

Why Did Ingerd Ottesdotter Let Go of Her Crown Fiefs in 1529?

King Frederik I and Female Fief Holders in Norway

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In December 1528, King Frederik I of Denmark and Norway gave Sir Niels Lykke, a Danish nobleman and diplomat, a grant on the following conditions:

[...] that if Lady Ingerd, Sir Nils Henriksson's widow, with kindness would hand over some or all of the Norwegian crown's fiefs she holds, Sir Niels and his present wife, Lady Eline Nilsdotter should use and keep these fiefs for as long as he lives, against the same duty and service that Lady Ingerd pays and offers. If Sir Niels or his said wife should die before Lady Ingerd, she shall access freely and unhindered the fiefs again and retain them in accordance with the deeds she has on them [...].¹

Although Lady Ingerd had originally been granted the fiefs for life, she complied with King Frederik's request and handed over all her fiefs to Sir Niels sometime in 1529.²

Ingerd Ottesdotter, or Lady Ingerd, as she is usually referred to in the sources, was Niels Lykke's widowed mother-in-law. She was one of Norway's greatest landowners, and from 1524 to 1529 she held six crown fiefs, Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Edøy, Fosen, Stjørdal (with Selbu) and Herjedalen, which covered a large part of mid-Norway and made her the third greatest fief holder in northern and western Norway,³ after her son-in-law Vincens Lunge, royal governor and castellan of Bergen castle, and Olav Engelbrektsson, the archbishop of Norway. Although Lady Ingerd's fief holding has not been the subject of empirical studies, Norwegian historians have nevertheless assumed that she lost her fiefs as a result of her involvement in the Daljunkern-affair, a political scandal in which Lunge, Archbishop Olav and Lady Ingerd supported the cause of a pretender to the Swedish throne.⁴ In this article, I suggest it is more likely that Lady Ingerd had to let go of her fiefs as a consequence of King Frederik I's enfeoffment policy in Norway. This policy made it difficult for noble widows to hold more than a

¹ *Norske Rigs-Registratorer tildeels i Uddrag I, 1523–1571* (NRR I), Christian C.A. Lange ed., Udgivne efter offentlig Foranstaltning: Christiania 1861, 17. Author's translation.

² NRR I, 17, 28–29.

³ From the Late Middle Ages, Norway was divided into two administrative-territorial units, the *nordafjelske* (northern and western Norway) and the *sønnafjelske* (southern and eastern Norway): The *nordafjelske* refers to the land west of Lindesnes and the central mountain chain in southern Norway, mid-Norway (north of Dovre Mountain) and Northern-Norway. The *sønnafjelske* refers to the coast east of Lindesnes and the inland east of the central mountains and south of Dovre Mountain.

couple of crown fiefs or to hold on to or establish positions of power equal to the position Lady Ingerd had held in the 1520s.

Crown Fiefs and Noble Widows

In the later Middle Ages, the Scandinavian system of local and regional administration consisted of *len* or fiefs, relatively fixed administrative districts of different size, type and importance controlled by the crown.⁵ In 1530, Norway was comprised (more or less) of six castles with accompanying castle fiefs and approximately thirty lesser crown fiefs. The king generally assigned fiefs to *lensmenn* or fief holders who, in exchange for an agreed part of the royal returns and/or military or other service exercised, delegated royal authority in their fiefs on the king's behalf. The fief holder's bailiffs collected taxes, rents and fines, and oversaw the administration of local law enforcement. In Norway, the most common way of holding lesser crown fiefs was through a combination of a fixed annual duty and service.⁶ In addition, the crown used fiefs to deposit surety for loans.⁷

The distribution of the crown fiefs was crucial to the monarch's control of the realm. In Norway, the strategically important castle fiefs were generally held by secular members of the Norwegian aristocratic-ecclesiastical council of the realm and, increasingly, their Danish peers. However, in the periods when the monarchy was strong, kings worked to limit and control the influence of the high nobility and to prevent situations where certain families or factions of the nobility were able to dominate government.

Crown fiefs were one of the most sought after resources amongst the leading members of the Norwegian and Danish power elite. Even so, a very select group of noble widows held lesser crown fiefs in their own right in certain circumstances in Norway and Denmark in the Late Middle Ages. In general, Norwegian and Danish widows' fief holding seems to have been tied to widowhood and to widows who were born and married into leading noble families. These families would generally mobilize all their material resources,

⁴ See, for example, Øystein Rian, *Den nye begynnelsen 1520–1660* (Aschehougs Norgeshistorie 5), Aschehoug: Oslo 1995, 23.

⁵ *Len* (sg. and pl.), from Norse *lén* (loan), refers to both the fixed administrative district the king assigned to his *lensmann* (fief holder) and to the royal authority the fief holder exercised within this district on behalf of the king. About the *lensvesen* (fief administrative system), fiefs and fief holders, see, for example, Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *Fra rike til provins 1448–1536* (Norges historie 5), J.V. Cappelens forlag: Oslo 1977; Lars Hamre, *Norsk politisk historie 1513–1537*, Samlaget: Oslo 1998; Knut Helle ed., *Prehistory to 1520. The Cambridge History of Scandinavia I*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 2003; 'Len', Steinar Imsen et al., *Norsk historisk leksikon*, Cappelen akademiske forlag: Oslo 2004/dig. edition, <http://lokalhistoriewiki.no/index.php/Leksikon:Len> (accessed 30 January 2013), and Grethe Jacobsen, 'Formal and Informal Power – Danish Noblewomen in Sixteenth-Century Denmark', in Per Andersen et al. eds., *Liber Amicorum Ditlev Tamm. Law, History and Culture*, DJØF Publishing: Copenhagen 2011, 133–142, at 136.

⁶ Castle fiefs: Båhus, Trondheim, Tønsberg, Bergen, Akershus (Oslo), Vardø. Lesser fiefs were typically a district equivalent to the early and high medieval Norwegian administrative district, the *sýsla*. In addition to regular crown fiefs, fief holders also held so-called property fiefs from the crown, typically a royal farm or estate or church property. In this essay, I focus on the regular crown fiefs because, unlike property fiefs, they entailed the exercise of royal authority.

