

Fictive Motherhood and Female Authority in Roman Cities*

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After the death of Augustus, the Roman senate proposed various tokens of honour for Livia, among which – in an overt allusion to Augustus’ title *pater patriae* – the title ‘mother’ or ‘parent’ of the fatherland (*mater/parens patriae*). Tacitus regards this as excessive adulation: “the Augusta was also much flattered by the senators. Some were of the opinion that she should be called ‘parent’ of the fatherland, others that she should be called the country’s ‘mother’; most held that ‘the son of Julia’ should be added to the emperor’s (*i.e.* Tiberius’) name”¹. Cassius Dio suggests that it was her extraordinary influence over Augustus that caused the excessive honour, as well as the precedence she desired to take over Tiberius: “For in the time of Augustus she wielded the greatest influence and she used to declare that it was she who had made Tiberius emperor; therefore she was not content

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1 — Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1: *Multa patrum et in Augustam adulatio: alii parentem, alii matrem patriae appellandam, plerique ut nomini Caesaris adscriberetur “Iuliae filius” censebant*. For the other honours, most important among which the title Augusta, see Barrett (2002) 148-158 and Flory (1997).

to rule on equal terms with him, but wished to take precedence over him. As a result, various extraordinary measures were proposed, many persons expressing the opinion that she should be called ‘mother of the country’, and many that she should be called its ‘parent’².

Pleading for moderation in the honours for women, Tiberius refused her the titles³. Yet, after her death, the title ‘mother of the country’ reappeared: “because she had saved the lives of not a few of them, had reared the children of many, and had helped others to pay their daughters’ dowries, some took to calling her ‘mother of the country’⁴. At first sight, these reasons, which stress her protection and her care for family life, seem very different from those mentioned earlier, which underline her authority with the emperor and her desire for power. Yet, both are in accordance with the Roman notion of motherhood, which, as Suzanne Dixon has shown in *The Roman Mother*, was a highly esteemed family role in Roman society, combining discipline and a position of authority with motherly love and care⁵.

Because of Tiberius’ opposition, Livia was formally denied the title ‘mother of the country’⁶, but in the second and third centuries some empresses received even more florid titles involving fictive motherhood. In 174, the younger Faustina was awarded the newly coined title ‘mother of the army’ (*mater castrorum*), which has no parallel in official male titles, and from Julia Domna onwards several Severan empresses were honoured as ‘mother of the army, the senate, and the country’ (*mater castrorum et senatus et patriae*)⁷. Though such titles were possibly occasioned by the presence of these empresses in the military camps, their precise meaning

2 — Dio 57.12.3-4: ἐπὶ τε γὰρ τοῦ Αὐγούστου μέγιστον ἡδυνήθη καὶ τὸν Τιβέριον αὐτὴ αὐτοκράτορα πεποικέναι ἔλεγε, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐχ ὅσον ἐξ ἴσου οἱ ἀρχεῖν, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρεσβεύειν αὐτοῦ ἤθελεν. ὅθεν ἄλλα τε ἔξω τοῦ νενομισμένου ἐσεφέρετο, καὶ πολλοὶ μὲν μητέρα αὐτὴν τῆς πατρίδος πολλοὶ δὲ καὶ γονέα προσαγορεύεσθαι γνώμην ἔδωκαν (translation Loeb Classical Library, with some adjustments).

3 — Tac. *Ann.* 1.14.1: *moderandos feminarum honores dictitans*. Suet. *Tib.* 50.3 relates that, offended by the proposal of the senate that he be called ‘son of Livia’ in honorific inscriptions, Tiberius rejected the title *parens patriae* for his mother. It should be noted, however, that he also rejected the title ‘father of the country’ for himself, see Dio 57.8.1 and Tac. *Ann.* 2.87.

4 — Dio 58.2.3: ὅτι τε οὐκ ὀλίγους σφῶν ἐσεσώκει, καὶ ὅτι παῖδας πολλῶν ἐτετρόφει κόρας τε πολλοῖς συνεξεδεδώκει, ἀφ’ οὗ γε καὶ μητέρα αὐτὴν τῆς πατρίδος τινὲς ἐπωνόμαζον.

5 — Dixon (1988). I here define ‘authority’ as informal, personal influence and dominance over others, as opposed to legal power.

6 — She may have borne the title unofficially outside Rome: the reverse of a coin portraying Livia from Leptis Magna in northern Africa carries the legend *Augusta mater patriae*; see Corbier (1998) 138 and Temporini (1978) 61. An inscription from Anticaria in Baetica calls her *genetrix orbis*, see *CIL* II/5, 748 = *CIL* II, 2038.

7 — Boatwright (2003), Kuhoff (1993) 251-255, Temporini (1978) 61-78 and (2002) 250 and 276, Levick (2007) 42 and 93-94, Kunst (2010) 156-157. The nearest male parallel for the title *mater castrorum* is the odd example of Piso, whom Tacitus disapprovingly portrays as being called *parens legionum* by the troops he had corrupted (Tac. *Ann.* 2.55.5).

is unclear. Like the title proposed for Livia, they suggest motherly care and protection, as well as a position of esteem and authority vis-à-vis the army, the senate, and the fatherland⁸. Should we therefore assume that they reflected an actual position of power, or were they purely nominal? What can we learn from similar titles for women of local importance in the cities of Italy and the Latin West?

