

Elites in the Assyrian Empire

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When the Assyrian crown describes the people of the Empire as “the children of the land of Assur, low and high” (SAA 2 8: ll. 8-9: DUMU.MEŠ KUR.Aš-šur LÚ.qàl-lu LÚ.dan-nu) or the people controlled by the various provincial governors and client rulers as “all the men in his hands, small and great” (SAA 2 6: l. 5: LÚ.ERÍN.MEŠ ŠU.2-šú *gab-bu* TUR u GAL) this view of society juxtaposes the “low” and the “small” with an elite – the “high” and “great”. This paper analyses who constituted these “high” and “great” people in the imperial age from the 9th to the 7th centuries BCE, when northern Iraq was the centre region of a state that encompassed regions from the Mediterranean coast to western Iran and shaped lives from the Sudan to the Caucasus, and discusses their role in and contribution to the Assyrian imperial project.