⁷ Generally, the fief holder retained all the income from a surety (*pantelen*) until the loan was reimbursed. In the first half of the sixteenth century, sureties had virtually become hereditary (Hamre 1998, 481–482).

regardless of who held them, in their quest for financial and political dominance. Widows' fief holding helped ensure that the family was able to retain and control as many fiefs as possible while they waited for the next generation to come of age and claim the fiefs.⁸

Widows who held crown fiefs in Norway between 1524 and 1555, generally owned or controlled vast landed property in the country.⁹ Usually, they had been married to influential councillors and castellans who had held several fiefs and had great private financial interests in Norway. In general, widows seem to have received fiefs in the same circumstances and in the same way: following the husband's passing, the widow would approach the king both directly (by letter, envoy, or in person) and indirectly through her social network (of influential relatives and friends), asking either to keep the fiefs she had held together with her husband and/or those which her husband had held by himself. Some widows also inherited sureties. Like their male peers, women who held crown fiefs were royal officials and therefore responsible for the exercise of royal authority in their fiefs.¹⁰ Although we have examples of wives acting as their castellan husbands' deputies in Norway, we have no examples of widows holding castle fiefs in their own right in periods of transition, as we do from the Swedish realm.¹¹ In Norway, noble widows usually held one or two regular lesser fiefs.

Women in Norway in the Late Middle Ages have been little studied, and no studies of women's fief holding exist.¹² Lady Ingerd's fief holding spanned four

⁸ There is an element of financial maintenance of widows in the enfeoffment policy, especially noticeable with regard to queens. See, for example, Mikkel Leth Jespersen, *På vor nådige frues vegne. Dronning Christines administration i senmiddelalderens politiske kultur*, unpub. Master's thesis, University of Århus, 2005, and Mikkel Leth Jespersen, 'Dronning Christine og kong Hans. Len, magt og fromhed i dansk senmiddelalder', (Danish) *Historisk tidsskrift* 106:1 (2006), 10–32. *Dansk kvindebiografisk leksikon* (<http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/170/>) gives insight into the background and life of female fief holders in Denmark in the sixteenth century; see, for example, Anne Meinstrup, Birgitte and Eline Gøye, Sidsel Ulfstand, Ellen Marsvin, Anne Rosenkrantz and Gørvel Fadersdatter Sparre. See also Grethe Jacobsen, 'Køn og magt i dansk senmiddelalder', in Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir et al. eds., *Konge, kirke og samfund. De to øverighetsmagter i dansk senmiddelalder*, Aarhus universitetsforlag: Århus 2007, 151–176, at 158–168 and 'Formal and Informal Power – Danish Noblewomen in Sixteenth-Century Denmark', in Per Andersen et al. eds., *Liber Amicorum Ditlev Tamm*, 133–142; Anu Lahtinen, *Anpassning, förhandling, motstånd. Kvinnliga aktörer i släkten Fleming 1470–1620*, Bokförlaget Atlantis: Stockholm 2009.

⁹ Information about female fief holders in Norway is found in NRR I and *Diplomatarium Norvegicum* (DN) 1–23, C.C.A. Lange et al. eds., Christiania and Oslo 1847–2011. Norwegians: Ingerd Ottesdotter (Rømer) held six fiefs 1524–1529, one to two 1531–1555; her eldest daughter and Vincens Lunge's widow, Margrete Nilsson (Gyldenløve), held Troms fief 1537–[1551] (NRR I, 53, DN 22, vol. 2, 436). Danes: Anne Jørgensdatter Rud, Henrik Krummedike's widow, held three fiefs 1530–1533; Anne Pedersdatter Halvegge/Væpner, Olav Galle's widow, Råde parish 1531–[1543] (NRR I, 31, DN 2, 1107). Swede Margrete Nilsson Krumme, the widow of Otte Henriksen Brockenhus, Råde parish [1551]–1557 (NRR I, 193, 212, 219). For details about Ingerd Ottesdotter and Anne Rud, see below. Unlike the Danes, Norwegian nobles were generally not addressed or referred to by family names around 1530, although both sources and historians sometime apply the Danish custom, for instance in the case of Olav Galle and his brother. The Christian names and the patronymics are here rendered in their customary national form. For example, Nils for Norwegians and Niels for Danes; -dotter and -son for Norwegians and Swedes; -datter and -sen for Danes. See Hamre 1998.

¹⁰ Jespersen 2005; Jacobsen 2011; Lahtinen 2009, 90.

¹¹ Both Anne Rud and her daughter Sofie Krummedike acted in their husbands' stead at Båhus and Bergen castle, respectively. Jacobsen 2007, 152 (Anne); DN XV, 533 (Sofie); Lahtinen 2009, 87–91; Jacobsen 2011.

¹² See Ida Blom and Sølvi Søgner eds., *Med kjønnsperpektiv på norsk historie*, Cappelen akademiske forlag: Oslo 2005, for an overview of research on women in late medieval Norway. This article is one of

decades—1524 to 1555—and can be studied from several angles. However, three events make Lady Ingerd's loss of fiefs in 1529 particularly interesting. The king's request to Lady Ingerd in 1528 came after King Gustav Vasa of Sweden had insisted that she should be punished by King Frederik for her involvement in the Daljunkern-affair and after King Frederik had discontinued grants of fiefs to Vincens Lunge and, it would seem, Archbishop Olav, who had also been involved in the scandal. Consequently, I will begin this article with the aftermath of the Daljunkern-affair and the assumed punishment of Lady Ingerd. However, Ingerd Ottesdotter was not the only widow who found it difficult to hold on to or to secure regular crown fiefs in Norway in the last years of King Frederik's reign (1523–33). In order to uncover whether the royal request reflected King Frederik's general approach to female fief holders in Norway, I will examine the king's dealings concerning the fiefs of Lady Ingerd and fellow fief holder Anne Jørgensdatter Rud's. Finally, competition over Norwegian fiefs was fierce and their distribution crucial to influential noblemen's careers and the monarch's control of the realm. From 1527 to 1529, King Frederik placed trustworthy Danes in the three most important Norwegian castles and began a redistribution of lesser fiefs to Danish-born nobles and other men in his service at the expense of Norwegians or men married to Norwegians. Thus, any discussion about noblewomen who held or lost Norwegian crown fiefs after 1527 should certainly take into consideration King Frederik's enfeoffment policy. Did this policy influence King Frederik's approach to female fief holders? And if so, what does Lady Ingerd's loss of fiefs tell us about noblewomen's opportunities to achieve and hold positions of power in Norway during King Frederik's reign?

