

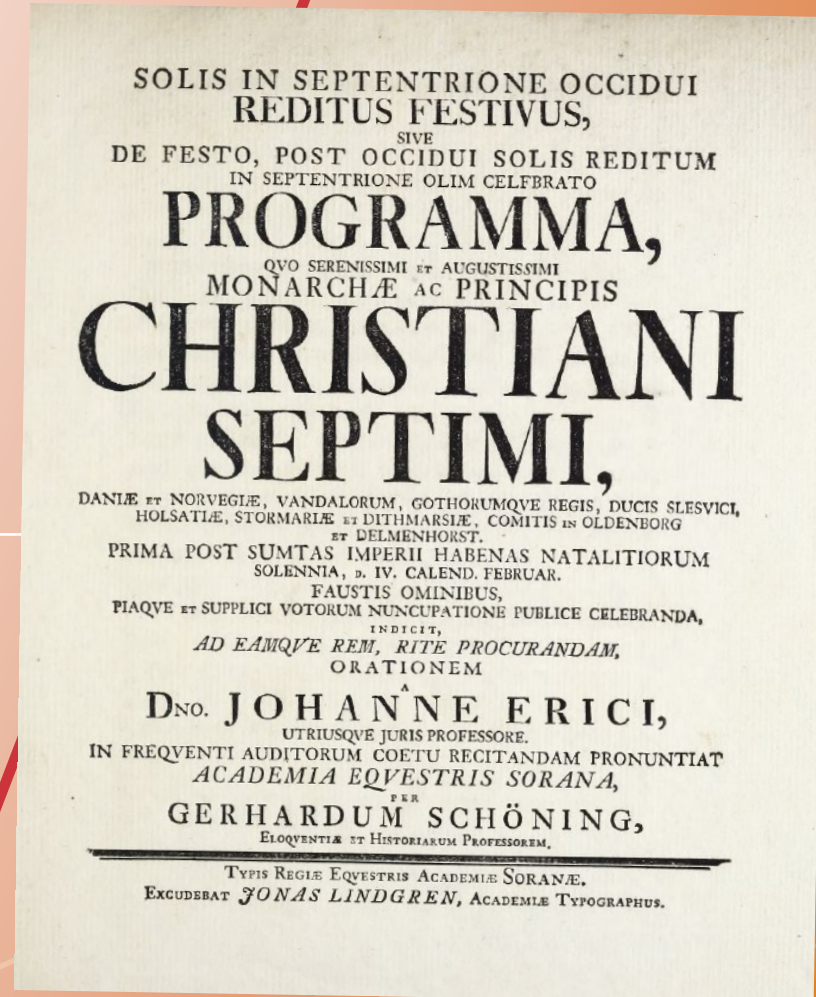
UIT

THE ARCTIC
UNIVERSITY
OF NORWAY

CELEBRATING THE END OF THE POLAR NIGHT, or: THE ARRIVAL OF A NEW “SUN KING”

*A programma from Sorø Equestrian
Academy, for the occasion of the
King's birthday, 29 Jan 1766*

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ABSTRACT

The Lofoten-born historian Gerhard Schøning (1722–1780) is well known for his many works on Norwegian history, architecture and folklore. After graduating at Copenhagen University, he became one of the founding fathers of the Royal Norwegian Society of Sciences and Letters in Trondheim, where he served as the rector of the Cathedral School from 1751 to 1765. However, in 1765 he left his post at the northernmost town of the Kingdom of Denmark and Norway. From then on, he was a *professor eloquentiae et historiarum* at the Equestrian Academy at Sorø in Denmark, before ending his career as the head of the national archives in Copenhagen (1775–1780).

On 14 January 1766, King Frederick V died. His successor Christian VII ascended to the throne, shortly before his 17th birthday, on 29 January 1766. It was on the latter occasion that the newly appointed professor Schøning published a *programma* to be read ahead of the solemn birthday celebrations for the young regent at Sorø Academy. The *programma* contains an erudite discussion of how the end of the polar night had been celebrated in Thule according to ancient sources. While the text primarily and ostensibly constitutes an exegesis of texts by both Greco-Roman and Old Norse authorities, it is interwoven with references to the arrival of the new king on the throne. The topos of the enlightened monarch is obviously playing an important role, in the sense that the celebrations at the end of the polar winter darkness in ancient times forges a symbolic harmony with the arrival of a new “sun king” and the on-going celebrations of his birthday.

