

## **The Middle Class in Halifax, 1780-1850**

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In recent years, regional works on the British middle class in the nineteenth century have derived the methodology to clarify the widely divergent situations of social relationships and economic, political and social activities of the middle class in provincial towns in the nineteenth century. This methodology, fitted as 'interactive approach', takes an inclusive approach towards the middle class in a specific regional community by using multiple contemporary sources. However, this analytical strategy risks fostering the 'tyranny of the discrete', enclosing its research object to a narrow specific topic. This thesis tries to overcome that danger and to present a multidimensional account of 'the middle-class world' in the nineteenth-century town by analysing an institutional matrix for the middle classes in specific local community where powers, relationships, identities and ideologies were constructed.

This study explores 'the middle-class world' by focussing on economic and social structure, the political sphere and public institutions in Halifax from 1780 to 1850. It employs the systematic approach of an original computer database for managing multiple quantitative sources, and tests the application of this through cross-reference between the database and the qualitative documents. While the middle classes faced demographic growth, expansion of textile industries and industrial diversification, their occupational states were diverged. The governance of public institutions in Halifax from 1780 to 1850 was under the leadership of the middle classes. The third chapter tries to describe the middle classes in public institutions and political life in Halifax from 1780 to 1820 in order to clarify continuity and change of 'the middle-class culture' in Halifax, which John Smail argues crystallised in the public sphere in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. The following chapters employ the rich data of the later period to explore the public life of the town. While the electoral pattern of the Halifax Borough after 1832 shows the political dynamics of the middle classes in Halifax, institutional and ideological factors to sustain the political life of the middle classes are investigated. Then, it analyses the process and institutional background by which the middle classes became structured through their collective actions in public institutions from the 1820s to the 1850s. 'The middle-class world' in Halifax from 1780 to 1850 has critical implications for the study of the British middle class by demonstrating the complexity of their practices, relationships and identities in economic, political and social spheres, and these institutional matrixes in Halifax. It concludes that the age from 1780 to 1850 was the critical period of the British middle class in provincial towns.