The Aftermath of the Daljunkern-Affair

In the 1520s, King Gustav of Sweden faced problems from rebels in the Dalarna district.¹³ To avoid King Gustav's retaliation, the insurgents' leaders sought refuge across the border with Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson in Trondheim and at Austrått, Lady Ingerd's manorial seat at the mouth of the Trondheim fjord.¹⁴ Although provoked, it was not until 1528 that King Gustav turned the full force of his anger towards the Norwegians when they sheltered and assisted Daljunkern, literally 'the squire from Dalarna', a young rebel who claimed to be Nils Stensson Sture, the son of Sten Sture, the late steward and virtual regent of Sweden. Convinced that the young man was whom he claimed to be and spurred on by false rumours of King Gustav's death, Archbishop Olav, Lady Ingerd, her sons-in-

three where I focus on Ingerd Ottesdotter's fief holding. The other articles deal with the periods 1524–1529 and 1530–1555 and will be published 2013/2014. The articles are part of a larger study of Ingerd Ottesdotter's position of power and role in Norwegian politics from the time when she was widowed in 1524 until she passed away in 1555. See also Randi Bjørshol Wærdahl, 'Fru Ingerd Ottesdotters bruk av nettverksforbindelser i 1520- og 30-årenes Norge', *Den Jyske Historiker* 125 (2010), 53–72.

¹³ For an updated account of the Dalarna unrest in the 1520s and the various interpretations of the events, see Hamre 1998, 359–79 and Lars-Olof Larsson, *Gustav Vasa, landsfader eller tyrann?*, Prisma: Stockholm 2002, although Larsson does not mention Lady Ingerd's involvement. See also Wærdahl 2010 about Lady Ingerd's role in Norwegian politics and her complicated friendship with Archbishop Olav Engelbrektsson.

¹⁴ Dalarna borders on Jemtland, which today is a part of Sweden, but in the sixteenth century it was a part of the Norwegian realm. Jemtland borders on Trøndelag, where both Ingerd Ottesdotter and the archbishop resided.

law Vincens Lunge and Erik Ugerup, and even Lunge's brother, who was in Norway as an envoy of King Frederik, supported Daljunkern in what was probably a bid for the Swedish throne.¹⁵ In the end, Daljunkern's quest failed and he returned to Norway, where he stayed until Lunge gave in to pressure from King Frederik and King Gustav and put him on a ship to Denmark.¹⁶ But King Gustav was far from satisfied. He repeatedly demanded that King Frederik should punish Daljunkern's Norwegian supporters, including Lady Ingerd.

The Daljunkern-affair put King Frederik in a delicate position. He feared the return of his predecessor, the ousted Christian II of Denmark, Sweden and Norway, and did not wish to antagonise his Swedish ally. The accusations from King Gustav were one of King Frederik's main motives for summoning Vincens Lunge to a meeting in Flensburg in October 1528, where he was presented with a long list of his alleged misconduct as Norwegian councillor, castellan of Bergen castle and royal governor to northern and western Norway. The Flensburg meeting ended in a compromise agreement, but Lunge lost Bergen castle and the accompanying fiefs and, with that, his position of power, which had been particularly strong in northern and western Norway. It is, however, important to bear in mind that the reaction against Vincens Lunge was not only related to the Daljunkern-affair, but first and foremost to his role as a leading royal official and King Frederik's political goals in Norway. It is also worth keeping in mind that Lunge was not left without fiefs and political influence. He remained a Norwegian councillor, kept some of his lesser fiefs, and was generously compensated for his loss of Bergen castle and fief with new fiefs and valuable estates. King Frederik probably had no intention of alienating Sir Vincens completely, but used the compensation to tie the Danish-born nobleman closer to himself and to the crown and to distance him from his former allies amongst the Norwegian nobles.¹⁷

Following the agreement with Vincens Lunge, King Frederik wrote to King Gustav about the measures he had taken against Daljunkern's supporters. He related that Lunge had lost Bergen castle and fief, but did not mention the compensation. Furthermore, King Frederik informed King Gustav that he had instructed Lunge, Archbishop Olav and Lady Ingerd to present their apologies to both kings in person at a planned meeting between the monarchs.¹⁸ Although there is no mentioning of actual punishment of Lady Ingerd and the archbishop in King Frederik's letter, three entries from October 1528 in the royal copy book reveal that King Frederik had intended that further measures should be taken against the archbishop: the king had granted the crown fiefs held by Archbishop Olav to two nobles from Holstein. But, as all entries concerning these grants were crossed out in the royal copy book, and the archbishop seems to have continued to

¹⁵ Daljunkern was betrothed to one of Lady Ingerd's daughters, given men and provisions, and Vincens Lunge and Erik Ugerup even accompanied him on a suspended military campaign through Jemtland towards Dalarna. However, the two brothers-in-law returned when they reached Jemtland and learned that King Gustav was very much alive.

¹⁶ Daljunkern never reached Denmark; he was captured and imprisoned in Rostock, where he was executed following pressure from King Gustav and on account of a letter where Lady Kristina Nilsdotter, whom he claimed was his mother, denounced him as a fraud.

¹⁷ Hamre 1998, 376–380.

