

KHAFAJE, 1937

IMMEDIATELY after receiving word that funds were available, Dr. Speiser undertook to carry on a brief season of excavations on behalf of the Museum at Khafaje, the great Sumerian site which is to be taken over from the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. His purpose was to endeavor to sample the site's possibilities for a full season and to have something immediately to show that would indicate the quality of the collections that could be expected in future. Dr. Speiser's report follows:

"OUR brief season at Khafaje is just about over. To us the results seem altogether fantastic. We have been extraordinarily lucky for I am told that no single full season quite matched in output the present short spell. Moreover, we have just had an exceptionally helpful division, for the government is sincerely striving to assist us. The holder of a winning sweepstakes ticket would very likely feel the way we do just now. We took a very long chance and won. But the gamble was with regard to only one aspect of the situation: that the immediate results would justify the Museum in completing the work which the reorganization of the Oriental Institute had interrupted. That the task is a vital one from a scientific point of view is hardly a matter for dispute.

"Our work had three principal field objectives. First and foremost, we set out to continue the excavation of a small but important Temple. Secondly, trenches were to be opened in the cemetery area to the east and northeast of the Temple. Finally, a sounding was to be made on a neighboring Mound for the purpose of investigating a building of the Hammurabi period. All of these objectives have been accomplished.

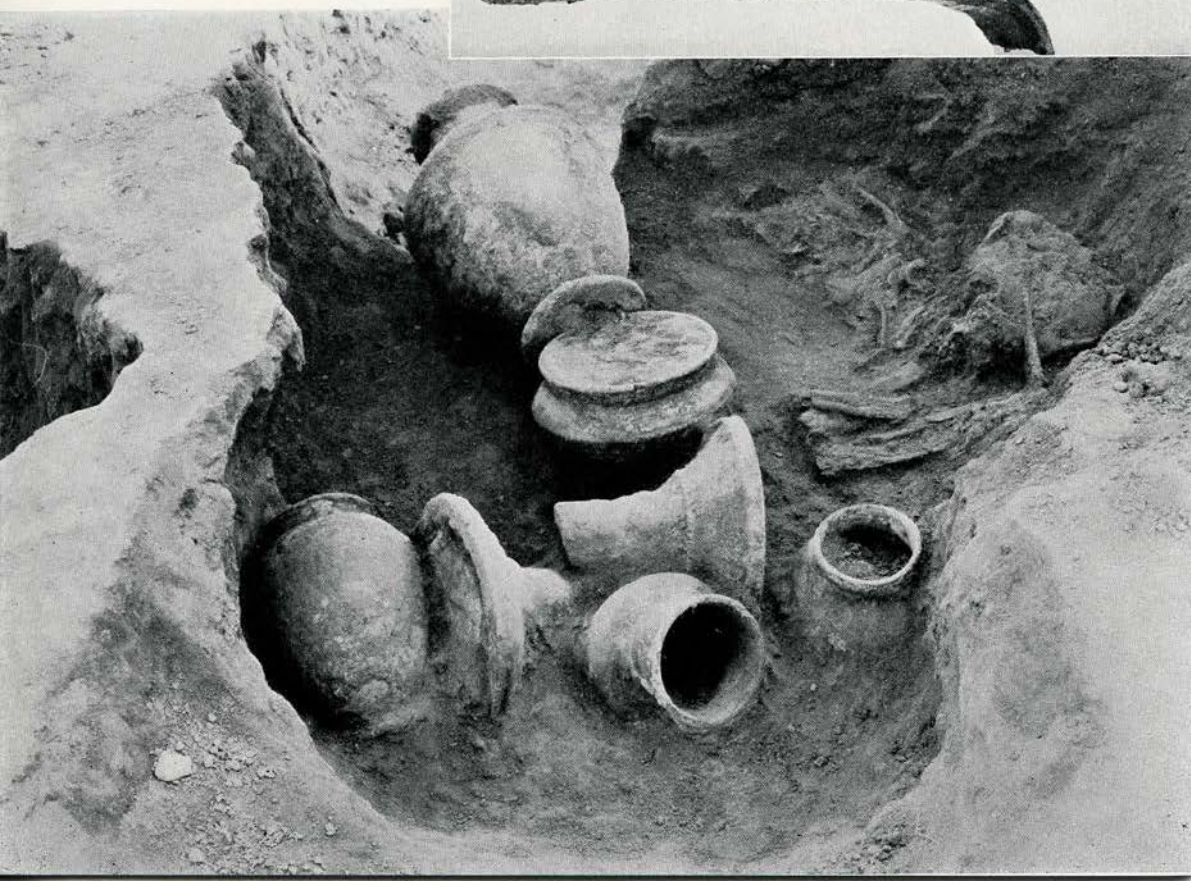
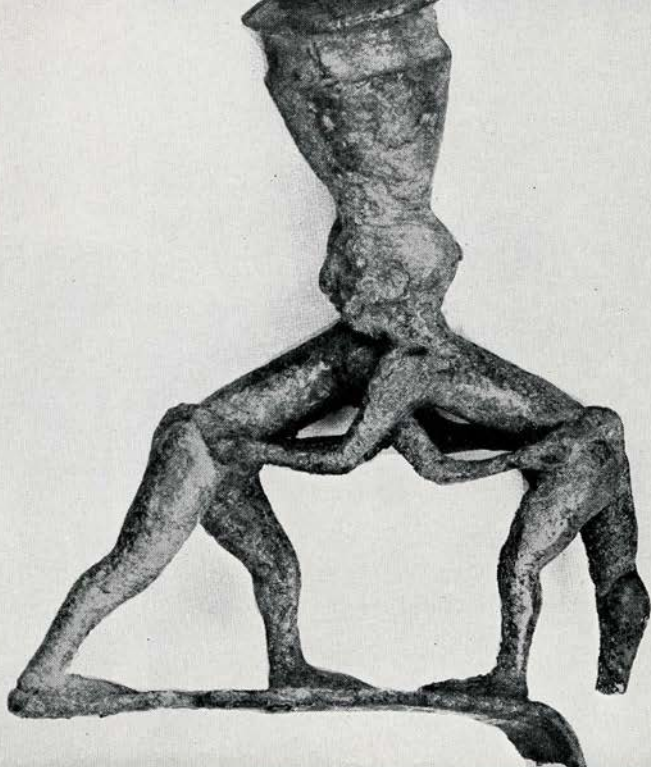
"In the Small Temple we uncovered three successive floor levels with their respective altars. Of particular interest was a pair of animal horns carefully imbedded in two superimposed layers of stone by the side of a bitumen wash-stand. Of manifest ritualistic significance, these horns constitute strong presumptive evidence that the temple in question was dedicated to the god of fertility. It would thus be a smaller replica of the Abu Temple at Eshnunna, to which it bears indeed a striking resemblance.

