In 1890, the versatile writer of Irish origin, Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904), arrived at the port of Yokohama, Japan, as a correspondent for Harper's Weekly. Just after his arrival, however, Hearn broke his contract with the journal. As a result, he found a way to earn his living by working as a teacher of English, though he continued reporting on Japan for a number of magazines. His journalistic writings were generally well-written, insightful and even imaginative. At the beginning, most of his writing reflects the Orientalist imagination of contemporary Western readers, but as he stayed longer in Japan, he modified his preoccupations and changed his writing style.

Although born on a Grecian island, Hearn spent most of his childhood in Ireland. His infant life in Ireland seems to have cultivated his interest in non-textualized folk culture. After coming to Japan, he paid much attention to various kinds of Japanese folk culture. Among these, Hearn showed a strong interest in the traditional Japanese physical art of jiu-jitsu or jujutsu, and he did much to introduce it to the Western World. He wrote an essay on jiu-jitsu subsequently compiled into his book, Out of the East: Reveries and Studies in New Japan (1895). His description of the Japanese physical culture was influential. It was even quoted in the 11th edition of The New Encyclopedia Britannica published in 1911, and it played a great role in shaping the image of the Japanese martial art in the Western imagination, at least at that time. The martial art which he observed at
his workplace, however, must have been called “judo” there. The purpose of this article is to examine why Hearn used the word “jiujutsu” rather than “judo” in his essay, considering the contemporary relationship between jiu-jitsu and judo and Hearn’s idea concerning the uniqueness of Japanese artistic tradition.

The New Encyclopedia Britannica, drawing on Hearn’s findings, defines “Ju-Jutsu, or Jiu-Jitsu” as “(a Chino-Japanese term, meaning muscle science), the Japanese method of offence and defence [sic] without weapons in personal encounter, upon which is founded the system of physical culture universal in Japan.” The Britannica also points out that the word “jiujutsu” means “to conquer by yielding,” and it quotes a passage from Out of the East stressing the enigmatic Oriental image of the martial art:

In jiu-jitsu [sic] there is a sort of counter for ever twist, wrench, pull, push or bend: only the jiu-jitsu expert does not oppose such movements. No; he yields to them. But he does much more than that. He aids them with a wicked sleight that causes the assailant to put out his own shoulder, to fracture his own arm, or, in a desperate case, even to break his own neck or back.¹

While The Britannica emphasizes the mysterious nature of jiu-jitsu, it is noteworthy that it also describes its condition in the modern age: “. . . now ju-jitsu is taught in the schools, as well as in public and private gymnasias. In the army, navy and police it receives particular attention.” This brief description clearly recognizes that jiu-jitsu was no longer a mysterious, hidden physical culture in Japan in the early 20th century. The Britannica adds, furthermore, that many jiu-jitsu schools had been established both in the Anglophone world and on the European Continent around the
beginning of the 20th century.

So, how did Hearn come to write the essay on jujutsu which powerfully impressed the writer of the encyclopedia? Hearn first encountered the martial art at the gymnasium of a school for which he worked. It is appropriate here to show how the school was established. In 1886, the Japanese imperial government, committed to the modernization of the country, decided to set up seven middle schools across Japan in order to educate ruling-class elites. Since their names were simply numbers, they are generally called "Number Schools." The Number Schools were recognized as central colleges in their respective districts. Among such schools, School Number Five was established in Kumamoto, a prefecture located in Kyushu, a southern insular region of Japan, in 1887. This Number School—officially called "The Fifth Higher Middle School"—hired Hearn as a teacher of English in 1891.²

Working as a teacher there, Hearn wrote the essay on jujutsu. Originally, in 1893, he supposed that his essay on jujutsu would become a "philosophical essay," according to the postscript of his letter to Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850-1935), an older Japanology specialist (Japanese Letters 50). In the letter dated 13 October, 1893, Hearn writes: "I am working out an essay—a philosophical essay on "Jujutsu," promised to the Boston folks by December" (Japanese Letters 50). In response to the Sino-Japanese War erupting in July 1894, he completed the essay entitled "Jujutsu." Hearn left the Fifth School and found a job as a writer for the Kobe Chronicle newspaper, and moved to Kobe in October 1894. About one month before his move, he completed the manuscript of the book to be entitled Out of the East: Reveries and Studies in New Japan, including the essay "Jujutsu." Out of the East was published in March 1895—the Sino-Japanese War also ended in this month—by Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston and New York.³

