

Throughout my time of making this article this was supposed to be an ongoing series on the largest anonymous textboards on Earth, 2channel. However, due to the amount of known information I've discovered on the site via various sources (i.e. newspapers, magazines, blogs, and regular websites) I felt if I kept researching, this article will never see the light of day. The best way to go through 2channel is to explain it in a multipage paper. Yet, the scope of 2channel is so large, that it's impossible to determine the scale of its true size of the content or its community.

The Second Channel is about how a website that was a refuge for Amezou worlders became the largest anonymous forum in the world.

The Second Channel: 2channel – The Father of the Western Imageboard Culture

2channel has done nothing short of a revolution in its home country. But it's more than a revolution in internet discourse; it's a well of modern internet culture to many Japanese. 2channel is THE father of the Western Imageboard culture, as it created many routine concepts that modern channers seem to be taken granted of or do not know. Routine concepts like topic recurrentability, traditions, tripcodes, and the routine creation of memes.

Think any average internet forum in the US: Like the Something Awful Forums, or off-topic.com, or even (god forbid) Gaia Online. Then multiply any of those forums by ten times the posts and population. Then add nameless anonymity. That is what 2channel is. 2channel is all about radical anonymity in a public sphere where Japanese netiquette used to reign supreme.

2channel is a place where Japanese, having to show a face in public in real life, can reveal their inner feelings in a public sphere of complete anonymity. Employees can post secret information about their companies without reprisal. It's a site where people want to talk about what's for dinner or the latest technology news, or talk about books or any other subject imaginable have a place to talk about it. Otaku of all types: anime, manga, video games, have a space to talk about anime and manga without fear of being set upon by a mainstream public that actually hates their hobbies. Also, it's a place where people can come and chit chat and have fun.

Basically, what is 2channel?

2channel ("2ch" for short) is the World's largest eBBS, or electronic Bulletin Board System. It's currently run by both Nishimura Hiroyuki (Known by his username "Hiroyuki") and Nakao Yoshihiro (Known by his username "FOX"), both administrators of the site. The entire site is hosted on ten servers located in the United States, and contains 837 boards of every subject imaginable in Japan, categorized into about 41 broad subjects. In each board there are hundreds of threads, and each thread has a limit of 1000 replies or about 500k of data.

Many people who post 2channel post anonymously, due to the ease of the posting system which is based on Amezou and Ayashii world. Amezou and Ayashii world were predecessors of 2channel and many of the first 2channelers came from those sites and the software which 2channel was created from was based on the software that Amezou world used before it closed down for good.

2channel is basically a place where Japanese of all walks of life can share information, chat with people over several topics. Where people discuss topics freely and openly than in real life than what they do in real life Japan. Where they can forget about presenting a face to the public, and can show their true side.

For any topic in Japan you want to talk about in 2channel there's a board for you. Topic boards range from "recipes, real-time coverage of news events, sex gossip, high-tech gadgets and computer news." (2channel's success rests on anonymity - The Japan Times)

You like television shows? There's not only a board for that, but a dedicated board for live discussions and comments while watching television channels such as NHK (The Japanese public broadcasting service).

You like books? There are a multiple textboards for each genre of literature the Japanese book industry publishes.

Go to school in Japan and are into any class subject? There is a board for each of those subjects you're into. Are you into technology? There are boards for computers, gadgets, cell phones, cameras, etc. Like animals? There's a board for dogs, cats, other animals, even there's an animal haters board.

There's boards for that, plus are even whole boards (that end with +) where dedicated volunteers people post breaking news. (Just don't go to the NEWS4VIP board if you're into real news. They'll troll the fuck out of your thread.)

For any topic you like, there's a board for it. You're a news junkie?

With a site with so many boards, it's impossible to determine the true nature and size of 2channel. It's a place so big that "people hardly ever browse the boards there". (2channel – Everything Shii Knows) Instead they go the boards they like and keep to themselves. Each board has its own culture, memes, posters, and recognized users of the boards. At the same time, they are bound together with a unique common culture that 2channel.

2channel is so powerful that Japanese news organizations browse to research the public mood of the day. Japanese Corporations such as Sony, and Toshiba monitor 2channel to see how their products or the corporations are viewed. Law enforcement agencies in Japan monitor 2channel so they can react immediately to criminal threats posted: from simple offenses, murders, or yakuza activity. It basically got the ears and the eyes of the Japanese government and economy, primarily because of its massive grassroots hivemind nature.