"Most of the finds of our brief season come from the small temple and from the court belonging to it. The finds include a number of pieces of statuary, a large number of mace heads, and several bronze objects and cylinder seals. The entire group of statues uncovered is shown in

PLATE V

Wrestlers in bronze from
Khafaje

Pottery in situ at Khafaje



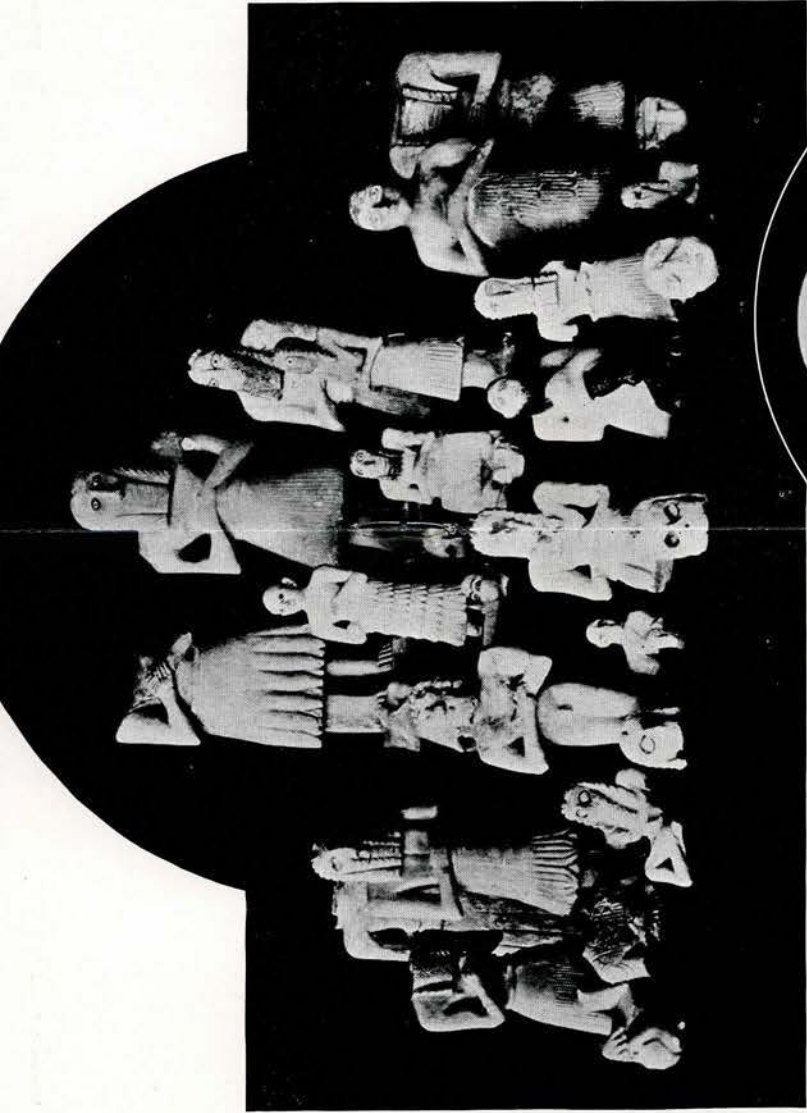
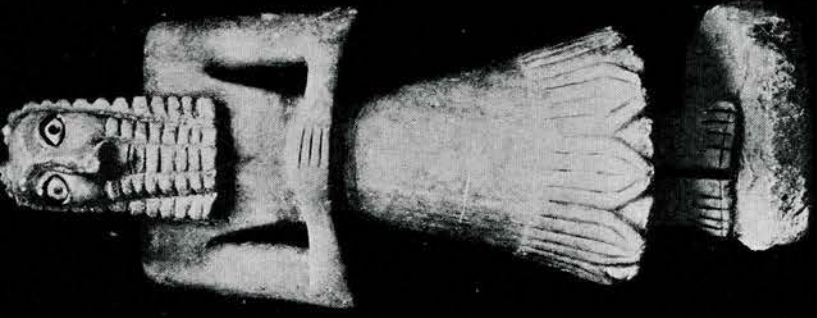


