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Sparsiones

Author(s): Hugh Nibley
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SPARSIONES

THE Roman practice, best described as *sparsio*, of bestowing public donatives by throwing things among the multitude to be scrambled for in scenes of wild disorder has never received the attention which its strangeness solicits and its significance for the study of Roman politics and economics deserves.[1] Though a preliminary view of a neglected and highly speculative field cannot but raise more questions than it answers, the nature and importance of the *sparsiones* may, we believe, be adequately demonstrated by consideration of three points: 1) what was distributed by *sparsio*, 2) by whom and on what occasions, and 3) by what particular methods.

What was distributed by *sparsio?* The articles scattered to the Roman multitude have long been the object of careful study. They fall into two classes, tokens and gifts "in kind." The tokens—*tesserae*, coins, little balls, sections of reed, and such bizarre objects as figurines and inscribed spoons—are such by virtue of their designated exchange value.[2] As gifts in kind may be classed figs, dates, nuts, sweets, and cookies, as well as such less appetizing bits as vegetables, fruits, grain, chick-peas, beans, birds, and flowers.[3] The solid *sparsio* was often accompanied by a liquid one of water, wine, perfume, or oil.[4] Meal, blood, and ashes were also strewn

[1] Treatment of the *sparsiones* must be sought for in works dealing primarily with other things. The most instructive of these are M. Rostovtzeff, "*Römische Bleitesserae*," in *Klio*, Beiheft III (1905); J. Marquardt, *Römisches Staatsrecht* (1878) III, 2, 475 f.; L. Friedländer, *Sittengeschichte Roms*[8] (1910) II, 316–318; Daremberg and Saglio, *Dictionnaire des Antiquités Classiques* IV, 2, 1418 f. The ritual side of the *sparsio* is discussed at length by M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion* (V, 2, 1, in *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* [München, 1941]) I, 110–125; M. Cornford, *The Origin of Attic Comedy* (Cambridge, 1934) 100–102 and *passim;* S. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer der Griechen und Römer* (Videnskapsselskapet Skrifter, Hist-Filos. Kl. [Kristiania, 1915]), 261–269. Less important works are indicated in the course of the present study.

[2] Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, is the classic treatment of the tokens, which he also discusses in PW IV, 875–880. Berve (*ibid.* XIII, 86–93) also deals with the tokens, as does Lipenius in his extensive *Historia Strenarum*, in J. G. Graevius, *Thesaurus Antiquitatum Romanarum* (1694) XII, 409–552.

[3] Types of *bellaria* are listed by Friedländer, *op. cit.*, II, 316–318.

[4] The liquid *sparsio* is discussed by Ph. Fabia in Daremb., *Dict.* IV, 2, 1418 f., with the exception of the oil, which figures in the old bridal *sparsio* (see below n. 31), and in certain primitive scrambles (Servius *in Georg.* II, 384; Varro, in Nonnius, ed. Lindsay, 31).

abroad in rites in which the public scrambling played a conspicuous part.[5]

The tokens in question were of course "symbols" (the word originates with them, in fact),[6] but no more so than the other gifts. Figs, nuts, fruits, meal, flowers, etc. are well-known symbols of fertility, possessing in the *sparsio* the broader signification of a "general blessing."[7] The ancients tell us that a shower of chick-peas and beans stands for *omnia semina*,[8] and that Janus' scattering of sweets is but an earnest of sweet things to follow through the year.[9] The same motif of abundance is evident in the tokens and figurines,[10] which were interchangeable with gifts in kind and could

[5] The blood of the October horse, mixed with the ashes of the Fordicidia calves, was distributed to all the people and strewn over the fields (G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* [1912], p. 200; F. Altheim, *Terra Mater* [Bd. 22, Heft 2 of *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten*, 1931] 121). The fullest treatment of these bloody *sparsiones* is S. Eitrem, *Beiträge zur griechischen Religionsgeschichte* (in the Videnskapsselskapet Skrifter, 1917, pt. II), 19–49. Both animals in question had been the victims of violent dismemberment, a wild tussle being held for the right to sprinkle the blood of the horse (Festus, ed. Lindsay, 190 f.). The Greek *pharmakoi* were hung with objects used in *sparsiones*, such as figs, cakes, etc., and their own ashes were scattered (Cornford, *op. cit.*, 55 f.; see below, n. 118).

[6] Rostovtzeff, *Bleitesserae*, I, 117; T. Mommsen, "Das römische Gastrecht und die römische Clientel," *Historische Zeitschrift* I (1859), 341; cf. "symbol" in *Oxford Dictionary*.

[7] For broad treatment of this subject, cf. Eitrem, *Opferritus und Voropfer*, 261–280; Nilsson, *op. cit.*, I, 113–115; Ed. Lehmann, in Chantipie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1925), I, 36, 40–43.

[8] Scholiast. on Persius, *Sat.* V, 117–179.

[9] Ovid, *Fast.* I, 187 f.: Omen, ait (Janus), causa est, ut res sapor ille sequatur
Et peragat coeptum dulcis ut annus iter.

[10] Whether or not the *sigillaria* and the *dulces figuras* scattered at the Saturnalia (Martial XIV, 222) were the same, as some commentators on Statius, *Silv.* I, 6, 17 have maintained, originally representing the body of the slain vegetation god (Cornford, *op. cit.*, 102), it is certain that as New Year's gifts both impart luck and prosperity. The principle of substitution is very conspicuous in the *sparsiones*. The rule, *in sacra simulata pro veris accipi*, makes possible, says Servius (*Aen.* II, 116), the use of models *de pane vel cera* for any costly object. Types of substitution in *sparsiones* are discussed by Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 277 f. A special coin takes the place at Rome of every kind of food offering or contribution, so that in time such terms as *visceratio*, *epulum*, *cibus*, *sportula*, *congiarium*, *munus*, etc., come to mean simply "a coin"; *vid.* lexicons, Hug in PW, II, 3, 1884; Berve, *ibid.*, XIII, 85, 88; Mommsen, in *Hist. Zeitschr.* I, 341 f.; O. Toller, *De spectaculis, cenis, distributionibus*, etc. (1889), 77–90. This substitution is very ancient with the Romans (Wissowa, *op. cit.*, 428; cf. Deuteronomy 14, 23–26).

represent *omne genus rerum*[11]—it was not just bread that the Emperor scattered; it was "perpetual daily bread."[12] The key-note is abundance—abundance of everything good, the *plouthygeia* of the Greek *sparsio*[13] as it it appears in the gifts of the Hygeia, Thalysia, Panspermia, Thargelos, etc., when mixtures of grain and fruits were scattered over the heads of the recipients to impart all the blessings of life,[14] and life itself.[15] With such a mixture the Romans showered their archaic Vortumnus, god of the *annus vertens* at his festival,[16] and were themselves showered at the year-feast of the Floralia,[17] when nuts, flowers, beans, and *omnia semina super populos spargebant* in primitive chthonian-agricultural rites.[18] But the true Roman equivalent of *plouthygeia* is the *strena*, the king's gift at the New Year, which in its primitive form of laurel branch seems to have figured in *sparsiones*,[19] as it certainly does in its other forms.[20] Whether the original *sparsio* was a scattering over the people and fields of *Zeugunskraft* in the form of blood, ashes, or fresh remains of the dismembered year-god,[21] or whether

[11] Seutonius, *Domit.* 4; cf. *id.*, *Nero* 11; *August.* 98; also Dio LXII, 18.

[12] Joannes Malalas, *Chronographia* XIII, 322 f., in Migne, *Patrol Graec.* 97, 841 f.; Chronicon Paschalis, Migne *PG* 92, 641; cf. Plutarch, *Crassus* 2.

[13] Aristophanes, *Aves* 725–751 (a typical year-song of the *quête* variety).

[14] Nilsson, *op. cit.*, I, 117 f., 439, 503.

[15] *Sparsio* rejuvenates (Aristophanes, *Plutus* 1197–1207), and restores the dead (Cicero *De Leg.* II, 25[63]; cf. Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 262).

[16] Propertius IV, 2; cf. Wissowa, *op. cit.*, 287 f.

[17] The festival of Flora was a duplicate of that of Acca Larentia (Plutarch, *Romulus* 5; cf. K. Schwenck, "Hercules und Acca Larentia," *Rhein. Mus.*, N. F. XXII, 129–131; Roscher, in his *Lexikon* I, 6; Altheim, *op. cit.*, 142 f.), which was a chthonian "Totenmahl" held on Midwinter Night (Macrobius, *Saturnal.* I, 10, 17; Varro, *L.L.* VI, 23 f.; Gellius VI, 7, 7; Plutarch, *Romulus* 4, and *Quaestiones Romanae*, nos. 34 f.).

[18] Scholiast to Persius V, 177–179; cf. Altheim, *op. cit.*, 136. This seems to have been the classic *sparsio* at Rome, for when in A.D. 217 such distributions were abolished, the Floralia was specifically excepted (Marquardt, *Staatsverwaltung*, III², 476; Dio LXXIX, 22).

[19] The laurel switch was used in the water *sparsiones* which accompanied the sprinkling of ashes, blood, and bean-straw at the Palilia (Ovid, *Fast.* IV, 728–740; V, 675–680; Zosimus VI, 6; cf. Marquardt, *op. cit.*, III, 239, n. 7). Is it possible that the word *strena* is to be referred to *sterno*, *struo*, rather than to the hypothetical **st(e)re* suggested by A. Walde, *Vergleichendes Wörterbuch der Indogermanischen Sprachen*, II, 627 f.?

[20] Below, n. 81, passages describing the *hypateia* of the emperors at Constantinople.

[21] Cornford (*op. cit.*, 58–69, 85 f., 90–102, etc.) is especially convinced that a *sparsio* must follow a *σπαραγμός* of the divine victim, with all the connotations which Frazer has made familiar. Cf. Frazer, *Golden Bough*, VII, 214–269.

it was a strewing of bloodless offerings such as honey-cakes or *mola salsa*,[22] it would be useless to inquire, since both forms are found together from the earliest time.[23]

Who gave the *sparsiones*, and on what occasions? So far we are on familiar ground. No one will deny that some *sparsiones* followed a New Year's pattern. But were there any that did not? The answer is in the negative. In maintaining that the great public distributions were simply the extension of unpretentious private festivities,[24] scholars have ignored the essential aspect of the latter, especially where *sparsiones* are concerned; namely, that they were not private at all. Private *sparsiones* were for celebrations marking some *rite de passage* in a family—a birth, death, marriage, coming-of-age, or the like.[25] These are precisely the occasions on which the individual's case, overpassing the bounds of everyday life to establish contact with the spirit world, becomes a concern of great moment to the entire society.[26] The Roman funeral was a public affair;[27] the Roman people could in fact comandeer the funeral of

[22] Ancient tradition gave the bloodless form priority: Empedocles, in Diel, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1922) I, 271 f., frg. 128; Plutarch, *Numa* 8; cf. Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 273 f. Wissowa (*op cit.*, 410, 412) holds the strewing of meal to be the older form at Rome.

[23] E.g., in the clumsy strewing of bloodless offerings over animal victims (Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Hist. Rom.* VII, 72; Hyginus, *Fabulae*, cclxxvii). The October Horse was decked with bread, and human victims were adorned with the bloodless objects of the *sparsiones* (Cornford, *Attic Comedy*, 55f). On the association of bloody and bloodless *sparsio*, cf. Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 261–280.

[24] Rostovtzeff is particularly insistent on this point (*Bleitesserae*, 20 f., PW, IV, 875, 880), while Berve (*ibid.*, XIII, 82f.) actually maintains that the *sparsiones* were not only strictly private but entirely spontaneous and devoid of any motive but the desire for a little fun.

[25] Occasions listed by Rostovtzeff, PW, IV, 878 and 177; cf. Terence, *Phormio*, I, 41–51, on the gift days. On these occasions one gave a coin to each member of the community (Pliny, *Epist.* X, 117; Plautus, *Aulul.* V, 107), or to a common fund (Roscher, *Lexicon* II, 1, 764; Wissowa *op. cit.*, 58, 128, 135, 168), or received gifts from the same (Terence, *loc. cit.*; T. Mommsen, *Römische Gesch.*[2] I, 787 [on "Pfennigcollecten" at funerals]).

