

## **RAMSHAUSEN, FRANCISCUS WILHELM VON (seventeenth century)**

A German Coptologist. Born in the small town of Quakenbruck in Westphalia, he studied theology in the Lutheran tradition and read widely the travel works on Egypt, particularly the writings of the Jesuit Athanasius KIRCHER, whose experiences among the Copts must have influenced him greatly in his studies. He wrote and published a comprehensive doctoral thesis on the Copts and submitted it to the University of Jena in the year 1666. Written in Latin, his own work has the composite title of tekkl/cia nkef] (tekklesia Nkefti) *sive Exercitatio Theologica, Ecclesia Copticae, Hoc Est Christianorum Aegyptiacae Ortum, Progressum Praecipuaque Doctrinae. . . .* The book has been described by W. Kammerer in *A Coptic Bibliography* (1950, 1969) as “probably the oldest European work on the Copts,” a verdict confirmed by A. Mallon in his renowned [Grammaire copte](#).

Von Ramshausen’s approach to the subject is systematic, original, and thorough. Starting with the definition of the word “Copt,” he discussed the Coptic language in its hieroglyphic background. Then he discussed the Coptic Bibles and other Coptic manuscripts available at his time. Next, he dealt with the history of the Coptic church and Coptic persecutions and heresies in Egypt, extending his panoramic view of Coptic Egypt beyond the sixth century. Coptic dogmas, sacraments, and rituals are also treated at a time when the West was oblivious of that nation in the framework of Eastern Christianity.

In this way, von Ramshausen laid a solid basis for the study of the Coptic language and Coptic church history for subsequent generations of scholars in the West. He drew attention to the antiquity of the Coptic [church fathers](#) and to the establishment of the Coptic church by Saint MARK, its first patriarch. He was outspoken in his sympathy for the ancient church. He appears to have had access to historical material no longer available, which enhances the value of his writing.

The genuine contribution of von Ramshausen's work is his objectivity in dealing with the Coptic church, which makes it overshadow subsequent works by even so great a scholar as Renaudot, whose *Liturgiarum Orientalium Collectio* (1716) was apparently more critical and unsympathetic than his predecessor's. This alone entitles von Ramshausen to a place in the story of Coptology.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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**J. HELDERMAN**

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