4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapters 2 and 3 the relationship between Thai vernacular houses and the Thai concept of well-being was reviewed. The discussion in Chapter 2 indicated that Thai vernacular houses, with features that vary from region to region, are continually being modified. Many of the modifications are in response to the inhabitants’ experiences of well-being, and the demands of a particular place and time. This was followed in Chapter 3 by a discussion on the concepts of well-being, or Khwam Phasook, in relation to Thai vernacular houses.

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss selection of an approach to study the residents’ experiences of well-being in Thai vernacular houses. It begins by explaining how research questions were generated in Section 4.2. This is followed by a discussion on the selection of a case-study approach and the selection of the type of case study in Section 4.3. Then, the selection of a study area and appropriate methods of data collection in the study area are discussed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5 respectively. Conclusions are drawn in Section 4.6.

4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As discussed in Chapter 2, like all manifestations of indigenous culture Thai vernacular houses are established as local wisdom responds to particular environmental conditions, and are to be seen as expressions of a need of the residents
Experiences of well-being in Thai vernacular houses

for living attuned to their land. These houses are generally wooden and built on stilts, with high-pitched roofs in response to the tropical climate. Their morphological characteristics and decorative features vary in accordance with the ethnic groups of particular places and regional cultures. Their styles and distinctive carpentry work not only express artistic creativity but also reflect the integration of the social norms and spiritual and religious beliefs of the residents. The embodiment of the highest beliefs of the culture provides manifold rewards for the residents in living with satisfaction, happiness and reassurance. Such houses are thus not strictly utilitarian, and they appear to evolve along with the changes in complex experiences of well-being of the inhabitants.

As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the strongest manifestations of the Thai concept of well-being is articulated in language. The idea of well-being seems closest to the Thai terms Khwam Phasook or Khwam Sabai. In an ontological sense Khwam Phasook and Khwam Sabai involve a combination of the intentions, experiences and attitudes of Thai residents for living in harmony with themselves, their community, their environment and the divinities. The unity and complexity of their interactions are best summed up by the phrase Khwam Yhou Yen Pensook, which expresses the fullness of the relationship between the residents’ experiences of well-being and their vernacular houses.

The term Khwam Yhou Yen Pensook, when related to Thai vernacular houses, denotes the relationship between the physical properties of the houses, the patterns of use and the meanings attributed to them by the residents. These three factors are irreducibly interrelated in expressing the Thai residents’ experiences of Khwam Phasook in domestic spaces. They unfailingly affect one another, and change to one factor causes a chain reaction both to the other two and, in particular, to their interaction. Thus, over the course of time not only have the physical characteristics of the houses been modified, but the ways they are used and the meanings the residents ascribe to them have also changed. The evolution of these factors has also resulted in changes to the characteristics of the landscape in particular places.

Since personal attitudes about domestic well-being are constantly changing in accordance with the conditions of the environment, this in turn brings about changes
to the relationship between the creation of the physical form of the vernacular houses, their patterns of use and the associated meanings. Before the present era of urbanization and rapid globalization these changes stayed within the boundaries of local wisdom and the constraints of the particular location and culture. However, with the progression of modernity and recent rural developments, changes that occur within one lifetime have accelerated—indeed they exceed those that developed over the previous few centuries.

The above critical situation raises two research questions:

1. How have the residents’ experiences and attitudes towards the idea of well-being affected change in the physical characteristics of Thai vernacular houses?

2. How has the evolution of physical characteristics of these houses brought about changes to their patterns of use and the meanings attributed to them?

During the research project it is necessary to subdivide these broad research questions into more specific and detailed ones. These detailed questions will be presented in the outline of procedures given in Chapters 5 and 6 where the investigations and the results of the study will be discussed.

