

Images, Perceptions and Productions in and of Antiquity

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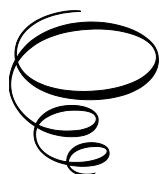


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CHAPTER ONE
ANCIENT EGYPT

SECTION 1.

ANCIENT EGYPTIAN STUDIES

WHEN THE PRODUCER IS THE PRODUCT:
THE DEMIURGE’S SELF-GENESIS
IN THE EGYPTIAN NEW KINGDOM RELIGIOUS
HYMNS (CA. 1539–1077 BC)

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Abstract

The present paper constitutes a brief preliminary approach to the Creator’s self-genesis in the Egyptian New Kingdom religious hymns (ca. 1539–1077 BC) in the context of on-going PhD research on the Creator deity and creation in the New Kingdom’s hymnology. This feature is referred to in numerous different manners in this *corpus*, which might be grouped into three main categories—self-emanation/manifestation, self-begetting/birth, and self-cast/construction—through which the present paper is structured. The term *xpr* is fundamental regarding the first, as it conveys the idea of “coming to existence” or “assuming/taking shape”. As for the second category, one finds attestations of the deity’s self-creation rendered by an allusion to biological processes, where the Creator would have engendered (*wT*) and given birth (*msj*) to himself. Finally, the third group relates to manual/craftwork with the use of different terms such as *od*. However, it will be argued that these groups are not to be taken as entirely separate units but rather as operative categories. *Msj*, for instance, might refer to both a biological process and a manual task. To sum up, this paper deals with the phraseology employed to depict the Creator’s self-coming into existence in this *corpus*, navigating diversity and taking its complexity into account.

¹ This paper was supported by Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) [SFRH/BD/131336/2017]. Address all correspondence to:
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Keywords: Ancient Egypt; New Kingdom; Creator deity; Self-Genesis; Religious Hymns

1. Introduction

The primary goal of my on-going PhD research is to create an inventory of and consider the phraseology attested to in the religious hymns of the New Kingdom (ca.1539–1077 BC)² which refer explicitly to the creative process(es). I intend to consider the complex identity of the Creator deity, who not only reunites several names, roles, and attributes but also sets the different Cosmos's components into being through the performance of distinct tasks. Thus, my research can be structured around three core issues: the identity of the Creator; the creation's outcomes; and the mechanisms and devices used by the Creator to achieve creation.

Nevertheless, there is one particular feature in this *corpus* that somehow blurs the individuation of these analytical axes: the Creator's creation of himself. The Demiurge is simultaneously both the producer and the product by bringing himself (by himself) into being. Thus, the Demiurge's self-generation seems to be the paramount point of the intersection of the three questions through which I navigate in my research: the producer is the product, and the latter is achieved by multiple processes executed by the former. However, the coming into existence of the Creator is not conveyed in a straightforward and monolithic way in this *corpus*. On the contrary, the demiurgic self-generation is textually depicted in several distinct procedures, which range from a mere "coming into existence" or "assumption of a form" (xpr) to more concrete actions, such as manual/constructive processes ("to build", "to shape", "to form"—od, nbj) or biological ones with the Creator being described as the one who begot (wtT) and gave birth (msj) to himself.

In this paper, I intend to focus on the different ways through which the Demiurge's self-generation is conveyed in this *corpus* by trying to trace patterns in the allusions to this cosmogonical moment. Simultaneously, I will aim at understanding the different meanings that each creative method entails and consider possible areas of ambiguity and overlapping.

² Dates according to Hornung, Krauss and Warburton 2006, 490-495.

