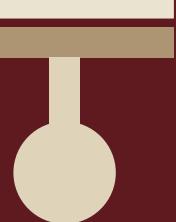


# Feudalism





## *Feudalism-*

Feudalism is that system of land ownership and work relations during the middle ages particularly in Europe when civilization was at the threshold of the purely agriculture-based economy and society propped up by independent land tillers and craftsmen/guilds, and the emergence of landlords owning vast tracts of lands by virtue of conquests or land-grabbing from helpless peasants or tribal communities.



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## *Feudalism*

Feudalism is a term invented in the sixteenth century by royal lawyers— primarily in Europe—to describe the decentralized and complex social, political and economic society out of which the modern state was emerging. The term “feudalism” came from the German *vieh*, or “cow”, the measure of wealth among the early Germans, a term that gave rise to the medieval word *fief*. Fief simply meant “something of value”, was usually land. But the sixteenth-century lawyers pictured this land as having been under the control of a powerful king who distributed much of it to his followers, men of distinction whose breeding and upbringing particularly fitted them for governing and giving battle. (Nelson 2004)



Lynn Harry Nelson, Emeritus Professor of Medieval History  
University of Kansas





# *Feudalism-*

Other key characteristics of feudalism, according to Nelson, is that (1) “a decentralized organization arises when central authority cannot perform its functions and when it cannot prevent the rise of local powers... (2) civil and military powers at the local level are assumed by great landowners or other people of similar wealth and prestige... (3) the local leaders and their retinues begin to form a warrior class distinct from the people of the territory... (4) the distinction between private rights and public authority disappears, and local control tends to become a personal and even hereditary matter...



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## *Feudalism-*

...(5) the feudal leaders often take over responsibility for the economic security of their territories over some activities... (strengthening) their presence at the local level and also make their possessions even more valuable, and (6) the feudal aristocracies are usually organized on the basis of private agreements, contracts between individuals.”



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## *Feudalism-*

In other words, a feudal work system exists when there is the assymetric order-giver and follower relationship, or “master-servant” relations, as for example, that of the landlord and his tenants or laborers, with the former having full control over the production activities of the land, and the latter serving the former with loyalty.



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## *Feudalism-*

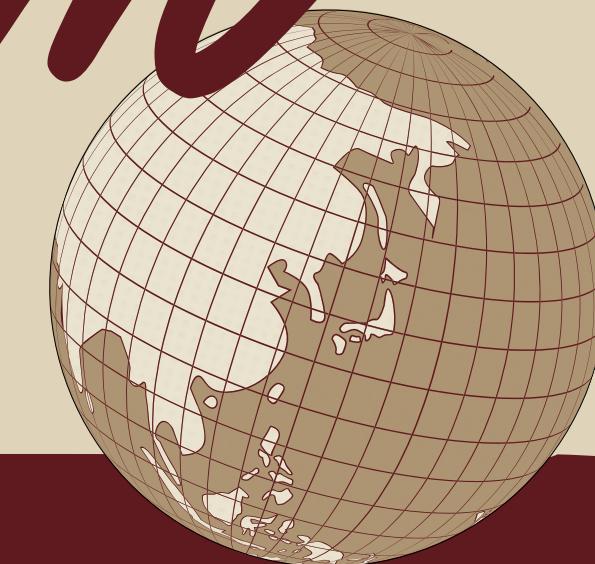
The fundamental feature of such work relations is that the subordinate, servant, or worker is obliged, if not coerced, to do the bidding of his master without question, under pain of some sanction. Such a relationship deprives the subordinate full autonomy to control his work, and to chart his own career growth, given his over-dependence on his boss.

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Historical Roots of

# Feudalism





# Definition of Terms

bureaucracy

a system of government in which power is divided among different department and officials

encomienda

- a Spanish labour system that rewarded conquerors with the labour of conquered non-Christian peoples.
- a formal system of forced labor in Spanish colonies in Latin America and the Philippines, intended to encourage conquest and colonization. Under this system, leaders of the indigenous community paid tribute to colonist with food, cloth, minerals, or by providing laborers



# *Definition of Terms*

## **encomiendero**

receiver of the grant, the encomendero, could exact tribute from the "Indios" in gold, in kind, or in labour and was required to protect them and instruct them in the Christian faith. The encomienda did not include a grant of land, but in practice the encomenderos gained control of lands



# *Definition of Terms*

**Gobernadorecillo**

the leader of a town or pueblo

**Principalia**

the principalia or the noble class, was the ruling and usually educated upper class in the pueblos

**conquistador**

the one that conquers, specifically a leader in the Spanish conquest of america and especially of Mexico and Peru in the 16th century

The Philippines was 'discovered' in 1521 by Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese explorer under the Spanish King Philip II. It was not until 1565 that Miguel Lopez de Legaspi headed Spain's colonial administration over the archipelago, after a "bloodless" conquest.



*With their superior military technology and imperial designs as a world power, the Spanish colonizers subdued and united into one political unit the disparate tribal communities spread out all over the islands.*



With the friars, the vanguards of the Christian faith, the Spaniards assured their centuries-long occupation, through gradual evangelizing—and firm domination, control and governance of the natives.



