



GET THE FACTS - HERITAGE INFORMATION SERIES

14. HERITAGE – MYTH OR FACT?

Concerns about cultural, natural, tangible, and intangible heritage have caused governments to enact protective legislation, courts to impose penalties, and organisations to conduct awareness campaigns. Heritage has become an important economic attraction that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors and billions of dollars into communities around the world, but what is the heritage that is being protected and promoted?

The plunder of archaeological sites, the theft of cultural and natural objects and specimens, and the destruction of structures and locations for profit or during times of conflict are heinous acts. These activities incite the spoilage of history, deplete traditional values, and degrade the basic notion of human decency.

What is heritage, and why has it become a commodity to discover, preserve, and exploit in communities around the world? The ubiquitous nature of the

'heritage' phenomenon is a source of some wonderment. Whenever humankind has 'looked for something solid on which to found their lives, they have chosen, not the facts in which the world abounds, but the myths of an immemorial imagination ...'.

Ref: Gary Edson - International Journal of Heritage Studies Vol. 10, No. 4, September 2004, pp. 333-348.