(((((The Luo Vessels))))

Paula Chin’s class notes
Fall 2003

Transcribed by
Nicholas V. Isabella III
These notes were taken during a series of lectures in a class on the Luo Vessels taught by Paula Chin at the Swedish Institute, September through December 2003.

© 2004, Nicholas V. Isabella III
I) Etymology

- Luo Vessels (a.k.a. Linking/Passage Vessels/Collaterals/Channels) are a network of channels interconnected like a net or a web
- The image of the Luo character alludes to the concept of a fishing net
  - Like a net, the Luo Vessels catch pathogens

II) What the Classics Say

1) The Luo Vessels are unable to float through the “Great Joints” Unlike the Divergent Meridians, which penetrate deeply into the body – the head and torso

2) In the Nan Jing, Ch 10 of the Ling Shu, the Luo Channels are described:
   - It says they are channels that float (i.e., are at the surface of the body) and can frequently be seen (unlike the Primary Meridians)
     - If they can be seen, it means they’re full
     - In this case, there’ll be discoloration and/or broken blood vessels
     - The most visible Luo Channels are at the Yang Meridians of the arms

3) Each of the 16 Longitudinal Luo Vessels have their own Full/Empty pathologies

4) In evaluating the Luo Vessels:
   - If they’re Dark = Cold and pain
   - If they’re Red = Heat and fever

5) If there’s Stagnation in the Luo Vessels, there’s fever
   - If they’re Empty, they’re not visible
   - If they’re deficient in Qi, they’re small and short
   - If they’re Full, they’re visible
     - When Full, the Luo Vessels are trying to get rid of a pathogen
       - To help this process, a Plum Blossom needle can be used
6) Evaluating Lu-10, which reflects the condition of the Stomach:
   – If Blue = Stomach-Cold (usually due to chronic Bi-obstruction)
   – If Red = Stomach-Heat
   – If darkening or blackening = chronic Bi-obstruction in Stomach

7) Alcohol goes directly to the Ying level and excites/heats the Ying-Qi up (causing a red complexion)
   – The Wei-Qi, in this case, goes to the Ying level in order to support it
   – Because of this, an EPF can invade the Wei-Qi level of the body and be quickly moved to the Ying-Qi level
   – This causes the Luo Vessels to become full and heated
   – Ying-Qi gets depleted, causing Fluid Deficiency

8) For treatment, blood-let once every-other day
   – After bleeding, harmonize Luo point by tonification or dispersal

9) Ch 22 of the Ling Shu says:
   – You can use the Luo for rebellious Qi
   – Rebellious Qi leads to Heat diseases

10) Ch 39 of the Ling Shu says:
    – The Luo Vessels influence the production of Blood and Fluids
    – The Great Luo of the Spleen is the origin of Blood
    – The Great Luo of the Stomach is the origin of Fluids

11) In the Nei Jing, Ch 50, 57 and 63 of the Su Wen say:
    – The location and relation of the Luo Vessels to the Primary Meridians is that they’re extensions of the Primary Meridians
    – The goal of the Luo Vessels is to “float up to the surface,” i.e., their energy tends toward the surface
    – EPF movement: jing-wells → Luo Vessels → Primary Meridians → organs

12) Ch 24 of the Su Wen says you can blood-let the Luo for emotional/mental problems, as well as stress
    – Ch 62 says to blood-let them for spirit (Shen) Excess

13) Ch 39 of the Su Wen says Cold penetrates and constricts the Luo Vessels, causing pain
    – If Cold penetrates to the Stomach and Intestines, the same happens
    – If there’s stagnation and the Qi cannot move to the paired channel, nodules/lumps will appear

14) Ch 56 of the Su Wen says the Luo Vessels provide a holding space for EPFs

15) The Nan Jing, in Ch 23 and 26 identify 15 Luo Vessels (in comparison to the 16 in the Nei Jing)
    – It also says that the Great Luo of the Spleen (Sp-21; classically GB-22) is a link between the Internal and External, Yin and Yang, Above and Below

(((Side Note)))

- The Luo points are the earliest acupuncture points
  – They were typically bled
- Tibetan Medicine has medical diagrams of what looks like the Luo Vessels
  – Their treatments use a lot of bleeding (after an herbal treatment)
– The Luo of Yin is Yin Chiao Mai point Ki-16
– The Luo of Yang is Yang Chiao Mai point Bl-62
I) Longitudinal Luo Vessel Energetics

