

The Queen`s Stepwell at Patan

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About the Book

In the arid region of Gujarat and Rajasthan with scarce rain, a highly original architectural form developed, that of the stepwell, that is, a well with a long flight of steps leading down to the water's edge. The steps did not remain as a mere adjunct to the well, but increased in complexity. Structural necessity to hold back the loose earth, coupled with the builder's love of the ornate, transformed the flight of steps into an elaborate stairway, with many pillared pavilions demarcating the stages and with many storeys on successive pavilions. The Ranki Vav, or the Queen's Stepwell, at Patan, the old capital of Gujarat, was built by Udayamati in memory of her husband late in the eleventh century. The monument was planned on an ambitious scale, over two hundred feet in length, with a draw well nearly one hundred feet deep, and was furnished with no fewer than eight hundred sculptures. The present work is concerned with the architecture, statuary, style and chronology of the Queen's Stepwell. The method of construction is also considered to enable the reader to understand better this unique architectural form. Twenty – six large drawings, specially commissioned, and 211 colour and black – and – white photographs, illustrate the book.