

Re: Some questions about Swedish language

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- *From:* phoglund@xxxxxx
 - *Date:* Thu, 25 Oct 2007 15:47:52 -0700
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On Oct 26, 12:05 am, Trond Engen <trond...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> wrote:

A R:nen skreiv:

"Carnby" <linnetsNOS...@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx> writes:

I'm learning some Swedish to read some scientific books written in that language. I found this clause: "USA torde för närvarande hårbärgera ung. hälften half världens judar, där de framför allt bo i New York [...]". I have some problems with the word "torde" and with the verb "bo": why is it infinitive? Shouldn't it be "bor"?

(What's your problem with "torde", it's a normal (if a bit antiquated) construction for marking slight uncertainty about what is being told? [...])

Almost needless to say, it's used the same way in Norwegian. However, in Norwegian the main meaning of the verb is "dare".

In Swedish, "töra" is not used in that way, but the deponent verb "töras" is.

"Jeg torde ikke gå." = "I didn't dare to go."

The usage in the OP's example is due to semantic development, probably from "challenge". "New York torde ..." ~ "New York should be a challenger for the title as ...".

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In the meaning "dare" it's also present in some dialects in an originally reflexive form with *-s*. This seems to point at "challenge". (Trondheim dial. "æ tørs" (*-s* = "oneself") = "I dare" <- "I challenge (or bet, or risk) myself"?)

Hellquist says that the verb is of uncertain origin and with several of its forms apparently contaminated with ON <þurfa> "need". Could it actually be the same as Eng. <dare> -- with even the initial *þ* from contamination?

Well, at least the deponent verb form "töras" is used in Swedish in the meaning "to dare": *töras*, *törs*, *tordes*, *torts* (although I would myself prefer the Low German import *våga*, and I feel very insecure about actually using "tordes" and "torts"). Modern Icelandic has *þora* = to dare and *þurfa* = to need, which are quite distinct.

[Bo] is not infinitive but rather present tense plural (but the form is indeed identical with the infinitive with very few exceptions, "äro" for "vara" is the only one I can come up with). I guess it's an old text?

The plural forms were lost over the 20th century, their final major institutional stronghold (newly enacted Swedish–language legislation of Finland) was lost around 1970, in Sweden they were basically extinct already in the 1950s.

They were lost in spoken language centuries ago, weren't they?

I don't know about centuries, but certainly they were extinct in all mainstream dialects long before they were abolished in written language. However, I seem to recall that Halland Swedish had even personal endings – *vi kommom* – as late as in the twentieth century.