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Title:	**Suggestions in encoding Taoist Secret Characters**
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1. Suggestions

To encode only the **Secret Names（讳名）** of famous Taoist gods and ghosts under the rule of multiple evidences after careful studies. Not to encode other Taoist Secret Characters used in Taoist talismans or incantations in CJKUI.

2. Introduction

Taoist talismans（道教符箓）have been widely used to eliminate disasters, evils and misfortunes in China. To make the talismans seem authoritative and more effective, Taoist priests always create **Secret Characters（讳字, also called 讳秘字）** or patterns, make the strokes more crooked or cursive and add decorative strokes to base characters.

图 18. 道言符　　　图 19. 森罗净霊符　　　图 20. 碧落空歌符　　　图 21. 大浮黎土符

Fig.1 Different ways to make Taoist talismans seem authoritative

滕媛：《中国道藏符箓图像研究》，南京艺术学院博士学位论文，P24

A Taoist talisman can be complicated with many Secret Characters, patterns and decorative strokes or be composed of a single Secret Character.
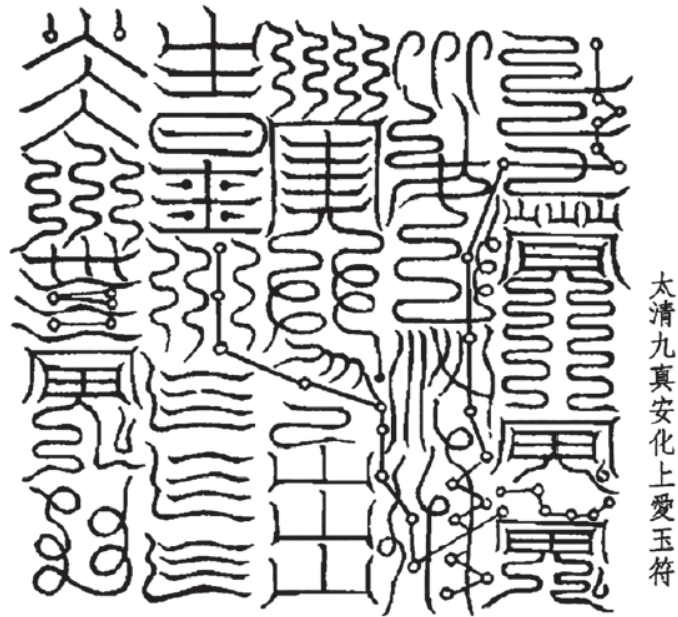
从左往右

