FIRST DIVISION

[G.R. No. 272396. April 15, 2026]

POH TOH BUDDHIST ASSOCIATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC., REPRESENTED BY DORIAN L. CHUA, PETITIONER, VS. CRISTINA SY* A.K.A HENG TE OR HENG TI AND MARGIE LIM MACALALAD, RESPONDENTS.

D E C I S I O N

ZALAMEDA, J.:

This resolves the Petition[1] under Rule 45 of the Rules of Court, filed by petitioner Poh Toh Buddhist Association of the Philippines, Inc. (PTBAP, Inc.), which seeks to reverse and set aside the Decision[2] and Resolution[3] issued by the Court of Appeals (CA). The CA reversed and set aside the Decision[4] and Order[5] of the Regional Trial Court (RTC) in a case for unlawful detainer.

Antecedents

PTBAP, Inc. is the registered owner of a parcel of land, covered by Transfer Certificate of Title No. T-6546, located in Baguio City. Erected on said land is a Buddhist temple (subject property). Sometime in 2009,[6] PTBAP, Inc. appointed respondent Cristina Sy (Sy), a resident monk, to oversee the maintenance and operations of the subject property, with full authority to decide and act on all matters concerning the same.[7]

In 2014, PTBAP, Inc. discovered that Sy had authorized respondent Margie Lim Macalalad (Macalalad) to operate a dormitory on the subject property under the name "Paramita Dormitory." Further, it was revealed that Sy had failed to remit donations collected from temple patrons. Consequently, PTBAP, Inc.'s board of trustees terminated Sy's appointment. It also ordered Sy and all persons claiming title under her to vacate the premises of the subject property.[8]

Disagreeing, Sy formed a breakaway faction (Sy group) which issued a board resolution, purportedly appointing Sy as officer-in-charge/administrator of the subject property. In tum, PTBAP, Inc., through its current board of trustees that included Benjamin G. Favis (Favis), challenged the legitimacy of the Sy group before the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which ultimately led to the cancellation of the Sy group's registration.[9]

From then on, PTBAP, Inc., acting through the group led by Favis (Favis group), issued a final demand upon Sy and Macalalad to vacate and surrender possession of the subject property. Despite receipt of the demand, Sy and Macalalad refused to comply. Consequently, PTBAP, Inc., through Favis, instituted a Complaint[10] for unlawful detainer before the Municipal Trial Court in Cities (MTCC).[11]

Sy and Macalalad, for their part, acknowledged receipt of PTBAP, Inc.'s notice to vacate. However, they refused to comply, asserting that the said notice emanated from the Favis group, which they claim lacks authority over the subject property. Sy and Macalalad insisted that Sy's authority as caretaker was derived not from the Favis group, but from one Conchita Mercader (Mercader) and noted by a certain Master Dao Yuan.[12]

Sy further asserted that she was reappointed as the overall caretaker and manager of the subject property by PTBAP, Inc.'s legitimate board of trustees, as stated in its latest board resolution, signed by the group of Jose Ocampo (Ocampo group). As such, the Favis group had no legal standing to issue the notice to vacate.[13]

According to Sy and Macalalad, the Pavis group falsified documents submitted to the SEC and initiated several unfounded complaints against Sy to harass her. They emphasized that these complaints were ultimately dismissed, thereby reinforcing their claim that the notice to vacate was issued by the Pavis group without lawful authority.[14]

Ruling of the MTCC

After hearing, the MTCC rendered its November 28, 2018 Decision,[15] the dispositive portion of which reads:

> **WHEREFORE**, judgment is hereby rendered in favour [sic] of the plaintiff PohToh [sic] Buddhist Association of the Philippines, Inc., represented by Benjamin Favis, directing therefore herein defendants Cristina Sy aka "HengTe" or HengTi and Margie Lim Macalalad and all persons claiming possession under them or acting under their authority to completely vacate and surrender to the plaintiff the possession of the subject property Baguio Buddhist Temple.
>
> Defendants are similarly adjudged to pay the plaintiff [PHP] 4,307.65 as actual damages for litigation expenses.
>
> **SO ORDERED.**[16] (Emphasis in the original)

