Rural studies in archaeology have introduced a lot of new ideas related to old subjects. One example is the medieval colonization and settlement of the coastal areas of Finland. This topic was, at some point in the mid-20th century, more or less left open by medievalists due to the lack of written sources. During the last decade, it has attracted new interest among archaeologists, thanks to interesting projects and fresh research topics\(^1\).

Finland was included in the Swedish kingdom from the beginning of the medieval period, and the coastal areas were inhabited by a Swedish-speaking population. However, the nature of this process is not very well known. Nevertheless, by combining the sparse written sources with archaeological data, landscape analyses, and place name studies, we can shed some light on the settlement history and try to find new ways of understanding the development and structures of medieval rural society.

This paper focuses on one single region, the administrational parish of Espoo in the medieval period. The area also includes the eastern parts of the church parish of Kirkkonummi. The study is part of an excavation project in a well-preserved medieval village,

\(^1\) The most recently published projects include the SEAS and VMA projects at the University of Helsinki (La-vento 2011) and the PAVAMAB project at the Vantaa city museum (Poutanen 2011).
Mankby, situated in Espoo. The excavations of the project have been conducted by a group of archaeologists from the University of Helsinki from 2010 to 2013. From 2007 to 2009, our previous project dug at the same site in cooperation with the Espoo city museum. The fieldwork of these projects has clarified many issues related to the nature of the medieval village. The aim of this paper is, however, to look at the landscape surrounding the village on a larger scale and to understand the settlement patterns in the area.

**CHALLENGING THE EMPTINESS**

The Swedish name for the region where Espoo is located is Nyland, literally New Land, from the viewpoint of the settlers who colonized the area in the beginning of the 13th century, at the point in history when the kingdom of Sweden was emerging. The area was also "new" in the sense that it had not been central in any way during the Iron Age. In fact, not a single clear Late Iron Age site has been found in Espoo – yet. The area has been thought to have been used only sporadically by people from the central areas in inland Finland, called Häme. However, this is only the traditional view. The idea of a totally uninhabited landscape has, for some time now, been questioned, but it is only during the last couple of years that we have finally obtained enough facts to revise this view.

The most convincing evidence is Teija Alenius’ study on pollen analysis (Alenius 2011). She has shown that by the year 1000, there is a remarkable opening of the landscape and an introduction of cereals in the pollen material. The fields of at least southern Espoo must have been opened by that time. The pollen evidence leaves no room for explaining the phenomena as being brought about by sporadic slash-and-burn-cultivation; the settlement must have been permanent by this time.

Place name studies have also contributed to the revision. Even though the place names of the area are mainly Swedish in the southern part of the parish, Saulo Kepsu has found in the material a strong presence of Finnish place names and place names of Finnish origin. The Finnish names are not only names of natural places, as was formerly thought. Closer studies of historical names have shown that names with a Finnish origin have been used for fields, meadows, settlements, and border markers. (Kepsu 2008; 15, 135–148). The region seems much more bilingual than implied by the traditional view, and thus, a more diverse ethnic picture is emerging.

Finally, we have three stray finds dating to the Iron Age from the area, found by amateur metal detectorists in 2012. The finds consist of a bird-shaped brooch from the Migration Period (AD 400–550) found at Bemböle Fallåker (KM 39283) and a bird-shaped pendant from the Viking Age (AD 800–1050) found at Vanttila, Bensuls (KM 39147: 1). The third find is a chain holder from Bemböle Kyrkäng (KM 39146), dated to AD 1050–1150. Anna Wessman, archaeologist at the Espoo city museum, has also recently revised the material from the medieval village excavation in Kauklahti (excavated in 2003 by Haggrén et al/The National Board of Antiquities) and identified a formerly unidentified horse-shaped pendant, dated to AD 1050–1150, in the material. (KM 2003111:275). The context of the find can be regarded as secondary. These finds strongly indicate that the absence of Iron Age sites is most probably to be explained by a lack of research rather than a lack of actual Iron Age activity. All the finds mentioned above are typical burial finds when found in context, and thus, their presence strongly indicates a local Iron Age settlement. (Fig 1)
FINDING SETTLEMENT CHANGE IN TAX RECORDS

Working with the material from Espoo and its medieval settlement has raised a lot of interesting research topics, but in this paper I mainly concentrate on the strategies of settlement. By this I mean not only the colonizing process, but also the more long-term medieval settlement development in the area.

