

## Japan to Thailand, 8-12-1941

In November 1941, the Japanese government made preparations to annex parts of Thai territory, to be used as a stepping stone to invade both Burma and the Malay peninsula.<sup>1</sup> As part of this plan, it ordered the deployment of large numbers of forces – about 60,000 according to one estimate – close to the border with French Indochina. It also directed a large number of vessels to the Gulf of Siam.<sup>2</sup> Despite seemingly cordial Thai-Japanese relations, the Thai government was expecting the Japanese invasion: it had shipped out its national gold reserves and dispatched a number of ships overseas. On the evening of 7 December, the Thai Prime Minister went underground.<sup>3</sup> That same night the Japanese ambassador had called on the Thai foreign minister in Bangkok at 11 p.m. He presented an official ultimatum with a time limit of only three hours demanding right of passage of Japanese forces to the Malay peninsula (from Singora, present day Songkhla) and to Burma (from French Indochina). Failing Thai compliance Japan would invade Thailand.<sup>4</sup> Also on 7 December, after close consultation with the American government, the British government had sent a communiqué to the British diplomatic representative to deliver to the Thai prime minister, which read that ‘we shall regard an attack on Thailand as an attack upon ourselves.’<sup>5</sup> The message was only delivered after the ultimatum had already been issued. The Thai foreign minister, meanwhile, was not able to reach his prime minister and therefore did not reply to the ultimatum. Japan invaded Thailand that night. Japanese forces landed at Patani and engaged the Thai military forces in serious clashes leaving more than 800 Thai soldiers dead. In addition, Japanese forces entered Thailand at Bang Pu and headed straight for Bangkok where they arrived in the early hours of 8 December. The Thai government under the aegis of the returned prime minister called for a cease fire at 7.30 a.m. on 8 December.<sup>6</sup> While the cease fire took hold, Japanese forces occupied other parts of Thailand. On 11 December, the Thai prime minister signed the *Provisional Agreement of the Treaty of Alliance Between Thailand and Japan*, followed by a series of other agreements, and the final treaty in the weeks thereafter.<sup>7</sup> In January 1942, Thailand declared war on Great Britain and the United States.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bussemaker, 555.

<sup>2</sup> Bussemaker, 552 & 555.

<sup>3</sup> Bussemaker, 556 & 562.

<sup>4</sup> Bussemaker, 562.

<sup>5</sup> Bussemaker, 556.

<sup>6</sup> Bussemaker, 556 & 562.

<sup>7</sup> Paul H. Kratoska, *Southeast Asian Minorities in the Wartime Japanese Empire* (Psychology Press, 2002), 196.

<sup>8</sup> Kratoska, 197.