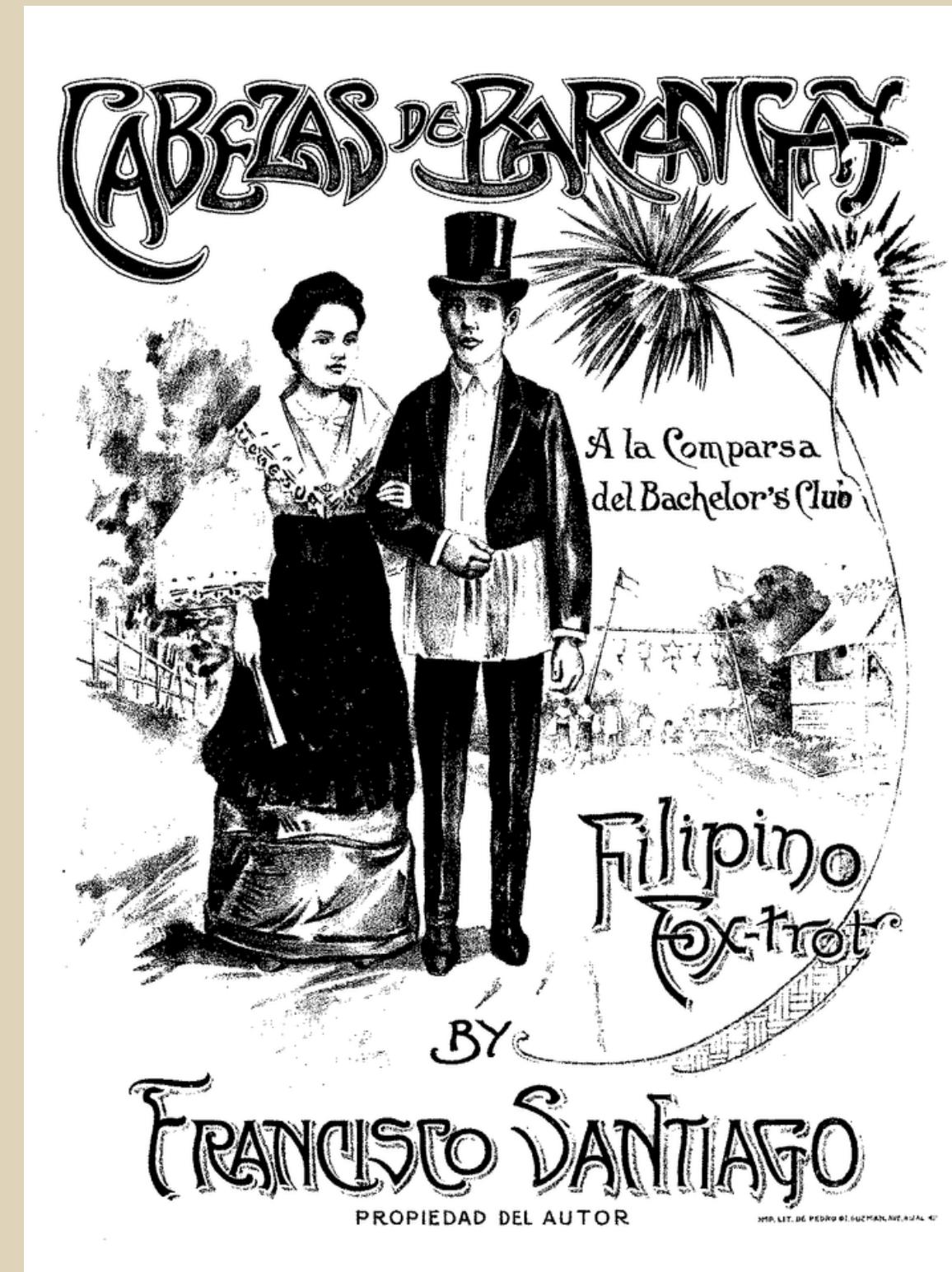
*Spain then established until 1821 a bureaucracy with the governor-general as the main administrator. It subdivided the country into different levels of administration, from the province headed by a Spaniard as the provincial governor, and further divided into cities, municipalities and the smallest political unit, the barrio.*

*The municipality or city was headed by the gobernadorcillo and held administrative duties covering lands, justice, finance and the armed forces. This was the highest government position held by a Filipino. At the lowest level, the barrio was administered by the cabeza de barangay who served as the tax and contributions collector for the gobernadorcillo. (Agoncillo 1990)*



The cabeze de barangay and higher officials enjoyed certain privileges such as exemption from forced labor which was imposed on the majority of the natives. With such special positions of power, the barrio administrators tended to abuse those under their supervision.

Feudal relations thus characterized the administrative machinery of the Spanish colonizers. This system had similarities with the European feudal rules, for example, the natives held the pueblo lands "by assignment from the king."





And this landholding arrangement, the encomienda system, where the extensive tracts of land were awarded by the king to the church, pious organizations and conquistadores evolved as hacienda agriculture, prevailing up to the end of the Spanish regime.



This feudalistic relations created an inequitable, exploitative, and oppressive social relations of production providing more wealth and more profits for the local landowners at the expense of the laborers or peons who had to survive as tillsers of the soil.



With the launching of the Manila-Acapulco galleon trade in the mid-18th century, and the expansion of commerce at the turn of the 19th century, new agrarian relations emerged whose focus was on the export markets.



This paved the way for the beginning of capitalist agriculture. The encomienda system began to decline and was abolished eventually due to abuses, but "feudal landlordism based on private ownership of lands was already institutionalized." (Ofreneo 1980)



The opening of the colony to world trade encouraged the development of agricultural specialization for crops like sugar, indigo, coffee, hemp and tobacco, on top of rice and corn which were the staple food. This focus on foreign markers led the colonizers and the local elites—the *principals*, *encomenderos* and the Chinese mestizos—to acquire and grab more lands from the small Filipino landowners.



During the last two decades of the 19th century before the Americans took over, there were changes in the economic conditions. Sugar came to lead all exports until the close of the period. The extensive absorption of land and labor in export agriculture led to rice imports since the 1870s.



And in "the absence of a strong manufacturing and industry sector, agriculture and land dualized the society and the economy into the poverty sector of subsistence farmers and the rich class of the landed gentry."(Corpuz 1997)

*Thank You for  
listening!*