4.3 SELECTION OF CASE-STUDY APPROACH

To answer these initial, broad questions, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth investigation in a specific area or areas, and to make contact with the people in these areas, as only the local residents truly live in and deeply feel their houses, as their ‘real-life context’ (Stake 1998; 1995; Yin 1994). According to Brewer (2000), Stake (1998; 1995), Yin (1994) and Ragin (1992; 1987), a case-study approach provides a specific and in-depth analysis of phenomena in the inhabitants’ everyday context in a particular place at a given time. They also noted that the case-study approach concentrates on trying to gain rich and deep information concerning the complexity of the studied context rather than attempting to separate all the relevant factors out independently. A case-study approach within a specific area or areas is therefore an important strategy to provide a framework for in-depth but still holistic exploration of
the relationship of changes between the residents’ experiences of well-being and their vernacular houses.

Three main physical scales could have been used for the present research:

- Case studies from the various regions described in Chapter 2;
- Case studies from various localities within one region;
- A case study in one place.

Case studies from various regions or from various localities within one region provide an opportunity for comparative perspective (Yin 1994; Patton 1990). As discussed in the two preceding chapters, Thai vernacular houses are established in response to the residents’ fundamental needs for well-being, associated with the social values and cultural beliefs in particular places at particular times. Even though Thai vernacular houses in different regions or localities may display some similarities of architectural features, they are always different in atmosphere and details of physical characteristics, living activities and beliefs of the inhabitants (Panin 1999; Temiyabandha 1994). A comparative study of the relationship between changes in the residents themselves and the evolution of their vernacular houses, from various places, could yield contrasts or explicate similarities among them (Creswell 1998; Altman & Guavain 1981; Rapoport 1981).

However, there are three main reasons why selection of case studies in various regions or various localities in one region was not suitable for the present study. First, the time available for conducting field research for the present project was limited.1 Second, because the research focused not only on changes in the physical structures of vernacular houses, but also on the residents’ everyday practices, opinions and life stories related to their home environments, some time was required for the residents to get to know me and to trust me enough to conduct fieldwork in their homes (see also Sub-section 4.5.4).

1 Due to the time-frame of my scholarship from the Thai government, the period for conducting fieldwork for the whole range of this research project was limited to six months. My fieldwork was divided into two phases. The first phase took four months and a half for gaining general information for the study. The second phase took one month and a half for conducting in-depth studies (see also Sub-section 4.5.4).
Sub-sections 4.5.1–2 and Appendix B). Third, even though I am Thai, I am an outsider in terms of the present quite specific investigation of the built environment, and accordingly I needed to understand the residents’ ways of life, dialects, beliefs, attitudes and cultural values. The present research required ‘a great deal of time for the intensive and detailed study of the case’ (Appleton 2002; Stake 1995; Yin 1994). My concern was that study in a short period for a locality may not be ‘long enough to experience the full range’ of the residents’ experiences and expectations (Brewer 2000, p. 80).

A case study in one locality can allow collection of very detailed, deep, rich and specific data. Stake (1995) notes that case studies seek to discern and pursue understanding of issues intrinsic to the case itself. A study in a single location provided not only the opportunity for an in-depth exploration on the evolution of the physical forms and elements of vernacular houses, but also permitted the exploration of often ‘invisible’ information on the residents’ ways of life and experiences and attitudes toward their home environments.

Brewer (2000), Stake (1995) and Yin (1993) all emphasize that the foremost concern for conducting a case study, especially in a single locality, is to generalize knowledge of the particular. Appleton (2002) and Hammersley (1992) noted that there are two case-oriented forms that could be generalizable:

- **An instrumental case study** (Stake 1998), which examines a particular case or cases to provide a supportive role for generating theoretical inferences;

- **A collective case study** (Stake 1998), which extends to several individual cases of the same phenomena to identify common characteristics or permit empirical generalization.

These two types of case study are important for an understanding of how Thai vernacular houses have evolved in parallel with changes in the residents’ experiences of well-being. The houses and the residents themselves are instrumental cases, because they are not regarded as unique cases of interest. Rather they play a supportive role (Appleton 2002) to permit an understanding of the relationship between changes in the residents’ attitudes and the evolution of their houses. Both the houses and the residents also need to be broadened as a collective case of various
samples in a particular place, so that in-depth investigation and comparisons can be made across them, creating a body of cumulative knowledge (Groat 2002; Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin 1994; Dey 1993; Hammersley 1992). Therefore, it was appropriate to study a number of vernacular houses and their residents in a locality in order to reveal the relationship between the evolution of vernacular houses and changes in the residents’ experiences of well-being during socio-cultural transformations within a given locality and a limited period of time.

