

On the way: The development of societies on the Baltic Sea islands of Rosala and Hitis from the Late Iron Age to the Medieval period

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Introduction

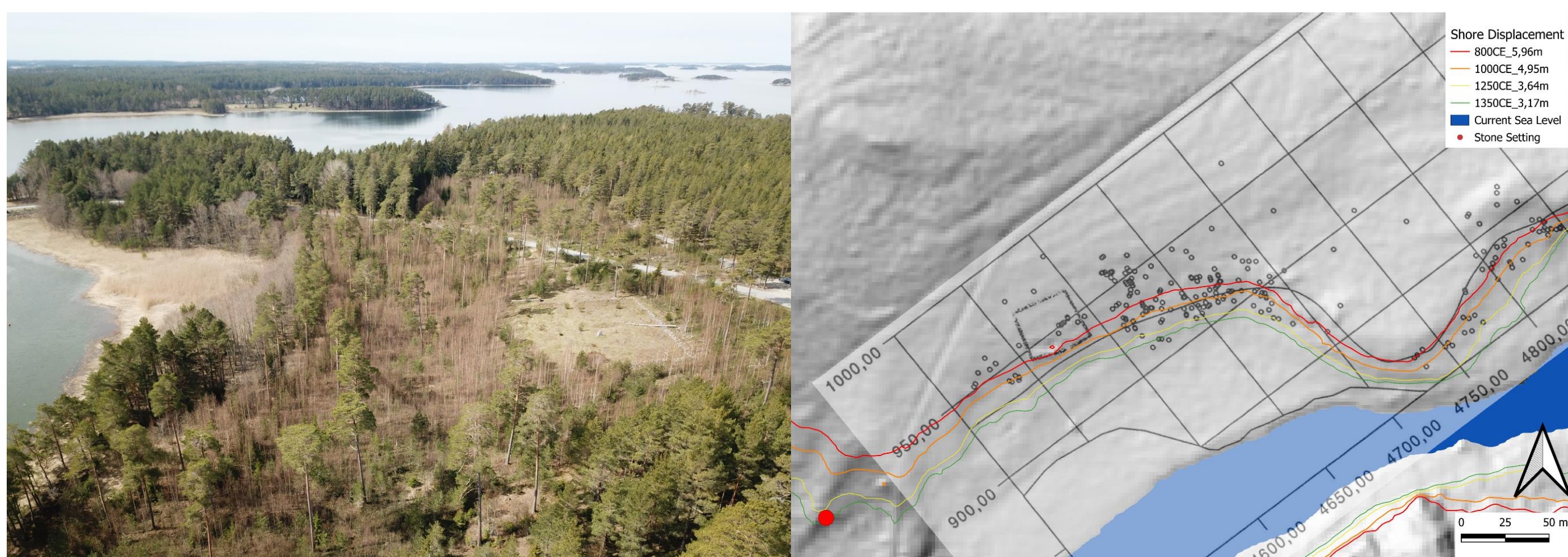
- Located in the Archipelago Sea region of the Baltic Sea, the Islands of Rosala and Hitis have been a stopping point along maritime routes.
- From the Viking Age to the Early Medieval period the societies connected to these islands developed by adapting to the cultural and environmental changes.

Methods

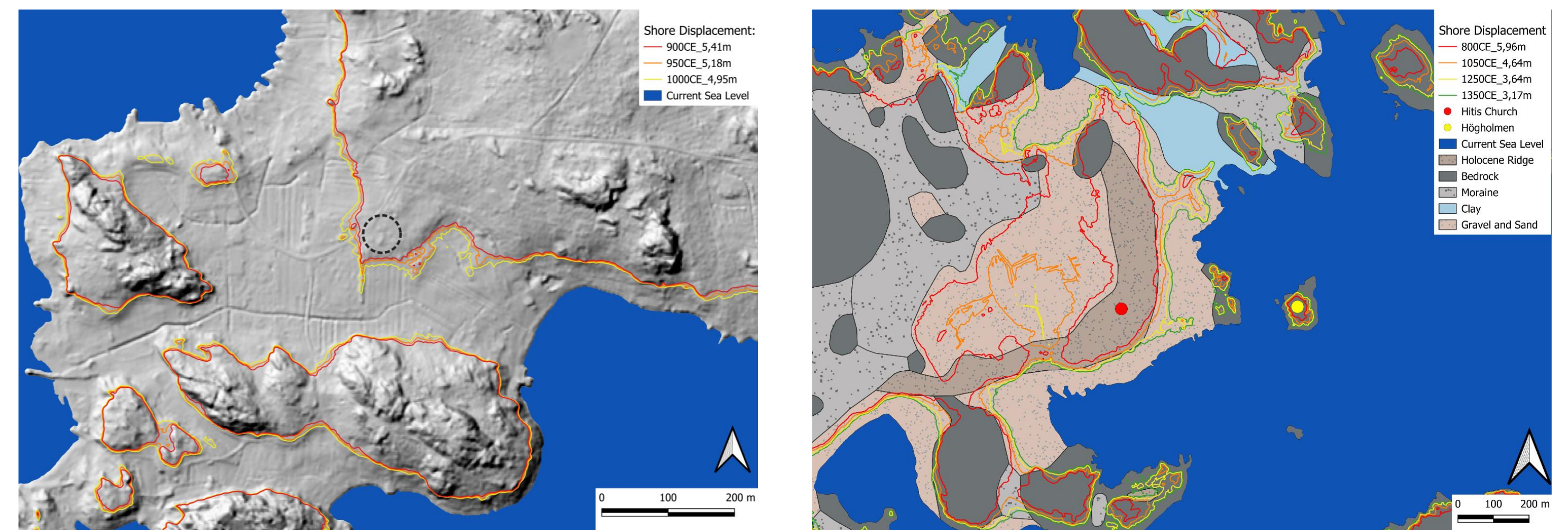
- Focusing on three areas, this research investigates the development of the islands' societies from the perspective of the maritime landscape, using GIS-based methods to analyse shore displacement and wind exposure.

Case Studies

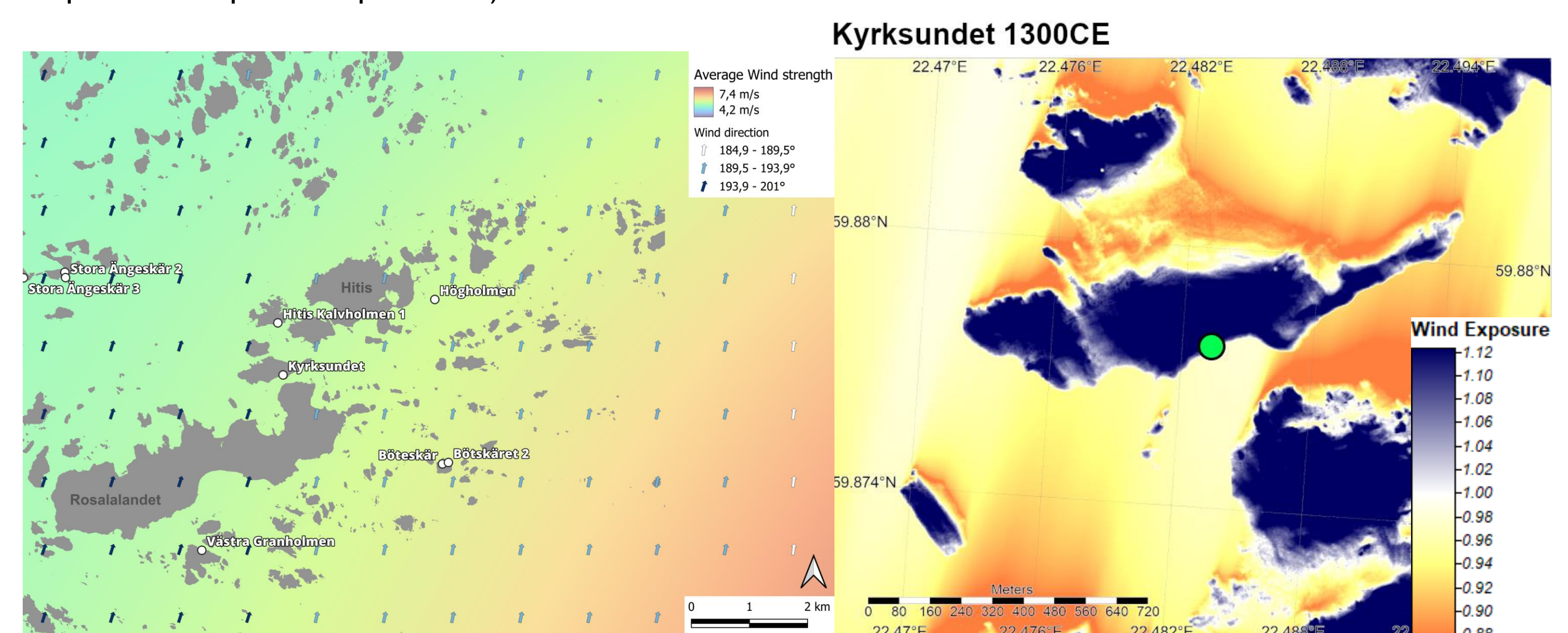
- Kyrksundet:** the ruins of a medieval chapel and its cemetery. A Late Iron Age coastal trading site was also located in the area.
- Rosala:** a burial ground in the village of Rosala that strongly resembles the mound burial tradition widespread in Late Iron Age Scandinavia.
- Högholmen:** a small island opposite Hitis village with two medieval harbors and house foundations



