

Media Reviews

writings there is little mention of artistic training, which he must have had. In 1643, Musashi retired to a cave to write *The Book of Five Spheres* (*Gorin no Sho*, more commonly translated as *The Book of Five Rings*). He finished it in 1645, shortly before his death. He gave the book to his most trusted student, Terao Katsunobu. While the original text has been lost, Terao's copy has been passed down in the Hosokawa family (figure 90 in the catalogue). This book forms the basis of how he is appreciated in the martial arts community, but also clearly shows his skill as a formidable painter. This is perhaps the best example of the interaction between culture and arms. The exhibition and catalogue make the themes clear and opens avenues for exploration. In short, anyone with an interest in martial arts will find things of interest, and those who desire a deeper understanding of Japanese culture will find many new ways of looking at a range of different objects.

REFERENCE

MIYAMOTO, M. (2006). *The illustrated book of five rings*. (T. Cleary, Trans.). Boston: Weatherhill (original work published 1645).



Uechi-Ryu Karate

Vol. 2: Building Blocks

by Ihor Rymaruk

Iron Arm International

Disk 1: Building blocks and

simple applications. Disk 2: Hojoundo and applications, Sanchin kata, Japanese terminology.

2009, 2 DVDs, 3 hrs 12 min. paperback • \$49.95

Available from:

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*Review by Brian Malley, Ph.D.
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In this second of a projected six-volume DVD series, Ihor Rymaruk, 8th-degree black belt, takes the viewer through a thorough first lesson in the practice of Uechi-ryu karate. It is as if you have stepped into his dojo for your first practice session. Rymaruk takes you aside and shows you how to perform the conditioning exercises (*hojoundo*) and the primary form (*kata*) in the Uechi-ryu system, Sanchin. The video ends with instruction in the Uechi-ryu conditioning exercises and instruction in proper bowing.

Disc 1 (103 min.) takes the student through the techniques used in the hojoundo exercises. Each technique is explained thoroughly and in a manner very accessible to beginners. Rymaruk has been teaching Uechi-ryu for more than thirty years, and has clearly thought a great deal about the best way to teach the style's techniques to novices. His teaching is highly

accessible, and he communicates an "it's-just-this-simple" confidence to the viewer at every step along the way. Despite the simplicity of the presentation, there are very few compromises of technical detail: I could count on one hand the number of times I thought he left anything out.

One or more basic applications of each technique are also shown. Again, Rymaruk has thought carefully through the proper application of these techniques, and it shows in his demonstrations. The hojoundo exercises, like kata, are not self-interpretive, and it is a demonstration of Rymaruk's understanding that he shows applications that are actually plausible in a self-defense situation. I would have liked also to see the applications demonstrated at speed against realistic attacks (not against mock attacks, where the attacker throws a slow, straight punch from a chambered position), but the purpose of these demonstrations is to give the beginner an idea of how a technique might be used, and that is well conveyed.

In Disc 2 (189 min.), the hojoundo techniques are put together in the sequence that they are actually practiced in Uechi-ryu classes. Rymaruk has made one small alteration to the traditional sequence, doing the circle block-front kick combination before the circle block-side kick application, but he explains this, and his way of teaching it is no impediment to a student practicing the traditional sequence.

The same approach of teaching individual techniques before teaching the sequence is then applied to the primary kata of Uechi-ryu: Sanchin. Sanchin consists of only a few techniques, and Rymaruk walks the viewer through these, showing their proper form and application, before teaching the full form.

The remainder of the instruction on Disc 2 is devoted to teaching proper bowing (both standing and kneeling) and conditioning exercises. There is also a separate section in which Master James Thompson, 9th-degree black belt, teaches some of the basic Japanese terminology used in Uechi-ryu classes.

Although the intended audience for this video is clearly the beginning Uechi-ryu student, I think this presentation deserves a broad audience. Intermediate students can benefit from the nuances of Rymaruk's explanations, and advanced students would do well to study his way of teaching Uechi-ryu techniques. The video dovetail nicely with the contents of Mr. Rymaruk's book *Karate: A Master's Secrets of Uechi Ryu*, but it also serves well on its own. I highly recommend both the book and video to all Uechi-ryu students.

REFERENCE

RYMARUK, I. (2004). *Karate: A master's secrets of Uechi-ryu*. Amsterdam, NY: Iron Arm International.