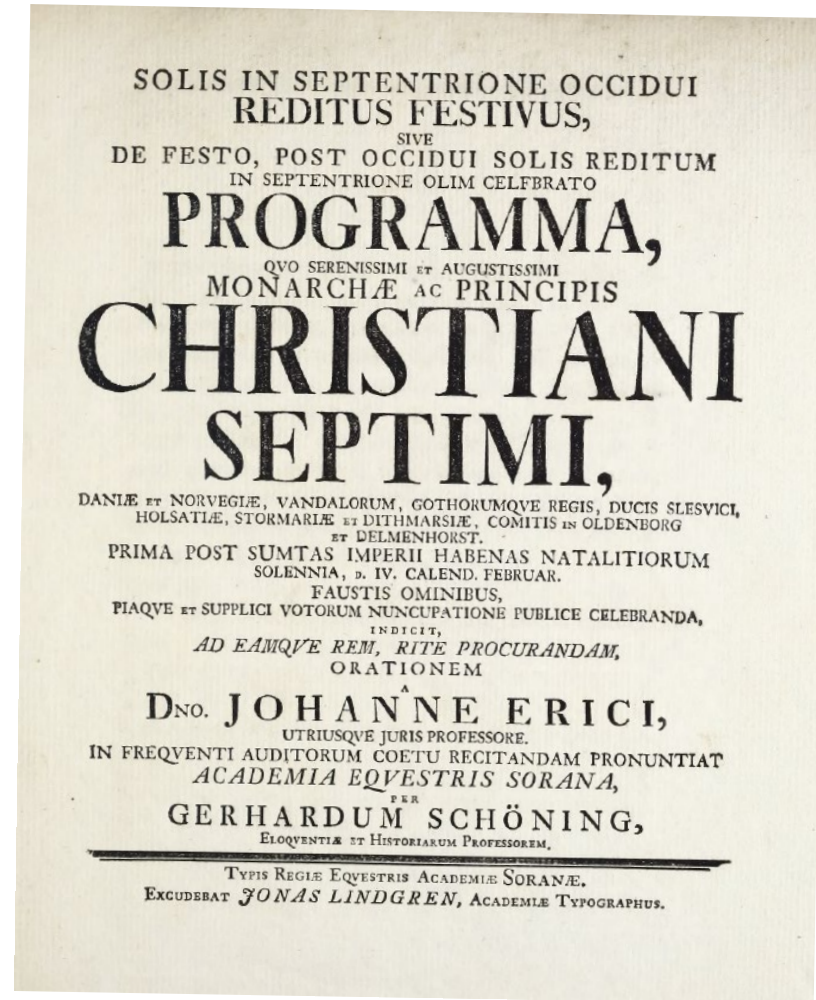
While not strictly a dissertation, the *programma* in question contains all the key features of a dissertation both in terms of length (16 pages), genre (footnotes, erudite discussion), language (Latin) and format (quarto), the only major difference being the overt references to the King’s ascendancy to the throne and his birthday celebrations, visible both on the title page and in the exordium of the short text. These facets allow for a discussion of the forms and functions of the *programma* vis-à-vis the thesis, or *dissertatio*, within early-modern academic institutions. Full title of the text:

Solis in Septentrione occidui reditus festivus, sive de festo, post occidui solis reditum in Septentrione olim cel[e]brato PROGRAMMA, quo serenissimi et augustissimi monarchae ac principis CHRISTIANI SEPTIMI, Daniae et Norvegiae, Vandalarum, Gothorumqve regis, ducis Slesvici, Holsatiae, Stormariae et Dithmarsiae, comitis in Oldenburg et Delmenhorst. prima post sumtas imperii habenas natalitiorum solennia, d. IV. Calend. Februar. faustis omnibus, piaqve et supplici votorum nuncupatione publice celebranda, indicit, ad eamqve rem, rite procurandam, orationem a Dno. JOHANNI ERICI, utriusqve juris professore. in frequenti auditorum coetu recitandam pronuntiat Academia Eqvestris Sorana, per GERHARDUM SCHÖNING, eloquentiae et historiarum professorem. Typis Regiae Eqvestris Academiae Soranae. Excudebat Jonas Lindgren, Academiae Typographus [1766]

Digitisation of original available at: <https://www.kb.dk/e-mat/dod/130020757427.pdf>

TRANSLATION:

The festive return
of the sun of the polar night
in the North



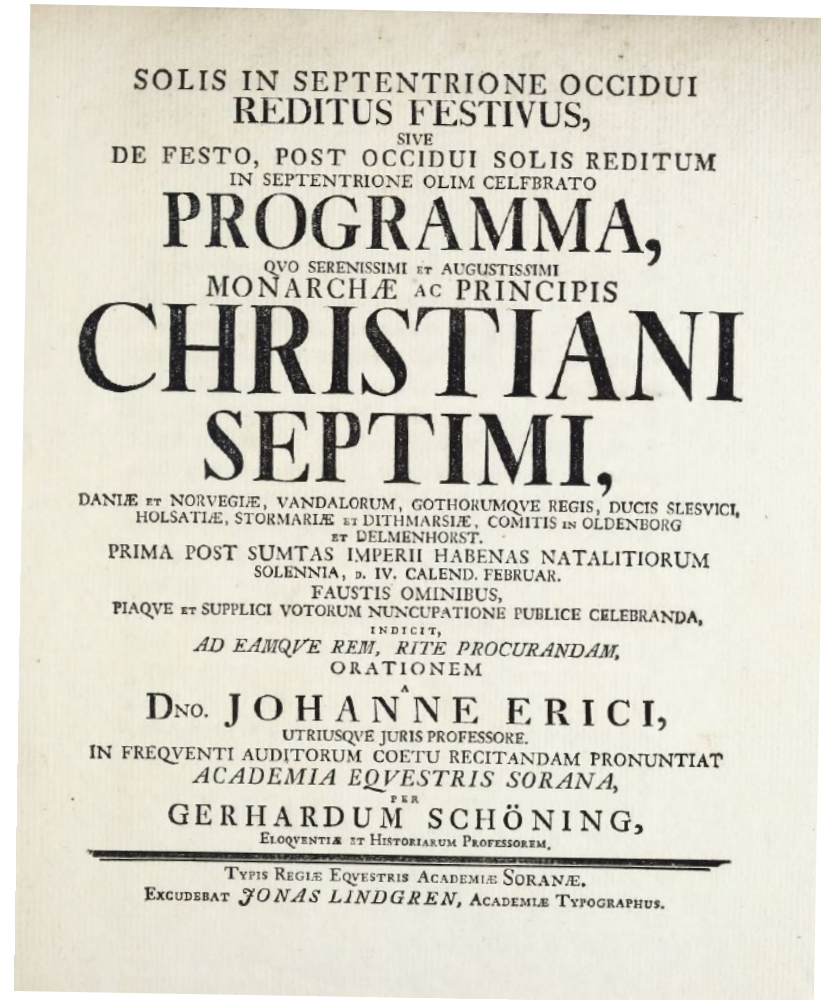
**The festive return
of the sun of the polar night
(*solis occidui*) in the North**

