



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Choreography of the She Ethnic Ritual Dance "Nainiang Cuigang" in Fu'an, Fujian Province

Huachun Xu<sup>1\*</sup>, Kritsada Wongkhamchan<sup>2</sup>, Pat Kotchapakdee<sup>3</sup><sup>1,2,3</sup> Faculty of Fine and Applied Arts, Khon Kaen University (KKU), 40002, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand**ARTICLE INFO**

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**\*Corresponding Author:**

huachun.x@kkumail.com

**ABSTRACT**

The She ethnic ritual dance "Nainiang Cuigang" is a folk art form with a profound cultural heritage in eastern Fujian. Its unique performance form and artistic characteristics make it stand out among many dances and become an important representative of She ethnic culture. The dance features the Han local goddess Chen Jinggu as the main character and, through a series of complex and symbolic dance movements, showcases the heroic image of a Nainiang driving away ghosts and demons, protecting the red, and protecting children. It also reflects the She people's yearning and pursuit for a better life. This study is based on semiotics and conducts a comprehensive analysis of the clothing, finger movements, and step movements of the nursemaid urging the spirit, aiming to reveal the deep relationships between clothing and identity symbols, finger language and the Taoist immortal system, and step movements and the Big Dipper. Let us better understand the cultural connotation of the nursemaid's urging for vitality.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

The ritual dance of the She ethnic group, Nainiang Cuigang, is a traditional dance in Fu'an City, Fujian Province, and one of the provincial-level intangible cultural heritages in Fujian Province. It is a type of witchcraft dance, a product of primitive society, which flourished in the late Han Dynasty. The Nainiang Cuigang lineage of the She ethnic group in Fu'an was introduced during the Kangxi period of the Qing Dynasty and has a history of more than 300 years, passed down through six to seven generations. The Wu dance in eastern Fujian is mainly performed by the She ethnic group and distributed in Fu'an. The dancer is a male witch who portrays several scenes of daily life and production activities to shape the image of Lady Chen Jinggu (also known as Nainiang, the folk legend of the mother and child protection god Chen Jinggu), a goddess who drives away demons and restrains evil spirits (Liu et al., 2014, 136-139).

The main feature of the "Nainiang Cuigang" dance is that men dress up as women. This not only portrays the gentle and kind nature of the Nainiang as a woman but also demonstrates her heroic qualities of exorcising demons and warding off ghosts. Therefore, the whole dance is gentle, and the combination of the character's personality and plot needs is well done. It gives people artistic beauty and incorporates the primitive dance forms and musical characteristics of the She ethnic group.

The She ethnic witch dance "Nainiang Cuigang" is a sacrificial dance performed by She ethnic shamans in eastern Fujian to exorcise and control demons. The accompaniment is mainly composed of three-tone gongs. It was discovered in 1985 in Nanshan She Village, Shekou Town, Fu'an City, and taught by She witch Zhong Fucheng.

As for when the Fu'an She ethnic group's nursemaid urged the introduction of the witchcraft dance, according to the "Lei Shi Wu Pu" by Master Lei Cang of Muyang Town, "The founder Fa Zhen Gong taught it in the 51st year of Kangxi's reign (1712) when he encountered Lushan Mountain... It lasted for over two hundred years after eight generations of transmission. Fourteen people, including

uncles, nephews, and nephews, learned this art and went out to parade. (Chinese Ethnic and Folk Dance Integrated Editorial Board Member, 1996)

The performance form of "Nainiang Cuigang" mainly consists of three chapters: Jingtian, Inviting the Gods, and Stepping on Gangs. Each chapter has unique performance content and form, forming a complete dance performance system.

The Pure Altar is the introductory part of the dance. It aims to remove impurities from the Pure God Altar, prepare for welcoming the gods, and practice the Gang Cloth Technique. At this stage, dancers use specific dance movements and rituals to create a sacred and pure state in the performance venue, creating a good atmosphere for subsequent dance performances.

Inviting the gods is an important part of dance, where dancers express their respect and pray for their descent through solemn rituals and dance movements. At this stage, dancers simulate various actions to invite gods, such as burning incense, kowtowing, reciting mantras, etc., to express their reverence and faith in the gods.

Xinggong is the central and most exciting and complex part of dance. The dance consists of "Gang Head," "Gang Tail," and eleven Gang Steps, each containing rich symbolic meanings and dance movements. At this stage, dancers showcase their divine power of exorcising ghosts, warding off demons, and protecting the Crimson Child by disguising themselves as Nainiang. The dance movements are vigorous and gentle, showcasing Nainiang's heroic qualities and feminine temperament through powerful and delicate performances (Taoist sutra, 1988).

