

## Abstract

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The very large endowments of land to the church in Norway during the Middle Ages have been widely debated during the years. Especially, the questions of which were the donors and the consequences of the donations for the development of a Norwegian state have been discussed. This thesis deals with these questions and for the first time the church ownership of land in an entire Norwegian diocese, Oslo, is examined. The main source of this study is *biskop Eysteins jordebok* (also called *Røde Bok* due to its red cover, usually shortened *RB*), a record from c.1400 of all land in the ownership of the episcopally controlled church in the diocese of Oslo. The land ownership of 247 rural parish churches, twelve town churches, the cathedral chapter, the bishop and three monasteries/nunneries are thoroughly examined. Based on the structure of the *RB* and information from a vast number of charters, we are able to divide the ecclesiastical land into two chronological strata: land acquired during the period 1325/50 to 1400 and land acquired earlier. Thus, we are able to rudimentary measure the growth of the land during a 50-75 year period for every parish church and ecclesiastical institution mentioned in *RB*. Also, the social origins of the 14th century donors mentioned in *RB* are examined through the charter material. The importance of the different social groups for the growth of ecclesiastical estates during the 1300's is discussed.

The results from the investigation of the 1300's are used as a base for a general discussion regarding the land endowments during the period c.1000 to 1300 since the amount of written evidence from this period is scarce. In this discussion non-written evidence, the church buildings, and earlier studies of the general development of medieval Norway are also used. The main contributions from this thesis are:

- The complete investigation of an entire diocese gives a very broad and deep reference background to earlier and future studies. It also gives us an approximate growth rate of the ecclesiastical estates during a 50 to 100 year period.
- The importance of the aristocratic groups, ecclesiastical and lay, and non-aristocratic land owners as endowers of land to the various ecclesiastical institutions during the 1300's as well as earlier centuries has been emphasized. Also, the weight of the lay aristocracy on the accumulation of land of the parish churches during the 1100's is emphasized.
- The non-aristocratic land owners were very important concerning the growth of the land of the parish churches from the mid 1100's and onwards.
- The importance of the kings as endowers of land to the episcopally controlled church from the mid 1100's and onwards are questioned and reduced.

**Keywords:** endowments, donations, church land, biskop Eysteins jordebok, Røde bog, Røde bok, social origin, aristocracy, kingship, Oslo biskopsdöme, Oslo stift, ecclesiastical estates, statistics.