



TRIAL EXCAVATIONS IN A SUBURB AROUND THE PÄRNU ROAD IN TALLINN

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INTRODUCTION

Two trial excavations were conducted in 2009 and 2010 in the medieval and early modern suburb area near present Pärnu road, south of the Old Town of Tallinn. The sites encompass the neighbouring plots at Pärnu Road 31, 33 and 35, and P. Süda Street 4 (Fig. 1; see Püüa 2009; Karro 2010). The excavations were conducted by archaeologists of OÜ Agu EMS: Garel Püüa (2009) and Krista Karro (2010), and with Guido Toos commissioned by two different companies with a plan of using the plots for building. In 2009 five pits and in 2010 one pit was dug.

In addition to archaeological remains of medieval and later Tallinn, surprisingly a prehistoric cultural layer was also discovered. The artefacts and the consistence of soil bear witness of a long period of cultural activity in the area. The archaeological material found from the plots may even refer to the possible discovery of ancient Tallinn. Not only another trace of settlement in the Tallinn area from the Neolithic (in addition to Vabaduse Square, for that see Kadakas *et al.* 2010), but also a well preserved cultural layer possibly from the Iron Age was revealed in a 2.8 × 2.8 m excavation pit in Pärnu Rd 35 (Fig. 1).

HISTORIC BACKGROUND

The plots form a small part of a larger area which is under protection as a settlement site from the second millennium BC to the 16th century AD.¹ It is an obvious medieval suburb area, known as the Harju Gate suburb. No clear Iron Age cultural layer is known from the vicinity of the Pärnu road site. A settlement with a radiocarbon dating of 12th–14th century, which probably burned during the St George's night uprising, has been discovered during rescue excavations from the vicinity of the Pärnu road site under the later St Barbara cemetery. Furthermore, an unpaved road probably heading for Toompea was discovered passing the settlement site. According to the radiocarbon dating of a well preserved wooden stick from a tire track on the surface of the road, it fell probably out of use from the 13th century onwards (Sokolovski 1997, 7, 46, 72, 100; Sokolovski & Lõugas 1997). Some artefacts with a probable Iron Age dating were discovered from the site

¹ National Register of Monuments, no. 2596 (<http://register.muinas.ee>).



Fig. 1. 1 – Town Hall Square, 2 – Toompea hill, 3 – harbour, 4 – Tõnismägi hill, 5 – former River Härjapea, 6 – water conduit from Lake Ülemiste to the Old Town, 7 – Karja spring at Tatari St 24, 8 – road to Pärnu, 9 – road to Tartu, 10 – medieval road to Narva, 11 – Sakala St, 12 – Roosikrantsi St, 13 – present Vabaduse Square, 14 – Harju St, 15 – medieval execution site Võllamägi ('Gallows Hill'), 16 – medieval St John's almshouse, 17 – Müller's field in the 17th century.

Jn 1. 1 – Raekoja plats, 2 – Toompea, 3 – sadam, 4 – Tõnismägi, 5 – kunagine Härjapea jõgi, 6 – veejuhe Ülemiste järvest vanalinna, 7 – Karjaallikas Tatari tn 24, 8 – Pärnu mnt, 9 – Tartu mnt, 10 – kunagine Narva mnt, 11 – Sakala tn, 12 – Roosikrantsi tn, 13 – Vabaduse väljaku asukoht, 14 – Harju tn, 15 – keskaegne hukkamispaik Võllamägi, 16 – keskaegne Jaani seek, 17 – Mülleri põld 17. saj.

Base map / Aluskaart: Unpublished reconstruction of 17th c Tallinn by K. Schultz / K. Schultz'i avaldamata rekonstruktsioonjoonis 17. saj Tallinnast (TLA 194-4-53.)

(Sokolovski 1997, 101). Almost nothing is known about the area east of present Pärnu road during the Middle Ages. According to historic town plans an underground water conduit – the town’s main supply until the 19th century (Jakobson *et al.* 1967, 20–21) – built between Lake Ülemiste and the town moat originally in the middle of the 14th century, crossed the Pärnu road somewhere under the plot Pärnu Rd 33. The conduit, unearthed by G. Püüa in 2008 near Ingermanland bastion (Kadakas *et al.* 2010, 64), is a vaulted limestone structure with the inner diameter of *ca.* 90 cm. In Pärnu Rd 33 the conduit was not possible to study, because there was a danger of disturbing the modern pipes on the same spot. Another important water source, Karja Spring has been situated *ca.* 150 m east of the site at the present address of Tatari Street 24 (Jakobson *et al.* 1967, 26). Water from this spring was led into another conduit that supplied the Old Town and was built in the 14th–15th century. It has previously been partly unearthed during the excavations at the crossing of Sakala and Tatari streets *ca.* 250 m north-east (Mäll 1997).