¹⁸ Hamre 1998, 382–383. Cf. *Konug Gustaf den förstes reistratur 1521–1560*, V. Granlund et al. eds., (Handlinger rörande Skandinaviens historia I), Stockholm 1871, part V, 285.

hold the fiefs, the grants were probably not effectuated. As leader of the Norwegian council of the realm, the archbishop, together with Vincens Lunge, had been conducting a policy intended to limit royal influence in Norway. However, in the political climate of 1528–1529, King Frederik probably could not afford to alienate the Norwegian archbishop by punishing him for his involvement in the Daljunker-affair. Besides, the archbishop put up a relentless defence and blamed it all on Lunge, Erik Ugerup and Lady Ingerd.¹⁹

Although Norwegian historians' interpretation of Lady Ingerd's part in the Daljunkern-affair, and in Norwegian politics in general, varies, no one denies that she was heavily involved.²⁰ Additionally, as was the case with Lunge and the archbishop, Lady Ingerd had also managed to exploit the lack of royal control of northern and western Norway to her advantage. For instance, she had gained control of several estates in Norway that rightfully belonged to Danish and Swedish nobles.²¹ But was Lady Ingerd punished by King Frederik? Is it possible to draw a line between her involvement in the affair and the fact that she was asked to hand some or all of her fiefs over to Niels Lykke in December 1528?

Beyond having to apologize personally to King Gustav, which she never actually did, there is no information of any measures taken against Lady Ingerd in the extant sources. In addition, while King Frederik's reaction against Vincens Lunge (and the archbishop) took place in October 1528, when he also sent his answer to King Gustav concerning the punishment he inflicted on Daljunkern's supporters, the entry containing the grant to Niels Lykke and request to Lady Ingerd is dated 26 December.²² Furthermore, the royal request can be understood as a kindly expressed instruction. The grant to Sir Niels was conditional; he could have the fiefs if Lady Ingerd kindly handed over some or all of her crown fiefs to him. There are no such premises in the crossed out entries of the copy book where the king redistributes the archbishop's fiefs. From a later entry in the royal copy book we also know that Sir Niels had to compensate Lady Ingerd financially for her loss.²³ Besides, both the king and Sir Niels acknowledged and accepted that Lady Ingerd had a rightful claim to the fiefs, as the grant contained the stipulation that they were to be returned to Lady Ingerd if Sir Niels and/or his wife should die.²⁴ Thus, Lady Ingerd handed her fiefs over to Sir Niels, but she did not relinquish her future right to them.

There is an element of voluntariness on the part of Lady Ingerd in the request, which is also detectable in a letter Niels Lykke sent in December 1529 to

¹⁹ NRR I, 16. Hamre 1998, 382–395, 400, 481–482. The fiefs were Gauldalen and Sparbu, and the two most important fiefs in mid-Norway, Trøndelag and Trondheim town.

²⁰ While some historians assume that she was just a passive participant in the schemes of her son-in-law, more recent studies in Norwegian politics grant her a more active role. For example, Ludvig Daae, 'Fru Inger Ottesdatter og hennes Døtre', (Norwegian) *Historisk Tidsskrift* 3 (1874), 224–336; Edvard Bull, *Vincens Lunge*, (Nordmænd; biografier av norske mænd og kvinder), Steen: Oslo 1917; Halvdan Koht, 'Ingerd Ottesdotter', in E. Bull et al. eds., *Norsk biografisk leksikon* 6, Aschehoug: Oslo 1934, 519–522; Rian 1995, 23; and esp. Hamre 1998, 353, 359–374.

²¹ Wærdahl 2010.

²² NRR I, 16–17. Hamre 1998, 382–383.

²³ Upon the king's request, Lady Ingerd had relinquished the fiefs she held for life in Norway to her son-in-law, in exchange for an annual amount [paid by Sir Niels] and Sir Niels paying the annual duty and service to the king. NRR I, 28–29; Hamre 1998, 456–459.

²⁴ NRR I, 17. This provision is confusing. In practice, Niels Lykke retained the fiefs when Eline Nilsdotter died in 1532.

the inhabitants of the six fiefs involved in the transfer. The letter contains a repetition of the provisions in the copy book entry from the previous year, relating that King Frederik had allowed and granted Sir Niels the fiefs, but also, moreover, that his mother-in-law, out of motherly faithfulness and love, had kindheartedly relinquished the fiefs following a request from the king. Sir Niels had even attached copies of the deeds and a letter from Lady Ingerd which confirmed the transfer.²⁵ Moreover, that Lady Ingerd lost her fiefs as punishment seems unlikely in light of the deal that was struck between Sir Niels and his mother-in-law concerning the six fiefs in 1531, a deal which confirms that the predominant component in the 1528 request was probably negotiation, not punishment.

A feud between the archbishop and his former allies Sir Vincens and Lady Ingerd prevented Sir Niels from taking over the fiefs until a settlement had been reached between the parties in March 1530.²⁶ However, sometime between March 1530 and July 1531 Sir Niels decided that the arrangement concerning the six fiefs did not serve him. In July 1531, Sir Niels and Lady Ingerd were in Copenhagen for an assembly of noblemen or *herredag*. Sir Niels acted as envoy between the king at Gottorp castle in Sleschwig and the assembly, which the king did not attend, due to distressing news about a possible threat from the exiled Christian II. While in Copenhagen, Sir Niels and Lady Ingerd agreed upon a new arrangement. Stjørdal and Herjedalen, which were held as sureties, were returned to Lady Ingerd, while her son-in-law kept Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Edøy and Fosen, which were held as regular duty and service fiefs. This arrangement was presented to King Frederik, who confirmed it in September 1531.²⁷ Thus, in practice, Niels Lykke held Stjørdal and Herjedalen for barely a year.

Although the 1528 request came from the king, the detailed terms in Sir Niels's grant and the way they arranged the return of the sureties in 1531 seem to indicate that the terms of the handover taking place in 1529 was a result of negotiations between Sir Niels and Lady Ingerd. It also suggests that, in order to explain why Lady Ingerd was requested to hand over her fiefs, we should focus on Sir Niels's wedding to her daughter, rather than the Daljunkern-affair.

After a process in which Niels Lykke's influential relatives negotiated his safe return to Denmark after some years serving Christian II in exile, Niels was able to offer his services to King Frederik and to marry Eline Nilsson in late autumn 1528. We know that he was corresponding with his future mother-in-law in August 1528, at which point the king had already decided to make use of Niels Lykke's diplomatic experience in Norway.²⁸ Lady Ingerd and Sir Vincens, acting in his late father-in-law's stead, were probably responsible for negotiating the terms of Eline's marriage, which could have included the handover of Lady Ingerd's fiefs.²⁹ However, due to the form and phrasing of the 1528 request – it is after all part of a royal grant to Sir Niels, not a royal confirmation of an

²⁵ DN 9, no. 649. Hamre 1998, 427.