In the essay, Hearn tried to analyze Japan's potential ability to
compete with Western imperial nations and their "salient" diplomatic ways in international society. In a part not quoted in *The Britannica*, Hearn states, "Much more than a science of defense is this jiu-jutsu: it is a philosophical system; it is an economical system; it is an ethical system . . . ; and it is, above all, the expression of a racial genius as yet but fairly perceived by those Powers who dream of further aggrandizement in the East" (145). Here the word "jiu-jutsu" expresses Japan’s unique, cogent, and enduring way of acting and her potential power in the diplomatic sphere. The writer of *The Britannica*, nevertheless, was much impressed by Hearn’s vivid description of jiu-jutsu itself. Hearn’s jiu-jutsu essay starts with the description of a "huge unfurnished apartment" (142) at the Fifth Higher Middle School, Zuihokwan, where the martial art was practiced. The description of the training at the beginning of the essay became accepted as a clear image of jiu-jutsu.

The second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*’s first example of "Ju-jitsu" is Hearn’s letter to his friend Masanobu Otani, written in 1891. In the letter, he wrote: "There is a building in which jū-jutsu is taught by Mr. Kano" (*Life and Letters* 175) at the Fifth Higher Middle School. This "Mr. Kano" was the incumbent principal of the school, Jigoro Kano (1860-1938). He was the founder of judo and the very person who invited Hearn to the Fifth School: he had been inaugurated as the principal of the school in 1891. Hearn came to the Fifth Higher Middle School on 19 November, 1891, and seemed to have a good relationship with Kano, who could speak English well. In his anonymous correspondence to the *Japan Weekly Mail* of 18 February, 1893, Hearn regrets Kano’s leave from the Fifth School:

The news of the appointment of Mr. Kano Jigoro, President of the Daigo Kōtō Chūgakkō [Fifth Higher Middle School], to the
still higher post of Educational Councillor, was received with much regret by the students and teachers, who were strongly attached to their director, and by no small number of the leading citizens of Kumamoto, with whom Mr. Kano was extremely popular. ("Letter from Kumamoto" 208)

Because Hearn could not feel at home in Kumamoto, he later asked Kano to recommend him to some other good working place, but Kano did not reply to his letter; thus, their friendship came to an end.

Contemporary publications of the Fifth School clearly show that the martial art Hearn saw was actually called "judo." In 1891, a comradery association of school staff, students and others related to the school called Ryunankai was established. At the association's launch, the association announced that it had a "judo" club, not a "jiujutsu" club, in two "Zappo" (Miscellaneous Reports) sections of the 1st and 2nd issues of the association's magazine, Ryunankaizasshi. With the judo founder Kano involved, the Fifth School became the mecca of judo in Kumamoto. Thus we come to the intriguing question: why did Hearn use the word "jiujutsu" in his essay? Reaching an answer requires examining the relationship between jiuichiatsu and judo at the end of the 19th century.

In 1877, Kano started training in the Tenjin Shinyo-ryu jiuichiatsu, one of the traditional schools of jiuichiatsu, to strengthen his physique. In 1882, he began to teach at a private school named Gakushuin. In the same year, he founded his own small, private educational institution named "Kano jyuku," and also established Kodokan. The present Kodokan dojo—on the whole of the 7th floor of a concrete building—is now judo's sacred place, but it was first a small rented room in the Eishoji Buddhist Temple with just seven tatami mats. Afterwards, Kodokan boosted the number of their members and continually changed its training venues, and their dojo
became bigger and bigger (Kano Sensei Biographic Editorial Committee 1-6).

When Kano started studying jiu-jitsu, it was regarded as an out-of-date art form. He later revealed that he could find many documents recording the secret skills of various jiu-jitsu schools even at ordinary second-hand bookshops. Kano studied these documents, picked up the techniques which he thought most effective and synthesized them into his own system of jiu-jitsu techniques (Kano 15-16). He thought a name with a fresh image would better suit his new system; he thus chose the word “judo,” although this was not Kano’s own coinage but already used in one of the former jiu-jitsu schools (Inoue 15-18).

