Disuse of spaces and discard of artefacts during the abandonment of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou

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ABSTRACT - The aim of this paper, starting from the analysis of the assemblage and stratigraphy of the unburned rooms, is to analyse the possible discard and disuse processes during the planned and gradual abandonment at Ermi-Laonin tou Porakou (Cyprus). Scholars note how the decision to leave objects when a place is abandoned depends on multiple factors, from functional reasons to ritual practices. At Ermi some markers suggest a possible intentional closure treatment of parts of the site in which it is possible to recognise a mix of functional and symbolic abandonment behaviours.

KEY WORDS - abandonment; discard processes; artefacts; Bronze Age; Cyprus

Introduction

All architectural remains and associated objects are conditioned by abandonment processes (Tomka, Stevenson 1993.191), which affect the related structures, activity areas, whole settlements or regions, and are caused by various factors (Cameron 1991; Cameron, Tomka 1993; Lightfoot 1993). Excluding rapid and unanticipated abandonments, due to natural disasters or enemy attacks, these processes are often planned. Settlements are therefore transformed by a sequence of practices and behaviours that entail the decision to leave behind or transport to the new site artefacts and, in some cases, building materials (Schiffer 1972; Schlanger, Wilshusen 1993.91). Factors that influence this decision are the degree of preabandonment planning, the distance from the new settlement, the capability and means of transport, the activities foreseen in the next location, the season of movement and ritual practices (Cameron 1991.172; Cameron, Tomka 1993; Deal 1985; Lange, Rydberg 1972; Lightfoot 1993.166; Schiffer 1972.160; 1985; Stevenson 1982). In many cases, places return to be lived in cyclically, involving the recovery and reuse of objects and building materials (Schiffer 1985.27). This phenomenon causes a significant loss of information related to the previous stages of life and the disuse episodes of an area.
Planned abandonments are often gradual (Cameron 1993.4), and it is fundamental to recognise the pre-abandonment behaviours to investigate the reasons, possible length and socio-political and economic processes behind the decision to leave a place (Nelson 2000; Schiffer 1976.33; Stevenson 1982) in order to define the moment of change that is always linked to an abandonment (Nelson, Hegmon 2001). What is commonly found – when abandonment dynamics are not distorted by scavenging or resettlement – is the result of a choice, influenced by functional and ritual practices. In order to define various type of deposits and their transition from the systemic to the archaeological context, scholars have identified eight different formation processes of the floor assemblage (Schiffer 1985.24–30; see also Hayden 2000). The conditions of objects, their location in the rooms, the possible practice behind the discard of them and finally the moment in which they were discarded (prior, during or after the abandonment of the settlement) characterise these different processes (Schiffer 1985; Iannone 1990; Hayden 2000.300).

The aim of this paper is to present an analysis on the discard practices and gradual disuse of some units of the workshop complex (area A) during the abandonment phase of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou at the end of the Middle Bronze Age on Cyprus (c. 1650 BC). The transition from the Middle to the Late Bronze Age (MC III-LC I) has been defined as a moment of change and a first step to the urban society of Cyprus (Crewe 2017.140). This transformative period entails the abandonment of a series of villages left in various conditions and following different practices. Abandonment studies on prehistoric Cyprus could provide information that would help us to better define the social changes which characterise the period, and also fill the related gaps on the study of this phenomenon in prehistoric settlements.

The site of Erimi-Laonin Tou Porakou

Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou (Limassol district) extends over an area of c. 1.20ha on the upper slopes of a natural hill located 250m above sea level. The general topography of the site is characterised by a hilltop surrounded by a series of lower terraces sloping southward and eastward (Bombardieri 2017; Amadio et al. 2021.302). The settlement presents two main areas organised in roofed units carved approx. 0.60–0.70m into the bedrock and open spaces (Fig. 1). The workshop complex (named area A) develops on the top of the hill and a residential area (areas B, T2-T5) is located on the first lower terrace, while a massive wall divided the settlement from the cemetery (area E) (Christofi et al. 2015).

Fig. 1. The site of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou (elaborated by the author; archive Erimi archaeological project/Italian archaeological mission in Erimi, Cyprus).
The position of the productive area (workshop, named area A) in the upper flat plateau and the peculiar layout of its rooms permitted the conservation of the majority of objects in their context of primary deposition, saving them from washout and other post-abandonment formation processes. At the same time, the use of the area for cultivation partially destroyed the upper layers of stratigraphy. In contrast, the residential area was subjected to considerable erosion and soil movement by natural agents and slope wash. Due to its position, the accumulation of soil partially saved walls and structures from destruction or massive reuse of building materials in post-abandonment periods (e.g., areas B2 and T2). In addition, frequentation of the area during the Hellenistic and Roman periods could be noted (Bombardieri et al. 2009.134–138).

