

## **Original Research Article**

# **Evaluation of Water Column Correction Methods in Mapping Seagrass Bed Using Remote Sensing Data in Khanh Hoa Province**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Usage of remote sensing images for the interpretation of underwater substrate objects depends on their reflectance spectrum of different water depths. Thus, the water column correction step is important in the interpretation. Two commonly used water column correction methods are Lyzenga's depth invariant index (DII) method and Sagawa's bottom reflectance index (BRI) method. To evaluate the role of each method in Khanh Hoa waters, we selected Tuan Le water, a high seagrass coverage and moderate turbidity, and Thuy Trieu Lagoon, with high biodiversity of seagrass species and turbidity water, as our representatives. 70% of the survey data was used for ground training data and the interpretation of both methods, whereas the remaining 30% of the survey data was used for validation of the mapping results. The maximum likelihood classification approach was used to extract the seagrass map and evaluated by overall accuracy as well as the Kappa coefficient. The processing results show that, in Tuan Le water, using the DII method gives an accuracy of 82.1% and the BRI of 80.1%; and in Thuy Trieu Lagoon, the DII method has an accuracy of 80.67% and the BRI of 80.0%. These results demonstrate that both methods have high accuracy results in both areas, but the method of BRI gives better results.

*Keywords: Seagrass bed, water column correction, DII method, BRI method.*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The use of remote sensing images for mapping in general and mapping of seagrass distribution in particular has become popular [1]. In recent years, thanks to the use of remote sensing technology combined with the GIS method, coastal ecosystems such as coral reefs, seagrass beds, and mangroves have been identified in detail. Nguyen et al. [2] gave a detailed update and evaluation of the distribution of seagrass beds from Quang Ngai to Kien Giang. Remote sensing was also applied to evaluate multi-year seagrass bed changes in Van Phong Bay [3]. The evaluation of changes in seagrass beds in Cam Ranh Bay over the years was done by Chen et al. (2016). Lau et al. [4] also applied the remote sensing technique for Landsat images to evaluate the distribution of coral reefs and seagrass beds in Ninh Hai waters.

Several methods have been used to interpret remote sensing images for mapping coral reefs and seagrasses, including the principal component analysis method applied to LANDSAT TM and SPOT images [5,6]; the Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) [7]; leaf area index (LAI) combined with field optical properties measurement data [8]; and object-based classification method [9]. However, after analyzing and classification based on these indexes, it turns out that most of the above methods have not considered water depth, whereas the light intensity is absorbed and reduced exponentially when passing through the water column [10]. As a result, for example, the reflectance spectrum of the same sand type at a water depth of 2m is very different from that at a water depth of 20m. On the other hand,

