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Authors

Liang, Jiajun

Xu, Yiran

Collver, Jordan

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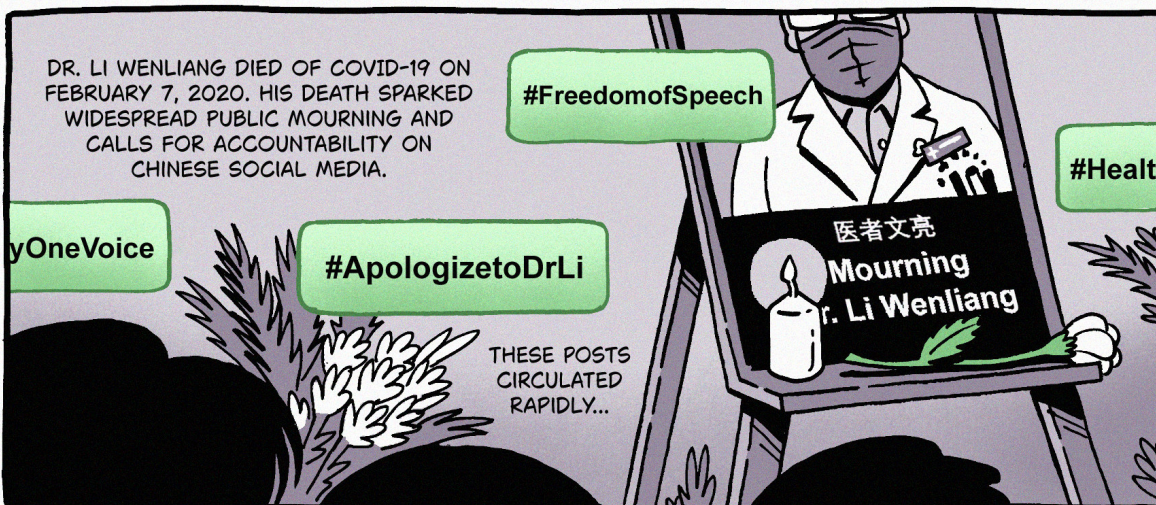