1) How the Longitudinal Luo Vessels deal with pathogens:

   \[\text{Yin Arm} \rightarrow \text{Yang Arm} \rightarrow \text{Yang Leg} \rightarrow \text{Yin Leg}\]

   \[\text{Lu; Ht; P} \rightarrow \text{Sl; Li; SJ} \rightarrow \text{Bl; GB; St} \rightarrow \text{Sp; Ki; Lr}\]

   \[\text{Chest} \rightarrow \text{Arms} \rightarrow \text{Legs} \rightarrow \text{Chest}\]

   - This is also how the regular meridians flow in Tai Yang, Shao Yang, &tc.
   - According to Western Medicine, this is how blood flows in venous and arterial circulation

2) The above *Ling Shu* sequence shows how pathogens enter the body

   - Some people don’t follow this older sequence, but instead organize the luo like the Primary Meridians (Lu, LI, St, Sp…)

3) When Wei-Qi is fighting EPFs in the chest, Heat is created

4) Luo Vessels take the Excess and move it to Lung, Heart and Pericardium vessels
   - They don’t treat the EPF, just hold it to maintain homeostasis
   - It then tries to move the EPF out via the Shu-stream point

5) If the Luo Vessels can’t move the EPF out, it goes to the Yang Arm and Yang Leg Luos, then back to the chest via the Yin Leg Luo Vessels
   - To treat the EPFs being stored in the chest, needle Sp-21 (Great Luo), which is indicated for pain throughout the body

6) Luo Vessels hold or expel EPFs, moving it to the Ying-Qi level if they’re holding it
   - Divergent Meridians hold EPFs, then try to expel it; while they’re holding an EPF, they move it to the Jing level

7) The body always tries to expel or make the EPF harmless, otherwise it goes into the organs
   - If there’s not enough Blood to hold the EPF in the Luo Vessel, it can go into a Divergent or Regular meridian, or…
   - Sometimes the Jing will break itself down to support the Ying-Qi by creating more Blood
     - \text{REMEMBER: Jing is associated with the 8-Extras}
     - \text{Li Shi Zhen said: if you’re going to use the 8-Extras, you must clear the Luo Vessels, the Divergent Meridians, all blockages, and the Primary Meridians}

II) The Luo Points and Longitudinal Luo Vessel Pathways

1) \textbf{Lu-7 (Lightening Strike):} the vessel goes down and scatters along the thenar eminence (or fish boarder) before entering the palm at P-8
   - From this point, a separate branch travels to its Yin-Yang paired meridian
– Lu-7 is called in Chinese *Lightening Strike*… “Lightening Strike is like something that comes into consciousness and shakes you; it strikes and then enters the chest and affects the Shen.” –Jeffery Yuen

– FULL: Heat in the palms
– EMPTY: Frequent urination and yawning

2) **Ht-5 (Penetrating Mile):** the vessel follows the Primary Meridian to Ren-17 (P. Mu) and Ren-14 (Ht. Mu), then to the root of the tongue (Ren-23), and then to the eyes

– FULL: Opresion in chest – a heavy, “sticky” feeling
– EMPTY: Loss of speech

3) **P-6 (Inner Gate):** the vessel travels along the Primary Meridian to connect with Ren-17

– FULL: Heart pain
– EMPTY: rigidity and pain in the neck and head… it’s trying to prevent Heat and Wind from entering the head, resulting in stroke

4) **SI-7 (Branch to the Upright):** the vessel goes through the elbow, connecting with SI-8, then to the lateral tip of the shoulder where it spreads out and connects with LI-15

– FULL: Loose joints and elbow atrophy
– EMPTY: Small itchy swellings that scab up
– Flaking/scaling skin, as in psoriasis
– Pebbly excrement

5) **LI-6 (Bearing Passage):** the vessel runs up the arm to LI-15, then up the neck to curve along the jaw and enter the teeth; a branch divides on the cheek to enter the ear

– FULL: Toothache and acute deafness (deafness that’s just begun)
– EMPTY: Coldness in teeth, *i.e.*, teeth overly-sensitive to food temperature (this can also mean cavities
– Diaphragmatic numbness – breathing feels funny, as you can’t feel the expansion and contraction of the diaphragm

6) **SJ-5 (Outer Gate):** this vessel goes up the arm and into the shoulder at LI-15 (or possibly GB-21), then to the middle of the breast before terminating at Ren-17

– FULL: Elbow dislocations and stiffness
– EMPTY: Difficulty in bending arm
– Weakness in elbow joint
– Body weakness and pain

7) **Bl-58 (Taking Flight):** the vessel runs down to Ki-4 to join the Kidney Luo Vessel (it does not have its own pathway)

