

CHAPTER V

HOW DO YOUNG EDUCATED CAMBODIANS HOLD THOSE ATTITUDES?

"Attitude formation and change are not two separate things, they are interwoven. People are always adopting, modifying and relinquishing attitudes to fit their ever changing needs and interests." ¹

The formation of attitudes can happen after a message or information about the attitude object has been received by the people. The message can come from direct experiences with the attitude object, information from the media, school, social environment or other sources. All are potential sources of the information. After receiving the message from the source, people will process that message or information, then their attitudes toward the attitude object could be formed, changed or kept the same. According to Petty and Cacioppo, there are various types of message processing. However, they categorize them into two basic routes to attitude change, the central and peripheral routes. The central route referred to the processing of a message or information pertaining to the object under consideration.² As for the peripheral route, the attitudes change is the result of the "persuasion cue" in the message or information.³ Thus, the source of the message, the message and the processing of the message are all very important for attitude formation and change.

¹ http://www.ciadvertising.org/sa-fall_02/adv382/klarr1/attitude_change2.htm

² Richard E. Petty and John T. Cacioppo, Attitudes and Persuasion: Classic and Contemporary Approaches, (Lowa: WCB, 1984), p. 255- 257

³ Ibid

In order to understand how the YECs hold their attitudes toward the Vietnamese and to devise ways to change the negative attitudes, this chapter aims to demonstrate the kinds of information about the Vietnamese perceived by the YECs and the source, which provides the information and the processing of that information into attitudes.

1. Information about the Vietnamese and its sources during the Vietnamese occupation in the 1980s

During the Vietnamese occupation in the 1980s, the informants were in their childhood. The younger informants said that they could not remember because they were too young. The older informants could remember their past experiences during that time. They gained information about the Vietnamese both from school education and from the people around them.

1.1 School Education

Some informants received primary education during the 1980s. At school, they were taught how to read, write and calculate. Although history was not taught yet in primary school, pupils were told through their textbook to love the revolution and the socialist regimes in Indochina. In the school curriculum, a positive picture of the friendship between Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos was painted while a negative image of the Khmer Rouge was strongly conveyed. One university lecturer recalled his school years during the PRK period. "At school, the curriculum was about the revolution. They taught us to hate Pol Pot but to love the communist and revolution. I never learnt about history before the Pol Pot regime. My textbook contained sections on Pol Pot and Revolution. It was about how Pol Pot cruelly treated the Khmers. We listened to revolutionary songs. We could not listen to Sin Sisamot (the most popular singer before 1975) and could not even get together and talk against the revolution."⁴ Another lecturer said: "When I was young, I did not know about history. At school we always learnt about friendship between Vietnam and Cambodia.

⁴ Interview with informant no.27

Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians are brothers."⁵ An informant who is an NGO staff remembered: "In school, they told us that the Vietnamese rescued us from the Khmer Rouge regime....At that time they trained us to hate Pol Pot and the monarchical regime and they put these messages in the educational system. We always respected the Vietnamese soldiers"⁶

It can be seen that the information about the Vietnamese given in school education in the 1980s was used to form positive attitudes of the young generation toward the Vietnamese and the PRK. The Vietnamese were mentioned as good people who were rescuers, protectors and brothers. All this propaganda was imposed on students via school textbooks.

1.2 Personal experiences

Besides the information gained from school, some informants had direct contact with Vietnamese people and soldiers in the 1980s. These YECs could recall their direct experiences with the Vietnamese. One man remembered: "I used to study in the temple and I saw the Vietnamese soldiers staying there. I saw them kill and eat dogs. I didn't feel afraid of them but I was afraid when I saw their guns. The Vietnamese soldiers never stayed in my house but they stayed in our neighbour's house. I did not see them treat anyone badly."⁷ Similar to this man, an informant talked about his experiences and his normal feelings toward the Vietnamese during that time. "After 1979, we thought that our life would become easier. During that time my mother worked for the government. She got a salary. But we still ate rice mixed with corn. We didn't have enough food to eat. I saw many NGOs, such as UNICEF which came to my school and distributed milk powder to the children. When I went to school, I brought a bundle of wood to boil water for making milk. During that time, the Vietnamese arrested many Cambodians. My brother in-law was also arrested. The Vietnamese soldiers (called Kamapibal or Bong Bros) said they were afraid of

⁵ Interview with informant no.14

⁶ Interview with informant no.20

⁷ In group discussion, informant no.26

Khmer Rouge soldiers hiding among the people, so they wanted to investigate. After the investigation, my brother was released safely. I did not feel afraid of the Vietnamese at all. I always called them elder brother (Bong)."⁸

However, many other informants had different experiences. Some had scary experiences and had a negative image of the Vietnamese. One informant recalled: "Whenever the Vietnamese soldiers came out of their camp, the people were scared of them. My house was near the Vietnamese camp. The main habit of the Vietnamese soldier was eating. In my village compound, they always killed the dogs and went into the villagers' houses and ate whatever they saw. So the people were afraid of that"⁹ A nurse also mentioned: "My grandfather was a village head. The Vietnamese soldiers always came to our house to ask for men to join the military forces. My grandfather didn't want the men in the village to go to war with the Khmer Rouge. So we always provided a place for villagers to hide. I didn't like the Vietnamese soldiers because they spoke loudly and they shouted at the children. I used to see them and I was frightened."¹⁰

Another informant remembers: "My mother used to tell me some good things about the Vietnamese soldiers who used to help our family. But when I grew up I saw there was a changing of Vietnamese soldiers. The old Vietnamese soldiers were replaced by new groups. The new Vietnamese groups were not good. They always came and asked for money. If we didn't give it to them, they took our foodstuffs and dried food which hung in front of our house. I remembered they once asked for money from us and they threatened to throw a hand grenade at our house. And they took our supplies for making fish balls. During that time when the people saw the Vietnamese soldiers, they always hurried to close the door."¹¹

⁸ Interview with informant no.27

⁹ Interview informant no.20

¹⁰ Interview informant no.7

¹¹ Interview with informant no.14

The YECs had different experiences with the Vietnamese when they were young. Some had normal feelings toward the Vietnamese in Cambodia during the 1980s but the others were scared of them. This fear was not the fear of losing Cambodia to Vietnam but the fear of the Vietnamese soldiers who caused trouble for them.

