Conceptual chaos of prisoner-of-war camps during the Continuation War
Background

Research project:

• *In Search of Military Translation Cultures (2011-2014)*
• Financed by the Academy of Finland.

The aim of the project:

• To describe translation cultures and translation events;
• To reconstruct translator and interpreter profiles;
• To analyze translation aids and to compile a project glossary.

The scope:

• the Continuation War 1941 – 1944
Aim, material and method of this study

• **The aim** of the study is to clarify some of the basic concepts related to prisoners of war.
• **The scope** of the study is the Continuation War (1941 – 1944) and Soviet prisoners of war captured by Finnish forces.
• **The material** of the study consists of academic writings and international conventions.
• **The concept of a narrative** is employed. A narrative is a set of related events that can be arranged in a sequency (Baker 2006: 9-10).
• It is through narratives that we come to know, understand, and make sense of the social world (Somers & Gibson 1994: 58 – 59).
Levels of narrativity

• Somers and Gibson (1994); Baker (2006; 2010):

1) Ontological dimension
2) Public dimension
   - family, church, nation, prisoner-of-war camp
3) Conceptual dimension
4) Meta dimension
   - capitalism vs. communism, World War II
Prisoners of war

Prisoners of war were captured primarily
1) as sources of information;
2) as manpower for construction, maintenance and supply.

In the course of the Continuation War Finnish forces
1) captured some 64,000 Soviet prisoners-of-war;
2) interned some 26,000 Soviet civilians.
prisoner of war, POW
sotavanki; военнооплененный

• The concept was first introduced in 1660 (according to wikipedia).

International laws and conventions:

• Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. Geneva, July 27, 1929
• Hague Convention respecting the laws and customs of war on land, 1907
• Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War of August 12, 1949 (Geneva Convention III)
Prisoners of war

- On capture:

  **Enemy**

  Category: the other

  *It* can be killed.

  **Prisoner of War**

  Category: the other

  *No* violence is allowed.
From the front to a POW camp

Classification and separation:
- Officers and persons of equivalent status;
- political officers;
- non-commissioned officers and persons of equivalent status;
- rank-and-file (miehistö) and persons of equivalent status;
- NCOs and rank-and-file of minority nationalities favourable to Finland; defectors (loikkarit).
From the front to a POW camp

POW camps

Organization camps

Organization points

Collection points

FINLAND

USSR
Conclusions

• The principle of humane treatment was not always observed in the Finnish POW camps.
• A German influence can be seen in the national rules on prisoners of war.
• In the Soviet jurisdiction the term *prisoner of war* was interpreted as a synonym of *traitor to homeland*.
• Distinction between “us” and “them” plays a key role in the context of war.
In Search of Military Translation Cultures

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Literature on narratives

