Perspectives on Black Africa; The National Geographic Magazine, 1931-1941 and 1957-1967

Marti Smith Winslow, Atlanta University

Date of Award
12-1-1976

Degree Type
Thesis

University or Center
Atlanta University (AU)

School
School of Arts and Sciences

Degree Name
M.A.

Department
African-American Studies

First Advisor
Dr. David Dorsey

Abstract
The objectives of this thesis are to determine what information was presented about Black Africa in the National Geographic Magazine articles published during two ten year periods; pre-World War II, 1931-1941 and post-Ghanaian Independence, 1957-1967; to describe the authors' attitudes towards Black Africa as expressed in the articles; to evaluate to what extent the content of the Black African-related articles published during those two decades reflected the atmosphere of the time and the degree and level of interest prevalent during those periods; and to compare and contrast the two periods examined to determine whether or not there was a change of attitude about Black Africa expressed by the authors through their articles. The researcher worked under the assumption that the attitudes expressed in the two periods under analysis would be significantly different. In undertaking this work the researcher drew on the articles relating to Black Africa in the National Geographic Magazine Vols. 59-80 and Vols. 111-132. The 42 volumes of the National Geographic Magazine covering those two ten year periods were examined to identify the articles relating to Black Africa. The twenty-six articles that contained a discussion of some aspect of African life and culture were selected for review. Historical information about the National Geographic Magazine is provided in the introduction of this work. Articles appearing in the publication during the decade 1931-1941 are considered in Chapter One. Generally, the articles during that period focus on the old and 'primitive' Africa, minimizing contemporary change and evolution. Chapter Two considers articles published during the period from 1957-1967. In the selections from that period, change (contrast of old and new) is the pervading theme. The third and final chapter serves as a synopsis as well as a contrast and comparison of the two periods examined to determine whether there was a change of attitudes towards Black Africa expressed in the articles. The assessment concludes that attitudes expressed in the two periods have undergone a significant change primarily in the latter period's subtle fascination with the 'exotic,' 'primitive,' alien cultures south of the Sahara.

Recommended Citation

http://digitalcommons.auctr.edu/dissertations/380