1.3 Social environment

Apart from school education and their direct experiences, the informants also received information about the Vietnamese from the people around them such as their parents, their relatives and their neighbours. Although the information given to them was both positive and negative, most of it was negative.

One lady recalled how the old people always used the Vietnamese as the "bad guys" to scare her into staying around the house. Moreover, she told about the frightening attitudes of her relatives toward the Vietnamese soldiers. "The old people always told us not to go far away from home otherwise the Yuon or the Pramat Promang¹² would take us away. So, we dared not go far away from home because we afraid of the Yuon. We always played around our house." she continued: "Whenever my aunt and my uncle brought me to the cinema, if they saw Vietnamese soldiers there, they would hurry back home and skip our relaxation. They said that wherever the Vietnamese soldier went, there would be problems such as conflicts, fighting and bombing."¹³ Another woman remembered getting negative information about the Vietnamese from her aunt who disliked some characteristics of the Vietnamese soldiers. She said: "I heard my aunt say that the Vietnamese used to stay in our house. She said they came to rescue us but at the same time it was also difficult for us to live with them. The Vietnamese did not respect us who were the owners of the house. If they wanted to get something, they just took it. It seemed like those things belonged to them and we could not say anything to them. Beautiful daughters of some families could

¹² "Promat Promang" is refers to a very bad person or to evil. This word is usually used to scare children. "The Pramat Promang will take you away then cut out your stomach and take out your insides". Here, the old people used Vietnamese as the Pramat Promang.

¹³ Interview with informant no.7

rarely escape from the Vietnamese soldiers' hands. They raped the girls. Of course they rescued Cambodia from the Khmer Rouge but it did not mean that they treated us well. They killed our chickens and ducks and enjoyed eating them. I heard all of these from my Aunt but I did not ask her more because I was just a small girl at that time."¹⁴

It is noteworthy that information about the Vietnamese that the informants got from the people around them when they were young relates to unsatisfied feelings toward the bad characteristics and behaviours of the Vietnamese. These include the use of violence, rape, and the taking of Cambodians' belongings without asking for permission.

Some informants also mentioned the dissatisfaction their parents and neighbours had toward some policies which they referred to as the policies of the Vietnamese and the PRK. One man remembered: "I heard my father talk about his life during the K5¹⁵ policy. He was ordered to take part in K5. My father said in K5 many people died and no one took responsibility for that"¹⁶. Another informant added: "I heard the old people say that during that time, K5 meant two wrists, two ankles, and a neck. They said this policy brought death to Khmers."¹⁷ Later, this informant talked about the K5 policy again in an in-depth interview. "During the K5, my father spent a lot of money to hire someone to go instead of him. Later the hire fees became more expensive, so he could not afford them and he decided to go himself. He saw many people die because of landmines. He said the number of people who died because of the Khmer Rouge was less than the number of people who died because of landmines. So, to go to K5 was to die." The Cambodians perceived this policy as a Vietnamese policy to bring the Cambodians to die. Although they did not experience this themselves, the informants more or less heard about the events which happened to the people around them.

¹⁴ Interview with informant no.11

¹⁵ K5 was a policy of the PRK during the Vietnamese occupation. It was the conscription of Cambodians for a vast construction project along the Thai border. Evan Gottesman, Cambodian after the Khmer Rouge: Inside the Politics of Nation Building, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003),p. 231

¹⁶ In group discussion, informant no. 26

¹⁷ In group discussion, informant no.14

To sum up, as young children in the Vietnamese occupation period, the informants received information about the Vietnamese from three important sources: from their direct experiences with the Vietnamese, from their school education and from the people around them. At school, a positive image of the Vietnamese and Vietnam had been imposed and this was related to the political situation in the 1980s when the Vietnamese and PRK alliance was trying to gain their legitimacy from the people under their control. Thus, the young generation had learnt from schools about the struggle of and the cooperation between the Vietnamese and the PRK. Families and neighbors were also important sources who provided information to the informants. Besides good information about the Vietnamese, these people also expressed their dissatisfaction towards Vietnamese activities in Cambodia. With or without intention, this young generation of Cambodians had already gotten the negative information because they lived close to them.

The YECs' images of the Vietnamese were also created from their own experiences as they grew up during the PRK period. That each would have a good or bad image depended on individual experiences. Thus, during the 1980s, the information about the Vietnamese gained by the children was both positive and negative. Although the school education aimed to form a good image, a negative image of the Vietnamese was formed through the socialization process during their childhood.

2. Information about the Vietnamese and its sources after the Vietnamese occupation

After 10 years of occupation, the Vietnamese completely withdrew their troops from Cambodia in 1990. The agreement to settle the peace in Cambodia was held in 1991 and followed by the national election in 1993. After having democracy, Cambodians enjoyed freedom that they did not have in the restricted society in the 1980s. The people have rights to express their opinions, to receive any kind of information and to do whatever they want as long as they respect the law. The results from the discussions and interviews with the informants can be good evidence to prove that people have much more freedom in

expressing and receiving the information than in the 1980s. In addition to school education, personal experiences and social surroundings, the informants gained information about the Vietnamese from another important source, the mass media.