As discussed in Chapter 3, because the evolution of vernacular houses, the patterns of uses and the meanings attributed to them are different from culture to culture, the detailed and specific information of the research findings from a single locality cannot be generalized (Miller 1994; Lincoln & Guba 1985). However, Geertz (1973, p. 24) argues that a study of the particular provides not only generalization but also offers ground for commentary on more than itself. He says, ‘where an interpretation comes from does not determine where it can be impelled to go.’ The findings of this study can be useful for further developments in understanding of residents’ experiences and expectations of well-being, and they can help establish a case for retaining vernacular houses during times of rapid developments. Such a case could, in turn, facilitate broader generalizations for sustaining indigenous dwellings in other localities (Oliver 2000).

It was therefore relevant to this project to adopt a case-study approach with a focus on a number of vernacular houses in one locality that provided detailed insights into the historical development of the houses and its association with the residents’ experiences and ideas of well-being. It also enabled the research findings to provide insights into the possibility of dealing with the wider problems of survival of vernacular housing trapped in the rapid development of Thailand.
4.4 Study Area

The numbers of Thai vernacular houses are now reducing significantly because of the scarcity of traditional materials and the rapid changes to Thai society and environment (Jumsai 1997; Panin 1996; Temiyabandha 1994). Besides the studies of many scholars, as discussed in Chapter 2, various organizations have formed a group whose aim is to investigate and record the unique indigenous Thai dwellings. Out of this came an important study on vernacular dwellings at Pakkran sub-district, or Tambon Pakkran, which is located in the southern part of the municipal area of Pra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya (PNSA) province in Central Thailand (Figure 4.1 and see also Figure 4.2).

![Figure 4.1 The location of Pra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya province](image)

I decided to conduct a case study at Tambon Pakkran, for four reasons.

First, PNSA province is located in the central region of Thailand. As discussed in Chapter 2, even though there have been many research projects and documentations on vernacular houses in the central region, study of the relationship between the residents’ experiences and attitudes to well-being and the evolution of their vernacular houses, uses and meanings has been given little attention. A case study focused on that issue in Tambon Pakkran of PNSA province was needed to complement the existing knowledge of vernacular houses in this region.

Second, the core of PNSA province, known as the city of Ayutthaya, is one of Thailand’s places of precious cultural heritage. The city of Ayutthaya is one of the
Experiences of well-being in Thai vernacular houses

most important historical sites of Thailand; it was the former capital of the kingdom (from 1350 to 1767), and was declared a world heritage site on 13 October 1991. Over a long period of time Ayutthaya has gradually built up its unique cultural heritage. The magnificent craftsmanship of its Thai architecture, mural painting, sculpture and fine arts was handed down to the first Rattanakosin era, 1768 to 1851 (Horayangkura 2001). It is well known as one of the significant locations of the traditional Siamese houses (see also Sub-section 2.3.4), or ‘Reun Thai.’ The accessibility from Bangkok City (75 km) and the influences of urbanization and modern developments have accelerated changes to the local character of the province. People’s lifestyles are rapidly changing from rural to urban (Sujachaya 1995). Despite their historical value, the vernacular houses, which have long been the key feature of the cultural landscape of this province, are now decreasing in number and changing in their architectural characteristics. This confirms the need to act towards their presentation and gives an (often unfortunate) opportunity to observe the effects of such pressures.

Third, Tambon Pakkran was nominated as one of the best sites of vernacular dwellings and environments of PNSA district in 2001 (Silpakorn University 1999; Panin 1998). Various research projects have been conducted on the ancient city of Ayutthaya; however, a significant background study for the present research is the project of the Masterplan II for Conservation and Development of Ayutthaya the Historical City (1997–1999). The aim of this project was to prepare a plan for conserving the archaeological and heritage value of Ayutthaya’s historical city. The project was divided into various disciplines such as history and archaeology, vernacular architecture, landscape architecture, sociology, economics, tourism and so forth. In the area of PNSA district, the project concluded that Tambon Pakkran still has some of the best vernacular dwellings and environments (Figure 4.2). The

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2 Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, is known by Thai residents as Rattanakosin.

