Various Prepositions on the Folklore Study on Colors

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The purpose of this paper is to grasp the color culture mainly of the urban environment in Japan from the viewpoints of the history and folklore, and discusses what sort of materials should be aimed at as the subjects.

Firstly, the ranking system of colors of the clothes and the symbolism in the ancient and middle ages in Japan are outlined. Then, the actual states of colors of dresses, props., theatres, etc. used for "Izumo Kagura", a folk art currently performed in mountain villages in Izumo-city, Shimane Prefecture are shown. Since this is an art using a myth as its theme, a question is proposed that the symbolism of color in the ancient and middle ages may lie behind.

Further, from "Comprehensive folk vocabulary in Japan" compiled by YANAGITA Kunio and other folklorists, the words that show four colors, white, black, red and blue are extracted and the symbolisms of the folk natures are described. Combinations of colors such as white and black, white and red, white, black and red, etc. are shown as the basic subjects of color symbolism in the folklore in Japan, referring the examples of Akamata/Kuromata ceremonies in Yaeyama Islands, Okinawa Prefecture.

Finally, the words of 783 popular songs often sung by the Japanese are studied to check what sort of color image they have. The result shows that words representing the colors are used frequently in the order of white, red, blue, seven colors and black. In it, color preference and folk symbolism unique to Japanese are included. It is emphasized that the historical study on the color sense of the Japanese is important as one of the subjects of methodology of the folklore study.