

Thai Princess Dedicated New Royal Sala Pavilion— A Gift to the EWC from His Majesty



The Princess was the guest of honor at the EWC's annual "International Affair" dinner, where she accepted the Center's Asia Pacific Community Building Award on behalf of her father, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in recognition of the king's dedicated work for the welfare of the people of Thailand.



Hundreds gathered outside the East-West Center's Imin International Conference Center to witness the formal dedication of the Royal Sala Thai (Thai pavilion) by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand on March 1, 2008. In her remarks at the dedication ceremony, Her Royal Highness described King Bhumibol's intent in gifting the original *sala* to the Center in 1967 as a symbolic meeting place for people from different nations and cultures to come together and exchange knowledge and ideas.

In recognition of the importance of the East-West Center to U.S.-Thai relations, Their Majesties King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit gifted the East-West Center with a Royal Sala, which they dedicated in person 41 years ago. Since then, it has remained the only *sala* outside Thailand personally dedicated by the King and one of only four such pavilions outside of Thailand to bear the king's own royal seal. In 2006, the EWC and the Royal Thai Government worked together to restore the *sala*, which was reconstructed at the Royal Palace in Bangkok, and assembled at the EWC by Thai artisans under the direction of Thai National Artist/Architect Dr. Pinyo Suwankiri.

"In the old days, one way of community service or merit-making was to build a pavilion, or a Thai *sala*," the Princess said. "Its purpose is for any traveler or passerby to rest a while during their journey. ... It is free for all travelers coming from different directions. ... It was therefore His Majesty's wish to build a *sala* here at the East-West Center as a symbol of universal hospitality and brotherhood of mankind."

The dedication ceremony included the debut of an original classical-style dance titled "Dream Island," inspired by the Princess and performed especially for the occasion by the Royal Thai Dancers and Musicians ensemble, as well as a special hula performance by Halau ika Wekiu. At that event, Her Royal Highness also met privately with students from Thailand and members of Hawai'i's Thai community.

To commemorate the dedication of the new Royal Sala Thai, and in recognition of the importance of leadership to the future of the Asia Pacific region, the East-West Center and EWC Thai alumni and friends established The Royal Sala Thai Scholarship Fund with a \$185,000 scholarship endowment, which was presented by Her Royal Highness to the East-West Center. This scholarship fund provides additional support for students from Thailand to participate in EWC educational programs as degree fellows and in the Asia Pacific Leadership Program. More than 3,000 Thai scholars, researchers, students and professionals in business, government, journalism and the arts have participated in East-West Center cooperative programs of research, study, training, and dialogue since the Center was established in 1960.

Top Left: HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn with the members of the Royal Sala Thai Scholarship Fund Committee in front of the newly dedicated sala. Bottom Right: HRH Princess Sirindhorn with EWC President Charles E. Morrison (right) during the Royal Sala Thai dedication ceremony.