太清九真安化上愛玉符

Fig.2 A complicated Taoist talisman found in 《正统道藏》

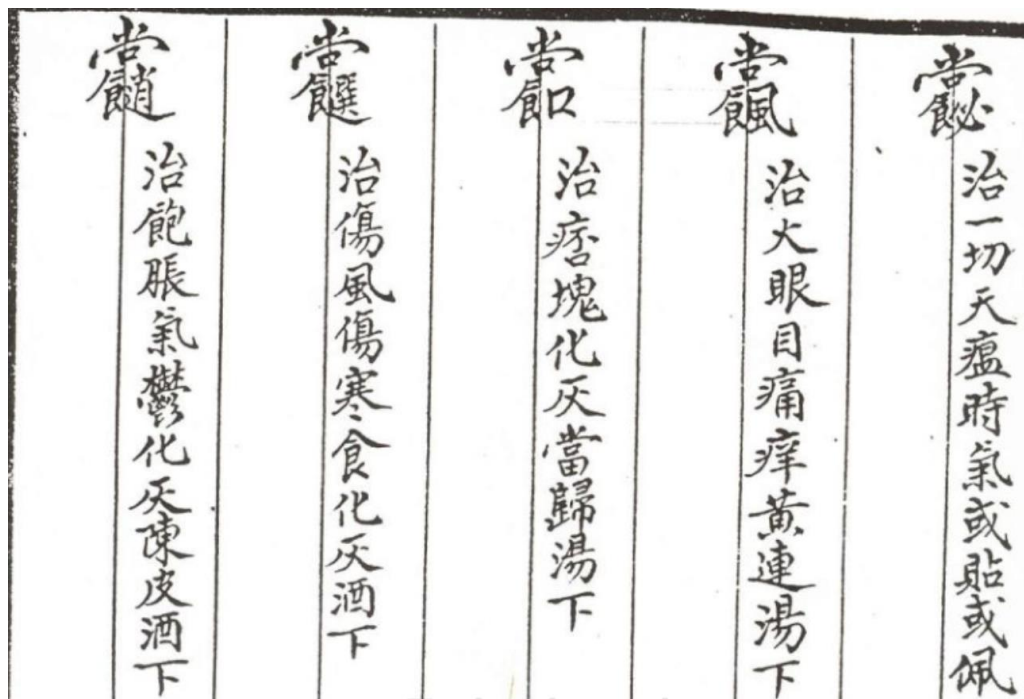高欣：道教符篆的视觉文化特征，炎黄地理，2021(04):117-120

Fig.3 Simple Taoist talismans containing only one Secret Character

《轩辕碑记医学祝由十三科》，民国三年（1914）上海锦章图书局出版

Since a Taoist talisman can be a single Secret Character, the names of different parts of a Taoist talisman, i.e. **head（符头）**, **heart（符窍）**, **foot（符脚）**, can be also applied to describe Secret Characters. Normally, a Secret Character contains head and foot but written heart.
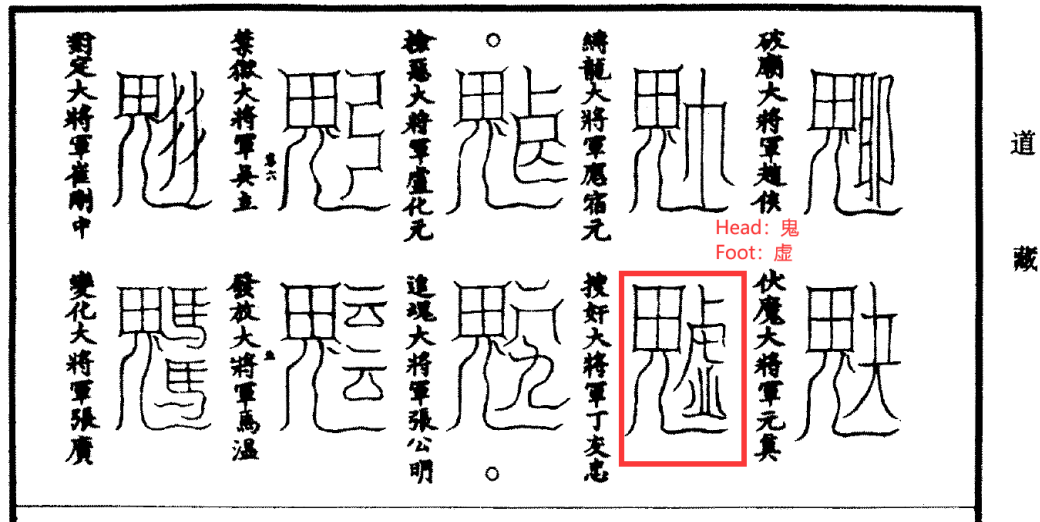
Fig.4 The head and foot of a Single-Character Taoist talisman

《高上神霄玉清真王紫书大法》卷六，载《正统道藏》第二十八册，P606

The **Secret Names** (i.e. the Secret Characters used to represent their names) of Taoist gods and ghosts can be used as normal Secret Characters as well. The following talisman is composed of three Secret Names of Taoist gods. The talisman has only heart, but head or foot. "三清帝令入吾水中，助我退病" is the incantation of the talisman.
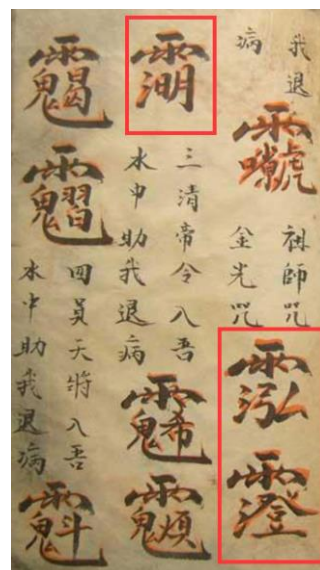

Fig.5 A Taoist talisman using Secret Names of Taoist gods

清代符咒手抄本（A handwritten copy of Taoist talisman Written in Qing Dynasty）

Because 玉清、上清、太清 are very significant gods in the system of Taoist mythologies, the forms of their Secret Names vary little. The other Secret Characters created for Taoist talisman, however, are variable and created much more casually.