2.1 School Education

In answering the question of what they learnt in school about the Vietnamese after the 1980s, some informants quickly recalled the history between Cambodia and Vietnam in the eighteenth and the nineteenth century. Instead of telling about the important dates or the long events they had learnt in school, the informants quickly jumped to talk about the invasion of the Vietnamese over Cambodian territory. One lady said: "I felt not so good with the Vietnamese since I studied history at high school. The teacher was right. Things are the same between the past and present day. The leaders like to enjoy wealth and women and they sold the nation."¹⁸ From her words, the negative attitudes toward both Vietnamese and Cambodian leaders could be inferred though the negative feeling toward the Cambodian leaders seemed to be much stronger. The meaning was that the Cambodian leaders should have taken responsibility to protect the territory from invaders. Her perception is similar to those of most of the informants who thought that the Cambodian leaders were more careless and lacked ability but enjoyed having power and a prosperous life, such as having Vietnamese wives and letting invaders take Cambodian land. One informant mentioned: "I told a Vietnamese whom I met in Russia that I don't like the Vietnamese because of history. They invaded our territory. It is recorded in history. But to be honest, I think it's because our king was crazy. It was the reason why we lost our land. It was also our fault."¹⁹

It is interesting to find that education after the 1980s was quite open. The people have learnt about the history between Vietnam and Cambodia more widely. At the same time that they learnt about the Vietnamese invasions, the students also had their own

¹⁸ Interview with informant no. 21

¹⁹ In group discussion informant no.22

perceptions about the Cambodian leaders. Historical lessons in school have affected the attitudes of Cambodian people toward the Vietnamese as well as toward the Cambodian leaders in the past.

2.2 Personal experiences

Many Vietnamese people were left in Cambodia after the withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops. In addition, the flow of the Vietnamese people into Cambodia still continues until today. In everyday life, the Cambodians could recognize the Vietnamese from their language or their accent. Some informants have experiences in communicating with Vietnamese people in their daily life.

Some informants mentioned that they saw the Vietnamese everywhere in Cambodia, not only in Phnom Penh but also in the provinces near the Thai-Cambodian border such as Battambang, Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey. It can be interpreted that the Cambodians easily noticed the large number of the Vietnamese immigrants in the country. They also observed the characteristics and activities of these Vietnamese as a university student told: "The Vietnamese are very professional. They work hard. The Khmer would like to have the Vietnamese work for them. Even my house was built by the Vietnamese."²⁰ Apart from noticing the good characteristics of the Vietnamese, the informant also compared them to characteristics of the Khmers. "The Vietnamese work hard and the quality of their work is better than the Khmers."

Through communication, direct contact and observation of the Vietnamese who live in Cambodian society, the informants formed positive attitudes toward them. They perceived Vietnamese as clever, hard-working, friendly with the Khmers and having a strong sense of community.²¹ However, through their experiences, the informants also have dissatisfaction with some Vietnamese characteristics and behaviours.

²⁰ In group discussion, informant no.18

²¹ As describe in Chapter 4

A government official pointed out: "I saw a Vietnamese family living near my house. The husband always uses violence on his wife. He brutally beats his wife. That is the reason why I don't recommend that anyone marry a Vietnamese man."²² Another woman told of what she has seen: "We just see how the Vietnamese people live and we could estimate that we are not able to live with them. They don't understand us. They are very noisy."²³ Another informant talked about his experiences: "The Vietnamese make me hate them. When I first came to Phnom Penh, I learnt to fix electrical devices near Phsar Chas. The Vietnamese living around there always caused conflicts. When they have quarrels, they speak very loudly. They throw things at each other. They never think of their neighbours' feelings."²⁴

These negative feelings were formed according to the experiences of the informants in working, living and seeing the Vietnamese in Cambodian society. This kind of information was not provided by any other sources except from the informants' personal experiences. Interestingly, many characteristics of the Vietnamese seen by the Cambodians as positive and negative such as clever, hard-working but tricky were similar to what the French had identified during the colonial period.

2.3 Social environment

The social environment still played a very important role in providing the information about the Vietnamese to the informants after the 1980s. Those include their parents, relatives, friends and other people around them.

²² Interview with informant no.8

²³ Interview with informant no.11

²⁴ Interview with informant no.14

Parents

A lady who had to leave home to work in the city mentioned: "My father always advised me not to live near the Vietnamese or communicate with the Vietnamese people up to the present day. He told me that even though the Khmer are cruel, we can understand each other. But the Vietnamese don't understand us. When I would rent a house, my father always warned me not to rent a house near the Vietnamese block. I think my father really hates the Vietnamese. When he blames someone for something, he always uses the word "Yuon", such as "Aa Yuon (The despicable Youn)", "A Kbal Yuon Kluon Khmer (The one who has a Vietnamese brain but a Khmer body)", "Ayong Yuon (The Yuon's servant)" and "A Komnit Yuon (The one who has a Yuon Idea)".²⁵ From these words, we can see that when parents have negative attitudes towards the Vietnamese, they also implant this attitude in their child. Her words can also be interpreted in two aspects. First, the father was worried about the security of his daughter because he perceived that the Vietnamese were dangerous to deal with. This relates to the bad characteristics of the Vietnamese people who live in Cambodia. Second, the father has a strong negative feeling toward the Vietnamese in terms of politics as well. The words he used such as "Vietnamese brain in a Khmer body" commonly referred to the Cambodian government in the 1980s.

Another informant stated: "My father did not like to watch the local Cambodian television channel. Anytime he watches, he always scolds the newscaster because the television belongs to a powerful political party and never tells the truth. He always listens to the Radio of Free Asia or Voice of America because they give actual information....When he wanted me to read a book, he asked me to buy it for him. For me, I started to doubt how good the book is which my father wants me to read. So, I read it and I gained the knowledge, such as the book entitled "Moving toward the west".²⁶ When the informant said that her father did not trust the Cambodian television channel which they

²⁵ Interview with informant no.8

²⁶ Interview with informant no.20

thought was politicized by the government and has never given neutral information, this means they did not trust or believe in the Cambodian government.