²⁶ See Hamre 1998, 388–431 about the feud. In December 1529, Sir Niels had arrived in Bergen where his mother-in-law also resided due to the archbishop's hostilities.

²⁷ NRR I, 28–29. She would also receive the royal revenue of Ørland and Bjugn in Fosen fief free of all duty in exchange for providing three to four men for military service.

²⁸ DN 9, nos. 613, 614. Oscar Albert Johansen, 'Lykke, Niels', in E. Bull et al. eds, *Norsk biografisk leksikon* 8, Aschehoug: Oslo 1938, 545; Hamre 1998, 383.

²⁹ DN 9, 614; Hamre 1998, 641.

agreement between Lady Ingerd and Sir Niels like the king's confirmation from 1531 – it seems more likely that the request originated in negotiations between Niels Lykke and King Frederik. Niels was a younger son with limited financial resources and was probably trying to secure as good a financial position as possible for himself before he embarked for Norway. His marriage to Eline, who had four sisters and no brothers, provided a substantial financial basis, but crown fiefs added considerably to his wealth and prestige.³⁰ Additionally, holding fiefs was a necessity if he was to establish a position of power in Norway.

Niels Lykke was an experienced royal servant and envoy from an influential Danish noble family, but it is obvious that King Frederik did not plan for him to have a role in central government in Denmark.³¹ Although King Frederik did not give him a Norwegian castle, he apparently considered Sir Niels as a reliable and useful man to have in Norway, with strong ties to Denmark and the Danish nobility, and to Eske Bille, the Danish noble who had been offered to take Sir Vincens' place at Bergen castle around the same time that Sir Niels received his grants.³² The king provided Niels with the resources necessary to establish a position for himself in northern and western Norway; in addition to the grants, he was knighted and became a member of the Norwegian council of the realm.

Based on the discussion above, it would seem that King Frederik's request that Lady Ingerd should hand over some or all of her fiefs to her son-in-law was not a result of her involvement in the Daljunkern-affair. It is more likely that she transferred her fiefs to Sir Niels as an indirect consequence of his marriage to her daughter and King Frederik's wish to provide him with a financial and political foundation in Norway. However, as Lady Ingerd was not the only widow who had to let go of Norwegian crown fiefs in King Frederik's reign, I will now attempt to discern whether the request to Lady Ingerd may have reflected the king's general approach to female fief holders in Norway.

King Frederik and Noble Widows' Right to Crown Fiefs in Norway

Although noblewomen and especially widows held crown fiefs in Norway and Denmark in the later Middle Ages, they were rarely granted fiefs directly. In general, they seem to have held one fief, and in Denmark this was often an inherited surety.³³ In the 1520s, Ingerd Ottesdotter was the only woman who held crown fiefs in her own right in Norway, and only a handful of women, all widows, held one or two fiefs—usually so-called duty and/or service fiefs—in the 1530s, 1540s and 1550s.³⁴ It was exceptional that Lady Ingerd held six fiefs from

³⁰ Sir Niels also received Troms fief in 1528. NRR I, 17.

³¹ Hamre 1998, 383.

³² Eske Bille's late sister had been married to Sir Niels' father. Hamre 1998, 385.

³³ See, for example, articles about Anne Meinstrup, Sidsel Ulfstand, Ellen Marsvin, Anne Rosenkrantz and Gørvel Fadersdatter Sparre at <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/170> (accessed 30 January 2013); Jacobsen 2007 and 2011.

³⁴ Margrete Nilsdotter probably held Troms fief as a combined duty and service fief (DN 22, vol. 2, 436); Anne Pedersdatter Halvegge/Væpner, Råde parish with service (NRR I, 31); Margrete Nilsdotter Krumme, Råde parish with service (NRR I, 193, 212, 219).

1524 to 1529, as was the fact that she was granted four of them directly from the crown. In order to further explain and contextualize Lady Ingerd's loss of fiefs, I will now attempt to discern whether King Frederik's request of 1528 reflected a general attitude towards female fief holders in Norway by examining his reaction to Vincens Lunge's distribution of the late Nils Henriksson's fiefs in 1524, and how he dealt with the widow who had a right to the greatest number of fiefs in Norway during his reign, Anne Jørgensdatter Rud.

It is important to point out that it had not been King Frederik's idea that Ingerd Ottesdotter should hold six crown fiefs from 1524 to 1529. In 1523, King Frederik had sent Vincens Lunge to northern and western Norway as a part of his plan to restore royal control of the country. Upon his arrival in Norway, Sir Vincens had married Lady Ingerd and Sir Nils Henriksson's eldest daughter. Sir Nils was both councillor and seneschal, and he held several crown fiefs. When he passed away late in 1523, his son-in-law took his place as a leading member of the Norwegian council of the realm. Sir Vincens was also the governor of northern and western Norway, with the authority to allocate Sir Nils's fiefs to his widow and to Erik Ugerup, who was married to another of the daughters.³⁵ In March 1524, King Frederik confirmed a grant to Lady Ingerd of four crown fiefs to be held for life as duty and service fiefs. In addition, Lady Ingerd most likely inherited Stjørdal and Herjedal from her husband, who had originally inherited them from his father.³⁶ A letter sent by the king to Archbishop Olav confirms that the grant to Ingerd originated in Sir Vincens, and that King Frederik did not necessarily see his governor's decisions concerning the fiefs as a permanent arrangement.³⁷ King Frederik's letter is a reply to a request from the archbishop concerning the late Nils Henriksson's fiefs. The king informs the archbishop that he has just received a letter from Sir Vincens, who informed him that he had granted some of the fiefs in question to Lady Ingerd, Sir Nils's widow, and Vardø castle and Finnmark fief to his brother-in-law, Erik Ugerup. The king tells the archbishop that it will remain as Sir Vincens has done on his [the king's] behalf in his absence.³⁸

Although the king confirmed the grant, it was to a large extent the Norwegian council of the realm and its leading members that controlled appointments of fief holders in Norway from 1524 to 1527.³⁹ Nevertheless, King Frederik's answer to Archbishop Olav can still be used to substantiate that the king had not intended for Lady Ingerd to retain such a large number of crown

³⁵ Hamre 1998, 243–250. The fiefs were Vardø castle, Finnmark, Sunnmøre, Romsdal, Edøy, Fosen, Stjørdal (with Selbu) and Herjedalen. See Erik Ulsig, 'The nobility of the late Middle Ages', in Helle ed., *Prehistory to 1520*, 635–652, at 649, about seneschal (*rikshovmester*).

