

On the Electrodynamics of Öcsi Bácsi

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A classic paper due to Price [1] is reprinted in a modified and extended form accounting for more modern developments in the field. The science of Öcsi Bácsi has become stagnant in recent years, and this analysis is intended to help promote a revival of the programme.

I. INTRODUCTION

The hallowed tradition of Öcsi Bácsi has fallen into disuse. Numerous plausible explanations have been cited for this state of affairs. Our friends in the biology department have brought increasing awareness of the health effects of a diet rich in carbonated sugar beverages. A large-scale movement is underway to unionize the graduate student workforce; such organization could dramatically hinder the powers of professors to extract forced labor from future generations of graduate students. The combination of these and other factors can be seen to call into question of the relevance of the Öcsi Bácsi tradition: that of a student chosen yearly from the many Tapir Ph.D. aspirants, who best represents the dedication to physics demonstrated by the majestic tapirs of the wild, and dedication to take on the immense responsibility of ensuring that the local cola reserves do not run low.

It is the considered opinion of the present authors that while the Öcsi Bácsi tradition may require some amount of modification if it is to remain viable in the coming years, the basic concept is essential for the continued health of our research group. While the specific responsibilities of the Öcsi Bácsi will likely change, the tradition must survive.

This paper is organized as follows. In section II, we reprint the original Öcsi Bácsi scroll, a document passed down along many generations of theoretical astrophysicists, and traditionally read at each Öcsi Bácsi ceremony. In section III, we extend the legend of the scroll, recounting the dark years when we dared ignore our traditions, and the events that led to their revival. In the concluding section, we very briefly discuss the expected role of Öcsi Bácsi in modern Tapir society.

II. THE MEANING OF THE ÖCSI BÁCSI AWARD

Around May every year research in Theoretical Astrophysics bogs down slightly as people ponder the question: What is the meaning of the Öcsi Bácsi award? Though no one actually has asked this question, it is important that it be answered and that the myth of the Öcsi Bácsi be set down.

Legend has it that many years ago in the place that we now call Caltech there lived a tribe called the Co-

henim. The legend would have it that there dwelt with this tribe for some time a warrior who called himself Öcsi Bácsi. The linguistic background of this name is clouded; it is certainly not from the language of the Cohenim. A strong case has been made that it originates in an isolated language group spoken by a very singular people. In this language, we are told, the name Öcsi Bácsi means, as nearly as we can express it in English: ‘fear of the covariant derivative.’

According to the oral tradition passed down to us, young warriors would come in their late adolescence to dwell with the Cohenim, and to pass through a lengthy and painful rite, in order to attain the honor of being called Chieftain, so that they could go off into the world to gain honor, some even to become Chiefs and to collect tribute called ‘grants’ from the Council of the Tribes. This rite was to take four years, although many young warriors would dwell longer, some much longer.

During the ritual the young warrior would be guided by an older and, in some ways, wiser Chief of the Tribe who would protect him from all worldly concerns while the warrior honed his skills. Öcsi Bácsi himself in this manner became the charge of Kip Ess meaning ‘face of the red hair’ who was later known as Kenan, after the chair he sat in¹.

To become a chieftain the warrior would study the ways of the chief and help him with his hunts. The warrior would in this manner prepare himself. To complete the ritual he would need to make a kill on his own. Often the kill would require a few crucial arrows from the warrior’s guiding chief, but it was traditional for the elders to turn their eyes from this.

The myth of the Öcsi Bácsi tells us that his path was not an easy one. His hunt required many years and the preparation of many intricate traps². With undiminished fervour Öcsi Bácsi pushed on. But the gods must have wanted to test Öcsi Bácsi. When his hunt was well under way they sent to attack him the dreaded Buick which

¹ Since the original publication of this document, Kip has risen from the chair of Kenan and taken instead a chair with the name Feynman. Despite his choice of furniture, it must be stressed that he still considers gravitation to be a fundamentally geometrical concept.

² A fragment of the legend refers additionally to the dietary laws followed by the Öcsi Bácsi, and in particular to abuse of paprika and steroids.

would smite him a mighty blow³.

Many months would pass before Öcsi Bácsi could again hunt. But hunt he did, and through the strength of his spirit became a Chieftain, and later a medicine man in the land by the great river.

We are gathered here today to remember the depth of his dedication and to celebrate the spirit which drives a young warrior to shun worldly pleasures, to accept a life of poverty and chastity in the perfection of his skills and in the pursuit of the hunt.

