

DOGS

IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA



AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

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Excavations of the Athenian Agora

Picture Book 28

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Front cover:

Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with children and Maltese. Ca. 400 B.C. (P 7685)

Frontispiece:

Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with children and Maltese. Late 5th century B.C. (P 27421)

DOGS

IN THE ATHENIAN AGORA



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AMERICAN SCHOOL OF CLASSICAL STUDIES AT ATHENS

2022



1. Plan of the Athenian Agora in the Hellenistic period with the locations of some of the finds presented here; most of the other finds come from contexts with limited archaeological significance. Note that this plan shows the major structures of the Agora as they stood ca. 100 B.C., although many of the objects in this book are dated considerably earlier or later.



*The gravestone says that here it guards the Maltese dog Argos,
Eumelos's most faithful guardian.
They called him a bull when he still lived,
But now the silent paths of night possess his voice.*

SO READS A POIGNANT EPITAPH recorded by a poet named Tymnes. It gives us a glimpse of the love and affection that an ancient Greek might have had for a pet dog, who was not only buried but provided with a tombstone making special note of his virtues. That the dog was called “bull” in life is a touching little joke, as Maltese are very small. Argos must have had a loud bark!

Many of us have stories and memories of a favorite dog. Perhaps you have known a cherished pet rescued from a shelter, an eager retriever waiting in a duck blind, or a dependable guide for a person with a disability. Our love of dogs is a sentiment that we share with the people of antiquity, who had their own stories and memories. Their dogs lived in homes and on the streets; they accompanied hunters and entertained children, and they appeared in the paintings on pots, as sculptures that adorned cities, and in the myths Greeks told to explain their world. Dogs were the most popular pet in ancient Greece, and they played many roles in society as both workers and companions: tracking and chasing prey, guarding homes, herding other animals, serving in battle, and curling up at their owner's feet. Some were bred to be small and dainty, others large and powerful; some were pampered indoors, and others lived hard lives outdoors. Dogs were pervasive in ancient Greek life and thought for centuries, from the Archaic (ca. 800–ca. 500 B.C.), Classical (ca. 500–323 B.C.), and Hellenistic (323–31 B.C.) eras into the Roman (31 B.C.–A.D. 267) and Late Antique (A.D. 267–ca. 650) periods.

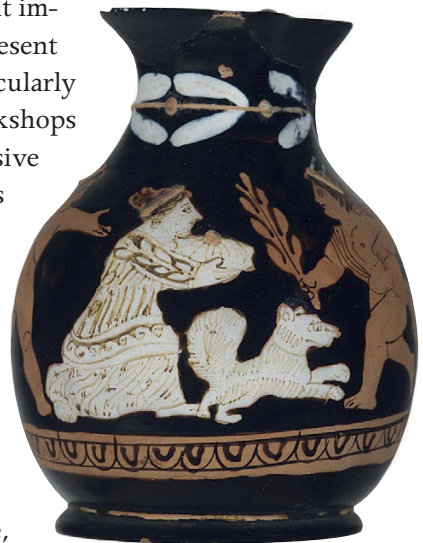
This book explores the dogs of the Athenian Agora, which was the civic center and central marketplace of the ancient city of Athens (1).



2. Middle Protoattic drinking cup (kotyle) with hounds chasing hare. This vessel is unique among Athenian pieces: the arrangement on the rim is reminiscent of contemporary pieces from Corinth, but the figures themselves are in a style popular among Greeks in the eastern Aegean and Asia Minor. Third quarter of 7th century B.C. (P 26556)

Looking at the plan, we can see that images and remains of dogs were present throughout the Agora, but particularly in the residential districts and workshops that surrounded the more impressive civic buildings at its center. Dogs were a part of the fabric of everyday Greek life, even if they were only rarely in the foreground compared to gods and heroes. In examining these animals, then, we contemplate one of the most human elements of the past.

Although there was a wide variety of dog breeds in ancient Greece, artists generally depicted dogs in one of two guises, hunting hounds (2) and small lapdogs (3). This ar-



3. Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with children and Maltese. Ca. 400 B.C. (P 7685)



4. (left) Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with trainer, youth holding javelins, and dog. The scene is set in a palaistra, an ancient Greek athletic training facility. Ca. 400 B.C. (P 18800)

5. (right) Black-figure stemless cup fragments with dog. The slender legs and feet and dark coloring are reminiscent of hunting dogs, but the shaggy coat and bushy tail more closely resemble the artistic conventions used for lapdogs. This fragment was found in a grave north of the Agora, but its unique form is presented here as a comparandum for the other dogs shown in this book. Its placement with a burial speaks to a strong connection between dogs and death, discussed below. Ca. 480s B.C. (P 10359)

tistic simplification was an easy visual shorthand for distinguishing between those animals that accompanied hunters and warriors and those that remained at home indoors; there is very much a gendered component to this dichotomy, as we shall see. One must always keep in mind, however, that this is an artificial division. In reality, dogs in the ancient Agora varied dramatically in size and appearance, and occasionally we encounter more naturalistic dogs in Greek artwork as well (4, 5). Greek literature distinguishes between many breeds. Some of the most prominent were wolfhounds; Molossians, renowned for their large size and speed, and prized as guards, hunters, and herders; the sleeker Lakonian hunting dogs; the vertragus, an ancestor of the modern greyhound, bred during the Roman period; and so on.



Generally speaking, shepherding dogs were larger than the collies we associate with shepherding today, a testament to the fact that predators were still a very real threat.

