



Aristotle: Discovery of his Lyceum ends quest to find all three of the famous gymnasia exalted by fathers of democracy



Jubilant Greeks reveal greatest find of modern times

Helena Smith in Athens

THE Lyceum where Aristotle taught philosophy to the citizens of Athens has been discovered in one of the most sensational archaeological finds since the creation of the modern Greek state 170 years ago.

The discovery of the West's first university ends the quest to locate all three of the famous gymnasia in which the mind as well as the body was exalted by the fathers of democracy.

Greek archaeologists came across the complex's 4th century BC foundations during routine excavation work for Athens' new Museum of Modern Art.

Amid national euphoria over the find, officials announced it would automatically deepen scholars' knowledge of classical Athens, including the layout of the Golden Age city.

In more modern terms it was, said Yannis Tzedakis, who directs the department of antiquities at the culture ministry, "like coming across the workshop of Leonardo da Vinci."

"Aristotle spent 13 years teaching there and Socrates was a frequent visitor. We've been looking for it since independence [from the Turks]."

Efi Lygouri, who headed the excavation work, told the Guardian she realised she had found the Lyceum when archaeologists unearthed part of its *palaestra*, an enclosed area where young men would

primarily practise wrestling. Although the walls were built in the 4th century BC, additional finds showed that the Romans had added to and modified the building until the 4th century AD.

"The archaeological finds and the architecture of the building were very important, but literary sources and topographical studies also

played a very big role in convincing us we had found the school," Dr Lygouri said.

Pausanias, the great Roman travel writer, detailed the ancient gymnasia like nobody else when he toured Greece after its occupation by Rome in the 2nd century AD.

But it was Plato who first spoke of the Lyceum, especially its undressing rooms, in

his *Dialogues*. As Socrates' most famous follower, he had founded his own school, the Academy, at the beginning of the 4th century BC. Epikrates, a comic poet, wrote of the philosopher benevolently standing over a crowd of young men "earnestly trying to define whether a pumpkin is a vegetable, a grass or a tree".

In 1930, a passer-by stum-

bled across the remains of that gymnasium while walking through what has now become a wretched industrial zone.

The British School at Athens is credited in 1886 with discovering the third gymnasium of Kynosarges, in what was then an empty plateau between two hills but is now a congested suburb.