3 From now onwards in the present study, the traditional Siamese houses that were described in Chapters 2 and 3 will be called ‘Reun Thai’ to follow the dialect of the residents in Tambon Pakkran.

4 I worked on the initial stage of this project as a volunteer for surveying and recording vernacular houses around PNSA district.
vernacular houses, which have been central to the pastoral landscape of the locality for more than a half a century, are clearly evolving. Much of their evolution can be attributed to changes in the residents’ ways of life and values associated with well-being. This provided a good basis from which to address the research questions identified in Section 4.2.

![Map of Tambon Pakkran](image)

**Figure 4.2 The location of Tambon Pakkran**

Source: Adapted by the author from *the Masterplan II for Conservation and Development of Ayutthaya the Historical City Project (1997–1999)* (Silpakorn University 1999)

Fourth, although Tambon Pakkran is one of the best locations of traditional houses, a number of modified *Reun Thai*, bungalow houses and completely new houses made entirely of concrete are now appearing among the *Reun Thai* (Figure 4.3), thus changing the overall atmosphere of the locality. The changes made to the *Reun Thai*, and its evolution towards ‘contemporary *Reun Thai*,’ are critical to understanding the evolution of such houses, their patterns of use, and the meanings

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5 The term ‘contemporary *Reun Thai*’ is taken in this thesis to mean a house type modified from the traditional Thai houses of the central region, or ‘*Reun Thai*,’ as a consequence of socio-cultural and ecological changes around the locality.
the residents attach to them (this is relevant to the research questions presented in section 4.2).

Figure 4.3 General view of the houses in Tambon Pakkran
(a) View from the road, (b) View from the watercourse of the villages,
(c) One of the bungalow houses, (d) One of the concrete houses in the villages

For these four reasons, the present research focused on a case study at Tambon Pakkran in PNSA district.
4.5 RESEARCH PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION

Geertz (1973, p. 22) states that ‘the locus of study is not the object of study.’ As discussed earlier, the relationship between the residents and their vernacular houses is significant for understanding their experiences of well-being. To understand this interrelation two types of data collection were required: primary and secondary. Primary data collected in the home environments was concerned with selection of households for detailed study and the collection of data from the residents of these households, while secondary data were collected from various other relevant sources.

This section deals with five types of data collection:

- The need for an unobtrusive approach;
- Selection of households;
- Methods for studying evolution of vernacular houses;
- Methods for understanding changes of uses and meanings;
- Secondary data collection.

These are described below.

4.5.1 The need for an unobtrusive approach

It is necessary not only to collect data in local houses but also to engage with the residents to elicit their experiences, attitudes and beliefs related to their home environments. Lee (2000) and Kellehear (1993) argue that the acts of the researcher in eliciting data from respondents can affect the validity of the findings. This difficulty called for a set of skills and methods that established an unobtrusive approach to the participants (Patton 1990), so that they could naturally reveal their life stories, their living activities, their opinions and the relationship between themselves and their vernacular houses (see Appendix B). Without this, it would not be possible to establish validity and reliability in the data obtained. Data triangulation, which refers to the integration of various data sources and methods (Patton 1990; Denzin
1989), was adopted to minimize the possibility of errors and biases. The selection of appropriate methods is explained in Sub-sections 4.5.2–4.5.4.

### 4.5.2 Selection of households

Schwandt (1997, pp. 140–141) notes that cases are ‘chosen on the basis of a combination of criteria including availability, accessibility and theoretical interest.’ For the present project, there were three main factors involved in selecting households for detailed study.

First, the criteria for selection of households in Tambon Pakkran were based mainly on the physical appearance of the vernacular houses, which in turn was based on a significant body of literature, as discussed in Sub-section 2.3.4. A number of vernacular houses were selected to yield contrasting or similar insights into their evolution within the locality. The houses selected ranged from completed models of Reun Thai to the most changed house models that still retained some characteristics of the traditional house (for example, see IAC-14 and IM-2 houses in Appendix D-3).