The history of judo records a legendary official bout between judo and another jiu-jitsu school organized by the Police Department of the nation in 1886. Generally, people believe that at this fight the Kodokan judo team completely beat their opponents, and after that they developed fast as a popular martial art school. It is true that Kodokan had a big win at the event, but many matches like this were held in this period, and many other jiu-jitsu schools also became revitalized (Inoue 28-32; Matsubara 28-30). The reason was that the modern Japanese government needed to form a strong army with many young soldiers to rival other imperial powers, and the know-how that the old jiu-jitsu schools had inherited drew much attention from the public sectors, as the New Encyclopedia Britannica puts it.

Revitalized jiu-jitsu and the new judo competed with each other, and in the course of their power games, the most powerful weapon for judo was Jigoro Kano himself, mostly with his bright brain and eloquence. He published several magazines to publicize the value of his judo (Inoue 46-8). He even made a speech on jiu-jitsu and judo in English with the assistance of Reverend T. Lindsay at the Asian Society of Japan on 18 April, 1888.
Kano introduced jiu-jutsu's history, its major schools and great masters and emphasized how his own judo was different from them. He announces: “Amongst these was the art of Jiu-jutsu, from which the present Jiudo [sic] . . . has sprang up” (Lindsay and Kano 192). In the speech, Kano clearly states that judo is “an eclectic system of the art” of various jiu-jutsu schools (204). Hearn must have read the published version of this speech since he mentioned Kano's lecture in his anonymous report for the *Japan Weekly Mail* (“Letter from Kumamoto” 208). We have to notice that the title of this speech of Kano is simply “JIUJUTSU.” Though he wanted to promote his “Jiudo” in the lecture, he did not use the name of his own new school as the title of this lecture addressed to foreign audiences.

Kano was a deep-thinking educator. For him, judo was not a mere martial art. He thought that not only the education of the physique but also the enlightenment of knowledge and the acquirement of morality are important. According to Kano's philosophy, through judo people should enhance their own qualities in all these three fields. Kano was successively appointed to high positions in good schools, and even promoted as a high-ranked bureaucrat of the Ministry of Education. Naturally, the schools in which he taught set up judo classes or clubs, and many of his students with judo experience became influential figures in society (Inoue 38-43). To sum up, among the various jiu-jutsu schools, only judo had such a powerful and eloquent promoter at the end of the 19th century. But it should not be forgotten that, although they are poorly documented, many jiu-jutsu schools still survived and were very active at various places in Japan in this period.

One organization gives a good illustration of the relationship between jiu-jutsu and judo in this period. Butokukwai was a corporate organization intending to totalize the Japanese martial arts such as Target Shooting, Horsemanship, Fencing, etc. It was established on 28 April, 1895, in
commemoration of the Emperor Kwammu, who was considered to have founded Kyoto City 1000 years before. Kwammu was said to have loved military arts very much, and Butokukwai celebrated the legendary military-loving emperor. Butokukwai published its own journal, *Butokushi*, ten years after its establishment. Progressively, each issue included an article written in English, although they were generally short.  

The insightful Kano became one of the founding members of Butokukwai. It incorporated both jiu jitsu and judo and discussed new rules and systems of techniques (Matsubara 30-32). In the fourth issue of *Butokushi*, published in 1906, there is an article entitled “Prof. Kanō on Jūjutsu.” It is a short English article in which an interview with Kano is reorganized. In it, avoiding the word “judo” but heavily depending on his idea of it, Kano champions the effectiveness of “jiu jitsu” (“Prof. Kanō on Jūjutsu” 1-3). Even in the early 20th century, Kano himself—at least in the interview—regarded judo as one of the jiu jitsu schools.  

We can now understand what Lafcadio Hearn saw at the Fifth Higher Middle School from 1891 to 1894. Thanks to Principal Kano, the school had a judo club, and even in its curriculum the martial art taught there was called judo. However, judo was still new and only recognized as one of the jiu jitsu schools at that time. Probably, many members of the school’s judo club had experienced other schools of jiu jitsu or even kept learning them. It is likely that some of the club members said to Hearn that what they did was jiu jitsu. At the end of the 19th century, when Hearn wrote his essay, the term “jiu jitsu” was much more familiar with the reading public, especially English readers, than the word “judo.”  

