Classical Perspectives on Treatment of Luo (Connecting) Vessels

By Kia Sinay LAc

Introduction

Luo Mai, or connecting, vessels, are known for their influence on the suppression of pathogens. These vessels become active as holding vessels for external and internal pathogenic factors in the body when the body's resources are insufficient and incapable of eradicating pathogens. If wei qi or ying qi are insufficient to eradicate pathogens, the pathogen is diverted to and held in a state of latency in the luo vessels.

The luo vessels only become active under unresolved pathogenic influences. There are two known states of the luo vessels: fullness of the luo or emptiness of the luo. Fullness of the luo presents as broken blood vessels or varicosities along the luo trajectory. According to the Huang Di Nei Jing—otherwise known as the Yellow Emperor's Classic On Internal Medicine—these broken blood vessels may indicate cold (blue vessels) or heat (red vessels) in the vessels. Emptiness of the luo occurs after the ying or blood is exhausted from fighting pathogens, resulting in the use of other dense fluids (hormonal fluids, dampness or phlegm) to hold pathogens in latency, resulting in the formation of nodules, lipomas, or cysts.

Luo Vessels in Expression, Suppression or Repression of Emotions

Mood: Expression is a function of the wei energy to bring the pathogenic factor from the ying or blood level up to the wei level in an attempt to eradicate the pathogen. This level of expression is more of a mood than a targeted emotion. A mood is a feeling with no causative factor. Mood is represented by the relationship of the Lung and Liver to wei energy. To therapeutically express the mood, use the Lung and Liver luo points, LU-7 (Lie Que, Broken Sequence) and LIV-5 (Lie gou, Woodworm Canal).

Emotion: Suppression is a function of ying energy, which acts as a fluid medium holding the pathogenic factor in a relative state of latency. The Spleen and Pericardium are responsible for manifesting this latency. Use the luo of the Spleen and Pericardium channels, SP-4 and P-6, to bring emotions out of suppression.

Psychological Armoring: Repression is a function of yuan energy—it is a denser medium, and holds the pathogenic factor at the deepest level of the body. The development of psychological armoring occurs at this level. Repression is represented by the yuan energy of the Kidney and San Jiao. To bring emotions out of a repressed state, use the luo points of the Kidney and San Jiao channels, KID-4 and SJ-5.

Treatment: Differentiate the level or depth of involvement based on three states: mood, emotion, or psychological armoring. Additionally, determine the five-element relationship to the mood, emotion or armoring, and treat the yang luo vessel point associated with the mood, emotion or armored state's element. For example, if the mood is fear, associated with the element of water, choose the yang of water, Bladder luo point BL-58.

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Table of Luo Vessels Symptoms:
Luo Vessels, Symptoms of Fullness, Symptoms of Emptiness

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Lung</th>
<th>Spleen</th>
<th>Bladder</th>
<th>San Jiao</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Gesturing with hands, hot palms</td>
<td>• Habitation, constant repetitive pattern—obsessive behaviors</td>
<td>• Panic attacks</td>
<td>• Notion of double personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Constant need for stimulation, need to touch everything</td>
<td>• Habitation to point of addictive behaviors</td>
<td>• Hyper-stimulated adrenals</td>
<td>• Stubborn</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Hyperactive need for contact</td>
<td>• Rigidity, stubborness, closed to other possibilities</td>
<td>• Easily overwhelmed by too much information</td>
<td>• Indifference about life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Highly spirited</td>
<td>• Lack of assertiveness, doubt, unsure of self, inability to be satiated</td>
<td>• Inability to determine satiation</td>
<td>• Inappropriate behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Constant need to be doing things</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fetishes</td>
<td>• Gall Bladder</td>
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<tr>
<td>• No interest in making contact</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Incessant needs</td>
<td>• Incessantly lamenting aspects of life</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of interest in engaging in life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Inability to see new possibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of motivation to make contact, or stimulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Pseudo-suicidal tendencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Anhedonia, yawning, lack of interest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Overburdened by regrets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Large Intestine</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Analysis of legs, buckled knees</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Tightness in jaw, neck and shoulders</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of urge to live life, suicidal tendencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Inability to digest or to sense the world</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can't stand up to the world</td>
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<td>• Inability to separate from the situation, or to handle and process the situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Madness, dementia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sense that there is more to be done in life causing anxiousness about mortality</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Inability to control emotions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sense that there is constantly more to be done, but never achieve completion</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Insomnia, irritability, insanity</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Lack of motivation or interest; lack of connection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Paralysis in lower limbs</td>
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Treatment of Luo continued from page 27

