



ACUPUNCTURE TECHNIQUES

Bondage and Liberation—the Luo Vessels and the Consciousness of Disease

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The Luo are vessels of liberation. They are about bondage. Through them we can learn much about ourselves: what we tend to hold onto, how we define ourselves and our lives. They can help us realize the power of surrender, teaching us about causes of pain and suffering.

The Luo use blood to hold onto unresolved issues. Blood is the mediumship that circulates the "spirit" which animates the mind. When the Luo "fill" our issues become visible and expressive. They will often show up as broken blood vessels on the skin or some sort of visibility. After saturation, the Luo "empty" to become repressed and mysterious, physically manifesting as swellings.

Under Lock & Key

Issues in the Luo hold us hostage, keeping us locked in a particular experience, pattern or state. The grand representation of this is the "Great Luo," SP-21 Da Bao. It is a vessel that wraps around the chest. It's common to find broken blood vessels along this channel at the region of the ribs.

It's significant that the "Great Luo" is attributed to the Spleen: the organ that "banks the blood." The Spleen is associated with the psycho-spiritual concept of the Yi: mindfulness. At the end of the Luo Vessel continuum is this point, SP-21 that says we are trapped in a state of suffering due to our thoughts: the way we have decided to manage our blood.



The Nan Jing says the Great Luo facilitates communication between above and below. It's also involved with the blood building capacity of the chest. I often see the Great Luo as a disturbance in relationship between the Kidneys' Zhi (willpower) and the Spleen's Yi. We've put ourselves in bondage via our thoughts, but we forget that since we are our own jailer, we also have the ability to free ourselves from our suffering. Yet many of us don't know how.

Heart disease is the leading killer in America. Chinese medicine in its expansive way helps us see matters of the Heart may not just be physical. Our unresolved thoughts, feelings and experiences can be the root of what is slowly killing us. The band around our chest, filled with unresolved experiences can be the root of circulatory stress and taxation.

Spleen, Heart & Liver

There's a three point combination taught to me years ago by my teacher, inspired by the "Blood Mansion" concept of Qing Dynasty physician Wang Qing Ren. The Blood Mansion is the mechanism by which blood is created, circulated and stored. The points SP-21 Da Bao, HT-1 Ji Quan and LR-13 Zhang Men reflect the three organs most responsible for blood. The Spleen creates the blood, the Heart circulates, and the Liver stores.

From a pathological point of view, this point trio tells another story. SP-21 as the Great Luo is the depository for all the other Luo. It is a saturation point whose classical symptoms are described as pain all over the body and loosening of the joints. Its major function is to "unbind the chest." This is also a function of HT-1.

The physical symptom of global pain represents suffering that cannot be resolved, which constricts a person's entire life. Looseness of the joints makes reference to the "Grandchild Luo" or Divergent Channels which cause issues to go into a place of deep hiding in the body, where they begin to alter the personality and influence posture.

Issues of "fullness" within the Luo Vessels retain a level of conscious awareness, which is much easier to address than something that has become unconscious as if it's part of the personality. Visibility is therefore a blessing, showing us there are issues taxing our blood that need to be resolved.

HT-1 is a major point along the Heart's Divergent Channel. It activates a special influence. As stated by Chapter 11 of the Ling Shu, the Heart's Divergent Channel "points to Earth."

LR-13 is the Mu point of the Spleen. Within this point combination, the illumination of the Heart is directed into the Earth via LR-13. The Earth represents our social self, as well as our Yi.

The imagery of these three points is vivid. We go into the gathering of our suffering, our Great Luo, addressing the way our mind is orienting our relationship with the world. We try and loosen the strangling of our chest as we use the illumination of the Heart and its ultimate possibilities to address our earthly attachments: that which we have stored in our Liver. The choice of LR-13 as the Mu collection point for the Spleen shows how the experiences we've stored can impact the health of our minds.

LR-13 provides the aspect of choice. What are we choosing to store within? What have we decided our life is about? What sort of definition have we given to ourselves? LR-13 is called the "Camphorwood Gate" which makes reference to the type of material used for coffins in ancient times. We can build tombs that act as alters to our traumas, suffering and disappointments. We can also let the past fully disintegrate and pass away. Another popular name for LR-13 is "Cycle Gate": allowing a cycle of our lives to end so something new can begin. New possibilities.

Letting "it" Go

The blood carries the spirit, it also carries within it our memories, experiences, feelings, thoughts. The Blood Mansion addresses that which we are holding onto, limiting our possibilities, defining our lives. To work with these three points can give us the opportunity to unbind our chest and free our hearts so we may allow our old dead experiences to fully pass away.

I often combine this trio of points with a particular Luo Vessel that represents the patient's fixation, obsession, trauma or repeating pattern. The Luo Vessels hold onto stuck blood, which encapsulate unresolved issues. They can be physical, but they can also be mental, emotional or experiential. They can also be related to habits and lifestyle patterns. The Luo are pathological channels. They hold onto stagnant blood which no longer nourishes us. The Luo in general represent challenges to our Heart and Circulatory System. The Blood Mansion can be seen as a grand statement about the Luo Vessel Circulatory System: the way in which the blood physiologically utilizes blood, as well as the process of circulatory disease.

For example, for a patient who suffers from a type of obsessive compulsive tendency to retreat into fantasy, I would add LR-5 Li Gou, the Luo Vessel of the Liver. The classical symptom of the Liver's Luo is priapism and genital itch, which can be a metaphor for fantasizing or creating multiple personalities.

The intention behind this combination is to invigorate the blood by loosening the chest and rectifying the qi so the patient can gain greater insight into what is underneath the obsessive compulsive behavior. What have they stored in their Liver that causes them to constantly need to create an alternate reality, either mentally or via acting out behavior?

The focus is not to just get rid of the behavior, but to allow insight and graduation from what's behind it. There may be a certain type of trauma that is constantly trying to be reenacted. Or a

wish-fulfillment attempt that is constantly trying to be created. Working with the Luo can illuminate what's behind our physical, mental and behavioral symptoms. They are Vessels of self-liberation.

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