Metaphorical motherhood, as expressed by the title *mater patriae*, was not restricted to the empresses. In the second and third centuries, we find some thirty records of mothers of cities (*mater coloniae* or *municipii*) or of civic associations (*mater collegii*) in the cities of, mainly central, Italy and in some cities in the Balkan and Danubian provinces. Moreover, in a religious context, female cult officials were sometimes addressed as mothers: as 'mother of the sacred rites' (*mater sacrorum*), for example⁹. Other fictive kinship titles for women are also found, though these are rare in the Latin West. We occasionally encounter a 'daughter' of an association (*filia collegii*), or even a 'foster-daughter' (*alumna*) of a town, or a group of women presenting themselves as 'sisters' (*sorores*)¹⁰. Female kinship metaphors, especially that of 'daughter' of a city, occur more frequently in the cities of the Greek East, where they start slightly earlier¹¹. Here,

8 — SHA *Marc.Aur.* 26.8-9 suggests that *mater castrorum* was a posthumous title given by Marcus Aurelius to his wife Faustina "because he had also had her with him in the summer camp" (*quam secum et in aestivis habuerat*); cf. Dio 71.10.5 (given to her by the soldiers during her lifetime?). Though she alludes to Faustina's connection with the army, Boatwright (2003) explains the title in a dynastic context; Kunst (2010) 156-157 connects it with munificence. Of course, Faustina Minor was not the first empress to be present in a military camp.

9 — Cf., for instance, Sempronia Salsula and Valeria Paulina, *matres sacrorum* listed among the priests of a *collegium* devoted to the cult of Jupiter Hammon Barbarus Silvanus in Carthage (*CIL* VIII, 24519 = *AE* 1899, 46 = *ILS* 4427). Other examples of a *mater sacrorum* are: *CIL* VIII, 20650 = *CIL* VIII, 8842 (funerary inscription, Tubusuctu, Maur.), *CIL* XIII, 5384 = *AE* 1984, 704 (funerary inscription, Vesontio, Germ.Sup.), *CIL* XIII, 575 (on an altar(?) dedicated to Mercurius, Burdigala, Gall.Aq.). 'Mother' may have been used as a term of respect for priestesses in daily practice; Plautus, *Rudens* 263 presents a priestess of Venus who is addressed as *mater*. Brooten (1982) 57-72 discusses some mothers of synagogues (*mater synagogae*), among whom a female *pater* (*pateressa*), see *CIL* V, 4411 = *InscrIt* X, 5, 204 = *ILS* 6724 (Brixia, It. 10), *CIL* VI, 29756 = *CIJ* I, 523 (Rome) and *CIL* IX, 6231 = *ILCV* 4900 (Venusia, It. 2; 3rd – 6th c.).

10 — *CIL* XI, 1355 = *ILS* 7227: the *album* of the *collegium dendrophorum* of Luna (It. 1) lists two *filiae*: Iulia Probit(a) and Fl(avia) Athenais. Discussing eleven *alumni* (including three *alumnae*) of cities in northern Africa, Corbier (1990) argues that they were members of the most illustrious families of their cities (often of senatorial rank), whose munificence towards, or patronage of, their cities of birth earned them the honorific title *alumnus/a*. The three *alumnae* are: Furcilia Optata, *patrona et alumna coloniae* in Bulla Regia (Afr. Proc.), Julia Memmia, *patrona et [alumna]* of the same city, and Valeria Maximilla, *alumna patriae* of Thamugadi (Num.). The former two were women of senatorial rank, see Hemelrijk (2004); the latter was related to senators, but perhaps not of senatorial rank herself. For *sorores*, see *CIL* XI, 3811 = *ILS* 6583 (Veii, It. 7, mid 3rd c.): *sorores piissimae* set up a statue for a benefactress.

11 — See van Bremen (1996) 164-170. For the use of familial terminology (especially 'father', 'mother', and 'brother') in associations and synagogues in the Greek East, see Harland (2005) and (2007), and for sons of cities in the Greek East, see Canali de Rossi (2007), who also discusses daughters of cities, and fathers and mothers of the *boule*, the *gerousia*, or the city, see pp. 37-46,

however, I restrict myself to the cities of Italy and the Latin-speaking provinces, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of the meaning and function of the title of ‘mother’ in these regions. Was there any connection between the fictive motherhood of some empresses and that of local women in the Latin West, or should we assume that, in the Latin West, fictive kinship titles were introduced under Greek influence?

Let us start with the – relatively rare – mothers of cities; they are six in number spread over five cities in central Italy in the second and third centuries AD (see Table 1). Motherhood of a city was an official title, bestowed by the local council and carved on the public statue or tomb of the woman in question, together with the record of her priesthood or other services to the city. The women honoured with this title were of some importance in their cities. Though their rank is not indicated, they must have been from wealthy and well-respected local families: four of them were priestesses of the imperial cult; one (nr. 2: Cantia Saturnina) even held priesthoods in two different cities¹². Apart from holding expensive public priesthoods, two women (nos. 4 and 5) are praised for their ‘merits’ and ‘munificence’, which points to benefactions and possibly other services to their cities. Four women (nos. 1, 2, 4 and 5), finally, were honoured with a public statue, an honour reserved for local notables. In the eyes of members of the senatorial order in Rome these women may have seemed of little distinction, but in their own cities they must have been the leading ladies.

This brings us to their title: ‘mother’ (*mater*) or ‘parent’ (*parens*) of their cities, a title which, in the Latin West, hardly ever occurs outside the imperial family¹³. What did these titles mean and why were they granted? In contrast to a ‘daughter’, a title which suggests youthful promise, we may expect that a ‘mother’ of a city was a mature woman of wealth and

61-74 and 145-167.

12 — For priestesses of the imperial cult, see Hemelrijk (2005), (2006), and (2007).

13 — Neglecting ‘mothers’ of cities, Corbier (1998) 138 assumes that, apart from coins honouring Agrippa as *municipi parens* or *municipi patronus parens* in Gades, and Livia as *mater patriae* in Leptis Magna (see n. 6 above), fictive kinship terms were not used in the cities of the Latin West. Indeed, unlike *patres* of *collegia*, the title has virtually no male parallel outside the imperial family: no *patres* of cities are known to me in Italy or the Latin West before the fifth century AD (*CJ* 8.12, 10.44.3.1 and 11.33.2.3: *pater civitatis*, and *CJ* 3.43.1.1 and 8.51.3.3: *pater et defensor civitatis*). Possibly the title *pater* was reserved for the emperor; *CIL* 3083 (Falerii, It.7) honours Augustus as *pater patriae et municipii*. However, I did find one non-imperial *parens et patronus municipi(i)* of unknown date: *CIL* XI, 5175 (Vettona, It. 6). In the absence of ‘fathers’ of cities, the nearest male counterpart for the title *mater municipii* (*vel sim.*) is the rare *princeps coloniae* or *civitatis*, which is occasionally used for local benefactors and other men of great wealth and merit: *AE* 1913, 214 (Capua, It. 1, 1st c.): *princip(is) / [c]oloniae nostrae*; *CIL* IV, 1177 (Pompeii, It. 1): *principi coloniae*. Plin. *Ep.* 7.24.8 calls Gaius Cassius, the founder of the Cassian School of jurisprudence, *Cassianae scholae princeps et parens*. For the more common usage of *princeps gentis* and *princeps civitatis* in Roman North Africa, see Kotula (1965), who argues that the men thus honoured were indigenous tribal chieftains who, in the course of time, transformed into civic magistrates.

proved merit¹⁴. As is apparent from the four priestesses of the imperial cult and from the examples of Avidia Tertullia and Numisia Secunda Sabina (Table 1, nos. 2-5), munificence, or more generally civic merits, were reasons for the title. This is supported by the (much earlier) decree in honour of the well-known city patron, magistrate, and benefactor of Herculaneum, Marcus Nonius Balbus, who is characterized as a man showing the attitude of a parent (*parentis animum*) towards the city, manifest, above all, in his manifold liberality¹⁵. Yet, munificence or holding a public priesthood cannot have been the only reason for awarding the title; there were hundreds of benefactresses and priestesses in the cities of Italy and the western provinces who, as far as we know, were never hailed as ‘mother of the city’¹⁶.

Being mother of a city suggests an exclusive and enduring relationship; after all, unlike with sisters and brothers, or children, one has only one mother. Therefore, I suspect that a city had only one mother at a time – if it had a mother at all; the title is found only in a few cities in central Italy in the second and third centuries and may have been restricted to that area and period; possibly, its occurrence in so relatively small an area points to inter-city rivalry. In any case, the title *mater* implies a privileged and probably lifelong relationship between the city and a woman of local importance. Unlike the term ‘sister’ (*soror*), which suggests a relation of equality¹⁷, motherhood indicates a hierarchical relation, with the mother as the superior partner and the citizens looking up to her. Yet, the title also suggests proximity, albeit fictive: the social distance between the mother and the people of her town is presented as not too great for a personal, emotional relationship to be at least imaginable.

An emotional relationship of this kind is apparent in the epitaph of Lucia Fonteia Concordia, who died at the age of seventy leaving children and grandchildren, and “whom the citizens always addressed as mother” (see Table 1 nr. 6: *quem(!) / semper cives maltrem appellave/runt*). Though

14 — Apart from three ‘foster-daughters’ (*alumnae*, see n. 10 above), I have found no ‘daughters’ (*filiae*) of cities in the Latin West, but in the Greek East ‘daughters’ of cities are relatively frequent. The title seems to denote an “early commitment rather than an achievement” on the part of the ‘daughter’; see van Bremen (1996) 167-170 and 348-357. Apuleius *Met.* 4.26.3 suggests that ‘son’ of a city was an official title for a promising young man of distinguished family: *speciosus adulescens inter suos principalis, quem filium publicum omnis sibi civitas cooptavit* (“a handsome young man, first among his peers, whom the citizens unanimously co-opted as the ‘public son’”), but I found no ‘sons’ of cities in inscriptions from Italy and the Latin West. Apuleius may have encountered the concept in the Greek world. For sons of cities in the Greek East, see Canali de Rossi (2007).

15 — AE 1947, 53 = AE 1976, 144 (Herculaneum, It.1, 1st c.): *parentis animum cum plurima liberalitat(e)*.

16 — For benefactresses in Italy and the Latin West, see Hemelrijk (forthcoming in 2013).

17 — For *frater* and *soror* as terms of address between social equals, see Adams (1995) 119 and Hemelrijk (1999) 191-192 with nn. 28 and 29; for ‘brothers’, see Harland (2005).

the inscription is late and probably belongs in a Christian context¹⁸, this remark suggests civic motherhood rather than a possible religious function; therefore this inscription may be included here. It shows that being the mother of a city was not merely an official title to be added to a woman's name in inscriptions; rather the word 'mother' was actually used by the people when talking to, or about, her in daily life. If the emendation of this badly damaged inscription is correct, the text continues by relating that the citizens brought wine and candles to conduct her funeral¹⁹. Thus, the people expressed an emotional tie with the mother of their city, addressing her as mother during her lifetime and conducting her funeral after death.