The MTCC ruled that PTBAP, Inc. had sufficiently established a cause of action for unlawful detainer. It found that PTBAP, Inc. proved its status as the owner of the subject property, that it had granted Sy authority to possess the same as a caretaker, and

that it subsequently served upon her a notice to vacate and surrender possession of the subject property. The MTCC further noted that the notice was duly received by Sy, yet she unduly refused to comply.[17] While it denied PTBAP, Inc.'s prayer for attorney's fees, it nonetheless granted litigation expenses in the amount of PHP 4,307.65.[18]

Both parties appealed from said decision.

Ruling of the RTC

Subsequently, the RTC issued a Decision,[19] affirming the ruling of the MTCC. The dispositive portion of the decision reads:

> WHEREFORE, in view of the foregoing, the Decision appealed from is hereby AFFIRMED *in toto*. The appeals are hereby DISMISSED.
>
> SO ORDERED.[20]

The RTC held that the Favis group submitted evidence of its prior status as the temporarily recognized governing body of PTBAP, Inc. in several cases, notably in a case decided by the Supreme Court. By virtue of this established recognition, the Favis group's authority to represent PTBAP, Inc. in this case must be upheld. Consequently, since the Pavis group had already sent a demand to vacate upon Sy, which she duly received, no valid reason remained for her continued occupation and possession of the subject property.[21]

Unconvinced, Sy sought recourse with the CA via a Petition for Review.[22]

Ruling of the CA

The CA issued its assailed Decision,[23] the dispositive portion of which reads:

> **WHEREFORE**, premises considered, the instant Petition for Review is **GRANTED**. The [January 29, 2021] Decision of the [RTC], Branch 3, Baguio City in Civil Case No. 9247-R is hereby **REVERSED and SET ASIDE**. The [August 29, 2017] Complaint for Unlawful Detainer is **DISMISSED**.
>
> **SO ORDERED.**[24] (Emphasis in the original)

In its Decision, the CA found that Sy's possession of the subject property was initially lawful, having been premised on PTBAP, Inc.'s tolerance. Although PTBAP, Inc. had already manifested its intention to withdraw such tolerance and demand the surrender of possession, the appellate court took note of the existence of rival factions within PTBAP, Inc.'s organization. This internal dispute raised a serious question as to which group constituted the legitimate board of directors with authority to order Sy's ejectment. Consequently, the CA ruled that it was the more prudent course of action to

await a definitive pronouncement from the Court resolving the issue of the PTBAP, Inc.'s legitimate board. Pending such determination, Sy's possession of the subject property should be maintained.[25]

After the CA denied PTBAP, Inc.'s Motion for Reconsideration,[26] the latter filed the present Petition[27] before this Court.

Issue

The issue for Resolution[28] is whether the CA committed reversible error in not finding that petitioner, through the Favis group, successfully proved its right to eject respondent Sy from the subject property summarily.

Ruling of the Court

The petition is granted.

The petitioner's ownership of the subject property is not disputed. However, in countless jurisprudence involving the issue of possession, the Court has emphasized that ownership alone is not determinative of the right of possession. Indeed, in one vein, "[i]t is an elementary principle of civil law that the owner of real property is entitled to the possession thereof as an attribute of his or her ownership. In fact, the holder of a Torrens Title is the rightful owner of the property thereby covered, and is entitled to its possession."[29] In another vein, it is likewise a fundamental rule that "even a legal owner of the subject property cannot simply oust a party who is in peaceable quiet possession thereof through a summary action for ejectment, without having established by a preponderance of evidence the essential requisites of the action."[30]