[26] " . . . il n'y avait point de solennité au sein d'une famille riche qui ne fut célébrée par une gratification au peuple, par un festin public ou des jeux" (V. Duruy, "Du Régime Municipale dans l'Empire Romain," *Revue Historique* I [1876], 348). The interested presence of all the race, living and dead, at these affairs is the subject of E. Bethe, *Ahnenbild und Familiengeschichte* (München, 1935), ch. I.

[27] Polybius VI, 53.

anyone at will,[28] and compel the dead, through his heir, to make that public distribution which belonged to a funeral.[29] If the defunct could not afford this donative, a public collection would be taken, a "shower" which the heir would presently redistribute as the dead man's gift to the people.[30] At marriages it was the same story, and bride and groom could no more evade the obligation of scattering presents to the populace than they could avoid the meal that the populace threw at them.[31] Likewise, the *triumphator* both received and gave a shower;[32] indeed, Lord Raglan has recently called attention to the obvious fact that triumph, wedding, and funeral are in all essentials ritually identical.[33] Alike they mark the beginning and end of a life-period; for the individual they are little New Year's days, celebrated with the same feasting,

[28] Victor, *Vir. Illust.* 15; Dionysius Halicarnassensis VIII, 58; Livy II, 16 (cf. III, 18); II, 61; Dio XXXIX, 64; XL, 49; XLVII, 53.

[29] Cf. Duruy, *op. cit.*, 349 for references; J. Kirchmann, *De Funeribus Romanorum* (1625) 583 f. From Livy VIII, 22 it is plain that Flavius' distribution never would have been tolerated on any other occasion than a funeral. The compulsory public distribution is found in ancient funeral practices elswehere, e.g. Josephus, *Bell. Iud.* II, 1.

[30] Victor, *Vir. Illust.* 32 and 18; Dio XLVIII, 53; cf. Pliny, *N. H.* XXI, 10, in which this public contribution accompanies an actual shower of flowers. On showering the dead with good things, especially grain, cf. Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 261–280.

[31] Vergil's *Sparge, marite, nuces . . .* (*Ecl.* VIII, 30 [cf. Festus, ed. L., 178–179]) is matched by a like obligation put upon the bride (Apuleius, *Apol.* 88; cf. Diodorus XIII, 84 and 90; Pliny *N. H.* XV, 86). Other wedding *sparsiones* were the scramble for the *spina alba*, which was broken up and distributed among the people *tanquam vitae praesidia* (Festus, p. 364, ed. Lindsay [cf. modern bride's bouquet]); and the sprinkling of the threshold with oil by the bride (Pliny *N. H.* XXVIII, 135; Servius, *ad Aen.* IV, 458), a custom still observed in Syria. The private *katachysmata* which introduced a Greek bridegroom or new-bought slave to his new life (Aristophanes, *Plut.* 768) is not to be distinguished from the great *public* showers (*ibid.*, 794–822).

[32] On the showering of the victorious emperor or contestant by the people, cf. Herodian VII, 10, 8; Pliny *N. H.* XIV, 96; for the similar *phyllobolia*, cf. Pindar *Pyth.* IX, 218–220. The symbolism of the triumphal shower is treated by Eitrem (*Opferritus*, 266 f.) and L. Deubner ("Die Bedeutung des Kranzes im kl. Altertum," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* XXX [1933], 79). Vortumnus, showered with fruits at the turn of the year, was the prototype of the *triumphator* (Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 287 f.). On the scattering of gifts *by* the victorious emperor, see below, n. 81.

[33] Ld. Raglan, "Magic and Religion," *Folklore* L (1939), 129. Thus the symbolic nut-shower of the wedding (Festus, 178, ed. Lindsay) also appears in the year-rites of the Saturnalia (Martial V, 30, 8) and at funerals (Eitrem, *op. cit.*, 262 f.). On the identity of funeral and triumph in ritual, cf. Ch. Picard, "Les Bûchers sacrés d'Eleusis," *Revue de l'Hist. des Religions* CVII (1933), 137–154.

games, greetings, and *sparsiones* as mark the regular New Year,[34] a time when public and private rites seem to be wholly mingled and confounded.[35] The giver of a *sparsio*, furthermore, ceased by that act to be a mere private individual, for he received a statue in his memory,[36] and was annually glorified in a public feast of his own providing.[37]

The striking resemblance of various important Roman festivals

[34] Cf. W. Schmidt, "Geburtstag," *Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten* VII (1909), 36 f. All *bellaria* were of the nature of second tables (Gellius XIII, 11, *fin.*), which would make them necessarily New Year's rites at Rome (Athenaeus XIV, 639; cf. J. Harrison, *Themis* [Cambridge, 1927], 250 f.). On the significance of Roman festivals as anniversaries, cf. A. Piganiol, *Recherches sur les Jeux Romains* (Strasbourg, 1923), 145–148.

[35] The identity of birthday and New Year is especially evident in the economy of the more ancient *collegia*. Thus the Arval Brethren and the Salii had the primary duty of celebrating birthdays and the New Year with identical rites (Wissowa, PW, II, 1472 f., 1485, and in *Relig. u. Kultus*, 345–347. The college of Aesculapius and Hygeia gave its *sparsiones* out on the emperor's birthday, the birthday of the college, and at the New Year (Rostovtzeff, *Bleiless.*, 98). The identity of the emperor's birthday with the New Year (the official birthday of all Romans, for that matter [Wissowa, PW, II, 1485]) is emphasized by Statius, *Silv.* IV, 1 and 2. The *genesia* is at once birthday and "Totenfeier" (Schmidt, *op. cit.*, 9–13, 37–45; E. Rhode, *Psyche* [1925], 167), held at Rome for all the dead on Midwinter Night (Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 233), when alone, says Macrobius (*Saturnal.* I, 10, 18), the cry of Io, Saturnalia! was legal. The Matronalia, on March 1, the old Roman New Year, resembled a birthday celebration in every respect (Wissowa, *ibid.*, 185), while every Roman bride celebrated her marriage with coin- and cake-tokens not on the marriage day, but at the Compitalia at the end of the Saturnalia (*ibid.*, 167 f.).

[36] Malalas, Migne, *PG* 97, 481 f.; *Chron. Pasch.*, *ibid.*, 92, 641. Cicero shows (*Pro Arch.* 30) how established the custom was. At all periods the rewards for gifts of grain to the people was a statue in one's memory (Pliny *N. H.* XVIII, 15; Gellius VII, 7, 1; *Chron. Pasch.*, *loc. cit.*, 1004). On the rostra, from which *sparsiones* and memorial addresses were given together in Republican times (notes 79, 80, below), stood the "golden statue of Memory" (Cicero, *Phil.* II, 34, 84). The statue and feast that went with it amounted to cult veneration, writes W. Buckler, "A Charitable Foundation of A.D. 237," *JHS* LVII (1937), 1–10, and *AJA* 41 (1937), 616; V. Duruy, in *Rev. Hist.* I, 347; S. Dill, *Roman Society from Nero to M. Aurelius* (1905), 275.

[37] In all the above instances the statue marks the scene of such a feast. Not a single instance is known in which a group observes a memorial feast at its own expense (Cf. Schmidt, in *Religionsgesch. Versuche und Vorarbeiten* VII, 37 f.). To be rich was to be a hero (Pausanias IV, 32, 2; Diodorus XIII, 84 and 90). Such donatives were "a manifestation of power and an enhancement of the personality" exalting the status of the giver to a superhuman level (cf. Athenaeus X, 418B, and the discussion by A. Malinowski, *Crime and Custom in Savage Society* [N. Y., 1926], 29).

to each other has been explained by referring them to a single common prototype.[38] This was the secular celebration, the inauguration of the Great Year, marking the life-cycle of the Roman people, individually and collectively.[39] And this secular rite was before everything the great *sparsio*, deriving its name from the primitive **se-tlom*, *"was das Säen ermöglicht"*—the sowing, specifically, of men and animals, the begetting of the race.[40] The central act of the celebration was the redistribution to all the people by the king (the emperor in the revived version) of *praemitiae*—beans, barley, corn—which they had brought in as year-offerings.[41] Much the same thing took place at Delphi originally "on the birthday of the god":[42] all over the ancient world, in fact, a royal *sparsio* dramatized the begetting of the race on the day of creation, the New Year.[43] It is quite proper that the chief patron of the *sparsiones* should have been Janus, first king and father of the race, and that the hero-kings of the first age, Janus, Saturn, Semo-Sancus, Cereus, Lupercus, Faunus, etc., should uniformly figure in the

[38] The definitive studies are by G. Wissowa, "De Feriis Anni Romanorum Vetustissimi," in *Ges. Abhandlungen* (1904), 154–174; L. Deubner, "Zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der altrömischen Religion," *Neue Jahrb.* XXVII (1911), 321–334; A. Von Domaszewski, "Die Festcyclen des römischen Kalenders," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* X (1907), 333–334; and S. Eitrem, Beiträge zur gr. Religionsgesch. II (in *Videnskapselskapet Skrifter*, Kristiania, 1917), 19–22. All are in agreement that a single great festival (cf. T. Mommsen, *Röm. Gesch.*, I, 788) was either repeated or prolonged by installments throughout the year.

[39] No one was allowed to be absent from the secular rites held in his generation, and no one might live to behold those of another (Zosimus, *Hist.* II, 5, 1; Suetonius, *Claud.* 21; *Acta Ludorum Saecularium*, lines 52–57, in T. Mommsen, *Gesammelte Schriften* [1913], VIII, 572; cf. 578–580).

[40] E. Diehl, "Das *saeculum*, seine Riten und Gebete," *Rhein. Mus.* LXXXIII, N.F. (1934), 255 f.; cf. F. Blumenthal, "Ludi Saeculares," *Klio* XV (1918), 242.

[41] Zosimus II, 5. The *re*distribution appears "unsinnig" to Blumenthal (*op. cit.*, 232), and puzzling to Mommsen (*Ges. Schr.* VIII, 596), but has been explained convincingly by A. Piganiol (*Jeux Romains*, 92–101).

[42] Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* no. 12; see Halliday's ed. of the *Greek Questions* (Oxford, 1928), 72 f. On the primitive bringing of first-fruits to Delphi cf. Plut. *ibid.*, no. 35. The function of the god there was to bestow equally crops and children (Euripides, *Io* 301–303).

[43] See below, notes 83, 86, 91. The *ludi saeculares* are the founder's festival, the *saeculum urbis conditae* (Diehl, *op. cit.*, 370–372). The day of sowing is the day of creation, for the Romans considered "Erzeugung" and birthday one and the same event (cf. F. Altheim, in *Klio* XXX [1937], 51).

role of the sower.[44] If private *sparsiones* had to be given by one who was *mactus* by virtue of standing for the moment between one world and another (for such is the *rite de passage*), the king was always *mactus:* he was the type and model of the one who gives the *sparsio*.[45]

During the Republic, for example, a magistrate giving grain on a lavish scale could be charged with trying to play *king* to the people,[46] which clearly betrays the origin of the system. The public donative as a royal but at the same time very popular survival was a source both of power and embarrassment to the oligarchs. Cicero has only praise for a system which enables great men to win all but regal acclaim,[47] and yet he is quite aware how ill the usage

[44] This subject has particularly engaged the attention of A. Schwegler, *Römische Geschichte* (1884), I, 212–239; and L. Preller, *Römische Mythologie*, Abschn. II, IV; VI–VII. Of the large Janus literature it is sufficient to cite the summary of the god's offices and his predominance in the economy of tokens and distributions (Ovid, *Fast.* I, 185 f.) by Otto Huth, *Janus* (Bonn, 1932), p. 23 and *passim*. Does the *Jano struem* of Cato (*De Agric.* CXXXIV) refer to the *sparsio* of cakes? The identity of New Year's distributions with feasts of the dead and the gifts of the sower is generally explained on the ground that the act of opening the subterranean corn-bin is both a chthonian and a New Year's rite: this theory, introduced by Otfrid Müller, has been popular since its revival by Fowler (cf. S. Weinstock, in *Röm. Mitt.* XLV, 115; Münzer, in PW, XVI, 1, 561–563; M. P. Nilsson, in Da la Saussaye, *Lehrb. der Religionsgesch.*, II, 297 f., 369, [see below n. 101]).