SOL IN OCCIDUUS

= the sun that does not set,
i.e., the midnight sun

SOL OCCIDUUS

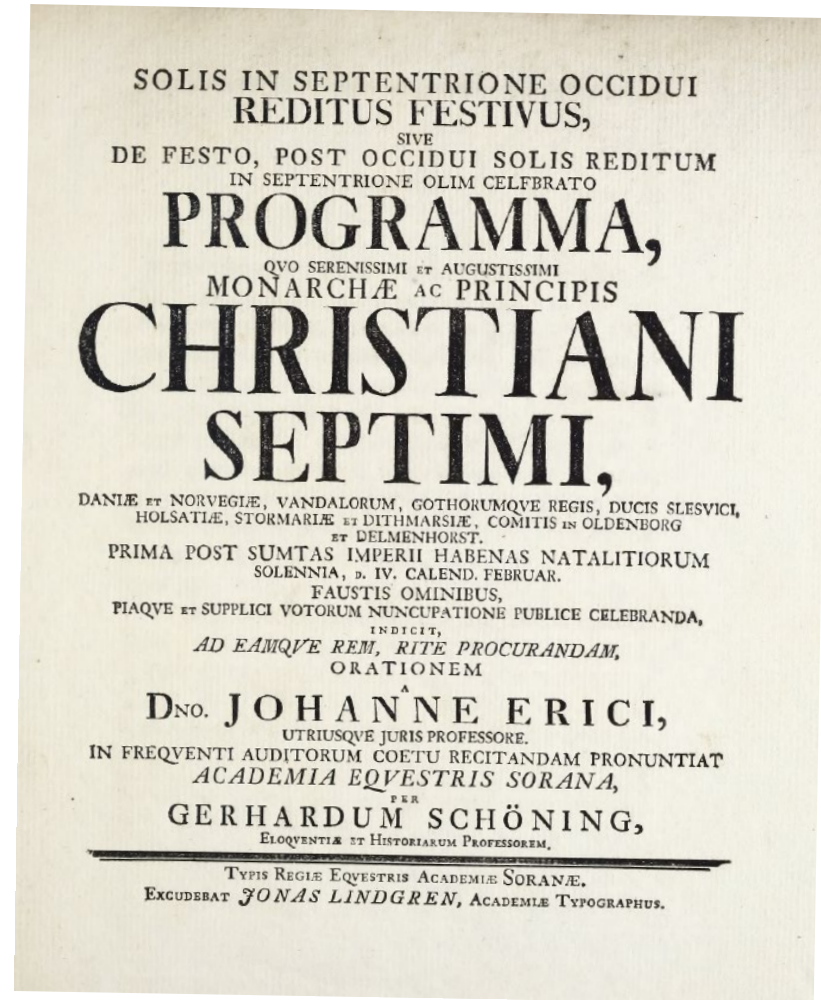
= the sun that stays set,
i.e., the polar night



The festive return
of the sun of the polar night
in the North,

or (*sive*)

a programma on the
celebrations which in the
past (*olim*) were held in the
North upon the return of
the sun of the polar night



PROGRAM FOR MY TALK

Programma – genre?