³⁶ NRR I, 3. In NRR I, 29, the two fiefs are explicitly referred to as Lady Ingerd's sureties. Nils Henriksson held Herjedalen as a surety from 1518–1519, at the latest. King Hans had originally granted Stjørdal to his father, Henrik Jensson, and his heirs as a means of compensating Henrik for ransoming himself from Swedish custody. Lars Hamre, *Norsk historie frå midten av 1400-åra til 1513*, Universitetsforlaget: Oslo, Bergen, Tromsø, 1971, 49; Rolf Fladby, *Fra lensmannstjener til Kongelig Majestetets Foged*, Universitetsforlaget: Oslo 1963, 55, 65; Available online at http://snl.no/.nbl_biografi/Nils_Henriksson/utdypning (accessed 3 October 2012).

³⁷ DN 7, no. 579.

³⁸ Orig. '[...] oc begheredhe atwij thet saa will ladhe bliiffwe szom hand giwrdt hagdhe paa ware wegne j wart frawerilsze.' (DN 7, no. 579). King Frederik confirmed the grant to Erik Ugerup on the same day as he confirmed Lady Ingerd's (NRR I, 3).

³⁹ Hamre 1998, 288–290, 296–302.

fiefs for life, as it indicates that he would make other arrangements concerning the fiefs when he was no longer absent from Norway. But it was not only the number of fiefs that set Lady Ingerd apart from the other female fief holders we encounter in Norway in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Even though little research on noblewomen, and women in general, in late medieval Norway has been conducted, it seems that the results from international research are applicable to Norwegian circumstances: noblewomen's power and influence was generally a result of their role within the family and the household, their control of property, and their ability to wield influence through informal channels of power.⁴⁰ However, Lady Ingerd had the ability to wield a more direct form of power and influence. From 1524 to 1529 she had both a formal and an actual position of power in northern and western Norway. As a fief holder, Lady Ingerd exercised delegated royal authority, and was responsible for and managed the collecting of royal duties and extraordinary taxes and the shipment of her annual duty to the crown.⁴¹ By combining this formal position of power with vast private financial resources and the role she played in political life, it is clear that Lady Ingerd held a position of power that surpassed that of an average Norwegian councillor, a position which we would expect to find occupied by a member of the Norwegian or Danish council of the realm or one of the king's trusted men. It is, of course, difficult to reach a conclusion about King Frederik's approach to female fief holders based solely on this limited information about Lady Ingerd, but it seems clear that although the king repeatedly tried to intervene against her unlawful appropriation of estates that rightfully belonged to other nobles, he did not try to interfere with her fief holding or diminish her strong position prior to December 1528. It does, as we shall see, make sense to understand the period from 1524 to 1529 as a transition period until King Frederik could redistribute the Norwegian fiefs according to his own enfeoffment policy, not Vincens Lunge's. Nevertheless, that King Frederik's attitude to noblewomen who held crown fiefs was ambiguous at best and governed by motives other than concern for the rights of widows is confirmed by the result of Anne Jørgensdatter Rud's negotiations with the crown in 1530.

Henrik Krummedike, Lady Anne's husband, passed away on 1 April 1530. Three days later, a grief-stricken widow wrote to her son-in-law Eske Bille, Vincens Lunge's successor at Bergen castle. Lady Anne informs him of his father-in-law's passing and that she has already written to Mogens Gøye, her brother Knud, and several friends, asking them to write to the king on her behalf to ensure that nothing happened to the fiefs she was to hold for life.⁴²

Lady Anne belonged to the Danish high nobility through birth and marriage.⁴³ She had managed and controlled one of the largest concentrations of

⁴⁰ Ingvild Øye, 'Kvinner, kjønn og samfunn. Fra vikingtiden til reformasjonen', in Ida Blom et al eds., *Med kjønnsperspektiv på norsk historie*, Cappelen akademiske forlag: Oslo 2005, 19–101, at 90–96 and Hilde Sandvik, 'Tidlig moderne tid i Norge 1500–1800', in Blom et al eds., *Med kjønnsperspektiv*, 103–55, at 126–128. However, these accounts primarily reveal the striking lack of empirical research on women's influence and power, or on any subject related to women, in Norway in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

⁴¹ Wærdahl 2010 and forthcoming 2014, about Lady Ingerd's motives for holding fiefs in the 1520s.

⁴² DN 23, no. 218. The letters concerning Anne Rud's Norwegian fiefs are now printed in *Diplomatarium Norwegicum* vol. 23.

⁴³ <http://www.kvinfo.dk/side/597/bio/1635/origin/170/query/Anne/> (Accessed 30 January 2013).

landed property in Denmark and Norway together with her husband, who had been the greatest fief holder in Norway and who had played a crucial role in Norwegian politics in several periods from the 1490s on.⁴⁴ When Henrik Krummedike died, ten Norwegian crown fiefs apparently became available for redistribution. There was, however, an obstacle. Several sources confirm that Sir Henrik had held the majority of his regular crown fiefs together with his wife. Furthermore, the deeds specified that the fiefs were to be held not only for his lifetime, but for hers as well.⁴⁵ There are similar provisions in the grants Niels Lykke and Eline Nilsdotter received in 1528. We need more research, but it seems that in certain circumstances wives were mentioned as grantees of lesser crown fiefs together with their husbands, a measure probably taken to secure income and make sure the fiefs remained in the family until they could be granted to the next generation.⁴⁶

