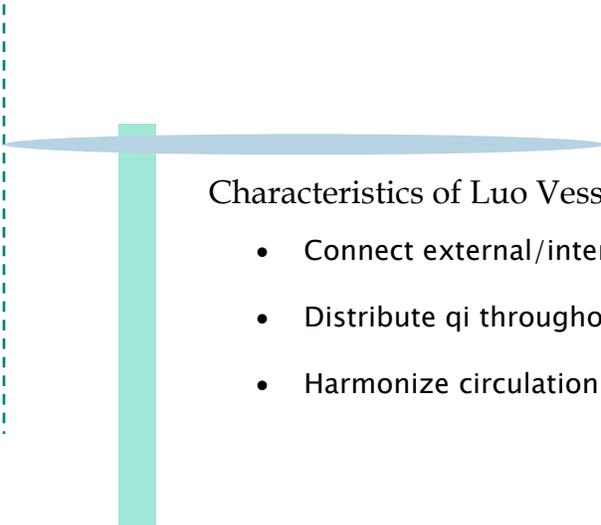

Chapter 3 *Luo Vessels, Cutaneous and Muscle Regions*





Characteristics of Luo Vessels

- Connect external/internal pairs
- Distribute qi throughout the body
- Harmonize circulation

In all, there are fifteen luo channels. When they suffer from a solid disease they become visible. When they suffer from a hollow disease, they sink. Whether they are visible or invisible, one must investigate the complete circle, as well as top and bottom. People and channels both have their variations, so the luo sinking channels have their differences and separations as well.

– Ling Shu

The Luo connecting and networking vessels may well be the oldest “acupuncture vessels” network. The Luo vessels have their origins in a historical modality which emphasized bloodletting along channels and in regions of superficial “spider vein” capillaries.

Chapter 10 of the Ling Shu describes the Luo vessels alongside the major channels as conduits between paired channels as well as between main channels and other tissues.

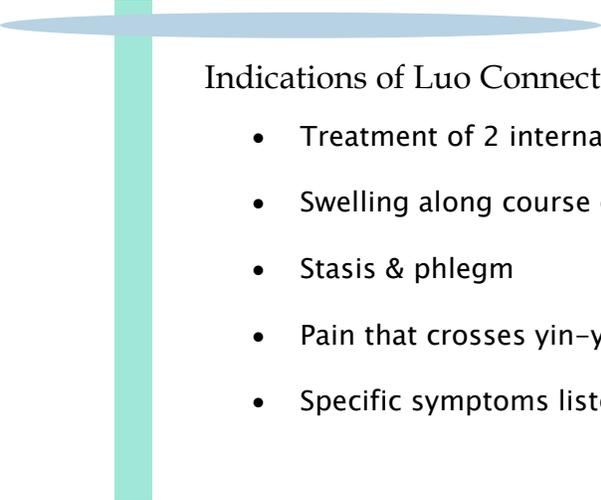
The authors of the Ling Shu go on to describe the Luo as a more superficial system separate from the main meridians:

How does one know the difference between the major channels and the luo linking channels?

The major channels cannot be seen. Whether they are hollow or solid, one must use the inch mouth pulse to know. The channels that can be seen are all luo channels.

The Luo linking channels are unable to flow through the great joints. They must move by alternative routes to exit and enter. Then they join again in the center of the skin. Unlike the main meridians, the Luo vessels do not seem to follow any distinct pattern of continuous flow or standard length and trajectory. The Ling Shu does list the points at which the Luo separates from the main channel and provides indications for the vessels by stating: “*Treat at the point of separation*”.

In clinical practice, Luo points are often some of the most useful treatment points. Pirog points out that modern Chinese texts frequently list them in treatment protocols but fail to explain why. One possible reason is that Luo points tend to occur in areas of deep muscle tissue that lends itself to Chinese deep needling techniques. It makes sense, however, that points where the qi of a meridian disperses are likely to be areas where the nutritive qi is strong and therefore suitable for effective needling.



