

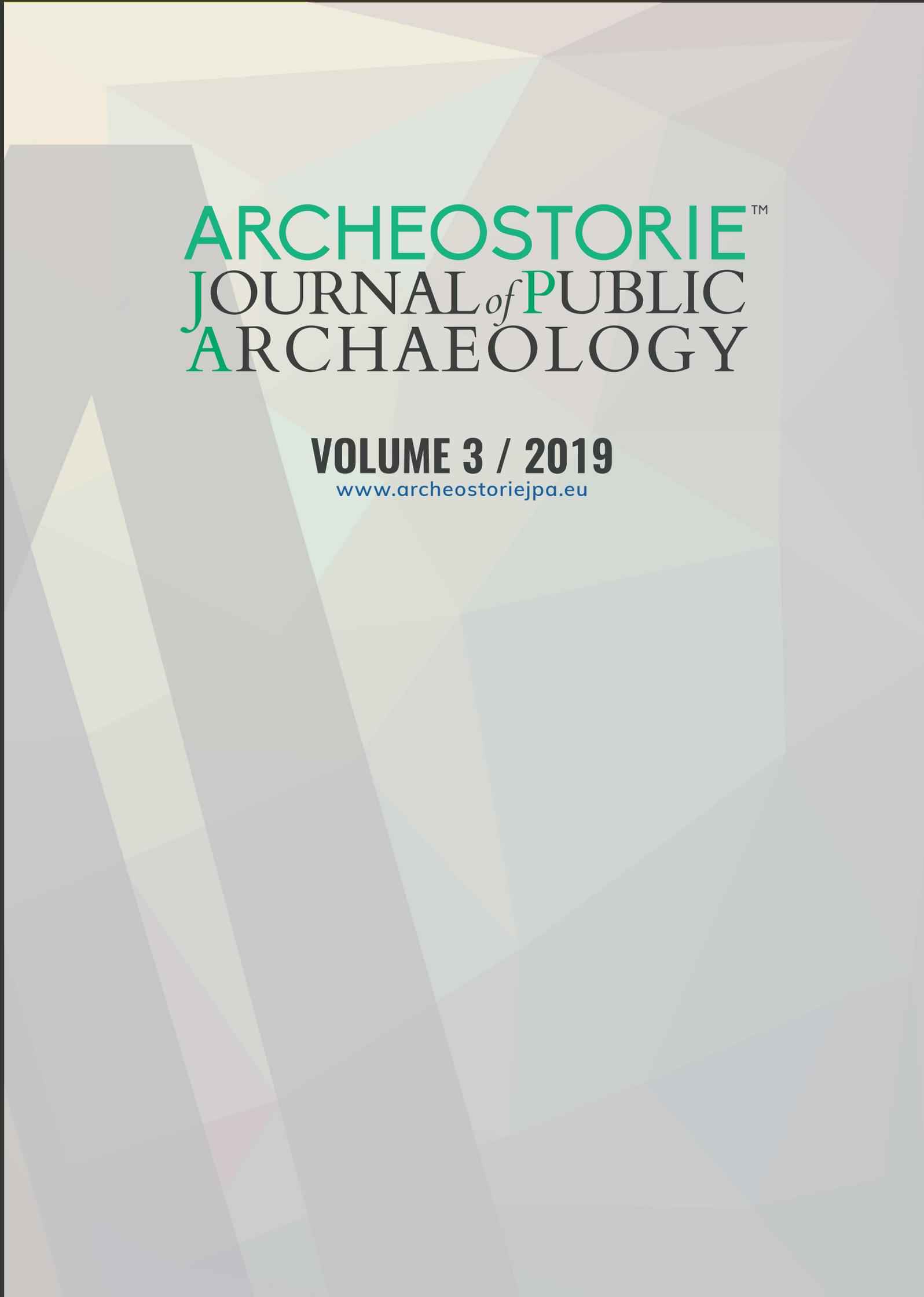


ARCHEOSTORIE<sup>®</sup>  
JOURNAL *of* PUBLIC  
ARCHAEOLOGY

**VOLUME 3 / 2019**

*Topic of the Year: Museum Archaeology*





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# Death at sea: the crater of the shipwreck

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## Abstract

Death at sea: *The crater of the shipwreck* is part of *Masterpiece*, an Italian podcast by Archeostorie® that describes some of the most beautiful and famous artworks from antiquity.

Open Access  Translated by: Julian Rose

 Keywords: shipwreck, sailors, Pithecusa



Fig.1. The crater of the shipwreck.

*They wanted to cross the sea, and instead the sea swallowed them. It was happening yesterday, it still happens today, all too often, in the Mediterranean.*

Above. Below.

Concepts now abstract, and remote. Laws that applied on the solid earth of the living.

I have crossed the thresholds of Poseidon, a clay doll in the hands of that god. I will not feel

anymore the weight of my tired, sweating body,  
, the sting of rocks under my worn-out shoes,  
the fatigue of walking on a sunbaked road. The  
song of the oarsmen has faded away, the birds are  
silent under the immense sky. I do not taste the  
salty wind or smell the pungent aroma of the pine  
grove. I will never again taste, with closed eyes,  
the aroma of bread.

Friends, please, do not forget my name!

In my throat I have the salt of all the oceans, it  
burns my eyes, my tongue, my heart. I float in a  
dark blue world that swallows up every light.

Who dances in these abysses of death? Lithe  
bodies brush against me with an icy touch, they  
tighten their circle around me.

Are they fish? Monsters of Styx? Specters of  
voyagers drowned in this shimmering and cruel  
sea, alone with their hopes, invoking with stifled  
cries the names of their lands and their native  
gods?

Friends, please, do not forget my name!

The waves will toss my bones, far from the  
flowers and cries of my loved ones. [can we get  
“peace” in here? Because it’s about burial rights.]

If I could only rest below the fig tree in the  
courtyard, cradled by the voices of the people of  
the house...

There is not a man more courageous under the

sun than he who abandons a safe harbor to chase  
a dream.

Friends, please, do not forget my name!

*The Crater of the Shipwreck is a vase of the late  
geometric style dated to the end of the 8th century  
B.C., which comes from the island of Pithecusa  
("monkey island"), modern Ischia. It was used to  
mix wine and water during banquets and symposia.  
Found in the necropolis of San Montano, it is the  
most famous artifact of the Pithecusa Archaeological  
Museum, together with the celebrated Cup of Nestor.  
It is famous for two reasons: Because it is the most  
ancient vase, of all those found in Italy, painted with  
figures and not only with geometric motifs, and  
for the scene of a shipwreck that is among the few  
that have reached us from the Greek world. It is a  
spectacular scene: their ship upside down, the sailors  
seek safety by swimming and floundering among  
the fish, while one of them is already about to be  
devoured by an enormous fish.*

*Pithecusa was the first Greek colony in the West.  
It was a place that the Greeks had reached with  
difficulty after many shipwrecks, and it was a base  
for trading with the Etruscans, which again entailed  
facing other dangers and risking other shipwrecks.  
The Crater tells all about these great sailors: all their  
daring, and all their fears.*