According to written sources in the middle of the 17th century a large area east from Pärnu road, including Pärnu Rd 31–35 was sold to alderman Georg Müller, who used the land as a field. From the 18th century parts of this field were rented out for building (Nerman 2004, 26).

THE EXCAVATIONS IN PÄRNU ROAD 31 AND P. SÜDA STREET 4

The trial excavations in October 2009 in the area of *ca.* 3500 m² of two joint plots of Pärnu Rd 31 / Süda St 4 were commissioned by Soravia Center OÜ. All five test pits revealed a suburban cultural layer including medieval finds from the 13th to 16th centuries in the bottom, 80–150 cm deep from the present ground level. No medieval structures were found. The depth of the layer varies, probably due to the variable natural surface in the large area. Interface between the upper and the darkened part of natural soil, containing finds and the first suburban deposit was difficult to discern. The two layers were jointly 40–70 cm thick. In every test pit the darkened upper part of soil contained some pottery shards which can probably be connected to a pre-13th century settlement. Altogether 16 supposedly

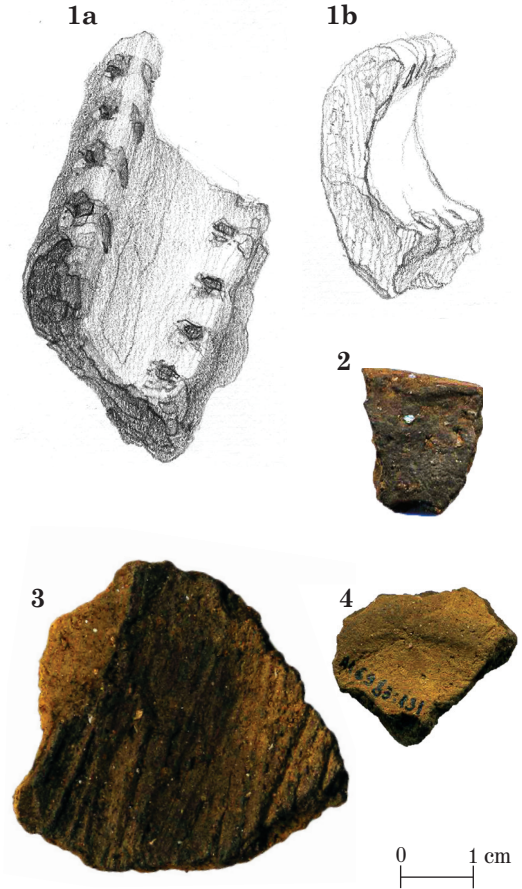


Fig. 2. Artifacts from the excavations.

Jn 2. Leiud proovikaevandist.

(AI 6983: 181, 166, 143, 131.)

Photo / Foto: Krista Karro

Drawing / Joonis: Jarõna Ilo

prehistoric shards were gathered. In the pit in the middle of the studied area a supposed pavement layer, consisting of burnt lime- and cobblestones, covered with pieces of burnt window glass and slag was discovered. The layer may indicate a major destruction of the suburb during the Livonian War (1558–1583), as there were no later finds than mid-16th century from under the burnt layer.

All foundations and other structures found during excavations represent 19th–20th century building activities. Upper soil layers contain finds from the intermediate period of 17th–18th centuries.

THE EXCAVATIONS IN PÄRNU ROAD 33 AND 35

In October 2010 a test pit of 2.8 × 2.8 m was dug in the southern part of the plot. Traces of different periods of suburban settlement were revealed in the pit (Fig. 3). The topmost 70–80 cm of mixed layers contained artefacts from the 17th to the 20th centuries. Under the previously mentioned mixed layers a 5–15 cm thick layer containing many brick and ceramic roof tile fragments, and lime mortar was revealed. From the latter thirty three artefacts from the 13th to the beginning of the 16th century were gathered.² This demolition layer has possibly been placed there as a medieval courtyard pavement. Twenty three fragments of mostly imported ceramics³ from 1300–1550 were identified, but from the lower part of the layer seven hand-made potshards were discovered as well. A coin possibly from the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century was found.⁴

One of the most important discoveries from the site was a 15–20 cm thick layer, consisting of blackened sand, animal bones, and fragments of hand-made ceramics. The concentration of the pottery fragments in the pit was outstanding as altogether 45 fragments were found. The probable date of the potshards was consulted with several specialists. Although the specialists proposed different periods, they all agreed with the Iron Age dating of the pottery fragments.⁵ Two specialists (Valter Lang and Mare Aun) assumed that at least some of the pottery fragments originate from the Early Iron Age. The fragments are with



Fig. 3. The south-western corner of the excavation plot of 2010.