Indications of Luo Connecting Points

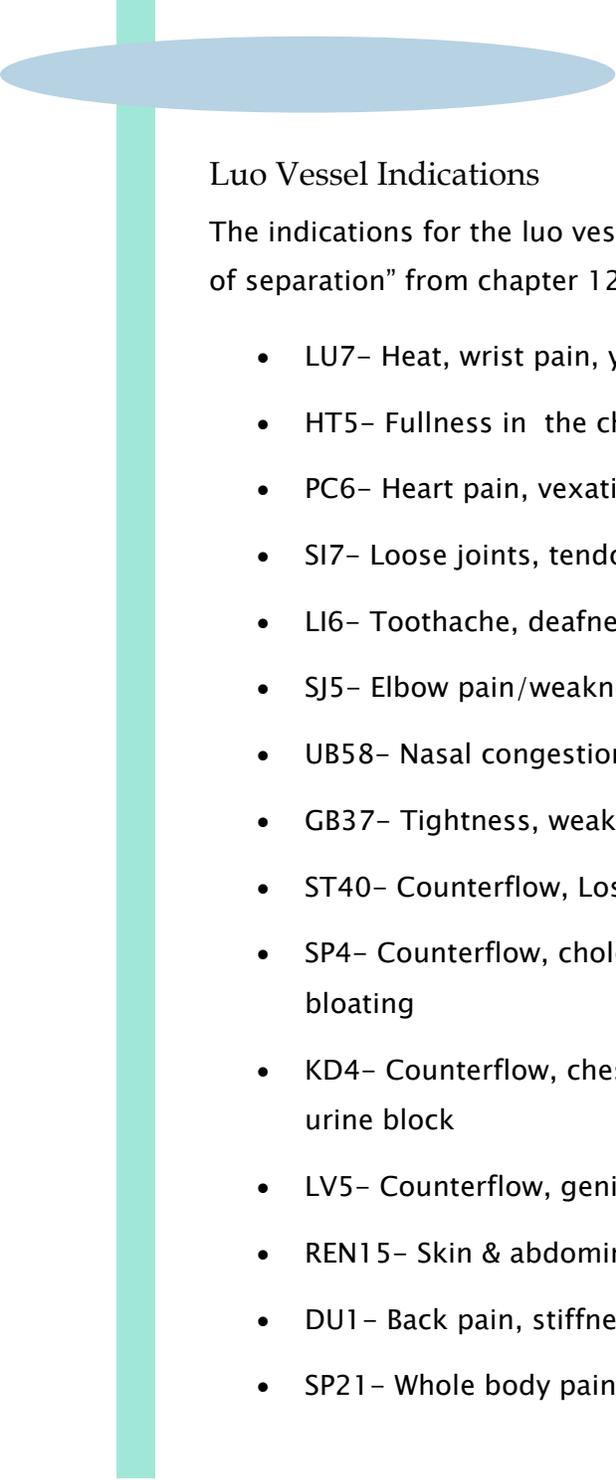
- Treatment of 2 internal–external paired meridians
- Swelling along course of meridian
- Stasis & phlegm
- Pain that crosses yin–yang borders
- Specific symptoms listed in Ling Shu

Because Luo vessels connect internally-externally paired meridians, they are the logical choice for disorders that affect both meridians or organs. They also serve to shuttle energy from one meridian to another. A clinical example of this shuttling process would be to release pathogens from the lung to the more external large intestine.

The Luo channels act as a sort of overflow for the main meridians. Like small tributaries at a river delta when the channels are in excess, they fill and when deficient they shrink and disappear from view. As such, pain and swelling can be reduced by treatment of the Luo vessel.

For stagnation and phlegm in the channels, the Luo points act as a sort of siphon to drain excess and harmonize the movement of qi.

For pain that crosses from yin to yang, the Luo point provides a simple tool for treating the greater area.



