

GIOVANNI BATTISTA BELZONI (1778–1823)
NARRATIVE OF THE OPERATIONS AND RECENT DISCOVERIES
WITHIN THE PYRAMIDS, TEMPLES, TOMBS, AND EXCAVATIONS
IN EGYPT (1820)

My constant occupation was searching after their antiquities . . . we embarked for Egypt, where we remained from 1815 to 1819. Here I had the good fortune to be the discoverer of many remains of antiquity of that primitive nation. I succeeded in opening one of the two famous Pyramids of Ghizeh, as well as several of the tombs of the Kings at Thebes. . . . The celebrated bust of young Memnon, which I brought from Thebes, is now in the British Museum; and the alabaster sarcophagus, found in the tombs of the kings, is on its way to England.

When I ascended the Nile, the first and second time, I had no other idea in my mind, but that I was making researches for antiquities, which were to be placed in the British Museum. . . . I am happy, however, to state, that I succeeded in putting all the articles of my discovery on their way to the British Museum, though not in the same manner in which I thought they were to be entered in that place at first, as was the case with the young Memnon head.

The indecision, whether I should go up or down the Nile, came at last to a point. I know not what to call it, whether curiosity, or that enthusiasm for antiquities, which I can trace from my younger days while in Rome, that spurred me on to decide to ascend the Nile.

The first ruins we arrived at were those of Shak Abade Here is the first Egyptian architecture that travellers meet with on the Nile above the pyramids; and I must say, that it has made a great impression on my mind, though it is only a portico of two rows of columns. The solitary place on which it stands, in the midst of the ruins of Hermopolis, and the majestic appearance of the columns, of a form so uncommon to a European, cannot fail to inspire veneration for the people that erected such edifices.

. . . my curiosity was at a high pitch, the noted temple of Tentyra being the only thought I had in my head. . . . On arriving before it, I was for some time at a loss to know where I should begin my examination. The numerous objects before me, all equally attractive, left me for a while in a state of astonishment. The enormous masses of stone employed in the edifice are so well disposed, that the eye discovers the most just proportion everywhere. The majestic appearance of its construction, the variety of its ornaments, and, above all, the singularity of its preservation, had such an effect on me, that I seated myself on the ground, and for a considerable time was lost in admiration. It

is the first Egyptian temple the traveller sees on ascending the Nile, and it is certainly the most magnificent.

As I entered these ruins, my first thought was to examine the colossal bust [Memnon head] I had to take away. I found it near the remains of its body and chair, with its face upwards, and apparently smiling on me, at the thought of being taken to England. I must say, that my expectations were exceeded by its beauty, but not by its size.

Taken from Giovanni Battista Belzoni, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs, and Excavations in Egypt* (London: John Murray, 1820), 1:vii–ix, 25–26, 33, 39.

JUAN BAUTISTA ALBERDI (1810–1884)
***BASES AND POINTS OF DEPARTURE FOR THE POLITICAL
ORGANIZATION OF THE ARGENTINE REPUBLIC (1852)***

Our youth should be trained for industrial life, and therefore should be educated in the arts and sciences that would prepare them for industry. The South American type of man should be one formed for the conquest of the great and oppressive enemies of our progress: the desert, material backwardness; the brutal and primitive nature of this continent.

We should therefore endeavor to draw our youth away from the cities of the interior, where the old order with its habits of idleness, conceit, and dissipation prevails, and to attract them to the coastal towns so that they may obtain inspiration from Europe, which extends to our shores, and from the spirit of modern life.

Industry is the grand means of promoting morality. By furnishing men with the means of getting a living you keep them from crime, which is generally the fruit of misery and idleness. You will find it useless to fill the minds of youths with abstract notions about religion if you leave them idle and poor. Unless they take monastic vows they will be corrupt and fanatical at the same time. England and the United States have arrived at religious morality by way of industry; Spain has failed to acquire industry and liberty by means of religion alone. Spain has never been guilty of irreligion, but that did not save her from poverty, corruption, and despotism . . .

The railroad offers the means of righting the topsy-turvy order that Spain established on this continent. She placed the heads of our states where the feet should be. For the ends of isolation and monopoly this was a wise system; for our aims of commercial expansion and freedom it is disastrous. We must bring our capitals to the coast, or rather bring the coast into the interior of the continent. The railroad and the electric telegraph, the conquerors of space, work this wonder better than all the potentates on earth. The railroad changes, reforms, and solves the most difficult problems without decrees or mob violence.

It will forge the unity of the Argentine Republic better than all our congresses. The congresses may declare it “one and indivisible,” but without the railroad to connect its most remote regions it will always remain divided and divisible, despite all the legislative decrees

Without the railroad you will not have political unity in lands where distance nullifies the action of the central government. Do you want the government, the legislators, the courts of the coastal capital to legislate and judge concerning the affairs of the provinces of San Juan and Mendoza, for example? Bring the coast to those regions with the railroad, or vice versa; place those widely separated points within three days’ travel of each other, at least. But to have the metropolis or capital a twenty days’ journey away is little better than having it in Spain, as it was under the old system, which we overthrew for presenting precisely this absurdity. Political unity, then, should begin with territorial unity, and only the railroad can make a single region of two regions separated by five hundred leagues.

The great rivers, those “moving roads,” as Pascal called them, are yet another means of introducing the civilizing action of Europe into the interior of our continent by means of her immigrants. But rivers that are not navigated do not, for practical purposes, exist. To place them under the exclusive domination of our poor banners is to close them to navigation. If they are to achieve the destiny assigned to them by God of populating the interior of the continent, we must place them under the law of the sea—that is, open them to an absolute freedom of navigation . . .

Let the light of the world penetrate every corner of our republics . . . Let us grant to European civilization what our ancient masters denied.

Taken from Juan Bautista Alberdi, “Roads to the Future,” in *Latin American Civilization: History & Society, 1492 to the Present*, ed. Benjamin Keen, 6th ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996), 270–272.