Besides the important selection of vernacular houses, participants were the residents who lived in them. Thus they could reveal in-depth information of changes to their houses and themselves. These residents (ranging from 20 to 89 years old) had experienced the changes that had occurred within and around their home environments. The number of respondents in the study of each household ranged from one person to the whole family, up to four people.

Second, selecting and accessing households to be studied involved two methods, self-selection and the ‘snowballing’ approach (Flick 2002; Seidman 1991). My first selections were made by direct approach to a small number of households. This method was limited because, as Hammersley (1983, p. 53) wrote, ‘people have pressing concerns of their own that often give them little reason to co-operate,’ and because local residents felt insecure and rather reluctant to participate in the study on my first encounter (see Appendix B for an account of how I dealt with this problem of reluctance).
The snowballing approach, having one participant leading to another, provided
more opportunities to select households to be studied (Fetterman 1998; 1989; Patton
people are more articulate and culturally sensitive than others. These individuals
make excellent key actors or informants.’ In selecting houses, a key informant in the
fieldwork was essential for guiding and linking myself with other local residents in
the communities. Using this approach, new participants became more at ease and
welcoming. Although this sampling technique increased my opportunities for
selecting houses to be studied, there is always the danger of bias in such methods (as
key informants introduce me to participants like themselves). The fieldwork was
therefore not complete until enough participants had been selected to enable this bias
to be identified and guarded against.

Thus, the third factor in the selection of households in this locality was
concerned with the issue of how many samples were ‘enough’. Seidman (1991, p. 45)
identified two criteria for this: first, the number of cases from the total population
should sufficiently reflect the problems in the particular study; and second, saturation
of information, which occurs at the point where the researcher begins to hear the same
information repeated. These two criteria were reflected in the selection of households
for this thesis, where the data revealed the same information repeatedly reported, and
the numbers of houses and participants studied were sufficient and effective for
identifying common characteristics of the evolution of vernacular houses, their
patterns of use and the meanings the residents attribute to them within the locality.

4.5.3 Methods for studying evolution of vernacular houses

To study how vernacular houses have evolved in parallel to the residents’ experiences
of well-being, two types of data were required: physical conditions and historical
development of the houses. The present physical appearance of the houses could be
obtained by physical observation, while an understanding of their historical
development required information that could only be revealed by the local residents
themselves. Thus, to understand evolution of these houses two categories of data
collection were developed: physical observation and interviews.
Physical observation

Since records of architectural drawings and other documents illustrating the physical appearance of most vernacular houses in Tambon Pakkran were rare, it was necessary first to document the physical appearance of these houses. As discussed in Sub-section 3.3.2, the appearance of houses is a combination of physical features and spatial dimensions (Dovey 1985; 1979). Thus physical observations of the houses in Tambon Pakkran required both of these aspects of documentation. The physical features of the houses being studied were documented by the use of conventional cameras and a technique of free-hand drawings, while the spatial dimensions of each house were measured in detail.

The free-hand drawings of each house fell into two groups. The first group was drawings documented on the interview sheets (this will be discussed shortly in Sub-section 4.5.4), illustrating the upper floor plans and the placement of furniture and implements stored in the spaces. These drawings of the upper floors, where most daily activities of the residents took places, became ‘representational maps’ (Denzin 1989; Schatzman & Strauss 1973) to support further interviews (see Sub-section 4.5.4). The second group was documented in separate books, and included various architectural drawings and details such as layout with placement of household items, and landscape elements, elevations and sections. All these drawings were presented to the participants for checking when the study of their houses had been completed.

Interviews

The historical development of the vernacular houses was revealed by interviews. An interview is a behavioral event of verbal exchange (Mishler 1986). Simpson (1995, p. 30) notes that ‘understanding the language of a people furnishes us with a map for understanding their world.’ For this study, interviews were used as a technique for revealing the often invisible but crucial information about the evolution of vernacular houses in Tambon Pakkran.