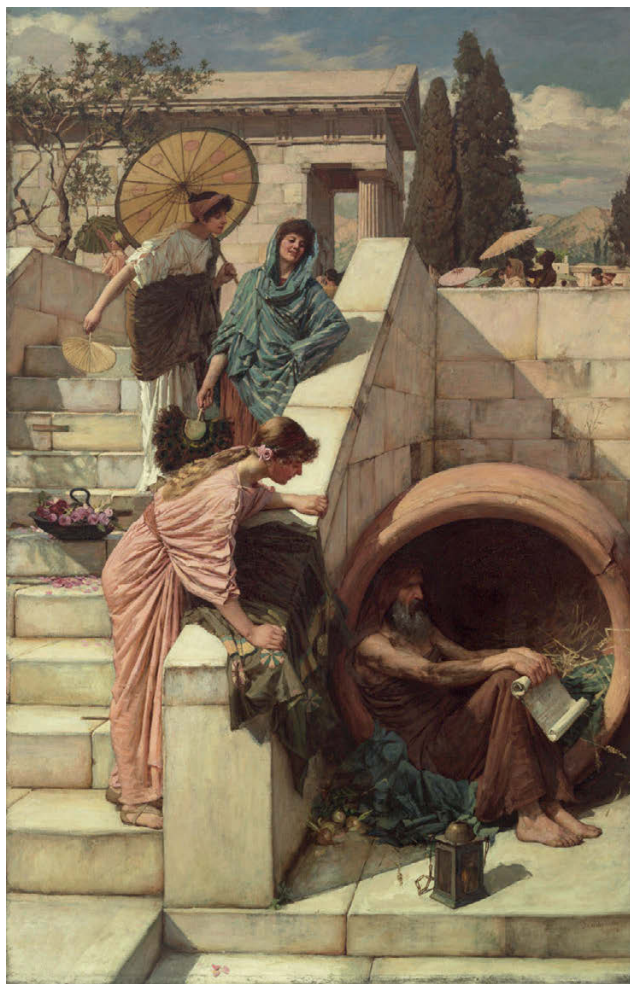
Dogs in ancient Greek thought might be considered emblems of loyalty and courage, or symbols of savagery and uncleanness. In the *Odyssey* Homer presents the quintessential faithful dog in Argos, Odysseus's dog who recognizes him upon his return to Ithaca. The scene is filled with pathos, as Odysseus, keeping his identity a secret, is unable to approach the dog; Argos, having grown infirm in Odysseus's long, 20-year absence, is unable to rise and greet him. Odysseus sheds a tear as he walks by, and the dog passes away, having at long last seen his master again. This faithful Argos was undoubtedly the inspiration behind the name of the faithful Maltese in the epitaph recorded by Tymnes. A related story concerns the dog of Xanthippos, the father of the famous Athenian statesman Perikles. Xanthippos commanded one of the ships evacuating the Athenians to the island of Salamis prior to the Persian sack of the city in 480 B.C. According to legend and as recorded by Plutarch, his dog, distraught over his master's departure, swam alongside the overburdened trireme all the way to the island, where he died as soon as he reached the shore. In the Athenian Agora itself, we are told by Aelian that in the 5th century B.C. in the Stoa Poikile, a building in the northwest corner of the Agora where Athenians displayed paintings of historical events, one such painting showed a soldier at the famous battle of Marathon alongside his particularly valorous war dog.

On the other hand, Homer's *Iliad* treats dogs eating battlefield corpses as commonplace, and Achilles, among others, insults allies like Agamemnon and enemies like Hector by comparing them to dogs. The use of "dog" as an insult continues throughout the history of Athenian literature and could be used to suggest that someone was overly aggressive, that they were unable to control themselves, that they were overly fawning, and so on. Athenian authors, who were universally men, were far more likely to apply dog-related insults to women than men. The general point of the insult was that—unlike other common ancient Greek insults such as "wolf" and "pig"—dogs lived among

humans and in human homes, and thus to be like a “dog” was to live among humans but fall short of properly being one. In this way, the English word “cynicism” ultimately derives from the Greek word for dog, *kyōn*. In the 4th century B.C., a philosopher named Diogenes asserted that human institutions and society were utterly contemptible; rather than live in an ordinary home, he moved into a large storage vessel (pithos) in the Athenian Agora, where, according to his fellow philosopher Plato and other Athenians, he lived not like a human but “like a dog,” *kynikōs* (6). Diogenes himself embraced the comparison! When someone asked him why he was called a dog, he replied, “I fawn on those who give me anything, I yelp at those who refuse, and I set my teeth in rascals.”

Within the Athenian Agora, archaeologists have uncovered both physical remains of actual dogs that trod its streets in antiquity and pieces of art that give us a window into the roles of dogs in the Greek world. This picture book starts with Greek artistic representations in general and representations of Greek myths in particular before turning to the remains of dogs that have been uncovered in the course of 90 years of archaeological excavations. As antiquity drew to a close, dogs did not suddenly vanish from the Athenian Agora; lastly, a few examples demonstrating the perennial interest in dogs among residents of and visitors to the Agora from medieval to modern times are included as well.





6. *Diogenes*, by John William Waterhouse. 1882. The Hephaisteion is visible in the background. Waterhouse was a Victorian-era artist whose depictions of antiquity remain popular to this day; the details in this painting are not realistic but reflect an idealized 19th-century vision of Diogenes in particular and the ancient world in general. Waterhouse was known, however, for taking inspiration from specific objects and details from antiquity, such as the large storage jar (pithos), which resembles examples found in the Agora and elsewhere.

DOGS IN ATHENIAN LIFE AND DEATH

As noted above, when dogs are depicted in Athenian art, they generally appear as either hunting dogs or lapdogs. This division is not borne out by the archaeological record, but as an artistic convention it persisted for many centuries in Athens. And interestingly enough, although Athenian literature frequently mentions shepherding dogs, Athenian art does not generally depict dogs at work in this way.

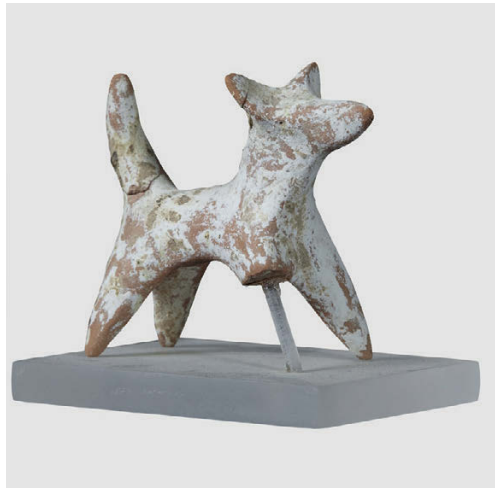
The pottery of Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greece represents perhaps the most common form of visual imagery in the Greek world; an average Greek would engage with painted or molded scenes on a daily basis. Some of the earliest figural pottery recovered from the Athenian Agora presents recognizable depictions of dogs (7, 8), and dogs continue to appear on Greek ceramics for over a millennium.

