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## The Stones That Have Sex

### *Kama Sutra carved on the walls*

On the walls of the XI century edifices of Khajuraho, there's only one ruler: sex. In this peak of the Hindu architecture, the temples are covered by the oldest taboo of the western world. The mures are covered by basreliefs depicting with great realism all the love chapters described in the Kama Sutra, the most known manual of the perfect lover. Today, the small village of Khajuraho, with less than 5,000 inhabitants, sees how tourist hordes disembark daily in its international airport, fully armed with photo cameras and prepared to make a lot of paths along the famous erotic reliefs. It's an area of 20 square km (8 sq mi) gathering 22 temples (once, there were 85). The monumental ensemble, one millennium old, was declared part of the Cultural Patrimony of the Humanity by UNESCO in 1986. Despite its huge size, Khajuraho remained hidden by the thick jungle till February 1838 when Captain Burt discovered it. He had in fact discovered the ancient capital of the kings of Chandela. 1,000 years ago, Khajuraho was an animated city, the heart of a prosperous kingdom which spread around the Dantla mountains, where today is the Madhya Pradesh (central India). While Europe was immersed in the Dark Age, India was the real Asian El Dorado. The opulence of this period contributed to the development of a considerable artistic production, both in quantity and quality. [img=2]The Indian artists had exceeded already one classicist period till they reached an exuberance similar to European baroque. Between 950-1050, the Chandela kings started the construction of their capital, adorned with 85 temples of all sizes. This was the Pala Epoch, when dominant was the Tantric Buddhism, a combination between Buddhism and Hinduism, defending the family meditation and the role of pleasure in the religious life like crucial elements for reaching the spiritual peace. The stone, of a pale golden shadow, was extracted from the quarries of Panna, on the banks of the Ken River, while an army of workers and artisans worked on the building and decorating the edifices. Each one of the temples of the complex belonged to a brotherhood (of Shiva, Vaishnava, Jaina, Lakshmi (the female counterpart of Vishnu), Brahma, Surya (the sun god) and so on), but the differences are minimal for a not-expert one. The temples were pyramidal, with overlapped grandstands, which could have represented the progressive raising of the soul to the spiritual illumination, of variable height and length, which reach a maximum of 31 m (103 ft) in Kandarya Mahadeo temple. The temples are placed on massive granite foundations, but the decorations on two rows are made of sandstones and only one is made of granite (Chausath Yogini). [img=3]But the worldwide fame of the Khajuraho, the Indian monument most visited after Taj Mahal, does not come from its sizes or architecture. The richness of the external decorations gains all the looks. They depict daily life aspects of the Indians during the XI century, but what stresses out are the erotic scenes, even if they represent a small percentage of the reliefs. The friezes mark love scenes between the god Shiva and goddess Parvati, following the canons of Kamasutra, the source of cosmic energy: the union between the male and female principle like the roots of life on Earth. The figures interweaves with a rare sensuality and tremendously explicit, realistic carving to the service of carnal love as a form of reaching spiritual purity. Posture after posture, some of them unlikely, the figures hug, caress, kiss and twist in striking scenes full of voluptuousness and movement. For most westerners, Kama Sutra is just an almanac of sex postures or exercises destined to those exceptionally flexible or eager. [img=4]But few know that in reality the acrobatic stunts occupy just five pages of the book. The rest is a scientific treaty written with the main objective of helping people to reach the perfect state, the inner peace but also to combat matrimonial monotony. It was written 1,500 years ago by the Indian learned Mallanaga Vatsyayana but in Europe got known during the middle XIX century. [img=5]Its spiritual concept is based on Buddhism, with three sides of this perfection: the dharm (the peak of the religious merit), the artha (the earthly prosperity) and the kama (enjoying the pleasure). The kama is reached with the fullness of the couple relationship inside the matrimony. This rigorous and complete guide is made of seven parts. The first one investigates the three pillars, the sciences, the arts which a high rank citizen should study. [img=6]The second part is dedicated to carnal aspects, of the various men and women types linked to their physical traits (many body features, like the form and the size of the genitalia, but also the way of moving) up to sexual techniques from coitus to kisses, hugs, caresses, scratches, bites and blows...After that, is detailed how a

wife should be acquired, her more desirable qualities, how to behave with others' wives (like anything is worthy, especially if the adulterous women can be convinced and all is made in great discretion). The last pages of Kama Sutra describe how to make you a charismatic person. The book emphasizes the importance of knowing the singing, dance and philosophy as a way of enjoying life. Other carvings of Khajuraho represent elephants, horses, lions, crocodiles, bulls, boars, monkeys or hunting or battle scenes; also royal processions, elephant fights, gods and goddesses, dancers.