[45] That the private *sportulae* were never bestowed in kind, as the public often were (Hug, PW, II, 3, 1885) indicates their later origin. Cicero (*Fam.* XI, 28) speaks of distributions as private in the sense of having no constitutional significance, i.e., as non-political; but there is no issue as to the priority of private or public *sparsio*, since any *liberalitas* is meaningless unless the gift is made both *a*) from private means and *b*) to parties outside one's family circle. Thus Augustus boasts (*Mon. Anc.* I, 32–35): "*populum universum meis impensis liberarem* . . . , his private gift to 320,000 Romans being given on the very public occasion of his assuming the tribunate and consulship (*ibid.*, III, 15–17). So Crassus "out of his own means" fed all the Romans for three months, but this again was to celebrate a consulship (Plutarch, *Crassus* 2); so too with Caesar (Plutarch, *Caesar*, 55 f.).

[46] For sources cf. T. Mommsen, "S. Cassius, M. Manilius, Sp. Maelius, die drei Demagogen," *Hermes* V (1871), 228–271; and Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.*, III, 132–136; 282–298. The Gracchi and even Caesar would come under this head. Maelius expected to restore the monarchy by giving but two pounds of grain to every plebeian, a ridiculously small bribe, unless for the people it had a deeper significance (cf. Schwegler, *ibid.*, III, 314 f.

[47] *De Offic.* II, 61–64; *ad Att.* I, 16, 12; *Pro Murena* 36; cf. Tacitus, *An.* IV, 62; Appian, *Sam. Hist.* XI, 1 (where he writes that to give money and gifts to the populace is an archaic Roman tradition).

suits a republican order, and insists that public liberality is a royal, not a private, virtue.[48] It is impossible indeed to conceive of a system less compatible to the good order of the Republic, or more plainly and fatally designed to beget corruption in it, than that of the Roman collections and distributions,[49] or any more blatant offense to every idea of order and decorum (so dear to the Republic) than a public scramble.[50] The distribution, particularly the *sparsiones*, it is safe to say, could hardly have arisen and taken root under the very noses of the conscript fathers without their knowledge and consent: if they were not suppressed along with newfangled cults and luxuries, it is because they were classified among the sacrosanct and ineradicable survivals of an earlier day.[51] Their immense vitality and popularity carried them right through the Republic, in fact, to become the very cornerstone of imperial authority.

From the first the emperor was careful to reserve to himself the sole right of making donatives.[52] Not only was this his exclusive and inescapable office,[53] it was also his one sufficient claim to rule if all else failed.[54] A reading of Dio, Suetonius, or Tacitus will suffice to show that a ruler at Rome was popular in that degree to which he resembled a Saturnalian king, and that from the first every emperor made a determined effort to play that strange and

[48] *De Offic.* II, 73; 77; *Pro. Lig.* VI, 23; *Fam.* IX, 13, 4; *Pro Reg. Deiot.* 26.

[49] Emphasized by T. Mommsen, *De Collegiis et Sodaliciis Romanorum* (1843), 50–55, and *Röm Gesch.*, I, 787.

[50] *Sparsiones* are never objected to on principle but only because they have become the plaything of the lowest classes (Porphyrio, *ad Sat.* II, 3, 182; Persius V, 177; Minucius Felix XI, 37). Epictetus objects to scrambling for figs and nuts on the ground that dignified men do not scramble "for such small stakes"(!) (IV, 7, 22–24; cf. Cicero *Pro Murena* 19; Appian, *Bel. Civ.* V, 3, 128; Cicero, *De Offic.* II, 57, and *Phil.* II, 84).

[51] Just as the popular burials in the Forum, though dreaded by the senate (Dio XXXIX, 64; XLVII, 53; cf. Livy VIII, 22), weathered every attack because they were a primitive popular custom (cf. Lucan, *Bel. Civ.* II, 222; D. Randall MacIver, *Villanovans and Early Etruscans* [Oxford, 1924], 73–83).

[52] Cf. M. Rostovtzeff, *Bleitess.*, 11, 39 f.; and PW, IV, 876, 880; cf. V. E. Gardthausen, *Augustus und seine Zeit* (1891 f.), I, 2, 588; O. Hirschfeld, *Römische Verwaltungsgeschichte* (1877), 120.

[53] No emperor could escape loud popular censure if he failed to give lavishly (Suetonius, *Claud.* 12; Zosimus IV, 16; Plutarch, *Galba* 18, etc.).

[54] See Berve, in PW, XIII, 89 f.

hilarious role.[55] It was the people who insisted on this: even though he forbade it they persisted in giving the emperor that popular title of *Dominus*,[56] the specific fixture of public feasts,[57] which proclaimed to the scandalized world that he was *dominus et deus*, nothing less than the old festive king, *dominus convivii*, giver of all good things,[58] the equivalent of the Greek *basileus*,[59] the *despotes* who in the Old Comedy bursts on the scene with a shower of gifts and a clamorous invitation to all the world to come and feast at his house.[60]

It was with this festive office of year-king, with its boundless popular appeal,[61] that the political rivals of the late Republic

[55] The evidence is collected in L. Friedländer, *Sittengesch. Roms* II, 299–305.

[56] Thus, during the *sparsiones*,

> tollunt innumeras ad astra voces
> Saturnalia principis sonantes
> et dulci dominum favore clamant:
> hoc solum vetuit licere Caesar.—
>
> Statius, *Silv.* I, 6, 81–84.

Augustus strictly forbade this *dominus* title (Suetonius, *August.* 53), as did Tiberius (Suetonius, *Tib.* 27.) According to Victor (*De Caesaribus* XXXIX, 4) Diocletian *primus omnium post Caligulam Domitiumque dominum se palam dici passus est, et adorari se appellarique uti deum*. Cf. *op. cit.*, XI, 2 and Victor's *Epitome* III, 8; XI, 6. The *dominus* title would never have caused the scandal it did, had it originated, as Mommsen claims (*Römisches Staatsrecht*, 192), in the old economy of the Roman household, nor would it have been inseparably connected with the title of *deus* (Mommsen, *loc. cit.;* Martial V, 7), had it referred strictly to the private relationship of servant and master.

[57] Cf. *Thesaur. Ling. Lat.* under "dominus"; Suetonius, *Domit.* 13.

[58] *Ibid.*, and Livy XXIII, 8; Gellius XIII, 11, 5; p. 433 f., Nonnius, ed. Lindsay; Statius, *loc. cit.* When Trimalchio regales his guests with a *sparsio*, they immediately interpret it as a religious donative stemming not from their host but from the emperor: Rati ergo sacrum esse ferculum tam religioso apparatu perfusum, consurreximus altius et "Augusto patri patriae, feliciter" diximus. Quibusdam tamen etiam post hanc venerationem poma rapientibus, et ipsi mappas implevimus . . . . (Petronius, *Satiricon* 60).

[59] Claudius' behavior at his revived version of the archaic year-feast, where he waited on tables, addressed his guests as *domini*, etc. (Suetonius, *Claud.* 21), closely resembles that of King Cotys (Athenaeus IV, 131; cf. X, 439). At the Saturnalia (Macrobius, *Saturnal.* I, 7, 26; Athenaeus XIV, 639 f.), as at the old *sparsiones*-festival of the Floralia, (Dio LVIII, 19), the emperor was treated in every way as a festival king. Since these celebrations are beyond doubt archaic, the origin of the supreme office cannot be dissociated from them (see below, n. 70).

[60] Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 1144–1165; cf. Altheim, *Terra Mater*, 19. At the Saturnalia the emperor keeps open house (Statius, *Silvae* I, 6, 39–50).

[61] Amid all the vicissitudes of the late Republic the common people of Italy remained

played so dangerously. It was as *praefectus annonae* that Pompey earned his title of The Great and the right to wear royal insignia at festivals.[62] When a Crassus, Sulla, or Lucullus gave a feast of abundance, it was at the very *Ara Maxima* where Hercules, as type and model of the victorious year-king, had set the example.[63] Brutus and Octavian bid desperately against each other for the right to play year-king,[64] and Antony with equal presumption could take the role of King Lupercus at Rome or Dionysus at Athens.[65] Caesar's Clodius posed as the New Numa,[66] and Caesar's own regalia was that of the festive king.[67] It was, moreover, as lord of peace and plenty that both he and his successor enjoyed the grant of sovereign power[68] by a popular consent which recalls the manner in which Cyrus became king of the Persians in return for a timely feast.[69] Indeed, it was an established procedure in

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loyal to the folk-memory of a Golden Age, and at the end of the Republic were looking forward with particular enthusiasm to the return of the *Saturnia regna* (cf. J. Ferrero, *Greatness and Decline* (1909 f.), II, 339; Vergil, *Ecl.* 4.

[62] Cassiodorus, *Var.* VI, 18; Plutarch, *Pompey* 28; Velleius Paterculus II, 40.

[63] Preller, *Röm. Mythol.*, II, 295. At Rome the prototype of the feast-giving year-king is Hercules, who takes the place of the old local Cererius and Jovius as sponsor of public feasts (Cf. Piganiol, *Jeux Romains*, 121–125). It is he who presides over the food distributions of the *Ara Maxima*, an event which Wissowa (*Rel. u. Kult.*, 277) holds to be the oldest public rite of the Romans: it was a true year-feast of abundance, at which food was ostentatiously thrown away (*ibid.*, 278). Wissowa identifies this Hercules with the autochthonous Garanus (*ibid.*, 276 f., 282; cf. 271), as in this same office he is identified with the old native sowing-god Semo Sancus (Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.*, IV, 346, 368 f., 375 f.; Preller, *op. cit.*, II, 270–275. "The ancients had a way of calling all mighty men Hercules," says Servius (*Aen.* VIII, 203), and everywhere the hero appears as *the* year-king (Dio Chrysostom., *Orat.* I, 50–74; K. Schwenck, in *Rhein. Mus.* XXII (1867), 129–131; cf. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy* [New York, Holt, 1927], p. 137, on Hercules as the great *mysta*). Even the Oriental year-king, as Ningizzida, Ninurta, Ningirsu, Tammuz, etc., "seems to be in possession of all the attributes of Herakles" (E. E. Van Buren, in *Iraq* I [1934], 14, 16).

[64] Appian, *Bell. Civ.* III, 3, 23 f.; cf. K. Scott, in *Mem. of Am. Accad. Rom.* XI, 7–49.

[65] Cicero, *Philip.* II, 84 f.; Athenaeus IV, 148.

[66] Mommsen, *Röm. Gesch.*, III, 290 f.

[67] Dio L, 10; Florus II, 13; Suetonius, *Caes.* 79. Caesar's public feasts, given on a royal scale (Dio XLIII, 14; Plutarch, *Caes.* 5), are described by Ausonius as archaic (*Technop.* IX, 5).

[68] Plutarch, *Caes.* 55, 57; Dio, *loc. cit.*; Tacitus, *Ann.* I, 2.