Fig.6 shows a Taoist talisman used to stop bleeding. If the "雨" and "鬼" of the four Secret Characters are excluded, we can get a word meaning "copper skin and iron bone（铜皮铁骨）".
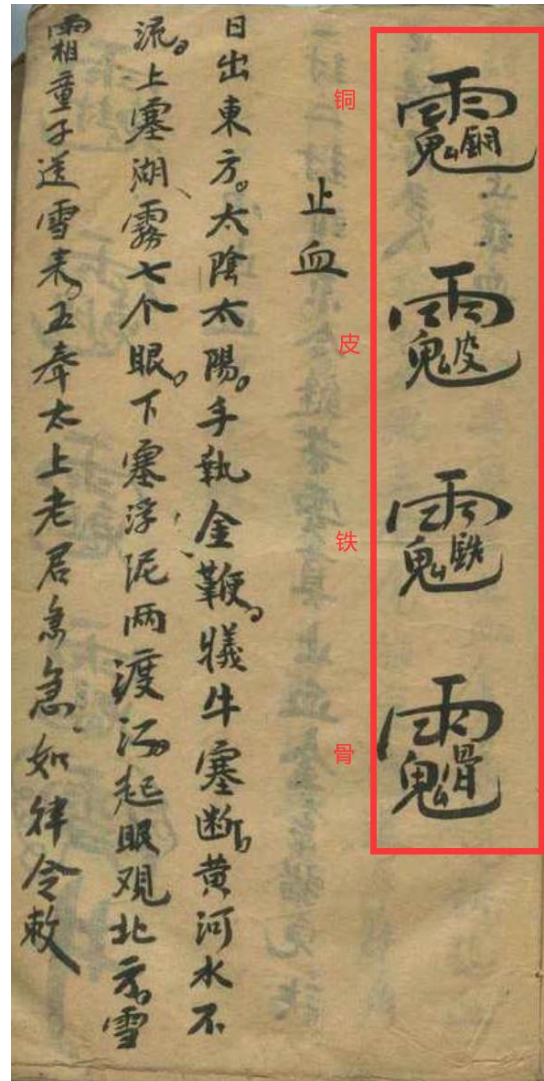

Fig.6 A Taoist talisman used to stop bleeding

Fig.7 shows another Taoist talisman used to court. If the "雨" and "鬼" are excluded, we can get words like "牵动女心（get the girl moved）" and "和合思"（hope it goes smoothly）.

This means the foot of Secret Characters can vary as the Taoist priests like, which indicates the encoding of the Secret Characters is endingless.
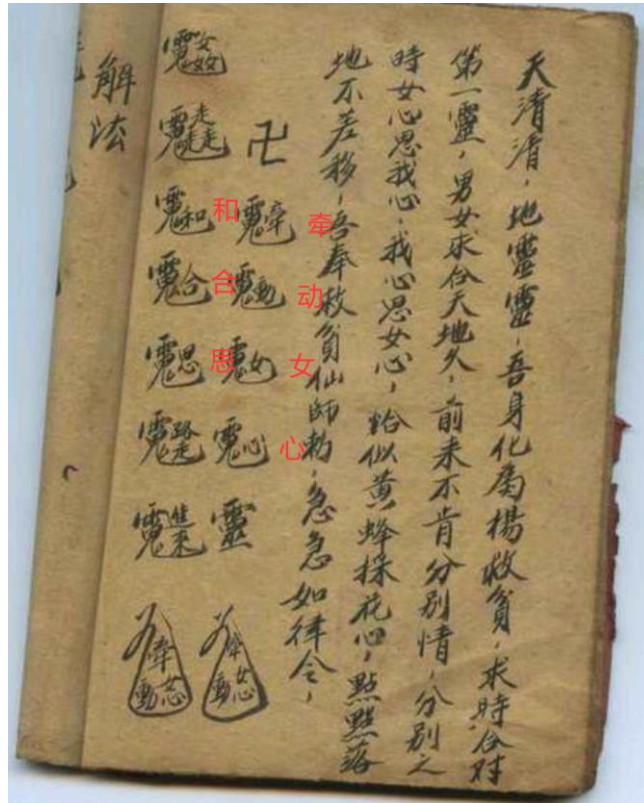
Fig.7 A Taoist talisman used to court