With or without intention, the parents of the informants gave information about the Vietnamese to their children direct or indirectly. In their everyday life with the family, some informants had already received the influence from the socialization process and their negative attitude toward the Vietnamese also had been formed up.

Old people

The informants also received much information about the Vietnamese from the people in the village, their friends and their student communities. These people could have freedom to discuss anything including politics. Here politics is related to the Vietnamese issue, because the discussion and interviews were connected from Vietnamese problems to Cambodian politics. One informant mentioned: "In the village you always found the old people talking about politics. In the school, the guards already started to discuss about politics when they just sat down. Why during that time we could talk? In those days, the Prince's supporter was a lot more than the government supporter."²⁷ The informant referred to the period before and a bit after the first national election in 1993 when the people enjoyed expressing their opinion about political issues after the country had been closed for many years.

Another informant who enjoyed listening to the old people said "When I visit my friend's house in Takeo, the old people like to discuss politics. They listen to the radio and discuss politics. I like to sit and listen to them. Sometimes they recall their experiences from one period to the other. I like to listen because they know a lot and have many experiences."²⁸ The political issues to which he referred are about the Vietnamese issue and border problems. That man later continued: "My father wrote about his background and

²⁷ Interview with informant no.14

²⁸ Interview wit informant no.19

gave it to me. I remember he used to say he nearly died because of the Vietnamese but I didn't ask the reason behind that."

Many informants seemed to base all their beliefs on what they heard from their parents and old people. One woman mentioned about her father who warned her not to rent the house near Vietnamese communities "Father always wants us to be good. He worried about us and that is the reason why I believe in what my father said. And I also don't like Vietnamese characteristics."²⁹ Another man mentioned: "What they said and analyzed seemed to be true because now we could see the Vietnamese everywhere, even in Siem Reap and Ratanakiri."³⁰

When negative information about the Vietnamese were passed from parents or old people to young educated Cambodians, negative attitudes could be formed as the YECs strongly trust and believe in their parents and old people. However, some part of the information given by parents and the older generation were also under the process of consideration. The YEC compared what they heard to what they saw in society and came up with negative attitudes.

Friends

Friends and communities are another important source of information. Some YECs strongly dislike the Vietnamese when they were exposed themselves to the community. One said "I started to dislike the Vietnamese since we had learnt about history in high school. But I think it become stronger and stronger when I came to Phnom Penh. I stayed in a dormitory. There, many students around me didn't like the Vietnamese. They turned on the radio everyday to listen to the political situation. Even though I did not have any desire

²⁹ Interview with informant no.8

³⁰ Interview with informant no.19

to listen to the radio, I could hear from them and from their radio. In the student dormitory, a demonstration leader was also staying there." ³¹

Another YEC who attended a demonstration in 2000 recalled how he received information from his friends and student communities. Moreover he explained what factors forced him to join the demonstration against the Vietnamese "My mind led me to join the demonstration. We could say because we were living with friends and community. The students had clear objectives. They raised some points to demonstrate about. That time, they raised about border issues and they have many reasons and evidence to show about the current Vietnamese invasion into Cambodian territory. Moreover, we are victims who lost territory because of the border treaty in 1980s. I am one of the Khmers, so I have a hurtful feeling too." ³²

Similar to another informant who used to join demonstrations in 1998, ³³ he raised the point that "The students have their own communities and we got the information from one mouth to another about the time we would go outside to demonstrate. During that time, not only students in Phnom Penh knew about the information. Even the students in the countryside knew." ³⁴

Friends and communities are very important sources of information. This kind of information was rapidly spread, especially about Vietnamese issues in Cambodia. The fact that the students believed in the information could be interpreted in two ways. First, they are involved in the community and would like to be a member. Therefore, they need to adapt themselves into the communities; as they have mentioned, "I am one of the Khmers". Second, the messages about the Vietnamese problems given to their communities seemed to be strong enough to persuade the students. As has been mentioned by the informants, the message "has clear objectives. They raised some points to demonstrate about." Other

³¹ In group discussion, informant no.22

³² In group discussion, informant no.13

³³ The 1998 demonstration was the demonstration to oust the Prime Minister from power.

³⁴ Interview with informant no.14

informants who did not join the demonstrations were also affected by this kind of information. One lecturer talked about his hurtful feeling and the reason that he did not join the demonstration. "I really don't want to speak. We can not protect ourselves. Some people really wanted to join the marches; but they were afraid because they used to have a hard life. Some parents warned their children not to attend any demonstration. They said this is not our business. We just wanted to live simply."³⁵ Joining or not joining demonstrations, most of the students are affected by the message spread in their community. These messages provoked nationalist sentiments, and a feeling of hatred toward the Vietnamese. Even those who did not join the demonstrations because of the fear of danger had negative feelings about the Vietnamese.

Besides school education and personal experiences, the YECs seemed to receive a lot of influences from their social environment. Information about the Vietnamese had been given to them through their family members and the people around them. More importantly, the YECs are deeply involved in their communities. They were therefore likely to believe in the information they received. As most of the information was negative, negative attitudes have been formed.

2.4 Mass Communication

According to the interviews, most of the informants received information about the Vietnamese from various kinds of media. Those included newspaper, radio and television, internet and the books outside the educational system.

