

SAAB Rescued by Pangda

China's largest listed car distributor, Pangda Automobile Trade Co Ltd, has come to the rescue of Saab in a deal worth as much as 10 million euros, staving off the collapse of one of Sweden's best-known brands.

Niche carmaker Spyker, which bought Saab from General Motors last year, ran into a cash crunch after the Swedish car's 2010 sales fell short of forecasts. The Dutch company scrambled to find funding to restart Saab's Trollhättan plant.

Pangda will take a 24% equity stake in Spyker for a total of 65 million euros, and the two companies will produce Saab branded vehicles as well as a jointly owned brand. It will take two years before production starts in China.

Earlier, Volvo had talks with the Swedish government about possibly bidding for Saab. Volvo was taken over from Ford by Greely last August, in China's largest acquisition of a foreign car maker to date. — Swedish Press, June 2011.

Stamps by Phone

The Danish postal service is trying to give customers' tongues a rest by allowing them to pay their postage via mobile phone text message instead of stamps. The text message from users prompts a special code to be sent back to them. The code is then written down on the letter and serves as proof of the postage having been paid.

A similar system is under consideration by the postal service in Sweden. There, users would be allowed to use codes from sending letters and parcels weighing up to two kilograms.

The risk of forged codes is no greater than it is with traditional stamps, as both must eventually be read by postal service scanners. — Scandinavian Press, Summer 2011.

THOR



GOD OF THUNDER FOR EVERYONE

After creating *the Hulk comic strip* in the 1960s, Stan Lee wondered how to make someone stronger than the strongest person? It finally came to him: don't make him human — make him a god. He decided that readers were already familiar enough with Greek and Roman gods, so he thought it might be fun to delve into the old Norse legends.

And that was the birth of "The Mighty Thor" **Marvel Comic** that has now been made into a film starring Chris Hemsworth as the powerful but arrogant "god of thunder" who is cast out of the realm of Åsgård and sent to live amongst humans on Earth, where he soon becomes one of their finest defenders.

In the Norse mythology, Thor was the son of Odin and the strongest of the gods. He was married to Sif, the goddess of fertility, but kept a mistress with whom he had two sons and a daughter. During thunderstorms, Thor rode through

the heavens on a chariot pulled by two goats. Lightning flashed when he threw his hammer Mjölir. The hammer always returned to Thor's iron-glowed hand. His greatest enemy was the Midgård serpent, that Thor managed to kill at the Ragnarök "Doom of the Gods", but whose poison eventually killed the heroic god.

According to the 11th century Christian missionary Adam of Bremen, there was a sculpture of Thor next to that of Odin's in the temple at Uppsala, Sweden. Thor was the most popular god, because he did not require human sacrifices like Odin, and because he protected the common man.

Mjölir-shaped amulets were carried by Nordic men and women long after the introduction of Christianity, and Thor's day still lives on every week as **Thursday**. His name also lives on in numerous place names across Scandinavia.

— from *Scandinavian Press*, Summer 2011.

MYTH v. MARVEL

With Thor the movie in theaters, America will be introduced to Marvel Comics' version of the god of thunder.

But how similar is Marvel's to the Thor from Norse mythology?

"I sometimes use this as a question on my final exam!" laughed Merrill Kaplan, who teaches Norse Folklore and Scandinavian Studies at Ohio State University. "The comics got the basics right. Thor is a defender of mankind. And he's got his handy hammer. Those are big. But just about everything else is different." Here's a rundown:

Superhero One of the most obvious aspects of Marvel's Thor is that he's a superhero, fighting for good and defending those in need.

According to Kaplan, that version of Thor isn't much of a stretch. Thor in mythology is very much heroic in that he runs out and battles and saves people. He's the defender of the realm of gods and men. He goes out and smites trolls. He fights one-on-one," she said.

Mjölir In the movie Thor is wielding a hammer that is named Mjölir, with a name and power that is similar to its roots in mythology.

"The hammer's dead-on," Kaplan said. "The Thor in mythology has a hammer. It really does return when he throws it. We never actually see that in the stories, but we're told in one of our best sources that that is true. The boomerang thing is dead-on."

Appearance and Masculinity But Thor of mythology is supposed to be a redhead and have a

beard, which is important. "This is a society where beards are an important signifier of masculinity, and Thor in the mythology is very much about the ideals of masculinity," she said.

"I'm not sure why he wasn't [portrayed] as a redhead. I believe it mostly has to do with our idea of what 'Scandinavian' is supposed to look like."

Odin Kaplan explained that in Norse mythology, the gods are usually battling the giants. In the movie, Anthony Hopkins' Odin, the chief god and father of Thor, contrasts greatly with the version from mythology, which frequently lies, makes trouble, and engages in battles of words and knowledge, she explained. And no matter what, the gods always beat the giants — until the end, which is called "**Ragnarök**," where the giants finally beat the gods.

Family In mythology, Thor seems to be very much about the family unit, Kaplan said, which is something she hasn't seen addressed in the Thor comic character.

"His wife, Sif, in mythology, is not someone with a sword [like she is in the comics and movie], which is too bad" she says. "Her name means something like 'kinship relation,' so there's something very basic about the family being part of Thor's profile."

"So you can see that, because Thor is very straight ahead, and on your side, that's what makes him more like a human hero."

— by **Vaneta Rogers**, Newsarama Contributor, May 5, 2011. <http://www.newsarama.com/film/thursday-marvel-vs-mythological-thor-110505.html>