We can also find dogs on the domestic goods that would have dotted households and businesses in and around the Agora, especially small terracotta figurines. Some are very small and simple, which suggests that they were children's toys (9). Or they may instead have been intended as small votive offerings to deities like Asklepios, a healing god who received similar canine votive offerings elsewhere in the Greek world at sanctuaries like Epidauros.

Dogs also commonly appear on funerary reliefs, the artistic centerpieces of grave monuments for wealthy Athenians. The dogs on these reliefs served as symbols of a good aristocratic life and presumably as representations of particular favorites of the deceased. It is also worth noting that dogs had a close connection to the underworld, as will be discussed below. Formal burials in the Agora generally ceased in the Archaic period, but hundreds of funerary relief fragments have nonetheless been discovered there. Most of these monuments were brought to the Agora to be recycled into Roman and Late Antique walls; a handful were also moved to the Agora in the 19th century when the Hephaisteion served as an early museum. Although these reliefs do



7. Rim fragment of Late Geometric spouted bowl with running hound. 750–650 B.C. (P 22302)



8. (left) Corinthian pointed oil flask (aryballos) with running hounds on shoulder. Dogs appearing in a single row like this are relatively rare. This fine piece was found in a deposit consisting of numerous discarded offerings from a shrine that may have belonged to a hero cult or the worship of some underworld deity. Mid-7th century B.C. (P 578)

9. (right) Simple hound figurine. Last quarter of 6th century B.C. (T 1815)



not, therefore, tell us much about dogs in the Agora in particular, their discovery there provides us with another window into the place of dogs in Athenian life more generally.

HUNTING DOGS

Hounds are generally depicted as sleek, with powerful shoulders and a body that distinctly narrows from the chest upward toward the hind legs; they have pointed muzzles, and their ears are perked up (10). They often wear conspicuous collars, which call to mind their owners: these are not wild dogs or wolves, but prized companions.

In his hunting manual, the *Kynēgetikos* (“Hunting with Dogs”), the Athenian soldier and philosopher Xenophon describes the ideal hunting hound thus: “The head should be light, flat, and muscular . . . the eyes prominent, black, and sparkling; the forehead broad, with a deep dividing line; the ears small and thin with little hair behind; the neck long, loose, and round; the chest broad and fairly fleshy . . . the ribs not low down on the ground, but sloping in an oblique line . . . the tail long, straight, and thin; the thighs hard; the shanks long, round, and solid.” These qualities are easily visible in the pottery of the Agora. Xenophon also gives a charming list of good names for hounds, which he says should be short, so the dog can be easily called. These range from aggressive names like *Bremōn* (“Growler”) and *Bia* (“Force”) to more pleasant ones like *Aktis* (“Sunbeam”).

The most common scenes with hounds involve hunting itself, whether in the presence of humans or not. Hunting in ancient Greece was not an activity undertaken predominantly to acquire food. It functioned



10. Fragment of black-figure shallow wine cup (skyphos) with hounds wearing collars. Ca. 500 B.C. (P 2710)



11. Fragment of rim of bowl with hound chasing hare.
Late 8th or early 7th century B.C. (P 37517)

rather as one of the social markers that aristocrats used to distinguish themselves from the lower classes. Hunting for the Greeks also symbolized the power of humankind and civilization, along with animals that served humankind, over the wilderness and wild animals.

In antiquity, hunters typically used dogs to drive prey—most commonly hare, deer, or boar—into an area where nets had already been set up. Small prey like hares could be guided into “purse” nets or simply be driven to exhaustion, after which the hunter or his dogs could retrieve them. Such scenes occur on some of the earliest figural pottery in the Agora, suggesting that hunting in this way probably predated the historical period (11). It continued to be a common theme on pottery in the Agora for centuries, regularly appearing on the shoulders of Archaic black-figure vessels (in which figures are painted with a black slip over red clay) and often on Classical red-figure pottery as well (in which figures are the color of the red clay and the background is painted with a black slip) (12). Simple chase scenes like this were ideal for small, round pots, as the very shape of the vessel lends motion to the scene. Surely, too, the simplicity yet immediate familiarity of these scenes made them popular.

Scenes with hares are not universal, however. In the case of larger prey, the hunter would still use nets to corner the animal, but then, with the hounds baying, deliver the killing blow with javelins or a spear (a potentially dangerous proposition against a stag or adult boar). Dogs might take part in the final struggle, particularly against boar, in which case

the human hunters had to be exceptionally careful with their weapons so that they did not injure their canine companions. These scenes were also depicted on pottery, particularly on moldmade drinking cups of the Hellenistic period, where they can become rather complex. On one such cup, for example, one side features a dog leaping at a leopard that in turn is leaping at a stag, all while birds flit overhead (13). Although hunting large cats was not common in Attica, Athenians were aware that such animals were hunted elsewhere. Following the conquest of the Persian Empire by Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C., Greeks became much more familiar with these types of hunts.

A similar scene appears on an oversized Athenian wine cup (14). Although the hunter himself is no longer visible, his spear has been thrust toward the leopard's neck at the exact moment that his hound is leaping toward its prey. The artist has directly connected this scene with the goddess Artemis, whose association with the hunt is discussed below: a graffito indicates that the vessel was dedicated to Artemis (and Dionysos, a god associated with drinking), the scene has been placed at a small shrine that contains a statue probably of Artemis, and a stag, an animal that often accompanies the goddess, is visible to the right of the shrine. A vessel like this probably would have been used in the symposium, a kind of drinking party popular among Athenian elites. Wealthy Athenians used exquisite and expensive vessels like these to celebrate two of their favorite pastimes, hunting and drinking.