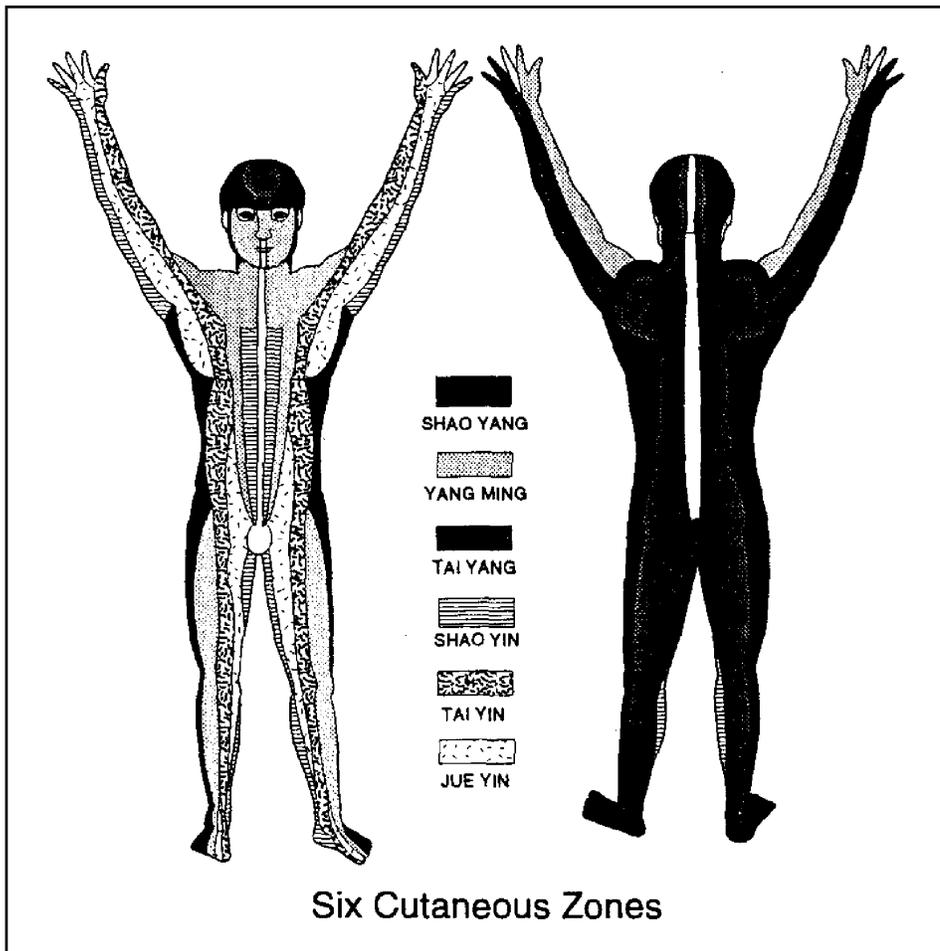
Luo Vessel Indications

The indications for the luo vessels to be treated “at the point of separation” from chapter 12 of the Ling Shu are as follows:

- LU7- Heat, wrist pain, yawning, frequent urine
- HT5- Fullness in the chest, loss of voice
- PC6- Heart pain, vexation
- SI7- Loose joints, tendons of the elbows
- LI6- Toothache, deafness, bi patterns
- SJ5- Elbow pain/weakness
- UB58- Nasal congestion (cold), HA, back pain
- GB37- Tightness, weakness of the legs
- ST40- Counterflow, Loss of voice, mania, depression
- SP4- Counterflow, cholera intestine pain, abdominal bloating
- KD4- Counterflow, chest congestion, constipation, urine block
- LV5- Counterflow, genital pain & swelling
- REN15- Skin & abdominal disorders
- DU1- Back pain, stiffness, head tremors
- SP21- Whole body pain, joint looseness

The Muscle and Cutaneous Regions

- Spread superficial (cutaneous) & deep (muscle) around main meridian
- Distribute qi & xue to surrounding tissues
- Do not connect to zang-fu
- Provide diagnostic information & treatment sites for bi (pain) conditions



The muscle channels or sinews channels and the cutaneous regions are not in the true sense channels. They are extensions of the main channels where the qi spreads out to nourish the surrounding and superficial tissues. As such, they can provide diagnostic information and treatment options.