Treatment Application of the Luo Vessels:
First, select the Luo vessels of the yang elemental and emotional association to help facilitate the release through the yang vessel.

Emotion/Mood - Elemental Association - Yang Luo Vessel Point
Anger - Wood - GB-37 Bright Light, (Guang Ming)
Anxiety - Fire - SI-7 Branch to the Correct, (Zhi Zheng)
Worry - Earth - ST-40 Bountiful Bulge, (Feng Long)
Grief - Metal - LI-6 Veering Passage, (Pian Li)
Fear - Water - BL-58 Taking Flight, (Fei Yang)

Second, determine the emotional component and the level of involvement, i.e. expression, repression, or suppression. Add these points to facilitate the release of the underlying pattern.

- Expression (wei level): Related to a mood or feeling. To encourage release of the expressed mood or emotion use the Luo point of the Lung and Liver, LU-7 (lie que, Broken Sequence) and LIV-5 (li gou, Woodworm Canal).
- Suppression (ying level): Related to the emotional disposition influenced by one's temperament. To encourage expression of suppressed emotions use the Luo point of the Spleen and Pericardium, SP-4 (gong sun, Yellow Emperor) and P-6 (nei guan, Inner Pass).
- Repression (yuan level): Related to one's temperament and psychological armoring. To encourage release of repressed emotions, use the Luo point of the Kidney and San Jiao channels, KID-4 (da zhong, Large Goblet) and SJ-5 (wai guan, Outer Pass).

Check the pulses to ensure there is enough wei, ying or yuan at the respective organ systems to provide for a full release. If insubstantial, bring more yang energy to the Luo vessel point by scraping (gua sha) the Luo point itself with flint, prior to lancing or plum blossoming. To further encourage a complete release and harmonize the blood, follow the bleeding with moxa over the Luo point, or needling one point proximal to the he-sea point.

Treatment of Fullness of Luo Vessels
Open the treatment with the respective Luo vessels point. The classical needling technique for Luo vessels is bloodletting. Using a
lancet or plum blossom at the luo point. If broken capillaries or blood vessels are found directly over the point or along the trajectory, prick these varicosities to bleed. If the area lanced or plum blossomed does not respond with a blood release, bring wei and ying to the surface by scraping (gua sha) the area, then use bloodletting techniques (plum blossom or lancet). Second, examine the luo trajectory for broken blood vessels, and prick to bleed. Classically, luo vessel treatments are used every other day.

**Treatment of Emptiness of the Luo Vessels**

Open the treatment with the respective luo point with lancet or plum blossom. Look for any phlegm or fluid accumulations (nodules, lipomas, or fatty cysts) along the trajectory. To break up the phlegm or fluid accumulations, scrape (gua sha) the location, and use a five-star needle technique to surround the accumulation from each of four directions, and at the center of accumulation. Check the pulses following the bloodletting, if the pulse is blood deficient (represented by a weak/xu, thin/xi, or short/duan pulse at the moderate level), the treatment needs to be harmonized. Harmonize with moxabustion over the luo source or shu points. Using moxa following the bloodletting provides warmth and yang to encourage the release to the exterior.

**Luo Vessel Needle Techniques**

Classically luo vessel points are bled with a lancet, one of the nine classic needles. Consideration of the seasonal correspondence may influence the response to luo vessels treatment. The winter—when the energetic intention of the body is to store—may not be an appropriate time to bleed acupuncture points. Disregarding the seasonal correspondence in this manner will risk disrupting the individual’s seasonal balance.