12. Small red-figure oil jug (askos) with hound chasing hare. This piece may have been decorated by the same individual who painted a hound chasing a hare on another small oil jug now in Munich (Archäologische Staatssammlung 2541); was this a preferred theme of the artist? Ca. 430 B.C. (P 5330)



13. Moldmade bowl or drinking cup with hunting scene showing hound, leopard, and stag. This bowl was found in a cistern with about 40 other moldmade bowls, one of several deposits that testify to the central role of Athens in manufacturing costly vessels like this in the late 3rd and early 2nd centuries B.C. 225–175 B.C. (P 28098)



14. Deep wine cup (kantharos) with hound, leopard, shrine, and stag. The graffito reads “Menekles, for Dionysos and Artemis.” The large size of this vessel (H. 32 cm) indicates that it was likely either a dedicatory offering meant for display or a mixing bowl rather than a cup meant for drinking. 250–200 B.C. (P 6878)





15. Fragments of black-figure water jug (hydria) or oil jug (lekythos). On the left, a hunter travels with his prey and his hound. On the right, one hound looks back at a horse and a second dog stands between two figures, one of whom holds a staff. Ca. 550 B.C. (P 13127)

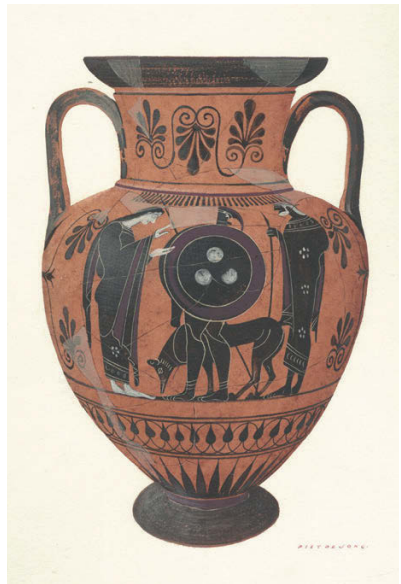
The scattered fragments of one black-figure vessel give us several glimpses of dogs in the company of aristocratic hunters in a more restful setting (15). In one scene, a dog walks alongside a man; the man carries what looks like his prey, a pair of hares hanging from a stick that likely rested on his shoulder. In another scene on the same vessel, a hunter (the same one?) returns home. There are traces of one dog in front of him, with its head craned back to look up at his horse, and a complete depiction of another dog waiting alongside the two draped figures who greet his return. These personal moments present hunting as an idyllic pastime, woven into the everyday lives of aristocratic men and women.

Hounds occasionally also appear in other aristocratic scenes that do not depict hunting, as we see on an elegant oil jug with a young man wearing a wreath and driving a chariot, accompanied by a hound (16). This scene probably depicts a warrior's departure, as the figure is heroically nude, even though his greaves are still plainly marked. As noted above, dogs could accompany their masters on military campaigns, though it is likely that the dog appears here only as another marker of the youth's aristocratic status. The composition is reminiscent of a large, roughly contemporary black-figure vessel that shows one dog accompanying a man in a chariot and another accompanying a warrior on foot (17).



16. Black-figure oil jug (lekythos) with hound in front of chariot. This vessel was decorated by an Athenian known as the Gela Painter; although this particular piece was found in the Agora, his works were commonly exported to Greeks who lived in Sicily. Ca. 500 B.C. (P 24105)





17. Watercolor paintings of large black-figure storage vessel (amphora) with hound in front of chariot and another beside warrior with helmet and shield. Ca. 500 B.C. (P 13013)



The appearance of hunting dogs in funerary sculpture generally reflects their appearance on pottery, particularly the long snouts and sleek bodies. The earliest is the so-called Man and Dog Stele, one of the finest pieces of Archaic sculpture to come from the Agora, though only the tail of the dog is visible (18). The light footwear of the man suggests that the depiction is not of a soldier going to war or of a man hunting; instead, we should picture an aristocrat striding with



18. Funerary relief with sandaled feet and hound's tail. Ca. 530 B.C. (S 1276)

ease, accompanied by one marker of his status, perhaps one that held special meaning for him. Although the sculpture is very fragmentary, other pieces from elsewhere in Athens can help visualize how the dog might have fit into the composition (19).

Dogs continued to appear on funerary reliefs in the Agora in later times. An interesting Hellenistic relief depicts a hunting dog sitting on top of a column; while some reliefs show columns (often with sirens sitting on them) and others show dogs, this one is unique in showing the combination of the two subjects (20). More conventional, and particularly personable, is the dog on a Roman relief from the Agora made in imitation of earlier Classical models (21). Here, a hunter walks midstride alongside his hound, who sniffs at the ground, presumably on the trail of their prey. The composition resembles Xenophon's description of the ideal hunting dog's behavior: "When tracking they should get out of the game paths quickly, hold their heads well down and aslant, smiling when they find the scent and lowering their ears."



19. The grave stele of Alxenor, with hound's tail between older man's legs. Early 5th century B.C. (Athens, National Archaeological Museum 39)



20. Funerary relief with hound atop pillar. This piece was reused in the walls of the Church of St. Spyridon, a small chapel that stood in the Agora until it was demolished in the 1930s in the course of excavations, as discussed further below. 2nd century B.C. (S 1147)



21. Augustan funerary relief with hound beside man. 27 B.C.–A.D. 14. (S 1362)



LAPDOGS

The regular appearance of lapdogs in Athenian art reflects another aspect of dog ownership: companionship at home. Although they are often called “Maltese” dogs, any connection to the island of Malta is tenuous at best, as the breed was almost certainly developed somewhere in south-central Europe. Depictions of these lapdogs are mainly limited to the Classical period and later, with almost all Archaic representations of dogs being hounds. The bodies are not nearly as muscular or sleek as those of the hounds, instead being noticeably more rotund; they have curly hair, in contrast to the short-haired hounds, and their tails are bushy and have a distinct, pronounced curve (22, 23). In Attic red-figure pottery, Maltese sometimes appear as normal red figures, that is, in the reddish color of the base clay, but are often painted a distinct white. Maltese are depicted as small, playful dogs, often seen leaping upward with palpable energy (24). They are much more likely to appear in domestic scenes with children,



22. Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with children and Maltese. End of 5th century B.C. (P 20090)



23. Impression made by a metal stamp of a Maltese with a heavy coat and a very curly tail. 5th century B.C. (MC 1202)



24. Red-figure wine jug (oinochoe) with children and Maltese. Late 5th century B.C. (P 27421)

or occasionally women, than in scenes with men (and, conversely, it is rare to find hounds depicted with children). That said, keeping these small dogs was no less an aristocratic activity than keeping hunting hounds. In many of the stories written by Lucian, a 2nd-century A.D. satirist who settled in Athens after a lucrative teaching career, Maltese frequently appear as the pets of aristocrats. One scares the ghost of a wealthy man's dead wife by barking at it from under a couch, echoing the virtue of Argos in the epitaph above. In another of Lucian's stories, a rich woman asks a Stoic philosopher to tend to her little Maltese Myrrhina ("Myrtle")—and when the dog urinates on the philosopher, starts barking, and licks his beard, some bystander puns that the Stoic has finally become a Cynic!

