

## Security in the Greek House

Greek houses of the Classical and Hellenistic periods were provided with a number of features designed for the safe-keeping of the entire *oikos*, the homeowner, his family and slaves, and their possessions. While many of these security measures do not survive intact in the archaeological record, they can be considered through both scant remains and literary and epigraphical accounts. The existence of security measures suggests that homeowners believed there to be potential threats against their safety.

The physical provisions for security in Greek houses were many, including doors and window shutters. Both were stoutly built and doors were covered with metal studs, in order to enhance the actual security and the impression of it. The doors were secured with both locks and crossbolts and some windows were protected with grills or bars. Many windows were only wide enough to allow air, but not intruders, to enter the home.

Both human and divine protection were also features of domestic security. Slaves were stationed at the street door and images of Hermes were placed there to add to that protection; other divinities, including Herakles Alexikakos were also called upon to protect the home. While Classical Athens possessed a police force of Scythian archers, there is no evidence that they were charged with protecting private property.

Householders in the countryside gained added protection from the towers which were a common feature of farmhouses. Square or round in section, these towers were used both to protect the family and as storage places for grain.