## 2. Research objectives

This study analyzed the costumes, finger movements, and step movements of the She ethnic group's ritual dance, "Nainiang Cuigang," using semiotics. The specific content is as follows: 1. To study the identity symbolism and significance of the costumes of the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance; 2. To study the relationship between the finger movements of the Nainiang's ritual dance and Taoist immortals; 3. To study the relationship between the steps and movements of the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance and the Big Dipper, and reveal the cultural connotations contained in the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

Based on semiotics, this article comprehensively analyzes the costumes, finger movements, and step movements of the She ethnic ritual dance "Nainiang Cuigang," aiming to reveal the traditional Chinese cultural connotations contained in "Nainiang Cuigang." Semiotics, as a discipline that studies symbols and their usage patterns, widely permeates various fields of human culture, and dance art is no exception. In the non-verbal art form of dance, symbols become important media for conveying emotions, expressing ideas, and constructing artistic spaces. As an outstanding representative of She ethnic ritual dance, "Nainiang Cuigang" not only showcases the unique charm of She ethnic culture with its rich symbol system but also provides us with a window to explore the application of semiotics in dance art.

Semiotics holds that symbols consist of two parts: signifier and signified. The signifier is the material form of the symbol, such as sound, image, action, etc., while the signified is the concept or meaning represented by the symbol. In "The Milk Maiden Chases the Gangs," the dancers' movements, costumes, props, music, and other elements form a complex symbol system, each carrying specific cultural significance and emotional value. These symbols achieve a transition from signifier to signified through the performance of dancers and the interpretation of the audience, thereby conveying the profound meaning contained in the dance.

Semiotics also emphasizes the resemblance, indication, and symbolism of symbols. In the ceremony of "Nainiang Cuigang," clothing, finger movements, and step movements are all symbols. Clothing represents identity symbols, finger movements represent the identity of gods, and the movement route of steps represents the Big Dipper, which governs all human activities. Some step movements represent Chen Jinggu's daily life, while others represent exorcism and the killing of ghosts. Iconicity is reflected in dancers shaping the image of a Nainiang by simulating the movements of daily life and production activities. Indications are reflected in certain movements or props in dance that point to specific cultural or religious content. Symbolism is one of the most prominent features of the dance

symbol system, which uses metaphors, symbolism, and other techniques to concretize and artistically express the She ethnic group's reverence and worship for nature, ancestors, and gods, as well as their yearning and pursuit for a better life and other abstract concepts.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Costumes of the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance

The costume for the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance consists of four parts: a red headscarf, a headband, a blue top, and a red divine skirt.

The headscarf is 65 centimeters long and made of high-quality silk. Eight trigrams and colorful auspicious clouds are painted on the headscarf, representing the gods stepping on the clouds to come and rescue and protect themselves. At the same time, the Bagua diagram has the function of warding off evil spirits and can block all evil spirits. When wearing the headdress, one must recite the spell and wear it repeatedly to protect the head and prevent evil spirits from attacking the mage's head.

The spell says:

This cloud is not extraordinary; it has transformed into a half-day five-colored cloud. Green clouds rise from Dongyue Mountain, and red clouds rise from the top of Nanyue Mountain. White clouds rise from the top of Mount Xiyue, while black clouds rise from the top of Mount Beiyue. Yellow clouds rise from the top of Zhongyue Mountain. The five-colored auspicious clouds often cover the disciples' bodies in Lushan. I am honored by the imperial decree of the Grand Master, and I am as urgent as a law.

In this spell, there is also the ancient Chinese thought of the Book of Changes, such as the fact that the East belongs to wood in the Five Elements, and the corresponding five colors are blue. Therefore, the East Peak rises with blue clouds. The southern region belongs to fire; the corresponding color is red, forming red clouds. The West belongs to gold, and the corresponding five colors are white, so Mount Xiyue has white clouds. It belongs to water in the north, and the corresponding five colors are black, so the North Peak rises with black clouds. The middle belongs to the earth, and the corresponding five colors are yellow, so the central mountain has yellow clouds. The function of the five colored auspicious clouds is to protect the disciples of Lushan and have the ability to become invisible. Demons and monsters can only hear their voice but not see their form, playing a protective role.