– FULL: Nasal congestion
– Headache
– Lumbago (low back pains)
– EMPTY: Nose bleeds (way of body getting rid of an EPF)
– Runny nose with clear fluid
I) **Luo Vessels in Relation to Psycho-social (Yi/Mind) Development**

1) The Longitudinal Luo may be thought of as a continuum that represents self-evolution
   - About the individual moving towards self-knowledge

2) The development of the psyche goes through three distinct phases:
   
   a) Development of perception, sensation, and thought
      - This is related to the Luo Vessels of the Lu, LI, St, Sp

   b) Development of social skills
      - This is related to the Luo Vessels of the Ht, SI, Bl, and Ki

   c) Development of a sense of self-preservation
      - This is related to the Luo Vessels of P, SJ, GB, and Lr

   d) After all this, we come to terms with life and ourselves
      - There’s an emergence of a new self
      - The Great Luo of the Spleen, and the Luo Vessels of Du and Ren Mai get developed

II) **The Luo Vessels can also Address Shen Issues**

1) The Luo Vessels can treat mental/emotional problems since they carry Blood, which holds emotions, feelings and experiences
   - Blood gives them residence

2) The classes of feelings that can be treated:
   
   a) **Primal**, or Non-cognitive feelings are an External/Wei-Qi response
      - Ex.: Fright, a combination of fear and shock from a sudden and unexpected noise
      - This is instantaneous

   b) **Premeditated feelings** are conscious and cognitive
      - These are an Internal/Ying-Qi response
      - We have control over these types of feelings
      - We can choose how to feel
      - Ex.: Anger from a perceived insult
      
      - Emotions in this area have a time frame, *i.e.*, they have a beginning, middle and end like a story
      - Emotions in this area have a focus or target
      - You have an emotion about something in particular

   c) **Moods** are different from the above in that in that they’re “floating around” and not fixated
      - Moods are undefined – they have no target
      - Moods are held at the surface/Wei-Qi level… so they are acute
d) **Suppressed emotions** are felt, but there is a decision not to express them in order to conform to one’s culture/society’s expectations
   - Ex.: *boys don’t cry…*
   - This is cognitive in nature… at the Ying-Qi level

e) **Repressed emotions** are unconscious
   - There’s a non-recognition/denial of the emotion
   - This is at a deep level – the Yuan-Qi level of dealing with emotions

3) These emotions can be processed, or they can be suppressed or repressed
   - Recognizing these emotions releases them and allows patient to reconnect with themselves, resulting in subsequent psychological release and sense of freedom

4) Denial and repression lead to stagnation in the Blood, eventually…
   - This leads to Heat in the Blood

5) Longitudinal Luo Vessels buffer and protect the Primary Meridians by holding Excess Heat created by these Internal factors – *i.e.*, emotions that are not released, as well as conflicts between emotion and thought

III) **Points for Processing and Harmonizing Emotions via the Longitudinal Luo Vessels**

1) Use Yin Luo points to work on person’s “armoring”
   a) **Moods** (Wei-Qi level)
      - Lu-7 & Lr-5
   b) **Suppression** (Ying-Qi level)
      - P-6 & Sp-4
   c) **Repression** (Yuan-Qi level)
      - Ki-4 & SJ-5

d) Plum blossom these points (those for the appropriate level) in an \( \infty \) pattern
   - Start with side of body with the dominant symptoms
     - Ex.: Right arm \( \Rightarrow \) Left leg \( \Rightarrow \) Right leg \( \Rightarrow \) Left arm

e) If you’re not sure what level the person is at, do ALL levels (mood, suppression and repression)

3) Use Yang Luo points for patient’s emotional disposition, tonifying the Yuan-source point of the organ’s Yin-paired meridian first:
   a) **Anger** = GB-37 + Lr-3
   b) **Anxiety** = SI-7 + Ht-7
   c) **Obsession** = St-40 + Sp-3
   d) **Grief/depression** = LI-6 + Lu-9
   e) **Fear** = Bl-58 + Ki-3
I) Cardiovascular Applications of the Luo Vessels

