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**Abstract of the Doctoral Dissertation**  
**Semantic Connotations of Colors in Polish Folklore**  
**(dissertation written under the supervision of Prof. Jan Adamowski)**

Colors constitute not only an essential element of our surrounding reality but have also become an important carrier of semantic content in the cultural space. Today, their significance in the process of cultural communication is indisputable. They are present in both its verbal and non-verbal dimensions. This is evidenced by the growing number of monographs on the meaning/symbolism of colors and individual entries in symbol dictionaries. However, these studies usually concern the broadly understood European culture and do not address the context of Polish folk culture, creating a significant gap in this area. Moreover, the semantics of colors is often overly generalized, without reference to specific contexts, which, as semioticians point out, model the ultimate meaning.

The aim of this dissertation is to reconstruct the linguistic and cultural image of colors as constituted in Polish folklore, and thus to explicate the symbolic semantics they possess in a contextual perspective. The material basis of the dissertation consists of nationwide documentation, including sources such as published ethnographic materials (regional monographs, folklore texts, dictionary data), unpublished archival materials, field interviews, and photographic documentation.

For the purposes of this dissertation, an ethnolinguistic method was adopted, which allows the extraction of not only symbolic content from the collected material but also the interpretation of reality contained in common thinking. This made it possible to capture the common, folk knowledge about colors, their stereotypical image, and the role they play in cultural communication.

This dissertation consists of five chapters, a summary section, a bibliography, and an appendix. The first three chapters contain theoretical considerations, while the fourth and fifth chapters form the analytical core of the dissertation.

In the first chapter, the key concepts of connotation, stereotype, and symbol, as well as the relationships between them, are presented. The second chapter reviews the current state of knowledge about colors in fields such as philosophy, physics, physiology, linguistics, psychology, chemistry, semiotics, and painting. The last theoretical chapter, the third, refers to the symbolism of colors in the context of European culture, which forms a broader background for the considerations undertaken in the dissertation. However, due to the extensive nature of this issue, it is not discussed in detail, and the chapter only provides a brief review of the literature on this topic.

The analytical part of the dissertation consists of two chapters. The first of these, "The Folk Palette of Colors," is introductory and presents the specificity of the research material. Ultimately, six colors most significant in Polish folklore (white, black, red, green, blue, and gray), as well as the category of multicolorfulness characteristic of the community in question, were selected for further analysis. The fifth chapter, the analytical core of the dissertation, is essentially a collection of six subsections, most of which are monographs of individual colors. Each subsection is further divided into smaller parts, thus defining in detail the semantic fields for each color. Within these small subsections, specific semantic content is explicated based on a cross-sectional analysis of the collected material. Each subsection concludes with a summary presenting the connoted content in the fragment and the semantic sequences that could have led to their establishment.

The final part of the dissertation is the summary, which includes a functional characterization of colors and presents their connotations, taking into account narrow semantic fields. Based on the analytical part, the following functions were distinguished: valuing, sacralizing, courtship-matrimonial, magical (apotropaic, mediatory, divinatory, healing, cleansing, vegetative, agrarian-breeding, fertility), emotional (expressive, impressive), and two subsidiary functions - representative and aesthetic. The analysis also showed that colors do not have fixed, universal meanings, but these are constituted in reference to narrow contexts. Only by considering this factor can their semantics be correctly interpreted, and thus the dominant function in a given case. The use of the ethnolinguistic method allowed the discovery that defining a detailed semantic field is only possible when considering the full range of qualifiers. For example, the white attire of an individual undergoing a rite of passage (such as baptism, first communion, wedding, funeral) can simultaneously fulfill various functions. On the one

hand, we are dealing with a mediatory function, which was particularly evident in funeral rituals up until the interwar period. However, in birth-related and wedding rituals, the valuing function comes to the fore (white here indicates the bodily and spiritual purity of the neophyte). If we add another qualifier in the context of funeral rites and the white garment is worn by a young girl or child, then the valuing function again becomes dominant. To facilitate the reader's identification of the semantics of colors, the conclusion of the chapter presents this information in a tabular format, considering the most common colored artifacts and their accompanying contexts.

At the end of the dissertation, a bibliography is provided, divided into sources, dictionaries, and studies, followed by an appendix containing photographic documentation and the questionnaire used in field research.

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