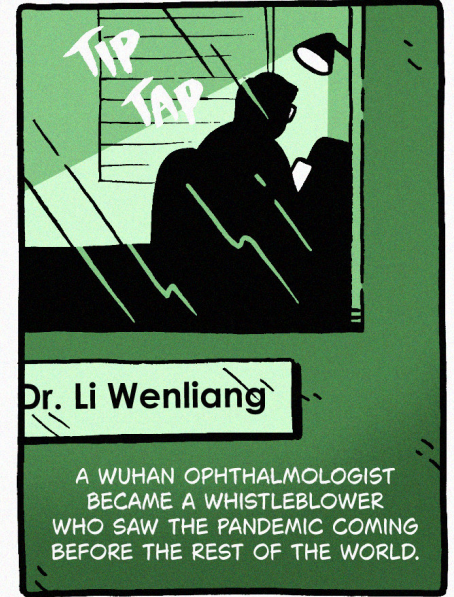
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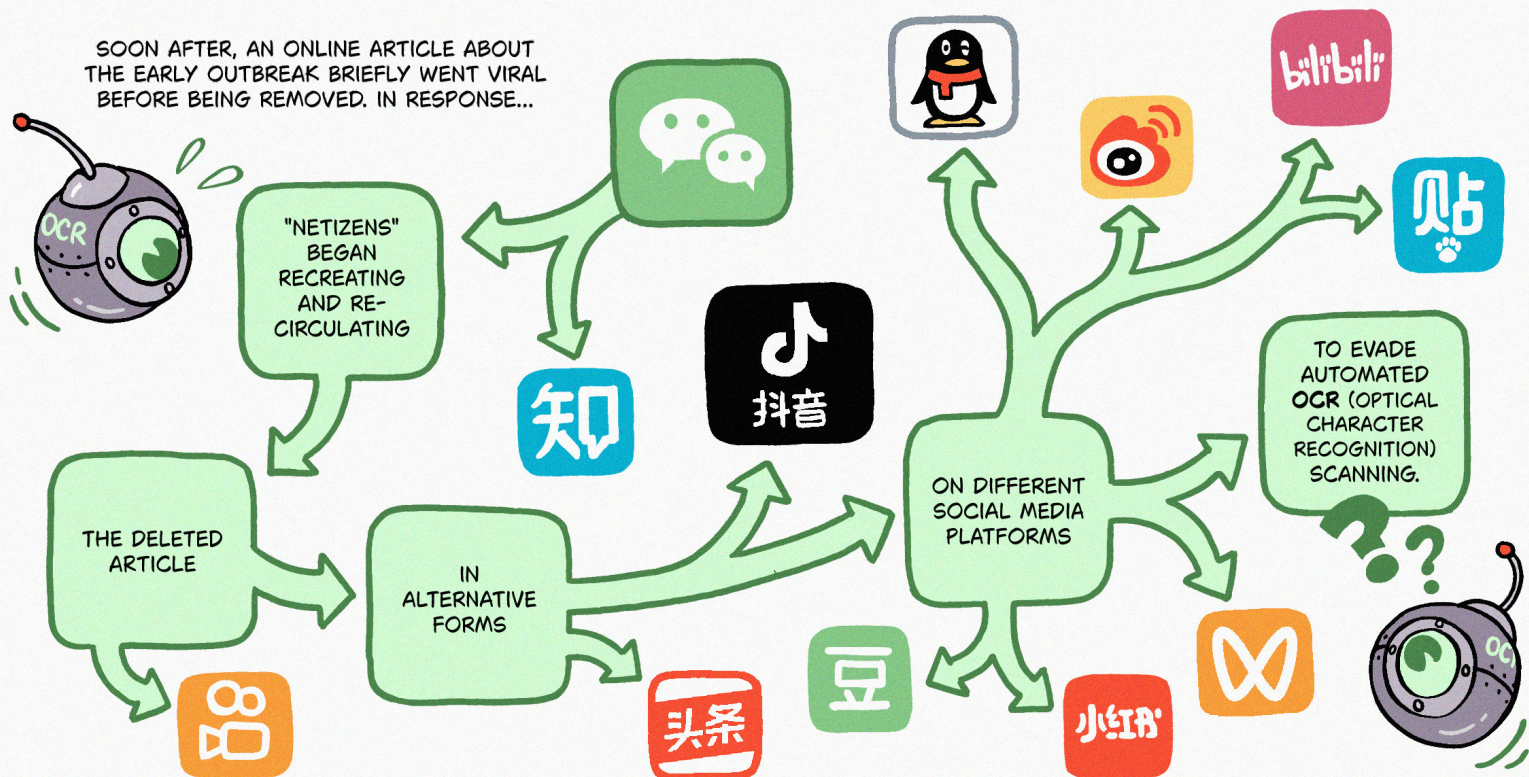
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CONTAGIOUS INFORMATION