What's more, the head of Secret Characters can vary, too. It depends on the usage, effect, sect, etc. of the talisman. Fig.8 shows different Secret Characters with the same foot. The head depends on weather or usage.
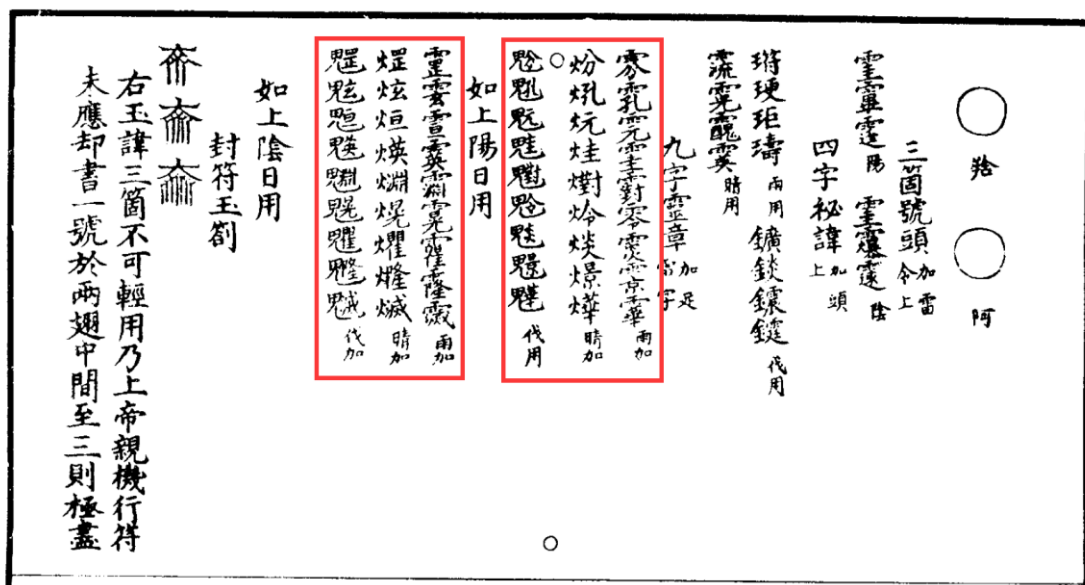

Fig.8 Different Secret Characters with same foot

《道法会元》卷八三，载《正统道藏》第二十九册，P333

Fig.9 shows Secret Characters using 雨 and 食 as head, with the foot saying "Let cloud, dragon, wind and tiger beat the crazy beast (云龙风虎降猛兽)". The talisman is used to cure dog bites.
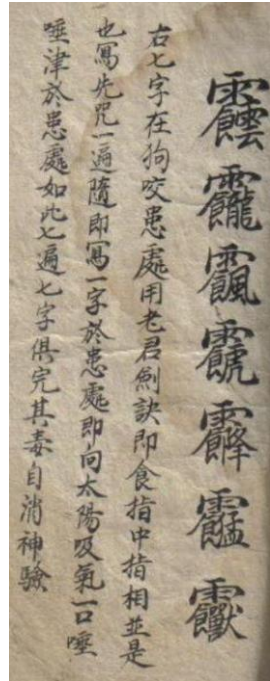
Fig.9 The head composed of 雨 and 食

符咒手抄本（A handwritten copy of Taoist talisman）

According to the above, it's not possible nor reasonable to encode Taoist Secret Characters one by one in CJKUI.

**3. Encoding suggestions**

First, I'd like to respond to two opinions.

The one saying "Taoist Secret Characters is the same with other CJKUIs and can be used among them". After reading the text, I think it's very clear that the fact is the opposite. And "can be used among CJKUIs" does not mean anything. For example："☺"是个笑脸，用于表达快乐的心情，可以读作"笑"。(☺ is a smiling face used to express your happiness. You can read it as "smile".)

The other saying "We have encoded some Taoist Secret Characters so we can encode more". In my opinion, it's a little ridiculous. An improper analogy would be to commit a crime: I have been in prison so I can break the law again. We have encoded some duplicates in CJKUI, but I believe none of us want to encode more.