2. The self-emanated/manifested deity (xpr)

The term *xpr* is quintessential in this regard as it conveys a meaning of “becoming”, “coming into existence”, or “occurring”³—that is, the passing from a dormant state to an actual form, a transmutation from pre-existence to existence.⁴ The original setting of this notion dates back to the initial Ocean, the Nu(n) (Nw(n)/Nnw),⁵ where the Demiurge, whose name might be Khepri (*xprj*), deriving from *xpr*, is diluted before taking shape. The realisation of his existence triggers his self-creation.⁶ The Cosmos would have been born in these motionless waters, which already contained in themselves, in a latent state, the matter to come that would be used to constitute the universe as it is known and understood.⁷ The Egyptian creation is thus not an *ex nihilo* one. #*pr* is therefore instrumental when referring to the Demiurge’s self-creation in the New Kingdom religious hymns and beyond.⁸ The expression *xpr Ds=f*, “who came into existence by himself”, is indeed the most common phraseological unit attested in this *corpus* as it covers the entire New Kingdom, except for Amarna, in a whole range of textual materialities, contexts, and plausible functions.⁹ The isolation of the Creator in the cosmogonical start and his subsequent ontological anteriority over the other beings (deities and humans) and elements might also be rendered through this verb, at least, since Thutmose III:

xpr m-bAH nn snnw=f

(The one) who came into existence in the beginning, without an equal¹⁰

³ Wb 3, 260.7-264.15.

⁴ Assmann 1984, 210.

⁵ Several lexical variations (such as *nw* or *nwj*) might be translated as “water” “waters” or “primordial waters”. This diversity is particularly striking in the *Pyramid Texts*, but the Coptic vocalisation (*noun*) indicated the structure *nnw* (Allen 1988, 4). For the purposes of this paper, *Nnw* is the adopted orthography used to refer to the primeval Ocean.

⁶ Vernus and Yoyotte 2005, 442.

⁷ Sauneron and Yoyotte 1959, 22.

⁸ See, for instance, the late-dated Papyrus Bremner-Rhind.

⁹ The list of references is very extensive. For an overview of the present state of the research regarding this particular topic, see the table in the final section of this paper.

¹⁰ TT 84(8), 2, temp. Thutmose III (Urk. IV, 942-943; STG 102; ÄHG 80).

#pr might as well be used not regarding this creation “in the beginning”—*creatio prima*—but rather as the ongoing cosmic recreation, re-enacted by the daily sun emergence:

jAw n=k xpr ra nb

Praises to you, who come to existence every day¹¹

The exploration of this semantics is profoundly existentially charged, something that is reinforced by the writing of several xpr-forms in the same sentence, which is a sequence that is often challenging to translate. The famous Short Hymn to Osiris, dated from Amenhotep III’s reign, provides one example:

wnn=k pA xpr xprw nn xpr

You are the being who came into existence before existence existed¹²

Given that all these textual fragments present a general sDm=f form, it is difficult to determine whether they refer to the initial “exit” of the Creator from the cosmic Ocean (*creatio prima*) or instead to the permanent emergence of the solar deity at every dawn (*creatio continua*).¹³ The phraseology attested for the verb bsj, “to flood out, to emerge”,¹⁴ however, seems to hint at the former:

bsj=k tpy

You emerged (yourself) first¹⁵

The concomitance of this verb and xpr might be regarded as a reinforcement of this perception:

¹¹ BM EA552, 1, temp. Tutankhamun (Urk IV, 2100-2102; Edwards 1939, 31, pl. 27; Martin 1989, 92-93, pl. 109-110).

¹² Lyon H 1376, 1, temp. Amenhotep III (Dévéria 1896, 55-112, 82-90; Varille 1931, 497-507; Urk. IV, 1914-1915; Barucq and Daumas 1980, n°12).

¹³ For an introduction to the distinction between *creatio prima* and *creatio continua*, see Knigge 2006, 67-70. According to Bickel, this differentiation begins precisely in the New Kingdom (Bickel 1998, 169).

¹⁴ Wb 1, 474.5-18.