PLATE VI Alabaster and Limestone figures from Khafaje

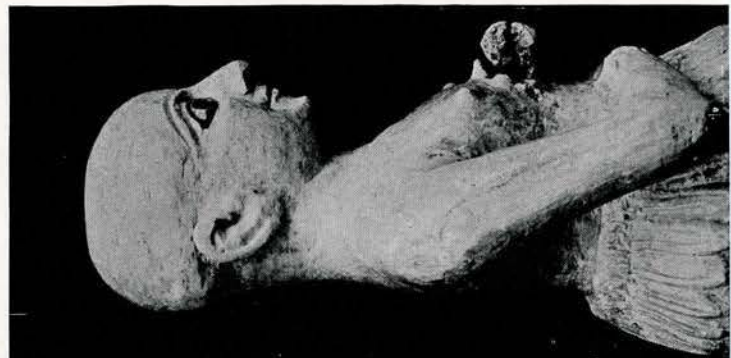
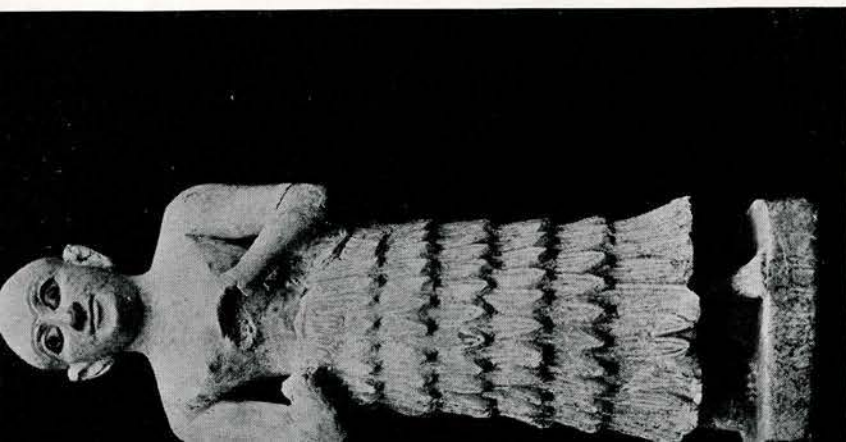


Plate VI; of these the Museum received six of the best in the division that has just been held.

"Of the statues, the finest in quality is unquestionably the limestone figure of a man illustrated in the first figure on Plate VI; this falls in the Museum's share. The head, which responded to the patient ministrations of Mr. Delougaz, is now visible in all its delicate detail. Every feature betrays the hand of a master sculptor: the splendidly modeled nose and mouth, the arched eyebrows, the contour of the head, and the minutely worked ears. The eyeballs are done in shell and the pupils in lapis. The double chin and the fold of skin over the nape of the neck harmonize perfectly with the self-complacent expression of the face. All in all, we have here an unsurpassed specimen of early Sumerian sculpture, executed at least five thousand years ago.

"In the Mound we succeeded in uncovering a large building of the Hammurabi period. The objects discovered in this building included terracotta plaques of the mother goddess of a type that has become known only in the last few years. Of far greater historical interest, however, are the indisputably Hurrian pots, the good Hurrian seals, and such well-known Hurrian features as terracotta plaques of banjo-players, all from this building. It has been known for some time that Hurrian proper names occur in the south from the end of the third millennium and on. But here we have for the first time traces of Hurrian material culture from the turn of the third millennium, a period antedating Hurrian settlements in the north. I would suggest, tentatively, that these finds reflect the presence of Hurrian mercenaries whom Samsuiluna may well have employed in his 'Fort.'

"We sincerely hope that these selected finds and results of a month's digging will suffice to insure further work in this area, whose exploration to date by the University of Chicago has earned the warm gratitude of the archaeological world."

E. A. S.