From her correspondence, it is obvious that the widowed Anne Rud wanted to retain the eight fiefs she could legally claim a right to in Norway. She also knew that Ingerd Ottesdotter held fiefs. In fact, she refers to them as ‘Lady Ingerd’s fiefs’ in July 1529, perhaps an indication that they had not yet been formally transferred to Niels Lykke.⁴⁷ But from Lady Anne’s letters and actions it is also clear that she expected to have to fight for her right to keep the fiefs. She mobilized her social network immediately after her husband’s passing. The answer she received from Mogens Gøye a few days later confirmed that she had cause for concern: there were men in Copenhagen who claimed they had already obtained deeds on the fiefs.⁴⁸

The leading political figures in Denmark would go far to obtain fiefs for themselves, their family members, allies, and protégées. Henrik Krummedike’s fiefs had probably been the subject of gossip and rumours even before he passed away.⁴⁹ Fiefs came with rank and office, but ambitious noblemen were also

⁴⁴ See Erling Ladewig Petersen, ‘Henrik Krummedike og Norge. Studier over Danmarks forhold til Norge 1523–1533’, (Danish) *Historisk tidsskrift*, 12 (series 3), Copenhagen 1968, 1–79; Ole Jørgen Benedictow, *Hartvig Krummedikes jordegods: en studie i senmiddelaldersk adelsøkonomi* (Historiske studier fra de norske universiteter 3), Universitetsforlaget: Oslo 1970; Hamre 1998, 226–227, 448, about Henrik Krummedike and Norway and his and Anne Rud’s Norwegian fiefs. Petersen’s (1968, 37) knowledge about Norwegian fiefs seems incomplete: he treats Southern and Northern Nummedal, as they are often referred to in the sources, as one fief, and does not seem to know that they correspond to modern day Nummedal and Namdalen regions, located in opposite parts of the country, in Buskerud and Nord-Trøndelag, respectively.

⁴⁵ A deed from 1498 clearly states that the fiefs in question were to be held by both Sir Henrik and his wife for both their lifetimes: ‘[...] at haffue nydhe bruge och beholle vtj beggis theris lifftid’ (DN 5, no. 982, cf. NRR I, 2–3). In 1530, they held the following crown fiefs together in Norway; Viken (which had been occupied by Sweden since 1524), Nummedal, Tune, Skjeberg, Solør (with Østerdalen), Råbyggelaget, Namdalen, and Brunla as a surety. In addition, Sir Henrik held Midsyssel (a.k.a. Mandal) and Lista on his own (cf. DN 18, no. 295; 23, no. 233). The couple also held several fiefs in Denmark. http://nbl.snl.no/Henrik_Krummedike/utdypning (accessed 12 September 2013).

⁴⁶ Jacobsen 2007, 158–168; Lahtinen 2009, 90–93.

⁴⁷ DN 23, no. 192. Anne relates to Eske Bille that she knows Archbishop Olav has occupied Lady Ingerd’s fiefs.

⁴⁸ DN 23, no. 221. It was not unusual that the king handed out grants to fiefs which were still occupied. Anne advised her son-in-law to secure letters for life on the fiefs she would keep, which he did. He succeeded his mother-in-law when she died in 1533 (DN 23, no. 227). In 1555, King Christian III granted Romsdal, which was again held by Lady Ingerd at this time, to a man to be held after Lady Ingerd had passed away (NRR I, 181).

⁴⁹ For example, DN 7, no. 597, 600; 10, no. 668; 13, no. 591–596; 22, vol. 1, no. 304, vol. 2, no. 438. This was a game Lady Anne was familiar with and which she paid close attention to on Eske’s behalf when she

dependent on their social network to secure them.⁵⁰ There seems to have been great similarities between men's and women's *modus operandi* when it came to the process of securing fiefs, and Lady Anne used the resources available to her in her struggle. She relied heavily on her social network, which consisted primarily of her son-in-law Eske and her cousins Mogens Gøye and Oluf Nielsen Rosenkrantz, who were both highly influential men in Denmark.⁵¹ They wrote letters on her behalf, gave advice, passed on news and gossip and met with her to discuss the matter. Sir Oluf even wrote to Eske to remind him of his duties towards his mother-in-law.⁵² In addition, Lady Anne approached the king directly, by letter and in person, a course advised by her cousins.⁵³

Although King Frederik acknowledged that Lady Anne had a claim to the fiefs, it seems fairly obvious from the start of the process that he had no intention of granting her all the fiefs to which she claimed a right. In a letter to Eske Bille dated 30 April 1530, Chancellor Claus Gjordsen explained that, although the king did not want to cause Anne any injustice concerning the fiefs she had letters on from her late husband, still she would not receive grants for all the fiefs she held in fee.⁵⁴ In late April, King Frederik himself also wrote directly to Lady Anne concerning her fiefs. He claimed to have been ignorant of the stipulations concerning Anne in her husband's deeds, although he had confirmed them in 1524. The king offered to meet her to discuss the matter, even though he also informed her that he had placed her fiefs under Båhus and Akershus castles. In addition, her son-in-law at Bergen castle received the fiefs that Henrik had held on his own.⁵⁵ It may seem that Lady Anne's efforts had been in vain; however, on 22 July, after the chancellor had (yet again) presented her case to the king, it was decided that Lady Anne would be allowed to keep two of the fiefs she claimed a right to in Norway; Namdalen and Nummedal. In addition, she held Brunla as a hereditary surety. This fief does not seem to have been part of the negotiations.⁵⁶ The result of the process was clearly a disappointment to Lady Anne, but when she related the outcome of her case to her daughter, she pointed out that keeping the fiefs had been a close call, because they were so sought after. Even Niels Lykke, whose fief Fosen bordered on Namdalen, wrote to the king in hope of securing some of Henrik Krummedike's fiefs.⁵⁷

Anne Rud's experience throws further light on the request Ingerd Ottesdotter received in 1528 and on King Frederik's evaluation of Vincens Lunge's distribution of her late husband's fiefs in 1524. Although King Frederik willingly granted one or two regular crown fiefs to noble widows and does not

stayed in Copenhagen. DN 23, nos. 233, 234, 235, 247.

⁵⁰ For example, DN 7, nos. 597, 600; 10, no. 668; 13, no. 591–596; 22, vo. 1, no. 304, vol. 2, no. 438.

⁵¹ Mogens Gøye was seneschal, and both were members of the Danish council of the realm.

⁵² For example, DN 12, nos. 456, 460, 466; 23, nos. 221, 229.