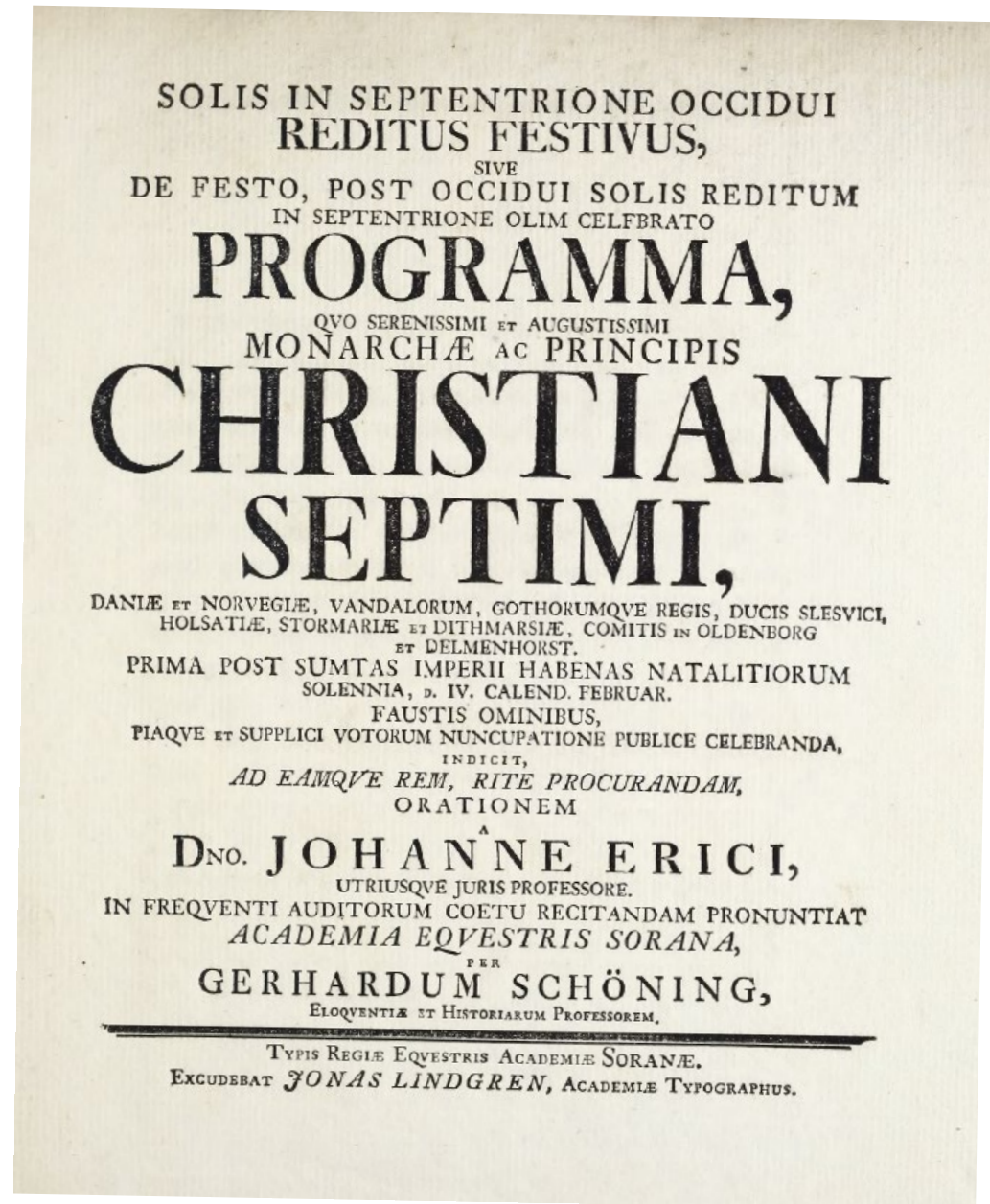
Sorø – where, when?

Authorship – who?

Contents – what, why?

Dedication – who, how?

Value? – then, now?