2.4.1 Newspaper, Radio and Television

After 1993, Cambodia enjoyed freedom of expression which it never had in the 1980s. According to Lor Chandara, Cambodia today is considered a "free" press for Asia

³⁵ Interview with informant no.27

and there has been a gradual growth in number of publications.³⁶ However, the quality and responsibility of the press has not improved. The media remains deeply politicized due to the enduring legacy of factionalism.³⁷ One of the main reasons by which the political parties could exploit the mass media are the poor economic conditions in the country.³⁸

Thus, the mass media under the pressure of political parties have been used as an instrument to spread political messages in order to gain political benefits. Both government and opposition parties gained support from different mass media. The Phnom Penh Post reported that in 2001, the popular local newspapers in the Khmer language such as **រស្មីកម្ពុជា** (Rasmai Kampuchea) and **ដំណឹងពេលល្ងាច** (the Evening News) took a pro-CPP party stance while **មនសិការវិទ្យា** (Khmer Consciousness) and **សំឡេងយុវជនខ្មែរ** (Voice of Khmer Youth) had supported Sam Rainsy Party and have been called the "opposition newspapers".³⁹ It is difficult to know exactly how many newspapers were pro or against the government. The same goes for the television and radio stations although it seems the government and the ruling party dominate strongly over those broadcast systems. A few belonged to other political parties or NGOs, such as Radio FM 90, which belonged to the FUNCINPEC party and FM 102 which was run by the Women's Media center.⁴⁰

The pro-government media have never reported events that harmed government policy. This was one of the important reasons why the YECs did not trust and accept news from the pro-government media. As one YEC mentioned: "I like to listen to the Voice of American and Free Asia. They are neutral. They broadcast the news for us to analyze. The local television and radio give only the news about the elite activities such as their festivals

³⁶ Lor Chandara, "Media in Cambodia's Emerging Democracy.", www.seamedia.org.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Khieu Kanharith, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Information, "Blood and Bribes: Inside the Khmer Press.", <http://www.phnompenhpost.com>, April 27-May 10 2001

³⁹ "Blood and Bribes: Inside the Khmer Press", <http://www.phnompenhpost.com>, April 27-May 10 2001

⁴⁰ Lor Chandara, "Media in Cambodia's Emerging Democracy." www.seamedia.org.

and ceremonies. It is mostly about singing karaoke".⁴¹ In contrast to the opposition media, they always criticize government policy and government officials. To some extent, they are too extreme in expressing their opinion and spreading opposition political propaganda .

Since the anti-Vietnamese propaganda is one of the most favourite things for the opposition parties to condemn the government for (and is a means by which they gain their popularity),⁴² all this propaganda has been commonly issued in the opposition newspapers or media. In the opposition media, people could read and hear the government leaders be called "Servant of the Yuon," etc. These kinds of messages could contribute to the formation of suspicious and hateful attitudes toward the Vietnamese as well as towards the government of Cambodia. An article written in **មនសិការវិទ្យា** (Khmer Conscience newspaper) during 1998 described the CPP: "In order to make the Khmer people believe that they are not Yuon communist puppets, in the 1993 election the communist devils tried to change themselves into a beautiful Devada angel (the logo of CPP) to persuade the Khmer citizens to love them."⁴³ Although no research has been conducted on these kinds of texts in the Khmer media, we can generally say the articles intended to insult Vietnam and the CPP have commonly been found in the opposition newspapers until the present day.

Even though the newspapers were mostly propaganda machines and have been used by political parties, some informants enjoy reading them. One informant recalled a very enjoyable time he and his family had freely reading the newspapers, whichever ones they chose. "Since the arrival of UNTAC, our family likes to read the newspapers. My mother also read the newspapers. So, I like to buy newspapers. I read until I came to Phnom Penh. In those days, there were many newspapers that supported the government but there were also some against the government. I bought both. From then on, I learnt about the illegal

⁴¹ In group discussion, information no.26

⁴² Anti-Vietnamese propaganda have been studies in Chapter 3

⁴³ Moneaksekar Khmer, "*CPP goes back to its roots.*", 1 July 1998 taken from Khmer Land, Khmer Soul: Sam Rainsy, Populism, and the problem of seeing Cambodia. by Caroline Hughes in Southeast Asia Research. Vol. 9, No.1 2001

immigration and the invasion of the Vietnamese into Cambodian territory from an opposition newspaper. There was news about the loss of territory to the Vietnamese."⁴⁴

Some informants who did not read the newspaper listened to the radio in order to learn about the current social problems and political news. One lady told the researcher how she knew about the current political situation between Cambodia and Vietnam over border issues. "ប៉ុស្តិ៍សំបុកប៉ុ (Beehive Radio station) talks a lot about border issues."⁴⁵

Beehive Radio Station is one of the independent radio stations in Cambodia.

Interestingly, no informants reported that they learnt about Vietnamese issues from television. It might be because most of the television stations were controlled by the government and criticism or anti-government messages were never broadcast.

Between the pro-government and opposition Medias, the informants seemed to substantially put their belief in the opposition media. One mentioned: "I read books and newspapers and listen to the radio. So, I know something about history. I think the opposition newspapers tell mostly the truth even though some of their analyses are too extreme. I think they tell the truth because we can compare what they say to the real situation."⁴⁶ The substantial belief in the opposition media seems to be caused by problems related to the threatening of the opposition media as well. Lor Chandara reported that from 1994 to 1997, six journalists were killed and numerous others were threatened with death and were jailed for criticizing official policies.⁴⁷ The threatening of the opposition journalists' lives pushed the YECs to believe more in the opposition media. The YEC perceived this act as the oppression of the Cambodian government on critical media. One lecturer said: "The opposition newspapers gave a strong criticism but it was true. When some journalists criticized the government, later they disappeared. For example, when a

⁴⁴ Interview with informant no.14

⁴⁵ Interview with informant no.11

⁴⁶ Interview with informant no.27

⁴⁷ Lor Chandara, "*History of political development media profile: link to media in Cambodia's emerging democracy part II.*" , <http://www.seamedia.org>

journalist was murdered, the opposition newspapers said because that journalist knew something and he had to disappear. It seemed to be acceptable. How many journalists have died? We should know why they died."⁴⁸ The informant viewed that what had happened to the opposition media was the act of the government. They were murdered because they criticized the government and the government had to eliminate them because the news from the opposition media was mostly true.

