

close study of the sculptures has yet to be made. In the meanwhile, the probable inference could only be, that the great Chola was no bigot, and, that this is an instance of the extreme tolerance that prevailed in the age, in which it was erected, before the different sects became antagonistic.

Another peculiarity is that, on the northern side of the main *vimana*, four human figures are described, rising one above another in a line. The lowest is much larger than the other which gradually decrease in size, finally terminating in a man's head crowned by a bowler hat (see plate). Tradition has it that the mason in charge of the construction—Soma Varma by name—an inspired one from Conjeevaram—carved the figures of a Chola, a Nayak, a Mahratta and an European, to show the prospective line of rulers of the *Choladesa* in succession. It is probable that the European figure, and certain of the Vishnavite figures were erected by the later Nayaks (builders of most of the Vaishnavite temples in the district) and that "they were assisted by a Dane or Danes shortly before or shortly after the acquisition of Tranquebar by that nation in A. D. 1620." Hemingway thinks that the European figure may be that of Roeland Crape, the pioneer of Dutch enterprise in the country, as it seems not unlikely that he assisted the Nayaks in their buildings.

Yet another version<sup>1</sup> is that the European figure represents Marco Polo, the great Venetian traveller to the East. He had travelled widely in China and was also for some time Governor of Canton. His influence was so great that the Chinese thought it fit to introduce his figure among the statuary of the Buddhas on the tower of the "Temple of the Five Hundred Buddhas" in the city of Canton. About the time of the repairs or improvements to this great temple by a later ruler, Marco Polo might have passed through South India on his way back home (A.D. 1288-93.) The traveller's fame and

(1) Mr. R. Foulkes, M.L.C., of Madras who had been to Canton notices for the remarkable resemblance between the figure there and the one at Tanjore.

the jubilation that attended his journey should have impressed the then reigning monarch so much that he perpetuated the great traveller's figure on the *vimana*.

The Chola fresco-paintings discovered recently by Mr. S. K. Govindaswami of the Annamalai University<sup>1</sup> within the circumambulatory corridor of the *Ardhamandapa* are of great interest. This discovery is an event of considerable importance to the history of South Indian Painting. They are the first Chola specimens yet discovered. Since the discovery of the Pallava paintings in the Sri Kailasanathaswami temple in Conjeevaram by Dr. Jouveau Dubreuil, the Pallavas held exclusively the palm for mural paintings in the Tamil country, and the Cholas may now be believed to divide the honours equally with Pallavas, not only in South Indian architecture and sculpture but in South Indian painting.

The passage of the corridor is dark, and the enthusiast finds the walls on either side covered with two layers of paintings from floor to ceiling. Those of the upper layer are of the Nayak period, as certain labels in Telugu characters mention the names of Sevvappa and Achyutappa and others. The Chola frescoes lie underneath. It may be that in the hands of successive rulers, a Nayak thought it necessary to repaint the walls and the painter covered the older paintings by a thin coat of plaster and executed his own work thereon.

The layer is now crumbling down in places, revealing the old wonderful frescoes underneath. The west and north walls alone have so far yielded interesting pictures. They are each divided into two equal parts by niches that on the north wall containing a monolith figure of Siva as Sadyojatamurti dancing, and that on the west wall containing a monolith figure of Gangadevi.

An ardent spirit of Saivism is expressed in the Chola frescoes. They probably synchronise with the

(1) Vide 'The Hindus' April 11, 1931, also S. K. Govindaswami, 'The frescoes of the Brihadisvara Temple at Tanjore—*Journal of the Annamalai University*, April 1933, pp. 1-10.