1) Wang Qing Ren (14th c.) was the physician who wrote *Errors Made By Physicians*
   - His primary focus was on the blood vessels
   - He did autopsies on the thoracic cavity and gave descriptions of the lungs, trachea, bronchi, heart and aorta
   - He said that internal conditions can be acute or chronic, and that there are four types of diseases
     - Excess/Stagnation or Deficiency of Qi
     - Excess/Stagnation or Deficiency of Blood
       - Because Qi and Blood are related, you can’t treat one without treating the other
   
   a) Wang Qing Ren believed that the chest is where Heat (as a lymphatic response) is produced
      - Heat at the chest causes palpitations and chest distress
   
   b) Heat also rises to affect the upper orifices
      - In response to Heat, the Stomach channel brings Yin-Fluids/lymph to upper regions to support the moisture of the eyes, mouth, lips and even brain

   c) When he did autopsies on the victims of high fevers and infectious diseases, he found high levels of lymph fluid in the Stomach channel areas

   d) Wang Qing Ren also believed that Heat affects fluids first, then blood
      - If the body can’t bring fluids to moisturize the upper regions, Blood will come up to contain the Heat
        - Ex.: No fluids in upper regions → blood-shot eyes

   e) When Blood is involved, there’s possibility of stagnation

2) The Luo Vessels are a link to the 8-Extra Vessels
   - Most 8-Extras start at Luo points (with the exception of Ki-6 and Bl-62 – Yangchiao and Yinchiao Mai)

3) Blood vessels are Curious Organs
   - Long-term blood issues can affect the other Curious Organs (and vice-versa)

4) The conditions in the Curious Organs can affect the Blood and Ren Mai because of their special relationship (more later)
   - Blood and Luo Vessels move towards Curious Organs like the brain, spine, marrow, uterus, gall bladder, and genitals

5) When evaluating complicated cardiovascular conditions, you should look at the history of the medical condition and see whether any Curious Organs are involved
VIII) **Treatment of Hemorrhage**

1) Hemorrhage is usually due to Heat or Spleen Deficiency
   - To figure out which, take the pulse to see if there’s Heat or Cold
     - Heat = Rapid pulse
     - Cold = Slow pulse

2) Treat Luo point at the site of hemorrhage
   - Bleed or plum blossom
   - …or moxa

3) Treat corresponding Jing-well point
   - Bleed with a lancet
   - …or moxa

4) Example:
   - Acute coughing up blood due to Wind-Heat
     - Tongue: Red
     - Pulse: Rapid
   
     a) Plum blossom Lu-7
     b) Bleed Lu-11
     c) For Heat, add Ying-spring point – Lu-10
       - This is considered a branch treatment in order to stop bleeding

5) A root treatment is used for bleeding at various sites
   - This condition is usually due to Deficient Blood (this can be caused by blood loss), which can lead to Blood Stasis

   a) This condition can be treated at the same time as the above (or later)

   b) Treat Spleen for not managing the Blood
      - You can select some, all, or add in different points for the following treatment

   c) Tonify Spleen:
      - Moxa Sp-1
      - Tonify Sp-10
      - Also tonify:
        - Bl-17 (Blood)
        - Sp-3 (Yuan-source)
        - St-36 (moves Blood)
        - Bl-20 (Spleen Back-shu point)

   d) Harmonize Liver
      - Tonify:
        - Lr-3
        - GB-34
        - Lr-2
I) Simplified Treatments for Hematological Conditions

- Treatments should be done in conjunction with an MD so that blood tests can be monitored
- For all the following conditions, monitor the patient for a healing crisis with Heat
  - Treat this with the Yang Longitudinal Luo Vessels

1) Anemia

- reduced oxygen-carrying capacity of red blood cells due to an iron deficiency
- Diet is insufficient in that element
- Iron deficiency can also be due to malabsorption
- …or chronic blood loss, as in heavy periods and stomach ulcers
- Pregnancy
- Chronic diseases like cancer

a) To increase the iron content of the body, modify the diet
   - Seaweed is a good source of iron
   - As is Guinness

   - You must also tonify Stomach-Fire (if deficient) so that iron will be absorbed by the Small Intestine and stored in the Liver
     - If Stomach-Fire is deficient, there’s Deficient Spleen-Qi… so iron cannot be properly transformed and transported

b) Transverse Luo treatment for Stomach-Fire (Excess or Deficient):
   - Tonify St-40
   - Tonify Lr-5 (for Qi Deficiency)
   - Tonify Ki-4 (for Yang Deficiency)
   - Tonify Sp-4 (for Blood Deficiency)
   - Also tonify Xue Fu (Blood Mansion): Ht-1; Sp-21; Lr-13
     - See Week 7; II, (1)

c) TCM treatment for Deficient Spleen-Qi and Stomach-Fire:
   - Tonify Sp-6; Sp-9; Sp-10
   - Moxa Bl-17

2) Vitamin B-12 Deficiency (pernicious anemia)

- Most often occurring in Nordic blondes
- Usually due to aging and atrophy of the GI tract
- Can also be auto-immune based
  - Peptic cells in stomach fail to bind to B-12 to be carried to Small Intestine for absorption

a) Signs and symptoms include:
   - Indigestion