The area of the study, the parish of Espoo, was by the late Middle Ages inhabited almost solely by freeholding peasants who paid their taxes directly to the crown with no lords involved in the landowning. This has provided good royal tax records from 1540 onwards, which can be used as source material in studying the settlement. The parish is large; it has over 100 villages and hamlets. It is also large geographically; the distance from south to north is over 30 kilometres. Compared to the sparse population in the Late Iron Age, Espoo is quite densely populated by the end of the Middle Ages. Practically all arable areas were used for peasant settlement: mostly small villages and hamlets, some individual farms, and a couple of slightly bigger villages consisting of 8–12 farms. (Fig 2)

If we examine the settlement names, we can draw a rough language border from the east to the west. The Finnish settlement names are situated to the north of the line, while the Swedish names are to the south. Linguists who have studied the place names and dialects of the Swedish-speaking areas in Finland agree that the Swedish names have medieval roots at the earliest, and do not date back as far as the Viking age or earlier times (Huldén 2002, 2001, Ivars 2002). This conclusion is in line with the idea of a Swedish colonization in the 13th century.

Otherwise, when we look at the villages evenly spread over the map, they tell us little about the nature of the settlement. One way of creating a more nuanced map is to define the size of the settlements (Fig 3). Bigger settlement units may indicate old settlement or areas that are central in some other sense. By looking at the size of the villages, it is easy to outline an area with bigger villages in the river valley that stretches from northeast to southwest. Another area with seemingly big villages is the northern lake area around Lake Enäjärvi. Compared to these areas, the coastal region, for example, seems to have very small settlement units.
However, more historical depth is needed to support this view, because the size of the settlement units gives us only the situation right after the medieval period, from 1540 onwards. During the Middle Ages, tax records were not kept in the same detail as in the 16th century, and comprehensive information on the settlement structure at that time is impossible to acquire. However, the source material from the 1540s can, to some extent, be used retrospectively.

One way of doing this is to study the amount of tax that the village, as a taxation unit, paid. During the Middle Ages, the tax rates were not dynamically adjusted according to the number of persons be-

![Map of Espoo's medieval parishes](image)

Fig 2. The medieval parish of Espoo consisted of over one hundred villages and hamlets. To the south, the settlement names are in Swedish, to the north in Finnish. (Map by Ulrika Rosendahl.)
longing to the unit. Because of this, units that used to be big in, for example, the 14th century, paid more tax per capita two hundred years later than units that used to be small but had grown in that time (Haggrén 2008: 52).

This gives us an idea of how the settlement size developed during the Middle Ages. If these factors are taken into account, the role of the central river valley region is more emphasized, whereas the northern lake area no longer seems to be as important. (Fig 4) This leads to the conclusion that the lake area can be interpreted as an area where the population grew only during the last centuries of the Middle Ages and not as the oldest settlement, despite the Finnish place names in the north.

Fig 3. In comparing the size of the late medieval villages, two areas stand out with big settlements: the river valley in the south and the lake area in the north. (Map by Ulrika Rosendahl.)
One of the rare medieval written sources that do shed light on medieval taxation is also helpful; we have a list of the central Bol villages that were responsible tax-collecting units in 1451 (Finlands Medeltidsurkunder nr. 2898). This list can be used to retrospectively identify central places in the area. Saulo Kepsu has drawn similar conclusions in his research (Kepsu 2010; 15–18). The dating of the Bol system is unclear, but the list from 1451 is most probably written evidence of a system that has been in use for a longer time, and the villages that were chosen to be Bol villages might have been central places in the local community even before taxation was standardized.

When the Bol villages are placed on the map (Fig 5.), a general picture of the struc-
ture of the settlement can be drawn. Again, the river valley area shows the largest number of Bol villages and is clearly central for the settlement. In addition to the large number of Bol villages, the river valley is also the location of the parish church, which was founded around 1350. The role of the lake settlement continues to decline, with only two Bol villages in the considerable area, which must reflect a meagre population by the time the taxation system was developed.

Furthermore, in this map, the coastal settlement starts to seem interesting. Here, several Bol villages can be located in an area that has seemed quite peripheral in the light of the other sources. There is a particu-
larly interesting Bol village in the southern-most part of the area, but the actual village, Örmerö, has more or less vanished during the Middle Ages. Only one farm remains, namely Dävits, which paid quite a modest tax. But could the fact that this tiny settlement unit is a Bol village in its own right reflect some kind of "past glory", or at least indicate that the coastal settlement has been more central for the settlement development in the area than one would think from analysing the 16th-century tax material in retrospect?

STRATEGIES OF SETTLEMENT

When we compare this settlement to the language border, we see that it correlates quite well with the lake area. The most central, and therefore, it can be argued, oldest settlement, seems to be on the "Swedish side", just like the theory of the New Land implied. But is this really the case? If we add the few pieces of archaeological material that date prior to the Swedish colonists to this retrospective picture gained from historical sources, we might obtain some more clues, even though the material does not cover the studied area completely.

All the Late Iron Age stray finds are found in the river valley, which we have already considered to be central and which can thus be assumed to have been well established in the landscape. The pollen analysis that dated the field use to the year 1000 was carried out in Hannusjärvi in the coastal area. This gives us all the more reason not to leave out the coastal area when we try to detect the earliest settlement.

