

Chanting Jokes: A conversation with Anehime-san

“Lucky Star” is an anime series produced by Kyoto Animation. Some say that it was the first major anime series, which was produced deliberately for the Nico-Nico-Douga-age: Lots of dancing, for example, and its lyrics are fast, and therefore well-suited for mis-hearing them. Lucky Star is good material for the creation of Mad movies, and for sure, Lucky Star is highly popular among Nico Chuu. So it is no surprise that Anehime-san suggests for our meeting the train station of Kasukabe, one hour by train from central Tokyo.



Kasukabe train station

The train station might look like any old suburban Japanese train station to you, but it is the station, where one scene of the intro of Lucky Star was filmed. “Filmed”??? What am I talking about?? Of course the train station was only the model for the animation. Japan is getting me!

¹ In this series of short and preliminary (!!) texts we publish first results of the Metadata Project’s ethnographic research on Nico Nico Douga. You can find more under “output” on <http://www.goldsmiths.ac.uk/media-research-centre/project2.php> and on our research blog: <http://d.hatena.ne.jp/metagold/>.



Anehime-san posing as a character out of Lucky Star

Anehime-san is in her early 30ties and has a background in engineering. As you can see, her fashion taste is “Gothic Lolita”. I met her in one of our focus groups. I was keen to talk to her again, because she described in this discussion, how tagging can become a passion. She also has taken part in the production of a video in a particular subgenre: These videos re-enact a music video by a DJ, which was originally a CGI animation, in real life. Trademark of these videos is the funny style of walking, and a plot where one “leader” attracts many followers (I am tempted to read this as an ironic comment on kuuki, though this is probably a mis-reading).

In the interview we did not manage to talk neither about tagging nor about this video. Instead, we talked about uploading, which turned out to be even more interesting. Anehime-san has only recently started to upload videos (the first one on 11.4.08, to be precise). She describes in detail the processes and decisions that came with it. Before I write more about this, it might be necessary to add an explanation for Non-Nico-Chuu: Most Nico Chuu, even most deep Nico Chuu, do not upload. They watch and comment and tag. Uploaders are a minority, and an even smaller minority are actual creators (who make the videos themselves).

At the time of our interview (about 2 weeks ago), Anehime-san had uploaded two videos. The first video is a promotion music video of a band that was popular in the 80ties: Anehime-san uploaded this

video, because she was annoyed that it got deleted on Nico Nico Douga. So this music video was on Nico Nico Douga before, but someone, probably the copyright holder, had asked to remove it. At the same time you could still find it on Japanese Youtube, which Anehime-san found strange. She first downloaded the video from Youtube. As a next step she started to experiment with uploading. Interestingly, she did that on Youtube, and not on Nico Nico Douga. She used Youtube as a practice ground. She uploaded one of the famous Donald videos of Nico Nico Douga on Youtube. As soon as she had found out how it works, she uploaded the TM-Network video of Youtube on Nico Nico Douga, which was the real purpose. Since then, she has done this with 6 more videos.

Nico Nico Douga allows the uploaders to place some additional comments in a privileged box above the video. This means: This special uploader comments appear in a separate box, which is situated just above the video, and not, like the normal comments, on top of the video (in the embedded videos on this blog you can not see this box for additional uploader comments. You would have to go to the Nico Nico Douga portal to see this). We talked through her own uploader comments in this box. Each of her remarks have complicated coded meanings. At this place I want to only mention her third comment: "Darenidatte 'keshitai kako'ttemonoga arunodesuyo", which might be translated as "Everyone has a past, which one wants to be deleted". For Anehime-san, this was a hidden message to the singer on this video, who, she guessed, might have asked Nico Nico Douga to delete the video, because he might be too vain to accept this video of him in a past fashion style. At the same time this comment is also a hidden joke about late 80ies and early 90ties fashion and dance styles in general, as well as former music taste of her generation.

After she uploaded the video, she started to write first comments on it. She did so to set the first corner stones of the kuuki. At the same time

she wrote on her Mixi-blog about the fact that had uploaded the video. By now, the video has gained more than 400 comments, which is a good result for a first-time uploader. Ever since she has uploaded the video, she checks this video about twice a day. She appreciates new comments, and checks how the kuuki develops. She is especially pleased that there is a small but noticeable Danmaku developing on “her” video. This Danmaku you can find on minute 4.02 in the video. Users started to comment the green shirt of the singer with “Midori no darudaru ouji”, which could be translated as “Prince of baggy green shirt” (and in fact, you can see an English comment on this video – this was, as you can guess, me, who tried to catch the kuuki and at the same time send a hidden message to Anehime-san. Anehime-san got this message, and comments on this on her uploader box).

The comment “prince of baggy green shirt” relates to “Tennis no ouji sama“ (=”Prince of tennis”) – a popular Manga that was made into a musical, and became popular material for re-edited mad videos on Nico Nico Douga. This is a typical Nico joke. You change one comment slightly into another one, and the resulting multiple meanings and references constitute the joke. The joke itself becomes really funny, when many people make it at the same time. And this is exactly what happens here: A joke-Danmaku is a Danmaku where everyone writes the same joke to make it funnier. It is a bit like laughing together, though more elaborated: Almost as if you chant jokes as a group.

But back to uploading: For me it was important to learn that uploaders often care about the videos they upload. They feel responsible for them and re-watch them regularly. They are in a way a hub in the otherwise totally open communication structure, and they use their uploader box for this. This confirms the hypothesis of Kishino-san that Nico Nico Douga actually takes up the communication structure of the Comic Market (and not so much of 2 channel, as it is often said) – see the older post about this. On top of this, Anehime also has taken a

comment and used it as a tag. This is another one of these really important findings in this research: Tags are sometimes born as comments. When they become popular, users or uploaders transfer them into tags. As tags they can spread to other videos and thus generate a new sub-genre. Both tags and comments spread over the videos. This constellation is one important breeding ground for tags.

A final headlight of this interview: Anehime-san used to talk about Nico videos at her former workplace. Most of her colleagues were engineers like herself, thus most of them were Nico Chuu. Many of them had different tastes on Nico Nico Douga: Some of them would be into game videos, other in more erotic content. However, one thing unified them all: They all first checked the daily ranking, This way they would always have some videos in common, which they could discuss on the next day at work. An on-demand video site that has a broadcast video presence: See the post on Koizuka-san on how this is archived from the programmer perspective.