Odin knew and practised that craft which brought most power and which was called seid (witchcraft), and he therefore knew much of man's fate and of the future, likewise how to bring people death, ill-luck or illness, or he took power and wit from them and gave it to others. But in promoting this sorcery, lack of manliness followed so much that men seemed not without shame in dealing in it; the priestesses were therefore taught this craft. Odin also knew where any treasure pit was hidden and knew such songs that the earth and hills and rocks and howes opened themselves for him, and he bound with spells those who might be dwelling therein, so that he could go in and take all that he wished.

By these crafts he became very renowned; his foes feared him, but his friends took pride in him and trusted in his craft and in him. But most of the crafts he taught the priests; they came nearest to him in all wisdom and wizardry. And many others learned much thereof; from them sorcery has therefore spread widely and long endured. Men sacrificed to Odin and his twelve chiefs and called them their gods and long afterwards believed in them.

*Ynglinga Saga*, Transl. S. Schjött (1900)

‘Then a seeress [vǫlua] who was called Heid [Heydur] arrived. The king told her to use her art to divine what she could learn about the boys. The king had a magnificent feast prepared for her and had her placed on a high trance platform [seidhiall/seiðhjallr]. Then he asked what she could see of the future, ‘because I know,‘ he said, ‘that much will be made clear to you. I see that there is great luck in you, so answer me as quickly as possible.‘

She wrenched open her jaws and yawned deeply, and this chant emerged from her mouth:

Two are the men

I trust in neither,

They the excellent ones

Who sit by the fire‘s side.

The king replied, ‘Are you speaking about the boys or about those who have saved them?‘ She answered,

They who long were

On Vifil‘s island

And there were hailed

With hounds‘ names,

Hopp and Ho.

Just then Signy threw a gold ring to the Sybil. Heid was pleased with the gift, and she wanted to stop her divining. She said, ‘This is how matters stand. What I said is only a lie, and now all my prophecies have gone astray.‘

The king replied, ‘If you do not choose more wisely, you will be tortured into speaking. Here among so many people, I still do not understand any better than previously what you are saying. And why is Signy not in her seat? Can it be that wolves are plotting with predators?‘

[...]

King Frodi now pressed the sorceress [seidk(onunni)] hard. He commanded her to tell the truth if she did not want to be tortured. Her mouth gaped wide, but the spell [seidurinn] became difficult. Finally she spoke this verse:

I see where they sit,

Sons of Halfdan,

Hroar and Helgi,

Healthy both.

They will rob

Frodi of life.

‘Unless they are quickly dealt with,‘ she said, ‘but that will not happen.‘ Then she jumped down from the trance [seidh(iallinum)] and said:

Hard are the eyes

Of Ham and Hrani;

They are princes

Wonderfully bold.

...The sorceress, who herself now ran from the hall, had given the boys good advice when she told them to save themselves.

*The Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, Transl. J.L. Byock

At that time there was a great dearth in Greenland; those who had been out on fishing expeditions had caught little, and some had not returned.

There was in the settlement the woman whose name was Thorbjorg. She was a prophetess (spae-queen), and was called Litilvolva (little sybil). She had had nine sisters, and they were all spae-queens, and she was the only one now living.

It was a custom of Thorbjorg, in the winter time, to make a circuit, and people invited her to their houses, especially those who had any curiosity about the season, or desired to know their fate; and inasmuch as Thorkell was chief franklin thereabouts, he considered that it concerned him to know when the scarcity which overhung the settlement should cease. He invited, therefore, the spae-queen to his house, and prepared for her a hearty welcome, as was the custom whereever a reception was accorded a woman of this kind. A high seat was prepared for her, and a cushion laid thereon in which were poultry-feathers.

Now, when she came in the evening, accompanied by the man who had been sent to meet her, she was dressed in such wise that she had a blue mantle over her, with strings for the neck, and it was inlaid with gems quite down to the skirt. On her neck she had glass beads. On her head she had a black hood of lambskin, lined with ermine. A staff she had in her hand, with a knob thereon; it was ornamented with brass, and inlaid with gems round about the knob. Around her she wore a girdle of soft hair, and therein was a large skin-bag, in which she kept the talismans needful to her in her wisdom. She wore hairy calf-skin shoes on her feet, with long and strong-looking thongs to them, and great knobs of latten at the ends. On her hands she had gloves of ermine-skin, and they were white and hairy within.

Now, when she entered, all men thought it their bounden duty to offer her becoming greetings, and these she received according as the men were agreeable to her. The franklin Thorkell took the wise-woman by the hand, and led her to the seat prepared for her. He requested her to cast her eyes over his herd, his household, and his homestead. She remained silent altogether.

During the evening the tables were set; and now I must tell you what food was made ready for the spae-queen. There was prepared for her porridge of kid's milk, and hearts of all kinds of living creatures there found were cooked for her. She had a brazen spoon, and a knife with a handle of walrus-tusk, which was mounted with two rings of brass, and the point of it was broken off.

