THAILAND

by

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INTRODUCTION

Thailand is predominantly a Buddhist country. However, its southern provinces of Patani, Narathiwat, Yala and Setun, which (with the exception of Patani) share a common border with Malaysia, are Malay-dominated areas. Like their brethren in Malaysia the Malays of Thailand profess the Islamic faith. The present Muslim population of these provinces, sometimes also referred to as “Greater Patani”, is estimated at more than two million.¹

In former times, these southern provinces constituted the prosperous Malay kingdom of Patani. The Patani Malays adopted Islam in the fifteenth century, or perhaps even earlier. The Islamic intellectual tradition in the kingdom can be traced as far back as the sixteenth century. It is well known that Patani produced a number of prominent and prolific Islamic scholars (“ulama”) whose religious and intellectual influence extended beyond its borders to permeate the whole of the Malay-speaking world. The most famous and prolific of them was Shaykh Daud bin Abdullah bin Idris al-Fatani (late 18th–early 19th century).

More recently, under Thai rule, the Islamic intellectual tradition in Greater Patani, although still living, has been in decline and the once rich Islamic manuscript holdings there have suffered neglect. Most of the writings of Patani authors in their manuscript form are now kept not in Thailand but in Malaysia. Collectors of Islamic manuscripts in Patani have sold many of them in Malaysia, mainly to the Islamic Centre (Pusat Islam) of the Prime Minister’s Department in Kuala Lumpur (see Vol. II, p. 265). As a result, not many Islamic MSS now remain in Thailand, and their locations are subject to change.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

BANGKOK

Adam Mahamad

c/o Sheikhul Islam
100 Soi Prompak
Sukhumvit 49
Bangkok 10110
Tel.: 390 0420 & 392 3814

Conditions of access: Considered case by case.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic).

Description of collection: One Qur’an in Arabic, undated, no page numbers, ca. 604pp.

NARATHIWAT

Abdul Malik Balajama collection

Status: Private

Description of collection: The family of HJ. Abdul Malik Balajama is believed to be in possession of manuscripts, but no information is available about them.

Madrasah Ihyā Ulum al-Din

Pondok Utan Tua

Status: Religious college library

Description of collection: The library of this madrasa is said to contain a small number of MSS of texts by Patani religious scholars including Shaykh Mohd bin Ismail Daud.

PATANI

Prince of Songkla University: Islamic Studies Department Library

Centre for Southern Thailand Studies, The University, Patani Campus

Date of establishment: 1968

Status: University departmental library

Description of collection: The MSS contain texts by leading Patani religious scholars, including Shaykh Daud (see above), Ahmad bin Mohd Zain and Ismail Abdul Kadir.

YALA

Ahmad Besing collection

Status: Private

Description of collection: A number of MSS are thought to be in the possession of the family of Tuan Guru Hj. Wan Ahmad Besing.

Ishaq collection

Status: Private

Description of collection: Some MSS are thought to be in the possession of the family of Tuan Hj. Wan Ishaq, a descendant of a close associate of Shaykh Daud.