Jn 3. 2010. a kaevandi edelamurk.

Photo / Foto: Krista Karro

² Identified by Erki Russow (AI).

³ AI 6983.

⁴ Identified by Ivar Leimus (AM) and Mauri Kiudsoo (AI).

⁵ Valter Lang and Marge Konsa (TÜ), Mauri Kiudsoo, Gurly Vedru and Mare Aun (AI) were consulted.

quite deeply striated inner surfaces and almost smoothed (with some very narrow and shallow striation on) outer surfaces (Fig. 2: 1b). Usually, such ceramics with quite deep striation, pottery with a striated outer surface or with similar deep striation on both surfaces have been gathered from (Early) Iron Age objects (see e.g. Moora 1967, 294–298, plate 5; Lang 1996, 40–46; Johanson & Veldi 2006, 33). Some potshards with more definite dating were also discovered. An edge fragment of an 11th century cup and a fragment of a vessel with an indented bottom probably from the 9th–11th century⁶ were found from the central part of the layer. Furthermore, two shards with incised edges⁷ most likely dating back to the Late Bronze Age (Lang 1996, 43) or Early Iron Age were also discovered from the layer. Nevertheless, more specific dating of the discovered finds from the described cultural layer needs further research.

A probable Stone Age household pit, dug into untouched reddish brown sand of medium grain in the western part of the excavation pit was unearthed in the bottom. It was discernible with its darker brown filling material of sand. As the upper part of the Stone Age pit had been destroyed by later activities, the original ground level from which the pit had been dug could not be recorded. The preserved lower part of the Stone Age pit was maximum 19 cm deep with a slightly conical bottom and quite clear edges. 13 pottery shards were found from the pit or from the border of the above mentioned Iron Age cultural layer (Fig. 4). Most of the shards are small⁸ and difficult to identify, but some of them are ornamented and enable to fix the settlement period to the Corded Ware (3200/3000–1800 BC) (Lang & Kriiska 2001, 92–94).

The shards have come from vessels with a rather thin wall: it varies between 0.4–0.9 cm and is 0.6 cm on the average. The fragments are in brown shades, indicating oxidative environment during the burning process. Probably the burning has been rather intense because the fragments are harder than average and not crumbly. The clay mixture has been generally very homogenous, in some places refine sand has been added, but two shards contain up to 2 mm pieces of rock debris. Narrow pores and cavities can be seen on the surfaces and brakes which can refer to slight admixture of organic matter. The break of one shard bears marks of a vessel being formed in coiling technique of type N, possibly with a stepped connection.

The inner and outer surfaces of the shards have been smoothed. Two shards have been slightly striated. Six shards have ornaments, deriving from probably four vessels.



Fig. 4. The eastern half of the household pit from the west.

Jn 4. Majapidamislohu idapoolne osa lääne suunast.

Photo / Foto: Krista Karro

⁶ Identified by Valter Lang (TÜ).

⁷ AI 6983: 125, 160.

⁸ On the average the shards are 2–2.5 cm big, the smallest is 1.2 cm and the biggest 4 cm wide; 12 smaller shards have a total weight of 26 g and the biggest shard weighs 19.5 g alone.

In all cases the ornament is placed on the outer surface. Three small shards⁹ come from a beaker with a profiled neck, decorated with spruce twig motifs. Some other shards without an ornament might come from a similar vessel. The other three ornamented shards belong to corded ware pots. One shard¹⁰ has a horizontal imprinted groove. Another shard has an irregular horizontal row of sharp oval 4 mm depressions, made with a stick with an uneven tip. The depressions were pressed on a slight rand made during a hardly distinguishable profiling of the vessel. An uneven row of slight notches could be noticed below the carinate rand.