Let's go back to the point. For Taoist Secret Characters, considering the Secret Names of famous Taoist gods and ghosts are stable and the amount of them is limited, I suggest we encode just these characters in CJKUI. Moreover, the characters appear in Taoist incantations can be related to the Secret Characters thus the necessity to study them carefully first.

Instead of encoding Taoist Secret Characters one by one, we should seek other ways to solve the problem. Since there are several heads of Taoist Secret Characters, I think a new encoding model or solving the problem in other level, for instance, type setting may be preferred.

Moreover, some common symbols in Taoist talismans can be encoded. For example, when used at the top of a talisman, ⚬⚬⚬ represents "三清"; use ☰ or ☱ as "三官大帝"; use ⊔ as "北斗七星神"; use ✦、✧ to represent 五行; etc.

4. Problems we may face

Here are some kinds of problems we will meet if my suggestions are accepted. If we decide to encode Taoist Secret Characters characters one by one, the problems will become much more difficult to solve.

4.1 Simplified form

Daoist Secret characters often contain CJKUIs as its elements, so they can be simplified as well.

For example, the Secret Names of the gods of The Big Dipper:

Fig.10 Simplified form of Daoist Secret characters

Source: https://m.wang1314.com/doc/webapp/topic/21005862.html

If we decide to encode just the Secret Names of famous Taoist gods and ghosts, it's OK to encode the simplified ones if proper evidences are provided.

4.2 Which Secret Characters to choose

There are many gods or ghosts in the system of Taoist mythologies while people keep creating new ones, especially the demons that need to be swept. It's hard to decide which is famous and which is not. I suggest we involve experts of Taoist Secret Characters in related work.

Note that there are other compound characters used to represent gods or ghosts. I don't know how to handle these ones. For example, Secret Characters appear in Fig.11 and Fig.12.
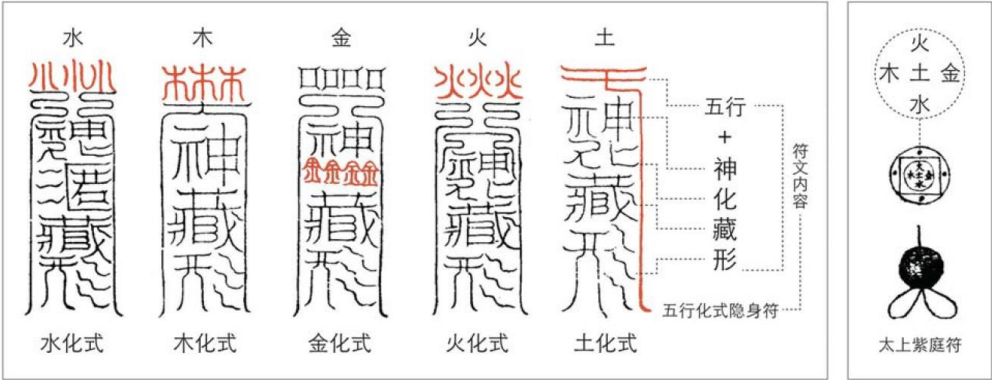
图 36. 五行式隐身符 　　　　　　 图 37. 太上紫庭符

Fig.11 Secret characters composed of duplicate CJKUIs
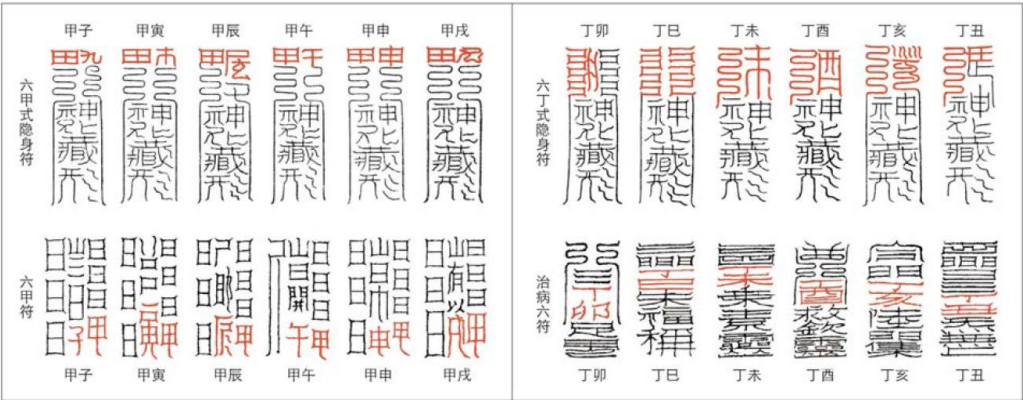
图 32. 六甲六丁神符举例