Terracotta figurines in the shape of dogs are among the longest-lived molded terracotta figurines produced in Athens (examples date from the Archaic to Late Antique periods; see 9). Most interesting are a number of rattles shaped like lapdogs, presumably intended as children's toys (25, 26). The craftsmen who made the rattles would have used two molds, one for each half of the dog; a small pellet or two, usually



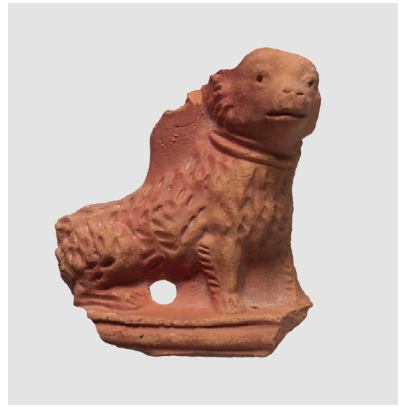
25. (*left*) Rattle in shape of Maltese. The rattle was found in a well with various other pieces of pottery, including a wine jug (oinochoe) in the shape of a child's head (P 11939). There is still a pellet inside this rattle. Mid- to second half of 3rd century A.D. (T 1510)

26. (*right*) Rattle in shape of Maltese. This later example shows cruder craftsmanship than 25, including a poor join between the two halves, but testifies to the enduring popularity of the subject. It was found in a grave that contained several lamps and three other rattles, two shaped like a rooster and one shaped like an animal that may be a bear or another dog. Mid-4th century A.D. (T 1422)

also of terracotta, would be placed inside before the two halves were joined and the piece was fired in a kiln. The results are these charming models of dogs that make noise when shaken, with obvious interest for both infants and parents looking to distract infants. The choice of a Maltese over a hound makes sense given their association with children. These terracotta Maltese types start to appear in the Agora in the 3rd century A.D. and continued to be produced for centuries. While lapdogs appear as figurines from elsewhere in the Mediterranean, these particular designs are exclusively Athenian, though it is not clear why such a design would be so popular in Athens and not elsewhere. Other rattles have been found in the Agora in the shape of birds, bears, pigs, and other animals, as well as deities and nonfigural shapes.

Lapdogs appear on other forms of terracotta goods as well. They were very popular subjects on lamps, particularly in the later Roman period; well over 200 examples have come from the Kerameikos, a pot-





27. (left) Lamp with Maltese seated left. Oil lamps like this provided light but were also commonly used in religious ceremonies and as grave gifts. Second half of 3rd into first half of 4th century A.D. (L 2904)

28. (right) Fragment of disk of lamp with Maltese wearing collar and facing viewer. Early to mid-3rd century A.D. (L 2346)

ters' quarter and cemetery northwest of the Agora, and dozens have been discovered in the Agora itself. The most common motif is a simple seated Maltese, looking upward, sometimes to the side and sometimes at the viewer (27, 28). Like the terracotta rattles, these first appear in the 3rd century A.D.

Maltese also appear on funerary monuments, and just as they generally appear with women and children on pottery, they likewise appear predominantly on funerary monuments for women. One Roman example in particular is striking for having no fewer than three lapdogs visible despite its very fragmentary state (29). The deceased must have been quite fond of her numerous pets, as typical sculptures like this only include a single animal. In addition to the three dogs, other elements of the composition emphasize her wealth, such as the ornate carving of the stool's legs and the large cushion on which she sits.





29. Julio-Claudian funerary relief with Maltese under stool, in lap, and looking up at far right. 27 B.C.–A.D. 68. (S 1106)



MYTHOLOGY

Just as dogs were present in the real, everyday lives of humans, so too did they appear in Greek myths. These mythical dogs are depicted just as their real counterparts are; for ancient Greeks, the differences between ordinary life and myth were minimal. Sometimes dogs appear alongside mythical animals as purely decorative elements, their normality correlating with the apparent normality of fantastic creatures like griffins, monsters with the head and wings of an eagle and the body of a lion (30). But more commonly, they appear alongside deities of the hunt, just as they appear with human hunters, and especially alongside deities of death. The connection between dogs and deities of the underworld was an ancient one; in the *Iliad*, Achilles himself sacrifices dogs at the funeral of Patroklos, although it is unclear if these were purificatory sacrifices, if they were meant to escort Patroklos to the underworld, or if they were meant to serve as his companions there. Other passages of the *Iliad*, in which dogs are reviled as corpse-eaters, suggest how ancient Greeks may have originally come to associate dogs and death.



