

Modern Egypt is a province of the Turkish Empire, but only loosely connected with it. The Khedive is a semi-independent prince, rather controlled by European holders of Egyptian bonds and of the shares in the Suez Canal than by the Sultan. The native population consists of Arabs and Kopts. The Arabs are descendants of the Mohammedan conquerors of the 7th century A. D. The Kopts are the descendants of the ancient Egyptians, as their name implies, which is a modified form of the word Egypt—(the Greek *Aiguptos* = *Koptos*). They have been long oppressed by the Turks and Arabs, who profess Mohammedanism, while the Kopts are Christians. The Koptic Church resembles the Greek Church, though not governed by it.

The Koptic language has been supplanted by the Arabic, and is no longer spoken; but as found in the Missals and Bibles still used by the priests, it is the key to the study of the old Egyptian language, of which it is the direct descendant. Such difficulties as still exist in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics are not so much owing to difficulty in spelling them out, as to the fact that the modern Koptic has lost many old Egyptian words, and has much modified others.

The study of Koptic was not, however, taken up by European men of science until they could spell out the hieroglyphics, and the first steps in this direction date from Bonaparte's campaign in Egypt.

The Rosetta Stone.—There was then found in the Delta of the Nile a slab of basalt—now in the British Museum in London—known from the place of discovery as the Rosetta Stone. This slab was covered with three inscriptions—one in Greek, and two in different hieroglyphic styles. The Greek inscription showed that the stone dated from the time of the Ptolemies, the Greek kings of Egypt. Corresponding to the letters in the Greek inscription spelling the word Ptolemy and other proper names, were hieroglyphics spelling the same words. Thus was found the clue to the letters of the old Egyptian alphabet.

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