Refuse types at Erimi-Laonin Tou Porakou
Archaeological investigations suggest a planned and gradual abandonment of the settlement. While some units were discovered empty of objects, most of the still usable artefacts were concentrated in a group of rooms. Finds were recovered sealed on the floors by the collapse of roofs and walls, in some cases accelerated by a fire. The rapid destruction meant that these rooms were not used for resettlement or massive reuse in post-abandonment periods and, thanks to this possible closure practice, this can provide a precious opportunity to analyse the site’s last phase of life.

Abandonment studies stress the recurrence, in various areas of the world, of a deliberate use of fire to voluntarily destroy structures or part of a settlement. This action would be performed by those who lived at a place at the end of a sequence of practices linked, in most cases, to funerary rituals (Cameron 1990; Lindskoug 2016; Schiffer 1985.29; Schlangen, Wilshusen 1993; Verhoeven 2000; Wilshusen 1986.246). In addition, other cases of destruction by fire are represented by unexpected natural catastrophes or enemy attacks, and by sites which were affected by closure practices performed by the inhabitants (Cameron 1991; Chapman 1999; Lightfoot 1993; Stevanović 1997).

Some evidence seems to suggest that the case of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou belongs to the last group. No human skeletal remains sealed by the collapse of structures as a result of catastrophic disaster have been found, and no signs of scavenging or any attempts at rebuilding activities can be detected at the site (Amadio et al. 2021.312–313). Moreover, the concentration of some artefacts in specific units, and the presence of a sequence of functional practices, such as the possible recovery of building materials from disused spaces, as well as possible ritual practices made before the fire, can support this interpretation. Analysis in this paper are focused on the assemblage and stratigraphy of the unburned units with the aim to describe a sequence of functional practices during the abandonment phase at Erimi.

In order to define the abandonment behaviours, and the transition of artefacts found in the rooms from the systemic to the archaeological context (following Schiffer 1985.24–30; La Motta, Schiffer 1999; Hayden 2000.300), objects have been divided into three different categories:

- **De facto** refuse refers to objects still usable which were left behind at the time of the abandonment. Michael B. Schiffer (1972.160) defines these as “elements which reach archaeological context without the performance of discard activities”.
- **Primary** refuse refers to artefacts left in their location of use or in proximity to their original position (Schiffer 1972.161–162).
- **Secondary** refuse refers to objects discarded anywhere other than in their location of use (Schiffer 1972.161), about which Hayden (2000.300) noted: “this is refuse that has been cleaned up and removed from its primary use or manufacturing context and dumped elsewhere, usually in designated refuse areas”.

It is worth specifying that even if they will be used as guidelines in the present work, these categories are not universal but conventional. For example, in the case of the stone tools in the depositional history of stone artefacts at Maki-Alonia, David Frankel and Jennifer M. Webb (2012.480) distinguished expedient tools (de facto refuse), described as still intact objects, discarded at or near their location of original use after a short use-life, from curated tools (normal refuse) that they define as objects that spent a long period in the systemic context and were discarded “in or near their context of final use when damaged, broken, near exhausted, or exhausted”. Moreover, Arthur A. Joyce and Sissel Johannessen (1993.138) stated that primary and secondary refuse disposal, prior or during a gradual process, must be seen as abandonment refuse. As noted by Schiffer (1985), the identification and categorization of these different kinds of refuse, particularly concerning pottery, is difficult, but in the case of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou it is possible to suggest a dis-
Disuse of spaces and discard of artefacts during the abandonment of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou

tinction based on the particular conservation and distribution of some assemblages of artefacts. In the workshop complex some de facto refuse, mainly represented by ground stone and vessels, was discovered. Despite being still usable and in good condition, these items were still left in the buildings, suggesting functional motivations, such as difficulties in transport due to the large size and heavy weight of the artefacts, behind their abandonment (Villani, Tripodi, under submission). At the same time, some rooms returned artefacts which it is possible to define as primary or secondary refuse (Figs. 2 and 7). They represent objects at or near the end of their use-life (Joyce, Johannessen 1993.138). The presence of artefacts broken before the collapse of the structures (Webb 2017.187–191; Dionisio 2017.341–343), modified or reused for a secondary function, such as some ground stone (see Webb 2017.214–215; McCartney 2017.253–256), repaired (Dionisio 2017.336; see Dooijes, Nieuwenhuyse 2009) or with traces of macro use-wear (Bombardieri et al. 2017.250) suggests that they were left in the proximity of their original positions or displaced and discarded because they were both easily replaceable and almost at the end of their usefulness (Tomka 1993.22; see also Frankel, Webb 2006.226–232; Webb 2006). As noted by scholars, when secondary refuse had some potential value, it was usually concentrated in provisional discard, until the reuse of the items or their displacement to a permanent dumping location (Joyce, Johannessen 1993.139; Deal 1985.253; see also Wilson 1994 and Tani 1995.234–235). Frequently the inhabitants of the settlement use abandoned structures for this type of refuse (Seymour, Schiffer 1987.554). To conclude, the presence of primary and secondary refuse – e.g., a broken pithos recovered in unit SA IIa with the upper part in the centre of the room and pieces of the lower part near the north-western corner (Bombardieri 2017.45, Fig. 3.41), or a group of objects (in the small room SA X) which it is difficult to correlate with the place where it was found – suggests a particular function of some rooms during the gradual abandonment of the site. An in-depth description of the assemblages, and the possible identification of some artefacts as de facto, primary or secondary refuse, will be provided in the following paragraphs.

**Artefacts from the workshop complex (area A)**

The objects found in the workshop units are terracotta vessels (in part destroyed by the collapse of the structures, as accelerated by the fire), ground stone tools and small objects like spindle whorls, worked and unworked ornamental artefacts made of picrolite, loom weights, bronze knives and chipped stones (Bombardieri 2017.219–250).

Several studies have shown that the distance from the new settlement, the capability and means of transport, the artefacts’ size and weight and the presence of repairs or damage, tend to influence the choice to leave an object (Schiffer 1976; Schlanger, Wilshusen 1993.91–92). In the case of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou, some of the above motivations can justify the abandonment of the larger vessels and of the pithoi found in situ, often supported by stone emplacements (like in units I, IIa, III, IV and XII). A similar explanation can be applied for the querns (discovered in burned and unburned units) and for the heavy or easily replaceable stone tools in general. At the same time, the presence of a number of transportable objects such as ceramic vessels (which in some cases have few signs of use-wear and do not show repairs or breakages), spindle whorls, bronze blades (two of which have been recovered, of which one is broken and the other almost complete), loom weights and worked picrolite artefacts (in particular, two pendants), suggest the possible decision to abandon some still usable artefacts before setting fire to the area. The units containing concentrations of artefacts were totally or partially destroyed by the fire, while the others returned few objects and appear to have been partially dismantled and cleaned out (Fig. 3). The ten exca-

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Fig. 2. Examples of refuse recovered in room SA IIa. a broken bronze knife (A.423.1); b large bowl with repair in antiquity (A.516.18); c jug with ancient breakages (A.434.8); d picrolite with traces of macro use-wear (A.342.95) (readapted from Bombardieri 2017).
vated units of the workshop complex are characterised by a similar layout, since they were carved in the bedrock and share walls with the adjacent buildings.

The result is an area with contiguous roofs, connected as if they were only one. In this respect, it would be very hard to stop the burning of the roofs to limit the fire only to those units where the artefacts were concentrated in a phase of use of the entire area. In addition, stratigraphic analyses show evidence for the presence of possible intentional ignition points employed to feed the flames in units SA I and SA III (Bombardieri 2017.276), while a specific treatment seems to have been reserved for unit SA V, where the fire started from the roof (Amadio et al. 2021.311–313).