Before ending this essay, though, I wish to discuss another “ghostly” factor which may have prompted Hearn to use the term “jiu jitsu” rather than “judo.” One of the characteristics inherent in Japanese traditional arts—so Hearn thought—was contradictory to Kano’s new judo. In the
first essay of his first book on Japan, “My First Day in the Orient” in *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), Hearn describes Japanese artists’ peculiar way of transmitting their skills—calling Japanese artists “ghostly” workers—as follows:

The idea whose symbol has perished will reappear again in other creations—perhaps after the passing of a century—modified, indeed, yet recognizably of kin to the thought of the past. And every [Japanese] artist is a ghostly worker. Not by years of groping and sacrifice does he find his highest expression; the sacrificial past is within him; his art is an inheritance; his fingers are guided by the dead in the delineation of a flying bird, of the vapors of mountains, of the colors of the morning and evening, of the shape of branches and the spring burst of flowers. . . . (13)

This elegant description suggests that Hearn already had a distinct conception of the inheritance process in Japanese traditional arts immediately after his arrival in Japan in 1890. And since the essay is included in a book published in 1894, it is plausible that Hearn still subscribed to this idea when he worked in Kumamoto and elaborated his essay about jiu-jutsu from 1891 to 1893. Kano, however, proposed a systematic and rational way of teaching judo. In Kano’s own (English) words, “daily instruction is carried on by means of lectures on the theory of Jiudo [sic], by discussion among the pupils and by actual practice” in a judo school (Lindsay and Kano 204). According to Kano’s thought, thus, judo was systematically taught as a school activity. If Hearn knew this idea of Kano, it is fairly understandable that he avoided using the term “judo” to represent a certain Japanese way of acting—unfamiliar to the West—shown in the contemporary diplomatic scene. In Hearn’s mind,
jiujutsu must have been one of the Japanese traditional arts inherited from generation to generation by ghostly jiujutsu masters.

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Notes

1 The original text can be found in Hearn, Out of the East 144-5. It is slightly different from that quoted in the main text:

I may venture then to say, loosely, that in jiujutsu there is a sort of counter for every twist, wrench, pull, push, or bend: only, the jiujutsu expert does not oppose such movements at all. No: he yields to them. But he does much more than yield to them. He aids them with a wicked sleight that causes the assailant to put out his own shoulder, to fracture his own arm, or, in a desperate case, even to break his own neck or back.

2 On the early history of the Fifth Higher Middle School, see Daigo Kotogakko Kaiko Gojyunen Kinenkai.

3 Hearn rewrote the essay and turned it into an article on jiujutsu for the Kobe Chronicle in December 1894. I am indebted to Koji Bando's detailed chronology of Hearn's life for my discussion of his days in Kumamoto and Kobe.
4 In the second issue of the journal, the English translation of the prospectus of the organization can be found. See “Butokukwai” 1-4.

5 After World War II, most of the jiu-jitsu schools were forbidden by the Allied Forces, and their activity diminished. On the other hand, judo survived by emphasizing its nature as a sport, and quickly regained status. It later became an Olympic sport (Inoue 179-188; Matsubara 47-55). It is noteworthy that as a leader of Japanese delegates, Jigoro Kano himself invited the 12th Olympic Games to Tokyo before World War II. His campaign succeeded at the International Olympic Committee meeting in 1938, although the games in question were cancelled because of World War II. Kano died on his way back to Japan after the success of his bid to host the Olympic Games in Japan (Kano Sensei Biographic Editorial Committee 182).

6 The historical context encouraged Anglophone writers to use the term “jiujutsu” even in the early 20th century. The victory of Japan in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 brought a boom of jujutsu both in Great Britain and in America. Especially, it became popular among English ladies after a suffragette threw a policeman on the street and the scene was caricatured in Punch (reproduced in Williams). The incumbent American President Theodore Roosevelt was well-known as a jujutsu enthusiast. He even started training in jiu-jitsu before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, and invited Kano’s judo disciple, Yoshitsugu Yamashita, to the White House in 1904. The President’s involvement in jiu-jutsu and judo boosted public interest in the United States (Yabu and Okada).

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