But why are all these implications of early activity, dated to a time prior to the colonization, on the southern side of the language border? They seem to imply that the land was not new, that there was a Finnish-speaking population in the area when the Swedish settlers arrived. But the question is: what happened to the Finnish population? Did it leave traces in the settlement, or did it just disappear when the colonists arrived?

If we compare these three areas that we have outlined, we can see that their settlement strategies are somewhat different. The lake area that seems to have a growing population towards the end of the Middle Ages has modest field resources, but might be making use of the vast forest areas in its vicinity. Lakes certainly provide fish, an important resource. However, since none of these villages has been excavated, we have few archaeological facts to refer to.

The river valley seems to be an area where the village system, probably introduced from Sweden, seems to prosper during the Middle Ages. The settlement shows big villages that acquire surplus from their excellent fields. Here we have two excavated villages, Köklax (fi Kauklahti) and Mankby, that have shown that the surplus was used to import goods and that the peasants most probably traded with Tallinn themselves (Haggrén 2005, Rosen- dahl 2011; 191–195, Haggren, Rosendahl, Terävä 2011).

The coastal settlement units are quite small, but there are some indications that the settlement had declined by the time we see them in written sources. The coastal settlement could earlier have prospered from trade, in addition to the obvious seal hunting and fishery. Agriculture was less important; the more maritime the environment, the smaller the fields usually became.

If the comparison is supplemented with observations related to the language situation, the lake area is obviously Finnish. According to Saulo Kepsu, there is great similarity in place names between northern Espoo and the neighbouring parish in the north, Vihti (Kepsu 2008; 137–138), which could indicate that
inhabitants arrived from that direction. The river valley is mostly Swedish, according to the place names, and in many cases it can be argued that the colonists on a local scale actually settled on some "New Land", that is, areas without former settlement. However, Finnish place names are heavily present beneath the Swedish surface, especially in the bigger settlement units like Kauklahti and Bemböle (Kepsu 2008; 137). The fact that the Finnish language was adapted to Swedish tells us that there was a Finnish presence in the central river valley landscape and that any new settlers must have been at least aware of this.

In the coastal area, the Finnish names are preserved in an otherwise Swedish environment (Kepsu 2008; 137). Here, the idea of a bilingual population or a population that changes language over time could be a more accurate interpretation of the material than explaining the settlement only with migration from Sweden. The preservation of the Finnish language in a quite unmodified form suggests that the words have had meaning for the people using the fields. Among linguists, the idea of language change is widely accepted as an explanation for the adoption of the Swedish language on the Finnish coast (Huldén 2002; 74, 78). According to this, the existence of different language groups has not necessarily been caused only by a large migration, but by a language change from Finnish to Swedish during the time of Swedish rule.

In addition to the place name material, we have an archaeological site in the coastal area that surprised us when it was found in 2006. It is a Christian village cemetery in one of the coastal villages in Espoo, Finnå (Kivikero 2011; 47–51, Rosendahl 2011; 195–197). Over forty graves were found, and the cemetery seemed to have been in use over a long period. The preservation was poor, but we managed to carry out radiocarbon dating that indicated dates in the 15th century or even later. These were obviously Christian graves, but dug next to the village instead of next to the parish church. Village cemeteries from Christian periods are rare in Sweden. As for Finland, they have been poorly known and investigated until recently, but in a Finnish inland context, the idea of a cemetery located far from the church is in no sense unique (Ruohonen 2005). Also rural Estonia has a long tradition of village cemeteries (Valk 1999).

Could the cemetery found in Finnå be seen as an amalgamation between the language groups that inhabited the area? That even though the language used at this point in history must have been more or less Swedish, the people had rituals originating from Finnish customs? This would mean that a hybrid culture had emerged during the Middle Ages, formed by both colonists and the people of the earlier settlement, those who opened the landscape for cultivation at the beginning of the second millennium.

**CONCLUSION**

Can we obtain a more diverse picture of the colonizing process of Espoo and Uusimaa? The theory of Swedish newcomers coming to an empty "New land" definitely has to be revised. But just adding a static "original" Finnish settlement is not enough. The Finnish settlement did not only represent an ahistorical original settlement. Both the Finnish and the Swedish settlement continued to change during the Middle Ages and also merged to some extent.

By combining written sources with methods of landscape studies, it can be made clear that the older Finnish settlement has not just disappeared in Espoo and that it did influence the settlement structure even after the Swedish colonization. Still, the different
areas have different strategies of using the landscape. The parish of Espoo is a vast area with different sorts of resources in the maritime coastal region, the agrarian river valley, and the more forest-oriented lake area. The density of settlement in these areas has varied, and the general population pressure has forced the settlement to either seek new areas or abandon areas that were no longer needed.

At least older historical research on the subject has failed to see that language groups mixed and communicated. We can no longer view people or groups of people as static ethnic entities. Language change and bilingualism are very plausible explanations for how people coped with the change that was originally caused by increasing population and migration movements that occurred at the time on a European level.

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