

德州天后廟

TEEN HOW TAOIST TEMPLE

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History of Teen-How Temple Houston, Texas

In 1980's, groups of Asian immigrants, men, women, and children, came to Houston and the surrounding vicinity. They were Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodians, and Laotians who left their countries, their homeland, and families after the end of the war in Eastern China or Vietnam War in 1975. They were looking for freedom, a promised land, and a brighter future away from a long, distressing war.

Thousands of these fortunate immigrants took a long, frightening journey on wooden-fishing boats across the Pacific Ocean from their homelands down to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia, the Philippines or up to Hong Kong. They were named "Boat People". Unfortunately, thousands did not get to their destination; they were buried on the ocean floor in this journey. Now, the new arrivals faced many new challenges in an unfamiliar environment, with a new language, and new customs as well as other obstacles to be able to settle down in this new world.

They missed their families, and their friends who lost or missing on the terrifying journey, or stayed behind, or drifted somewhere in the world. They wanted to build a temple, a place to practice their religions, to fulfill their promises during their journey, and to maintain their strong spirit. They wanted to have a place where they could meet friends and relatives and to share their feeling, emotions, etc. with each other.

The Vietnamese Cambodian Laotian Association was established in 1987 with an aspiration to build a temple to pray, to practice their religions, and to come together as one community.

Teen How Taoist Temple is the name of the temple since Teen-How is called The Goddess of the Sea, who they continuously praised during the journey by boats. Teen How Taoist Temple was built with the support and donations of Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodians, and Laotians communities. The Temple has become a meeting place for the Asian community.

Teen How Taoist Temple is a unique temple serving all three (3) main religions in Asia: Buddhism, Taoism and folk religion which can be briefly described as follow:

- **Buddhism**: Buddhism is a path of practice and spiritual development leading to insight into the true nature of reality. Buddhist practices like meditation are a means of changing yourself to develop the qualities of awareness, kindness, and wisdom. The goal of the Buddhist spiritual life is to represent the end of suffering for anyone who attains it.
- **Taoism**: Taoism is a type of belief, or a way of thinking about life. Taoists focus on living a simple and balanced life in harmony with nature: This is one of the most important principles in Taoism. Taoists also believe that conflict is avoidable and there is a way around it. Taoism is a Chinese philosophy, advocating for humility and religious piety. The three (3) virtues of Taoism are compassion, kindness, love; they practice moderation, simplicity, frugality, humility, and modesty. In addition, Confucianism

and Taoism share many of the same basic ideas about how the world functions, the role of mankind in the world, and the functions of gods and spirits.

- **Folk Religion:** folk religion is a religion which is not organized in a religious system; It is set local worship traditions which are devoted to the local Gods or Goddess and Sprits. Folk religion is defined as the beliefs, practices, rituals, and symbols originating from various sources. It can be said that it is a combination of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, as well as the traditional non-scriptural / local practices and beliefs. The focus of Folk Religion which is in how-to live-in harmony and peace with other people and with the world. The Gods or Goddess can be nature deities, guardian deities, or ancestral gods. Folk Religion strongly believes in Afterlife, Body and Soul, Deities, Heaven, Yin and Yang, Ghosts and Spirits.

Buddhas, Gods, Goddess, Lords are worshipped in the temple:

1. **Goddess of the Sea** (天后聖母, Bà Thiên Hậu Thánh Mẫu): also known as Matsu, Teen-How, Goddess of the Sea. The goddess of the sea is one of the most loved of all goddesses in Chinese mythology.
2. **Goddess of Mercy** (觀音菩薩, Đức Quan Thế Âm Bồ Tát): Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara or Guanyin, the goddess of mercy and compassion: Guanyin is a key figure in many ancient and contemporary Chinese myths and legends. Guanyin could hear the sorrows and woes of the world and she embodies empathy, kindness, and grace.
3. **God of Spirit** (關聖帝君, Ngài Quan Thánh): Guan Yu or Guandi was a Chinese military general in the Eastern Han dynasty of China. His most popular paradigms are loyalty and righteousness. He is a deity worshipped in Chinese folk religion, Confucianism, Taoism, and Chinese Buddhism.
 - a. **Horse Duke** (馬使爺及赤兔寶馬, Mã Tướng Quân), Horse mate of Guandi.
4. **Jade Emperor / Emperor of Heaven** (玉皇大帝, Ngài Ngọc Hoàng Đại Đế): Jade Emperor is one of the most important and popular figures in Chinese mythology who supreme ruler of Heaven and the first emperor of China. Jade Emperor's most prominent traits are his benevolence, fairness, and mercy. Jade Emperor has four (4) great guardians.
 - a. **Guardian of the East** (持國天王, Trì Quốc Thiên Vương): Guardian holds a magical mandolin.
 - b. **Guardian of the West** (廣目天王, Quảng Mục Thiên Vương): Guardian is shown with the magic dragon or mystical snake.
 - c. **Guardian of the North** (多聞天王, Đa Văn Thiên Vương): Holds an umbrella as protection against thunderous storms.
 - d. **Guardian of the South** (增長天王, Tăng Trưởng Thiên Vương): Guardian who holds ferocious expression and a precious sword.
5. **God of Happiness & Prosperity** (福德正神, Ông Thần Phúc Đức, Ông Bổn): the star god symbolizing blessings and happiness as a result of good fortune.
6. **Pharmacist Buddha** (藥師佛, Đức Dược-Sư Phật): The Buddha of disaster relief, protect and longevity. He helps people eliminate pain.
7. **Triad Goddess** (三母元君: 地母娘娘、九天玄女、龍母娘娘, Tam Mẫu Nương Nương: Địa Mẫu Nương Nương, Cửu-Thiên Huyền-Nữ Nương Nương, Long Mẫu Nương Nương): These are the highest goddesses in Taoism who are also the goddess with richest myths and legends circulating among the people.
8. **Lord of Province** (城隍爺, Đức Ông Thành Hoàng): He protects the people and the affairs of the village, town or city.
9. **Tai Sui God** (太歲爺, Đức Ông Thái-Tuế): The Grand Duke Jupiter of the Year – known as Tai Sui God who is in control of one's upcoming fortune such as wealth, health, marriage, and career.

10. Lord Tiger (虎爺, Ông Bạch Hổ): Lord Tiger is no longer just a simple beast, but has been given the ability to expel epidemics, suppress evil, and eliminate evil.
11. Mother Goddess (金母娘娘, Kim Mẫu Nương Nương): As known as Goddess of Wealth whose blessing bestows wealth and good fortune.
12. Duke of the local Land (土地公, Ông Thổ Địa): He is in charge of the local land and has powers to help gather wealth.
13. Kitchen Lord (灶君爺, Đức Táo Quân): Protects the house, in charge of people's diet as well as giving convenience to life. It is also believed that the Kitchen God is also an official sent by the Jade Emperor God to picket the good and evil of each household.
14. Hexad Taoist Priests (長春祖師, 純陽祖師, 重陽祖師, 道德天尊, 元始天尊, 靈寶天尊; Trường-Xuân Tổ-Sư, Thuần-Dương Tổ-Sư, Trùng-Dương Tổ-Sư, Đạo-Đức Thiên-Tôn, Nguyên-Thủy Thiên-Tôn, Linh-Bảo Thiên-Tôn), the six highest priest in Taoism.
15. Master Lu Zu (青松觀呂祖先師, Lữ Tổ Sư): the highest priest in Taoism.
16. The Guardian-Angel (靈官星君, Linh-Quan Điện-Hạ): the protective deity in Taoism.
17. Doumu, (斗姥元君, Đức Bà Đẩu-Lão): A kindly benevolent goddess who is often depicted holding important religious items in her many arms.
18. The Wealth Lord (財皇星君, Đức Ông Thần-Tài): Also known as God of Wealth who blesses for wealth and good fortune.
19. River Goddess (龍母元君, Đức Bà Long Mẫu):
20. Door Gods (門神, Môn Thần): a pair of deities who guard the thresholds of temple or buildings to ensure that evil demons and bad omens cannot get inside.