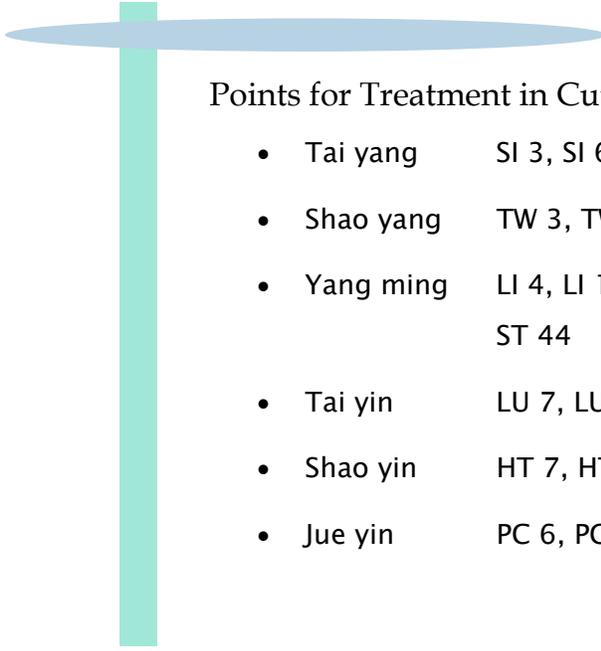
Chapter 56 of the Su Wen states:

The cutaneous regions are the part of the meridian system located in the superficial layers of the body. The cutaneous regions are marked by the main meridians.

The Su Wen goes on to explain the markings:

Blue coloured skin signifies local pain, dark colored skin indicates blockage of qi and blood, yellow to red colored skin refers to heat syndromes and white colored skins exhibits the cold syndromes.

The protective qi moves superficially and the Ling Shu describes its “coming out” at the jing well points. Because of this, these points are often chosen as treatment sites for the cutaneous regions and sinews channels. Modern texts offer the following points for treatment in cutaneous regions.



Points for Treatment in Cutaneous Regions

- Tai yang SI 3, SI 6; UB 40, UB 62, UB 60
- Shao yang TW 3, TW 5, TW 8; GB 39, GB 34, GB 41
- Yang ming LI 4, LI 11; ST 36, ST 37, ST 39, ST 40, ST 44
- Tai yin LU 7, LU 9, LU 5; SP 9, SP 4, SP 6
- Shao yin HT 7, HT 5, KD 3, KD 6, KD 7
- Jue yin PC 6, PC 5, LV 2, LV 3, LV 5

Muscle Channels

Following is a description of the muscle channels, their courses and indications as explained in the Ling Shu (chapter11):

- Foot tai yang
Pain in the little toe, heel, back of knee, arched spine, neck spasms, stiffness of rotation of the waist, pectoral pain, hyperextension of the spine
- Foot shao yang
Pain of the 4th toe, lateral knee pain, stiff knee, spasms of buttocks, rib pain and eye disorders
- Foot yang ming
Middle toe pain, "jumping foot", knee pain, thigh pain, hernia, abdominal cramps, dry mouth, eye swelling, cheek pain, facial paralysis
- Foot tai yin
Great toe pain, medial ankle, lower leg and knee pain, "knotting" pain in the genitals, navel and hips, pain in the chest and thoracic spine
- Foot shao yin
Plantar spasms and pain of the medial aspect of the foot, epilepsy, fasciculation's, inability to flex or extend the spine
- Foot jue yin
Great toe pain, medial leg pain, genital pain, impotence or pianism
- Arm tai yang
Little finger pain, medial elbow pain, scapular pain, ear pain, jaw pain, neck pain,, neck ulcers
- Arm shao yang
Arm pain, jaw stiffness and a rolled up tongue, lateral headaches

- Arm yang ming
Hand pain, arm pain, inability to raise the shoulder or turn the neck
- Arm tai yin
Arm pain, hand pain, cardiac pain, panting, rib pain, spitting blood
- Arm jue yin
Hand pain, arm pain, sternal pain, “throbbing” heart
- Arm shao yin
Pain and oppression of the chest with arm cramps (MI), arm and hand pain