In the instant Petition, the petitioner, through the Favis group, filed a summary case for unlawful detainer. A complaint sufficiently proves a cause of action for unlawful detainer if it satisfies the following elements: (1) initially, possession of the property by the defendant was by contract with or by tolerance of the plaintiff; (2) eventually, such possession became illegal upon notice by plaintiff to defendant of the termination of the latter's right of possession; (3) from then on, the defendant remained in possession of the property and deprived the plaintiff of the enjoyment; and (4) within one year from the last demand on defendant to vacate the property, the plaintiff instituted the complaint for ejectment.[31]

The records establish that respondent Sy's possession of the subject prope11y was initially allowed by tolerance of the petitioner. Without the petitioner's knowledge and consent, respondent Sy allowed respondent Macalalad to operate a dormitory on the premises. When the petitioner, through the Pavis group, sent a demand to vacate, respondents refused to comply. As a result, the Pavis group, on behalf of the petitioner, filed an action for unlawful detainer within one year from the date of demand.

The only question that remains is whether the Pavis group possessed the requisite authority to revoke the tolerance previously extended by the petitioner to respondent Sy. To be sure, it is well-settled that a corporation, like petitioner, being a juridical entity, may act only through its board of directors (or trustees, in this case). The board exercises almost all corporate powers, lays down all corporate business policies, and is responsible for the efficiency of management. The general rule is that, in the absence of authority from the board, no person, not even its officers, can validly bind a corporation.[32] Conversely, an act not authorized by the legitimate board of trustees will not bind the corporation.[33]

In resolving such issue, it is crucial to point out that, in G.R. No. 233236, *Poh Toh Buddhist Association of the Philippines, as represented by Rosa Lim Co v. Hon. Cornejo-Tomacruz*,[34] the Court had already declared that "[u]nless and until there is a ruling from a proper court that the Go group has been replaced by the Lim group, the authority of the former to represent the PTBA, Inc. in the unlawful detainer case is presumed to continue."[35]

For clarity, it bears noting that the Go group referred to in the earlier *Poh Toh* case, is the same group to which Pavis belongs. As explained by the RTC:

> The record shows that the [Favis group] is led by its Board of Trustees Chairman Dorian Chua [Chua group]. In several suits in the City of Manila, [PTBAP], Inc. brought actions as plaintiff: represented by a group called therein as group of Vicente Go [Go group], which is the same as [Chua group] and the [Favis group] in this case. In said cases, the [Go group] and, therefore, consequently the [Chua group] and the ["Favis group"] in this case, was recognized, even by the Honorable Supreme Court as having lawfully instituted the suits for and on behalf of [PTBAP], Inc. even pending determination of which between the two contending groups constitute the governing Board of Trustees of the association.[36] (Citations omitted)

In line with this, respondents' contention that the pronouncement in *G.R. No. 233236* is limited solely to the specific unlawful detainer case therein involved, and thus inapplicable to the present controversy, is untenable. The said ruling cannot be read in isolation but must be understood considering the principle it established concerning representation and authority of the Favis group, pending judicial determination of the legitimate governing board of petitioner. As the Court recently elucidated in *Estate of Bueno v. Justice Peralta, Jr.*:[37]

> In *Tiburcio v. People's Homesite & Housing Corporation*, this Court recognized, that in certain circumstances, courts need to take judicial notice of pronouncements in other causes due to its relevance to the matter at hand:

> In some instance, courts have taken judicial notice of proceedings in oth0r causes, because of their close connection with the matter in controversy. Thus, in a separate civil action against the administrator of an estate arising from an appeal against the report of the committee on claims appointed in the administration proceedings of said estate, to determine whether or not the appeal was taken on time, the court took judicial notice of the record of the administration proceedings. Courts have also taken judicial notice of previous cases to determine whether or not the case pending is a moot one or whether or not a previous ruling is applicable in the case under consideration. [38] (Citations omitted)

For this purpose, the Court rules that the Favis group is recognized as the existing board of the petitioner and is thus authorized to terminate respondent Sy's authority to occupy the subject property. Consequently, the CA Decision and Resolution must be reversed and set aside, and the RTC's Decision reinstated.