The red headscarf (Figure 1) worn by the dancers is an indispensable decorative element in the "Nainiang Cuigang" ritual dance. This is a simple outfit pairing and a symbol of the dancer's identity. Red is regarded as a symbol of auspiciousness, celebration, and courage. Dancers wearing red headscarves signify they have been given a special mission and power, becoming red-headed mages who can communicate with gods and ward off evil. The bright colors of the red headscarf are particularly eye-catching in dance, burning the dancers' fighting spirit and faith like flames, leading them to complete their sacred mission.



**Figure 1: Headscarf**

Source: Photographed by Huachun Xu, 2024

The head crown (Figure 2) is one of the distinctive headpieces in the dance "Nainiang Cuigang." The head crown is carved with a fierce blue dragon face and a white tiger head image. The left side is painted with a sun-shaped pattern, the right side is painted with a moon-shaped pattern, and the

middle is written with the taboo characters of Lushan Taoism, symbolizing the Three Qing Ancestors. This design not only reflects the worship and reverence of the She ethnic group for the power of nature but also contains profound symbolic significance.

The Green Dragon and White Tiger, respectively, represent the Eastern and Western mythical beasts, embodying bravery and strength, and are the guardian deities in the hearts of the She ethnic group. Carving it on the crown of the head is a recognition and encouragement of the dancer's courage, trust, and reliance on their ability to ward off evil spirits. The sun and moon patterns represent light and darkness, masculinity and femininity. They are interdependent and mutually restrictive, forming harmony and balance in the universe. The taboo characters of Lushan Taoism add a touch of mystery and solemnity, making the headband a powerful magical tool.

While wearing the crown, the wizard must recite a spell and say: This crown is not extraordinary; it has transformed into three towers and five mountains. Willow trees draw on both sides, while green dragons and white tigers rest on either side. This crown is worn on the head of the master, like the emperor of five dynasties.

From this, it can be seen that this headband is not ordinary but symbolizes the Three Mountains and Five Sacred Mountains. Even if ghosts and monsters use willow trees to whip them, they will automatically flash to both sides, and two divine beasts, Green Dragon and White Tiger, are arranged on both sides as protectors, just like tickling, unable to hurt a single hair of the master. The master wears this crown, as noble and majestic as the emperor of the Five Dynasties.



**Figure 2: Head crown**

Source: Photographed by Huachun Xu, 2024

The blue shirt is another important costume element worn by the master in the TV series *Nainiang Cuigang* (Figure 3). It is made using the traditional tie-dyeing technique of the She ethnic group. The material is handmade linen with bright and varied colors. Blue has a special status and significance in the She ethnic culture. It is not only one of the favorite colors of the She people but also a symbol of their traditional blue farming industry.

The She ethnic group has been skilled in planting bluegrass and using it to produce dyes for textile and printing since ancient times. The patterns and textures on the blue shirt are carefully crafted through tie-dyeing techniques, which not only showcase the superb skills and creativity of the She ethnic group but also convey their love and reverence for nature. The She ethnic group's indigo dyeing technique is China's most famous traditional handmade tie-dyeing technique. The fabrics they produce have top-notch color and texture in the country. Even after wearing them for decades, they still look like brand-new clothes, incomparable to modern machines.



Figure 3: Blue top

Source: Photographed by Huachun Xu, 2024

The red divine dress (Figure 4) is the lower garment worn by Master Gong in the TV series *Nainiang Cuigang*. It is made of lightweight and breathable materials and has bright and glossy colors. In the She ethnic culture, the red divine dress symbolizes divinity and purity, representing the dancers' reverence and devotion to the gods.

When dancers dance in red divine dresses, their graceful steps and flowing skirts are as beautiful and captivating as fairies descending to earth. The bright colors of the red divine dress complement other clothing elements on the dancer's body, creating a vivid and mysterious scene. It adds visual effects and infectiousness to the dance and allows the audience to feel the unique charm and profound heritage of She ethnic culture while enjoying the dance.

At the same time as wearing the divine skirt, one must also recite the spell again: This skirt is not extraordinary; it transforms into the wheels of a train. Go step by step on the green grass when you go, and step by step on the green clouds when you return. When I went, I copied to Nanjia Temple, and when I returned, I blocked the lower gate. The front ring of the master's body has three turns, and there is no trace of a thousand evil spirits. Open the gates of heaven, close the gates of earth, keep the gates of people, and block the path of ghosts.