The interviews for revealing such historical dimensions were supported by a technique that I call projection mapping, which involved reconstructing the past by sketching the plans of the houses before and after various times of change, as
recounted by the residents themselves. The projection mapping helped me during the interviews not only to reveal the historical development of the houses but also to create a relaxed atmosphere for the participants. In this way, the participants felt engaged in the interview procedure, thus creating a positive rapport between us.

4.5.4 Methods for understanding changes of uses and meanings

To answer the second research question (see p. 81), it was necessary to observe the varied factors underlying changes in the residents’ daily living activities and in the meanings they attributed to their houses. Two main methods were employed: interviews and participant observation.

**Interviews**

Seidman (1991) and Brenner (1985) note that we use the method of interviews to understand other people’s stories or narratives. As mentioned earlier, because of time limitation for conducting field research, I decided to divide the interviews for understanding the changes in the relationship between the houses, the residents’ living activities and the meanings they attribute to them in Tambon Pakkran, into two phases.

The first phase of interviews, conducted during October 2000–February 2001, was to gain general information about the changes. The interviews in the first fieldwork avoided the use of sophisticated recording devices such as video cameras and tape recorders. Only papers and pens were used. The interviews were conducted using a questionnaire, with myself taking notes on the interview sheets. The conversations were informal and flexible, and were presented in such a way as to provide some pauses for the participants, in which they could see and comment on what I wrote. The task was as much to establish a positive rapport and trust as to collect data.

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6 This semi-imposed limitation is discussed in the section ‘Exploring through Trial and Error’ in Appendix B.
The interview questions for the first phase were semi-structured. Seidman (1991) argues that behavioural observation may not be at all consistent in certain situations. This was the case in Tambon Pakkran. I decided to include living activities of the residents in the interviews by asking about their daily schedules, because direct observation in their houses was limited. This was also to respect the privacy of the residents themselves. Thus the questionnaire was divided into three main parts:

- General information about the participants themselves and their houses;
- The residents’ living activities;
- Their feelings about their houses (see also Appendices C-1 and C-2).

The interviews in the first phase would typically begin with a casual discussion of the participants’ occupations, their way of life, their personal history and the historical development of their houses. An opening discussion of this kind made the residents more relaxed, and the information itself was useful for further discussion. The interviews then moved into more specific questions based on the last two parts of the questionnaire. These employed ‘probes’ (Zeisel 1984), which were interposed questions to engage the residents to clarify their opinions, to continue the conversation, and to shift the topic when necessary.

The method of projection mapping, which involved the residents indicating their living activities and their feelings about their houses, was also included. This method involved my use of free-hand drawings to gain the residents’ attention and participation in the interview process. With this method, the participants could enjoy themselves, interact with me and reveal more about how they used their houses and how they felt about them. This often gained the attention not only of the participants of the house being studied but also of other locals who came by during the interviews, thus adding opportunities to make contacts for potential further study.

The second phase of interviews, conducted during January–February 2002, was to gain in-depth understanding of the relationship between changes in the residents’ experiences of well-being, the evolution of the houses, the patterns of use and the meanings the residents attributed to them.
The interview questions in this phase were set in a semi-structured form. These questionnaires were again divided into three parts: first, the development of the residents’ houses and surroundings in relation to the changes in socio-cultural and environmental conditions around Tambon Pakkran; second, changes in their everyday living and their feelings about the conditions of spaces and elements of their modified houses and changes to the meanings they attributed to them; and third, changes in the relationship between the residents’ attitudes to well-being and their houses (see also Appendices C-3 and C-4). Because of the need for in-depth information, which sometimes requires detailed questions, I decided to conduct interviews with only a small number of participants. The participants for the second phase of interviews were selected from those interviewed in the first phase. Since they were by now familiar with me, I could use not only hand notes and projection mapping but also a tape recorder. This second phase of interviews helped provide detailed information that needed further investigation as identified from the first phase of interviews.

