**Birth Place of Yang Taichi**: Yong Nian County (永年县), China

**Founder** : Yang Lu Chan (杨露禅) in 1800s.

**Yang Style Taichi** was founded by Yang Lu Chan (杨露禅), of Yong Nian County (永年县) in the Hebei Province in China, in the 1800’s. It is relatively simpler and easier to learn than Chen Style, with much less body winding and coiling. Movements are more curvy, direct ,and open. Yang Cheng Fu once said: “Yang style Taichi is the art of softness containing hardness, of a needle concealed in cotton. The postures must be centered and upright, rounded and full, calm and steady, relaxed and tranquil, the movements are light, lively, and curved – a completely marvelous action.”

**Insights on Yang Style Taichi** – by Grandmaster Fu Sheng Yuan, from his book “Authentic Yang Family Taichi“

1. **Eyes**: Gazing out at eye level and follows the movements of the body lively.
2. **The Waist**: The waist is referred to as the general of an army. In your practice, it should be straight to maintain your center of gravity – to be able to sink your chi to dantian (your center) and breathe smoothly. If your practice is not correct, you will never reach higher levels, even if you spend a lifetime practicing.
3. **The requirements of the Limbs**: Taichi training involves the use of 4 limbs. An old saying goes: “ The arms and legs should assume the shape of a circular cane basket.” This means that the arms and legs are slightly bent, without the joints fully extended. The curve shape is similar to that of a bow ready to release an arrow. In particular, avoid extending the limbs with force.
   1. **Hands**: The palm sits on the wrist, but the heart of palm is slightly concave.
   2. **Fingers**: Relaxed and slightly opened.
   3. **Shoulders**: Relaxed and sunk.
   4. **Elbows**: Dropped and pointing down.
   5. **Order of Movements**: The shoulder guides the elbow. The elbow guides the wrist. The fingers lead the palm. While the palm leads the arm, the elbow and shoulder should be dropped and relaxed. Coordinate your waist and legs with your hands, elbows and shoulders, so that the upper and lower parts of body are all connected and flow as a unit without using force.
   6. **Move like a Cat:** Whenever you step forward, gently land with the heel first then gradually transfer the weight until the front leg is solid. The front knee should finish in line with the toes.
   7. **Lift the Foot**: Lift the heel, then the toes.
   8. **Sinking the Chest:** As you become more relaxed, your chest will sink vertically.
   9. **The Thighs**: Keep them open and maintain the circular shape.
   10. **Stance:** Keep the knees bent moving on the same horizontal plane. Adjust the height only to meet the requirements of certain movements. The lower half of the body is solid.
4. **Frame of Mind:** A. The mind should be quiet, calm and spirited – the mind is constantly directing even the smallest movements. B. Follow the classical standard. This refers to the standard set down by the great masters.

**Summary**: The first stage is for the movements to be open and expansive. As your practice matures, your movements become more refined and closely knit. Pay attention to the details and practice diligently.

**Health Benefits:** In China, Taichi is used as a form of recuperative therapy in most major hospitals**.  
a. Nervous System**: The Yang Style of Taichi requires you to use your mind in a relaxed yet focused manner. The mind should lead the movements for a minimum of one round which is approximately twenty minutes. Because of the subtle nature of the movements and the way they are strung together, practicing the form requires a high degree of concentration and relaxation. As a result, your balance, coordination and fine motor control are improved. With the mind fully involved in leading the body, you eventually enter into a state of absorption. As the mind develops more power, your concentration improves and you begin to gain more control over your nervous system, which in turn helps you to stay calm and maintain mental and physical balance. With regular practice, this process of strengthening the nervous system goes on indefinitely. Hence Taichi is especially beneficial to those whose concentration span is short; who are working under constant pressure; or are suffering from insomnia.  
b. Respiratory System: By practicing Taichi regularly, you begin to breathe Diaphragmatically, which enables the chi to sink to the dantian. Gradually your breathing becomes deeper, longer, finer, smoother, and even. This helps to increase your lung capacity, and strengthens your diaphragm. Using the diaphragm reduces the pressure in the chest cavity which allows your lungs greater freedom of movement. This process improves oxygenation of the blood and the elasticity of the lung tissues. For this reason, Taichi is regarded as being beneficial for the respiratory system.  
**c. Cardio-vascular system**: A requirement of your practice is for the whole body to be relaxed and avoid using brute force. Your movements should be light, agile and alive. As a result of moving in a slow and relaxed manner, the functioning of the lymphatic system and the circulation of blood and chi are improved. A more efficient circulatory system reduces the workload of the heart. While practicing Taichi, you can be perspiring, but your breathing will be deep and slow, your pulse rate will not increase. It is now common for doctors to recommend Taichi to their Patients who suffer from heart conditions and blood pressure problems because the movements are continues and gentle, and do not strain the heart.  
**d. Muscles, Joints and Tendons:** Taichi requires your joints to be relaxed and rounded, and your movements to describe circles and parabolas. All the muscles and joints of the body are involved in performing the movements. As the muscles relax, it becomes stronger and more flexible. By comparison, it is easier to strengthen the muscles than the ligaments, tendons and joints. One reason for this is the lack of blood circulation to these areas due to the density of their construction. The constant gentle and rounded movements help to exercise these difficult-to-get-at areas. It is well known that regular exercise helps to strengthen the skeletal system. A major requirement for Taichi practice is good posture. Learning how to hold your spine straight yet relaxed will help to reduce stress on the joints, spine and internal organs. In Taichi the combination of good posture, strong legs, and the constant rotation of the lumbar spine helps to prevent and alleviate lower back problems and reduce the effects of the natural degeneration of spine and joints which occurs with age. The constant contraction and expansion of the muscles help to improve their elasticity reducing the likelihood of them being damaged. On the other hand, muscles that are tense and inflexible are more susceptible to injuries. In the Authentic Yang Style Taichi, you turn on your solid leg without rocking your weight back first. This thoroughly trains your leg muscles. With regular practice over a period of time, you improve your strength, balance, agility and flexibility.  
**e. Circulation of Chi:** One of the special features of Taichi is the circulation of Chi. Chi is an essential energy which flows through the meridians to nourish your body and protects you against disease. Sickness is usually associated with sluggish flow of chi caused by blockages in meridians. Health on the other hand, is associated with an unimpeded flow of the chi throughout the body, which is analogous to running water which never stagnates. The guiding principle of Taichi, such as relaxation; roundness of joints; slow continuous movements; and quiet mind; are all prerequisites for circulating the chi freely. Taichi is one of the tools which traditional Chinese Medicine employs to stimulate and strengthen the flow of Chi through the body.  
**f. Importance of Relaxation:** The beneficial effects of mental and physical relaxation on your health cannot be over emphasized. Many people believe that they are relaxing while reading, listening to music , walking, playing sports, watching television or sleeping. In comparison to the levels of stress experienced, for example, at work, the above activities are less stressful, but they are only the initial stages of relaxation. The deeper levels of relaxation are experienced when the mind is no longer chattering, that is in the calm and focused state.