Fig.12 Secret characters composed of different CJKUIs

4.3 Variant

I'd like to use the Secret Name of Yu Huang, i.e. Yu Di（玉皇, also called 玉帝）as an example.

1）The UK-20704 （▦雨▯言▯门刁玉）in IRG WS2021：
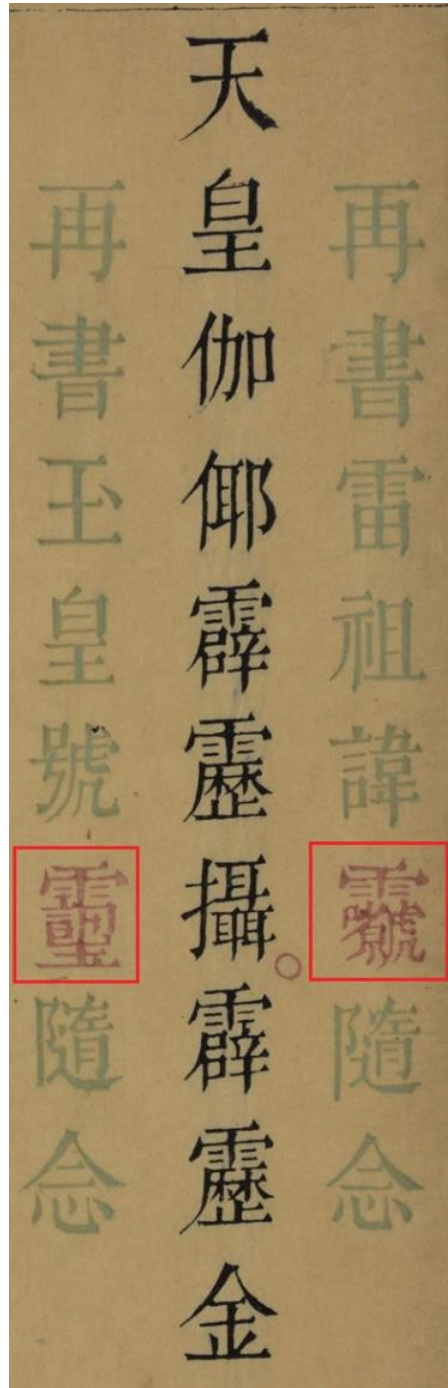
Fig.13 Evidence of UK-20704