The unburned units

The outermost units investigated in area A, namely units SA VI, SA IX, SA X and SA XI, are those that partially surrounded the rooms affected by the fire. When compared with the burned spaces, these rooms have yielded few artefacts and no pithoi were found on the floor, while in SA X only a spindle whorl was discovered. Scholars have hypothesised that in case of planned and gradual abandonment the areas near living spaces could become discards, and that when people know that a place will be left they tend to reduce the standard of cleaning (Schiffer 1985.25; Stevenson 1982.247–248, 252). Unit SA VI (6.5m x 3m) is the easternmost roofed space in the southern wing of the workshop complex and has the same NE-SW orientation as the adjacent units, but it was carved at a lesser depth of 0.50m into the limestone bedrock (Bombardieri 2017.52). This room yielded a small number of fragmentary artefacts, two medium-sized Red Polished (RP) jugs, two Drab Polished (DP) juglets, a small Red Polished (RP) bowl, a Coarse Ware (CW) mealing bin, a rubber and four chipped stone tools (Bombardieri 2017.55). Two fragmentary gaming stones, as noted by Luca Bombardieri (2017.56), were discarded in a previous occupation phase and reused as building material. The access from the north, the presence of few objects, the absence of pithoi or big storage vessels and its multiple phases of construction and occupation, suggest that the use of this space has probably been changed several times (I.c.). In the contiguous unit SA I, which shares the perimeter walls with SA VI and SA II, three possible ignition points were found. It is therefore arguable that, if a fire occurred during the last phase of use of SA VI, its roof would be affected by the fire. However, the absence of a burnt layer – as recovered in the adjacent unit – and the few artefacts found on the floor, make it possible to hypothesise that this space was dismantled and consequently disused before the deliberate burning of SA I. SA IX is a small annex of SA V. In this unit only fragments of vessels and ground stone tools were found, and no evidence of de facto refuse can be observed. The room appears to have been filled with clay, while in the last phase of use a small structure has been built near the eastern limit, on the top of a pre-existent basin. This feature has probably been disused and filled before the burning. Indeed, no ashy deposits have been noticed in the filling of the basin, which additionally appears to have not been covered by the layer of plaster which constitutes the floor of SA IX. Worth noting is the case of unit SA X, where the presence of different layers of limestone blocks associated with ceramic sherds could confirm its intentional filling and disuse in an early stage of the abandonment phase.

In summary, these units returned few artefacts, mostly interpretable as primary or secondary refuse, and the proximity to the burned rooms suggests the loss of their function at the beginning of the workshop’s dismantling. Having presented the overall picture, the next section analyses in detail the disuse of the unburned unit SA X.

Unit SA X

Unit SA X is a small space (3.35m x 3.10m) located in the north-western part of the workshop complex,
lacking a well-defined entrance and interpreted as an annex of SA V. The stratigraphic sequence was characterised by the presence of three different layers of limestone blocks (more than 130 of various sizes) associated with ceramic sherds (most of them are bowls with less than 1/3 preserved, and found in all the filling layers) suggesting a deliberate deposition, especially if compared with the lower number of limestone blocks discovered in the largest units of the same area (Fig. 4). At the same time, the unit does not show traces of ashy layers, which would have surely been identified if the burning of SA V occurred during the use of SA X. The assemblage found on the floor was composed of two partially worked picrolites, a spindle whorl, two fragmentary vessels, three chipped stones, a quern (at an early stage of use or not used), a hammer and more than 300 ceramic sherds. It is difficult to establish *a priori* that all these objects belong to a specific category of refuse, but the small dimensions of the space, the absence of a defined entranceway, the heterogeneity of the assemblage and its casual disposition on the floor, suggest an unspecialized function. It is therefore possible that objects found on the floor are secondary refuse discarded in the unit when it was disused.

It is interesting to note that SA X returned one of the highest dimension/sherds ratios of the whole workshop (c. 35 sherds for m²), but only few attributable to the same vessels. These data and the presence of sherds in all the filling layers suggest that the concentration could be related to the practice of cleaning the units still in use, and when people knew that the site would be left and there was no need to re-deposit the refuse elsewhere it accumulated here. This hypothesis could support its final treatment as a discard, particularly for building materials.

### The burned units

At Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou, major concentrations of artefacts were found in the larger units SA I, SA II (in both sub-units, A and B), SA III, SA IV, SA V and SA XII. Only five of the ten rooms investigated in the workshop complex – units SA I, SA III, SA IV, SA V and SA XII – were directly affected by a fire, which partially reached the contiguous unit SA II (*Bombardieri 2017.46*).

This first macro evidence suggests a gradual spatial reduction in the use of the workshop, with a progressive transformation of some units into discard rooms destined to be filled with no longer usable artefacts. Therefore, if some objects appear to have been discarded because they had been consumed, exhausted, damaged or were easily replaceable, still usable objects seem to have been intentionally concentrated in the room whole or partially affected by the fire. These units yielded the highest number of portable artefacts, some of them in good condition, such as the pendants from SA I, SA IIb and SA XII, the spindle whorls recovered from all the units excluding SA IIa, the bronze blade from SA XII, and numerous loom weights and some vessels found in this area. Interestingly, not all these objects can be attributed to the common typologies, as in the case of the decorated RP biconical spindle whorl (*Bombardieri et al. 2017.219–236*), and the RP goat-shaped *askos* from unit SA III (*Bombardieri 2017.49*). Among the burned units, only one returned a rich assemblage without showing the massive ash layer or the presence of possible intentional ignition points observed in some of the other rooms. This peculiar situation is represented by unit SA II, the assemblage and stratigraphic data of which will be analysed in the following section of this paper, with the aim to define its possible (dis-)use and final treatment during the abandonment phase of the workshop area.