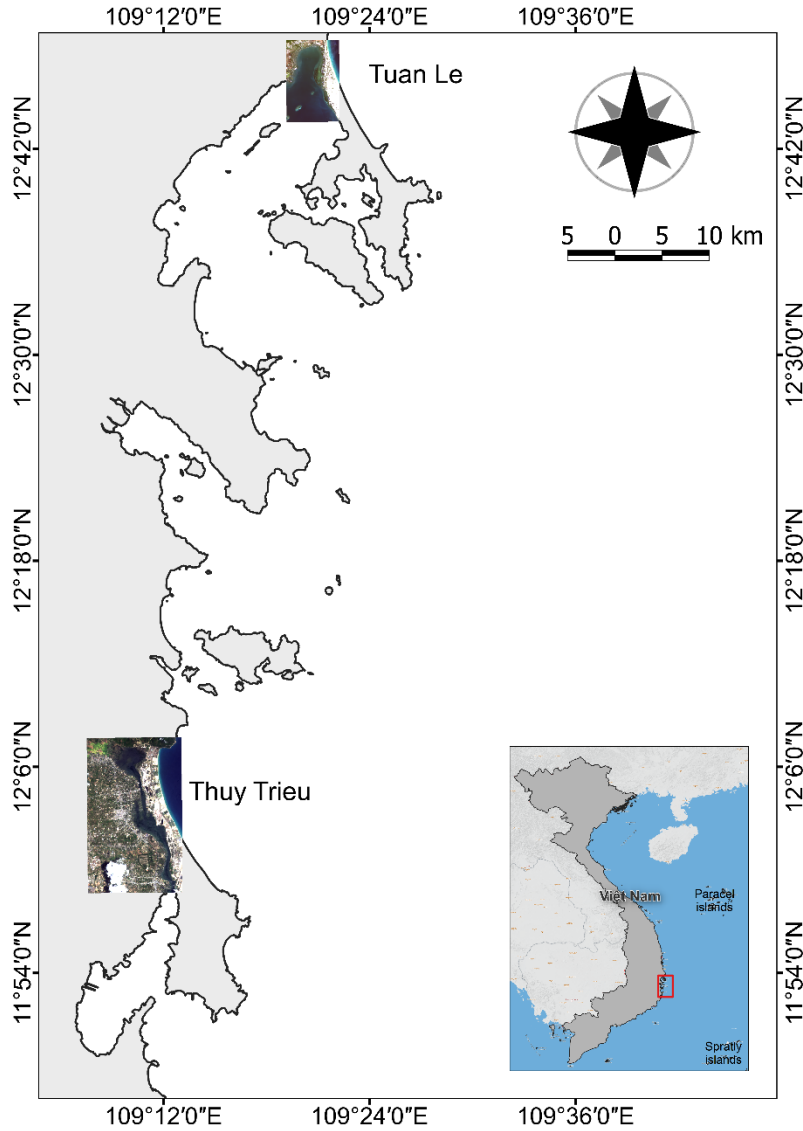
the reflectance spectrum of the sand object at a water depth of 20m might be similar to the seagrass object at a water depth of 4m [11]. Hence, it is very difficult to distinguish between sand and seagrass, and the image classification directly has certain limitations. In addition, the signals of underwater objectives obtained by the satellite sensors depend not only on the different types but also on their depth [11]. This would lead to errors in interpretation resulting in the supervised and unsupervised classification of multispectral images. Thus, it is necessary to achieve water column correction or converts image signals to distinguish these objects from each other. To deal these problems, two well-known methods, Lyzenga's depth invariant index (DII) method [12,13] and Sagawa's bottom reflectance index method (BRI) [14] have commonly used in underwater classification in remote sensing. The DII method uses the water column suppression technique based on the invariance of the linearized function between pairs of bands with different wavelengths of the image, whereas the BRI method uses the water-depth data to calculate the attenuation coefficient for water column correction. According to Sagawa et al. [14], the BRI method could significantly increase the accuracy from 54% to 90% in case I water and from 61.7% to 83.3% in case II water.

In Khanh Hoa waters, seagrasses are distributed in Van Phong Bay, Nha Phu Lagoon, Nha Trang Bay, Thuy Trieu Lagoon and Cam Ranh Bay with different substrate objects [2,3,15]. According to Nguyen et al. [2], the water quality in Thuy Trieu Lagoon is relatively turbidity due to mainly bottom sandy and muddy, whereas the water in Xuan Tu and My Giang, parts of Van Phong Bay, is relatively clear due to mixed sand and reefs. The seagrass bed distributed in these regions is relatively narrow and slopes, the morphology is not the same as the region in Sagawa et al. [14]. Contrary, Tuan Le region is moderate turbidity, but the seagrass is relatively large and applies appropriate interpretation methods. This paper aims to test the difference in interpretation results through two methods of DII and BRI water column correction for Tuan Le region and Thuy Trieu Lagoon in Khanh Hoa.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

### 2.1 Study area

Tuan Le area is located to the north of Khanh Hoa (Fig. 1), where seagrass was high in. A total of 4 seagrass species was recorded, dominated by *Enhalus acoroides*. However, under economic development, from 1998 to 2019, 14.8% of the seagrass area in Tuan Le was lost [3]. Seagrass in Thuy Trieu Lagoon, located in the south of Khanh Hoa, was also a high coverage and species diversity, including 8 species of *Enhalus acoroides*, *Halophila beccarii*, *H. ovalis*, *H. minor*, *Thalassia hemprichii*, *Halodule pinifolia*, *H. uninervis* and *Ruppia maritime*. *H. ovalis* is dominates in the upper regions of the Lagoon, whereas *E. acoroides* is distributed mainly in many areas along the coasts of the Lagoon [16,17,18].



**Fig. 1. Study areas in coastal waters of Khanh Hoa Province**

## **2.2 Data**

### **2.2.1 Remote sensing images**

The Landsat 8 satellite consists of two sensors, an Operational Land Imager sensor (OLI) that collects spectral bands in the visible and near-infrared wavelength ranges and a Thermal Infrared Sensor (TIRS) that collects two spectral bands in the infrared heat band. The Landsat OLI image consists of 9 bands from 443nm to 1390nm with a spatial resolution of 30m, of which band 8 is a panchromatic band with a resolution of 15m. In this study, the Landsat 8 OLI images are free to download from the USGS (the U.S. Geological Survey) website <https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov/>, including LC08\_L1TP\_123051\_20210502 applying for Tuan Le Region and LC08\_L1TP\_123052\_20210416 for Thuy Trieu Lagoon.

