

at the National Museum of Cambodia and the Cleveland Museum of Art.² Dated to the 7th century CE, these works depict a youthful, mighty and smiling Kṛṣṇa miraculously lifting the mountain with his left hand. Khmer and Pallava artists sculpted Kṛṣṇa in high relief with the hip slightly bent to the right in the case of Khmer statues and to the left in the Pallava artwork.

Working on the same theme, the Cham artist gave the beloved Kṛṣṇa the prominence of a tympanum to adorn a temple entrance. At first glance, it seems that the god is standing on a square pedestal in the Goddess pose (*utaka koṅāsana*) with two knees firmly stretched outward and two feet on tiptoe. The left hand rests on his left thigh while the right lifts the mountain. Yet on a closer look, Kṛṣṇa's movement subtly conforms to the three-bends posture in which the body curves at the neck, waist and knees (*tribhaṅga*) as one finds in most Cham images. The mountain is stylized in an inverted U-shaped form, creating a shelter for the cowherds and their cattle, who are shown flanking Kṛṣṇa symmetrically on both sides. The cowherds on both sides make praying gestures with their hands, while another seems to be in deep thought with his face looking down and his right hand touching his head. Those with raised hands may hold torch-like objects as if they are lighting up the darkness in the midst of the calamity. On top of the mountain are two hunters (?) and four deer running among the dense

foliage.³ Kṛṣṇa wears a *sampot* with flaps held in place by a belt; the central fold hangs down to the pedestal while the side panel is arranged like a triangular patch-pocket. This type of garment is also seen on the pair of gate guardians (*dvārapāla*) at Khương Mỹ numbered [BTC 80 9.4] and [BTC 94-9.5].⁴ The god's face, though faded, has features attributed to the Đờng Dươ̄ng style such as the projected eyebrows, flared nostrils and thick lips. The headdress is a two-tiered diadem (*kirītamukūta*), decorated with spear-shaped fleurons (?). These facial traits and headdress suggest a 10th century CE date for the relief and a stylistic transition from the Đờng Dươ̄ng period to the Mỹ Sơn A1 or late Trà Kiệu style.⁵

Up till the present, this tympanum is the only Cham sculpture treating the legend of Kṛṣṇa – Govardhana. It was unearthed from the relics of Khương Mỹ by the École française d'Extrême-Orient and accessioned to the museum in 1918. Further excavations at this site from 2000 to 2008 have also revealed many decorative stone slabs around the temples' foundation featuring monkey scenes from the *Rāmāyaṇa* epic. These archaeological findings, together with the Kṛṣṇa – Govardhana tympanum and a statue of a four-armed *Viṣṇu*, now exhibited at the Vietnam History Museum in Hồ Chí Minh city, points to the possibility that the 9th and 10th centuries temples of Khương Mỹ were dedicated to *Viṣṇu*.

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- 2 John Guy, *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculptures of Early Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 146-148.
- 3 Henri Parmentier, *Vùng Tập Viện Bảo tàng tỉnh Tourane [Inventory of the Tourane Museum, Vietnamese translation version]*, 57-59; Henri Parmentier, "Catalogue du Musée Cam de Tourane," *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient, Tome 19*, (1919), 48.
- 4 Emmanuel Guillon, *Cham Art: Treasures from the Da Nang Museum, Vietnam* (Bangkok: River Books, 2001), 64, 177.
- 5 Jean Boisselier, *La Statuaire de Champa: recherches sur les cultes et l'iconographie [Vietnamese translation]* (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 1963), 196-197.