The biggest Stone Age ceramic fragment¹¹ found, the only rim shard, has a slightly thickening rim which is inclining to the outside and has been worked to thin towards the rim. An intensely protruding rand with a sharp edge or a moulded cordon is 2 cm below the rim. The shard is generally 0.85 cm thick but 1.22 cm near the moulded cordon. The shard was not preserved well enough to precisely calculate (Kriiska 1995, 63) the vessel's diameter, but has probably been approximately 12–18 cm. The shard has smoothed surfaces and similar ornamentation on the rim and moulded cordon: a row of 4–5 mm sharp oval depressions made with a stick with an uneven tip is located on the rim and moulded cordon. A row of a bit fainter depressions positioned a bit to the right or exactly below the higher row is located just below the rim/moulded cordon. These remind grooves: they are located directly below the rim and seem to be pressed with the side of a stick.

DISCUSSION

The Stone Age settlement site

Over 50 settlement sites of Corded Ware Culture are known from Estonia (Kriiska 2000, 70), but these have mostly been discovered accidentally while excavating a site of another (Stone Age) period (Jaaniits 1966). Only one settlement site of purely Corded Ware Culture is known – Riigiküla XIV near Narva (Kriiska 2000, 60–70). At the present stage of research the Pärnu road site can be considered the other because of Stone Age ceramics only corded ware has been found. It is also indicated by the location of the studied area regarding the contemporary shoreline. The Pärnu road site is situated *ca.* 19 m above the present sea level and therefore must have been quite far from the contemporary seashore (Kadakas *et al.* 2009, 10–12).

The corded ware collected during the preliminary excavations has fine matches from a very close area. 16 corded ware fragments were found from a Late Comb Ware Culture settlement site of Vabaduse Square recently (Kadakas *et al.* 2010, 36; Kadakas 2010, 56–58) *ca.* 330 m north from the Pärnu road site. The same kind of ceramics has been found from other places in the vicinity of Tallinn as well e.g. from Iru stronghold, Viimsi, Saha and Lagedi (Lang 1996, 37, 379). In addition to ceramics the distribution of stray finds associated with the same cultural group (battle-axes, specific flint artefacts) and also results of pollen analyses indicate that permanent settlement and primitive agriculture date back already to the end of the Neolithic period in Tallinn and its surroundings (Lang 1996, 378–381; Kriiska 2000, fig. 9; Kadakas 2010, 8–10).

⁹ AI 6983: 174–176.

¹⁰ AI 6983: 184.

¹¹ AI 6983: 181.

Among the abovementioned find material the rim shard with intensely protruding moulded cordon and double depressions makes the Pärnu road settlement site distinctive from other similar ones. Not many fragments of this type of vessels have been found from Estonia, but single shards of this type have been gathered from the Valma settlement site near Lake Võrtsjärv (Jaanits 1959a) and the Akali settlement site near the mouth of River Emajõgi (Jaanits 1959b). Furthermore, almost a whole pot has been unearthed from a female grave of the Sope Corded Ware Culture cemetery (Jaanits 1952; see also Jaanits *et al.* 1982, 108–111). For example, such ceramics type has been found in Abora I and Asne I settlement sites near Lake Lubāna in Latvia, where they form as many as 10% of all corded ware finds (Loze 1979, 98–99).

Vessels with moulded cordon are a subtype of corded ware, which is known in the whole area of Corded Ware cultures from Switzerland to Finland (Becker 1955). The intensely protruding moulded cordon can be decorated with double depressions, like on the vessel from Pärnu road, but it can also be pressed wavy. In Sweden and Finland this type of vessels are categorized into the subdivision E of the corded ware (Malmer 1962, 16–19; Edgren 1970, 25) which is considered to belong to an earlier period of Corded Ware Culture (Larsson 2009, 139–144). Although this pottery has been found from different burials (e.g. in the abovementioned Sope cemetery, but also in Eknäs in Finland (Edgren 1958) and in several places in Sweden (Malmer 1962, 16–19)), the great majority of finds have come from settlement sites. That is why this type of vessels has mostly been interpreted as mainly household pottery (Larsson 2009, 142–146).

In late Stone Age the closest point of coast-line from the excavation site under discussion was probably 200–250 m north-east (between the present Tatari and Kentmanni streets). Perhaps the reason for the Neolithic people to choose the Pärnu road site for settlement could have been easy access to fresh water, as the place was close to one of the most important water suppliers in historical Tallinn, the abovementioned Karja Spring.