**Luo Vessels Treatment Principles**

Treatment frequency: According to the classics, treatment of luo vessels is every other day.

Harmonize following bloodletting on luo vessels based on pulse examination. If the pulse is found to be deficient at the ying level, use one point proximal to the he-sea point to harmonize the blood. An alternative technique may be to use moxa over the luo vessel point itself in addition to use of the point proximal to the he-sea point on the respective channel. For example, following a luo vessels treatment of the large intestine, take the pulse at the sun position on the right hand at the moderate level to determine the quality and quantity of blood/ying at this level. If the pulse is found to be weak or deficient in this position, then it is recommended to moxa the luo point, LI-6 (pian li, Veering Passage) and tonify one point proximal to the he-sea point, LI-12 (zhou liao, Elbow Bone-Hole). It may also be beneficial to use SP-10 (xue hai, Sea of Blood) to assist in the production of blood. If blood stagnation is present, use SP-11 (ji men, Winnower Gate) to assist in invigoration of the movement of the blood.

To invigorate the blood with the heart’s pumping action, use the Heart or Pericardium source points, HE-7 (shen men, Spirit Gate) or P-7 (da ling, Great Mound). When needling, it is important to use a technique such as Burning Mountain Fire to activate all three levels of the body: wei (superficial level), ying (moderate level), and yuan (deep level).

It is important to note that classically the luo points are needled contra-laterally respective to the position of the right or left pulses. The Lung, Large Intestine, Spleen, Stomach, Kidney and Bladder luo points are needled on the left side (correlating to pulses found on the right), and the Heart, Small Intestine, Liver, Gall Bladder, Pericardium and San jiao luo points are needled on the right side (correlating to pulses found on the left).

The Ling Shu (Spiritual Axis) states the Great Luo controls all the luo. SP-21 (da bao, Great Embracement) is responsible for the production and management of blood, and ensures that the luo vessels are moving the blood. The Great Luo of the Spleen produces the red substance and ascends to the Heart where the red substance is transformed into blood. From the Heart, the blood descends to the Liver for storage, and the Spleen banks the blood. This is represented by the trajectory of SP-21 to HE-1 (ji quan, Highest Spring) to LIV-13 (zhang men, Camphorwood Gate), known as the axis responsible for the production of blood.

If the condition involves an underlying blood deficiency with respect to the luo vessels, you must nourish and move blood. Below are methods to nourish and move blood.

- **Axis of Blood:** Needle SP-21 (da bao, Great Embracement) angled toward HE-1 (ji quan, Highest Spring). Needle HE-1 to LIV-13 (zhang men, Camphorwood Gate) to bank blood.
- **Tonify either or both the Ren and Du luo points, REN-15 (jui wei, Turtledove Tail) and DU-1 (chang qiang, Long Strong).
- **Tonify one point proximal to the he-sea point on the affected channel.**

**Conclusion**

The luo vessels can be used to treat many conditions, and should not be limited to psycho-emotional uses. Blood is an essential commodity and resource for the body. The pathogens of luo vessels afflict the ying or yuan levels to facilitate holding pathogens in a state of latency. Maintaining latency erodes a deeper foundation of longevity and health by utilizing the body’s resources. Should the patient and clinician determine that a release is not appropriate, it is paramount to continue nourishing the blood through techniques outlined above to keep the body’s resources available as holding vessels. However, if the patient and clinician determine to release the pathogen from the luo vessels, careful consideration must be made to follow the classical treatment guidelines for luo vessels, working closely with the patient every other day for a cycle of three treatments every other day; and maintaining a close dialogue with the patient to assure their treatment progress. Additionally, therapy may be useful concurrent to the luo treatment as another means of support for the patient.

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**References**


George S. “Luo Jing (Connecting Vessels) & Their Clinical Application,” Lecture/Class, New York; New York; April 16-17, 2005.