Origins

2channel was founded by Hiroyuki Nishimura on May 30th, 1999 while he was a student at the University of Central Arkansas. While in America he started a business as a webpage designer while studying for his psychology degree. (Japanese Find a Forum to Vent Most-Secret Feelings – NYT) While he may claim that he created 2channel because he had some free time and he wanted to create a Web

page for which other people would provide content. Ayashii and Amezou world may have been the first textboards to provide such an open space for others, but 2channel was the first to provide that space to everyone. As a matter of fact, Hiroyuki was actually an Amezou worlder before he created 2channel.

The name of the site was based on the second channel Kanto region of VHF television for broadcast television. It also has a double meaning as it was treated as a second textboard channel for many Amezou worlders. It was fitting that it got that name due to the fact that Amezou world's server's kept crashing routinely, especially during one time where 2channel got its first break.

Shortly after he created 2channel in June 1999, the Toshiba scandal occurred. A 2channeler came to one of the website boards to make a thread about Toshiba's rude customer service. The thread was about him complaining about a faulty VCR he bought from a store that was made by Toshiba. When he called customer service, he was "greeted with obscenities from the electronics giant's service staff" (2channel – Everything Shii Know) Not only he was able to post the ordeal, he was able to record the entire conversation and upload it as a link in the thread. The 2channelers who visited the thread were compelled to call the customer care there and forced them to apologize to the man for being abused.

The Toshiba scandal is one of the first and wasn't the last examples of the "naked heroism" that each person used. This is particularly important because while in America they can be activists without being worried, in Japan they don't want to be identified doing so. 2channel provides the space and platform to be active protesters without being identified. The Toshiba incident provided the positive attention, but it wasn't the one that brought 2channel into the media spotlight. What did was something more sinister.

But even before then, as soon as the thread about the Toshiba incident was created, many Amezou worlders came to 2channel. This was primarily because when the incident went down, Amezou World was down at the time due to routine server problems. As a result many of Amezou worlders eventually moved over to 2channel. As more Amezou worlders came to 2channel, more boards were created to accommodate the migrating population.

Eventually 2channel would be the new home for those who used to go to Amezou world. On December 30th 1999, Amezou World's front page, the access point of the boards, was down for good.

The Birth of the Monar Cat

The monar cat, a well-known and practically the official mascot of the 2channel text boards was born on January 3rd, 2000. It was borne in a thread in a reply about people "spending way too much free time", with an ASCII depiction of a cat. In response, another 2channeler copied the same cat and said "Omae monaa!" (You too!). The name monar, was based on the word "monaa" Monar and his catchphrase were used on 2ch in much the same way that "NO U" is used on 4chan. (Memes – Lurkmore.com) In many threads, the monar cat was is used to defuse trolls by saying the same thing to the person, implying that he does the same thing he accuses the posters in the thread are doing. Eventually he became a standalone character used in replying to everyday threads. Just like Ayashii World's "Giko Cat", anyone can replace the words he speaks with words that the person wants to post.

Monar cat was just the beginning of a creation of a whole family of ASCII characters that are based on internet and 2channel memes, real world issues in Japan, and events.

"Shii" – a female cat who lives in a cardboard box because she is homeless. A boy friend of Giko cat. Popularized in *Shii's song*.

Kuma – A nature loving bear who loves have fun and avoids work as much as possible. He likes to chase after pretty high school girls. His arch rival is Ronald McDonald who destroys Kuma's beloved natural environment. In retaliation, Kuma often karate chops Ronald McDonald. He eventually came to North America as the infamous net character "Pedobear".

Nida – A cat based on Korean stereotypes created by some xenophobic Japanese and is a reflection on. He either talks about Japanese war crimes, or stirs up trouble. Often ends sentences in "nida". His favorite drink is apology juice, in reference in the apology's Koreans demand for the suffering the Japanese did in during the occupation of Korea in World War II.

Jisakujien – A small cat head used to compliment people on good posts or threads. A possible precursor of the many 2ch emoticons that exist on the Japanese internet.

Hikki – Based on the Hikikomori phenomenon in Japan. A Hikikomori is a "hermit who has separated himself from society... lock themselves in a room and live off their parents, probably posting to 2ch a lot" Hikki lives in an empty apartment with Dokou.

Dokuo – A suicidal cat, based on the suicide threads that are frequent in 2channel. He lives with Hikki in the same empty room.

Onigiri – Cats with rice ball heads. Often times they celebrate the glory of rice balls with "onigiri wasshoi!" Onigiri can be easily replaced with "shitty thread" as in "shitty thread wasshoi!".