⁵³ DN 10, no. 612; 23, nos. 221, 230.

⁵⁴ DN 12, no. 460.

⁵⁵ DN 10, no. 612; 12, no. 460, and 23, no. 224, 230, 233. *Breve til og fra Mogens Gyldenstjerne og Anne Sparre 1*, E.M. Marquard ed., Selskabet for Udgivelse af Kilder til Dansk Historie: København 1929, 17–18. NRR I, 2–3; cf. Hamre 1998, 227.

⁵⁶ DN 12, 456; 23, nos. 233, 234; NRR I, 23. Lady Anne also kept Our Lady's monastery in Roskilde. In the end, the majority of the fiefs she claimed went to Mogens Gyldenstjerne, castellan at Akershus; these were Råbyggelaget, Skjeberg, Solør (with Østerdalen) and Tune (NRR I, 23–27), while Claus Bille at Båhus castle held Viken from 1532, when it was no longer occupied by the Swedes (Hamre 1998, 513, 520).

⁵⁷ DN 12, no. 464; 23, no. 233.

seem to have had a negative approach to female fief holders in general, it seems evident that he had no intention of contributing to a situation in which Lady Ingerd and Lady Anne would have held fourteen of the estimated thirty lesser crown fiefs in Norway.⁵⁸ King Frederik and the chancellor do not explain in their letters why Anne had to settle for so little, but as the rest of Henrik Krummedike's fiefs were placed under the three central Norwegian castles, it is clear that in order to further explain why Lady Ingerd let go of her fiefs we must address the broader political context. Why did a king who had no qualms about granting one or two Norwegian crown fiefs to noble widows, who clearly did not have a negative approach to female fief holders in general, and who acknowledged that Ingerd Ottesdotter and Anne Rud had rightful claims to fiefs, request that Ingerd should hand over some or all her fiefs to her son-in-law?

Why Did Lady Ingerd Ottesdotter Let Go of Her Crown Fiefs in 1529?

From 1524 to 1527, the Norwegian fiefs were held by Norwegian nobles and men married to Norwegians, in line with King Frederik's Norwegian accession charter. In 1527, the king appointed the Dane Mogens Gyldenstjerne to Akershus castle. This was the first step in a process that culminated with the appointment of Eske Bille to Bergen castle in 1529, and which included stripping Vincens Lunge off his castle and establishing a financial and political foundation for Niels Lykke. In order to further regain royal control over Norway, King Frederik encouraged the extension of castle fiefs at the cost of lesser fiefs, thus opting for fewer and more loyal fief holders less likely to challenge the king. King Frederik's enfeoffment policy affected the Norwegian-born nobles severely. In addition to the castles, the remaining lesser crown fiefs were also increasingly granted to a younger generation of Danish nobles and trusted royal servants.⁵⁹ Did these changes influence King Frederik's approach to female fief holders? And if so, what does Lady Ingerd's loss of fiefs tell us about noblewomen's opportunities to achieve and hold positions of power in Norway in King Frederik's reign?

The king's request to Lady Ingerd and his decision to grant Lady Anne only two of the eight Norwegian crown fiefs to which she claimed a right can be perceived as elements in King Frederik's Norwegian enfeoffment policy. Noble widows who held crown fiefs controlled resources and held positions which were unattainable to most men. Competition over fiefs was fierce and only a select group of noble widows with rightful claims and influential friends and relations held and received fiefs in competition with the king's favoured officials and men in Norway from 1524 to 1555. However, within the boundaries of King Frederik's enfeoffment policy, Norwegian crown fiefs were first and foremost a prerogative of leading royal officials and loyal men, not a means of securing income and

⁵⁸ Summøre, Romsdal, Edøy, Fosen, Stjørdal (with Selbu), Herjedal, Viken, Nummedal, Tune, Skjeberg, Solør (with Østerdalen), Råbyggelaget, Namdalen, and Brunla.

⁵⁹ Esben Albrechtsen, *Fellesskabet bliver til 1380–1536* (Danmark-Norge 1380–1814 1), Universitetsforlaget: Oslo 1997, 319–322; Hamre 1998, 179–383; and Erik Ulsig, 'The Nobility of the Late Middle Ages', in Helle ed., *Prehistory to 1520*, 650–652; Herman Schück, 'The Political System', in Helle ed., *Prehistory to 1520*, 703–711; Jens E. Olesen, in 'Inter-Scandinavian Relations', Helle ed., *Prehistory to 1520*, 710–713.

positions to their predecessors' widows. An enfeoffment policy designed to enhance royal control of Norway seems to have left little occasion for allowing noblewomen to hold and control a large proportion of crown fiefs. It seems unlikely that a widow would have been allowed to hold six fiefs in Norway and to hold onto or establish a position of power after 1528 equal to the position Lady Ingerd had held in the 1520s. The political situation which allowed Lady Ingerd to hold six fiefs between 1524 and 1529 was extraordinary, and it is hardly surprising that it would not be continued when King Frederik took full control of fief distribution. Few noblewomen held regular crown fiefs in their own right in Norway in the first half of the sixteenth century, and they rarely held more than one or two fiefs. Thus, Lady Ingerd's loss of fiefs in 1529 can be understood as a return to normality.

This article is based on a preliminary study of a new topic in historical research on late medieval Norway. To fully understand the extent and nature of noblewomen's fief holding in this period, it is necessary to conduct further studies in Norway and the rest of the Nordic region. Ingerd Ottesdotter is a good, although possibly unique, example of how far a noble widow could rise within the political and administrative structures of late medieval Norway when the circumstances were to her advantage. Yet, this study is primarily a testament to what transpired when circumstances became less favourable. King Frederik's enfeoffment policy made it increasingly difficult—probably impossible—for noble widows to hold onto or establish a position equal to the position Lady Ingerd had held in the 1520s. Although her position had been the result of a political reality in which the most prominent members of her family and close associates dominated political development and controlled the distribution of lesser crown fiefs in northern and western Norway, it seems that her loss of fiefs substantiates the conclusion that a strong king and an increased centralization of local and regional government reduced noblewomen's opportunity to achieve positions of power in pre-reformation Norway.

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