III. THE ÖCSI BÁCSI AWARD, ITS DEATH AND REBIRTH

For countless generations, aspiring warriors have recounted the legend of Öcsi Bácsi, and in time came to invent a tradition around the story. Each year a feast was prepared, in which the legend would be retold and continued through the elevation of a young warrior, the warrior deemed most dedicated to the hunt, to the title of Öcsi Bácsi. This new Öcsi Bácsi would be charged with the responsibility of symbolically recreating the valorous acts of the great hero, through rather menial tasks which were endowed with great esteem merely through their association with the title of the great warrior. One major responsibility was to control the supply of sacred elixirs, to ensure that they would always be available whenever any member of the tribe might require their invigorating properties.

However, in time, the tribe lost contact with its traditions. The tribe confused the important legend of the original Öcsi Bácsi with the admittedly menial tasks each Öcsi Bácsi was asked to perform in remembrance. When the tradition was stripped of its original significance it could last no longer than the need for the tasks it coincidentally entailed. The final blow to the tradition came when the tribe abandoned the hallowed, but noisy, shrine used to keep the sacred elixirs in their holy, tasty state. With the removal of the shrine, warriors learned to survive without the help of their sacred elixirs, or when they were truly needed, they went about procurement themselves. The Öcsi Bácsi then served no purpose, symbolically or physically, and the tradition died.

The proud warriors of old cried on that day. For the tradition of the Öcsi Bácsi was never about sacred elixirs. The real purpose of the Öcsi Bácsi tradition was to remind the tribe of its illustrious history. The great warrior Öcsi Bácsi was not the first great warrior to emerge from the tribe, nor was he the last. The history of the tribe is filled with stories of countless heroes enacting incredible feats to make the world a safer place for the majestic tapir. Each of these great warriors, not only those des-

igned Öcsi Bácsi, has walked in the footsteps of the warrior of legend.

The tribal elders watched in dismay as their beloved tribe slowly fell from grace. The young warriors did not approach the hunt with the same passion as those of old. Papers sat far too long before reaching a state suitable for publication. Many of the young warriors did not even apply for Chieftainship candidacy until they were forced to do so by the Dean of Warrior Studies. It was clear that the young warriors depended on the Öcsi Bácsi, as an example to aspire to in their own work. The elders, in their wisdom, knew that the tradition must be revived. But they could not do so alone; for their energy was constantly directed toward the construction of “proposals,” offerings to be made to the gods who must only be named in acronym, NASA and NSF, in the hope that they might provide the tribe with a bountiful crop in coming years.

The elders appointed a committee, some of the more esteemed of the young warriors, who were considered capable of understanding the importance of this tradition⁴. This committee met in private, discussed the responsibilities that might be placed on the new Öcsi Bácsi, and eventually constructed a ballot listing three young warriors they considered most deserving of the honor. The first vote did not produce a clear result; all of the young warriors received the same number of votes. The committee, undeterred, devised a more complex balloting process intended to reduce the likeliness of such an occurrence in the second vote. Sadly, the second ballot failed as well, one candidate was eliminated, but the other two again garnered equal votes. At this point the warrior Pritchard returned to his hut to retrieve a six-sided stone, marked with numbers for use in games of chance. The final decision was entrusted to the fates, and the first Öcsi Bácsi of the new generation had been chosen.

A scribe was then appointed the task of preparing a document extending the scroll that recounts the original Öcsi Bácsi legend. After that scribe flaked out, another committee member volunteered, and saw an opportunity to pad his publication list.

IV. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have described the history of the Öcsi Bácsi award, and have motivated its continuation. While we have noted that the burdens usually associated with this position, those of a cola supplier, are no longer nec-

³ One authoritative source relates that the gods sent an Oldsmobile rather than a Buick.

⁴ The sheer nobility of these individuals must not be understated. Any one of them would have brought great honor to the title Öcsi Bácsi. That these incredible warriors were chosen for this committee, and thereby removed from consideration for the Öcsi Bácsi award itself, is a demonstration of the wisdom of the tribal elders. If these magnificent astrophysicists were to contend for the title, the task of choosing from among them would have been hopeless.

essary, we believe that the position should still carry certain responsibilities. In particular, we expect that the Öcsi Bácsi will advertise weekly informal lunch meetings among the various branches of the research group.

Another issue of importance is that of the continuation of this tradition beyond the current year. In the past, each Öcsi Bácsi has appointed his or her successor. With this simple method comes also the danger of a certain amount of cronyism, as well as unclear responsibilities regarding the preparations for the Öcsi Bácsi party. We propose continuation of the methods used this year: that “around May every year” a committee of senior students be appointed to choose a new Öcsi Bácsi from among their younger colleagues. This committee could then share the responsibility of planning a party to

announce this decision some time around the end of the academic year. Yeah, this year we were late. Shut up.

Acknowledgments

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[1] Price, Richard H., “The Meaning of the Öcsi Bácsi Award”, rejected from Phys. Rev. Lett.