Since some of the YECs tended to believe the opposition media, the criticism and insult in the media would affect the informants. Answering the question how he feels after reading the opposition newspaper, one informant said: "I felt stress. I feel pity toward the country and strongly hate the ruling party. I saw everything in Cambodia go black."⁴⁹ Another woman talked aggressively about the territory violated by the Vietnamese along the border: "The government said we didn't lose our territory to Vietnam. However, they (the journalists from the radio) came to the border and interviewed the people. They faced problems. How about the government? They never visited the people and always said our territory was the same. But it was not the same. Yuon moved in to our territory."⁵⁰ These words show that the anti-Vietnamese propaganda issued by the opposition media have an effect on people's attitudes. The propaganda has created fear of the disappearance of Cambodia and the mistrust of the Cambodian government because they believed that it was under foreign domination. The propaganda message has been considered as truth since they have made a comparison between the real situation and the messages. In anti-Vietnamese propaganda, illegal Vietnamese immigration and border issues have been commonly used along with the corruption in the country. Obviously, everyone knows about the corruption. Everyone also sees a great number of Vietnamese living freely in Cambodia. This is the truth and when opposition media report about this, they are accepted or believable.

⁴⁸ Interview with informant no. 14

⁴⁹ Interview with informant no. 1

⁵⁰ Interview with informant no. 11



2.4.2 Internet

In the past few years, the birth of information technology has allowed Cambodians to have access to the world and to build online communities, sharing information among Cambodians worldwide. Through discussions and interviews, some YECs pointed out that the information they received about Vietnamese issues was gotten through online radio on the internet and websites. "When I was in Russia, I could learn of the news about Cambodia through online radio RFA. I knew that Vietnam was moving the border line into Cambodian territory."⁵¹ Another informant said that he sometimes received political news from forwarded e-mails from his friends⁵².

New technology will become a very complicated and large source of information. However, as the informants access to the internet and e-mail in order to get information from the radio and their communities, these technologies just help them to be closer. In interviews with the YECs, none of them mentioned the negative messages they got by just surfing the internet. However, according conversations with some people, they mainly received strong negative messages from websites. Some of these messages were posed in order to spread political propaganda with some specific purposes. An example can be seen in <http://www.khmerkrom.net> which is a website of the Khmer Krom association in the West. Information presented on this website is aimed at demanding rights for the Cambodian people who are currently living in the southern part of Vietnam. The messages condemn the Vietnamese for badly treating the Khmer. To sum up, information cannot be controlled by governments in this era. At the same time negative information about the Vietnamese could be received by the YECs through this high technology.

⁵¹ In group discussion, informant no.22

⁵² Interview with informant no.14

2.4.3 Book outside the educational system

According to examples raised by the informants to support their arguments, some negative information about the Vietnamese came from the contents of books outside the educational system. One informant said: "Vietnamese always maintain their goal of taking control of Cambodian territory. I read "ដំណើរឆ្ពោះទៅទិសខាងលិច (Moving toward the West)", "នរណាជាឃាតករ? (Who is the murderer?)" and "ចារឹកខ្មែរ (Khmer characteristics)".⁵³ When the researcher asked why they believed that Vietnam wanted to invade Cambodia, some informants recommended that the researcher read these books. "I recommend that you read "Moving toward the west" if you want to know more. If the book has five arguments, four are believable. I bought that book for my father because he wanted to read it. Many years ago, that book was not allowed to be sold in the market. The book was banned since it affected Vietnamese-Cambodian relations. But when there was no book in the market, we started to copy the book from one person to another."⁵⁴

The books mentioned by the informants gave a very negative picture of the Vietnamese and were banned by the government. However, the people could still read them as they could make a copy from the original. Thus, the continuity of the information provided by the books still existed. The three controversial books are "ដំណើរឆ្ពោះទៅទិសខាងលិច (Moving toward the West)", "នរណាជាឃាតករ? (Who is the murderer?)" and "អង្គការជានរណា? (Who is the organization?)"

⁵³ Interview with informant no.1

⁵⁴ Interview with informant no.20

ផ្សេងទៅទិសខាងលិច (*Moving toward the West*)

This book was written in the early 1970s by Nuon Khim who was born in Siam Reap. "Moving toward the west" discussed the Vietnamese movement into Cambodian territory. At the beginning of the book, the author provoked nationalist sentiment by referring to Angkor and the great ancestors of the Khmer who had brought the Khmer Nation to high civilization.⁵⁵ He later introduced readers to the fear of losing territory and sovereignty to its neighbouring countries which would lead to "the disappearance of Cambodia". He explained this concept in relation to the historical background of the relationship between Cambodian and Vietnam. Moreover, he used the past to predict the future of Cambodia in the year 2000, and asked whether it would then be occupied by the Vietnamese or not.

The author wrote that Vietnam was dangerous for the Indochina states because Vietnam had three important things: a large number of Vietnamese people, the rapid growth of the Vietnamese population and the special characteristic of the Vietnamese people in struggling to invade territory.⁵⁶ He supported his idea by referring to the loss of the Champa kingdom and Cambodian territory in the southern part of Vietnam. More importantly, the author stressed: "We understand our neighbouring country. But in the future will the Vietnamese people and youth still keep their respect toward Cambodian territory and sovereignty?" He later mentioned: "Even though the Vietnamese leaders have respect toward Cambodia, we still can not prevent our country from danger ahead because it is a development of two civilizations with different values." This is a message to persuade Cambodians to believe that Cambodia will be in danger in the future, faced with losing the country to the Vietnamese.