Saitama – Based on the Liberal Democratic Party logo. The art consists of three cats saying "Saitama!" The logo is also based on the actual town of Saitama.

>>1san – A reference the OP (original poster) of the thread, to a new posters who don't lurk before posting and as a result makes terrible threads.

Those are just the few examples of the wide range of characters that were born from 2channel. The monar cats are set in various art pieces, drawings, and even made anime style drawings. There was even a depiction of the cats as a snow sculpture. There's even a computer font known as the mona font was named after the 2channel mascot.

Eventually they also gave birth to the yukkauri heads. (Characters based on the Touhou project.)

The Neomugicha Incident

On May 3rd 2000 a 17 year old youth with a handle name called Neomugicha (Japanese for "Neo-barley tea") posted a thread with a strange threat on the site. It initially shocked both 2channelers and the

public thinking “he was posting about an attack that had already occurred”. (Neomugicha Incident – English Wikipedia) However, one hour later he carried out the cryptic threat. He hijacked a Nishi-Nippon Railroad run Wakakusu bus in Dazaifu, Fukuoka, Japan. He stabbed a passenger to death during the hijacking. The Japanese Police Agency’s Special Assault Team, a counter terrorist law enforcement unit was called in to end the hijacking, and apprehended the youth alive.

After the Neomugicha incident, there was an attempted copycat attack by a 2channeler named Neouuroncha (or Neo-Oolong tea). Instead of using a knife as his choice of weapon, he decided to step up his game by using a bomb to blow up a Odakyu Electric Railway station. However, police departments in Japan were closely monitoring the site for any copycat assaults. With that in mind, they managed to identify and arrest him before carrying out the attack. Then another 2channeler named Neomugishu (or Neo-Barley Wine) attempted to do the same job that Neouuroncha attempted but failed, but was also busted.

The Neomugicha incident helped give 2channel the attention and the popularity it currently has despite the negative news story. Many people wanted to learn more about the culture.

After the incidents

After the incidents the site grew exponentially. With more people discovering 2channel, and the ease that people can post messages anonymously and without logging in, people keep going to the site. Over the next year 2channel added new boards and staff to cope with the growth in the user base, added IP logs to help assist police in Japan with help to prevent and solve criminal incidents like the Neomugicha incident, and added spam filters to prevent spammers vandalizing the textboards. But on August 2001, the growth and demand was so large that it threatened the integrity of 2channel itself.

UNIX and 2chan and the August 2001 Crisis

The growth of 2channel threatened to tear the site from the inside out. What occurred out of the crisis were two groups of people: one to prevent the annihilation, and another who went a forced evolution of nameless expression.

With the threat of 2channel shutting down and the fear that 2channelers will be displaced again, some 2channelers created another site. That site was called Futaba channel, the same site allows the posting of images with text. Even though Futaba channel started with only a text board at first, the programmers created board software to allow people to upload images in a thread. That alone created an innovation where if you want to upload an image, you have to use your own hosting to do it, or image leech off another site.

On the other side was the measure preservation section. In 2channel, there’s a board that has been relatively unknown to the community until the August Crisis happened. Its board’s name was simply called UNIX. A team of expert programmers on that board saved the servers by reducing the “server load of 2channel's Perl scripts by 90%” by devising a read.cgi code”. (2channel- Everything Shii Knows)

The entire thing is too large for me to explain, but there exist a flash animation called UNIX which can viewed here :<http://coolsummer.typepad.com/kotori/files/unix.swf>

However, the UNIX flash doesn't tell the complete story. Yotsuba Society Historian IsharaYar, who hunged out in the Unix and Linux boards said that the Unix board people actually tried to reduce the amount of http access to the boards, and the people who specialize in cgi tried to reduce the amount of http access by re-writing the 2ch scripts and changed to use gzip support for apache.

After the August 2001 crisis someone made the flash and as a result the unix board became very popular. Ironically, the Unix board actually hated the flash piece.

There's also thread about this which can be viewed at the 4-ch archives here: <http://archives.4ch.net/tech/kareha.pl/1100254230/>

After the crisis, in order to avoid the same incident from happening again, 2channelers were recommended to use specialized browsers to view and use 2channel. 2channel browsers get the data itself from the services, so that it was unnecessary to load perl scripts so often.

With the August Crisis of 2001 resolved, 2channel kept expanding on, and on, and on.

What 2channel introduced?