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**Fig. 4.** Unit SA X before and after the archaeological investigation. On the bottom (left side) are shown the blocks removed from the room (archive Erimi archaeological project/Italian archaeological mission in Erimi, Cyprus).
Unit SA II

Unit SA II, located in the southern part of the workshop, was underwent a change in layout during phase A, when the position of the opening which connects the two sub-units (named SA IIa and SA IIb) was modified (Bombardieri 2017.38–39) (Fig. 5). Some easily transportable and still usable artefacts were found in the smallest SA IIb (Bombardieri 2017.43–46). Particularly intriguing for the analysis of the abandonment discard processes is the larger sub-unit SA IIa.

The stratigraphic analysis revealed the absence of possible ignition points, in contrast to the contiguous SA I and SA III, while an ash layer was recorded only near the perimeter of the room with a particular concentration along the east and south walls (Bombardieri 2017.46). The assemblage discovered on the floor of SA IIa was composed of a high number of artefacts (35 from phase A; Fig. 6). The state of preservation of most of these objects is fundamental to define the role that this space played during the abandonment phase of the settlement. Regardless of the preservation of vessels – which in this work includes all the diagnostics fragments without distinction, from almost complete to not restorable – the majority of them can be ascribed to the more common ceramic classes found at the site (see Webb 2017). As noted by scholars, local items are more likely to be left at the time of the abandonment (Tomka 1993.22, Joyce, Johannessen 1993.150).

Contemporaneously, they present a bad state of preservation: the RP large bowl, for example, is the only almost complete vessel found at the settlement with a repair (Dionisio 2017.336), while the large pithos located near the northern limit of the unit was found crushed on the floor, with the upper part unbroken in the centre of the room (Fig. 7). Moreover, the DP spouted jug was broken in antiquity, and presents a small hole of 5mm on the body (Bombardieri 2017.41; Webb 2017.187–191), the only almost complete vessel – despite a high level of fragmentation (Dionisio 2017.341, Fig. 15.15) – found in the room without repair or breakage is the amphora (Webb 2017.197). Other vessels are composed of a few fragments, such as a mealing bin in Coarse Ware or a cooking pot. Residual artefacts are represented by three picrolites (one broken, one unfinished and one with signs of macro use-wear from a post-phase A layer), a broken axe (a third preserved), a broken, very heavy pounder (1.9kg), a broken chipped stone and two reused objects (a broken pess-
Disuse of spaces and discard of artefacts during the abandonment of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou

hypothesise that the room lost its function during the gradual abandonment, it could represent primary refuse left in the place where it was used. Almost all the other objects are fragmentary and show damage or macro use-wear, while the well-preserved bowl repaired in antiquity found at Erimi was recovered in this room. In addition, residual artefacts were found concentrated in the northern part of the unit and in the south-eastern corner behind the doorway. In the workshop complex, the only objects discovered near a threshold belong to unit SA IV (Amadio et al. 2021.316), where four piled and complete vessels were found. In contrast, the vessels, the broken bronze knife and the heavy pounder recovered behind the entrance of SA IIa do not appear to be well preserved or placed in an organised manner. Moreover, a bin (Ft. 9; see Fig. 5) was built close to the entry that connects SA IIb and SA IIa during phase A, making it more difficult to move between these spaces. The presence of residual artefacts, the absence of possible ignition points and the construction of the bin seem to suggest the gradual disuse and transformation of this unit as a provisional discard. Almost all the objects concentrated in SA IIa could be then interpreted as primary and secondary refuse. At the site the reuse of broken or exhausted artefacts is attested by the presence of ground stones and gaming stones in the walls, by the reuse of a quern as a support for a mezzanine in SA III (Bombardieri 2017.51, Figs. 3.53, 3.54), and by the modified neck of an RP jug inserted in another jug neck and utilised in a double-chambered hearth (Bombardieri 2017.36–37). As stated by Michael Deal (1985), when the abandonment of a building complex people is foreseen and planned, refuse is accumulated in areas usually kept free and not concentrated into the generally designated areas. At the same time, Marc G. Stevenson

