

Hemelrijk, E.A. (2008) “Patronesses and “mothers” of Roman *collegia*”, *Classical Antiquity* 27.1, 115-62.

This paper studies the meaning and function of the titles “patroness” and “mother” of *collegia* in Italy and the Latin-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire in the first three centuries CE. It is investigated why some *collegia* co-opted female patrons or appointed “mothers”. What was expected from these women and was there any difference between a “mother” and a patroness of a *collegium*? On the basis of epigraphic evidence it is argued that *patrona collegii* and *mater collegii* were no empty titles but denoted distinct functions exercised by different classes of women. Whereas patronesses were, as a rule, outsiders to the *collegium* they patronized, “mothers” were mostly social climbers from within the ranks of the *collegia*. Though both types of women acted on behalf of the *collegia*, they did so in a different way. Moreover, they were honoured differently. *Collegia*, therefore, had good reasons to distinguish between the titles they gave them.