In agreement with the ideal of familial *pietas*, the relationship between a mother and her city was mutual and enduring: in gratitude for certain services provided by the mother – which are only briefly referred to in the inscriptions – the city and people honoured her by co-opting her as the city's mother and erecting a public statue for her. And in return, she was expected to care for them as long as she lived. For example, in gratitude for the munificence of Numisia Secunda Sabina (Table 1, nr. 4), the common people (*plebs*) collected money among themselves for a public statue. In the inscription she is praised as *sacerdos Augustae, mater municipii et coloniae* and “the first of all women” to receive a statue from the people, whereupon she rewarded them by giving each citizen four sesterces at its dedication. The claim that she was the first woman to be honoured with a public statue, though not necessarily historically correct, suggests that in the eyes of the people the relationship was a special one²⁰.

In short, motherhood of a city suggests a hierarchical and affectionate relationship between a wealthy and highly placed mother and the people in the role of her children. It was a personal, reciprocal, and enduring relationship, in which the mother and the people were expected to render mutual – but distinct – services, and which lasted until the death of the mother. The personal and affectionate nature of the relationship, and the element of duration, may have distinguished it from other, more ephemeral exchange relations between the cities and members of the wealthy

18 — For this reason, Cenerini (forthcoming in 2013) omits it from her discussion.

19 — *Quem / semper cives maltrem appellave/runt adque cel[re]i[s] calicibus / [funus] duxerunt.*

20 — *Huic primae omni[um] / pleps(?) Praetuttian[a] / mulierum aere coll[ato] / statu[am] posuit; o[b] cuius / dedica[tionem] sin[gul]is / HS IIII n[um]mos d[edit]. l[oc]us [d(atus) d(ecreto)] d(ecurionum).* According to Buonocore (1998) and Cenerini (2005) 487, the title *mater municipii et colon[iae]* *Interamniu[m]* *Praetuttianor[um]* may be explained by the fact that the *municipium* contained a *colonia* of Sulla. For an earlier statue for a woman in the same town, see *CIL XI*, 5068 (Interamnia Praetuttiorum, 1st c., cf. Forbis (1996) 179 no. 280): *] / Attiae P(ubli) fil(iae) / Maximae, / sacerdoti / Augustar(um). / Ti(berius) Claud(ius) Vitalis / uxori optima[e]. / l(ocus) d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum).* Though erected in a public place with the authorization of the local council, this statue was set up by a private person (Numisia's husband).

elite. The restriction of the title to central Italy (if not merely a figment of the chance survival of evidence) may point to local fashion, inter-city rivalry, or the influence of imperial kinship titles. The rarity of the title suggests that it was a special honour, not to be awarded to every benefactress or priestess²¹. Within the city, a mother seems to have been a figure of authority and motherly care, who inspired filial affection and loyalty among the citizens. For the women so honoured, the title was a source of pride; it was recorded on their statue bases and tombs together with their civic priesthoods and munificence.

We may now turn to mothers of *collegia*, who are more common and somewhat more widespread than mothers of cities: 26 mothers of *collegia* are recorded in 21 inscriptions, mainly in central Italy, the Balkan and Danubian regions, and - a single case - in Spain (see Table 2). They are attested in roughly equal numbers and the same areas as fathers of *collegia*, but there are no indications whatsoever that 'mothers' were the wives of 'fathers'²². Like a father, a mother was officially co-opted by an association²³, but the inscriptions are mostly vague about the reasons for their co-optation. Let me start with an unusually detailed example. On 11th March in the year 153, the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygieia in Rome drafted a statute (*lex collegii*), which was carved on a large marble plaque in their clubhouse. It records important donations by Salvia Marcellina in memory of her husband, an imperial freedman, and of his superior:

"Statute of the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygia. In memory of Flavius Apollonius, imperial *procurator* in charge of the picture galleries, and of his assistant, the imperial freedman Capito, who was her most excellent and devoted husband, Salvia Marcellina, daughter of Gaius, donated to the *collegium* of Aesculapius and Hygia the domain of the shrine with a pergola, a marble statue of Aesculapius, and an adjoining roofed terrace, in which the members of the said *collegium* may dine"²⁴.

21 — Note that the title 'mother' was also infrequent in the Greek East: in contrast with the far more numerous 'daughters' of cities in the Greek East, van Bremen (1996) 168 records only ten mothers of cities, all women of great prominence and high standing.

22 — For 'mothers' and patronesses of *collegia*, see Hemelrijk (2008). 'Fathers' of *collegia*: Waltzing (1895-1900) vol. IV, 372-3 lists 23 *patres* of *collegia*, mostly from central Italy, and the Balkan and Danube regions. No married couples are found among these 'mothers' and 'fathers', but a more remote family relationship did sometimes occur (see Salvia Marcellina).

23 — For the co-optation of a *mater*, see AE 1998, 282 = AE 2000, +243 (in the bronze *tabula patronatus* of her husband): *Egnatiam Salvianam, l eius (uxorem), matrem cooptemus*.

24 — CIL VI, 10234 = ILS 7213 (dimensions: 70 x 119 x 5 cm.): *Lex collegi(i) Aesculapi et Hygiae / Salvia C(ai) filia) Marcellina ob memoriam Fl(avi) Apolloni proc(uratoris) Aug(usti) qui fuit a pinacothecis et Capitonis Aug(usti) l(iberti) adiutoris / eius mariti sui optimi piissimi donum dedit collegio Aesculapi et Hygiae locum aediculae cum pergula et signum marmoreum Aesculapi et solarium tectum iunctum in / quo populus collegi(i) s(upra) s(cripti) epuletur*.