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Artefact</th>
<th>Broken</th>
<th>Secondary use/unfinished/repaired</th>
<th>Macro use-wear</th>
<th>Fragmentary</th>
<th>Partially complete/complete</th>
<th>Inventory</th>
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<td>RP large pithos</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.448.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RP storage jar</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.434.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small bowl</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.427.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouted jug or tankard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.427.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouted jug or tankard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A.427.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool (Piéce esquillée)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>434.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 6. Artefacts discovered inside unit SA IIa.
Andrea Villani (1982.248) noted that in case of gradual abandonment refuse within enclosed living area “will be more abundant and distributed in a more clustered or orderly manner”. Some scholars have also defined provisional discard as “the intentional storage of damaged or fragmented items for future disposal” or reuse that had high probability of being left at sites after abandonment (Deal 1985; Cameron, Tomka 1993; Joyce, Johannessen 1993; see also Frankel, Webb 2006.153–154). The decision to concentrate these objects in a single unit is thus possibly related to their potential value for reuse. In addition, Deal (1985.263; see also La Motta, Schiffer 1999.21–22) notes that “if a structure was slowly being dismantled within an ongoing household it might become a dumping location for large inorganic items, and especially pottery”.

In the chart, objects defined ‘fragmentary’ are artefacts for which only as most as a third of their entire body has been found (Fig. 8).

It is important to note that the majority of these consist of only few fragments. In the category ‘partially complete (with breakage or macro use-wear)’ we have included vessels and other objects interpreted as possibly broken before the collapse of the structures (e.g., the *pithos*, the axe, one of the picrolite items or the bronze knife). It is interesting to note that only 14 of the 35 artefacts are complete or partially complete, of which only three are not characterised by breakage or secondary use. As mentioned above, in unit SA IIA burned deposits seem to occur mainly on the east and south walls and only along the perimeter of the room (Bombardieri 2017.46). The absence of a layer of ash, indicating the collapse of the roof, and the discovery of the intact upper part of the *pithos* in the centre of the room seem to indicate a partial dismantling of the roof prior to the fire. In this respect, Swiny interpreted the presence of collapsed roofs at Sotira-Kaminoudhia as further evidence of its rapid abandonment, caused by an earthquake, noting that serviceable beams are retrieved when structures are voluntarily abandoned (Swiny 2003.53; see also Horne 1993; Schlanger, Wilshusen 1993.90–95; Stevenson 1982) (Fig. 9).

Moreover, unit SA IIA seems to share disuse processes similar to those seen in the unburned units SA X (dismantled and filled with stones) and SA IX (filled with clay). In SA IIA the abandonment of the quern is possibly related to its weight, as confirmed by the presence of heavy querns and other ground stone tools left or discarded on the floors of other units of the workshop (e.g., SA III, SA IV, SA X and SA XII). The large dimensions and difficulties in transport could also explain the decision to leave the largest RP decorated jug, while the discovery of the *pithos* deserves a more detailed examination. In contrast to

![Fig. 7. The broken pithos (A.448.11), and the quern left on the bench (A.447.1) discovered in unit SA IIA (archive Erimi archaeological project/Italian archaeological mission in Ermi, Cyprus; readapted from Bombardieri 2017.45, Fig. 3.41).](image1)

![Fig. 8. Conditions of artefacts discovered in unit SA IIA.](image2)
what is observed for other units (Bombardieri 2017.53, Fig. 3.57), this vessel does not appear to have been crushed in situ by the collapse of the roof. Its upper part, in fact, was found separated from the body in the middle of the room, suggesting that it was already broken before the unit’s collapse. If, in other units, most of the pithoi represent de facto refuse still usable until the destruction caused by the fire, the pithos from SA IIa could be primary refuse, crushed on the floor and abandoned before the collapse of the unit. As suggested by Mutì (2020. 200), pithoi could be moved from their location to get rid of their contents, and the particular breakage and fragmentation of the pithos in SA IIa suggest that it was broken upon such displacement (Bombardieri 2017.45, Fig. 3.41).

Smaller and easily movable objects would probably have been curated in SA IIa on the basis of different criteria. On the one hand their bad state of preservation would make them not useful in the new settlement, on the other they would have been still usable in case of extreme necessity. At the same time, the absence of an ashy layer homogeneously distributed inside the room can suggest a partial dismantlement of the roof. The absence of beams, in fact, could force the creation of possible ignition points in SA I and SA III aimed to burn and destroy the two non-contiguous spaces. It is impossible to define if the ignition points were created to burn the rooms or if they represent a concentration of wooden materials which were destroyed by the fire. The absence of wood inside unit SA IIa could be related to the displacement of usable materials in rooms in use until the end of the site occupation. This space provided further elements in support of the planned abandonment without anticipated return. In the case of a planned return, the discard of objects would not have been occurred in the interior of one of the units and, as noted by Stevenson “less refuse would be discarded within enclosed living areas” (Stevenson 1982.260). Finally, it is important to note that SA IIb, the smallest unit (om2) of the workshop complex (Bombardieri 2017.38), returned portable artefacts that were still usable (specifically a pendant, six spindle whorls and some small vessels) and does not show traces of massive ash layer, as well as SA IIa. The concentration of burned debris near the partition wall between SA IIa and SA IIb and the massive presence of artefacts suggest that a particular final treatment was reserved for this unit. The absence of an ash layer could be due to the room’s layout, since the unit has partially been carved in the bedrock (approx. 0.30m), possibly facilitating the dispersion of ash. In addition, some of the objects appear to have been destroyed by the collapse of walls and roof. The limited concentration of ash near the southern limit of the unit (Bombardieri 2017.46), close to the wall that divided SA IIa from SA IIb, might be related to the presence of a roof only in the smaller sub-unit IIb at the time of the fire.

