The political development of Medieval British Isles

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**Introduction:**

The idea behind the concept of nation-state system is traced back to the French revolution but the kingdoms of the middle age British Isles are considered as an ethic claim for the formation of nation-state. British Isles consist of the north western side of the continental Europe that is comprised of Ireland, Great Britain and other smaller Isles. The Britons is used to represent the whole Celtic population and Celtic is a linguist and also an ethnic group. Those were the people who used to live in British Isles before the advent of Romans and those are the warrior who fought the invaders who came from other side of Europe. These invaders were the Anglo-Saxon who conquered England and thus England got its name. They did not conquer Scotland but did conquer Wales. So it is why Scotland and some parts of the Wales consider themselves different from England. Similarly, Ireland was never invaded by the Romans but it was in contact with the Roman Empire. It is therefore the British Isles have different political makeover.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The kingdom of Scots and that of the English were established in the period 1100-1400. These kingdoms consist of complex ethnic groups that were intermingled. The different social strata of the kingdoms were divided by different ethnic groups. The state organist ion was introduced to the British kingdom w by the Norman conqueror of the midlevel periods. They conquered Britain and introduced the feudal system there and that was the essential organizational structure of British Isles that time. The Normans started cultural assimilation with the native people through intermarriages. As a result the expended through Wales, Scotland and Ireland and the native people and the one who have cultural links with the Norman rulers developed separate national Identities. Those national identities came into existence due to the rivalries within the nation. By the end of the middle ages the national-state of the British Isles was fully developed [[2]](#footnote-2)England and Scotland build up as unified kingship. Wales and Ireland held powers within smaller groupings within a big unit. They Celts never called themselves British but were in search of separate political and cultural identities. They have been involved in certain political movement in order to have regional devolution and their claim on a separate. They wanted to have separate nation. The Celtic regions of British Isles, Ireland, Wales and Scotland have different ethnic identities. This difference in ethnic identity was the reason that national development was not possible in the United Kingdom. But the same ethnic diversity gave birth to a social base of politics based in ethnic groups in Wales, Northern Ireland and Wales.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Feudal fragmentation:**

None of those empires were in unified positions. They were ruled by the foreigners and were like federations and power was with feudal lords. The Monarchs, emperor and kings have very less authority over the territories. The international organizations that were considering themselves superior from the kings and emperors were Church and that was in control of Pop of Rome. [[4]](#footnote-4) The four nations within the British Isle were produced due to the interaction of the native and the foreign settlers.

**Local government:**

Still at the local level Feudal lords were controlling the public and political affairs. Manorial courts were formed that were controlling the village matters. Above the village the authority was with two entities. One was the feudal load who was the actual owner of the village and the other was royal officials who had to report the matter of the village to the king’ council. This pattern of authority creates a rivalry between the feudal authorities and the royal institutions. The towns were either completely independent or having their own governments. There were town councils and that was answerable to the bigger council.[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Centralized government:**

England as conquered by the Roman and the introduced the centralized government there and they had their own administrative setup along with economic life. In case of Scotland the native tribe got a common enemy that developed a unity among the people. The native people could take the centralized approach of the neighbor states.

The civilization of the British Isles was founded by the Romans. The laws, art and crafty, education and architect can be seen in the social setup of the European countries. The made Christianity the major religion in the area and Church controlled the major political makeup of the British Isles. They are the founder of Celtic culture in the region. The assimilation of Roman culture with the native culture founded the medieval west.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Romans alienated the newly conquered Empire into provinces and hired Roman citizen as governors for those provinces. Most of those province were based on city-states, consists of both rural and urban areas. The urban areas were more populated and the rural areas were surrounding those. The governors had both military and civil functions. But they had lack of men power to control the territory and financial administration was also a problem for the governors. Tax assessment was not standardized in the kingdom until the fourth century. By then they started collecting taxes from the farmers and send the revenue generated to the local governing boards. The Roman became able to centralize their power on the frontiers. But the provincial government showed inadequacy.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The Roman Empire collapsed around AD 400 and it took away the Romanian way of life and the problematic tribes and Anglo-Saxon arrived in Britain. The native British who came in contact with them forced them to move towards the far west towards the Wales and the Picts who were occupied by the Scots and Irish people.[[8]](#footnote-8)

**Political maturity of the British Isles states:**

The Anglo-Sexon (600–1066) had an incredible effect over the political grooming of the British Isles. Scotland was also being interrupted by the Anglo-Sexon along with Britain. Intermarriages were the second main reason of forming the empress. Intermarriages occurred among the warriors and that let the hostile native be the part of the ruling enemies. The local who were born as a result of intermarriages claim their rights over the thrones and the proved this claim with good sword arm to back up in case of something happens to the kingdom. The Kingdom of Alba that is later called Scotland was build up like that. This kingdom remained separated and developed its own administrative institutions that suit its needs. But that kingdom was invaded by new invaders, the Scandinavians, who took away major parts of the kingdom, the northern Scotland, the Western seaboards and the Orkney. These areas had common enemy and they had worked over a common national identity. [[9]](#footnote-9)

At the time being England had identified their kings as superior to all other kings in the kingdom. This made the kings of Scotland to show reaction and the linked their bases of origin with that of Ireland. The Scottish Church was also very influential. It worked too hard to have a separate political identity for Scotland. It worked to stop the ongoing interference in it southern border. The civil servants of the Church were at the front line in establishing a strong foreign position for the kingdom. The church also took help from the Pop of Rome against that of English. Scotland developed its own political identity and administrative institution by then. But those institutes were not as capable as that of England. Because those political and administrative bodies were not having any local level positions and the national level politics and government bodies were not as mature as that of England. By the end of 13th century Scotland developed its military as well and its military was lacking the basic capabilities as compare to that of England[[10]](#footnote-10).