2channel introduced the following that regular channers don't notice or think about. Topic reccurency, which topics keep going in new threads that are created by one person or another because of a reply limit. The second was tripcodes, which allow people to verify who they are with or without a name. Finally, there are traditions, regular threads surrounding an item that happen daily in a board.

Topic Recurrency

I define topic recurrency as a topic that keeps being created in a board. It could be about any topic in a board: text board or imageboard that keeps being created for a number of reasons. The primary reason for it is a limit of some kind that anonymous forums have. In most cases it the limit of how many posts you can make in any given thread. It can be a soft limit or a hard limit.

A soft limit is post limit that allows a person to make replies after a certain limit, but the thread will not age, or bump to the topic of the thread list. A hard limit is like a soft limit, but the instant the post hits the thread limit, the thread can't be posted in at all. 2channel has a hard posting limit where there is a bump limit of 999 posts after the 1st post. After 1000 posts in a thread, they have to create a new thread in order to continue the discussion. Often times, someone self-elects themselves to create a new thread.

Another primary reason is that the topic is very popular or common to the board. In any given board, there are threads about common topics of people, places and things. Topics about computers, a particular anime program, images, and all sorts of topics. With a new thread, there can be new material,

old material, or a mix of old and the new material. With any thread it's a lottery that you don't know what you're going to get until you click on one.

This combination has led to many threads on similar topics or ideas. Some of them started years ago and are still on going. Often times, they note the number of threads made as "Parts", like if there was a 50th thread of a particular subject, there will be a thread title with the subject "[insert topic name] Part 50". That's lets people know how many topics the subject had and how long the topic has been made.

Introduction of Tripcodes

Another aspect that many 4channers take it for granted is tripcodes. Many 4channers use tripcodes for various reasons. Some use them for convenience, some use them to identify themselves, and others use them for one time things. Many 4channers do not realize that tripcodes were actually invented on 2channel on August 2001.

Before the introduction of tripcodes on 2channel there were only two types of anonymity: Handle anonymity and nameless anonymity. Nameless anonymity is anonymity where people "post messages without handles". (The Dynamism of 2channel) Nameless anonymity is represented by the multitudes of default usernames on 2channer if they don't want to post with a username/handle. Most 2channelers post messages via nameless anonymity.

The second type of anonymity is handle anonymity. Now this type of anonymity is where people "use handles (screen names, nicknames, or pseudonyms) by which people usually present themselves." You may know this type of anonymity by usernames. But with textboards before 2channel there was no way to verify the person posting if he is the same person or not.

With the introduction of tripcodes, people who choose to use them can use them for a variety of reasons. They can use them in a thread so they can verify that they are the same person in a single thread. Or people can use them to verify they are the same person in more than one thread or across the entire site. Tripcodes can be combined with a default username or with a username. However, often times first time 2channelers should not use tripcodes until they get a feel for the site, lest others think he's a new channeler.

There are two types of tripcodes used. The first one is a simple tripcode which uses one # after the username. Simple tripcodes can have a maximum of eight characters a person can use as a "passcode". The second one is called a secure tripcode which uses two # after the username, and the user can use as many characters as the person wants. A person can also use a hybrid tripcode where he can combine both simple and secure tripcodes together one after another.

Cultural Background

In order to fully understand 2channel, you have to understand the cultural background of Japan itself. Eastern and Western cultures are completely different from each other primarily because of the emphasis on individuality VS Group interaction. Western cultures, which are based in Europe, have an emphasis on individuality. Eastern Cultures, which are based in China, are based on group dynamics and

harmony. Japan is a particular country of interest because it was influenced by Confucianism but has its original way of describing things as well. But Japanese Culture is such unique in Asia.

The Sprit of Wa

The overall culture of Japan is its emphasis on the spirit of “wa”. The word wa is the oldest recorded name” of Japan. Thus it has been known as such by Chinese and Koreas who drew the kanji as “Chinese, Korean, and Japanese scribes regularly wrote Wa or Yamato "Japan" with the Chinese character 倭 until the 8th century”. (English Wikipedia – Wa (Japan)) The Japanese found fault with the original Kanji Character for Wa as it represented drawfs. The Japanese changed the Chinese character to more fit their culture as 和, which means harmony, peace, or balance, depending on the context.

In western cultures, most people tend to openly compete and confront each other when interacting with another, unless they have similar interest. In Japan, even if they do not have a similar interests, they usually cooperate with each other. In the context of Japan, wa “is the motion of harmony with in a group”. (Japanese values) To achieve such harmony, it requires, self-control, willing to cooperate and able to perform their social roles. The performance of social roles includes participation in group activities on and off the work place, and attending things as well. But with cooperation, there are benefits; you have emotional security in a group and having a social identity.