2） In 《广成仪制·玉帝正朝集》，P101. Note that 《广成仪制》 is also used as UK source of evidence but this shape is not included in UK submission.
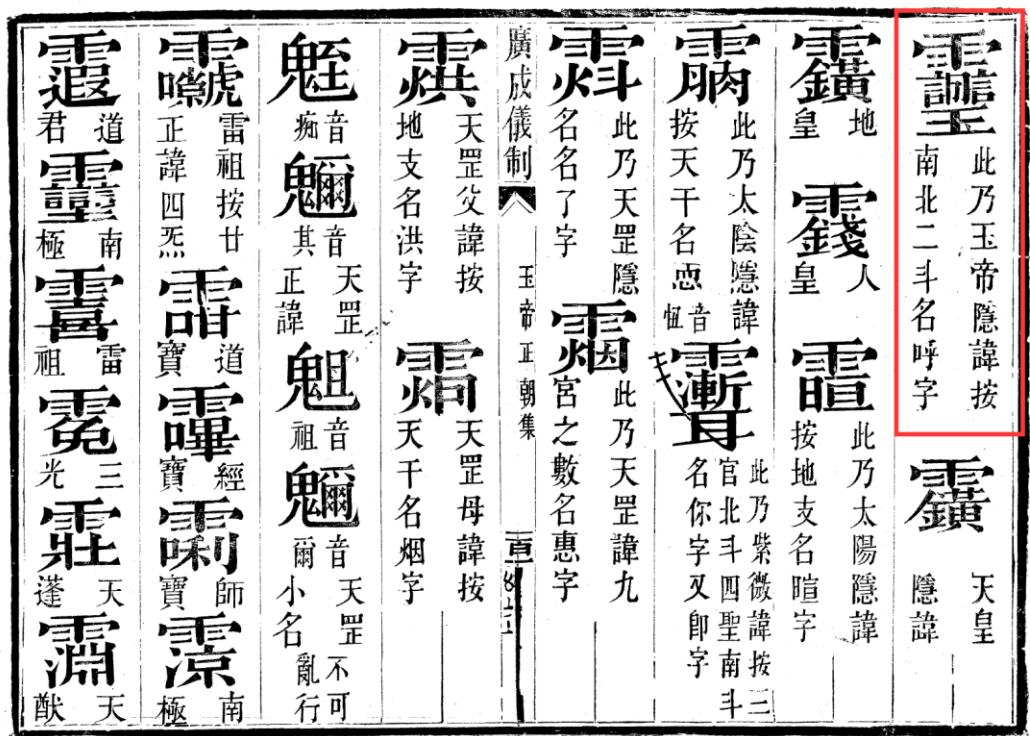
Fig.14 The Secret Name of Yu Huang in《广成仪制·玉帝正朝集》

3) A wooden token selling online

Fig.15 The Secret Name of Yu Huang in a wooden token selling online

4) The Secret Name of Yu Huang in a handwritten copy of Daoist Secret characters. Note that the missing stroke of the character is not meaningless.
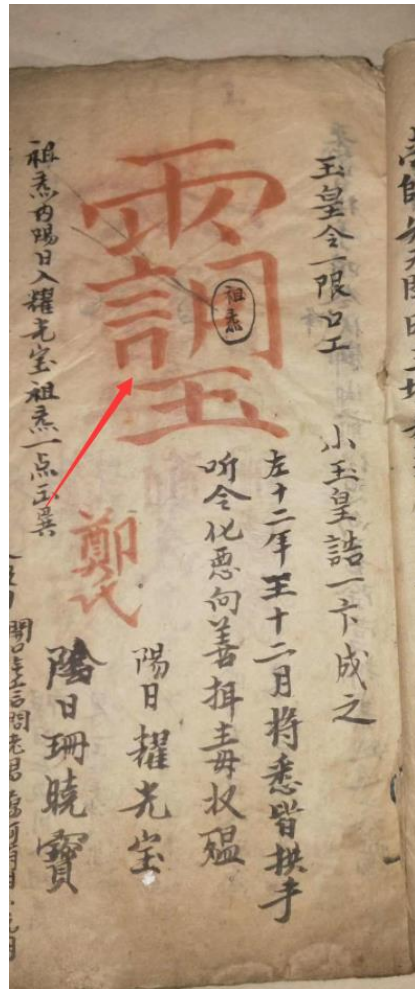
Fig.16 The Secret Name of Yu Huang in a handwritten copy of Daoist Secret characters

5) Another wooden token selling online

Fig.17 The Secret Name of Yu Huang in another wooden token selling online

What's more, FYI, UK-20697 , UK-20682 and UK-20766 have the similar structure.

Other Secret Names have the same problem as well. For example, The Secret Name of Tai Yin（太阴）：

Fig.18 The Secret Name of Tai Yin in《广成仪制·玉帝正朝集》

Fig.19 The Secret Name of Tai Yin in a handwritten copy of Daoist Secret characters

When the structure becomes more complicated, the number of its variant may become very large.

Fig.20 The Secret Names of 60 Jia Zi

Source: https://page.om.qq.com/page/O7RvbAGIJ5dCOD31hSIEXWCA0

4.4 Characters with non-CJKUI components

For example, UK-20710. The provided IDS of UK-20710 is "▢雨▢▢由儿▢三三", the fact

is , however, that ▢三三 is ☷（U+2637，坤卦）. I don't think it's proper to say this is a

normal CJKUI.

There are more this kind of characters collected in 《道教讳秘字专用造字集》：

Fig.20 The Taoist Secret Characters includes the Eight Diagrams

References:

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