[69] Herodotus I, 126. On Cyrus as the model year-king, cf. A. Jeremias, *The Old Testament in the Light of the Ancient East* (1911), II, 231 f., 274–276.

ancient times for an ambitious man to seize a throne simply by getting himself made King of the Festival and then, by exercising his ceremonial right to demand year-gifts and to redistribute them, reorganize the state while refusing to yield up his royal office.[70] It was for that matter at the *Ludi Saeculares* that Augustus himself assumed rule of the world.[71] An unbroken tradition binds the imperial bounty to the *Saturnia regna* of the fabled priest-kings: to the end the emperor remains the *magnus parens mundi*, the lord of peace and plenty, the New Hercules, King of the Golden Age,[72] "sowing his gifts broadcast as a sower his seeds."[73]

[70] In that way the gardener Ellil-bani became king of Babylon *in grauer Vorzeit* (B. Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* [Heidelberg, 1925], II, 99). At Tarsus the Epicurean Lysias, chosen "crown wearer" (Priest of Hercules), refused to give up the insignia after the festival and made himeslf absolute tyrant, "first of all dividing the wealth of the rich among the poor, killing all who refused to contribute" (Athenaeus, IV, 215). Later, when the people of that city formed factions, they crowned Cassius and Dolabella as rival kings (Appian, B.C. IV, 64). Cornford (*Attic Comedy*, 26) has very plausibly suggested that the famous ruse of Pisistratus and his masquerade-Athena succeeded because, insofar as it concerned the old year-king, he could rely "on the conception being familiar to the simple-minded folk in ritual." When Timaeus wanted to become king of Cyzicus, he began by "bestowing a largess of money and grain upon his fellow citizens" (Athenaeus XI, 509). The formula was followed in Sicyon, where "the king, receives *honors* and in turn gives *gifts*" of land, grain, and money to everyone (Livy 32, 40). Distributions as a rule follow confiscations, as in the case of Molpagoras at Cius (Polybius XV, 21), Charops in Epirus (*ibid.*, XXXII, 5), Chaeron at Sparta (*ibid.*, XXIV, 7), Apollodorus (*ibid.*, XXII, 19) and Phintias (Diodorus XXII, 4) in Sicily, Nabis at Sparta (Diodorus XXVI, 19), etc. In Roman legend there are many traces of such practice. When all the people chose T. Hostilius king, he divided up all the royal lands among them (Dionysius Halicarnassensis III, 1), following the example of Romulus himself, who willed to each Roman a couple of jugera as an *heredium* (Varro R.R. I, 10, 2). King Numa "abolished poverty by force" when he gave to the masses "all the land which Romulus had won by the spear" (Plutarch, *Numa* 16). When Sextus, son of Tarquin, became King of Gabii, he "destroyed the more influential citizens and distributed their wealth among the populace" (Zonaras, *Annales* VII, 10). Lepidus had the people plunder and divide the effects of all who opposed his (royal) triumph (Appian, *Bell. Civ.* IV, 5, 31).

[71] Cf. E. Diehl, in *Rhein. Mus.* LXXXIII, 348–352. It was at the great year-festival of the Gauls at Lyons that Drusus induced these people to accept Augustus as ruler and god; it is evident from the ease with which this plan succeeded that he was followeng a pattern as familiar to the Gauls as the secular celebration was to the Romans (Strabo IV, 3, 2, discussed by H. W. Lawton, in *Speculum Religionis* [Oxford, 1929], 73).

[72] Such symbolic titles are very common, e.g., Martial XII, 62; Statius, *Silv.* I, 6; 2; IV, 1; Vergil, *Bucol.* I, 6 f.; Seneca, *Epist.* I, 73; Claudianus Mamertus, *Paneg.* V, 2; VI, 1; Cassiodorus, *Variae* VI, 4; IX, 17; XII, 11; Corippus, *Justin.* IV, 165–174; Nicolaus Da-

What was the method employed in the *sparsiones*, and why? On tokens used in the distributions are found representations of the emperor handing out gifts, or of *Liberalitas* shaking out the contents of her cornucopia, from a raised platform.[74] Heliogabalus is described as acting *Phoenicio ritu* when, dressed as the Sun, he mounts a specially built platform to shower gold on the people,[75] and certainly the picture of Gaius flinging gold and silver from the palace roof[76] suggests the famous scene from the tomb of Eye, in which Amenophis IV throws gold from a palace balcony while above his head, to make the meaning clear, the Sun with outstretched hands showers his gifts at the same time.[77] But, while it has notable archaic affinities,[78] the custom of casting gifts from a high platform is no late Oriental importation at Rome, for the old Republican usage was to scatter *nummos* from the rostra,[79] apparently the survival of a very primitive native *sparsio*.[80]

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mascenus, *Vit. Caes.* 12, etc. The familiar concept of the king as the ultimate source of the food supply, expressed in these passages, needs no discussion. "AUG" on coins "in effect raises the emperor to the level of a symbol typifying, in a more than earthly capacity, the blessings which the more humble of the earth may enjoy" (C. H. V. Sutherland, in *Greece and Rome* IX [no. 26], 74). Caesar was the first Roman to put his own image on coins, an honor reserved before that time for deity, *ibid.*, 72.

[73] Cassiodorus, *Var.* III, 29. [74] Berve, PW, XIII, 90.

[75] Herodian, *Hist.* V, 6, 9. [76] Josephus, *Ant. Jud.* XIX, 1, 5.

[77] R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler* III, 103–109; reproduced in E. A. W. Budge, *History of Egypt* (1902), IV, 121, 123; cf. 127: the gifts include all the fruits of the earth, but also many *ankh* tokens, showing that the god is bestowing life itself.

[78] Dio LIX, 25: Gaius had ordered a high *bema* erected on the shore and from it supervised his soldiers as they gathered shells from the beach, following a mock combat. Then he gave them rich presents, as if they had won a great victory, and marched with the booty back to Rome, where he immediately mounted another platform to watch the people gathering gold in the same manner. The whole story of the farcical British expedition, with its island objective, its mock combats, its triumph and collecting of shells and gold, etc., closely resembles Alexander's mythical expedition to the underworld (Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alexander* II, 41 f.), a tradition with an Oriental year-rite background (cf. J. Zacher, *Pseudocallisthenes* [Halle, 1867], pp. 141 f.; also Octavian's unsuccessful attempt to satisfy his soldiers with such a token triumph [Appian, B.C. V, 13, 128]). [79] Cicero, *Phil.* II, 16.

[80] Besides *sparsiones*, memorial speeches were given from the rostra (Polybius VI, 53), where stood the golden statue of Memory (Cicero, *Phil.* II, 84). Herodotus (IV, 26) describes the same remarkable combination of *sparsio*, memorial rites, and golden statue among the Scythians, and compares it with the Western *genesia*. The actual distribution of the dismembered body of the defunct in the Eastern rite may well represent the original form of the *visceratio* or Roman funeral distribution of meat (Livy VIII, 22;

Likewise the chariot from which the emperor would fling his gold at the New Year,[81] while it has striking Oriental parallels in the heavenly car or plow from which the year-god showered blessings over men and fields,[82] has just as definite counterparts in the North and West among the Scythians,[83] Celts,[84] Greeks,[85] and Germans,[86] all of whom remember in their oldest ritual and legend the gold that fell from the wagon or plow of the god at the turn of the year. The holy vehicle also appears in Rome as the chariot

XXXIX, 46; cf. *supra*, n. 21). The older rostra, to which Cicero refers (Wissowa, *Rel. u Kult.*, 77), was the seat of Lupercus (Cicero, *loc. cit.*; Suetonius, *Caes.* 79), and stood on the site of the earlier Volcanal, a raised platform from which the kings would address the people (refs. in S. B. Platner & R. Ashby, *Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*, 583). Livy (XXXIX, 46; XL, 19) tells of showers of blood *in area Vulcani*, implying that the spot was actually the scene of bloody *sparsiones*. For another type of chthonian *sparsio* taking place there, see below, n. 116.

[81] Heliogabalus varied the platform routine with the golden chariot (Herodian V, 6, 6–9). The solar costume went with both, for at Constantinople the emperors wore it for their chariot *sparsiones* (Theophan. *Chron. ann.* 791; Cedrenus I, 710). In a relief from an ivory plaque one sees the deified emperor in a chariot mounted on a very high wooden platform hung with draperies (Cabrol and Leclerq, *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chretienne et de Liturgie* [Paris, 1907], IV, 2656; cf. Herodian IV, 2, 1–4; Lucius Ampelius, VIII, 19). Representations of exalted chariots are very common.

[82] The Babylonian year-god scatters seed from his heavenly car or mountain top (H. Frankfort, "Myths on Sargonid Seals," *Iraq* I [1934], 24 f.; cf. *infra*, n. 91. His special symbol is the plow (Von Scheil, "La Charue Symbole de Ningirsu," *Rev. d'Assyriologie* XXXIV [1937], 42), which identifies him with year-gods everywhere (cf. E. E. Van Buren, in *Iraq* I, 13 f.), notably with Triptolemus (Hyginus, *Fabul.* 147, with specific reference to *sparsiones*), of whom A. B. Cook (*Zeus* I, 214, 225) observes "a remarkable similarity between the equipment of Triptolemus and that of Dionysus," including chariot and plow.

[83] Herodotus IV, 5: the sacred gold of the Scythians fell from the sky at the creation, along with a plow. The one able to take up this gold was declared king.

[84] Of great antiquity is the story of Lo(v)ernius, Luernes, Ariamnes, etc., who feasted all the Celts for a year and was acclaimed leader and benefactor of the race as he "drove his chariot across the fields, scattering gold and silver for the thousands of Celts who followed him" (Athenaeus IV, 152; Strabo IV, 2, 3).

[85] Cf. Hyginus, *Fab.* 147. The practice of scattering seeds and chopped straw in the wake of a plow or wagon at New Year's still survives in Northern Greece (Cornford, *Attic Comedy*, 63).

[86] The Greek custom is found among the Germans as well (J. Grimm, *Teutonic Mythology* [1882], I, 264, 273–276), imitating in this case the Earth-Goddess and/or her consort, who ride through the sky on Midwinter Night scattering shavings and straw from their wagon or plow, bits which on being picked up turn to gold. (Cf. Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Alex.* II, 41; S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* [Bloomington, Ind., 1932–1936], F342.)

of the *sparsio*-giving *triumphator*,[87] the quadriga in the Vulcanal,[88] or that heavenly car mounted upon the topmost part of the Capitol, upon which the fertility of the Roman fields was believed to depend.[89]

Besides the platform and chariot, must one consider the *linea*, stretched high overhead, from which, in some endlessly puzzling fashion, sweets and tokens were shaken down over the crowd in what the ancients refer to as *imber*, *pluviae*, *grando*, *nubilia*, etc.[90] This is more than a poet's fancy. The *sparsio* that fell from on high was actually thought of as falling from heaven. Throughout the ancient world one meets in legend and ritual the golden shower that descends upon the world to fructify it on the day of creation.[91] The Roman version of this is King Janus' sweet rain of honey and gold; it is the *sparsio*, from the golden chariot[92] or gilded platform,[93]

[87] The chariot of the *triumphator* is that of Jupiter himself (L. Deubner, "Die Tracht des röm. Triumphators," *Hermes* LXIX (1, 34), 320. It is also the royal chariot (Velleius Paterculus II, 40) and the victorious chariot of the games, to judge from Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5.

[88] This quadriga had been placed by Romulus himself in the temple of Vulcan (Dionysius Halicarnasensis II, 54, 2; cf. Platner and Ashby, *Topog. Dict.*, p. 583), the source of the archaic *sparsiones* (*supra*, n. 80). It goes back to time when Vulcan ruled before the arrival of Jove (J. Carcopino, *Vergile et les Origines d'Ostie* [1919], 98–102).

[89] Plutarch, *Publicola* 13; cf. Aust, *Die Religion der Römer* (1899), 49–55.

[90] Martial VIII, 78, 7–12; Statius, *Silv.* I, 6, 9 f.; 20–27; Ovid, *Fast.* I, 186, etc

[91] To cases cited above, notes 83–86, may be added the golden *sparsiones* (soma, rice, butter, gold, etc.) of the Asvamedha, the archaic New Year's celebration of India (P. E. Dumont, *L'Asvamedha* [Paris, 1927] V–VIII, 252 f.). This rite has been identified with the oldest Sumerian year-practices by W. F. Albright and P. E. Dumont ("Indic and Babylonian Sacrifical Ritual," *Jnl. Am. Orient. Soc.* LIV [1934], 107; cf. the Babylonian sprinklings of honey and milk in B. Meissner, *Babyl. u. Assyr.*, II, 238 f.). For interesting Armenian *sparsiones* cf. Z. C. Boyajian, *Armenian Legends and Poems* (London, 1919), p. 49, commenting on Moses of Khorene. At the Persian creation golden streams flow down and a golden shower falls from heaven to earth (A. J. Carnoy, "Iranian Views of Origins," *Jnl. Am. Or. Soc.* XXXVI [1917], 301; and *Iranian Mythology* [Boston, 1917], 299–300). For the flowing gold of the Ras Shamra ritual texts, cf. G. A. Barton, "The Second Liturgical Poem from Ras Shamra," *Jnl. Am. Or. Soc.* LV (1935), 38–44. At the founding of Athens and the birth of Athena Zeus sent a shower of gold over the place (Pindar, *Ol.* VII, 8, 50). The cases of Danaae and others will come to mind. The golden tears of the goddess give life to the world (Rendell Harris, *Picus Who is also Zeus* [Cambridge, 1917], 45–47; cf. Pausanias II, 31, 14).