**Participant observation**

Seidman (1991, p. 16) argues that ‘the interaction between the data gatherers and the participants is inherent in the nature of interviewing. It is inherent as well in other qualitative approaches, such as participant observation.’ Patton (1990), Jorgensen (1989) and Vidich (1970) hold that participant observation permits the researcher to go beyond external behavior to gain a better understanding of the internal state of persons who are observed. During the first phase of the fieldwork, I augmented my interviews with participant observation by living in one of the villages and joining in with some village activities.

I included participant observation in order to understand and to unfold in detail the villagers’ ways of life and beliefs about their vernacular houses. However, I was not able to rent one of the contemporary Reun Thai in one of the villages until the second half of the first fieldwork period, because the locals needed time to get to know and trust me. There were various benefits of living in such a house. Living in a contemporary house not only helped me to understand its characteristics of spatial structure and modification, but also gave me the knowledge needed for understanding other modified houses. This also provided me with an in-depth understanding of the
evolution of the housing compounds of the group of relatives with whom I lived. Another advantage of living in the villages was that I could spend more time and gain the opportunity to join events and activities held in some houses and around the villages, thus gaining a better understanding of the relationship between their vernacular houses and their ways of life and the social norms in this locality. Having accommodation in one of the villages helped me to develop and expand rapport with local residents, enabling them to become comfortable with me and assured about my conducting field research in and around their houses.

4.5.5 Secondary data collection

Besides the most valuable primary data collection discussed above, secondary data were necessary for development and structuring of my understanding of the relationship between changes in the external factors of the environments, the residents’ experiences of well-being, and their vernacular houses. Various other sources of supporting data were collected from various government agencies and other sources:

- Demographic information;
- Maps and aerial photographs taken at various times;
- Other reports about changes of the environments around the locality such as floods and the development of infrastructure;
- Information about architectural movements that could bring about changes to vernacular houses in Tambon Pakkran.

This secondary information helped me to understand the influences of socio-cultural and environmental changes on the relationship between the residents’ experiences of well-being and the evolution of vernacular houses in the locality.
4.6 CONCLUSIONS

Thai vernacular houses are always evolving, partly in accordance with the residents’ experiences of well-being. The Thai concept of well-being refers to the terms Khwam Phasook or Khwam Sabai. These concepts are best described by the phrase Khwam Yhou Yen Pen Sook, which links the relationship between Thai vernacular houses and residents’ experiences and their expectations to live attuned to the environment. This term clearly embraces the relationship of physical characteristics of the houses, the patterns of uses and the meanings the residents attach to them. These three factors and their natural relationships are important to an understanding of the relationship between the Thai residents’ experiences and their attitudes to Khwam Phasook.

A case-study approach was selected for the present research to provide an opportunity to achieve detailed insights into changes to the above three factors of Thai vernacular houses. Time limitations made cross-cultural comparisons impossible. Conducting a case study with a number of vernacular houses in a single location was an appropriate format for this project.

It was decided to carry out the study in Central Thailand. The key reason was the lack of research on the relationship between the evolution of central Thai houses and the inhabitants’ experiences of well-being. Tambon Pakkran in Pra Nakhon Sri Ayutthaya was selected as a study area because this locality retains some of the best vernacular houses and environments in Thailand. Tambon Pakkran has also been experiencing rapid modern development. Numbers of traditional houses have been decreasing, while numbers of contemporary vernacular houses and various types of modern houses have been increasing. This situation has created the opportunity for me to explore evolution of the contemporary vernacular houses in this locality and to see it in relation to the residents’ experiences of well-being during this socio-cultural transformation.

Multiple sources and methods for data collection were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. Two main categories of primary data collection were selected for the research: first, observation of the evolution of the physical characteristics of vernacular houses in Tambon Pakkran; and second,
exploration of the patterns of uses and the meanings the residents attach to their houses. These two main types of data collection were pursued using methods of direct observation, interviews and participant observation. They were documented through photographs, free-hand drawings and descriptive narratives. Multiple methods and techniques were selected and developed as unobtrusive ways of conducting field research and in-depth investigation in the residents’ home environments. Secondary data collection from various sources was also included to support analysis of the residents’ experiences of well-being in their vernacular houses. Detailed analysis of the data collected will be presented in Chapters 5 and 6.
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