⁵⁵ Noun Khim, *Moving toward the west*, (Phnom Penh: Khmer Publisher, 1970), in his preface page

⁵⁶ Ibid, 18-19

To say what Cambodian should do in order to protect their country from disappearing, Nuon Khim pointed out: "To keep Cambodia, we need a 'national consciousness'. Having a national consciousness will not only increase patriotism but also increase nationalism. Basically, our duty is to reinforce nationalism to be a solid ideology. Nationalism could be developed when democracy is developed and the people are allowed to participate in national affairs".⁵⁷

Whether or not the author is a real nationalist, "Moving toward the west" seems to be propaganda used by the Lon Nol regime to seek legitimacy from the people. It showed how much Cambodia had suffered at the hands of its neighbouring countries and previous leaders by portraying the downward process since the fall of Angkor and by claiming that only the new democratic Lon Nol regime could help to protect Cambodia forever.

In this book, Vietnam was used as the main actor in the story since it was bound to a hostile history with Cambodia. Moreover, the regime in the 1970s sided with the US to fight with North Vietnam. The author used the real situation of the Vietnamese immigration into Cambodia during this wartime to support the accuracy of his propaganda.

អង្គការជាអ្នករណ? (*Who is the organization?*)

This book was written by a Khmer woman named Kim Thi Ouy (pen name Tieng) who was born in Khmer Krom (the southern part of Vietnamese territory which used to be the Khmer territory). After 20 years in Khmer Krom, she then left her family to live in the Khmer province Kandal (Cambodian territory today). In Khmer Krom during the first Indochina war between Vietnam and France, Tieng was forced by the Vietminh to be a Vietminh cadre. The suffering from her duty and the experience of living with the Vietminh troops made her family decide to send her away to Kandal. Her life in Cambodia seemed to be very good between 1950-1975. After that, she faced with another bad time in the Khmer

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 33-34

Rouge regime. Tieng luckily survived and fled to France. Later she wrote this book and finished it in 1993.

In the three volumes of "Who is the organization?", Tieng described her hard life and events she saw from one period to another. Besides giving information, her book was full of her personal judgments and opinions about what had happened in Cambodia. In her judgments and opinions, Tieng seems to have an extreme hatred of the Vietnamese.

From the beginning to the end, Tieng's main point is to demonstrate that Vietnam always had the goal of invading Cambodia. The Vietnamese are very tricky. They used the technique of "divide and rule" to control the Khmer. One interesting point, Tieng answered the title of her book "Who is the organization (in the Khmer Rouge regime)?" by saying the organization was the Vietnamese (យួនសម្រាប់យួន). The Vietnamese was behind Pol Pot and his genocide of the Khmer in order to take all Cambodian land or set up a new Cambodia.

Tieng wrote that there were two different invisible groups among the Khmer Rouge cadres. The first group was the real Khmer Rouge cadre but the second group was the Khmer Vietminh who hid themselves under the name of Khmer Rouge cadre but served the Vietnamese. This group had been trained by Vietnam. They brutally killed the Khmer during the Khmer Rouge regime. She mentioned that it was not a war between the Khmer and the Khmer but between the Yuon and the Khmer. "The anonymous organization had no real body, but they were very flexible. The organization dared to show their brutal activities in the name of Khieu Samphan. They used the curtain as the walls to cover the brutality of the Yuon and Vietminh who were the thieves and the murderers. And the Khmers could not see this."⁵⁸ She continued: "The Khmers did not know that Yuon transformed Vietminh troop to be Khmer Rouge who spread their military base across the whole country of Cambodia. Some Khmers, especially some political parties' leaders did not know that Heng

⁵⁸ Kim Thi Ouy, Who is organization?. (Phnom Penh: Apsara Publishing, 1994), p. 140

Samrin, Hun Sen and Chea Sim were former Khmer Vietminh who used the name of Khmer Rouge cadres." ⁵⁹

Tieng explained that the Vietnamese control over Cambodia in the 1980s was the success of their efforts. The PRK government were servants of the Yuon. The Yuon used these people to hide their face and invade Cambodia. So, ousting the Khmer Rouge in 1979 was just a technique to invade Cambodia and to show the world that they had sympathy toward the Khmer.

To sum up, Vietnamese was seen as the main cause of the suffering in Cambodia. Vietnam used every technique to gain control over Cambodian territory throughout history. They used Khmer to kill Khmer during the Khmer Rouge regime and later pretended to help.

It was not known whether this book was written personally or was a political tool of the Khmer who live in foreign countries. While putting the blame on many Cambodian political actors such as former King Sihanouk, Khmer Rouge leaders and PRK leaders, the book seemed to be pro-Son Sann who was a Cambodian from Kampuchea Krom (present day southern Vietnam) and tried to show the devotion of the Khmer Krom People to Khmer nationalism. One sentence which causes one to doubt that the book was political propaganda was: "So, we should be careful. If the PRK wins the election, our country will be under the Indochinese federation legally."⁶⁰

ឧរណ៍ជាឃាតករ? (Who is the murderer?)

This book was written by a former secondary school teacher, Hin Sithan, who fled to the US after the Khmer Rouge regime. He finished this book in 1986. "Who is the murderer?" blames the Vietnamese for killing the Khmer directly or indirectly during the

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 141

⁶⁰ Ibid, 103

Khmer Rouge regime. Sithan believed that Vietnam still had a goal of expanding their territory to the west. To do this, Vietnam has tried to use every tricky technique to reach success. Sithan also mentioned that the westward movement of the Vietnamese could be seen in two phases. The first one was in the period of Emperor Minh Mang and the second one was the continuation of that Vietnamese policy by Ho Chi Minh.⁶¹

In the second phase, the author pointed out that Vietnam formed the Khmer Vietminh in order to slowly gain control over Cambodia. This plan was destroyed by Pol Pot. Then Vietnam waited and let Pol Pot crazily kill the Khmer.⁶² The Khmer Rouge committed genocide but Vietnam used Khmer to eradicate the Khmer.⁶³ The author added that after the Khmer Rouge killed the Khmer, Vietnam pretended to help the Khmer but started to Vietnamize Cambodia again. Vietnam forced their puppet regime to accept Vietnamese immigrants. She tried to send as many Vietnamese people as possible in order to ensure that the next Vietnamese or Vietnamese-Cambodian generation favours Vietnam rather than Cambodia.⁶⁴ This same technique was used to take control over the Champa Kingdom and Kampuchea Krom and now this technique was used to eliminate the Khmer.⁶⁵

It is difficult to draw out whether the author was involved in any political party. However, this book seemed to be a mixture of imagination and judgment. The author put all the blame on Vietnam and he looked only in the context of Vietnamese and Cambodian hostilities. This book is extremely anti-Vietnamese.

