

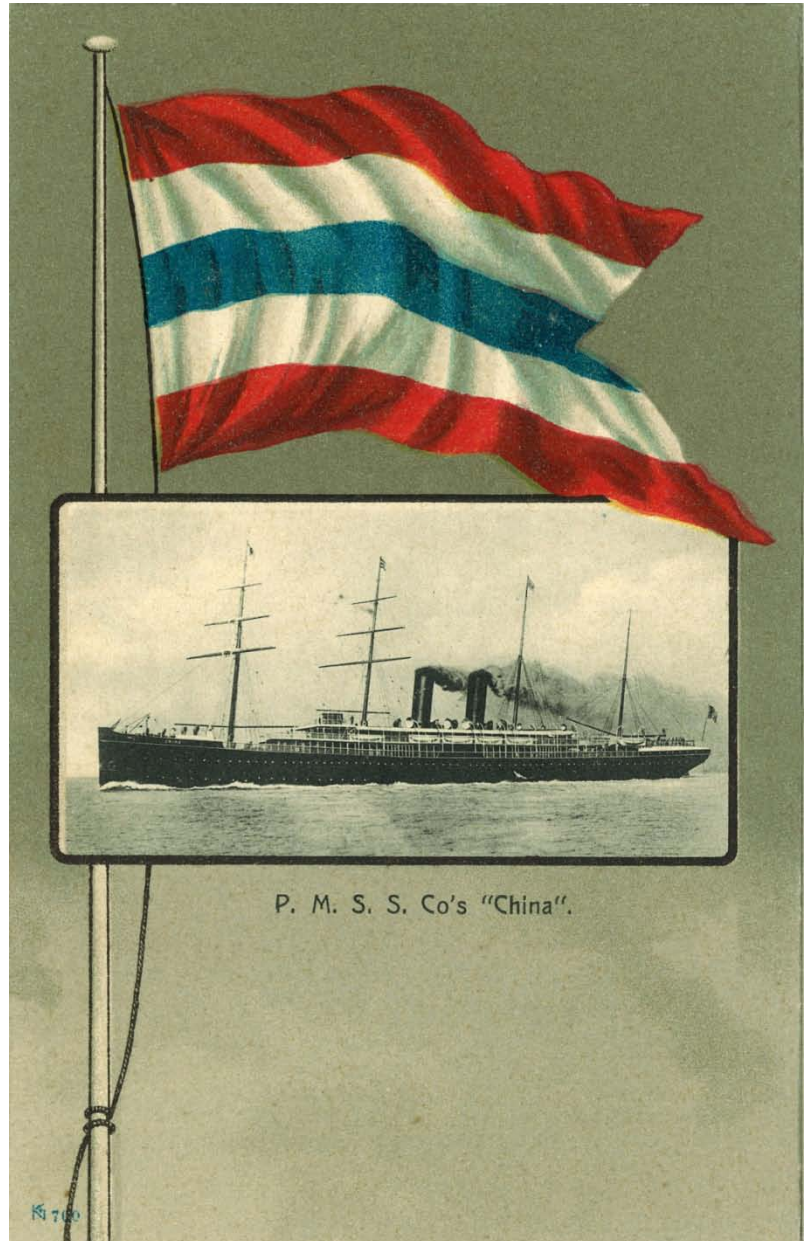
# S. S. China Steamship

On January 8, 1900, the **S. S. China** steamship arrived in Honolulu Harbor. Among its passengers were the first 26 Okinawan contract workers who had traveled from Naha, Okinawa, to Osaka, Yokohama, and then on to Honolulu.

The S. S. China was part of the Pacific Mail Company's fleet of ships, which included (at various times), the S. S. Korea, S. S. Manchuria, S. S. Mongolia, and S. S. Siberia. The S. S. China was constructed in 1889 by the Fairfield Company (Ltd.) of Glasgow, Scotland, and sailed between San Francisco and Yokohama, with stops in Honolulu. Originally of British registry, the ship was registered in Hawaii in 1897, and to the United States the next year (after the annexation of the Hawaiian islands).

The ship was 440 feet long and 48 feet wide. When the ship arrived in Hawaii with the first Okinawans, it had four masts and two smoke-stacks. Three years later, two masts were removed.

Postcards and menus from the ship give us a glimpse of the luxury afforded the passengers – at least the cabin passengers (first and second class). The ship could also accommodate about 1,000 passengers in steerage (usually immigrants). Among her features was lighting by *electricity*, a modern innovation at that time. The S. S. China visited Hawaii until about 1915.



*This exhibit was made possible by a generous grant from Hui O Lailima*

Hawaii Karate Museum  
museum.hikari.us • goodin@hawaii.rr.com • 808-488-5773

# Okinawan Sumo

**Okinawan Sumo** was a featured event at just about every picnic and gathering of Okinawans almost as soon as the first immigrants arrived in Hawaii. Although it is commonly called “Sumo”, Okinawan Sumo differs in many ways from Japanese Sumo.

In Okinawan Sumo (or “Shima”), the two contestants, under the supervision of the referee (gyoji), begin in the center of the ring (dohyo) holding onto the sides of each other's belts (mawashi). They have to continue to hold the belt throughout the match. If one lets go of the other's belt, the match will restart.

The match ends when one contestant pins the other's back to the ground. There is usually no time limit.

If a contestant steps out of the ring, the match will restart. If a contestant touches the ground, the match continues. If a contestant falls on his front (rather than his back), the match will restart.

When the match restarts, the referee will ensure that the contestants are properly holding each other's belt and then give a command to resume the match.



Okinawan Sumo, or Shima, may be more closely related to wrestling or Judo than it is to traditional Japanese Sumo. In Hawaii, the contestants usually wore only shorts and the belts. In Okinawa, they now generally wear Judo gi.

Many Karate students also participated in Okinawan Sumo. In the photo above, Seishin Uehara (1901-1956) referees a match in 1948 on the grounds of the Japanese Consulate. Born in Motobu, Okinawa, Uehara was one of Hawaii's earliest Karate Sensei.

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