Apart from this, she gave 50,000 sesterces to the *collegium* as a perpetual fund for banquets and distributions among its members, to which her brother-in-law, Publius Aelius Zeno, father of the *collegium*, added 10,000 sesterces: “The same Marcellina gave and donated to the *collegium* mentioned above 50,000 sesterces for sixty men on the condition that no more than sixty members are to be admitted”²⁵. These substantial gifts allowed her to stipulate detailed conditions regarding their use: establishing the number of members to be admitted, the burial conditions for deceased members, and regulations for the communal feasts and distributions of the association (see below)²⁶. Thus, by means of her donations, Salvia Marcellina exercised a decisive influence on the organization of the *collegium*, which was acknowledged by the prominent recording of her name in large letters at the head of the text (see fig. 1).

Her donations and her resulting authority within the *collegium* earned her both the title *mater collegii* and a place of honour in the distributions of the association. As was common in such distributions, a strict hierarchy was observed among the recipients: the chief office-holders received the largest portions and the other members smaller ones, each according to his position or status. Let us take the following example from the seven annual meetings that were prescribed in the statute:

“that on the thirteenth day of the Kalends of October (= 19 September), on the most felicitous anniversary of our Emperor Antoninus Pius, Father of our fatherland, hand-outs are to be distributed in the temple of the deified emperors, in the shrine of the deified Titus: for the perpetual *quinquennalis*, Gaius Ofilius Hermes, or whoever is in charge at the time, three *denarii*, for Aelius Zeno, ‘father’ of the *collegium*, three *denarii*, for Salvia Marcellina, ‘mother’ of the *collegium*, three *denarii*, for the *immunes* two *denarii* each, for the *curatores* two *denarii* each, and for the ordinary members one *denarius* each”²⁷.

This inscription tells us several things about a mother of an association. Firstly, we may assume that Salvia Marcellina’s donations earned

25 — *Eadem Marcellina collegio s(upra) s(cripto) dedit donavitque HS L m(ilia) n(ummum) hominibus n(umero) LX sub hac condicione ut ne plures adlegantur quam numerus s(upra) s(criptus).*

26 — Flambard (1987) 234-239; Liu (2007) 241 convincingly argues that substantial donations, such as those of Salvia Marcellina, greatly influenced the organisation of *collegia*, in some cases even amounting to a reorganisation of the association. In accordance with his smaller gift, the place of Publius Aelius Zeno in the statute is much more modest than that of Salvia Marcellina; his gift is mentioned towards the end of the inscription.

27 — *Uti XIII K(alendas) Oct(obres) die felicissimo n(atali) Antonini Aug(usti) n(ostri) Pii p(atris) p(atriciae) sportulas dividerent in / templo divorum in aede divi Titi C(aio) Ofilio Hermeti q(uin) q(uennali) p(er)p(etuo) vel qui tunc erit \(\denarios) III Aelio Zenoni patri collegi(i) \(\denarios) III Salviae Marcellinae matri collegi(i) \(\denarios) III imm(unibus) / sing(ulis) \(\denarios) II cur(atoribus) sing(ulis) \(\denarios) II populo sing(ulis) \(\denarios) I.*

her the title *mater collegii* and, with this title, a place of honour in the distributions of the association: she received the same sum as the highest official, the *quinquennalis*, and the father of the *collegium*. Secondly, she was not only a person of esteem as the mother of this all-male *collegium*, but – as the wife of a deceased member and the sister-in-law of the father of the association – she was also an insider, who was honoured within the clubhouse. Thirdly, by means of her donations, Salvia Marcellina had a decisive influence on the organization of this male bastion; this is recognized by the statute – which is governed by her stipulations – and by the prominent recording of her name in the inscription. In sum, as the mother of the *collegium*, she was an insider who enjoyed a position of esteem and authority, a position she owed mainly to her munificence.

This is confirmed by the evidence about other mothers of *collegia*, though the texts mentioning them are much more concise. We know of quite a few mothers of associations from *alba collegii*, the official membership lists of *collegia*. In these lists, which were carved on large stone tablets hung on the wall of the clubhouse, the mothers received a place of honour: their names are usually recorded among, or immediately below, those of male officials, before the ordinary members²⁸. Though some *alba collegii* list more than one mother, it is probable that they were co-opted successively, and that a *collegium* had only one mother at a time. Salvia Marcellina's generosity seems to have been exceptionally lavish; some other mothers bestowed smaller benefactions on their *collegium*. Moreover, some inscriptions hint at ceremonial activities performed by mothers – for example overseeing the dedication of a statue in the name of the *collegium* –, which resemble the tasks of fathers and other male officials²⁹.

Like mothers of cities, most mothers of *collegia* were probably married women and mothers in the biological sense, but – apart from Salvia Marcellina – we do not know whether they were widowed when receiving the title. Occasionally, a mother was co-opted because of the merits of her husband (Table 2 nr. 8: Egnatia Salviana), but the reverse also occurred: a

28 — AE 1977, 265b: five 'mothers' listed after the patrons but before the *amatores*, the scribes, and the ordinary male members. CIL XI, 1355 = ILS 7227 (side B): 29 *patroni*(?), two *immunes*, three mothers, and two *filiae* followed by some male members and one *bisellarius*. CIL XIV, 256 = AE 1955, 182 = IPOstie-B, 344: patrons, *quinquennales*, and a *mater* are followed by fourteen *honorati* (ex-magistrates), and ca. 320 ordinary members. AE 2001, 854: the *mater* and the *sacerdos Augustalium* are listed as the last two of the *patroni allekti*. CIL III, 7532 = ILS 4069: the mother heads the list of members (otherwise all male). CIL III, 870 = ILS 4061: the name of the 'spirarches' (the leader of the *collegium*) extends over two columns: the left column lists 27 male members, the right one 16 female members headed by a *mater*.

29 — CIL II, 3229 = ILS 7308 (Laminium, Hisp.Tar.): *curante / Licinia / Macedoni/ca matre*. For the tasks of 'fathers', and the term *curante*, *curantibus*, or *curam agentibus*, see Hemelrijk (2008) 137-138 with n. 61.

son co-opted because of the merits of his mother, for instance (see Table 2 nr. 10: Memmia Victoria). Mothers are found relatively often, finally, in the few *collegia* that had women among their members. In one *album collegii* a mother actually heads the list of the female members (see n. 28), which suggests that mothers may have had some role in the selection or supervision of female members. With a few high ranking exceptions (see Table 2, nos. 8, 10 and 19: Egnatia Salviana, Memmia Victoria, and Fabia Lucilla), mothers were of the same social class as most members and officials of *collegia*, to whom some were actually related. Thus, mothers were, as a rule, insiders of the *collegia* with which they were associated. In accordance with their usually modest social status, mothers of *collegia* received no public statues, nor did they hold any public priesthoods. Instead, they were honoured within the *collegia*, but proudly carried the title throughout their lives and added it to their names on their private monuments: their tombs and dedications.

To get a clearer view of mothers of cities and *collegia*, we may offset their role against that of patronesses of cities and *collegia*, with whom they are sometimes confused in modern studies³⁰. These patronesses were of much higher standing: almost all were of senatorial or equestrian rank³¹. Though often originating from the cities they favoured, most senatorial patronesses lived at least part of their lives in Rome; as a consequence, their relationship to the cities they patronized was much more remote. Moreover, the social distance between the people of a local town, or *collegium*, and a woman of senatorial or equestrian rank made the relationship a more formal one. This is underlined by the official co-optation decrees which were offered to patrons and patronesses, but not to 'mothers'. In these decrees, which were engraved on bronze plaques, the city or *collegium* adopted a humble attitude towards the patroness, addressing her in a tone of great deference. Let us consider a fragment from the decree for Nummia Varia, for example, who was co-opted in 242 as a city patroness by the small town of Peltuinum Vestinum in central Italy:

"It pleases the members of the council to confer on Nummia Varia, a woman of senatorial rank, priestess of Venus Felix, in accordance with the splendour of her high rank, the patronage of our *praefectura*, and to request of her excellency and extraordinary benevolence that she accept this honour we offer her with willing and favourable inclination; and that she deign to take us and our *res publica*, individually and universally,

30 — Clemente (1972) indiscriminately lists *matres collegii* among the patrons of *collegia*; Waltzing (1895-1900) vol. I, 430, too, suggests that mothers and patronesses may have been the same persons, but see Hemelrijk (2008).

31 — For city patronesses, see Hemelrijk (2004), Kajava (1990), and Nicols (1989); for patronesses of *collegia*, see Hemelrijk (2008).

under the protection of her house (*in clientelam domus suae*), and that, in whatever matters it may reasonably be required, she may intervene with the authority (*auctoritas*) belonging to her rank to protect us and keep us safe”³².

As a woman of a consular family, Nummia Varia ranked high above the decurions of a local town, as is apparent from the deferential tone of the decree. High-ranking patronesses such as Nummia Varia were, to some extent, outsiders to the affairs of the cities or *collegia* they patronized. One of the duties of a patroness was to enhance the prestige of the city or *collegium* by associating her name with theirs and to protect its interests by means of her social connections. A mother, by contrast, was part of the city or *collegium* she fostered. Though excluded from civic office and often from membership of a *collegium* on account of their gender, mothers occupied a prominent position within these civic bodies.

Mothers of cities and *collegia* and the imperial mothers of the army, the senate, and the country are roughly contemporary; both are found in the second and early third centuries AD. Yet this is not simply a matter of imitation of the empresses by local women; if we exclude the abortive attempt to hail Livia as ‘mother of the country’, local mothers of cities are attested slightly earlier than imperial ones (see Table 1, nos. 2 and 3). There is a crucial gap in the first half of the second century, with the much less prominent women of the families of Trajan and Hadrian, whose background was less exalted than that of both their Julio-Claudian predecessors and their Antonine and Severan successors; as far as we know, they did not receive the title mother of the country³³. Possibly, women of local importance were trendsetters in this respect as they were in other fields, such as civic munificence. This accords with recent ideas that the influence between women of the imperial family and prominent women of high-ranking (local) families was mutual, rather than only one way, from imperial women to other female citizens³⁴.

A possible mutual influence notwithstanding, both imperial and local ‘mothers’ seem to be a product of their times, the second and third centuries: this period shows a marked preference for the language of family affection and family metaphors to describe the relationship between the elite and the people. Riet van Bremen has explained the occurrence of

32 — CIL 9, 3429 = ILS 6110: *Placere universis conscriptis Nummiae Variae, c(larissimae) f(eminae) sacerdoti Veneris/ Felicis, pro splendore dignitatis suae patrocinium praefecturae nos/trae deferri petique ab eius claritate et eximia benignitate, ut hunc/ honorem sibi a nobis oblatum libenti et prono animo suscipere/ et singulos universosque nos remque publicam nostram in c(l)ientelam domus suae recipere dignetur et in quibuscumque / ratio exegerit, intercedente auctoritate dignitatis suae, tutos deffensosque praeestet*; Hemelrijk (2004).