The best way to archive harmony or at least the spirit of harmony is to know your role, and play your role.

Tatamae and Honne

The primary know your role in society is to usually play act in order to achieve balance, even if it means if they want to show their true feelings. We routinely do this in Western cultures, but in the Japan they have actual names: Tatamae and Honne. Tatamae is the public face that everyone must protect or project, regardless of our true feelings about it. Honne is the true feelings about the subject we deal with. This type of divide in Japanese society is well known by everyone who lives there.

To explain further of the divide, what you see in real life is the artificial reality of what you are expected to play along in. That is the “official, public, socially required reality” (BBC - h2g2 - 'Tatamae' and 'Honne' in Japanese Society) Japanese every are expected to play along and support the official reality even if it's not true. This is required no matter in a group, if it's small in a work place, or large like an organization. It's a very clear unwritten rule that is well known.

There are certain contexts to show your true feelings or what you really think. This is known as Honne, the “informal, personal reality in disregard of social parameters”. (ibid) Honne is used in one's personal space like in private meetings or individual meetings with another person. Often times, people keep their true feeling hidden except with a friend they trust.

These two aspects of Japanese life explain how Japanese know that they don't want to do it, but they have to keep the appearance of the harmony of a group. And since Japanese society is not a society of individuals but a society of groups, “the Japanese tend to go to great lengths to avoid conflict, especially

within the context of large groups.” (English Wikipedia - Honne and Tatemae). You have large groups such as schools, workplaces, social groups. People belonging to such groups get the benefits, as long as they play their role as long as they support their role no matter how much they do not like it.

Due to this expectation to maintain harmony of all times, their feelings are expected to be suppressed at all times. As such their “opinions are never openly expressed, emotions are not shown, and public confrontations are rare.” (Honne and Tatemae – My Nippon). This has great benefits as they can put up with jobs that many people don’t want to do, but do so to maintain a living. Plus they get to focus on their hardships they have to endure without them complaining.

However, there is a flipside in this. Since everyone knows you’re deliberately expected to put on a show, as long as you put up that show “as long as harmony is maintained it is acceptable to engage in a certain type of behavior.” (Ibid) This explains how there are active Japanese underground cultures such as the otaku culture are alive and well. As long as they fit their role in Japanese culture and fulfill their duty, society will not care.

Ijime

Ijime is a Japanese word for bullying. This not like normal bullying in the Western countries, although it is similar is that most cases of bullying is an intolerance of difference. But instead of the individual doing the bullying, it is the group that is doing the bullying of the individual to get the person to conform to their standards. Ijime is sadly one of the harshest ways that Japanese groups maintain harmony. The root cause of the ijime culture is in the Japanese Education system.

The Japanese Education system, like all education system not only educates people in topics and knowledge. It’s also has an unwritten, social curriculum in socialization. One of the topics is that it’s good to be homogeneous. In Japanese society people consider being “similar to one another is a virtue and gives a sense of relief or safety.” (Ijime: A Social Illness of Japan by Akiko Dogakinai) This is in contrast in Western society where you in order to conform, you have to have the right clothes, family, and such. In Japan you have to be born the right amount of abilities, not too much. Those who have extraordinary abilities is consider abnormally and is consider disharmonious to the school’s society and thus be run out.

Murahachibu

There is another type of shunning, but instead of a school doing so, it’s the entire community. Its called murahachibu, or Village eight divisions. But in this case of shunning, it’s the eight exclusions based on the event people subjected to this type of shunning are excluded from. It is a type of punishment that originated in the Edo period, and in some rural areas, it still exists as a type of punishment towards uncooperative neighbors.

Murahachibu is a type of shunning those same local village organizations at the time use to force a neighbor out. It is a use of that type of shunning that local village organizations use against them before

“they might attract official notice (or for other reasons)” (4 murahachibu (shunning)). It is one of the more harsh ways to enforcing the spirit of wa if all other ones fail.

In the Edo era, each village has its own laws. If someone did not follow them, he would eventually be excluded from eight events every town participated. Each town at the time has ten events that everyone in the village participates: wedding ceremonies(kekkon-shiki), coming of age ceremonies(seijin-shiki), house warming events (shinchiku-iwai), travel (ryoko) , Buddhist events (hoji), baby births (akachan no tanjyo) , nursing sick people (kanbyo) and works for floods (kozui no shori), firefighting, and funerals. (Mura-hachibu) Murahachibu disallows people who are shunned from participating in any event except for firefighting and funerals since they usually done by outsiders. Since the person being subjected to this punishment can't participate in the cultural activities of the community, he is expected to leave.

