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Abstract of dissertation

The aim of the study is to present physical activity of the Scandinavians during the Middle Ages, with the special focus on Saga-Age Iceland. The need for a comprehensive development of the subject has been ignored - and not only by historians, but also scholars of literature and anthropology. For over one hundred years there has been no major studies that focus on this subject, and various smaller works will not fill this gap in a satisfactory manner, and *Íþróttir fornanna* written one hundred years ago by Björn Bjarnason is already obsolete. Therefore, dissertation is an attempt of new, comprehensive analysis of the problems of sports and games, which are an important part of life of medieval Icelanders, taking into account the current state of research.

In the dissertation as a basic source were adopted medieval Icelandic sagas. The mention of sports and games concerning the early medieval Scandinavia, most often occur in texts written later, in the 12-15 century. This situation requires particularly careful analysis.

The work is divided into 11 chapters. The first two are devoted to the theory and terminology related to games and sports, as well as the sources and methodology of their research. The third chapter focuses on the role of the places where the games were held and sports were cultivated. The fourth chapter is devoted entirely to the characteristics of the audience of sporting events described in the Icelandic Sagas. Subsequent chapters are already analysis of individual sports practiced by medieval Icelanders. These are, in turn, *glíma* (wrestling), swimming and *knattleikr* (ball game with sticks). In the eighth chapter put to the analysis were games rarely presented in the sources: dragging the leather and skin throwing, archery, running, horse racing, demonstrations of strength, skiing and skating competitions and drinking games. Chapter nine is devoted to board games: native Scandinavian game called *hnefatafl* and alluvial chess. The last two chapters deal with the animals, one with horse fighting and another with dog fighting, which presence in medieval Scandinavia, is doubtful.

Dissertation closes conclusion: Games and sports are cultural reflection of the Icelandic society in the Middle Ages. They can tell us how much some aspects of the game are important not only during the game itself, but also have an impact on social life – of the individual, but also the inhabitants of the region. By winning or losing player has gained a lot of important attributes in society including fame, respect and honour. Through constant

repetition of "who is the strongest" (*hver er sterkastr*) they still sought an opponent with whom they would have to face and respond to this "important" question.