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TITLE

When the Producer is the Product: The Demiurge's Self-Genesis in the Egyptian New Kingdom Religious Hymns (ca. 1539-1077 BC)

KEYWORDS

Ancient Egypt, New Kingdom, Cosmogony, Self-Genesis, Religious Hymns

ABSTRACT

The main goal of my PhD is to consider the phraseology present in the New Kingdom religious hymns which explicitly mentions the cosmogonical process, that is, that sheds some light on the way the world came into existence. My research is structured around three core questions: Who creates? (The identity of the Creator); What is created? (The outcomes of the Creation); How is it created? (The processes, mechanisms, and devices used by the Creator to set the World into existence). Nevertheless, there is one particular feature in this *corpus* that somehow blurs the individuation of these analytical axes: the fact that one of the most mentioned outcomes of the creation in these texts is the Creator himself.

The Egyptian term *xpr* is quintessential in this context since it conveys the idea of “coming to existence” or “assuming/taking a shape” (e.g. BM EA826). Nevertheless, there are other ways of expressing this notion, namely the ones linked to an idea of construction and formation through manual/craft work, employing verbs such as *od* or *nj* (e.g. pLeiden I 344 verso). The deity's self-creation might as well be rendered by an allusion to a biological process, where the Creator would have engendered (*wtT*) and given birth (*msj*) to himself (e.g. BM EA551).

In this paper I intend to focus on the different ways through which the Demiurge's self-Genesis is conveyed in this *corpus*. On the one hand, I will consider the possible religious meanings and implications of this existential continuity between producer and product. On the other hand, I will link this phenomenon with other cosmogonical aspects attested in these texts, such as the creation of gods (theogony) and human beings (anthropogeny).