



# **The Great Belzoni: The Circus Strongman Who Discovered Egypt's Ancient Treasures (International Library of Historical Studies)**

*Stanley Mayes*

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This is the extraordinary life story of Giovanni Belzoni: engineer, barber, monk, actor and strongman in a circus (where he earned his title "The Great Belzoni"), who became one of the giants of 19th century Egyptian Archaeology. Sometimes maligned as a tomb robber, he is perhaps the most important and yet least remembered explorer and archaeologist of the last two hundred years. Under seeming impossible conditions Belzoni transported the colossal granite head of Ramesses II from Thebes to England, where it is now one of the treasures of the British Museum. He went on to excavate the great temple of Abu Simbel, discover six major royal tombs in the Valley of the Kings, including that of Seti I, and provide the British Museum with a spectacular collection of Egyptian antiquities. Giovanni Belzoni was the first person to penetrate the heart of the second pyramid at Giza and the first European to visit the oasis of Siwah and discover the ruined city of Berenice on the Red Sea. His exhibitions and best-selling memoirs made him a major celebrity in Regency London, where he was a huge influence on the vogue for Egyptian style in art, design and architecture. In 1823, at the age of forty-five, Belzoni died of fever trying to reach the mysterious city of Timbuktu.

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