The residential area

Particularly interesting for the abandonment processes is area B, which brought to light a complex sequence of changes in the layout of some domestic units (Fig. 10).

The last sub-phase A1 is characterised by a reduction in terms of use of space, with the dismantling of unit 7 and the construction of a wall to close the passage to unit 6 (Bombardieri 2017.70). As in the case of Marki-Alonia, where Frankel and Webb (2006; 2012. 488) identified nine different phases, it is possible to define changes, renovations and modifications in the layout of the rooms. Since the reduction of dimensions occurred during the last sub-phase, the residential area seems to have experienced a gradual...
and planned disuse, as noted for the Erimi workshop. At the same time, the excavation of area T2 revealed a possible ‘atypical’ disuse practice reserved for two contiguous doorways that give access to two distinct units. During the abandonment of these spaces, the thresholds would have been surmounted by monolithic blocks put on the short tight side, possibly testifying to the symbolic isolation of the internal from the external space of the building (see Garwood 2011). The peculiar disposition of the monolithic blocks suggests an action more related to an abandonment behaviour than a change in the layout of the spaces. The blocks, in fact, are isolated and not included in a possible new structure, while the passage in front of the thresholds was not closed. A similar practice appears to be represented by the threshold D3 of unit 3 in area B which, during the passage from phase A2 to A1, changed its use and was transformed into a large square basin. In this case, the decision seems to suggest a change in the layout of the unit and not its final abandonment (Bombardieri 2017.65–70).

Abandonment processes at Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou

This paper has highlighted the contribution that a cross analysis of the stratigraphy and artefacts’ assemblages could provide to explain the treatment reserved for the rooms of the workshop area during the gradual abandonment of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou. Ethnoarchaeological studies have shown that when the process is gradual and planned, abandonment often occurs through a differential treatment of the spaces (Rothschild et al. 1993). The site was then partially disused and dismantled, and the inhabitants selected and concentrated still usable artefacts in units that were finally set on fire. Studies on discard processes in Bronze Age Cyprus note that part of the households or the alleys were used to concentrate refuse or to discard obsolete objects (Frankel, Webb 2006: Falconer, Fall 2014:174–176). Due to the particular layout of the workshop, with most rooms not connected by internal passages but only through open spaces, it is possible to suggest that some units lost their productive role and were gradually dismantled, while SA Ia became a sort of provisional discard, a place to concentrate objects not useful but possibly reusable in case of extreme necessity. As noted by Frankel and Webb in the case of Marki-Alonia, vessels with flaws have been “maintained for use in a limited or secondary capacity or in provisional discard awaiting mending, reuse or removal” (Frankel, Webb 2006. 153). Unburned units would have been disused and partially dismantled, while in some burned rooms a set of artefacts in still usable condition has been curated. This hypothesis can also be confirmed by the comparison of the ratio between entire vessels and sherds. As noted by some scholars, rooms abandoned in an earlier phase tend to show the presence of a high number of sherds but few complete artefacts. In contrast, spaces which were disused in a later phase seem to show the opposite (Montgomery 1993.157–159; see also Schiffer 1985.23). In this respect, no well-preserved vessels were found in SA X, but it returned one of the highest proportions of sherds found in the workshop. In addition, unburned spaces seem to be related to unspecialized functions due to their smaller size and the limited presence of features, an aspect that could justify their final treatment and the exclusion from the possible deliberate burning (see Joyce, Johannessen 1993.151).