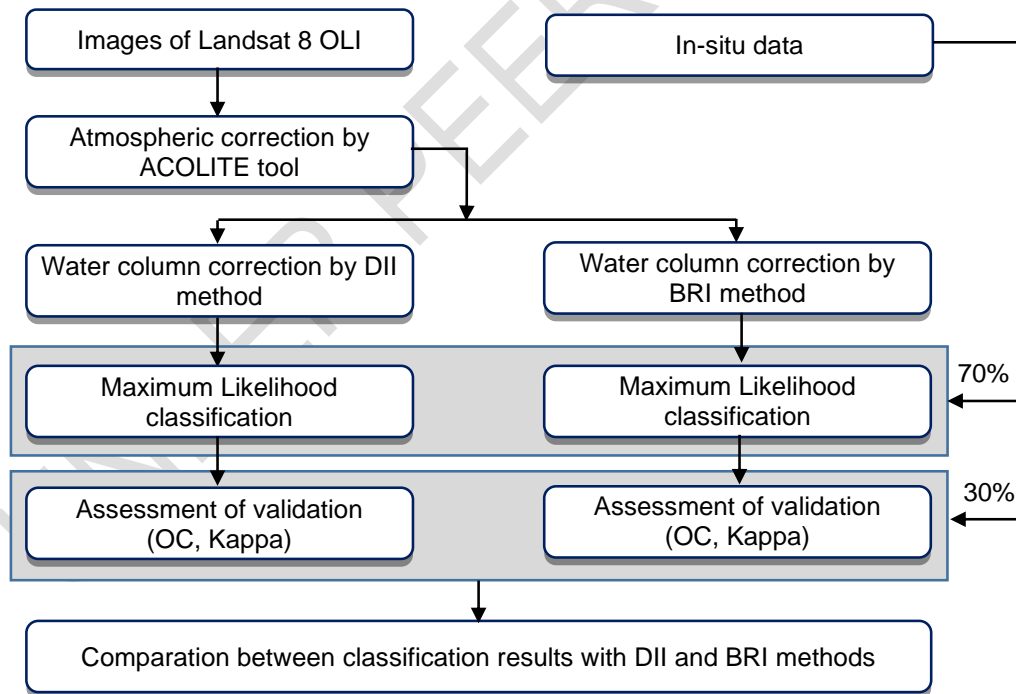
### 2.2.2 Water-depth data

Water-depth data was extracted from the Van Phong Bay topographic map of 1:25,000 scale with an update in 2018. This topographic map was used to select control points with a limitation of the -16m contours. The map was also used to mask waters within -15m contours.

Water-depth data in Thuy Trieu Lagoon were collected by Lawrance VP 1000 single-beam echo sounder. More than 4000 depth points were obtained for interpolating by the natural neighbor method, resulting in the creation of the deep grid corresponded to the Landsat image.

### 2.3 Methodology of remote sensing analysis for seagrass

The image processing would follow the Fig. 2. The Landsat 8 OLI images were atmospheric correction with the ACOLITE tool [19]. The blue band B2 ( $\lambda = 488$  nm), the green band – B3 ( $\lambda = 565$  nm) and the red band – B4 ( $\lambda = 655$  nm) of Landsat images were applied water column with the DII method [12,13] and the BRI method [14]. The surveys were done in Tuan Le Region and Thuy Trieu Lagoon. Survey data were divided into two parts. About 70% of the data were used to calculate the indexes and/or coefficients through the DII method and the BRI method and also used as ground control points for the classification by the Maximum Likelihood method. Then, the remaining 30% of the data set was applied to evaluate the validation of the classification. As a result, the value of the water column correction method (DII and BRI) was selected for these studied areas.