Censorship vs Creativity in a Time of Crisis

BY
JIAJUN LIANG & YIRAN XU
AND
JORDAN COLLVER





SOME SUBSTITUTED CHARACTERS WITH EMOJIS BASED ON SEMANTIC MEANING...

病毒检测

↓

病👁检测

stands for "toxic"

OR PHONETIC SIMILARITY.

肺炎

↓

肺👁

sounds like "inflammation"

OTHERS TRANSLATED THE ARTICLE INTO DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, BOTH REAL AND IMAGINED.

THE MOST RADICAL VERSION APPEARED BLANK, BY RENDERING WHITE TEXT ON A WHITE BACKGROUND, CREATORS PRODUCED A SO-CALLED "HEAVENLY SCRIPT."

MEANING EMERGED ONLY THROUGH ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.

THEN THE "MOUTH" RADICAL (口) VANISHED...

咸因
↓
戌大

= "gratitude that can neither
be felt nor spoken"

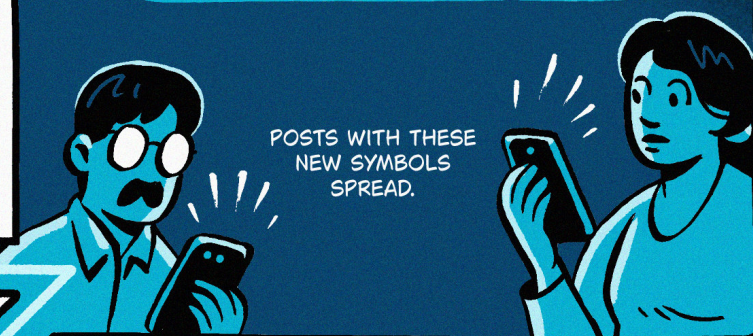


NETIZENS RESPONDED BY REMOVING A PART OF CHINESE
WRITING CALLED A RADICAL TO CHANGE THE MEANING
OF THE WORD "GAN'EN."

感恩
↓
咸因

"heart" radical
removed

= "gratitude without heart"



POSTS WITH THESE
NEW SYMBOLS
SPREAD.

DURING THE PANDEMIC, "GRATITUDE EDUCATION"
(感恩教育) WAS WIDELY PROMOTED TO ENCOURAGE
SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF AN
UNPRECEDENTED CRISIS.



"GAN'EN" (感恩 GRATITUDE) BECAME A SARCASTIC
EXPRESSION IN AN ONLINE FORUM. THE PLATFORM
WAS BANNED OVERNIGHT IN SEPTEMBER 2021.

MEANING SURVIVED ONLY AMONG
THOSE WHO COULD DECODE IT.



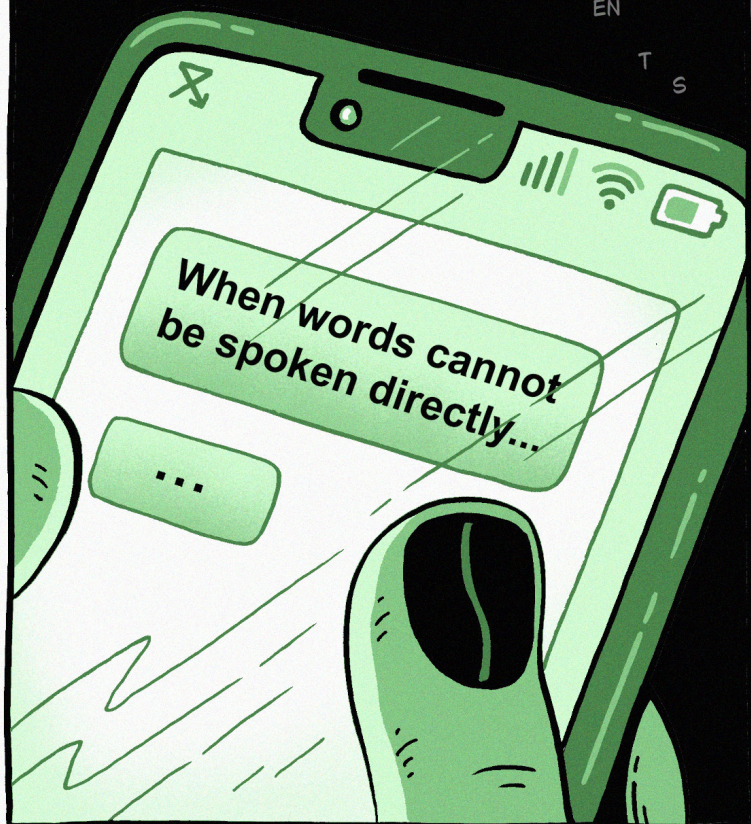
A shibboleth - "if you know, you know." Like this symbol ³⌘²_{1 4} which tells you the correct reading order to understand this page!

UNDER CENSORSHIP, MESSAGES
RARELY DISAPPEAR COMPLETELY.

THE TEXT FADES OUT,
LEAVING ONLY FRAG_M

EN

T S



they survive



between



to
each
other.