

much damaged by exposure to the weather, but they were sufficient protection to preserve intact several of the fragile vases and wine cups. Other interesting objects found in the tombs were a curious terra-cotta figurine of a bull and a painted pot in the shape of an animal with a boar's head.

The lowest strata so far excavated promise the most interesting results. Here has been revealed a cyclopean retaining wall, which in sections is ten feet high and six feet wide. Outside the wall, was found a fairly complete collection of bronze weapons. It will take a number of weeks to extend the excavations to a point behind the wall, but it seems likely that rich deposits will be found.

*A Wood-carving from  
New Guinea*

**T**HE great island of New Guinea, to the north of Australia, is next in size to Greenland among the islands of the world. It is still largely unexplored. The inhabitants are Oceanic negroids, though there are Pygmies in the interior, and further racial admixture is due to immigration from the Melanesian islands to the east.

The region of the Sepik River in the north has been visited several times and collections made illustrating the material culture of the people along its banks; but, so far as the main stream is concerned, little is known of the customs of the inhabitants. An important collection, made shortly before the war, was acquired by the Museum several years ago and is now being prepared for exhibition in the new wing.

The wooden figurine shown in Plate VII is a decorated suspension hook, one of a numerous class of objects used in the houses, and is for hanging up, out of the way, food and all sorts of articles of household use. A contrivance of this kind is in common use in the Pacific islands, but the high development of its decorative character is a peculiar feature associated with the Sepik River people, especially with those inhabiting the middle reaches of the stream. The art of this group is particularly interesting, one of its most striking features being a lavish use of colours in the wood-carvings—chiefly black, red and white.

The figure illustrated is of a man in typical costume and with characteristic adornments. The hair and beard are represented by clusters of loosely twisted cord made of human hair. Across the front of the face runs a string of cowry shells fastened by its ends to the ears. Ear ornaments thus joined are a type found again far away among the Polynesians of the Marquesas Islands. Here, the string, or fibre chain, is usually attached to earrings made from the quill of a large cassowary feather.

The apron hanging from the girdle, which is rove through a shell ring behind, is part of the skin of a flying-fox (*Pteropus*), a fruit bat whose skin is actually thus used for the costume of the men.

The deep incisions which score the shoulders and back, or rather the ridges between the incisions, represent a means of decorating the skin which might appropriately be called skin-carving and which takes the

place of tattooing among many very dark-skinned peoples. This is one of the few customs of the natives of this part of the river which has received some detailed attention from a traveller, so far as its practice among the men is concerned.

Cicatrization is performed on the youths at puberty, or some time afterwards, as part of the practices connected with their initiation into the men's mysteries, a condition for their admission into full tribal life. When the time for the initiatory ceremonies has come, the youths are taken to the men's assembly or club house, to which women and children are not admitted. Here several elders cut the designs upon the candidates' bodies with bamboo knives, the yells of the victims being drowned by the noise of a dance executed by the bystanders to the accompaniment of great wooden gongs and smaller portable drums. The candidates, streaming with blood, are then washed and their wounds are rubbed with oil, before they are carried out and shown to the women. A period of seclusion in the men's house follows, lasting for several weeks. The youths, dressed in kilts like those worn by the women, are then brought out to the sound of bamboo flutes and drums, and are tied to bamboo poles planted in the ground. The ceremonies conclude with a dance of women and little girls, who, while dancing, approach the tethered initiates from behind and, catching hold of their kilts, let the strands of fibre of which the garments are composed pass through their fingers as they move backwards again, still dancing.

*H.U.H.*





A WOOD-CARVING FROM THE SEPIK RIVER, NEW GUINEA