

## 52. Tympanum of Kṛṣṇa-Govardhana

Khuông Mỹ, Quảng Nam

10<sup>th</sup> century

Sandstone: H.90 cm; W. 125 cm; D. 30 cm

BTC 89-17.6



Kṛṣṇa is one of the ten famous earthly avatars of Viṣṇu. As a pastoral deity, he is often portrayed in the image of a cowherd boy playing the flute or a young man surrounded by *gopis*, the cowherd girls. Legend has it that Kṛṣṇa persuaded the people of the Vraj region to give up their annual offerings to Indra, the king of gods, and worship instead the spirit of the Mount Govardhana. In retaliation for this betrayal, Indra invoked torrential rain and storms that flooded the village and destroyed crops and livestock. Frightened by Indra's tempest, the

villagers approached the Kṛṣṇa for protection, who used one hand to hold up the mountain for seven continuous days so that villagers and their livestock could gather safely below it.<sup>1</sup>

The Kṛṣṇa–Govardhana story, as recounted in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, enjoyed immense popularity in South and Southeast Asian art. Among the best known Indian works is probably the relief at Kṛṣṇa *mandapa* of the Māmallapuram rock-cut temples on the coast of Tamil Nadu. Other examples are pre-Angkorian sculptures of the Phnom Da style, which are now displayed

1 Edwin F. Bryant, *Krishna: the beautiful legend of God: Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Book X* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 115-118; Wilson H.H., *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa: a system of Hindu mythology and tradition* (India: Punthi Pustak, 1961), 416-421.