30. Fragment of small red-figure oil jug (askos) with hound facing griffin. The eagle's head and lion's paws of the griffin are visible. Late 5th century B.C. (P 36)

ARTEMIS

Dogs are common features in artistic depictions of hunting scenes, so it comes as no surprise that they are also common in mythological scenes as the loyal companions of Artemis, goddess of hunting and the wilderness. We have already seen one example of a hunting scene placed near a shrine to the goddess (see 14). On one Roman marble plaque, perhaps a votive relief, Artemis is depicted as a hunter, carrying a tall torch in her right hand and probably a bow in her left; a quiver for arrows is slung over her back (31). At her side is a hound wearing a collar; the hound's long snout is extended, and one forepaw is raised as though it has caught the scent of some prey. This depiction is very conventional: a comparable arrangement can be found on a lamp found in the Agora (32), although



32. Fragment of lamp with Artemis and hound. Late 2nd to early 3rd century A.D. (L 5187)



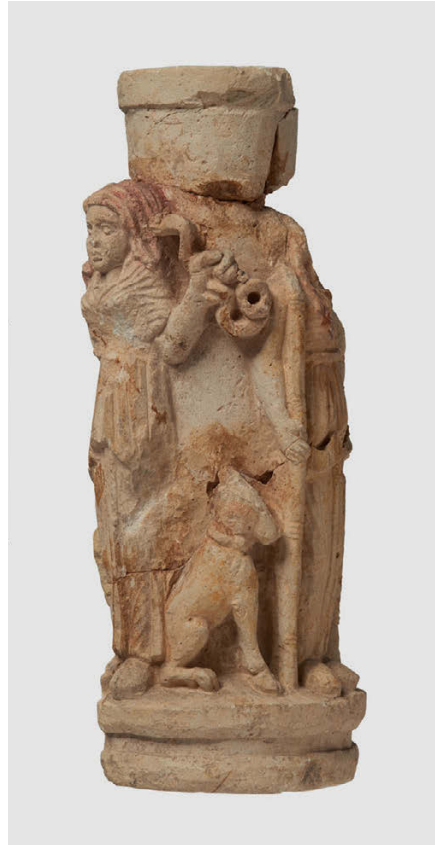
31. Votive relief of Artemis with hound wearing collar. This type of votive was common in domestic contexts; it may have been reused in a Late Antique home, where it was found. 2nd or 3rd century A.D. (S 2361)

here Artemis reaches for an arrow at her back instead of holding a torch and the dog looks up toward her. In one popular Greek myth, the hunter Aktaion happens to see Artemis bathing naked, and she punishes him by turning him into a stag (a traditional hunter's prey) and having her hounds tear him to pieces. Although the myth itself is not depicted in these pieces, the presence of the dog evokes it.

HEKATE

Far different than these formal representations of Artemis are depictions of the goddess of crossroads and dark magic, Hekate. Like Artemis, she is often depicted with dogs at her side, but she is also often depicted in triplicate, as in a poros statuette featuring three Hekates with dogs interspersed between them (33). This particular statuette is a later blend of earlier features from examples from both Attica and Asia Minor, though the dogs are present in both varieties. The dogs here are also hounds who wear collars, although they are not as lithe as the dogs depicted with Artemis, and they do not look like they are in the middle of a hunt.

Another piece, a votive terracotta plaque, depicts a goddess with a distinct combination of features of Hekate and Artemis (34). Like the Hekate of the poros statuette, this figure is presented as a triple-headed, triple-bodied goddess. She holds in her hands a bow, a whip, and a torch; the bow and torch are attributes of Artemis (see 31), and all three are common attributes of Hekate. To the left of the figure stands a stag, an animal frequently



33. Poros statuette of triple-bodied Hekate with hounds in between figures. The goddess also holds snakes, another animal that emphasizes her connections to the underworld. 2nd to 3rd century A.D. (S 1943)



34. Terracotta plaque with triple-bodied Hekate/Artemis, stag, and hound, at left; detail of hound, at right. The back is flat; the suspension holes at the top would have been used to hang the plaque. As the piece was found in a well filled with domestic goods, including household pottery and food remains, perhaps the plaque was hung within a home as a talisman meant to ward off evil. 3rd century A.D. (T 3637)

associated with Artemis and evocative of the Aktaion myth. The dog to the right of the figure, its posture alert and the shape of a collar visible around its neck, is the most obvious point of overlap between Artemis and Hekate in this hybrid depiction. It is both a symbol of Artemis's association with the hunt and Hekate's association with the underworld.

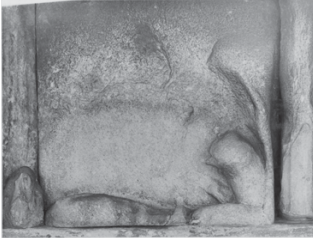
Given the connection between dogs and death in Greek thought, it comes as no real surprise to find that, for Hekate, dogs were the sacrifice of choice: as the 2nd-century A.D. author Plutarch writes, "Nearly all the Greeks used a dog as the sacrificial victim for ceremonies of purification; and some, at least, make use of it even to this day. They bring forth for Hekate puppies along with the other materials for purification."



HERAKLES AND KERBEROS

The most famous Greek hero was Herakles, and the most famous myths surrounding him involve the 12 labors he undertook to atone for slaying his family in a fit of madness. One of these labors was his subjugation of Kerberos, the dog that guarded the entrance to Hades and thus in part controlled the passage between the living and the dead. Kerberos is traditionally depicted with three heads, but may have as few as one and as many as 100, and sometimes any number of snake heads as well. Herakles naturally has no trouble subduing the monster; the Athenian comic playwright Aristophanes makes it sound like a simple and easy task, as an indignant judge in the underworld complains to Herakles, “You’re the one who rustled our dog Kerberos, grabbed him by the throat and darted off.” Some scholars have seen in the story of Kerberos—in which the hero travels to the underworld and returns victorious—a metaphor for the triumph over death.

Although surviving visual depictions in the Agora are scant, one version of the scene appeared on one of the most prominent landmarks in the city, the Hephaisteion. This large temple, dedicated in the mid-5th century to Hephaistos, god of craftsmen, is one of the best-preserved temples of the ancient world. It is in part decorated with sculptures showing various mythological scenes, including the labors of Herakles. The panel showing Herakles and Kerberos is unfortunately very damaged, but enough survives to give a sense of the original composition, in which Herakles, having fastened a leash onto the monster, drags it up a slope out of Hades (35). The specific details on one lamp fragment are likewise difficult to make out, but the scene is generally interpreted as Serapis and Isis, Egyptian deities often identified with Hades and his consort Persephone, with Serapis resting a hand on a single-headed Kerberos sitting between them (36). Several pottery fragments are also only suggestive but may depict Herakles cautiously approaching Kerberos (37), a scene which appears on other black-figure vases from Athens made at about the same time (38), or Herakles leading Kerberos out of the underworld (39, 40).