Upon asking informants how they feel about these books, one who read "Who is the murderer?" said: "After I read, I felt that I believe in most of the contents. I read the book after I heard the news on the radio of the invading of Khmer territory in Dong Village by the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese soldiers did not allow the Khmers to farm Khmer land.

⁶¹ Hin Sithan, Who is the murder?. (Washington, 1991) p.163

⁶² Ibid, p.183

⁶³ Ibid, p.184

⁶⁴ Ibid, p.185

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 186

So, what the author wrote in the book seemed to be true. Vietnamese invaded Khmer territory"⁶⁶ The informant compared the information he received from the book with what he believed truly happened, such as the case of the current invasion of Khmer territory by the Vietnamese. However, the informant could not give a clear answer whether it is true that the Vietnamese really control Cambodian territory when the clear border markers have not yet been set up. The informants said "I believe it is true but I don't know if it is true or not."⁶⁷

All the books mentioned by the informants are anti-Vietnamese books. Some information in the books was the extreme judgments and opinions of people who seemed to be strongly against the Vietnamese. Most importantly, the books interpreted the history between Cambodia and Vietnam in a negative way. Most of the authors' interpretations could lead to the fear of losing Cambodia, viewing Vietnam as always maintaining the goal of invading Cambodia.

No wonder that this kind of thing has occurred as the informants lack neutral information to discuss Vietnamese issues and Cambodian government policy. The informants mistrust the information given by government media and substantially believe the opposition media provides factual information. As a whole, the social environment, media and books outside the education system all provided negative information about the Vietnamese.

⁶⁶ Interview with informant no. 1

⁶⁷ Ibid

3. Summary

According to the findings, we can summarize the kinds of information and information sources as follows:

Source/Period		1980s	After 1980s
School education		Positive message: Vietnam helped Cambodia, we are brothers	Negative message: history of invasion in the 17 th 18 th century
Personal experiences		Positive and Negative message: good and bad characteristics and behaviours of the Vietnamese	Negative and positive message : good and bad Vietnamese characteristics
Social environment		Positive and negative message: Vietnamese helped Cambodia. Bad Vietnamese characteristics. Bad Vietnamese and PRK policy.	Negative message: Vietnamese bad characteristics and behaviours. Anti-Vietnamese political message
Mass Media	Newspaper, Radio and Television	None	Negative message: political propaganda and anti-Vietnamese message
	Internet		Negative message: political propaganda and anti-Vietnamese message from the online communities
	Books outsides educational system		Negative message: Vietnamese always wanted Cambodia territory.

The YECs hold the positive and partly negative attitudes toward the Vietnamese as a result of the characteristics (or the "culture") of the Vietnamese people. The YECs favour the Vietnamese since they are clever, professional, skilful, hard working, have a spirit of struggle, have a strong sense of community and are good in doing business. However, the YECs also do not like the Vietnamese because of many bad characteristics such as being tricky, cruel, unaffectionate, dishonest, inconsiderate, destroyers and exploiters of

Cambodian resources and loyal to the Vietnamese and Vietnam rather than to Cambodians and Cambodia. All the negative information has been perceived by the YECs through their direct experiences in seeing or observing the Vietnamese who are living in Cambodia. Moreover, these attitudes were also affected by information from the social environment.

In addition to that, the YECs hold negative attitudes toward the Vietnamese as a result of Vietnamese status in Cambodia, the large flow of the Vietnamese which shows the weakness of the Cambodian government to implement policy and solve the problems. They perceived the Vietnamese as illegal immigrants, conducting immoral acts such as prostitution, banditry or drug trafficking. The large flows of Vietnamese into Cambodia threaten the job opportunities of the Cambodian people. The Vietnamese do not respect Cambodian law, having more right than Cambodians to act outside the law. All these images of the Vietnamese were from the direct experiences and socialization.

Moreover, the YECs suspect the Vietnamese in Cambodia to be a tool of the Vietnamese government in implementing a policy of control over Cambodia. This is more related to the influence of the political propaganda of the major political parties who hurl against the CPP by using the Vietnamese problems as a tool. The propaganda aimed to create negative and suspicious feelings toward the CPP who owed its origin to Vietnam. The propaganda linked history with the problems such as the failure of the CPP to handle Vietnamese issues in order to create the fear of losing Cambodia to the Vietnamese. The political propaganda had been spread and received by the YECs through many means, but the two most significant are media and social environment.

The YECs received information and processed it under consideration as they always mentioned the comparison of information received from different sources. As the information from media and social environment similarly presented a negative image of the Vietnamese, it became true in the eyes of the YECs. However, the important process by which the information came to be believed was through the comparison between information and the direct experiences in seeing Vietnamese problems in Cambodia.

The suspicious attitudes of the YECs toward the Vietnamese settlement in Cambodia are related to the negative feeling of the YECs toward the VG. The YECs also suspected the VG of maintaining a policy of invading Cambodia. The information was provided by the political propaganda of the opposition parties. Information from school education in the 1980s and after seemed to have no great effect on the attitudes of the YECs. However, the history of Cambodian-Vietnamese relations used by the political parties to gain popularity seemed to have a great effect on the YECs in helping to maintain their negative attitudes toward the Vietnamese people and government.