



Rock Solid: Volume 36/2 of the *Journal of Ancient Civilizations*

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The five articles included in 36/2 are daunting: they contain valuable research and insights, but are clearly the product of specialists writing for other specialists. The rest of us will find these pieces slow going. For example, I assumed that the first article that caught my eye, Stefanie Schmidt's "Early Roman Syene (1st to 2nd Century) -- A Gate to the Red Sea?" would be in the lively continuum of J. H. Thiel's 1939 book about the transoceanic trade between the Middle East and the Far East, *Eudoxus of Cyzicus: A Chapter in the History of the Sea-Route to India and the Route Round the Cape in Ancient Times*. Schmidt's article concerns the possibility of a canal linking the inland city of Syene with the Red Sea, and her presentation and analysis of the relevant data are excellent. She does not, however, touch on the question of why such a canal would have been built, nor how its construction and use would have changed the status quo. A specialist writes for other specialists.

The same tone is found in Guo Zilong's article on republished Greek texts, that is, editorial retouches observed in later versions of Attic orators' work. The reader with a good command of Greek and a good understanding of the field would find the piece a rich collection of exempla. The less accomplished reader will probably skim the article and leave a close reading for another day.

Elisabeth Günther theatrical gestures preserved in ancient vase paintings is voluminous and thought-provoking, but has the stylistic flaw frequently observed in specialist literature, inflated footnotes, footnotes that show more polish and careful writing than the article itself. I recall in my editorial days telling contributors to flip their articles upside-down to make them more readable, or at least integrate the content-heavy, Tolstoyan footnotes into the main line of the piece.

Irene Berti's article on Delian writing materials and their cost features charts to illustrate the details of her survey. The presentation is very detailed, but is not light reading. The same is true of Péter Kató's discussion of Coan philanthropists' behavior deduced from ancient texts.

The articles in 36/2 are magisterial in tone, and each is a valuable contribution to its field, insofar as I am able to judge. I am not a specialist, however, and so must remain a hesitant observer, on the outside looking in.



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