How are these cultural background important?

It's important to understand these cultural aspects in order to fully understand why Japanese of all walks of life are attracted to 2channel. Before 2channel, the etiquette of Japanese real life applied to online interactions. In public spaces, and in private chatrooms, they have to keep this façade of life and the official stance. The only possibly way to reveal their true side is by IM or by Email. They had no true open space to reveal their true feelings.

Once Japanese discovered 2channel, they suddenly have a free open space to reveal their true sides. There's no need for them to use a username. There's no need to worry about reputation, they can post anonymously and open. They can adopt a tripcode if they wish. But many 2channers do post anonymously.

At the same time this expression of their honne can be good. Good is that it provides and open space for people to reveal their true sides. People who can discuss topics that can't be discussed in Japanese public: Politics, economics, government, and the like. Bad is that they can reveal the negative sides of Japanese culture that we mentioned in this paper. Those negative things include not only ijime, shunning, and maruchuba, but also xenophobia against Chinese and Koreans.

2channel can be a good example of a window into the true side of Japanese culture. Both good and bad.

Major Events

2channel has been host to many major events in the history of the website. Threads long enough to make books out of them. Financial incidents that make lucky men rich. Festivals where people are caught up in the festivities. Vote rigging. 2channel has been the place for those things.

The Story of Densha Otaku or Train Man

Some threads are so long, that books are made up of whole conversations in those threads from 2channel. One of the most famous 2channel stories that was turned into a book, then into a manga, then into a live action drama and movie was the legend of Densha Otoko or Train Man. Densha Otoko is an actual true story of a 22 year old otaku “falls in love with a girl who he saved from a drunk on a train”

(project.DENSHA - The 'Densha Otoko' Translation Project) After the rescues he got a Germes coffee cup set in exchange for rescuing her. The anonymous man had no idea how to deal with it so he posted his experience of saving the girl on a 2channel thread.

Eventually in the thread the 2channelers who read the story called him Densha Otoko, or train man. While the female of the person who saved was called Miss Hermes. And throughout the time 2channers gave him advice in over six threads. In the end Densha Otoko got the girl, and there was a great celebration thread about it. The great story of train man was compiled in a book and published in 2005.

Mizuho Securities Incident or the “fat-finger” keyboard error:

On December 8th 2005, at 9:27 am a trader for Mizuho Securities mistakenly placed a sell order to sell 610,000 shares of J-COM Co., Ltd, a manpower recruitment agency for one yen each instead selling a share for the company for 610,000 yen. Normally the Tokyo Stock Exchange system would normally block the sell order, but it failed to do so. ('Fat finger' trade costs Tokyo shares boss his job – The Independent) Instead the sale order went as placed. A 2channeler found out and posted the information on one of the financial information textboards. As an end result, two twenty somethings like 29 year old hikikomori Takashi Kotegawa, and Tetsuya Ichimura a Tokyo-based executive director became millionaires overnight.

Takashi Kotegawa was known on the internet as “B.N.F.” or “J-Com Man”. He’s was a stock trader who owns nothing but a downtown condo, and uses it just to live. All he does is eat ramen, sleep, and day trade. Interestingly as much as he likes making money, he has no interest about spending it. He just does it for the money to make more money. (Check out this Japanese DayTrader: Takashi Kotegawa (BNF/J-Com Man) – The Motley Fool)On the other hand, Tetsuya Ichimura is a 24 year old executive of Liquidflow.

There’s not much information about him. Either way, they both benefited from this slip up, that eventually cost Takuo Tsurushima, the then head of the Tokyo Stock Exchange, to apologize and resign from his job. Regarding the incident which was the second time where the TSE was “forced...on 1 November to shut down for the first time since 1949 after a computer glitch”, he said that he was “gravely responsible.”

It’s unknown if the two people regularly go to 2channel. But we have to assume that they do.

Vote rigging

There has been several online vote rigging incidents in the history of 2channel.

Tashiro Festival

One of the major rigging incidents that occurred was surrounding the comedian Masahi Tashiro. He was a big topic on the 2channel textboards because of his blatant sexual harassment against females, belligerent public behavior, and possession of recreational drugs.

Around December 2001 there was a thread about him being a candidate for the Time Person of the Year of 2001 on the 2channel breaking news boards. So it was decided that they will host a festival in honor of him known as the Tashiro Matsuri, 田代祭, or the Tashiro Festival. The actual activity of the Festival is rigging the vote in order for him to keep the top spot for number one. A massive effort to get out the vote was made all over the site.