[92] In the chariot *sparsiones* cited above, n. 81, it is specifically reported that the chariot was of gold; cf. Pindar, *Ol.* I, 37–41.

[93] Martial VIII, 33, 3 f., and in his *Lib. Spect.* II, 3; saffron, *ibid.*, V, 25; XXV, 7; VIII, 33,

of gilt tokens and golden grain, of crocus, saffron, powdered chrysolite or bean-straw, gilt figs, dates, and cookies—the golden color predominates in the *sparsiones:*[94] as in the year-rites of India, everything that is scattered is thought of as golden because *or est semence.*[95] What is more natural than that such a shower should usher in the *aureum tempus* at the Saturnalia?[96]

The golden shower belongs to the familiar *hieros gamos:* it is the fructifying of the earth by the shower, thought of both as seed and as water, that falls from heaven.[97] This treasure is stored in the

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4. The throne of Lupercus on the rostra (*supra*, n. 80) was the *sella aurea* (Cicero, *Phil.* II, 3; cf. Pindar, *Nem.* I, 37).

[94] This theme is treated by Ph. Fabia in Daremberg, *Dict.*, IV, 2, 1419; on gilding cf. Rostovtzeff, *Bleitesserae*, 116; Martial XIII, 27; cf. *Mirabilia Romae* I, 4 on the "golden bread," reminding one of the Dutch-gold on the gingerbread figures at old-world fairs.

[95] Dumont, *L'Asvamedha*, 249, 15 f. Of the importance of gold as a universal luck- and fertility-charm nothing need here be said.

[96] It is so described by Statius, *Silv.* I, 6, 40; cf. Vergil, *Ecl.* 4, 6–10, where *nova progenies caelo demittitur alto* refers, of course, to the *gens aurea* of line 9.

[97] It is the marriage of "the Earth-Mother and the Heaven-Father, whose rain falls in a life-giving stream into the womb of Earth" (Cornford, *Att. Comed.*, 19); cf. M. Jastrow, "Sumerian and Akkadian Versions of Beginnings" (*Jnl. Am. Or. Soc.* XXXVI [1917], 290–295), and the broad treatment by G. W. Elderkin, "The Marriage of Zeus and Hera and its Symbol" (*AJA* XLI [1937], 425–435). Water in the New Year's rites has a special fertilizing power, discussed by A. Wensinck, "The Semitic New Year and the Origin of Eschatology" (*Acta Orientalia* I [1922], 164 f., 183 and *passim*). In the Indian year-rites "water is seed" (*Upanishad* [ed. M. Mueller] I, 238 f.). In the ancient Easter rite the wax of the Easter taper "is dropped into the font in the form of a cross, and the candle itself is dipped into it . . . . Then the people are sprinkled with this Easter water" (H. J. Feasey, *Ancient English Holy Week Ceremonial* [1897], 238 f.), while the wax of the taper itself may be distributed among the multitude in the form of little wafer-tokens to bring prosperity for the year (*ibid.*, 203 f.). Greek *sparsiones* were accompanied by liberal water lustrations over the multitude (Aristophanes, *Pax* 962–972; cf. Cornford, *op. cit.*, 101 f.). The liquid and flower showers of the Isis cult (Apuleius, *Metam.* XI, 9) and the sprinkling of Nile water in the same (Servius, *ad Aen.* IV, 512) certainly have the same significance as the life-giving "drop" of the Egyptian New Year (A. B. Cook, *Zeus*, I, 256 f.). The sprinkling of the life-giving water by the Pharaoh at the great year-festival (the Sed festival) is often depicted in murals and reliefs (e.g., E. Naville, *Festival-Hall of Osorkon* II [Egypt Exploration Fund, 1892], Pl. XI, p. 17 f.), wherein the recipients of the shower return the typical anniversary wish, "millions of years to the King!" *Befeuchter* and *Befruchter* are concepts identical with those of the ancients (F. Altheim, *Terra Mater*, 150; L. Preller, *Röm. Mythol.*, 335; J. Grimm, *Teut. Mythol.*, I, 137–144). Cf. G. Dossin, "Un Rituel du Culte d'Istar," *Rev. d'Assyriologie* 35 (1938), 9.

of gilt tokens and golden grain, of crocus, saffron, powdered chrysolite or bean-straw, gilt figs, dates, and cookies—the golden color predominates in the *sparsiones:*[94] as in the year-rites of India, everything that is scattered is thought of as golden because *or est semence.*[95] What is more natural than that such a shower should usher in the *aureum tempus* at the Saturnalia?[96]

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inner chamber of the Earth-Goddess[98]—represented at Rome both by the temple of Vesta[99] and the treasury of Ceres, that immemorial shrine of the *plebs*, wherein was kept both the yellow grain and the yellow gold of the state,[100] both being scattered abroad at the proper time under her sponsorship.[101] It was Flora, the *Terra Mater*, who *prima per immensas sparsit nova semina gentes*.[102] But, though it reposes by right in the bins of the goddess, the ultimate source of this wealth is her heavenly spouse.[103]

[98] From the golden horde of Demeter came the *sparsiones* of the Thalysia (*Iliad* IX, 534; M. P. Nilsson, *Gesch. der gr. Relig.*, I, 117; Cornford, *op. cit.*, 27). Frigg, or Freyja, was called Folla, Abundia, Dame Habonde, etc., because she kept "the divine mother-chest (*eski*) out of which gifts were *showered* upon the people . . . prosperity and abundance." (Grimm, *op. cit.*, I, 308); this treasure was "the gold of Frigg" (*ibid.*, 306–308). The treasure chamber of the goddess always appears in close connection with the royal marriage motif (Cornford, *loc. cit.*), of which the story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in its numerous Oriental versions is perhaps the most instructive instance, though the reader may recall various Celtic legends of the same intent, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Hist. Reg. Brit.* II, 14; cf. Herodotus II, 121–127; II, 135; I, 187, etc.

[99] This was the *penus* of the community and the *arca pontificum*, from which festival expenses were paid (Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 407, 471). After half the blood of the October horse had been sprinkled, the other half was stored there for future *sparsiones* (*ibid.*, 145; see *supra*, n. 5).

[100] *Ibid.*, p. 300; it was the "Archiv und Kasse" into which all fines were paid, and from which the *cura annonae* was administered (cf. *ibid.*, 302, 297; Altheim, *Ter. Mat.*, 118; Piganiol, *Jeux Romains*, 2, 12, 85, 91, 101, etc.; W. W. Fowler, *Rom. Festivals* (1908) pp. 74–79.

[101] In connection with the *sparsiones* the goddess appears most often as Fortuna (*infra*, notes 141–146) and as Annona: the *Annona Augusta Ceres* of the Imperial coins representing "Ceres . . . in her guise as Imperial corn supply" (C. Sutherland, *Gr. and Rome* IX, 74 f.). Annona is the emissary (Oehler, PW, I, 2320) and the *indigitamentum* of Ceres (Wissowa, in Roscher's *Lexikon* I, 360; Berve, PW, XIII, 89 f.). Ceres received and dispensed the *praemitiae* as archaic patroness of the *cura annonae* and of the primitive games (see preceding note). Her mate is the year-god Janus-Cerus (O. Huth, *Janus*, 22 f., 93; Roscher, *Lex.*, II, 1, 30; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, 103 f., 109), and it has often been noted that her festival was *the* year-festival (Piganiol, *op. cit.*, 91; W. W. Fowler, *Roman Festivals* (1899), 74–79), the primitive year being marked by the opening and shutting of her subterranean corn bin (see above n. 44; cf. F. Altheim, "Altitalische u. altrömische Gottesvorstellung," *Klio* XXX (1937), 47–50; G. Wissowa, *Ges. Abh.*, 154 f.). The name *Annona* refers specifically to the *yearly* office of distribution.

[102] Ovid, *Fasti* V, 221 f.; on Flora as Ceres, cf. Altheim, *Terra Mater*, 132 f.

[103] The treasury of the goddess is also that of Pluto, and the counterpart of the heavenly treasury of Zeus (Cornford, *Att. Com.*, 27; Aristophanes, *Pluto* 131–134). Lydus (*De Mensibus* IV, 85) argues that Pluto is the Sun in the underworld with Kore, who personifies "that power which is upon the seeds as they fall from heaven to earth." At all times the substance of the Roman *sparsiones* was taken in theory from the

This concept is familiar to the whole ancient world. In the common Egyptian formula "all good things and pure" are "given of heaven, formed by the earth, conveyed by the Nile."[104] "From heaven shall abundance come down upon thee," is the Sumerian version,[105] while Babylonian Marduk filled the land with feasts of plenty when he "poured out abundance over Shidlam,"[106] even as the God of Israel "commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna . . . and had given them of the corn of heaven: man did eat angel's food; He sent them meat to the full; He rained down flesh upon them as dust," etc.[107] Though early Easter ceremonies furnish some of the most striking instances of *sparsio*,[108] it was not through Christian channels that the idea of the heavenly donative reached Rome; for when the boys of the city gathered beneath the Pope's window to sing for a largess at the New Year, it was *quomodo qui ad Caesarem* that they called to him to appear at his high window like the sun, moon, and cloud, to scatter good things over them.[109] This donative is the equivalent of the English "singing cakes" or "singing silver," which, as in the Sarum usage, "must be caste out of the steple, that all the boyes in the parish must lie scrambling by the eares."[110] It recalls the office of Augustus, who, upon becoming patron of the

aerarium Saturnii (Oehler, PW, I, 2319), and Saturn's temple was the city treasury (Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, 57). In the East the waters of heaven and those of the underworld are identical, and the gold shower is supplied from a heavenly rain-pond, which is at the same time the water of the abyss (cf. De la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgesch.*, I, 105 f.; II, 228).

[104] A. H. Gardiner (*Egyptian Grammar* [Oxford, 1927], 296) cites references to this.

[105] A. Deimel, *Sumerische Grammatik* (Rome, 1924), 119; cf. p. 110: "von Phallus überschüssiger Kraft, vom Hause des Sturmflutes, vom Gebirge, dem bl. Orte werde ich dir (i.e. the King) einen Wind schicken: das Land wird er mit Lebenshauch beschencken." It is the goddess who brings forth this shower (M. Jastrow, in *Jnl. Am. Or. Soc.* XXXVI, 292 f.).

[106] Hammurabi Code, prologue, cols. 2–4 (R. F. Harper, *Code of Hammurabi* [1904], pp. 5–9). The Persian god sits in heaven "on a golden throne . . . with hands overflowing" (Carnoy, *Iran. Mythol.*, 229).

[107] Psalm 78, 23–29 (for the New Year); cf. Malachi 3, 10.

[108] Cf. Wensinck, in *Acta Orientalia* I, 158–199; H. J. Feasey, *Ancient Eng. Holy Week Ceremonial*, 55–72.

[109] "Domine aperi fenestram. Sol veni! Luna veni! Nubes celestis cum manna veni!" (Cabrol and Leclerq, *Dictionnaire*, VIII, 2, 1911–1916).

[110] Feasey, *op. cit.*, 74, 76 f.; cf. 58.

iuventus, all over Italy supervised such youthful scrambles for tokens and sweets.[111] There is an ancient representation of the *linea* in action which clearly portrays its heavenly nature. It is from a lost glass vase of the fourth century and depicts the distribution of the *annonae:* high above a group of people with birds, flowers, and festive *mappae* in their hands fly two winged genii, each holding a string of *bellaria* in either hand—they are plainly heavenly purveyors of heavenly gifts.[112]

The Romans not only received year-gifts by *sparsio*, but made them in the same way; that is, by throwing cakes, coins, tokens, flowers, etc., into pits or waters leading to the other world.[113] Though this practice is found among ancient peoples everywhere,[114] none make more of it than the Romans. The original Roman *stips* was food or a coin that was tossed or thrown to the god; only later was it laid on the *sacra mensa*.[115] Archaic Roman offerings to chthonian deities had to be thrown or tossed in some way before

[111] Suetonius, *August.* 98. As *princeps iuventutis* (*Monum. Ancyr.* III, 1–6) he would distribute tokens marked MAG(ister) IUVENT(utis) (Rostovtzeff, *Bleitess.*, 59; cf. H. Démoulin, in *Musée Belge*, III [1899], 177–192).