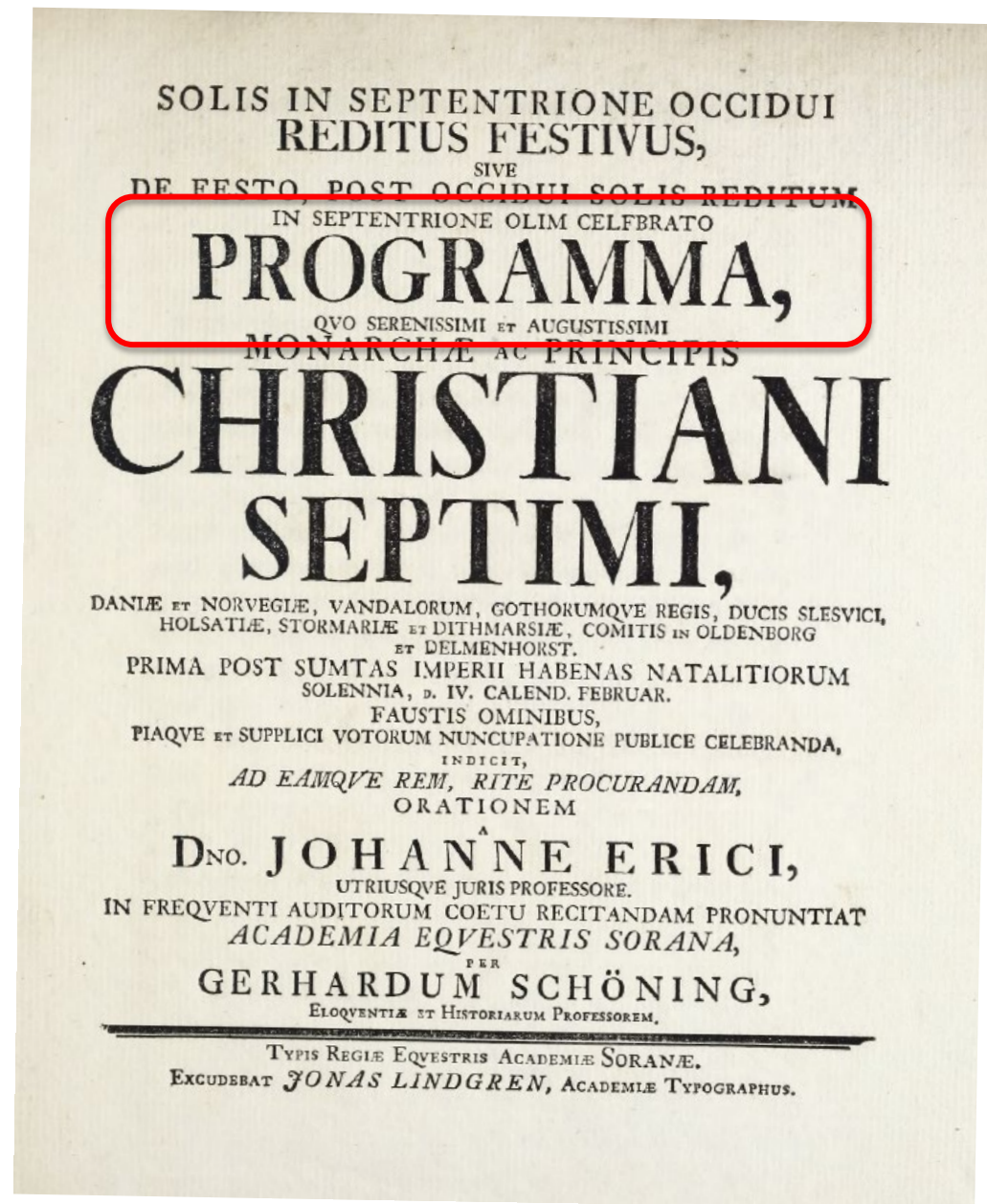
PROGRAMMA – GENRE?

In Universities:

texts announcing
happenings/gatherings
(incl. disputations)

In gymnasia:

often, texts with little or no
relation to any specific
happening/gathering



PROGRAMMA – GENRE?

