

Rohr Vio, F. (2022) “*Matronae and politics in Republican Rome*”, in V. Arena, J. Prag, and A. Stiles (eds.), *A Companion to the Political Culture of the Roman Republic*, Hoboken, New Jersey-Oxford, Wiley, 362-73.

By tradition, Roman women were excluded from politics and they had no influence on Roman political culture. Under the model, women were prevented from entering institutional places – assemblies, the senate, the courts – where political activities took place and also from holding any official position whether religious, military or political. In the early and middle Republics, they would contribute to public life as follows: they secured alliances between families through arranged marriages; with the children they bore, they gave the society priests, army officers and magistrates; they acquired the *Pax Deorum* through religious practices. Only in exceptional cases where the safety of the community was threatened did women ignore this model and intervene in the political life of the community. The late Republic, however, was dominated by civil wars in Rome and many of the political leaders were killed. Politics was no longer conducted in institutional places, but in the homes of the men in power. As the women were living in these homes, they also got involved in political activities including decision-making. The mothers, daughters, sisters and wives of the leaders intervened in community politics in different ways: they acted as mediators between the politicians or represented them in their absence; they liaised with their allies and their enemies; they coordinated their supporters and one even took command of the army. At that time they actively contributed to political life and the definition of political culture. They conditioned subsequent developments of this political culture, even when Augustus tried to restrict women’s power and return to ancient practices and he was not able to completely exclude them from political life.