Various programmers around the 2channel community create various software programs to spam the time voting servers with multiple votes. They made such programs with manual scripts to allow voting with links or automatic scripts that allow people to vote multiple times via tools known as Cannons. Cannons were tools for efficient repeat voting through the http client, and they were named with whimsical titles, each one more powerful than the last. Named in order, Tashiro Cannon, the Mega Partial Tashiro Canon, 25 repeated blows, Tashiro Canon, and the Super Tashiro Cannon. All of those programs were successful in rigging out the vote, but eventually made an effect similar to a DoS (Denial of Service) attack which crashed the servers. They even created a Satellite Cannon named after him, but when the Super Tashiro Cannon was able to crash the Time servers it wasn't deployed.

After the Time server crash, Time staff finally figured out what was going on and he was removed as a candidate. The end result of this incident is that 2channel created a festival hall board for these types of threads. Since 2002, Time magazine begun to limit voting to the person designated by the magazine editor.

The Tashiro Festival was not the only voting rigging incident that happened in 2channel. As a matter of fact, there has been several vote rigging incidents since then. One of them was done by the VIPPERS at the NEWS4VIP board targeted a character named Masaru Gojo in an soccer anime series called Inazuma Eleven. The sole purpose of the thread was to make all the "children and fujoshi cry". Why Gojou a person who is a background character in the series? Because they want a character that's almost as creepy as themselves as VIPPERS. (Vippers vs Fujoshi – Sankaku Complex)

Another vote rigging incident was Dominios pizza. The voting contest was simple, for one whom you think your pizza will be even more delicious if he cooked and deliver it to you. Some of the 2channers found a guy that is more unique than the others. In the case of 2channelers, more pizza (in exact pronunciation in Japanese "piza") than the others meaning chubbier. For some reason the more chubby the person, the more delicious the pizza because he's has more experience in eating.

And just like the Time Incident, it rigging almost happened again. History repeated it self as "vote script did not have any protection against duplicate submission" and he gathers about 1 million votes from 2channers. (Domino Pizza Handsome Deliverer Voting Campaign Rigged By 2-Channellers - Asiajin.com) Then another person got million votes overnight. Eventually Domino's pizza caught wind of this farce, ended the contest.

Finally there's Lotteria, a Korean born fast food chain. The chain held a poll asking customers to vote for a new flavor of milk shake. One of the choices was Kimchee a common Korean food consisting of cabbage scraps soak in vinegar and savory spices. It doesn't make a good milkshake, but 2channelers

decided that since it's a Korean fast food chain, why not make a milkshake of kimchee? So they did so by the millions.

They managed not to win, but Lotteria did managed serve the 2channelers what they wanted. The chain manufactured enough ingredients "for a few thousand kimchee shakes" and sold them at 5 of their locations in Japan. (The Japanese Revolution - Large Prime Numbers) And just like they say, the words are true, it tasted vile and terrible.

Rise of the VIPPERS

The VIP board was originally created by 2channel staff for junk threads. Junk spreads like spam, vandalized threads, and plain awful threads. Eventually it devolved into a high-speed chatroom of sorts. It's full name of the VIP board is News4VIP or News for Very Important Persons. But in reality it isn't about breaking news or about news for very important persons.

A 2channeler who visits 2ch's VIP board is a VIPPER. VIPPERs are known to the public as VIP or VIPPER as a shared username. Similar to what 4chaner /b/tards use Anonymous as s shared username. This shows that there is a community spirit above individuality (2ch.net, an Anonymous Social Network – Google Blogscoped) and that community spirit is about randomness and a concept called "VIP Quality".

Currently, it is the number one text board that most 2channelers use. There are people from all walks of life who go to News4VIP: Otaku, middle schoolers and high schoolers, middle age people, business people. The average VIPPER is 15 to 25 years of age, but people from all walks of life come here, hang out and just post random threads. The board is basically the equivalent to the Something Awful Forums FYAD (Fuck You and Die), and 4chan's /b/ - Random board.

The content of the VIP boards is very similar but unique to 2channel. The VIPPERS have their own subculture above and beyond the regular 2channel culture. The entire purpose of being a VIPPER is making content that is "VIP Quality". In NEWS4VIP, quality is a sarcastic term. VIPPERs mean "quality" they mean intentionally shitposting, High quality intentional shitposts. Basically making posts or content that is considered "useless, crazy, reckless, absurd, idiotic, foolish or even for something that is creative in any one of those" to any normal 2channeler. (2channel background- Nippon-sekai) The higher any of these aspects of VIP quality, the high "quality" the thread is.