[112] Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dict.*, I, 2, 2274–2276, fig. 776. Leclercq's explanation is that *deux génies couvrent les epoux de fleurs*, although the objects on the strings in no way resemble flowers, and the strings are not held lightly like garlands, but are clutched firmly and hang straight, though at odd angles, as if they were being shaken.

[113] Plutarch, *Romulus* 11. The best-known example is that of the *Lacus Curtius*, into which every Roman tossed a coin or fruit offering *annuatim pro salute imperatoris* (Suetonius, *August*, 57; cf. Livy VII, 6, 3–6; Propertius IV, 2, 61). The mouth of the underworld was the *mundus*, which has been persistently identified with the subterranean public silo from which the grain distributions were made, the *mundus Cereris* (Festus, ed. Linds., p. 142; Macrobius, *Sat.* I, 16, 17 f.; *supra*, n. 101).

[114] "Die Sitte der Münzspende an Quellen und Flüsse geht durch die ganze antike Welt," according to F. Dölger (*Antike und Christentum* [Münster, 1929], III, 13), who has treated the subject extensively (*ibid.*, 1–24). Additional instances of the throwing of year-offerings into the abyss of the netherworld are to be found in Sozomen II, 4; Eusebius, *Vita Constant.* III, 52; Gregor. Tours, *Liber in Glor. Confess.* II (Migne, *Patrol. Lat.* 71, 830 f.); Pausanias I, 18, 7; VII, 24, 2; III, 23, 9; III, 26, 1 (this Ino is identified with the Roman Mater Matuta in ritual, cf. Schirmer, in Roscher, *Lex.* II, 2, 2012); Lucian, *De Dea Syr.* 12, etc. The Demeter pigs of the Thesmophoria were thrown into a pit before being scattered over the fields, according to G. Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion* (1925), 30.

[115] Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 429; one is reminded of the Greek *katabolia*, the act of contributing one's offering to a public feast by *throwing* it onto the common pile (Athenaeus IV, 22; Tzetzes, *Ad Hesiod.* II).

being burned,[116] quite like the Jewish heave- and wave-offerings,[117] and the burning itself was a kind of *sparsio*.[118] Though throwing is a well-known way of banishing evil, and the act of *sparsio* may have been designed "both to get rid of evil and to distribute the good fertility charm over the fields,"[119] the main thing about throwing objects, good or bad (and who shall see evil in honey-cakes and lucky coins?) is that thereby the gift or curse is passed through the void, from one world to another, as it were, with careful avoidance of physical contact between giver and receiver.[120] The spirits are fed—at a safe distance—by *sparsio*.[121] If food fell from the hand or the table by accident it could not be retrieved, for it had passed

[116] Cf. H. J. Rose, "The Cult of Volkanus at Rome," *JRS* XXIII (1933), 58–61; J. Toutain, "Sur un Rite curieux du Culte de Vulcan," *Rev. d'Hist. des Religions* CIII (1931), 136.

[117] Levit. 5; 8, 26–30; 14, 6 f., 16; 23, 11, 20, etc. These rites are a complicated series of throwing, waving, sprinkling, and mixing of oil, blood, water, bits of meat, and fruits of the earth, with much liquid *sparsio* over altar, priests, and congregation. They are full of instructive parallels which cannot be treated here.

[118] As seen in the scattering of ashes to the winds, in which every vestige of the object of sacrifice follows the course of the flame and smoke to the other world. The ashes of various "vegetation gods" were sown abroad in true *sparsiones* (J. Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* [1908], 97 f.). On burning as a means of banishment, cf. Pausanias II, 10, 1

[119] Cornford, *Att. Comed.*, 55 f.; Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 281–294.

[120] Roman practices of banishment recall the Hittite system, which put things "on the road to the Sungod in the Underworld" by throwing them into a fire, a stream, or a pit (A. Götze, *Kleinasien* [München, 1933], 146 f.). The Sumerian compound for "dedicate," "sacrifice," is *a-ru*, literally "throw into the water," writes Deimel (*Sumer. Gram.* p. 42). Objects tossed into the year-fires of Europe (Grimm, *Teut. Mythol.*, I, 43) were also cast into holy fountains, both acting as *Bote zwischen der göttlichen und der menschlichen Welt* (P. Herrmann, *Altgermanische Kultgebräuche* [Jena, 1928], 33, 40, 59). The year-fire itself is transmitted from heaven by a burning-glass, a "type of the Orient on high," passing from the world above to that below without any contact of the two (Feasey, *Holy Week*, 187 f.; 180 f.).

[121] Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 282–290; H. J. Rose, in *JRS* XXIII (1933), 61; P. Radin, *Social Anthropology* (N. Y., 1932), 306. The throwing of food or stones keeps the spirits at a distance either by satisfying them (Cerberus) or scaring them off (cf. S. Thompson, *Motif Index*, H331; R231 [Atalanta motif]; G512). With the *sparsio* as a form of combat (e.g., confetti) the present study is not concerned. It will be enough to note that the *adorea* of kisses, flowers, fruits, and vegetables (Plutarch, *Cato Maior* 46) thrown to actors in the theater could, if an actor did badly, take the form of a shower of stones: in either case it was a *sparsio;* but Ferrarius in Graevius, *Thesaur. Ant. Rom.* VI, 82–88 (cf. Eitrem, *op. cit.*, 290), warns against confusing ritual combats with stoning rites.

to the spirits[122]—to Hecate, who would redistribute it to the poor (earthly counterpart of the spirits) by *sparsio*.[123]

New Year's gifts are both given and received through the void. They fall in some unaccountable way into one's shoe or stocking, or they are suddenly thrown in through the window or chimney; they are not transmitted directly, but descend mysteriously in the night, like manna[124]—it is even dangerous to recognize the giver.[125] This avoidance of contact is the idea behind royal *sparsiones* among certain backward peoples of antiquity, where the king, living aloof from the world of men, took his meals behind a partition, removed only at the New Year,[126] or in a secret room,[127] or

[122] The spirits were waiting to snatch it: they were the Harpies, the rapacious dead (Kirchmann, *De Funerib.*, 578–580; G. Weicker, *Der Seelenvogel* (1902), 20). In Babylonia the stray animals that snatched food from the ground were "the shadow-spirits of the dead" (Meissner, *Bab. u. Assyr.*, I, 419). To appease such the Philageians would carry some crumbs from the year-feast (Athenaeus IV, 149C; cf. Dölger, *Antike und Christentum*, V, 232–247; 258). After the German year-feast the crumbs were scattered over the fields with cries of "wol! wol!" (Grimm, *Teut. Mythol.*, I, 156), the sowing of the fields and the feeding of the dead being the same act (Eitrem, *op. cit.*, 262). For the Pythagoreans all food that fell from the table passed τοῖς ἥρωσι and could not be used by mortals (Diels, *Frag. der Vorsokrat.* I, 357 f.; Diogenes VIII, 34). Whatever is thrown or dropped is lost to this world, whatever is caught is gained (Pausanias I, 17, 3; *Historia Augusta, Hadrian* 26, 7).

[123] Hecate takes a *deipnon* from the rich to feed the poor, who must snatch the food before it is set down (Aristophanes, *Plut.* 595–599, and Scholiast to the same). The crumbs for Hecate (see Gulick's note on Athenaeus IV, 149C; cf. III, 110C) were a sort of Hygeia-bread, like the cakes of the Kollyridian rites (Dölger, *op. cit.*, I, 13 f.). The remnants of the Christian *agape*, heavenly food, were distributed among the poor (Evagrius, *Hist. Eccl.* IV, 36; Cedrenus [ed. Bekker] I, 686–688), as were the untouchable remains of the great Slavic year-feast for the dead (J. Machal, *Slavic Mythology* [1918], 236). In Israel what fell from the sacred bread-fruit tree in the temple could be picked up only by the poor (Talmud, *Pesah* IV, 8, 522; cf. the gleaning-law, Levit. 20). Eitrem gives other cases in which *die Armen vielfach den Platz der Totenseelen eingenommen*, (*op. cit.*, 263 f., 267).

[124] Grimm, *op. cit.*, I, 273 f., 276, 282. Unless the god unexpectedly lets fall a shoe or ring, etc., from his statue, these must be snatched from him unawares by one who would obtain prosperity (*ibid.*, I, 114); cf. such year-motifs as Gilgamesh snatching the tablets of Destiny, Prometheus stealing fire, etc. The throwing or accidental dropping of a spindle into running streams at the New Year gratifies the earth-goddess (Cf. Wuttke, *Deutsche Volksaberglaube* [1901], 26(24), 29 f., 32; S. Thompson, *Motif-Index* G423, a motif occurring very anciently in the Ras Shamra fragments; G. Barton, in *Jnl. Am. Or. Soc.* LV [1935], 38).

[125] See S. Thompson, *op. cit.*, E545, 561, 373.

[126] Athenaeus IV, 145; cf. 146B; Herodotus IX, 110.

[127] A. Götze, *Kleinasien*, 153 (of the Hittite King).

at a table set apart as if for a spirit from the other world.[128] The world was thought of as living on the crumbs from his table,[129] and he gave his portions by throwing them to his subjects, who would scramble after them "like dogs."[130]

One cannot sufficiently admire the mentality which, having introduced the *tesserae* into Rome as a means, for so we are assured,[131] of procuring good order and regularity in the grain distributions, chose to dispense the same in mad, universal scrambles.[132] The *sparsio* does not of itself call for a scramble—there was more than enough for all, and no one was allowed to be disappointed.[133] Plainly the undignified *rixa*, *direptio*, *rapina*, *tumultus*, etc. was a regular and necessary part of the business.[134]

What the scramble represented was a sort of grab-bag, for the *sparsio* was a kind of lottery.[135] The element of chance plays a most important role in the distributions: the fundamental principle even of the highly regulated *annona* was at all times simply luck, admis-

[128] Athenaeus IV, 153. The symbol of Orestes' utter banishment from the world of men is his eating alone at a table set apart (Euripides, *Iph. Taur.* 949–954).

[129] Athenaeus IV, 145; Götze, *loc. cit.;* H. Kees, *Aegypten* (München, 1933), 64.

[130] Athenaeus IV, 35 (Thracian), 38 (Parthian). It is still considered an ill omen in the East for food to pass directly from the hand of a giver to that of a receiver.

[131] Rostovtzeff is insistent on this point (*Bleitesserae*, 13, 16 f., 38, 55).

[132] Many were actually killed in scrambles for *tesserae* (Dio LIX, 25; Herodian V, 10). Yet for Rostovzeff (*op. cit.*, 4) "Ausstreuen" is nothing more than a convenient means of distribution.

[133] Gifts were flung until *desunt qui rapiant, sinusque pleni gaudent* (Statius, *Silv.* I, 6, 79 f.; cf. Aristophanes, *Pax* 960–965: *οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεὶς ὅστις οὐ κριθὴν ἔχει*). When most of the *missilia intra popularia deciderat*, Domitian gave the knights and senators a special repeat shower (Suetonius, *Domit.* 4, 5; cf. *id.*, *August.* 41, and Duruy, in *Rev. Hist.* I, 348). Rich senators complained if they failed to get their share of these trivial "handouts," a plain indication of their symbolic nature (Symmachus, *Epist.* IX, 153; cf. Commodian, *Instruct.* II, 34).

