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## YAO

Translated by  
Carolyn Haynes

*Shite*  
*Ado*

Emma, King of Hell  
A Sinner

(As in all oni plays, Emma wears the *buaku* mask and carries a demon's staff; the Sinner wears the *usofuki* (whistler) mask.<sup>1</sup>)

Sinner      (*Enters to shidai music; over his shoulder he carries a pole on which a letter is stuck. At the jôza [upstage right], turns to face the drums at upstage center and chants.*)

[shidai]      A sinner falling into hell,  
A sinner falling into hell—  
Won't someone come to help me out?  
(*Faces front and speaks.*) I'm a man from the village of Yao in Kawachi.<sup>2</sup> Swept along by the winds of impermanence, I now find myself heading for the nether world. I'd better get going, I guess. (*Begins circling the stage.*) Boy, I never thought I'd die this soon. If I'd known . . . oh, the things I've done to jeopardize my soul! Anyway, I have a letter from our Jizô at Yao<sup>3</sup> for King Emma, so I imagine I'll be sent straight to heaven. (*Having circled the stage once, he stops center stage.*) Hmm, here's a big intersection. This must be that "Crossing of the Six Roads" I heard about on earth. Which one am I supposed to take? I'd better rest here a while before making any decisions.

(*Sits at waki seat, downstage left.*)

Emma      (*Enters to shidai music. Like the Sinner, stops at the jôza and faces the drums to chant.*)

- [shidai] The master of hell, Emma the King,  
The master of hell, Emma the King,  
Sets out on his begging rounds.<sup>4</sup>  
*(Faces front and speaks.)* I'm the master of hell, Great King  
Emma. Humans have gotten so clever recently, what with  
the eight and nine sects,<sup>5</sup> that one after another they troop  
right on up to heaven, and down here in hell we're starving.  
So today, King Emma himself is going to the Crossing of the  
Six Roads and, if a good sinner comes along, I'm going to  
chase him off to hell. *(Chants.)*
- [michi-  
yuki] Leaving my dear home, hell, behind me,  
Leaving my old home, hell, behind me,  
And letting my footsteps lead me on,  
And letting my footsteps lead me on,  
I arrive at last at the Crossing of the Six Roads.  
  
*(During the michiyuki he has taken a few steps forward.  
He now steps back, faces front, and speaks.)*  
  
That was fast—I'm at the Six Roads already. Sniff. Sniff!  
Sniff!! Aha, there must be a sinner around here, 'cause I  
smell a human! Now where is he? *(Steps forward, search-  
ing.)*
- Sinner *(Standing.)* Well, this path looks good; I might as well  
take it.  
  
*(He starts walking; the two meet up downstage center.  
Emma scowls and the Sinner retreats to the waki seat,  
cowering.)*
- Emma *(Returning to the jōza.)* Ha! Here's a nice sinner. Now to  
chase him off to hell. *(At upstage center.)* Hey, you sinner!  
Get a move on!
- [seme] *(To instrumental accompaniment, Emma brandishes his staff  
at the Sinner, crying "Hurry up! Hurry up!" Finally, the  
Sinner pushes the letter at the end of the stick toward  
Emma, and the latter retreats to the jōza in displeasure.)*
- Emma Hey, what's that thing you're shoving in my face?

- Sinner It's a letter from the Jizô of Yao to your highness, King Emma.
- Emma Huh? A letter from the Jizô of Yao to me, King Emma?
- Sinner That's right.
- Emma Unh unh—I *used* to accept letters from the Jizô of Yao, but humans have gotten so clever recently, what with the eight and nine sects, that one after another they troop right on up to heaven, and down here in hell we're starving. So today I came myself to the Crossing of the Six Roads, figuring if a good sinner came along I'd chase him off to hell. And you showed up! So I'm just going to do a little chasing and chase you on down to hell.
- Sinner Oh, what a bother!
- Emma A bother? How come? (*He goes to upstage center and chants.*)  
Heaven's far; hell is near.  
So, Sinner, better get goin', y'hear?
- [*seme*] (*As before, Emma brandishes his staff, and finally the Sinner begins to walk. Emma, shouting with pleasure, rides his staff hobby-horse style onto the bridgeway. The Sinner follows, but thrusts forward the letter when he reaches the first pine on the bridge. Emma threatens again and the Sinner retreats but finally, at the waki seat, he shoves the letter forward forcefully enough that Emma stops.*)
- Emma Oh, all right, all right, if you're going to be such a pest about it, I'll look at the letter. Bring me something to sit on.
- Sinner Yes, sir. (*He removes the letter from the pole and pockets it in the bosom of his robe, then gets a large cask [shôgi] from the rear of the stage and brings it to Emma at center stage.*) Here's a stool.
- Emma (*Sits.*) Come over here.

- Sinner Yes, sir. (*Sits stage-left of Emma and gets out the letter.*)  
Here's the letter.
- Emma Give it here.
- Sinner Yes, sir. (*Hands it to Emma and returns to his seat.*)
- Emma Let's see . . . "To Emmy, from Ji."<sup>6</sup> Aww . . . He remembers all those little things. Do you know anything about this, this letter from the Yao Jizô to King Emma?
- Sinner Not a thing.
- Emma Way back when, that Yao Jizô was the handsomest young monk . . . . We were really good friends, y'know.
- Sinner He's still very good-looking.
- Emma Well, let's get on with it.
- Sinner Thank you; I'd be very grateful.
- Emma (*Opens the letter and chants.*)  
"In the province of Kawachi, in Japan,"  
"There is a patron of the Yao Jizô,  
"A man by the name of Matagorô,  
"And this Sinner is his brother-in-law."  
(*Speaks.*) Huh. So you're Matagorô's brother-in-law.
- Sinner That's right.
- Emma Matagorô's wife must be really ugly.
- Sinner Why's that?
- Emma 'Cause if she's your sister, she *must* be ugly.
- Sinner Oh, no. She doesn't look like me at all; she's really very pretty.
- Emma I suppose that's possible. Well, let's read this thing together. Come over here.

Sinner Yes, sir. (*He goes to Emma's side and they look at it together. The remainder of the play is chanted.*)

Emma " . . . is his brother-in-law."

Together "He worships devoutly, making monthly pilgrimages,  
"And many offerings. In fact, he's my best patron.  
"So if at all possible, Dear Emma,  
"Please send this Sinner to the Nine-fold Paradise.  
"If you don't, I'll stomp your hell-pots to bits."

*(The Sinner pushes Emma off his seat and sits down himself. Emma lands at the jōza and sits dejectedly on the floor.)*

What an arrogant Sinner!

Sinner What an arrogant Sinner!

Emma There's nothing I can do . . .

Chorus (*Chorus has entered shortly before this point and sits behind the musicians; they chant the rest of the play to instrumental accompaniment.*)

"There's nothing I can do," he says and,  
Taking the Sinner by the hand,  
King Emma leads him to the Nine-fold Paradise,

*(Emma leads the Sinner to the waki seat; the Sinner remains there while Emma returns to the jōza.)*

Then sets off for hell.

Turning back once more, he cries, (*Approaches the Sinner again.*)

"Oh, I hate to see that Sinner get away,  
"I hate to see him get away!" (*Dances back to the jōza.*)  
With that, the demon goes home to hell.

*(Emma exits, followed by the Sinner.)*

This translation of the oni kyôgen *Yao* is based on the Okura text and stage directions found in Koyama Hiroshi, ed., *Kyôgenshû II. Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, vol. 43 (Iwanami Shoten, 1961) pp. 121-24.

## NOTES

1. This is the only one of the oni plays in which the human figure is masked.
2. In present-day Osaka urban prefecture.
3. The deity is enshrined at Jôkôji in Yao.
4. Emma goes out to beg for alms (*rosai ni izuru*), as if he were a priest.
5. The eight sects (*hasshû*) of Buddhism were the Hossô, Sanron, Kusha, Jôjitsu, Ritsu, Kegon, Tendai, and Shingon; the nine sects were these plus either Jôdo or Zen.
6. Jizô uses an effeminate style, addressing Emma as *Em-moji* and abbreviating his own name.