**Fig. 2. Flow chart for seagrass classification with different methods of water column correction in coastal waters of Khanh Hoa Province**

#### 2.3.1 Depth invariant index (DII) method

To remove the effect of depth, Lyzenga [12] recommended the bottom reflectance equation following equation (1).

$$L_{\lambda} = a \cdot r \cdot e^{-K_{\lambda}gZ} \quad (1)$$

where,  $L_{\lambda}$  is atmospheric corrected reflectance at wavelength  $\lambda$ ;  $a$  is a constant which includes the solar irradiance, the transmittance of the atmosphere and the water surface, and the reduction of the radiance due to refraction at the water surface ( $\text{mW cm}^{-2} \text{sr}^{-1}$ );  $r$  is the bottom surface reflectance,  $K_{\lambda}$  is the effective attenuation coefficient of the water ( $\text{m}^{-1}$ ),  $g$  is a geometric factor to account for the path length through the water, and  $z$  is the water depth (m).

The water column correction with the DII method given by Lyzenga [12,13] following a step-by-step guide:

Step 1: Linearize the reflectance by depth for each band in the natural logarithm following equation (2).

$$X_i = \ln(L_i) \quad (2)$$

where,  $L_i$  atmospheric corrected reflectance value of band  $i$ ;  $X_i$  linearized reflectance of band  $i$ , in which band  $i$  was one of the visible bands, such as bands 2, 3 and 4 in Landsat 8 OLI images.

Step 2: based on reflectance values at one region, the slope coefficient of reflectance between two bands  $i$  and  $j$  ( $k_i/k_j$ ) is calculated according to Lyzenga [13] following equation (3).

$$k_i/k_j = a + \sqrt{a^2 + 1} \quad (3)$$

where,  $a = \frac{\sigma_i - \sigma_j}{\sigma_{ij}}$ ;  $\sigma_i$ ,  $\sigma_j$ ,  $\sigma_{ij}$  are the variance and covariance of bands  $i$  and  $j$ .

Step 3: The index  $\text{DII}_{ij}$  is calculated by equation (4).

$$\text{DII}_{ij} = \ln(L_i) - \frac{k_i}{k_j} \ln(L_j) \quad (4)$$

where  $\text{DII}_{ij}$  is called the bottom invariant index between bands  $i$  and  $j$ .

### **2.3.2 The bottom invariant index (BRI) method**

Unlike the DII method, the BRI method does not use a ratio between 2 bands to remove water effects on light intensity through the water column. The water correction is the corresponding depth data. Sagawa [14] proposed the BRI index as following equation (5).

$$\text{BRI}_i = \frac{(L_i - L_{si})}{\exp(-K_i g Z)} \quad (5)$$

where,  $L_i$  is the atmospheric corrected reflectance of the band  $i$  from the image,  $L_{si}$  is the reflectance recorded over deep water of band  $i$ ,  $z$ ,  $K$  and  $g$  are the same as equation (1).

In equation (5), the  $(L_i - L_{si})$  is replaced by  $a_i \cdot r_i \cdot e^{-K_i g Z}$  in equation (1). The  $\text{BRI}_i$  indexes become the following equation (6).

$$BRI_i = a_i \cdot r_i \quad (6)$$

where  $a_i$  and  $r_i$  are the same as in equation (1) for band  $i$ . The  $BRI_i$  is called the bottom reflectance index of band  $i$ .

In this study, we assumed that the hypothesis of the light attenuation coefficient is the same as in one study area as well as on bottom objects. From equation (1), Sagawa [14] uses logarithmic regression to obtain coefficients  $K$  and  $g$ . Then,  $BRI$  could be easily calculated by equation (5).

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ratio of attenuation coefficients for band-by-band ( $k_i/k_j$ ) in the DII method is shown in Table 1 and the attenuation coefficients ( $k_i, g$ ) in the BRI method are shown in Table 2. According to surveys, the bottom objects of Tuan Le Region included dense seagrass, mixed seagrass, sand and muddy sand, whereas ones of Thuy Trieu Lagoon were seagrass, sand and muddy sand.

**Table 1. Ratios of band pairs of attenuation coefficients according to the DII method**

Coefficient	Tuan Le area	Thuy Trieu Lagoon
$k_2/k_3$	0.87	0.63
$k_2/k_4$	0.50	0.48
$k_3/k_4$	0.52	0.76

