

# The Unsolved Mystery of the Agora Bone Well

Fine Arts Building 249  
Florida State University

Tuesday, January 31, 2012  
8:00 PM



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In 1937, American archaeologists in Athens excavated a deep well on the brow of the Kolonos Agoraios, the hill that overlooks the agora, or public center, of the ancient city. The well had been abandoned and filled in the 2nd century BCE with the usual trash of daily life: broken pottery and lamps, corroded bronze from a nearby workshop, even part of the scabbard of a sword. Unlike most other wells, however, this one contained a large collection of human bones: the remains of 450 new-born infants, along with the skeleton of an older

child and one adult. It also had a rich collection of faunal material, including the bones of about 150 dogs, an unusually large collection. Perhaps because of its unsettling contents, the deposit has never been studied in detail.

The lecture will present the results of an interdisciplinary study of the contents of the well, concluding with hypotheses as to why and how the babies and the dogs found their way into the well. Plague? Famine? Infanticide? Or simply natural infant mortality?

A Lecture presented by the Tallahassee Society of the Archaeological Institute of America  
and the Student Archaeology Club



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