Fig. 10. Reconstruction of the renovations layout in area B (Bombardieri 2017.70, Fig. 3.87).
At the workshop of Erimi, the gradual and differentiated treatment of spaces could reflect the decision to intentionally seal some rooms as part of the abandonment strategy. The deposition of some objects, their location and concentration are markers of specific choices, often related to the burial of members of the community or, in other cases, to possible detachment rituals before leaving structures or settlements. As demonstrated by several ethnoarchaeological studies and experimental archaeologists, a structure could burn for days before collapsing (Cameron 1991.162; Gheorghiu 2019.30–47; see also Stevanović 1997), and the inhabitants would have had the possibility to recover at least some objects. At Erimi, however, the absence of any attempt to retrieve artefacts and the presence of possible intentional ignition points seem to confirm the decision to voluntarily seal the objects inside the units. At the same time, different studies have highlighted how the distance from the new settlement influences the decision to take or leave an object (Schlanger, Wilshusen 1993.90–91; Schiffer 1985.26–33). Taking into account the empty units of Erimi alone, we could hypothesise that the new site could have been in close proximity, entailing the transport of most of the artefacts to the new settlement. If we exclude possible ritual or symbolic practices, the assemblage of the burned units suggests the opposite scenario, a longer distance and the abandonment of artefacts caused by functional motivations. Deeper analysis on almost complete or fragmentary artefacts – and particularly vessels – will be fundamental to define the real quantity of still usable objects left in the site.

Nevertheless, the sequence of the gradual abandonment processes, from the reduction and disuse of some spaces to the burning of part of the workshop, seems to confirm that the selection, location and concentration of some portable and often still usable artefacts depended on specific and voluntary decisions, influenced by different motivations. Scholars have often defined abandonment as a strategy following practice determined by local populations, as well as local and regional conditions (Schlanger, Wilshusen 1993.85; see also Nelson, Hegmon 2001. 213). The conditions in which the site was abandoned and the possible foundation of a close, new settlement seems therefore to be ascribed to a wider social phenomenon that involved the island of Cyprus at the end of the Middle Bronze Age. Suggesting a gradual and pre-planned abandonment in the case of the Bronze Age site Marki-Alonia, Frankel and Webb (2006.153) stressed how some rooms returned complete or restorable vessels while in other cases the absence of artefacts could depend on different motivations, from the curation to episodes of renovation, which could have affected some rooms.

At Kissoneri-Skalia Crewe noted a decrease in the activities that would have produced a slow abandonment of the site (Crewe 2017.146), while the presence of intact artefacts and skeletal remains at Sotira-Kaminoudhia has been interpreted as a rapid abandonment caused by a seismic event (Swiny 2003.53–54). Even at Kalopshida, the presence of a burned layer in the house of trench 3 and in the room 7 of site C combined with the rich assemblage found on the floor suggests a rapid abandonment (Aström 1966.139–140; Gjerstad 1926; Webb 2012. 52), while Swiny noted that the absence of certain typologies of objects at Episkopi-Phaneromeni could be related to curating behaviours due to the short distance from the settlement G to A (Swiny 1979.330). At the same time many artefacts were left in situ when settlement G was abandoned (Swiny 1979.15). Therefore, excluding cases of rapid and not anticipated abandonments, the choice to leave the settlement through a planned and gradual process could have been based on social and economic motivations. At Erimi, finally, the voluntary destruction of part of the workshop and the particular location of the partially complete artefacts in some units, seem to reflect the specific way in which the inhabitants decided to detach from their place (see Lamoreux-St-Hilaire, Macrae 2020), performing a voluntary closure (see Adams 2016; Cameron 1990).

Conclusions

The data presented in this paper, combining an analysis of artefact refuse with the study of the abandonment practices performed at the MBA site of Erimi-Laonin tou Porakou, provide interesting information. Some spaces were cleaned out and the objects were probably progressively put in the compounds still in use and then taken away at the end of a gradual abandonment. Some units were disused, partially dismantled and transformed in discard areas; contemporaneously, some artefacts were concentrated inside the rooms then possibly set on fire. The workshop has likely been impacted by a series of symbolic practices, such as the decision to leave some artefacts inside the units as well as the deposition of the piled vessels in front of the entrance of SA IV, the concentration and location of artefacts inside the burned units, and the absence of attempts to recover the smaller objects during the fire. Finally, if in the rooms it is possible to distinguish arte-
facts as *de facto*, primary and secondary refuse, the differences in preservation, concentration and selection of artefacts from some burned units suggest that in some cases objects entered in the archaeological context possibly through symbolic depositions made before the burn. Elsewhere in Cyprus, the presence of artefacts has been interpreted as the result of a rapid process caused by natural disasters. In contrast, the abandonment practices performed by the Erimi’s inhabitants resulted in the possible deposition of some artefacts, clearly suggesting some decision-making in this process.

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