From the above spells, we can see Lu Shan's magic dominance. Surrounding this divine skirt is like riding on the wind and fire wheel of Nezha's third prince, rushing back and forth. When I go, my gait is as light as flying over the grass, and when I come back, it is like stepping on colorful auspicious clouds. When I went out, I raided the temple of the evil god of the Nan family. When I returned, I broke the door through which the ghosts and monsters escaped. To wear this divine dress, you must wrap it three times before you to avoid being tracked by ghosts and monsters. Combined with the finger-pinching technique, open the Heavenly Gate, close the underworld, leaving a passage for people to walk, and block the path of ghosts and monsters.



神裙 存變  
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 去時抄倒南家廟 回來塞斷下道門  
 先師身前三匝 千邪百鬼斷無蹤  
 開天門 閉地戶 留人門 塞鬼路



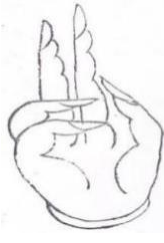


Figure 4: Divine skirt

Source: Photographed by Huachun Xu, 2024

### 4.2 The finger movements of the Nai niang Cuigang ritual dance






The finger movements of the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance are very rich, originally consisting of more than 180 types, but currently only more than 70 are commonly used, which can be divided into one handed image and two handed image. Among them, the hands are also divided into two types: grip type and wrap type.

**Table 1: One handed image**

Number	Name symbol	One handed movement form	Action method
1	Emperor Xuan		Wrap the tail finger around the ring finger, wrap the ring finger around the middle finger, and press the big finger on the middle finger while the index finger stands up.
2	Ancestor		Stand up with the little finger and ring finger, and pinch the thumb, index finger, and middle finger together.
3	My Master		The index and middle fingers stand upright, while the other fingers are bent and not connected.
4	Immortal Master		Raise the tail finger and index finger, pinch the thumb with the middle finger and ring finger.
5	Master Lian Gong		The index and tail fingers of the right hand stand upright, with the thumb bent and stacked on top of the ring and middle fingers.

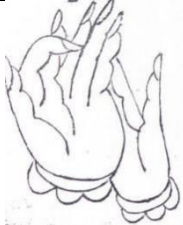
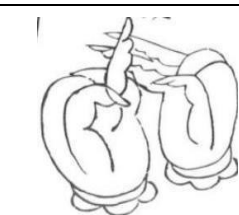
Source: Made by Huachun Xu, 2024





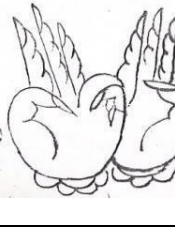
**Table 2: Hand clasped image**

Number	Name symbol	Hand clasped motion	Action method
1	Guanyin		Simultaneously lift both palms upwards, use the ring finger and left ring finger to wrap and flip back and forth, hook the right little finger onto the left index finger, and stretch the left and right big fingers
2	Zhenwu		Spread your left and right fingers open, palms overlapping, and place your right hand above your left hand.
3	Mrs. Chen		The four fingers of the left hand intersect at the left tail joint, leaving three fingers in the upper middle of the tail finger.
4	Prince Nezha		The middle finger of the right hand stands upright, while the other four fingers naturally curve and clump together. Bend your left finger naturally and place it under your right hand.
5	Zhang Zhao, the second genera		Four fingers intersect with each other, and two fingers pass underneath.

Source: Made by Huachun Xu, 2024

**Table 3: Hand wrapping image**

Number	Name symbol	Hand Wrapping motion	Action method
1	Liu Lu Gong Cao		The palm of the left hand is the back of the right hand, and the right ring finger and the left ring finger are twisted and flipped to form a loop. The right middle finger and ring finger are wrapped around the left ring finger, and the left big finger and little finger are stretched apart.
2	Seven Immortal Ancestors		Extend three fingers of the right hand, pinch the two fingers together, and hold the left hand in a clasped state with one finger intersecting with the right hand.

3	Buddha		Four fingers intersect, two fingers bend, and the tail fingers separate.
4	Grandmother		The palm of the left hand is the back of the right hand, and the right ring finger and the left ring finger are twisted and flipped to form a loop. The right middle finger and ring finger are wrapped around the left ring finger, and the left big finger and little finger are pinched together.
5	Swallowing the Sky King		The palm of the left hand, the back of the right hand, the middle and ring fingers of the left hand pass through the tiger's mouth of the right hand, and the index and tail fingers of the left hand are inserted into the big and tail fingers of the right hand.
6	Flying Sand King		Form the Five Dragon Technique with both hands, cross the tail fingers and then reverse, and cross the index fingers with both hands.
7	Six Ding Six Jia		The tail fingers of both hands intersect, the big finger is bent, and the other three fingers stand up, forming a six finger shape.