33 — See Boatwright (1991).

34 — Cooley (forthcoming in 2013), Hemelrijk (2005b) 317 with references.

mothers of cities in the Greek East by the increasing “verticalization” of the relationship between the wealthy elite and the citizens, which was expressed by familial terms. Like the metaphorical mothers in the Latin West, mothers of cities in the Greek East were usually women of very high standing or prominent benefactresses, who were granted the title for life³⁵. Yet, there are no indications that the introduction of the title in the West occurred under Greek influence, and the title daughter of a city, which was much more common in the Greek East than that of mother, is hardly found in the West (see n. 14 above).

Though usually explained as a way to legitimate the rule of the elite, the use of kinship metaphors has a special meaning for women: despite their exclusion from political office, fictive motherhood allowed women a position of authority within a city or *collegium*, a role which was cast in socially acceptable terms. This furthered their integration into civic life. The Roman notion of motherhood was especially opportune, since it implied both authority and motherly love and care. It provided official recognition for both empresses and meritorious local women, and gave them a civic role, each at their own level. Like *pater patriae*, the title of ‘mother of the country’ suggests an enduring and hierarchical relationship characterized by venerability and authority, on the one hand, and proximity and loving care, on the other. Thus, the title both recognizes *and* mitigates her power, just as it simultaneously exposes *and* bridges the social divide between the empress and the people. *Mater castrorum et senatus et patriae* further specifies this motherly care and protection by the empress, extending it to soldiers, senators, and citizens.

At the local level, mothers of cities and *collegia* are presented in a nurturing and benevolent role, as caring mothers who were entitled to the affection and respect of their ‘children’. Their authority and social status are underlined by the honorific statues accorded them and their prominent position in the membership lists and distributions of their *collegia*. The question of whether we should understand fictive motherhood as an honorific title or a functional role is perhaps misleading³⁶. Motherhood as a metaphor was sufficiently broad to cover both honour and authority, thus conveniently blurring the distinction between the two. In this way, it allowed women a socially acceptable position in male institutions. As mothers of the country, the town, or a civic association, both imperial and local women were granted a position of esteem *and* authority in the very same public bodies that excluded them from more formal leadership roles.

35 — See van Bremen (1996) 156-70 on “the domestication of public life”; further Harland (2007) and Jongman (2002).

36 — Harland (2007) 78-79.

Table 1: 'Mothers' of Cities³⁷

Name	Corpus	Ancient site	Type of inscription and monument	Date	Social status	Civic title	Priesthood	Public honour and dedicat(s)	Justification
1. Caesia Sabina	<i>CIL</i> XI, 7993	Fulginiae, It. 6	honorary, marble plaque		decurial?	parens municipii		public statue(?) <i>dec(urionum)</i> <i>decr(eto)</i>	
2. Cantia Saturnina	<i>CIL</i> XI, 407 = <i>ILS</i> 6657	Ariminum, It. 7	honorary, statue base	after 123		mater coloniae	flaminica and sacerdos divae Plotinae in Ariminum and Forum Sempronii	public statue <i>d(ecreto)</i> <i>d(ecurionum)</i> <i>/ publice</i>	
3. [--] udia --Petro?] nilla	<i>CIL</i> XI, 408	Ariminum, It. 7	funerary, marble plaque	after 137		mater(?) coloniae	flaminica, sacerdos(?) divae Sabinae		
4. Numisia Secunda Sabina	<i>AE</i> 1998, 416	Interamnina Praetut-torium, It. 5	honorary, marble plaque	2 nd half of 2 nd c.		mater municipii et coloniae	sacerdos Augustae	public statue, <i>pleps(?) ... aere coll[ato] ... l(ocus) [d(atus) d(ecreto)] d(ecurionum) ... sin[gul] is / HS IIII n[ummos d] edit</i>	<i>ob munificen-tia[m]</i>
5. Avidia Tertullia	<i>CIL</i> XI, 5752	Sentinum, It. 6	honorary, statue base(?)	2 nd – early 3 rd c.		mater municipalis	flaminica	public statue; <i>ordo Vivirialium</i>	<i>ob merita eius</i>
6. L(ucia) Fonteia Concor-dia	<i>CIL</i> XI, 2538 = <i>ILCV</i> 1578	Clusium, It. 7	funerary stele	late 3 rd c.		quem(!) / semper cives ma/trem appellave/runt			<i>casta / pudica sapi/ens uno contenta / marito</i>

37 — The inscriptions have been listed in chronological order, starting with the undated inscriptions.