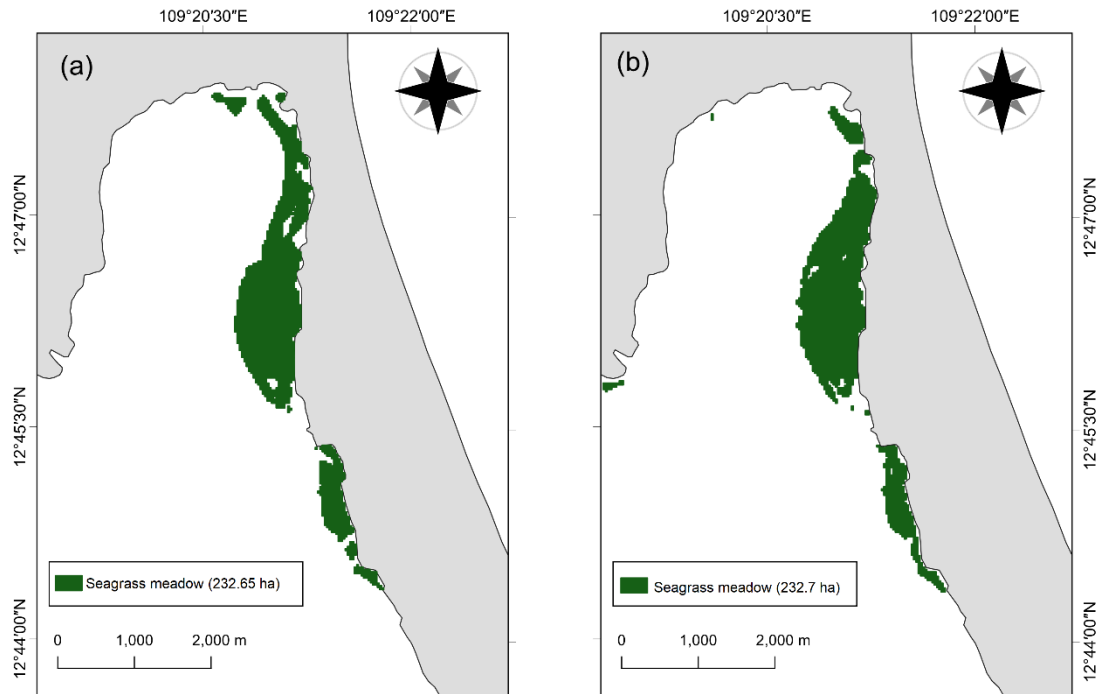
**Table 2. Attenuation coefficients of bands according to the BRI method**

Coefficient	Tuan Le area	Thuy Trieu Lagoon
$k_2 g$	0.106	0.024
$k_3 g$	0.196	0.062
$k_4 g$	0.144	0.072

The results of seagrass classification using the water column correction by DII method in the Tuan Le Region showed the seagrass covered an area of 232.65 ha (Fig. 3a) with an accuracy of 82.1% as well as a kappa coefficient of 0.76 (Table 3), whereas by the BRI method the area of seagrass was about 231.75ha (Figure 3b) with an accuracy of 80.1% and a kappa coefficient of 0.73 (Table 3). Thus, the results of seagrass classification in the two methods DII and BRI were not significantly different in terms of area. In terms of spatial distribution, both methods also give relatively similar results, but in the area north of Tuan Le Region, the distribution of seagrass was different. This area has a depth of 1-2m and muddy sand, so the value from the DII method was similar to that of the sparse-density seagrass, and the result was classified as seagrass. In contrast, the BRI method using depth to calculate the bottom reflectance values produced a different value of muddy sand compared to the sparse grass, so the classification results showed this area was not seagrass.