Source: Made by Huachun Xu, 2024

### 4.3 The steps movements of the Nai niang Cuigang ritual dance

The poem "Nainiang Cuigang" features a male wizard playing the role of Chen Nainiang, and the ritual is divided into three chapters: 1) The Pure Altar; 2) Please God; 3) Jump the Yu Step. The "Pure Altar" and "Inviting God" belong to the introductory part of the *dojo*, which means to remove impurities from the Pure Altar to avoid profiting from the gods. *Xinggang* "is the main stage of dance, consisting of eleven gang steps (movements), namely: eight steps, chains, losing the sea, nourishing the body, combing hair, knotting, washing face, looking in the mirror, rice, sifting rice, and fishing. According to Zhong Fucheng, a shaman of the Xin ethnic group in Shekou Township, Fu'an (born in 1918), combing hair, buttoning hair, washing the face, and looking in the mirror are used to depict the dressing and grooming of a Nainiang before her expedition. The Eight Steps is a Taoist technique that divides heaven and earth into four directions: Tianmen, Difu, Renmen, and Guilu. The Nainiang uses the Eight Steps to drive away demons and prevent them from causing trouble in the human world. Chain is the means of locking demons and refining ghosts. Losing the sea means transcending the dead soul, nourishing the body, and referring to the service and recuperation after giving birth to children. Rice husking, rice screening, and fishing are prayers and blessings for a person's longevity, prosperity, and shared peace.



This dance has three distinct characteristics in its movements.

1. The movements are mainly gentle, with a balance of softness and rigidity, reflecting Chen Shiseniang's gentle and delicate nature as a woman while also embodying her martial spirit of exorcising demons and warding off evil spirits.
2. The movements have a strong sense of daily life, such as fishing with a curved rod, dressing up with a mirror, sifting rice, and swinging chains, with realistic images.
3. They fully utilize the role of props, such as the horn sounding long at times, the bell and knife hitting the ground at times, guarding against demons and frightening ghosts, and using one knife at a time with ease (Chinese Ethnic and Folk Dance Integrated Editorial Board Member, 1996).

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 The identity symbol of clothing

The costumes in the dance "Nainiang Cuigang" are not only a symbol of the identity of the Red-Headed Master but also an organic whole. They are interdependent and complement each other, forming the dance's unique charm. The red headscarf symbolizes the identity and courage of the dancer; The tiger-headed divine beast's crown represents the power of exorcism and demon control, as well as the harmony and balance between the universe; The blue shirt showcases the traditional skills and natural beauty of the She ethnic group; The red divine dress conveys the dancer's reverence and piety towards the gods. Together, these elements constitute the profound cultural connotation and rich artistic expression of the dance "Nainiang Cuigang."

### 5.2 Finger movements and symbols of Taoist immortals

The ritual dance "Nainiang Cuigang" embodies a deep connection to Taoist practices and beliefs through its intricate finger movements, which not only exorcise demons and combat ghosts but also symbolize reverence for Taoist immortals and deities. Each gesture, such as the Xuandi Jue, Zushi Jue, and Xianshi Jue, reflects specific Taoist principles and spiritual aspirations. For instance, the Xuandi Jue represents the bravery and wisdom of Emperor Zhenwu, encouraging Taoists to uphold justice and confront evil with clarity and determination. Similarly, the Zushi Jue and Xianshi Jue pay homage to the ancestral masters and enlightened immortals, emphasizing the importance of remembering roots, respecting mentors, and aspiring toward transcendence. These symbolic movements highlight the Taoist emphasis on lineage, spiritual inheritance, and pursuing higher wisdom and virtue.

Further, the various manuals referenced in the dance, such as the Guanyin Manual, Zhenwu Manual, and Six Ding Six Jia Manual, signify a profound integration of Taoist cosmology with ritual practice. The Guanyin Manual, for example, embodies compassion and redemption, reminding practitioners to wield their powers with empathy and mindfulness for the benefit of others. In contrast, the Zhenwu and Six Ding Six Jia manuals evoke themes of strength, justice, and divine protection, drawing upon the imagery of celestial generals and deities to inspire courage and resilience in the face of adversity. Together, these gestures and their underlying meanings underscore the holistic nature of Taoist cultivation, which intertwines moral discipline, spiritual growth, and alignment with cosmic forces, reinforcing the role of Taoists as protectors of balance and harmony in the world.