The Iron Age settlement site

According to the archaeological finds, it may be grounded to speak about a Metal Age (Iron Age, but Bronze Age cannot be excluded either, see above) settlement site near the Pärnu road. In fact, there is not much evidence of earlier settlement in the area of Tallinn than from the period after the Danish conquest in 1219. It has been stated that all of the traces of earlier settlement in the territory of Tallinn Old Town are stray finds or some C¹⁴ datings with unclear context (Pärn 2002, 355–358; Mäll 2004, 253–254; Kiudsoo, In print). In addition, Mäll and Russow (2003) argue that the hypothesis of an Iron Age trading place at the present Town Hall Square is not correct. Accordingly, no proper Iron Age cultural layer has been discovered in the Old Town and its vicinity. Thus, the layer from the Pärnu road can be considered the first one.

However, some pre-conquest human activity has been identified in the distant historical suburbs of Tallinn: in 1996 on the eastern bank of the now disappeared small River Härjapea in Tornimäe St 2 *ca.* 1 km north-east of the Pärnu road site (Aus 1997). According to Valter Lang the fragments of Early Iron Age pottery gathered from

there dated back to 200 BC – 200 AD (Aus 1997, 15–16, photos 41–43, 18–19; Lang 1996, 90, figs 44: 1–3; 72: 1).

Concerning the location of the settlement site, it has historically been directly at the crossroads. Pärnu road leading to the Harju Gate continued northwards along the present Roosikrantsi street in the Middle Ages. Sakala street used to start from the crossing of the present Pärnu road and the Roosikrantsi street, leading north-east to the seashore and the bridge over the River Härjapea, thus being the first road around Tallinn Old Town and connecting the main roads leading out of the Old Town towards Pärnu, Tartu and Narva. Possibly this network of roads and the place of crossing date back to the prehistoric period, when the road along Sakala street led to the mouth of the River Härjapea, where a harbour and a trading place might have been (Tamm 2003, 317). So, the settlement site seems to have been located by the road from the west coast of Estonia (Pärnu road), passing the Toompea Hill at the distance of *ca.* 500 m, going onwards to the mouth of the River Härjapea (along Sakala street) and from there to the River Pirita area where a trading place is assumed to have been at Iru (see Tamm 2003; Mägi 2007; 2011; Kiudsoo, In print). An unpaved road has been unearthed during excavations on Roosikrantsi street, which was probably out of use after 1277. The road probably lead to the Toompea hillock (Sokolovski 1997, 100) and it is likely that it passed the Pärnu road site, too. However, there is no clear evidence that the road was already in use during the Iron Age. The location of the Karja Spring together with the crossing point of mainland roads that are believed to originate from the prehistoric period probably gave a good reason to choose this spot for a settlement. On the contrary, the existing natural spring and the settlement site could have attracted the traffic and influenced the shaping of road network. So, further research on the site would be necessary in order to gather more evidence on the dating of the settlement site, which would in turn provide information on the development of human activities in this area.

CONCLUSION

The six test pits dug near Pärnu road, *ca.* 400 m south of the Old Town of Tallinn surprisingly revealed a prehistoric, i.e. Stone and Iron Age, settlement layer, covering a large area and different periods, under the medieval suburban cultural layer. Any definite dates are difficult to present, because the scarce find material indicates different periods of Iron Age. As another surprise, one test pit revealed a possible household pit in the bottom with some shards of late Neolithic corded ware.

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PROOVIKAEVAMISED TALLINNAS PÄRNU MNT EESLINNAS

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2009. ja 2010. aastal juhatasid OÜ Agu EMS arheoloogid Garel Püüa, Krista Karro ja Guido Toos eeluuringuid Tallinnas Pärnu mnt 31, 33 ja 35 ning P. Süda tn 4 krunte hõlmaval alal, mis on riikliku kaitse all II a.t. eKr – 16. sajandist pärit asulakohana (reg. nr 2596) (jn 1). Kokku tehti kuus proovikaevandit, neist viis 2009. Proovikaevamistel avastati 2010. a kaevandist lisaks kesk- ja uusaegsete leidudele ning ehitusjäätustega kihtidele 15–20 cm paksune orgaanikasegusest liivane kultuurkiht, mis sisaldas loomaluid ja käsikeraamikat (jn 3). Asjatundjatega arutelul veenduti, et keraamika pärineb rauaaajast, osa arvatavasti selle varasemast perioodist. Mitmed nõu killud olid sügavalt riibitud sise-, kuid õrnalt riibitud välispinnaga (jn 2: 1b). Eesti varase metalliaja kontekstis leidub sellist keraamikat harva, sest tavaliselt on riibitud kas ainult välispind või nii sise- kui välispind. Viimase puhul on mõlemal poolel sügavad riiped. Lisaks riibitud keraamikale leiti ka arvatav 9.–11. saj põhjalohuga nõu katke ning 11. saj peekri ülaservakild (jn 2: 3, 4). Ka leiti kaks hilispronksiaja ja eelrooma rauaaaja täkitud servadega savinõu katket. Tuleb lisada, et metalliaja keraamika kogus 2,8 × 2,8 m suuruses kaevandis oli märkimisväärne: kokku leiti 45 kildu. Sarnane kultuurkiht paljandus osaliselt ka 2009. a kaevandis, kuid käsikeraamikat leiti sealt mitu korda vähem, kokku 16 katket.