The king had to pay the expenses of the royal government from his pocket especially in time of peace not in times of war. He had to rely on the mangantes for the financial contributions. They kings had to govern with the help of their councils leaded by the churchman and nobles. Later own the financial contribution was done by the town and cities who became wealthy. The noble, churchman and the great council of the king were the three estates responsible for the kingdom. They had to meet in a separate assembles, in England they lords and Bishops used to meet up in the House of Lords and the other assembly members met up at the “ House of Commons”. [[11]](#footnote-11)

With the passage of time the warfare became expensive and that gave rise to representative assembles. Thus representative assemblies were given power structures and Feudal were charged and professional army were build. Those taxes were used to make new weapons and guns, cannons and pikes were introduced. [[12]](#footnote-12)

The state institutes that were able to public services, protection of private property and law enforcement were essential for achieving economic prosperity. In the Middle Age British Isles this linkage was very strong and it was in this time period that the element of modern state was introduced. The achievements of medieval state elements were the reduction of taxation by the lavish lords, the reductions in violence caused by private wars within the state and the focus on formation of industrialized system of court to improve the legal institutions of the state. This development also improved the economy of the states in Middle Age Europe. State building was very essential for long term development as no surrounding state was able to interfere in the development processes of stronger states. The medieval states were used to remove the competitor from the sates capacity and were not focusing on the creation of large armies and strong bureaucracies. They were focusing on improving political stability by reducing conflicts so that state could invest more on economic development. The political institutions of the Middle Age British Isles were very incremental and very persistent.[[13]](#footnote-13)

The Medieval Japan (1185-1600) used to have feudal structures and its warfare along with destruction resembles to that of the political development in the British Isles in the medieval periods. The similarities and differences in the political up bring of Medieval Japan and that of Europe has been a topic of interest for historians. Feudal political organizations, the dominance of religion and the pattern of wars were similar to that happened in the Middle Ages of the British Isles. The influence of Buddhism on the Japanese society was similar to that of the influence of Christianity on the European society. [[14]](#footnote-14)

The rise of the political power of Samurai in the medieval Japan was a result of the transformation of powers from the noble into warrior’s families. The powerful military rulers used to rule the land and the emperor had no powers but was just symbolic monarch. The military leaders were called Shogun and the government was called “bakufu”.There was no as such constant warfare in Japan in the middle Ages but the society was torn apart from the effect of war and by the 1500 a whole class of military lords called Daimyo emerged. The Daimyos build castles for their army personals where they used to live and they were being served by the samurai retainers. [[15]](#footnote-15)

Muromachi age has been described as the age of political weakness in the history of Japan. The first shogun leader called Ashikaga Takaujia was not able to control the centralized system but his grandson the number third Shogun played the role of absolute hegemon at his time. The shogun number sixth Yoshinori was killed and was not given a chance to rule. After the great Onion war Japan interred into a period of wars and the Shogunate became powerless[[16]](#footnote-16).

The Ashikaga Shogunate planned important role in the political upbringing of the Japanese Society. After the Onion war a new period started and it new political and social institution came into existence. The development of the political power of Shogunal in Japan was similar to the evolution of Monarchy in Medieval Europe. The period of Ashikaga Shgunate was the start of pre modern Japan and in 1338 Takauji the youngest Ashikage established a new system and according to that he will control the army and his brother will control the bureaucracy and will also take care of some judicial responsibilities. In 1392 the policy was introduced aiming to find the alternate succession to the great throne. This happened because of the internal crises of the family. The next shogun, Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408) developed a system and according to that the families which were loyal to his kingdom got more regional power and the house of governor was being rotated between those families. He was going to change the name of the dynasty ad start a new one. He tried to minimize the hold of court and break its nobility.  
 He worked to improve the diplomatic skills and to lessen down the enemies of his dynasty.  
The upcoming Shagun had not ruled the country properly and thus Japan entered into a period of political instability [[17]](#footnote-17)

**Conclusion:**

The Middle Age British isles had a political system based on the policies of feudal lord, religious leaders the great institutions of the kings. It took ages to develop in to a mature political identity. The ethnic differences and war conflicts lead to the establishment of State system in the British Isle. The political, cultural and economic ideas of the invaders like the Romans helps in shaping the nation-state system. Church plays an important role in the political upbringing of the society.

However, Medieval Japan had the same political upbringing. The political makeover was due to the Buddhist leaders, the invaders and the military personals. But the ruling emperor was controlling both the political institutes as well as the military of Japan. But the failed to control the centralized government and Japan entered into the era of war.

Thus both of the situations were having more are the less the same kind of actors but one gave birth to Western Civilization and the other pushed the country into war. But around the late medieval period Japan also had its renaissance and the country flourished as a great nation.

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