

### JANET JOHNSON

**Jan Johnson**'s personal research this year included a re-analysis of a group of mid-first millennium contracts which refer to the earliest known examples of a type of document called a "document of making live," i.e., an "annuity contract." Later examples of such annuity contracts (they had become fairly common by the early third century) were made by a man on behalf of his wife. In the contract, the man pledges all his property as guarantee that he will provide his wife with money for her food and clothing "in whatever place she desires." That is, the man must continue to support her even if she moves out of his house. In addition, most such contracts explicitly name his children by

her as his legal heirs. He is not allowed to sell or give any of his property to anyone without her permission or the permission of her eldest son. Many people refer to these “annuity contracts” as “marriage contracts,” but they are actually economic documents executed within the framework of a marriage—it is clear in many of the documents that the couple has already been married for some time and already has one or more children. The contracts which she re-analyzed refer to “annuity contracts” made by a man and his father on behalf of a woman. Because of the involvement of the father, and because the woman’s brother later ends up in possession of the contracts, some scholars have questioned whether these earliest annuity contracts were also made in the context of a marriage. She retranslated the broken, and often difficult to read, texts and did a careful genealogical reconstruction of several generations of the two families involved. Her work has shown that these earliest annuity contracts were indeed made between husband and wife, that the husband’s father was involved because the property the husband was pledging was property he was inheriting from his own father, and that the wife’s brother came into possession of the contracts after the husband and wife divorced, the husband remarried, and fighting erupted over inheritance of his property. The elements of this story—marriage, divorce, attempted disinheritance—form a wonderfully illustrative example of why familial economic arrangements of this sort came to be written down in formal legal form, and in more and more detail, during the first millennium.

During the year Jan Johnson continued to work extensively on the Demotic Dictionary Project (see separate report), she served as the American representative on the International Committee for the Publication of the Carlsberg Papyri (a large collection of mostly Roman period Demotic literary texts, often very fragmentary, housed in the Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Ancient Near Eastern Studies of the University of Copenhagen), and she continued to serve as Vice President of the American Research Center in Egypt, as a member of the University’s Humanities Institute Faculty Governing Board, and as a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Semitic Studies. *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond*, the proceedings of an international symposium held at the Oriental Institute in 1990, edited by her, was published by the Oriental Institute Publications Office.

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