35. East facade of Hephhaisteion, above; detail of sixth panel (metope) depicting Herakles and Kerberos, at bottom left; and drawing of sixth panel, at bottom right. The drawing shows a likely reconstruction of the scene based on similar sculptures from elsewhere in the Greek world, particularly a very similar panel from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. 430s B.C.

36. Fragment of lamp depicting Isis and Serapis enthroned, with Kerberos between them. These two underworld deities from Egypt remained popular in Athens for centuries; see the discussion of 41, below. Mid-3rd century A.D. (L 4274)





37. Fragments of large black-figure storage vessel (amphora) possibly depicting Kerberos and Herakles. These fragments were found in a fill with numerous other pieces of fine pottery dating to the very late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C., probably the broken remnants of a pottery shop that was destroyed when the Persians sacked Athens in 490 B.C. They were deposited before the Stoa of Attalos depicted on the site plan (see I, above) was constructed. 510–500 B.C. (P 24643)



38. Large Athenian black-figure storage vessel (amphora) with Herakles and Kerberos. This scene probably resembles the original composition of 37. Ca. 530 B.C. (Moscow, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts II 16 70)

39. Fragment of black-figure cup possibly showing Kerberos and Herakles. The large size of the animal suggests that it is Kerberos, rather than an ordinary hunting dog, and the style of the legs themselves is reminiscent of other depictions of Kerberos. Ca. 520 B.C. (P 3)





40. Large Athenian black-figure storage vessel (amphora) with Herakles leading Kerberos out of the underworld; Hermes leads in front and two women, depicted in white, watch. This scene may resemble the original composition of 39, though there are no women's legs present in the Agora example. Ca. 540–520 B.C. (Baltimore, Walters Art Museum 48.16)

ANUBIS

Another deity that illustrates the association between the underworld and dogs is the Egyptian god Anubis. Greeks respected Egyptian culture, as they were well aware that it was older than their own, and if they sometimes found the half-animal, half-human gods of Egypt peculiar, this did not stop them from importing the very ancient Egyptian cults into their cities. The popularity of these cults exploded in the Hellenistic period, as Greek rulers governed Egypt, Greeks migrated there in large numbers, and trade flourished across the eastern Mediterranean. The most popular subjects of worship among Greeks were Isis and Osiris, and one of

Isis's most prominent assistants was Anubis, the jackal-headed god of the underworld. One Hellenistic figurine of Anubis from the Agora (41), made of a luxurious, glass-like ceramic called faience, demonstrates the popularity of this Egyptian deity in Athens despite what to Greeks would have been his very strange and un-godlike appearance. This figurine and the lamp with Serapis and Isis (36) are notable examples of the long tradition of Isis worship in Athens; archaeologists believe there was probably a temple to the two deities somewhere in or near the Agora.



41. Faience figurine of Anubis. 3rd century B.C. (G 62)

IN THE AGORA

Actual dogs were also undoubtedly a common sight in the ancient Agora. In a recent survey of the animal bones recovered in excavations at the Agora, the remains of well over 500 individual dogs have been identified from the Archaic through Roman periods. In earlier periods, particularly in the Archaic period, there is even evidence for the consumption of dogs. But the study also found that in the Roman period, just as evidence for the consumption of dogs ceases, the number of dog breeds present in the Agora increases dramatically.

The most charming record of dogs in the Agora comes from terracotta tiles that were used to make roofs, line drains, and so on for the many temples and civic buildings that occupied the site. To make large tiles, workmen would form tiles from wet clay in molds and then leave the clay to dry; once dry, the tiles were fired in kilns and then brought into the Agora. Unfortunately for the craftsmen, occasionally unwanted visitors walked across the tiles while they were curing in the sun, and their prints were made permanent when the tiles were fired (42). Tiles like this are common at sites across Greece and beyond, finding their echoes in the modern pawprints left in our own concrete sidewalks.

Most of our material remains, naturally, come from deceased dogs. Some received special burials within the Agora, though this was clearly exceptional. One dog from the Hellenistic period was buried under a workshop within a coarsely decorated pot (43). This dog was relatively small and fairly old (at least 7 or 8 years old at the time of death), and there are several signs that it was particularly beloved



42. Terracotta tile preserving canine footprints. Probably 4th–5th century A.D. (A 5193)

by its owners. The pot itself had been broken to allow the remains to be inserted and then carefully mended with the dog's body inside, unusual care and expense for what must have been a beloved animal. Also included in the burial was an unguentarium, a small tubular vessel usually used to store perfume or other liquids; unguentaria were often buried alongside humans as grave gifts, and the inclusion of such a gift is another testament to how important this dog must have been



43. Short storage vessel (stamnos) with glaze decoration. Inside were found the remains of a dog named "Fido" by the excavator. 200–100 B.C., in a context dated 150–100 B.C. (P 16658)

to its household. These sentimental touches also moved the excavator of this grave, Rodney S. Young, who was a great lover of dogs. When he uncovered the burial in 1940, he named the dog Fido, and archaeologists to this day refer to this burial as Fido's Grave. In a similar example, probably from a little earlier in the Hellenistic period, a midsized dog was carefully buried in a clay-lined pit at the eastern edge of the Agora with a large beef bone affectionately placed at its mouth (44). Dog burials are not uncommon in the ancient world, but the presence of these in the civic center of ancient Athens is certainly remarkable.