Metalliaja kultuurikihi all paljandus punakaspruun liivakiht, millest leiti kiviaegset nöörikeramikat sisaldav majapidamislohk (jn 4). Lohust leitud keraamika ornamendi ja koostise põhjal kuuluvad nõukatked hilisneoliitilisele nöörikeramikale. Kokku leiti lohust 13 kildu, millest enamik oli silutud sise- ja välispindadega, kahel oli näha riipeid. Kolm kildu pärinevad kuuseksaornamendiga peekrist, kuid ka mõned dekooriga katked võisid olla osa sellisest nõust. Lisaks leiti kaks ornamendiga kildu, millest ühel on sissevajutatud horisontaalne joon ning teisel teravovaalsetest lohkedest rida. Üks nõukildudest (jn 2: 1) oli Eesti kontekstis pigem haruldane nöörikeramilise mõikaga nõu katke, kuid nõu analooge on arvukalt leitud Soomest ja ka Lätist Lub järve ümbruse asulakohtadelt.

Nöörikeramikat on Eestis leitud umbes 50 kiviaja asulakohast. Üldjuhul esineb seda liiki

savinõukilde vähesel määral teiste kiviaja kultuuride asulakohtades, vaid Riigiküla XIV asulast on saadud ainult nöörikeramikat. Ka Pärnu mnt leiukohast on kiviaja perioodist siiani tulnud välja ainult nöörikeramikat. Lähim neoliitiline asulakoht, kust mh leiti nöörikeramika katkeid, on Vabaduse väljak 330 m Pärnu mnt leiukohast põhja pool. Veel on sama tüüpi keraamikat teada Irust, Viimsist, Sahalt ja Lagedilt, ning need koos õietolmuanalüüside tulemustega näitavad, et varase põllumajandusliku püasustuse võib Tallinna ümbruses dateerida hilisneoliitikumi. Pärnu mnt asulakoha puhul mängis asulaks sobiva koha valikul ilmselt rolli Karja allika kui puhta veevõtukohta lähedus. Nöörikeramika kultuuri aegse rannajoone lähim punkt kõnealusele asulakohale oli ilmselt 200–250 m kirde pool praeguste Kentmanni ja Tatari tänavate vahelisel nõlval.

Samast kohast leitud metalliaja keraamika katked viitavad asustuse jätkuvusele. Rannajoon oli selleks ajaks taganenud umbes praeguse Viru keskuseni. Rannajoone lähim punkt asus ilmselt Härjapea jõe suudmes umbes 1 km Pärnu mnt asulakohast kirde pool.

Kõnesolev asulakoht asus ilmselt oluliste teede ristumiskohas. Muinasaegseks peetakse Pärnu maanteed ning selle jätku Sakala tänava näol, mis kulges Härjapea suudme ja arvatava varasema Tallinna sadamakohani. Selle sadamakoha eksisteerimise ja tähtsuse üle on üsna palju vaieldud, kuid sellest piirkonnast lahknesid ka Tartu ja Narva maanteed, millest viimane kulges Pirita jõe ääres asuva tõenäolise rauaaegse sadama- ja kauplemiskohani Irus. Seega oli kõnealune asulakoht soodsas positsioonis Lääne-Eestist tuleva ning lõpuks Iruni viiva maantee ääres.

Tallinna vanalinna alalt tuntakse üksikuid rauaaegseid leide, kuid mitte *in situ* säilinud kultuurikihti. Mõningad varaseme rauaaega kuuluvad savinõukillud saadi Härjapea jõe kunagise suudmeala päästekaevamistel. Sellisel säilinud metalliaegset kultuurikihti Pärnu maantee ääres võib praeguse Tallinna territooriumil lugeda esimeseks omasuguseks. Võimalik, et asulakoha eksisteerimine mõjutas sealse teedevõrgu kujunemist ning edasised kaevamised Pärnu mnt asulakohalt võiksid ka selle teema kohta rohkem infot anda.