Table 2: 'Mothers' of *collegia*

Name	Corpus	Ancient site	Inscription and monument	Date	Social status	Benefactions	Title and justification	<i>mater</i> of
1. Claudia	<i>CIL</i> IX, 5450 = <i>AE</i> 1999, 599 = <i>ILS</i> 7248	Falerio Piceni, It. (5)	funerary stele		freed-woman		<i>matri</i> / <i>sodalici(ii)</i> / <i>fullon(um)</i>	sodalitium fullonum
2. Gavillia Optata	<i>CIL</i> IX, 2687	Aesernia, It. (4)	funerary inscription		freed-woman		<i>matri colleg(ii)</i> / <i>centonarior(um)</i>	collegium centonariorum
3. Licinia Macedonica	<i>CIL</i> II, 3229 = <i>ILS</i> 7308	Laminium, Hisp. Tar.	statue base for Allia Candida				<i>matre</i>	collegium [Rom?]anense maius
4. Pomponia Victorina	<i>CIL</i> VI, 8796 = <i>ILS</i> 1700	Rome, It. (1)	votive base		freed-woman?	a statue for Liber	<i>mat(er)</i> / <i>colleg(ii)</i> / <i>Liberi patris</i>	collegium Liberi patris
5. Salvia Marcelina	<i>CIL</i> VI, 10234 = <i>ILS</i> 7213	Rome, It. (1)	marble plaque; <i>lex collegii</i>	153		a piece of land with a shrine, a pergola, a marble statue of Aesculapius and a roofed terrace for banqueting; HS 50,000 (foundation for distributions of cash and food)	<i>matri collegi(i)</i>	collegium Aesculapii et Hygiae
6. Marcia Basilissa	<i>CIL</i> III, 7505 = <i>ILS</i> 2311 = <i>AE</i> 1888, 11 = <i>IScM</i> ² V, 160	Troesmis, Moes. Inf.	votive stele	after 170			<i>matre</i> / <i>dend(rophororum)</i>	collegium dendrophorum
7. Flavia Nona	<i>IScM</i> ² II, 160 and <i>AE</i> 1964, 230	Tomis, Moes. Inf.	votive altars	180-192 or 211-217		votive altars to Cybele(?)	<i>ma/ter dumi</i>	dumus

Name	Corpus	Ancient site	Inscription and monument	Date	Social status	Benefactions	Title and justification	<i>mater</i> of
8. Egnatia Salviana	<i>AE</i> 1998, 282 = <i>AE</i> 2000, +243	Lavinium, It. (1)	statue base set up by Egnatia Salviana for her husband	228	equestrian		she is co-opted as <i>mater</i> in recognition of the benefaction of her husband, who is co-opted as patron in the same inscription	collegium dendrophorum
9. Epipodia	<i>CIL</i> III, 870 = <i>ILS</i> 4061	Napoca, Dacia	marble plaque; <i>album collegii</i>	235	slave?		<i>Mater</i>	collegium Asianorum
10. Memmia Victoria	<i>CIL</i> XI, 5748 = <i>ILS</i> 7220	Sentinum, It. (6)	bronze <i>tabula patronatus</i> for her son	260	decurial / equestrian(?)		<i>matris numeri nostri</i> ; her son is co-opted as patron <i>in honore a(t) que dignitate Memmiae Victoriae</i>	collegium fabrum
11. Flavia Festa	<i>AE</i> 2001, 854	Liternum, It. (1)	marble plaque; <i>album Augustalium</i>	late 2 nd c.			<i>mat(er) Aug(ustalium)</i>	Augustales
12. Placidia Damale, quae et Rufina	<i>CIL</i> III, 8833	Salona, Dalm.	funerary stele	2 nd – 3 rd c.			<i>matri / vernaculorum optimae / et incom / parabili feminae</i>	collegium vernaculorum
13. Lepidia Iulia, Titinia Crispina and Numitoria Felicitas	<i>CIL</i> XI, 1355 = <i>ILS</i> 7227	Luna, It. (1)	marble plaques; <i>album collegii</i>	2 nd – 3 rd c.?			<i>mat(res)</i>	collegium dendrophorum
14. Iunia Zosime	<i>CIL</i> XIV, 69	Ostia, It. (1)	votive base	2 nd – 3 rd c.?	freed-woman?	a statuette of Virtus of two pounds of silver	<i>Mater</i>	collegium dendrophorum
15. Claudia Arria	<i>CIL</i> XIV, 326	Ostia, It. (1)	marble plaque listing contributors to a fund	2 nd – 3 rd c.?	freed-woman?	HS 6,000(?) for a fund for the communal celebration of birthdays	<i>matr(is)</i>	collegium dendrophorum
16. Domitia Civitas	<i>CIL</i> XIV, 37 = <i>ILS</i> 4114	Ostia, It. (1)	votive; small statue base	late 2 nd – early 3 rd c.	freed-woman	a statuette of Attis	<i>mat(er)</i>	collegium canno-phorum

Name	Corpus	Ancient site	Inscription and monument	Date	Social status	Benefactions	Title and justification	<i>mater of</i>
17. Menia Iuliane	<i>CIL</i> III, 7532 = <i>ILS</i> 4069 = <i>IScM</i> ² II, 129	Tomis, Moes. Inf.	marble stele; <i>album collegii</i>	late 2 nd – early 3 rd c.			<i>matrem Romanorum subscriptorum</i>	collegium Romanorum
18. Macia Menophile	<i>CIL</i> XIV, 256 = <i>AE</i> 1955, 182 = <i>IPOstie-B</i> , 344	Ostia / Portus, It. (1)	marble plaque; <i>album collegii</i>	early 3 rd cent.?	freed-woman ?		<i>Mater</i>	collegium fabrum navalium
19. Fabia Lucilla	<i>CIL</i> III, 1207 = <i>IDR</i> III 5, 2, 483	Apulum, Dacia	funerary stele(?) for her father-in-law	3 rd c.	equestrian		<i>mater coll(egiorum) / fabr(um) et cent(onariorum)</i>	collegia fabrum et centonariorum
20. Herois Cy[s]enia, Eusebia Prima, Aurelia Herais, Lartia Felicitas and Sera Chreste	<i>AE</i> 1977, 265b	Classis, It. (8)	marble plaque; <i>album collegii</i>	287-304	freed-women		<i>Matres</i>	unidentified collegium



Fig. 1. *Lex collegii Aesculapii et Hygiae* (Rome, Vatican Museum),
Photo by the author

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