

Matsuri! Talking to Nico Nico Bu members in Kyoto

We didn't really plan to do a focus group in Kyoto. I wanted to see temples, eat, sit at the river, do all the classical Kyoto things, before the research would continue in Osaka. However, Takashiro-san soon found out that many Nico Nico Bu members – the expert community of bloggers, who write about Nico Nico Douga on Hatena – are based in Kyoto. So it was only logical to organise a group in Kyoto. This turned out to be a really good idea. Our discussions lasted from the early afternoon until late at night. In the following days we did several follow up interviews – with Sikii-san, Kanamaru-san and Taitoku-san – and if we would have had more time, we would have done even more.

The Kyoto research has been fruitful in many ways, and I will need several posts to describe it. One of the most important findings came quite early, in the focus group itself: Next to “Kuuki”, there are two more central terms that one needs to understand if one wants to understand Nico Nico Douga: “Matsuri” and “Moriagari”. As we talked in this focus group mainly about Matsuri, I want to concentrate here on this (and postpone an analysis of the relationship of Matsuri and Moriagari for a later post). “Matsuri” can be translated as “Festival” or “Carnival”. It is a special moment, a festive event, normally caused by an external stimulus.

We discussed several different examples of Matsuri on Nico Nico Douga: Matsuri can happen, when a video reaches a certain number of views or comments. In that case, it is desirable to watch this video in

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/>.

exactly that moment, when this happens. Many people are synchronously online and comments go wild. Sometimes such moments are celebrated with a piece of Asci-comment-art. Again, it is desirable to be there at that moment. However, in this case it would show bad manners to comment, as new comments might destroy the art piece. The reason to be here in that moment is to enjoy this piece of art, before someone with worse manners destroys it.

But this is not the only example of a Matsuri. Here is another example: Taitoku-san, one of the members of this focus group and a prominent blogger, is a baseball fan. When a favourite player of his makes a spectacular successful move, he would later on search on Nico Nico Douga for uploaded videos of this move. Often he finds not only these, but also quickly edited mad movies, which celebrate the achievement of the player. And he would, of course, communicate through comments and share his excitement with thousands of other Nico Chuu, who are also baseball fans.

One more example I want to mention: Recently, a Nico Chu mentioned on 2channel that there are hardly no music videos of a band called Bizu uploaded on Nico Nico Douga. On the next day, different Nico Chu uploaded more than 50 music videos of this band. They created a Matsuri that celebrated this band. This Matsuri is also particularly interesting, because it did not have, as usual, an external stimulus in the form of a date, a special event, or a round number of comments.

So what do we learn from this? Apart from Kuuki, there is a second form of creating an imagined community. Kuuki is most of the time a form of collective appreciation (less often, there can also be a negative kuuki, which flames the video or what is depicted on the video). A Matsuri takes this appreciation one step further: It is a celebration that is so strong that it does not only happen on one video, but on many videos. The second difference: It does not happen through comments

but also through uploading videos. A third difference: A matsuri has often a strong cross-platform element: They start on TV or on 2channel. Fourthly, a Matsuri can be described as a Kuuki that is at the same time time-based: You have to be there, when it happens, to fully enjoy it.

There is much more to be said about Matsuris, and I will come back to this. For now I want to conclude with one very important fifth trait of Matsuri: Matsuri makes Nico Chuu leave their islands. What does that mean? Nico Nico Douga has undergone a process of differentiation in the last year. Many Nico Chuu have now specialised interests. They describe these interests as islands. There is, for example, the island of Ima mad, the island of Tohou, or the island of baseball. Nico Chu spend most of their time on Nico Nico Douga on these islands. But a matsuri makes them leave the island.

A Matsuri can be island-specific. Such a Matsuri would only interest, say, Idolmaster-fans. Other Matsuri generate more attention. In such a case, a Nico Chuu, who is not really interested in Idolmaster would still "travel" to this island for the sake of the Matsuri. Matsuris have value in themselves – this is an interesting contradiction to the other trait that Matsuri: They need an external stimulus, and normally do not happen for their own sake. Matsuri do not happen for their own sake, but if they happen, you join for their sake, even though you do not care about the stimulus.

So how do you notice that a Matsuri happens? Normally, you notice it when you visit the daily raking. Many Nico Chuu visit this daily ranking as the first thing. However, not all do. In this focus group in Kyoto, most members do not. They are very deep Nico Chuu, and get their information about the videos mostly through blogs and twitter. Both provide them with concentrated information about what is happening on their islands. Nico Chu would normally collide the new blog posts

in a RSS reader (usually the “Livedoor”-reader), and the posts on Twitter on a Twitter reader.

So there is a danger, when you are a very deep Nico Chuu: You might miss a Matsuri on another island. The member of our focs group in Kyoto are well aware of that. Even though they do not use the daily ranking anymore the access the video, they still check it in a later stage of their daily Nico Nico Douga Routine. Ranking has gained here a different function. It is not anymore the first point of access. It is a specialised tool for finding Matsuri. This shows, how important the idea of Matsuri is.