, 1964; Siao Song Peck vs. Lao Lim, CA-G.R. No. 34211-R, December 29, 1967; Roxas vs. Esguerra, CA-G.R. No. 31918-R, June 7, 1972.

<sup>74</sup>Section 88 of the Judiciary Act of 1948; De Agbayani vs. Justice of the Peace of the Capital of the Province of Ilocos Norte, 72 Phil. 281.

Municipal Circuit Trial Court is appealable to the Court of Appeals, if the appeal will raise questions of fact or questions of fact and law, and to the Supreme Court, if it will raise questions of law.

## D. Special Jurisdiction

Finally, Section 35 of the Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 states:

"In the absence of all the Regional Trial Judges in a province or city, any Metropolitan Trial Judge, Municipal Trial Judge, or Municipal Civil Trial Judge may hear and decide petitions for a writ of habeas corpus or applications for bail in criminal cases in the province or city where the absent regional Trial Judges sit."

Before the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts can exercise their special jurisdiction under this provision, all the Regional Trial Judges in the province or city must be absent.

All the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts may exercise the special jurisdiction granted by this provision. This is in sharp contrast to Section 88 of the Judiciary Act of 1948, which confers a similar jurisdiction only upon the Municipal Court in the capital of provinces and sub-provinces and the City Courts in chartered cities.

The Judiciary Reorganization Act of 1980 has also abolished the jurisdiction of the Municipal Courts in the capital of provinces and sub-provinces and the city courts in chartered cities to issue orders which are interlocutory in the absence of the Judge of the Court of First Instance.

## IV. CONCLUSION

If one may make a generalization regarding the jurisdictional changes introduced by the Judiciary Act of 1980, certain patterns may be observed. First, it reduced the work load of the Supreme Court by transferring to the Intermediate Appellate Court the appeals from all administrative tribunal except the Commission on Elections and Commission on Audit, and appeals from naturalization and denaturalization cases and by broadening its original jurisdiction over special civil actions to include cases which are not in aid of its appellate jurisdiction. Secondly, the Judiciary Act of 1980 increased the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Trial Courts, Municipal Trial Courts, and Municipal Circuit Trial Courts by giving them jurisdiction over civil cases in which the amount involved does not exceed twenty thousand pesos