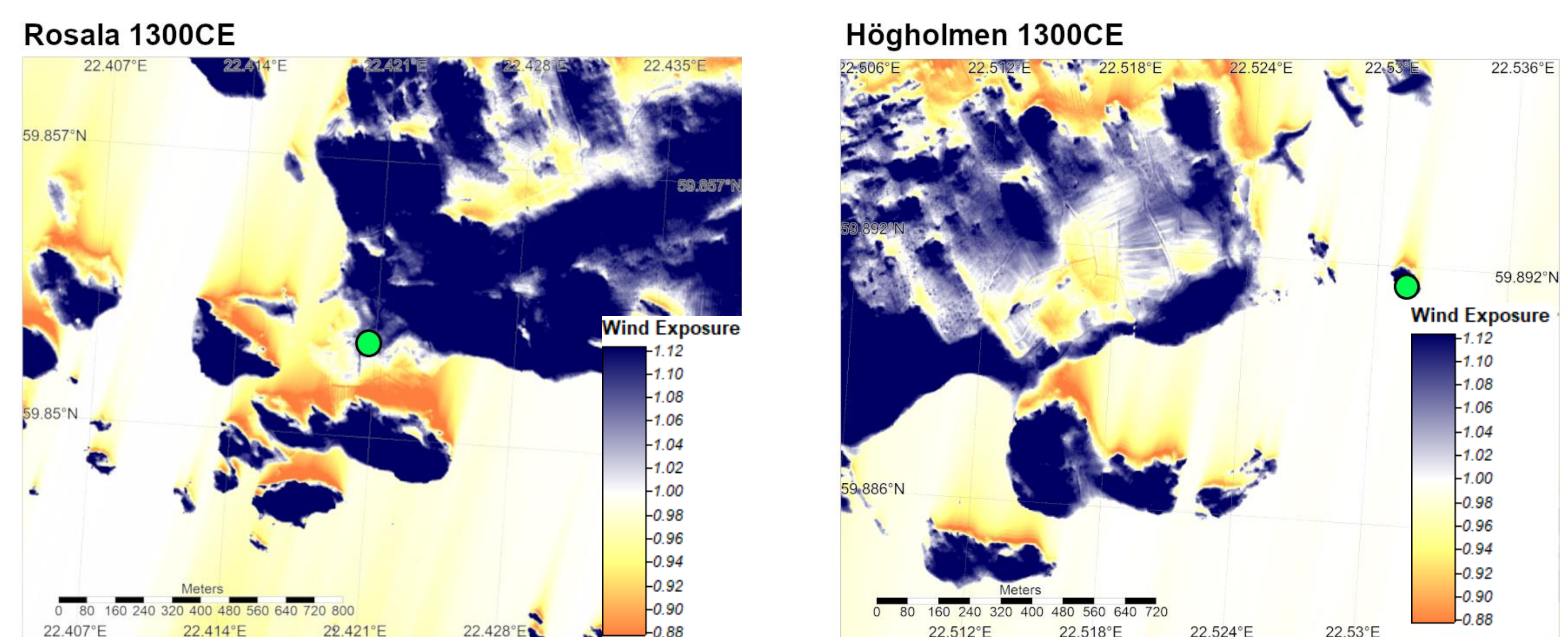
Aerial photo of Kyrksundet chappel and cemetery (left) including the local waterway (Photo: Irissou Y.) Map of Kyrksundet (Right) with metal detection find spots with shore displacement. Shoreline activity decreases after 1250 CE (Created by: Irissou Y. DEM & LIDAR: ©Maanmittauslaitos 6/2024. Detector finds: Jäkärä 1997: 18).



Shore displacement Rosala village region (left) with burial ground area circled. Shore displacement and soil in Högholmen (right). Högholmen transforms to support mixed subsistence strategies in 1250 CE. (Created by: Irissou Y. DEM & LIDAR: ©Maanmittauslaitos 6/2024. Superficial deposit map: ©GTK).



Model of interpolated average wind strength and direction (left) during the sailing season in Rosala and Hitis region in 1050 CE. Wind exposure in Kyrksundet in 1300 CE. Orange depicts protected and blue exposed areas. (Created by: Irissou Y. SAGA Wind Effect: Böhner & Antonic 2009; Gerlitz, Conrad & Böhner 2015, Wind data: based on Ilmatieteenlaitos weather stations).



Wind exposure for Rosala and Högholmen regions in 1300 CE. Orange depicts protected and blue exposed areas. (Created by: Irissou Y. SAGA Wind Effect: Böhner & Antonic 2009; Gerlitz, Conrad & Böhner 2015)

Conclusion

- Coastal activity at Kyrksundet continues into the Medieval period, with a decline starting in the late 13th century.
- Favorable conditions for the existence of a Late Iron Age farm on the southeastern coast of Rosala village.
- During the 13th century the environment surrounding the island of Högholmen became suitable for mixed subsistence strategies, which may have led to a shift from Kyrksundet towards eastern Hitis.
- The construction of Högholmen was linked to settlement development in eastern Hitis. Högholmen functioned as an outpost and transit port in a maritime border zone between mainland Finland and Reval in Estonia.

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