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CULTURES AND LANGUAGES OF THE ANCIENT WORLD: EGYPT

ANCIENT CONCEPTS IN NEW CONTEXTS: CREATIVE APPROACHES TO TEXT AND IMAGE IN PTOLEMAIC AND ROMAN ERA TEMPLES

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Egyptian temples of the Ptolemaic and Roman era are eloquent and loquacious in the vast amount of information they provide on aspects of their cultic functioning as well as local and national belief systems. More than ever before, a vastness of texts and images cover every available space upon temple walls. Scene upon scene, register upon register, the Ptolemaic Basileus or Roman Emperor is continuously portrayed performing the role of the traditional pharaoh. Extensive inscriptions further enhance our understanding of the role these sacred monuments played in sustaining the order of the world.

The priestly designers creating this specific visual background of architecture, text and image upon which sacred dramas would take centre stage proved absolute masters of their craft. Upon a close examination, one swiftly becomes aware that not only did they rely on a rich source of inscriptional and graphic data in temple libraries, but moreover showed a most creative and ingenious approach to texts and iconography.

This lecture traces by means of various case studies the methods and techniques the priestly composers applied and practised when creating text and image to cover the walls of these magnificent religious structures from Ptolemaic and Roman times.

