

Masutemi Waza

Views on Nage No Kata Set Four

Ma Sutemi Waza

by Peter C. McMahan

Introduction

Nage no Kata, or Forms of Throwing, was one of the first katas created by Jigoro Kano [1] as a way to preserve and formalize the instruction of selected throwing skills in Judo. It is made up of five sets, Te Waza, Koshi Waza, Ashi Waza, Ma Sutemi Waza, and Yoko Sutemi Waza, each with three techniques done both from the left and right side.

This paper addresses some of my views on set four, Ma Sutemi Waza. This set contains Tomoe Nage (overhead throw), Ura Nage (back throw) and Sumi Gaeshi (corner throw) [3]. The individual steps that make up these throws in the kata are well documented (see references 1,2 and 4 - there are many others, including videos on YouTube and elsewhere), so I will not repeat them here. Unfortunately, there is also a lot of confusing or just bad instructional advice out there as well, so the beginning Nage no Kata student should study the Kodokan material but stick to whichever reference they're going to be graded on. For this paper I'm using the USA Judo Kata Guidelines [4] as the "gold standard."

Views on the Ma Sutemi Waza Set

The first technique of this set, Tomoe Nage (both sides), is done "significantly faster" [4] than all of the other techniques in the kata. This speed-up is one of the more confusing parts of the kata, since the first three techniques are sped up in the Kodokan Nage no Kata video, and the speed-up is not mentioned in the Kodokan Judo book [2] (or in many other print references, like reference 1). The latest USA Judo guidelines [4] only say to speed up both sides of Tomoe Nage, so for this paper I'll assume that is correct since these guidelines will be used at Senior Nationals this year. What I haven't yet seen is an explanation in print on why Tomoe Nage is performed faster than the others. David J. Ellis has jokingly suggested that, "maybe Kano got bored in the middle and wanted to spice it up." Unless there is significant kuzushi, I believe that Tomoe Nage has a low probability of working against an experienced opponent. In my opinion, the greater speed is justified because allows for tori a high probability of correctly executing the technique and uki doesn't need to jump to make it look right.

The next throw in the set, Ura Nage, although easy in concept is in my opinion one of the hardest in the whole kata to perform correctly. This throw is executed by stepping in close and bending knees as low as they'll go, pulling uki forward and thrusting with the legs for the throw, all with perfect timing. When paired with an opponent of your build, there is no way to "muscle" this throw and make it work. You must have proper kuzushi and tsukuri or this throw will end badly for the tori. However, I can think of at least one situation, in Shiai, where this throw could be used effectively. In this example, you have an opponent who likes to smash in the over-the-back grip. This is in my opinion borderline against the spirit of Judo, but it is nonetheless actively taught by one of the central Florida Judo schools. During the course of the match, you should be able to get a feel for your opponent's body language to telegraph when they're about to go for this grip. If you time your opponent's reaching grab with your entry and squat then Ura Nage might work pretty well.

Sumi Gaeshi, the last throw in the set, is in my opinion a simple modification of Tomoe Nage. For this kata, the Kumikata, or starting grip position, and Tai Sabaki, or body movement, have been changed between the two throws, but the Kuzushi and Nage are very similar. If I could suggest a more up-to-date or perhaps more interesting version of this kata, I would substitute Tawara Gaeshi for either Sumi Gaeshi or Tomoe Nage. Tawara Gaeshi, or rice bag reversal, was actually available at the time Nage no Kata was formed [5], so it is possible that Kano considered including it. I like this technique because it is very different than the other two rear sacrifices in the set, and because it is extremely handy against poorly executed leg picks. In shiai, we often see wrestlers-turned-Judoka (as well as more experienced players who should know better) attempting what is supposed to be Morote Gari, but rather than picking up at the knees and dropping their opponent straight on his back they dive head-first at the knees and try to drive their opponent back. Not only is this dangerous to their opponent's knees, it is also dumb because I hardly ever see this lead to a score. It is, however, the perfect time for their opponent to execute a Tawara Gaeshi. When we practice Tawara Gaeshi in the dojo we use a crash pad because it generates so much force. Maybe Kano thought that Tawara Gaeshi was too dangerous to practice, or maybe he thought that the leg-dive entry didn't lend itself to the flow

of the rest of the kata. In any case, I think Tawara Gaeshi would be a good choice for substitution into this kata.

Conclusion

Since there are many really good references on how to perform Nage no Kata, I instead focused this paper on some of my views on set four, Ma Sutemi Waza. Tomoe Nage, both sides, is performed at a faster speed than the other techniques in the kata. I believe this could be necessary in order to generate the required Kuzushi to guarantee the technique will work. Ura Nage is in my opinion one of the hardest throws in this kata to perform correctly because of the required precision, but in certain circumstances it could be useful. Finally, I think that Sumi Gaeshi, the last throw in this set, is similar enough to Tomoe Nage that one or the other could be replaced by Tawara Gaeshi to improve the kata.

References

- [1] Gordon, Allen. "Nage no Kata." The Judo Information Site (2008), <http://www.judoinfo.com/katanage.htm>
- [2] Kano, Jigoro. Kododan Judo. 1st ed. New York: Kodansha International, 1986 (145-159).
- [3] Translations checked at <http://linear.mv.com/cgi-bin/j-e/nocolor/dict>, Japanese to English dictionary.
- [4] Jomantasn. "NAGE NO KATA." USA Judo Kata Guidelines (2005), http://www.usjudo.org/kata_variouskatas.asp
- [5] Ohlenkamp, Neil. "The 67 Throws of Kodokan Judo." The Judo Information Site (2007), <http://www.judoinfo.com/gokyo.htm>