Many people come to NEWS4VIP thinking they'll get up to date on breaking news of the day. Once the post any breaking news story, they will be endlessly trolled to death by VIPPERS. Obviously anyone who posts on VIP on news is a dead giveaway that he posted without lurking and thus new. And by extension someone new to 2channel, because the breaking news boards are titled differently from the regular boards.

Threads featured in the VIP range the garment from a board with all types of people. From wallpaper threads, chit-chat threads, humor threads, desk space threads, even creative threads such as photoshopping threads, image threads, and drawing threads. But many of the threads and content show much VIP Quality, or stupid the content actually is.

VIPPERS are well known for various stunts in 2channel history. Trolls, pranks, and all sorts of insanity. At the same time they reveal the sort of creativity equivalent to 4chan's /b/. VIPPER Challenge is one long term series of photoshopping challenges that challenges VIPPERS to make this image cool, or make this image unique in sort of way.

At one time they invaded a Korean textboard for retaliation for Koreans taking down 2channel. Koreans took all the servers of the site down because of the outrage regarding "criticism of their Olympic figure skating champion Kim Yu-Na." VIPPERS decided to raid the sites with their usual catchphrases and AA art.

They are indeed stupid – The VIPPERloids

The VIPPERS are also infamously known for the VIPPERloids, a snarky parody of the Vocaloid series of characters. They are actually known as UTAUloids, but they are actually created as troll Vocaloids by VIPPERS. They're usually used as jokes "to fool people into believing new Vocaloids had came out" (Vipperloid – Facebook) However, people continued to like them and the programs on it. Some people even cosplay as those characters in conventions in Japan and the United States.

But how does a VIPPERloid work? First a Vocaloid announcement is made by Crypton Future Media. VIPPERS create a thread specifically to make the VIPPERloid. Random information is given by the VIPPERS, sometimes they do it for every aspect, and if some of those aspects are done they decide on other aspects not done yet for the VIPPERloid. Then the most random/best information is put together to create the said character. A webpage, songs, and a videos are also created. Then some other VIPers spread information on the web.

Speaking of AA art...

ASCII Art

Thanks to 2channel, the art of AA art is alive and well in Japan. There are ways to express ideas via AA art. From simple designs to complex well painted works of art. It's has led to a new form of storytelling where people post series of images and connect them together to tell a story. Even when copied and pasted, they are sometimes modified to fit the story. These stories are "produced collectively, and different users add new turns in the story". (Some lessons for us beginners by an Otaku – Metagold) With AA art you can make the same characters, but with new dialogue from other ideas.

AA art is also known as simplified kemno art made using Unicode characters and posted in threads "without having to link to outside images" outside the boards. (2ch-wikifur) AA Art is designed for textboards because it's impossible to upload images onto a textboard without using an image host. AA art is a simple way of marking art. Some channelers are so skilled that they can create elaborate works of art.

There are so much of them that there is a whole cast of characters from 2channel. Even there is a large dictionary as well online at AA dictionary websites. (2ch – Wikifur) These AA characters can be copied

and pasted over and over pasted with new lines being made with the same characters. New characters are being made daily in new ways, or old characters are made with new lines of dialogue.

But AA art does not extend to plain art; there are huge sets of emoticons that many 2channelers use in discussions.

2channel is a place where people left out in the mainstream in Japan are provided a home. There are threads and dedicated boards for the GLBT community or people with mental health conditions. Serious topics and issues that are not discussed in the Japanese mainstream media are often times discussed in 2channel. If users can manage to separate fact from fiction, 2channel can possibly serve as an excellent source of information and advice. At the same time 2channel is also a window into Japan's ugly side. Some of the contents tend to be nationalistic and xenophobic, especially toward Koreans, many of which are not discussed openly in public.

Legacy.

Since the creation of 2channel, there are many anonymous textboards in Japan. Sadly, anonymous textboards never got the same popularity as it gotten in the United States as in Japan. But there were attempts of creating one. Major ones include world2ch, 4-ch, and currently 4chan's world4ch.

So what's next for 2channel?

2channel will still exist for quite a long time. As long as there is no true open space for discourse in a society where it's expected to put up a front for society, there's always a space for 2channel. With millions of Japanese visiting the site daily, they will consider it their home for quite some time. Hopefully for the next ten years.

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