¹⁵ Leiden I 350, IV.1, temp. Rameses II (Gardiner 1905, 12-60; Zandee 1947; Erman 1923, 363-373; Wilson 1950, 368-369; Roeder 1959-1961, 282-301; Oswalt 1968, 61-89, 196-219; HPEA 72; Assmann 1995, 159; Foster 1995, 68-79; Mathieu 1997, 109-152; ÄHG 132-142).

bsj.n=f xpr [Ds=f]

(After) he had emerged, he came into existence by himself¹⁶

These textual excerpts record the Creator's self-genesis in the Primeval Ocean framework, presenting this act as an emergence or an appearance. However, one also finds other terms that depict the Demiurge's coming into existence—namely, biological ones.

3. The self-begetter/born deity (msj/wtT)

Giving birth and being born undoubtedly suggest a creative act. Hence it is only logical that this bio-physic imagery, covered by the verb msj,¹⁷ shall be convoked in order to address the coming into existence of the different beings and entities, starting with the Creator himself. This feature has been attested to since, at least, Thutmose III:

jnD Hr=k Jmn-Ra mss(w) sw Tnw wn.wt pr(j) m mw.t=f m-Xr.t-hrw Htp m
Xn=s r nw=f

Hail to you, Amon-Ra, who gives birth to himself every hour, who comes forth from his mother every day and rests in her in his (due) time¹⁸

The above passage refers to *creatio continua*, as it points to a continuously renewed process: the sun's daily journey. The continuous demiurgic self-genesis might also be rendered through the concomitance of the verb msj and the expression Ds=f, something that is only attested to after Amarna:

rdj jAw n Ra-(J)tm-xprj-Hr-Ax.ty
jnD Hr=k pA Hwn nTry ms(j) Ds=f ra nb

To give praises to Ra-Atum-Khepri-Horakhty.

Hail to you, the divine young one, who gives birth to himself every day!¹⁹

¹⁶ TT 50(7/8), x+4, temp. Horemheb (STG 62d); and Hymn of Tura, 10-11, probably written between the end of the 18th dynasty and the beginning of the 19th dynasty (Bakir 1943, 83-91; Oswalt 1968, 51-57, 188-194; HPEA 74; Assmann 1995, 161-163; ÄHG 88).

¹⁷ Wb 2, 137.4-138.17.

¹⁸ Chicago E14053, 2, temp. Thutmose III (STG 165; ÄHG 75; Stewart 1966, 63).

¹⁹ Berlin 7316, 1-2, 18th dynasty, after Amarna (Roeder 1924, 134; HPEA 47; ÄHG 60).

This “daily birth” refers to the quotidian emergence of the sun at dawn. It is noteworthy that praised deity is here adored in four names—Ra, Atum, Khepri, and Horakhty—all of them connected to different aspects and features of the sun-god(s). The fact that these names/gods correspond to distinct solar phases concurs to the covering of a cycle, which is manifested in the journey featured by the Creator deity through a process that culminates in the eternally expected and awaited morning solar (re-)birth.

If there seems to be no doubt regarding the *creatio continua* quality covered by the excerpt quoted above, others are open to a certain ambiguity:

jnD Hr=k pAwty tA.wy nb MAa.t jwty nw=tw wa mss msj sw jrw mw.t=f
omA d.t=f prj m Ax.t Ax hn(a) kA=f

Hail to you, primordial of the Two Lands, Lord of Maat, who has no equal, the only one! Child/Begetter/Who gave birth²⁰ that gave birth to himself. Who made his mother, who created his hand? Who comes forth from the horizon, transfigured with his kA?²¹

Once more, primordiality and uniqueness seem intimately connected to self-creation. Moreover, the Creator’s singularity, which allows him to give birth to himself, is characterised by his self-sufficiency: he is enough to set his existence into being. By assigning the creation of his mother to the deity, the hymnographer emphasises the god’s autonomy with regard to his creative task. Furthermore, the mention to the hand’s creation suggests an allusion to a fundamental Egyptian cosmogonical motif: the demiurgic masturbatory act. According to the Heliopolitan cosmogonical cycle, after causing himself to exist in a *causa sui* instance, the deity engenders the first divine couple through expectoration/spit or masturbation.²² Thus, the reference

²⁰ Scholars have interpreted this passage differently. While Barucq and Daumas (1980, X) have interpreted mss as “child” (“enfant qui s’est enfanté lui-même”), Assmann (1999, X) renders that word as “Procreator” (“der seinen Erzeuger zeugte”). As for Jorgensen (1998, 74), he believes that mss should not be understood as a noun but rather as reduplicated verbal form: “Who gave birth to that which gave birth to Thyself”. The lack of classifier hinders a definite answer to this problem. Regardless of the chosen translation/interpretation, there seems to be no doubt that we are facing here a self-creation textual mention. Simultaneously, it is important to bear in mind that a deliberate ambiguity might be at hand.

²¹ Copenhagen AEIN 655, 7-9, temp. Thutmose III-Thutmose IV (Koefoed-Petersen 1951, 31, pl. 64; Jorgensen 1998, 74-77; Mogensen 1930, XVII-A.72, 19; ÅHG 51; HPEA 53; Stewart 1966, 63).

²² This cosmogonical motif has been attested to since the *Pyramid Texts*, namely, in PT 527. One also finds attestations of this reality in other *corpora*, including the

to the god's hand, which would be in some instances hypostasized as a deity, may be envisaged as an indication of the god's ability to create their own body parts that perform as tools in the creative task. The god is able to provide himself with the required devices to set creation into being, which ultimately relies exclusively on his own existence.

Statements that claim that not only did the god give birth to but that he also begot himself reinforce the self-sufficiency of the demiurgic bringing to existence. One finds thus a concomitance of the verbs *msj* and *wT*, "to beget",²³ which seems to be a post-Amarna feature:

pw Hr-Ax.ty pA Hwn nTry jwa nHH wtT sw msj sw Ds=f nswt p.t tA HoA
dwA.t Hr(y)-tp spAt Jwgr<.t> [ptj] m mw sTA sw m Nnw rnn sw sDsr
msw.t=f

It is Horakhty, the divine young one, heir of the nHH-time, who begets and gives birth to himself! King of sky and earth, sovereign of the Duat, the foremost of the Igeret-necropolis, [who comes forth] from the waters, who drags himself out of the Nun, who nurtures himself and sacralises his birth!²⁴

The Creator's begetting and bearing proprieties are presented in the context of his coming into existence out of the Nun. Furthermore, the affirmation of his superintendence over the Cosmos as a whole—he both controls and administrates the three existential levels (celestial, terrestrial, and the netherworld)—aligns with his self-manageable caretaking of himself. Thus, the Creator's agency seems to operate both on a cosmic and an individual level.

Nevertheless, the negation of the Creator's birth constitutes a fruitful strategy to posit the deity's top position in the cosmic hierarchy. Through passive forms, the Demiurge is said to be the only entity that comes into existence without being born. This is the case in the stela of Suty and Hor:

Coffin Texts (CT 321, CT IV 147b-e). The inclusion of two references to this cosmogonical motif in Papyrus Bremner-Rhind, written in Roman times, attests to the continuity of this perception in the Egyptian thought (BM EA10188 26'24-27'1; 28'27-29'1).

²³ Wb 1, 381.10-382, 9.

²⁴ BM EA551, 3-5, temp. Tutankhamun (Meyer 1877, 148-157; Urk IV 2094-2099; Edwards 1939, 31-33, pl.28; Martin 1989, 29-31, pl.21-22; Scharff 1922, 58-60; Stewart 1966, 51-53; HPEA 24; Foster 1995, 45-47; ÄHG 57).

jnD Hr=k jtn n hrw omA tm.w jrj anx=sn bjk aA sAb-Sw.t xpr sTs sw Ds=f
xpr Ds=f jwty ms.tw=f Hr sms Hr-jb n njw.t

Hail to you, sun-disk of the day! Creator of the humans, who makes them live! Great falcon, with variegated plumage! Scarab, who elevated himself, who came into existence by himself, without having been born! Horus, the eldest in the sky!²⁵

In this passage, the Demiurge is identified with two animals: the falcon and the scarab. If the former entails a clear link to Horus, explicitly mentioned further ahead, the later enables a wordplay with the verb *xpr*, thus enhancing the symbolic meaning of the text and possibly its aesthetic quality as well.²⁶ Simultaneously, it is interesting to notice that anthropogeny is acknowledged prior to the god's own coming into existence. The hymnographer recognises the deity's importance as the Humanity's author but mainly as its sustainer and caretaker: the god does not limit himself to create human beings, he also provides them with their living sustenance. As for the phraseology directly connected to the demiurgic self-creation—*xpr Ds=f jwty ms.tw=f*—it shall be noted that the exact same one is attested to in another 18th Dynasty hymn. However, in this particular instance, the expression is employed to praise Thot:

jAw n=k +Hwty nb #mnw xpr Ds=f jwty ms.tw=f nTr wa

Praises to you, Thot, lord of Hermopolis, who comes into existence by himself, without having been born! The sole god!²⁷

In this excerpt, Thot is praised as a self-created god, who shares the oneness attribute commonly linked to the sun-birth creative god, and which not usually ascribed to the lunar god. One might posit the hypothesis that the religious-theological concepts around Thot were somehow influenced by the profound transformations that were occurring vis-à-vis the sun god in this period. However, one should bear in mind that this hymn follows

²⁵ BM EA826, 8-9, temp. Amenhotep III (Edwards 1939, pl.21; Varille 1941, 25-30; Urk IV, 1943-1949; Pierret 1870, 70-72; Breasted 1934, 275-277; Sainte Fare Garnot 1949, 63-68; Wilson 1950, 367-368; Stewart 1966, 53-55; Fecht 1967, 25-50; HEPA 68; ÄHG 89; Foster 1995, 56-58; Murnane 1995, 27-28; Shubert 2004, 143-165; Lichtheim 2006, 86-89; Baines & McNamara 2007, 63-79; Guylas 2009, 113-131).

²⁶ According to Vernus (2005, 442) *xpr*, “Scarab/the one who takes a from”, would have derived from the verb *xpr*, duplicating the final consonant, possibly even before writing. This process is well-attested for both animal and family names.

²⁷ BM EA551, 18-19.

another one in the same document, addressed to a three-named god, Re-Atum-Horakhty, whose solar nature is evident.²⁸ Thus, we may be dealing here with a standard phraseological repertoire, intended to praise the beneficial deeds of a given deity. Simultaneously, this could aim at displaying a textual cohesion and coherence.

However, one should bear in mind the polysemy covered by the word *msj*. This verb also comprehends more general creative notions—“to create”—or even procedures that are not (necessarily) biological, such as “to fashion”.²⁹ This is even more relevant if we take into account that this verb is often graphed without the woman giving birth hieroglyph (B3/B4). The context of some instances of the lack of this classifier hinders their respective translations. Indeed, some occurrences of *msj* introduce a certain ambiguity between biological and manual-crafted procedures.

3. The self-crafted/fashioned deity (*msj*; *od*)

Some occurrences of *msj* introduce a certain ambiguity between biological and manual-crafted procedures. This seems to be the case in the following example from the aforementioned stela of Suty and Hor:

PtH=tw nbj=k Ha.w=k mss jwty ms.tw=f wa Hr xw=f sbb nHH Hry wA.wt
m HH.w Xr sSm=f

You are a sculptor! You cast your (own) body. Child-bearer/Modeler who is not born/modelled! Unique in his kind, who traverses the nHH-time [= eternity] over the paths, with millions under his command!³⁰

The consistent lack of classifiers in this text hampers its translation. Firstly, the word *ptH* with no further classifier induces a possible premeditated ambiguity between the god Ptah, the noun “sculptor” and the verb *ptH*, “to form, to create”.³¹ This persistent absence also channels the way into diverse

²⁸ BM EA551, 1-17.

²⁹ Wb 2, 137.4-138.7.

³⁰ BM EA26, 3.

³¹ Wb 1, 565.11. Barucq and Daumas (1980, 188) interpret *ptH* as “le Sculpteur”. Foster (1995, 56) harmonises with this perspective: “Fashioner of yourself”. Assmann (1999, 210), on the contrary, prefers to translate this passage as “Du bist ein PTAH”. Barucq and Daumas (1990, 188 [b]) argue against this option, as it should be covered by *ntk PtH*. The scholars suggest instead that *ptH* is a past particle of the verb *ptH*, “to mold/to sculpture”. However, further problems arise as this verb is only known from ulterior sources (Wb 1, 565). Lichtheim (2006, 87) presents a more neutral option: “self-made”.

interpretations regarding the second element of the above-quoted passage, *msj*, which is not clear as to whether a biological or artisanal creative procedure is intended. While the latter would fit in a manual and crafted conception of the self-genesis, the former would serve to amplify and diversify the utilised narratives and devices in order to convey that paramount cosmogonical moment. Both solutions seem to be possible, both linguistically and subject-wise, and one must bear in mind the possibility of deliberate ambiguity. The self-creation via an artisanal work is reinforced by the verb *nbj*, which might be translated in various ways, all of them connected to manual activities,³² applied to the emergence of the god's body. The craftsman is simultaneously the crafted piece: Creator and creation conjoin in the same being—the producer is the product. His self-made condition ranks the Demiurge as a unique entity, the only one of “his kind”, thus assuming the conduction of the Cosmos and control over time.

The diversity of images that may cover expressions linked to the artisanal/manual creative conceptions in the religious hymns of the New Kingdom also includes the verb *od*, “to form, to fashion, to build”.³³ Although its attestations in this *corpus* occur earlier, it only refers to the demiurgic self-genesis from the Amarna period onwards. This is the case in the so-called Short Hymn to Aten:

pA nTr Sps(y) od(w) sw Ds=f jr(w) tA nb omA(w) nty Hr=f m rmT.w
mnmn.t aw.t nb(.t) Sn.w nb rwd(w) Hr sAtw anx=sn wbn=k n=sn ntk mw.t
jt n jry=k

The noble god, who builds himself (by himself), who makes every land and creates what is in it: humans, every big and small animal, and every tree that grows upon the soil. They live when you rise for them. You are the mother and the father of what you have done!³⁴

In this excerpt, the self-creation is presented amid a vaster array of creative outputs. The god indeed accounts for the creation of “everything that exists”, even if his own is the first to be mentioned. The whole creation relies and depends on the god's deeds who performs as a provider and

³² “To melt, to cast, to fashion, to model, to guild” (Wb 2, 236.6-9; 241.8-29).

³³ Wb 5, 72.8-73.24.

³⁴ Short Hymn to Aten, 3-4, temp. Akhenaten (Davies 1903, pl.XXXVII; Davies 1906, 27-30, pl.XVI, XXIII, XXIX, XXXII-XXXIII, XL, XLIII; Sandman 1938, 10-16; Grandet 1995, 121-133, 153-159; Scharff 1922, 67-69; Murnane 1995, 157-159; Lichtheim 2006, 90-92; Hoffmeier 2015, 217-218).

caretaker of his creatures, to whom he is both “mother” and “father”.³⁵ Simultaneously, this extract is most probably intended to convey a *creatio continua* process, given Atenism’s features. As previously stated, the xpr Demiurge’s self-genesis seems to be absent from the Amarna hymnology. Aten was supposed to be everlastingly eminent, and the affirmation of a “coming into existence” would somehow weaken this perspective: Aten is not supposed to “take a shape” because he was, is, and will always be the sun-disk. Thus, it is interesting to note a replacement of the common expression xpr Ds=f by od sw Ds=f.

Shortly after Amarna, this verb was written in sDm.n=f form, explicitly referring to the self-creation of the Demiurge, like in this previously considered passage:

jnD Hr=k wbn m jtn=f prj m Nnw r sHD tA.w xpr xprw omA Ha.w=f jrj
D.t=f> jrj sw m a.wy=f bs.n=f xpr [Ds=f] <a.wt=f nb Hr md.w Hna=f od.n=f
sw n(j) xpr.t p.t tA jw tA m Nnw r-jmjtw

Hail to you, when you rise up in/as his sun-disk! You came forth of the Nun to illuminate the Two Lands. The existence that came into existence, who created his limbs, who made his body, who made himself with his arms! He emerged, coming into existence by himself, all his members talked with him. He built himself when the sky and the earth had not yet come into existence, when the land was still in the Nun, inert!³⁶

This extract invests the Creator with an ontological anteriority and primordiality over the other cosmic entities. It has more a cosmogonical tone rather than a cosmological one,³⁷ and so its *creatio prima* aspect seems rather in doubt.

³⁵ The binomial “father/mother” in connection to the Demiurge is well attested in the New Kingdom’s hymnology. Its attestations cover a vast period, from Thutmose III until the 20th Dynasty. The author is currently preparing a paper where this phraseology will be discussed more in-depth.

³⁶ TT 50(7/8), x+3-x+4; and Tura Hymn, 10-12.

³⁷ Indeed, as noted by Brague, “cosmogony” points into a diachronic conception, contrary to “cosmography” that would correspond to a description of the world as a unit and therefore would be more associated with a synchronic perspective. These concepts are as well related but distinct from a third one—“cosmology”—that suggests a reflexive nature that intends to answer to ontological questions related to the world as we know it (e.g., origins of the Evil, the relation between humankind and the divine) (Brague 2015, 291-292).

Like with other verbs, in Ramesside times, *od* can also be attributed to the shaping of the god's corporeality, notably his limbs:

NN Dd=f jj Ra msj MAa.t jty jr nn r-Aw od Ha.w=f nbj D.t=f omA sw mss
Ds=f rdj=f mA<=> nfrw=f m Xr.t-hrw st.wt=f wbn Hr Snb.t=j

NN, he says: "O Ra, who gives birth to Maat! Sovereign, who makes all this (in totality)! Who builds his limbs and casts his body! Who creates himself and brings himself forth! May he make me see his beauty daily (and may) his rays shine upon my chest!"³⁸

This small laudatory text attests to the phraseological diversity when addressing the Creator's self-genesis in this *corpus*, which is referred to through four different verbs: *od*, *nbj*, *omA*, and *msj*. Moreover, the Demiurge is once more portrayed as the author of "all", and he is responsible for the emergence of Maat (MAa.t), a deified Egyptian concept connected to ideas of social justice and cosmic balance.³⁹ The Creator is thus in charge of both creation and its maintenance by looking after his creatures and promoting a cosmic harmony. This also resonates on the individual level. This praise is followed by a personal *ple*, in which the worshipper asks for the permanent presence of this god in his life. The deity is, therefore, in charge of both human collective issues and individual demands.

4. Final Remarks

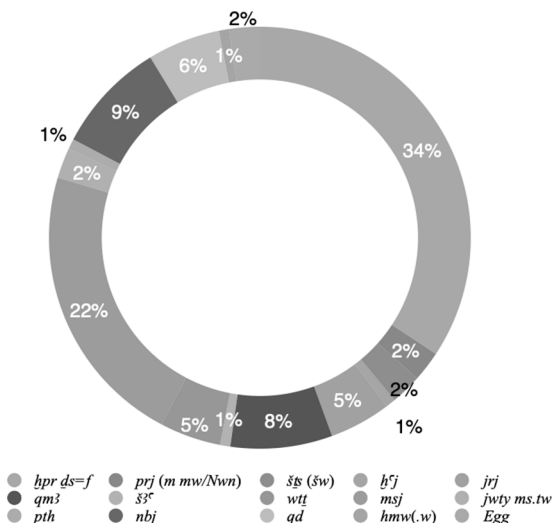
The creative mechanisms performed by the creation of the Demiurge (particularly his own) in the religious hymns of the New Kingdom are quite diverse and complex. Firstly, it should be noted that it looks as if materiality (the support of the text) does not significantly influence the administration and distribution of the cosmogonic contexts concerning the creative procedures, nor does it necessarily determine the praised deity.⁴⁰ It seems that they tend to be extremely contextual, with a high degree of variation from text to text, both synchronically and diachronically. Hence, the establishment of a universal pattern is certainly not the simplest of tasks, and perhaps not even a desirable one.

³⁸ TT 263(7), temp. Rameses II (STG 224).

³⁹ About this fundamental notion for the Egyptian civilization see, most notably, Assmann 1999.

⁴⁰ Bickel 1998, 167.

However, it is possible to trace a textual distribution of terms—both the ones dealt with in this paper and the ones that could not be included in it—among this *corpus*. The following table and graphic list the data at the present moment of my research:



Graphic 1. Self-Creation in the Religious Hymns of the New Kingdom:
terminological frequency

As shown above, *xpr*, more specifically, the expression *xpr Ds=f*, occupies a prominent position among self-creation addresses. Not only it is the commonest expression, but it also covers all periods of the New Kingdom hymnology, apart from the Amarna one. The same seems accurate for *msj*, although the negation of the god's birth (*jtwy ms.tw=f*) and the concomitance of his self-begetting and self-bearing (*wtT sw msj sw Ds=f*) are only attested to after the Amarna period. The latter also marks the start of the verb "od" in reference to the demiurgic self-coming-into-existence, even if other verbs displaying manual/artisanal work, such as *nbj*, are attested to within a more significant number of examples throughout the New Kingdom. Overall, the biological metaphors regarding this "self-creative" feature seem to be more predominant than constructive-manual ones, although this separation might not always be neat, given the evidence of terms, such as *msj*, whose semantics relates to both creative procedures. As for more general renderings, such as *jrj* and *omA*, the latter seems to occur more than the former, but both of them are attested to in different chronologies of this *corpus*. Finally, there is an occasional mention of other self-creative linguistic and religious devices, such as *SAa*, *prj*, *sTs*, *Haj*, or the *egg*.

We thus face a vast phraseological catalogue that develops in an extensive word-repertoire to address the Demiurge's own coming into existence. It is even possible for a single text to depict the Creator's self-genesis in various ways, and we may face some examples of an "imported" use of this wording when praising deities not traditionally conceived of as creators, such as Thot. In fact, this phraseology deploys itself into intricate paths, with expressions that are attested to throughout the New Kingdom and others that limit themselves to particular periods.

This self-creation may be accounted for independently or be framed within the broader cosmogonical picture where theogony, anthropogeny, or the creation of other beings (animals, plants, "everything") is also mentioned. When the latter is the case, the Demiurge's ontological anteriority and his primordality, as well as his unknowability and transcendence are often stressed and emphasised. Not only was he the first being to come into existence—in some texts, he emerged even before his mother—he was also the most important one. His features (aspect, name, figures) remain hidden and unknown to others and thus, although proactive in the cosmic balance, he endures a rather transcendent being, especially in Ramesside times.

The agency of the Demiurge is a multi-folded one that conveys a very hyphenated reality where the borders between different and individual creative procedures are not always clear, and so overlapping and symbolical continuity are instrumental when approaching this issue.⁴¹ The Creator can simply come into existence by himself or inaugurate his own existence. Nevertheless, he is also said to have been shaped, built, cast, and formed. We are told that he makes, creates, begets, gives birth, or merely produces himself. He can sculpture his limbs or originate the egg from which he would subsequently emerge. However, all this diversity harmonises on one very profound level: he is solely responsible for his own existence. His creative deeds demand no further subordinate or helper. On those grounds, he can truly be acknowledged as a legitimate self-sufficient entity. He himself is enough.

⁴¹ Bickel 1998, 165-166.

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