Perhaps the most interesting—and grim—record of dog remains in central Athens comes from the so-called Agora Bone Well. In this deposit, in an industrial corner of the Agora, were found the bones of about 460 infants and 150 dogs, along with associated pottery and other small finds (45). For many years, this material went unpublished, and various interpretations were suggested: the bones were the dire result of some plague; they were the remains left after the Roman general Sulla's sack of Athens in 86 B.C.; they were a testament to the supposed Greek practice of infanticide. After extensive study, however,



44. Careful burial of a dog, possibly with grave offerings. Third quarter of 4th century B.C. (Deposit R 10:3)

archaeologists working in the Agora now believe that the infant bones accumulated in a short period in the mid-2nd century B.C. as midwives took advantage of an out-of-use well to deposit the remains of infants who were born but did not survive past the first few days of life. The bones of the dogs are much less uniform. They range dramatically in size, with a few exceptionally small individuals and a few large hounds, but generally stood at an average height. Their ages suggest they were mostly adults, neither particularly young nor old. Many of them show signs of repeated trauma, including fractures to their skulls and broken limbs, that healed while the dogs were still alive. These, then, were most likely not pets but street dogs, not unlike those that still amble about the Agora today. The most plausible explanation for their presence in the well is that they were placed there by midwives along with the deceased infants. The midwives may have used these dogs as vessels that absorbed the pollution associated with coming into such close contact with human death, or they may have used them as sacrifices to appease deities associated with deceased infants—perhaps Eileithyia, goddess of childbirth, or Hekate, whose connection

with the underworld in general and dog sacrifices in particular is noted above. Street dogs would not have been particularly missed, and we might imagine that they were easily captured for this grim fate with a scrap of food. Mixed infant and dog burials are not unique to the Agora; similar assemblages have been found at Eretria and Messene within Greece and Lugnano in Teverina in Italy, suggesting that the practice may have been widespread around the Mediterranean.



45. Selected skulls from the Agora Bone Well, showing that the dogs ranged in size from quite small to very large. Second quarter of 2nd century B.C. (Deposit G 5:3)



TO MODERNITY

Although the preceding examples date from the Greek and Roman periods, the presence of dogs in the Athenian Agora quite naturally persisted to the present, and the objects and images in this final section are a testament to the enduring human interest in dogs.

In the Byzantine period (ca. A.D. 650–1453), potters adopted new forms of ceramic decoration, like the distinctive *champlevé* technique, in which areas of white slip are removed to leave white figures on a dark background. Even when using new techniques, however, Byzantine artists continued to depict many of the same subjects, including dogs. One bowl or plate fragment, for example, shows a hunting dog chasing another animal in an immediately familiar chase scene (46). The use of dogs around the edge of a plate or bowl is strikingly reminiscent of their appearance on the rims of vessels dating back to the Archaic period (see 11). The dog depicted on this plate, however, looks distinctly broader and stronger than the lean hounds seen on ancient pottery.

Perhaps the most beautiful modern piece found in the Agora's excavations is a maiolica pitcher of the mid- to late 16th century (47). Maiolica



46. Fragment of Byzantine shallow champlevé plate or bowl with hounds running left. Ca. A.D. 650–1453. (P 7027)

pottery is made by applying pigment directly onto a tin glaze; the pigment is absorbed immediately, which leaves little room for error, but it does allow artisans to create pieces with a brilliant palette of colors. This particular vessel was imported from Italy, probably from Faenza, during the Ottoman period at Athens

(A.D. 1453–1821). The dog on this pitcher is white with touches of brown that clearly represent the actual markings of a specific dog breed, if not a specific dog; neither a hound nor a Maltese, it reflects an attempt to render a more naturalistic or even realistic animal. This object also testifies to the taste of at least one apparently wealthy individual living in Ottoman Athens for imported ceramics from Renaissance Italy: maiolica pottery like this was the height of luxury at the time.



47. Maiolica pitcher with dog leaping left. Mid- to late 16th century A.D. (P 7610)

Some of the earliest photography in the Athenian Agora comes from the 1920s and 1930s. Before excavations began in 1931, the American School and the Greek government expropriated the homes, shops, and churches overlying the Agora, forcing the families living there to relocate. First, however, the American School made an extensive photographic record of the neighborhood. In one of these photos, a healthy-looking dog is visible peeking at the cameraman from behind a post (48). Images like this serve as a reminder that the area from which the artwork in this volume came was once a densely populated neighborhood whose residents had homes, jobs, and dogs.

The modern Athenian Agora is no stranger to dogs either. Many modern strays have ingratiated themselves with the excavation staff and site guards, and they regularly appear in the annual photos of the excavation teams (49). Although not owned by any individuals, stray dogs in Athens have been “adopted” by the government of the city, which in 2003 began a program of spaying or neutering strays, providing them with vaccinations and tags, and offering some ongoing veterinary care and legal protection. Feeding these animals is the responsibility of local residents, and the excavators and guards ensure that the dogs of the Agora are well cared for.



48. Bridge to Poseidonos Street, as seen from Adrianou Street, with dog behind post. September 1932.



49. The Agora Excavations staff in 2001. Visible in the front row are, from left to right, Cujo, Scratch, Marmaduke, and Cow Dog.





50. Rex looking out on the Agora in 2013.

Our love of dogs is a thread that runs from past to present. Ancient Greeks called out to Growler and Myrrhina; modern archaeologists have uncovered dogs in touching burials and given them names like Fido; and today's excavators go about their work in the company of strays like Odysseus and Itchy. Perhaps the best-known dog of the modern Athenian Agora was the beloved Rex, a large white dog with dark ears and muzzle (50). For many years, he lived in the Agora, where he was frequently seen in the company of longtime director John McK. Camp II, helping him lead tours and manage the excavations. Even in his old age, Rex was particularly prone to chasing the many stray cats that also call the Agora their home, and it was to the great sorrow of all that he disappeared and was presumed deceased in 2019. Nevertheless, hundreds of students and staff have fond recollections of him, and so long as there are dogs padding about the ancient streets of the Agora, on the lookout for the cats that skip among the ancient stones, his memory will be honored.

CREDITS

Translations of ancient texts are adapted from the Loeb Classical Library, a series of facing texts and translations published by Harvard University Press, except for the epitaph recorded by Tymnes, which is adapted from Méndez-Dosuna 2007, p. 274. Except where indicated below, color photography appears courtesy of Craig Mauzy, and black-and-white photography appears courtesy of the Archives of the Athenian Agora.

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6. Image courtesy of Meidosensei / Wikimedia Commons; the painting is now held in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.
17. Watercolor paintings by Piet de Jong; courtesy of the Archives of the Athenian Agora.
19. Photo by Alison Frantz; courtesy of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Archives, Alison Frantz Photographic Collection (AT 99).
35. Drawing by Donna Drake.
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48. Photo by Hermann Wagner; courtesy of the Archives of the Athenian Agora (2016.03.0171).
50. Photo by author.

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