When the tables were removed, the franklin Thorkell advanced to Thorbjorg and asked her how she liked his homestead, or the appearance of the men; or how soon she would ascertain that which he had asked, and which the men desired to know. She replied that she would not give answer before the morning, after she had slept there for the night.

And when the (next) day was far spent, the preparations were made for her which she required for the exercise of her enchantments. She begged them to bring to her those women who were acquainted with the lore needed for the exercise of the enchantments, and which is known by the name of Weird-songs, but no such women came forward. Then was search made throughout the homestead if any woman were so learned.

Then answered Gudrid, "I am not skilled in deep learning, nor am I a wise-woman, although Halldis, my foster-mother, taught me, in Iceland, the lore which she called Weird-songs."

"Then art thou wise in good season," answered Thorbjorg; but Gudrid replied, "That lore and the ceremony are of such a kind, that I purpose to be of no assistance therein, because I am a Christian woman." Then answered Thorbjorg, "Thou mightest perchance afford thy help to the men in this company, and yet be none the worse woman than thou wast before; but to Thorkell give I charge to provide here the things that are needful."

Thorkell thereupon urged Gudrid to consent, and she yielded to his wishes. The women formed a ring round about, and Thorbjorg ascended the scaffold and the seat prepared for her enchantments. Then sang Gudrid the weird-song in so beautiful and excellent a manner, that to no one there did it seem that he had ever before heard the song in voice so beautiful as now.

The spae-queen thanked her for the song. "Many spirits," said she, "have been present under its charm, and were pleased to listen to the song, who before would turn away from us, and grant us no such homage. And now are many things clear to me which before were hidden both from me and others. And I am able this to say, that the dearth will last no longer, the season improving as spring advances. The epidemic of fever which has long oppressed us will disappear quicker than we could have hoped. And thee, Gudrid, will I recompense straightway, for that aid of thine which has stood us in good stead; because thy destiny is now clear to me, and foreseen. Thou shalt make a match here in Greenland, a most honourable one, though it will not be a long-lived one for thee, because thy way lies out to Iceland; and there, shall arise from thee a line of descendants both numerous and goodly, and over the branches of thy family shall shine a bright ray. And so fare thee now well and happily, my daughter."

Afterwards the men went to the wise-woman, and each enquired after what he was most curious to know. She was also liberal of her replies, and what she said proved true. After this came one from another homestead after her, and she then went there. Thorbjorn was invited, because he did not wish to remain at home while such heathen worship was performing.

The weather soon improved when once spring began, as Thorbjorg had said, Thorbjorn made ready his ship, and went on until he came to Brattahlid (the steep slope). Eirik received him with the utmost cordiality, saying he had done well to come there. Thorbjorn and his family were with him during the winter. And in the following spring Eirik gave to Thorbjorn land at Stokknes, and handsome farm buildings were there built for him, and he dwelt there afterwards.

*The Saga of Erik the Red,* Transl. J. Sephton (1880)

Ingald returned home and invited many people to the feast. All those invited duly attended.

Ingjald and his men prepared a magic rite in the old heathen fashion, so that men could examine what the fates had in store for them. A Lapp enchantress was among those present...The Lapp woman, splendidly attired, sat on a high seat. Men left their benches and went forward to ask about their destinies. For each of them she predicted that which eventually came to pass, but each took the news in a different way. The foster-brothers sat in their places and did not go up to inquire about the future; they placed not trust in her predictions.

The seeress said, 'Why do those young men not ask about their futures, because they seem to me to be the most outstanding of the men assembled here?'

Ingimund answered, 'It's not important for me to know my future before it happens, and I do not think that my future lies at the roots of your tongue.'

She answered, 'I will nevertheless tell you without being asked. You will settle in a land which is called Iceland; it is as yet not widely settled. There you will become a man of honour and live to a great age. Many of your kinsfolk will be noble figures in that land.'

Ingimund answered, ‘…’

The Lapp woman answered, 'What I am saying will come to pass and, as a sign of this, an amulet is missing from your purse -- the gift which King Harald gave you at Havsfjord -- and it now lies in the wood where you will settle, and on this silver amulet the figure of Frey is carved and when you establish your homestead there, then my prophecy will be fulfilled.'

Ingimund answered, 'If it were not for offending my foster-father, you would receive your reward on your skull; but because I am not an aggressive or irritable man, we will let it pass.'

She said that there was no need for angry words. Ingimund said that ill fortune had brought her here. She said that things would turn out as she had stated, whether he liked it or not.

She went on -- 'the destinies of Grim and of his brother Hromund also lie in Iceland; and they will both become worthy farmers.'

The next morning Ingimund searched for the amulet and could not find it. That did not seem to him a good omen.

*The Saga of the People of Vatnsdal*, Trans. A. Wawn (2000)