



## GET THE FACTS - HERITAGE INFORMATION SERIES

### 16. HERITAGE IS THE COMMODIFICATION OF HISTORY

Heritage is something that is partly material, partly human, and partly spiritual on which humans often rely to cope with challenges that face them. It is more than customs, ideas, and tradition. It often includes belief that is not necessarily limited to sacred considerations. Therefore, heritage is most often a set of conditions adopted by a cultural group to meet the basic requirements of that group. However, owing to the scattered nature of contemporary society, primary group identity has been replaced by the general assimilation of social conditions that reflect the need for individual validation. These

routines are transmitted by means of imitation, social conditioning, and teaching. The use of these secondary practices is reinforced as they are transmitted from one generation to the next. This integration of non-tradition-based activities alters the coherent whole of the group and challenges the validity of uncorroborated practices (heritage) allegedly based on cultural history. The heritage ‘industry’ often promotes a vicarious experience that depends on using objects or locations as a means of entering into or living in the past. Visitors to a heritage place are required to assent to the historical

authenticity and reality of what they see, while simultaneously recognizing its artificial, fabricated nature. We understand the past through dominant, but abstracted intellectual processes to the point where the heritage item or object is removed from the continuity of everyday uses in time and space and made exquisite on display. Objects are transformed in their meanings: they become commodities.

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