[134] Quite apart from the fun of the *licentia diripiendi* (Suetonius, *August.* 98; Josephus, *Ant.* XIX, 1, 13), there is an archaic background to the *rixae*, as seen in Apollodorus I, 9, 23; Hyginus, *Fabul.* 22, where Jason's *sparsio* of stones that begets a race of men is followed by yet another which sets them fighting by the ears. Altheim (*Terra Mater*, 136) surmises a *kultische Bedeutung* in the *rixanti populo* of Persius V, 176, but is not more specific. The *rixa* figures also in the Greek *sparsio* (Aristophanes, *Vesp.* 58 f.; cf. Cornford, *Att. Comed.*, 100 f.).

[135] Rostovtzeff (*Bleitess.*, 56) and Friedländer (*Sittengesch.* II, 317) both use the term without following up the clue.

sion to the grain-lists being determined solely by lot.[136] Everything about the Saturnalia smacks of divination—the very food of the year-feast is prophetic.[137] A gift received by *sparsio* falls into one's hands by the imponderable working of fate; it is a providential thing, a present for which one is beholden to no man; it is a boon from heaven, given with majestic impartiality in bewildering abundance and unrestrained disorder.[138] It is a sign and a promise, a communication from on high.

How far the ancients went in this interpretation of the *sparsio* can be seen if one considers the objects of the *rixae*. They were *sortes*.[139] The word comes from *sero*, "set in rows," i.e. "strung on a line," and goes back to the oracular shrines of prehistoric Italy,[140] where at the New Year the Earth Goddess (as *Fortuna*)[141] would tell people their fortunes by means of lots and dice.[142] The lots—*sortes*—were hung on a line, a *linea*, and *devenaient prophetiques par le seul fait qu'elles étaient tirées au sort*.[143] All this fits with the *sortes* of the *sparsio*, which also came from an oracular shrine, were perforated for hanging on a line, were given out at the

[136] H. Dessau, *Geschichte der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Berlin, 1924), I, 339.

[137] A. Tille, *Yule and Christmas* (1898) 31 f., 114 f.; the famous year-cake of the Slavs (Machal, *Slav. Mythol.*, 218 f.) recalls the round Janus cakes of the Roman New Year (Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 111, n. 3). Contributions to the Greek feast had to be caught, not purchased (Athenaeus IV, 141; Pausanias VII, 18, 7; cf. I Sam. 2, 13 f., where the priest receives his share by a sort of grab-bag). A fowl alighting on the emperor's table during the scrambles of the Saturnalia was hailed as the best of omens (*Historia Augusta, Alex. Sev.* 37, 6; cf. Dölger, *Antike u. Christentum*, I, 153; and Rostovtzeff, *Bleiless.*, 89, on *die sakrale Grundlage der Jagd*).

[138] All this is implied in the symbol of the cornucopia, the impartiality motif in the formula, *O dominum aequum et bonum!* (Suetonius, *August.* 53; cf. Dio Chrysost., *Orat.* III, 73; Athenaeus I, 13; Livy XXXI, 4; Tacitus, *An.* IV, 64.

[139] E.g., *Historia Augusta, Heliog.* 21; Suetonius, *August.* 75.

[140] V. E. Ehrenberg, PW XIII, 2, 1459; M. Bouché-Leclercq, "La Divination Italique," *Rev. d'Hist. des Religions* I (1880), 43 f.; cf. Cicero, *De Div.* I, 34; II, 85–87. It should not be overlooked that *sero, serere* also means to "sow."

[141] Ehrenberg, *op. cit.*, 1455–1457; Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, p. 44 f. In this capacity Fortuna is an old autochthonous version of the Mother Goddess (see *supra*, n. 101).

[142] *Loc. cit.* The great shrine of Fortuna Primigenia at Praeneste was open only at the New Year (cf. refs. in Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 46 f.); so also the Pythian originally gave oracles only one day a year, on the god's birthday (Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* no. 9).

[143] Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, I, 44; Ehrenberg, *op. cit.*, 1475; Cicero, *loc. cit.*

Near Year,[144] and bore the name of *Fortuna*,[145] whose gifts, moreover, were commonly thought of as coming by *sparsio*.[146] In form as well as name the tokens are thus seen to be real *sortes*.

Quite as specific is the borrowed term for *sortes*, *tesserae*, which means simply "dice" or "tablets."[147] Dice and tablets were used together at the primitive divination shrines, where one would compare marks on dice with those on tablets to learn his fortune.[148] Just so the value of a *tessera* could be realized only by matching it with other symbols, the original *tessera* being employed as a ticket of identification which admitted the holder to a feast when it matched a like token kept by the giver of the feast.[149] For admission to public feasts every holder of a *tessera* had to have his name on the bronze tablets or *incisi* kept on the Capitol.[150] The interesting custom of admission to public feasts by ticket, though it has been ignored by scholars, is found at archaic year-festivals everywhere, from the festival tablets of the Sumerians[151] and the arrows of the Asiatics (serving both as tickets and as gaming pieces)[152] to the wooden tags of the Scandinavian North[153] and the

[144] The numerous *tesserae* from the shrine of Aesculapius and Hygeia on the Tiber Island fulfil all these conditions (Rostovtzeff, *Bleitess.*, 2 f., 99).

[145] Hers is the commonest name on all tokens (Rostovtzeff, *ibid.*, 97; Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 246), and designates the goddess as *Spenderin von materiellen Gütern* (Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, 110).

[146] Seneca, *Epist.* 74, 6: . . . ad haec, quae a fortuna sparguntur, sinum expandit et sollicitus *missilia* exspectat.

[147] Cf. lexica; Mommsen, in *Hist. Ztschr.* I, 340 f.; Regling, PW, *s.v.* "Tessera."

[148] Pausanias VII, 25, 6; II, 20, 3 (where Tyche corresponds to the Italian Fortuna).

[149] The classic treatment of this is by Mommsen, *op. cit.*, I, 339–342, and *Römische Forschungen* (1864), I, 338–343. The need for such tickets argues their origin in public rather than in the intimate private cult.

[150] Cf. Regling, PW, *s.v.* "Tessera"; Rostovtzeff, *op. cit.*, 1; Marquardt, *Röm. Staatsverw.*, II, 124: the *incisi* possess *ein für allemal tesserae* to match their names in the list. Cf. Livy VIII, 20, 8, and Wissowa, *Rel. u. Kult.*, 131, on the great *tessera* of the state.

[151] Deimel, *Sumer. Gram.*, 73, 77 f. (dated New Year), 86 f., 210, 224.

[152] Throughout the Middle East it was the custom for everyone coming to the king's feast at the New Year to contribute an arrow (A. J. Carnoy, *Iran. Mythol.*, 207 f., 308); these were the baresmen used by the king in divination as he sat "on a golden throne, on a golden cushion, on a golden carpet . . . with hands overflowing" (*id.* 299 f.), as appears from comparison with the Tartar custom described by Joinville (*Hist. de St. Louis* XCIII, 475–478). For the Scythian version cf. Herodotus IV, 81; for the Caucasus, W. E. D. Allen, *A History of the Georgian People* (London, 1932), 331. The use of lucky arrows in determining portions at feasts is frequently mentioned in Arabic sources, e.g., *Koran*, II, 216; *Mu'allaqāt*, II, 104. The same association of arrow-token (or seal) and feast is apparent in very early Babylonia, where seals seem to have originated as arrows

laurel-leaf tickets of the primitive Greeks and Romans—which, incidentally, bring us back to the *strena*.[154] Also widespread is the idea of registration in a great list of *incisi*, a "Book of Life opened at the Foundation of the World," containing the names of those to whom life is given for the New Age.[155] To be written down in this book is to be admitted to the banquet of life, to receive a *tessera*, "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written," and with it a share in the feast of the "hidden manna,"[156] the food that falls from heaven.

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or reeds (W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (1909), 5), the earliest of these being devoted to New Year's banquet themes. According to Frankfort, in *Iraq* I, 6 f., their "designs of good omen," which "reflect the Babylonian New Year festival . . . antedate by two thousand years the texts upon which we must draw." The favorite subjects of the very earliest seals are banquet and hunting scenes (L. Legrain, *Archaic Seal Impressions* [Univ. of Penna., 1936], 4). The arrow appears as a device for carrying a message between this world and the world above in much folk-lore, e.g., Herodotus v, 105.

[153] "Marks were cut on pieces of wood . . . and each person had his mark. Sometimes the places at feasts were assigned by lot; images of some of the gods were sometimes marked on the lots" (P. B. Du Chaillu, *The Viking Age*, I, 350 f.). Runes and ogam characters take their form from being cut on such pieces of wood (J. Rhys, *Celtic Heathendom* [London, 1898], 268), just as Babylonian characters appear on seals "long before we meet any instance of writing on clay tablets" (Legrain, *loc. cit.*). Such marks exactly resemble the *Hausmarken*, or private seals, derived anciently from some southern European alphabet "most like the North-Etruscan," according to G. Neckel ("Die Runen," *Acta Philol. Scand.* XII Aard. 1–2 [1938], 115; cf. 112–114).

[154] For admission to the primitive Greek feasts the poor would present a section of reed or a laurel leaf (Athenaeus IV, 140, 141E); the leaf would be given back to the holder with a paste of oil and barley on it, both laurel (*ibid.*, 140C) and reed (C. Bonner, "The Reed as Token and Identification," TAPA XXXIX (1908), 35–49) serving as cheap and convenient containers. The laurel leaf here has a token value, for one could pay certain fines either with a cake (*kamma*) or with a laurel leaf (*kammatis*) (Athenaeus IV, 141A). The leaf was put to the same use by the early Romans, who would cook their New-Year and birthday cakes on them and call them *panes laureati* (Cato, *De Agr.* 75, 76, 121; Martial X, 24). In the East the *strena* takes the alternative form of sections of reed under the Empire (Malalas, in Migne *PG* XCVII, 481 f.; *Chron. Pasch.*, *ibid.*, XCII, 641). An unexplained passage from the *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (ed. Henzen, 26) seems to imply that there was a scramble in the giving out of the *panes laureati:* . . . et panes laureat(os) per public(os) partiti sunt; ibi omn(es) lumemulia cum rapinis acceperunt. Since the meaning of *lumemulia* is entirely unknown (Henzen, 32), may not the *rapinae* refer to *rixae* of the distributions rather than to "beets"?

[155] A. Wensinck, in *Acta Orientalia* I, 172 and *passim*, citing especially Ephraim Syr., *Hymn.* II, 2; VI, 13. The heavenly Book of Life is matched by like tablets kept in the underworld (Aeschylus, *Eumen.* 273 f.). The worst of all penalties is to be blotted out from the Book of Life, to be "cut off from among the people," etc.

[156] Revelations 2, 17.

Such was the economy of the mystery feasts, which present indeed the closest affinity to the rites of the *ludi saeculares*, the sowing festival,[157] including *tesserae*[158] and *sparsio*.[159] At the Saturnalia feast of the Arval Brethren a gold coin was presented to each of the guests as the gift of life itself.[160] The *sparsio* of life-giving stones in the Deucalion legend follows upon a casting of dice, which determines the method by which the race is to be created and also the lot in life of the persons thus begotten.[161] By a like sowing Cadmus, at the beginning of the "Great Year," produced a race of men fittingly called *Sparti*.[162] It is only natural, as Wissowa points out in the case of Fortuna,[163] that people should come to think of one who gives certain assurance of a boon as the actual giver of the boon, and regard those tokens which merely promise

[157] Blumenthal, in *Klio* XV, 231 f.; cf. Herodian III, 8, 10.

[158] The Golden Tablets of the Orphic mysteries as "passports to the other world" (E. Rohde, *Psyche*, 249 f. [vii, 21]) resemble the coins or cakes with which the dead were expected to pay their admission to the banquets of the beyond, thus assuring their non-return (P. Sartori, "Die Totenmünze," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* II (1899), 210, 213. A *dos* or *sportula* had to be presented by all seeking entrance to the feasts of the various *collegia* and mysteries (Dölger, *Antike u. Christent.* III, 9–12; Wissowa, *Relig. u. Kult.*, 407).