FOR THESE REASONS, the Petition for Review on *Certiorari* is **GRANTED**. The February 9, 2023 Decision and February 14, 2024 Resolution of the Court of Appeals in CA-G.R. SP No. 169202 are **REVERSED** and **SET ASIDE**.

The January 29, 2021 Decision and March 5, 2021 Order by Branch 3, Regional Trial Court, Baguio City in Civil Case No. 9247-R, which affirmed the November 28, 2018 Decision of Branch 2, Municipal Trial Court in Cities, Baguio City, in Civil Case No. 14093, are **REINSTATED**.

SO ORDERED.

Gesmundo, C.J., Hernando, Rosario, and *Marquez, JJ.*, concur.

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[*] Also referred to as "Cristina Ting Sy" and "Sister Cristina Sy" in some parts of the *rollo*.

[1] *Rollo*, pp. 12-35.

[2] *Id.* at 244-251. The February 9, 2023 Decision in CA-G.R. SP No. 169202 was penned by Associate Justice Maximo M. De Leon, and concurred in by Associate Justices Marlene B. Gonzales-Sison and Perpetua Susana T. Atal-Paño of the Seventh Division of the Court of Appeals, Manila.

[3] *Id.* at 274-278. The February 14, 2024 Resolution in CA-G.R. SP No. 169202 was penned by Associate Justice Maximo M. De Leon, and concurred in by Associate Justices Marlene B. Gonzales-Sison and Perpetua Susana T. Atal-Paño of the Former Seventh Division of the Court of Appeals, Manila.

[4] *Id.* at 208-211. The January 29, 2021 Decision in Civil Case No. 9247-R was penned by Presiding Judge Emmanuel Cacho Rasing of Branch 3, Regional Trial Court, Baguio City.

[5] *Id.* at 212. The March 5, 2021 Order in Civil Case No. 9247-R was penned by Presiding Judge Emmanuel Cacho Rasing of Branch 3, Regional Trial Court, Baguio City.

[6] *Id.* at 13.

[7] *Id.* at 245.

[8] *Id.*

[9] *Id.*

[10] *Id.* at 36-39, Annex "B."

[11] *Id.* at 245-246.

[12] *Id.* at 246.

[13] *Id.*

[14] *Id.*

[15] *Id.* at 182-188. The November 28, 2018 Decision in Civil Case No. 14093 was penned by Presiding Judge Glenda T. Ortiz-Soriano of Branch 2, Municipal Trial Court in Cities, Baguio City.

[16] *Id.* at 188.

[17] *Id.* at 186-187.

[18] *Id.* at 188.

[19] *Id.* at 208-211

[20] *Id.* at 211.

[21] *Id.* at 209-211.

[22] *Id.* at 213-227.

[23] *Id.* at 244-251.

[24] *Id.* at 250.

[25] *Id.* at 249-250.

[26] *Id.* at 253-266.

[27] *Id.* at 9-35.

[28] *Id.* at 274-278.

[29] *See* **Javelosa v. Tapus**, 835 Phil. 576, 587 (2018) [Per J. Reyes, Jr., Second Division].

[30] *See* **Nabo v. Buenviaje**, 887 Phil. 678, 694-695 (2020) [Per J. Inting, Second Division].

[31] *Id.* at 689.

[32] *See* **Cebu Mactan Members Center, Inc. v. Tsukahara**, 610 Phil. 586, 591 (2009) [Per J. Carpio, First Division].

[33] *See* **University of Mindanao, Inc. v. Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, et al.**, 776 Phil. 401, 411 (2016) [Per J. Leonen, Second Division].

[34] **G.R. No. 233236**, October 9, 2017 [Notice, First Division].

[35] *Rollo*, p. 181.

[36] *Id.* at 210.

[37] 927 Phil. 136 (2022) [Per J. Lopez, J., Second Division].

[38] *Id.* at 154-155.

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