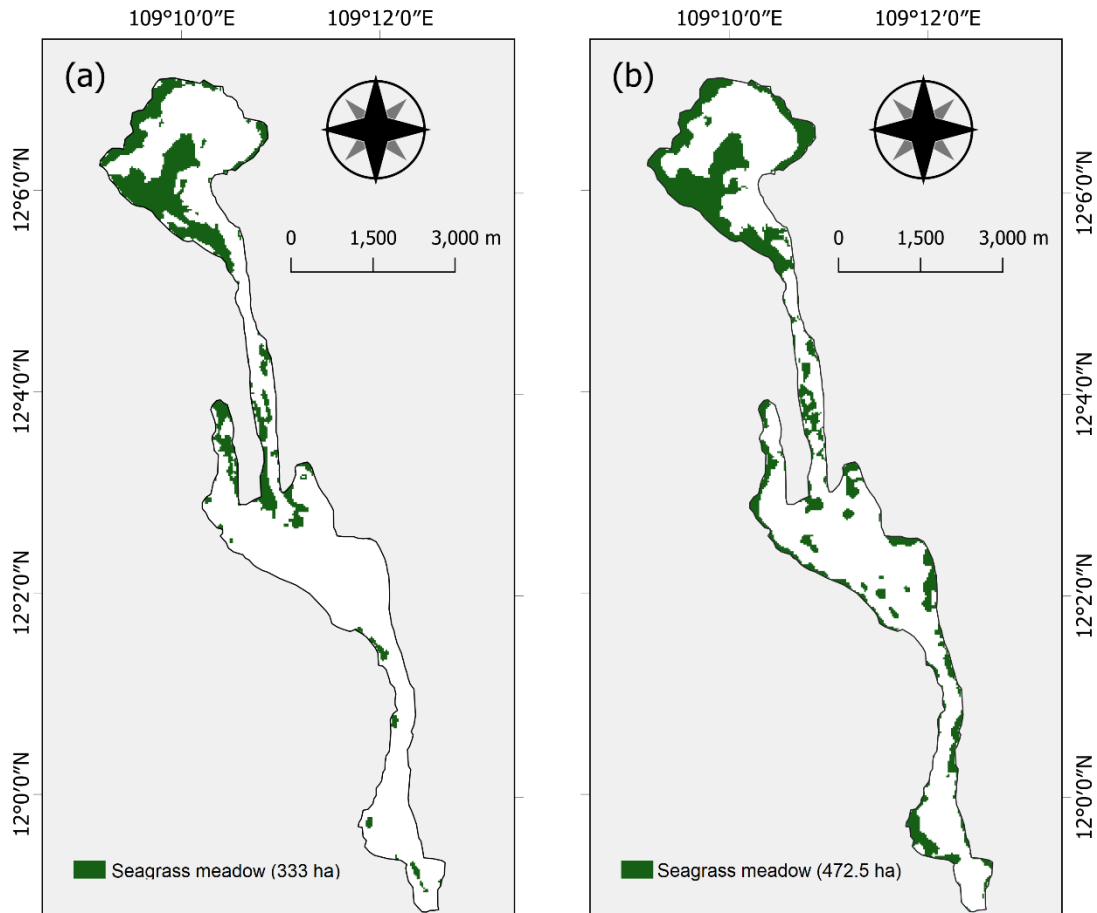
**Table 3. Results of accuracy assessment after classification by DII and BRI methods**

Factor	Tuan Le Region		Thuy Trieu Lagoon	
	DII	BRI	DII	BRI
Overall accuracy	82.10%	80.10%	80.77%	80.00%
Kappa coefficient	0.76	0.73	0.71	0.69
Producer accuracy	81.00%	74.65%	58.5%	56.00%
User accuracy	77.84%	79.50%	80.00%	76.60%



**Fig. 3. The distribution of seagrass beds in Tuan Le Region. (a) Using the DII method; (b) Using the BRI method**

The results of seagrass classification in Thuy Trieu lagoon show there are significant differences in terms of area and spatial distribution of seagrasses by two methods DII and BRI. Seagrass area was 333 ha by DII method (Fig. 4a), less than 472.5 ha by BRI method (Fig. 4b). In terms of spatial distribution, seagrasses distributed in the western area of the upper region of Thuy Trieu Lagoon are similar in both methods, whereas in other areas, seagrasses classified by DII method were less distributed than by BRI method. According to Hoa et al [17], seagrass in Thuy Trieu Lagoon has a large distribution area, but the density, biomass and coverage degree are very low. In addition, this area was turbid water, high phytoplankton [20,21] and sandy bottom, which critically affects the interpretation results. As a result, the *Producer accuracy* value of classification was only 58.5% by DII method and 56% by BRI method (Table 3). Therefore, the results need validation in more detail. However, seagrass coverage in this study (in 2021) was similar to the classified result in 2014 [22], and the seagrass area decreased by about 135 hectares on both DII and BRI methods.



**Fig. 4. The distribution of seagrass beds in Thuy Trieu Lagoon. (a) Using the DII method; (b) Using the BRI method**

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The Landsat 8 OLI image is freely available with a temporal resolution of 16 days as an appropriate image source for seagrass classification. With the accuracy of classification results over 80%, both DII and BRI methods are suitable for the interpretation of Khanh Hoa waters. However, the DII method has the advantage as it does not require water deep data for the interpretation area. The DII method gives better results than BRI one in terms of seagrass classification. It is recommended to use DII method for Khanh Hoa waters. However, in turbidity water (case II water) as well as shallow waters conditions, such as Thuy Trieu Lagoon, the classification of seagrass using remote sensing data should be had more in-situ data for improving the accuracy value.

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