[159] The Phyllobolia was one of the formal steps of initiation into the mysteries (refs. in Eitrem, *Opferritus*, 279). In the famous picture of the heavenly banquet of Vibia, depicting certain mysteries (M. Rostovtzeff, *Mystic Italy* [Yale Univ., 1933], 145 f.) two youths are seen in the foreground on a flowering field; one of them scatters small objects which the other gathers up and puts in his mouth (M. Garruci, *Storia dell'Arte cristiana*, Pl. 494; Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dict.*, I, 1, 838–840. Cf. Aeschrio, in *Anthol. Lyr. Iamb.*, LIV, 6: καὶ θεῶν(βρῶμα)ἄγρωστιν εὗρες, ἣν Κρόνος κατέσπειρεν; and Carnoy, *Iran. Mythol.*, 308: "And there shalt thou place the meadows where unceasingly the golden-colored, where unceasingly the invincible food is eaten."). The feast on the grass with its miraculous abundance occurs in Herodotus I, 126 and Math. 14, 19; Mark 6, 39; and in the archaic Roman year-feasts (Ovid, *Fast.* III, 532–540; this Anna Perenna, the year-goddess, is identical with Ceres [Altheim, *Terra Mater*, 93]); Henzen, *Acta Frat. Arval.* p. 26: . . . in cespite . . . sacrum fecer(unt).

[160] A remarkable parallel is the Indian Asvamedha feast, at the end of which the king gave to each priestly guest a piece of gold of 100 grains, "because the life of man is 100 years" (Dumont, *L'Asvamedha*, pp. iii, 15 f.; cf. v; 249). Just so, after the Arval banquet each of the brethren received a sportula of a gold coin, which is always specified as 100 denarii (Henzen, *op. cit.*, 13, 16 f., 26 f., 45 f.: though it is not stated that this is for 100 years, such was in fact the secular life-span, and the coin was exchanged for the wish, *augeat tibi Juppiter annos* (*ibid.*, 45 f.; cf. Wissowa, PW II, 1475).

[161] P. Nigidius Figulus, frg. 99; *Scholia ad Germanicum* (ed. Maass), 85, 154; Juvenal, *Sat.* I, 81–86.

[162] Apollodorus III, 4, 1; Euripides, *Herc. Fur.* 4–7; Hyginus, *Fabul.* 178; Ovid, *Metam.* III, 101–130; cf. S. Thompson, *Motif-Index* A1245. On *Spartoi* from σπείρειν cf. Turk, PW, *s.v.* "Spartoi."

[163] *Relig. u. Kult.*, 261.

life and prosperity as the very gift itself: the die or *sors* which indicates the blessings of life to follow is not to be distinguished from the seed from which those blessings spring. The *tessera*, like the Oriental seal, gave one a place and a status in the world of men: it was the gift of a grain *tessera* that assigned a slave his freedom and his place in a tribe.[164] As seal and *tessera* witness solemn contracts between men and gods,[165] the *sparsio* of itself is such a contract: on the giver's part it promised a golden age of peace and prosperity—this the *sparsiones* songs make clear.[166] As to the one who caught the falling gold, he accepted a contract on his part[167] and recognized the rule and dominion of his benefactor in formal acclamations, found sometimes actually written on the *tesserae*.[168]

While the *tesserae* may be described variously as tickets, tablets, coins, or seals,[169] they are particularly interesting as dice. They

[164] Marquardt, *Staatsverw.*, II, 126.

[165] The seal was a contract between god and man as it was between men (O. Weber, *Altorientalische Siegelbilder* [Leipzig, 1920], 1, 5); it was "the emblem of the Creator God, as a symbol and guarantee of his assistance" (W. M. F. Petrie, *Scarabs and Cylinders with Names*, etc. [London, Univ. of London, 1917], pp. 3 f.), "a peculium of the owner," having "a protective virtue . . . a sense of divine companionship." Cf. A. Evans, *Palace of Minos*, III, 144. On the *tessera* as contract, see supra, n. 149.

[166] Such were the song of the Sicilian *bukoliasts* (Nilsson, *Gesch. der gr. Relig.*, I, 118), the Eiresione song (*ibid.*, 114), and the typical "quête" song in Aristophanes, *Aves* 723–736. Latin equivalents of these are the *laudes pueriles*, a collection of which may be found in Cabrol and Leclercq, *Dict.*, VIII, 2, 1910–1916, and the panegyrics, collected in the same work, XIII, 1, 1016–1045. The activities of these youthful New-Year choruses closely resemble those of the Arval and Salian brethren (cf. R. Conway, *Ancient Italy and Modern Religion* [Cambridge, 1933], 2–10). When a *sparsio* is given at a private party, the guests spring to their feet and recite an *acclamatio* to the Emperor (Petronius, *Sat.* 60).

[167] This appears in a very ancient form of marriage contract, wherein one party catches the gold or silver thrown by the other (Plato, in *Anthol. Lyr. Eleg.*, Epig. II and III; Herodotus I, 199; S. Thompson, *Motif-Index* H316, where both throwing and catching serve to establish a contract). If the gifts thrown into the abyss at the New Year disappeared, it was believed that the god had accepted the contract, if not, it was taken as a bad sign (Pausanias III, 23, 9).

[168] Rostovtzeff, *Bleiless.*, 41. Many of these acclamations are collected by Ferrarius in Graevius, *Thesaur.*, VI, 104–115; 123–136; 150–183; 199–230; and in Cabrol and Leclercq, *loc. cit.*, and VIII, 2, 1913. The hundreds of *acclamationes* almost without exception 1) hail the donor as worthy and victorious, 2) wish him *multos annos*.

[169] The principle of substitution is here in full force. The common resemblance of *tesserae* to coins is explained by the substitution of coins and dice alike for those primitive astragals of which Neolithic Italy has yielded a great harvest, but which disappear completely in historic times to survive in altered form both as coins and as dice (Ehrenberg, PW XIII, 1485; H. Blümner, *Römische Privataltertümer* [München, 1911], p. 412, n. 12). The Lydians, who traditionally invented money, also invented lots and games of

actually take the form of gaming pieces in many instances,[170] and on some of them the *iactus venerius* is indicated.[171] This last opens up a wide vista into the background of the *sparsio*, for it recalls the old Roman custom of choosing a *rex bibendi* at feasts (the "king" being the first guest to throw the *Venus*),[172] a practice which can have been inspired only by the example and tradition of choosing the *rex Saturnalius*, King of the Great Feast, by lot.[173] Dicing, it should be remembered, was legal at Rome only during the Saturnalia.[174] The *Venus* also indicates the archaic background of those *tesserae lasciviae*, which have shocked scholars as symbols of Roman degeneracy and decline,[175] for it recalls a very widespread and ancient legend of how the King during the New Year's feast casts dice with a stranger from the underworld for the hand of a fair lady and the possession of the kingdom.[176] This legend appears in

chance, and that in an attempt to solve the food-distribution problem (Herodotus I, 94). Since writing possibly began with seals, it is significant that Cadmus, who begot the race by sowing tokens, is also credited with the invention of written symbols. Diogenes recommended universal use of dice as money (Athenaeus IV, 159), and indeed gilt astragals marked like dice still serve as money in the most civilized parts of the East Indies. Blümner (*op. cit.*, 415) finds that the Romans never diced except for money, so that the coin was part of the game. While coins may have originated from seals (A. R. Burns, *Money and Monetary Policy in Early Times* [N. Y., 1927], 37), dice and seals are also confused and identified in archaic times (F. Hommel, *Geographie und Ethnologie des alten Orients* [München, 1926], 48 f. [Hittite], 66 [Etruscan]).

[170] A large class of bronze and the whole class of bone *tesserae* are *tesserae lusoriae* (K. Regling, PW, *s.v.* "Tessera." [171] PW, *s.v.* "Spintria"; Rostovtzeff, *Bleitess*, 56f.

[172] Horace, *Carm.* I, 4, 14; II, 7, 25 f.; Reiss (PW II, 1795) suggests that this is the reason for calling Venus βασιλικός (cf. Plautus, *Cur.* 357).

[173] Tacitus, *An.* XIII, 15; Cicero, *Att.* V, 20, 5; Lucian, *Saturn.* 2–4, 9; Seneca, *Apoc.* 8. The Roman emperor learned the fortune of his rule by dicing at the New Year in the shrine of Fortuna at Praeneste (Suetonius, *Domit.* 15) exactly as the Babylonian monarch would dice in the Chamber of Destiny, or the kings of the North would cast dice in the temple of Upsala to win 300 years of life (P. Herrmann, *Nordische Mythologie* [1903], 531). King, high-priest (Cicero, *Verres* II, 126), and scapegoat (Levit. 16, 8; Talmud, *Joma* 3, 10; Helmold, *Chron.* I, 52, etc.) were all chosen by lot.

[174] Martial XIV, 13; IV, 17; V, 84; XI, 6; IV, 7 f.; cf. Suetonius, *August.* 71.

[175] E.g., Rostovtzeff, *Bleitess.*, p. 59; Regling, PW, *s.v.* "Spintria." Far from being a late invention, just such *obscöne Bleispiegel und Bleiplaketten* were found in the temple of Ishtar at Assur (B. Meissner, *Babyl. u. Assyr.*, II, 438), and refer no doubt to that system of ritual prostitution for which Herodotus (I, 196) actually finds parallels in Italy (cf. J. Whatmough, *Foundations of Roman Italy* [London, 1937], 173).

[176] Best known in its Celtic versions (cf. H. De Jubainville, *The Irish Mythological Cycle*, etc. [Dublin, 1903], 176). A very old version of the story is the Setna legend, dating at least from the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt (M. Pieper, *Aegyptische Literatur* [Potsdam, 1927], 93 ff.; G. Maspero, *Contes Populaires de l'Egypte Ancienne* [Paris, 1905], 100 f.). Pieper identifies it with the Rhampsinitus cycle (Herodotus I, 121–126, with its remarkable dicing episode, *ibid.*, 122, and its *tesserae lasciviae*, *ibid.*, 126.

the oldest stratum of Roman tradition as the story of Hercules and Acca Larentia, in which the hero wins the lady and a feast by dicing at the Saturnalia.[177] Not to pursue them further, the many and complex connections between *sortes*, tickets, feasts, goddesses, and the rest may be summarized in the herald's order at the Greek revels: "Come hither, that Tyche may by lot tell each man where he is supposed to eat!"[178]

We have discussed the *sparsiones* of the Romans only in a broad and general sense. If the evidence is scarce enough to require such treatment, it is also consistent enough to support it. The multiple aspects of the institution fit nicely together and may be matched in every point with common practices of other peoples, the same peculiar elements appearing in the same complex combinations. We can therefore with confidence answer the three questions proposed at the outset of this study in the following general but specific terms: 1) the objects of the *sparsiones* were tokens symbolic of life, health, strength, and abundance, and were actually exchangeable, as far as possible, for the tangible realization of these blessings; 2) they were given by the king or his counterpart—emperor, magistrate, or paterfamilias—as living representative of the father and founder of the race, by 3) being scattered like seed or rain from a celestial station in a manner to simulate the sowing of the race itself on the day of creation, with all the blessings and omens that rightly accompany such a begetting and amid acclamations that joyfully recognize the divine providence and miraculous power of the giver.

The *sparsio* is the authentic heritage of the Golden Age, the sublime economy of which remains throughout antiquity, and indeed in religious ideology down to the very present, the ultimate basis of the social, economic, and political structure.

HUGH NIBLEY

The United States Army

[177] Macrobius, *Sat.* I, 10, 12–14; Tertullian, *Ad Nat.* II, 10; Augustinus, *C.D.* VI, 7, 2; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.*, No. 35; *Romulus* 4 f. Acca divided up all her property among the Roman people, as did her mate at the *Ara Maxima*, and they celebrated her bounty in a midwinter feast at her tomb (Gellius, *A. N.* VI, 7, 7, citing Cato; cf. Macrobius I, 10, 16; Varro *L. L.* 23 f.; Plutarch, *loc. cit.*, and *Quaest. Rom.*, No. 34). From Herodotus II, 121 f. it is plain that the lady of the Setna cycle, whom Herodotus calls Demeter, is none other than Acca's *indigitamentum*, Ceres.

[178] Aristophanes, *Eccles.*, 687 f., 834–837. Tyche, like Fortuna, was a dicing goddess, and as such, like Acca, the companion of Hercules (Pausanias II, 20, 3).