Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion
A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298-642 CE)
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DESCRIPTION:
The famous island of Philae, on Egypt's southern frontier, can be considered the last major temple site where Ancient Egyptian religion was practiced. According to the Byzantine historian Procopius, in 535-537 CE the Emperor Justinian ordered one of his generals to end this situation by destroying the island's temples. This account has usually been accepted as a sufficient explanation for the end of the Ancient Egyptian cults at Philae. Yet it is by no means unproblematic. This book shows that the event of 535-537 has to be seen in a larger context of religious transformation at Philae, which was more complex and gradual than Procopius describes it. Not only are the various Late Antique sources from and on Philae taken into account, for the first time the religious developments at Philae are also placed in a regional context by analyzing the sources from the other major towns in the region, Syene (Aswan) and Elephantine. "[T]he author situates his material into its wider historical context, and does this so effectively that what begins as a very specific study of a local problem expands to consider the transitions from paganism to Christianity in Egypt as a whole, and stands as one of the most important studies of this topic to date. This well written and deeply learned book is a tour de force of regional religious history that will also be essential reading for anyone interested in indigenous religion and early Christianity in this time of transition." -- Terry Wilfong, in Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists