



7. Type of God: Protection of House and Family

Chinese names/ titles:

Zao Jun (Mandarin)
Ong Tao (Vietnamese)
Kitchen God or Stove God
Guardian of the Household and Family

Birthday/ date of Celebration:

Birthday – 3rd day of the eighth month of the lunar calendar marks the birthday of Zhang Lang, a mortal
Annual Report to Heaven – 24rd day of the twelfth month

Legend:

The story tells of a man named Zhang Lang who married a virtuous woman but left her for a younger woman. The Heavens punished him for his adulterous ways by making him sickly and blind, and soon his young lover left him. He had to resort to begging to support himself. One day he unknowingly came across the home of his former wife. She took pity on him and invited him in and prepared him a fabulous meal. In her home he

lamented how sorry he was for treating his former wife so badly. Filled with self-pity he began to weep. After seeing his remorse she told him to open his eyes. His vision was restored and when he realized he was talking to his former wife he was so ashamed he threw himself into her stove. She tried to save him but only managed to salvage one leg. Showing devotion she made him a shrine above her stove. This started the worship of the Stove God, Zao Jun.

Traditionally each Chinese household will have an effigy or plaque of Zao Jun and his wife (who writes down everything that is said in the family for his yearly report to the Jade Emperor) above the stove in the kitchen. This effigy is burnt and a new one replaced every Chinese New Year. The worship of the Stove God is to protect the household and the family.