### 5.3 The symbolic significance of step movements of the Nainiang Cuigang ritual dance

The ritual dance "Nainiang Cuigang" of the She ethnic group is a profound embodiment of their cultural beliefs, wisdom, and traditions. Each dance movement carries symbolic meaning, reflecting a connection to nature, spirituality, and the practical wisdom of daily life. For instance, the Eight Step Gang, characterized by steady movements in eight directions, symbolizes harmony and universal balance, with each step serving as a tribute to the gods. Similarly, the *Chain Gang*, with heavy and deliberate steps, represents the act of binding and suppressing evil forces, symbolizing unwavering inner strength and resilience. Other movements, such as the Death Gang, evoke the crossing of realms, emphasizing supernatural insight and the ability to protect the community from hidden threats. These steps illustrate the She people's deep spiritual connection and reverence for harmony, strength, and insight as guiding principles.

In addition to its spiritual dimensions, the dance incorporates gestures that resonate with the values and daily lives of the She people. The Rice Milling Gang and Sieve Rice Gang represent diligence and

precision, celebrating the perseverance and careful planning integral to their agrarian lifestyle. Movements like the Taking Care of Pregnant Women Gang and Combing Hair Gang emphasize nurturing and self-improvement, symbolizing the harmonious balance between physical well-being and inner growth. Meanwhile, steps such as the Fishing Gang highlight patience, adaptability, and wisdom, essential for navigating life's challenges. The dance serves as a sacred ritual and reflects the She ethnic group's profound respect for natural harmony, community resilience, and the pursuit of inner and outer refinement.

The vigorous movements in the poem 'Nainiang Cuigang' not only showcase the unique charm of She ethnic dance but also profoundly reflect the She people's understanding and reverence for nature, gods, life, and themselves. Through the symbolic meanings of these action symbols, we can gain a deeper understanding of the She ethnic culture and its underlying belief system.

## 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Clothing and identity symbols

The costumes and symbols of the dance "Nainiang Cuigang" vividly represent the She ethnic group's religious beliefs, historical heritage, and artistic aesthetics, encapsulating their cultural identity and spiritual values. Rooted in Taoism, Buddhism, and nature worship traditions, elements such as red headscarves and tiger-headed crowns symbolize devotion and divine protection, transforming dancers into mediators of spiritual blessings. These costumes also preserve and showcase the She ethnic group's unique craftsmanship, such as tie-dyeing techniques and symbolic blue and red garments, reflecting their industriousness, wisdom, and resilience. Furthermore, vibrant colors, intricate patterns, and culturally significant materials embody the She people's aesthetic sensibilities, offering audiences a profound visual and emotional experience. As integral carriers of She is cultural heritage, these elements enrich the expressive power of the dance and inspire respect and appreciation for the She ethnic group's traditions, underscoring the importance of preserving and promoting their cultural legacy for future generations.

### 6.2 Finger movements and the Taoist immortal system

The finger movements in the dance "Nainiang Cuigang" embody profound symbolic meanings and serve as artistic representations of Taoist rituals and beliefs, reflecting the She ethnic group's deep connection to Taoist culture. These gestures imitate the techniques of Taoist immortals, symbolizing their guidance, protection, and supernatural abilities while also expressing the principles of "Dao follows nature" and "harmony between heaven and man." Through intricate and purposeful movements, dancers not only enhance the expressive power of the performance but also convey the spiritual essence of Taoist culture. These symbolic finger gestures, harmonized with the dancer's body, illustrate the She ethnic group's reverence for Taoist traditions and their unique interpretation of its philosophical and religious significance, making the dance an invaluable element of their cultural heritage.

### 6.3 The walking path and the big dipper

The relationship between Yu Bu and the Big Dipper in the She ethnic ritual dance "Nainiang Cuigang" exemplifies a profound interplay of footwork, symbolism, and cultural heritage rooted in Taoist and She traditions. The dance's intricate steps, such as the Bu Gang Stepping Battle, mirror the celestial patterns of the Big Dipper, embodying the Taoist principle of the "unity of heaven and man." This connection signifies the She ethnic group's reverence for nature and belief in celestial phenomena's spiritual power to ward off evil and ensure harmony. Moreover, the Big Dipper's role as a symbol of protection and divine energy is seamlessly integrated into the dance, highlighting the interplay between ritual practice and cultural identity. By imitating the movements of the constellation, the dance reflects not only the She people's spiritual devotion but also the enduring influence of Taoist cosmology in their cultural expressions. This relationship enriches the ritual dance's significance as a vibrant representation of She is ethnic heritage and Taoist philosophy.

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