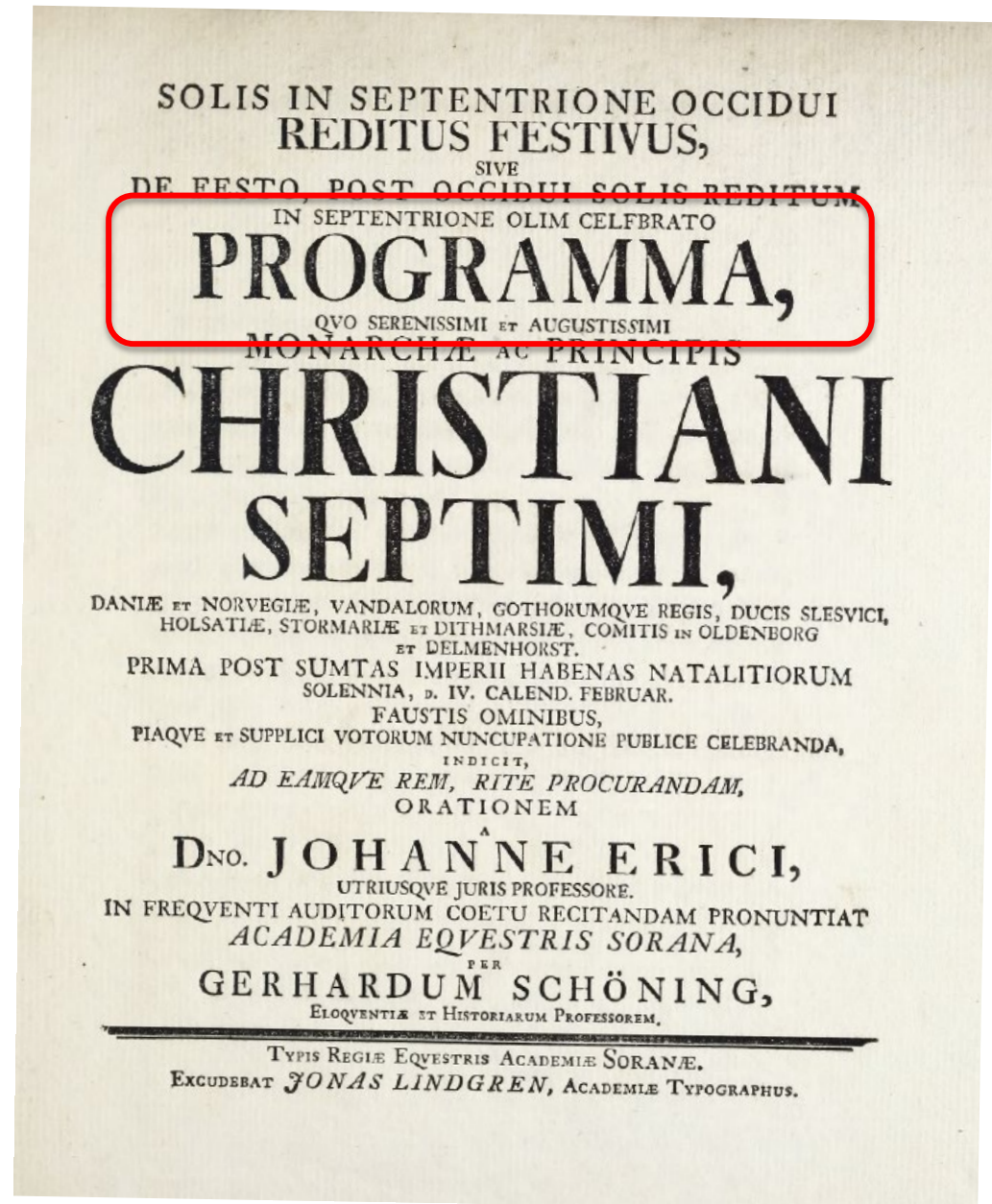
Aptum (Univ./Gymn.):

texts announcing
happenings/gatherings,

preferably with content
related to the theme of the
happening/gathering

or at least academic in nature

(my summary, based on
Annamaria Lesigang-
Bruckmüller, 2021. [DOI](#))



ACADEMIA SORANA (revitalised 1747)



Photograph: dubious internet source, please do not reuse



KIÖBENHAVN

SORÖE

Source:
Thomas Bugge,
Trigonometrisk Carte over Sjælland
(1779)

ACADEMIA SORANA (BASIC FACTS)

For noblemen, who would spend 2–3 years there with their servants

Also, some common people who attended courses as «privatists»

Aims & scope: the formation of excellent civil servants for the realm

Important professors (as of 1766)

-political science Andreas Schytte 1761–77

-law Jón Erichsen 1759–71

-history & eloquence Gerhard Schøning 1765–73 (75)

-Plus, 2 or 3 more prof. in theology, numismatics, medicine, biology, etc.

-Also, teachers of dance, riding, fencing, German, French, etc.

Privilege of censorship

Own printing house (Latin, French, German, Danish)

Gerhard Schøning (1722 – 1780)

ELOQUENTIAE ET HISTORICARUM PROFESSOR

1722 Born in Lofoten

Trondheim Cathedral School +
Copenhagen University

1751–65 Rector, Trondheim Cath. School

1760 Trondheim Society of Sciences

1765–73 Professor at Sorø Academy

1773–75 Cultural research trip in Norway

1775 Archivist of the Realm, Copenhagen

1780 Dies in Copenhagen



CONTENTS – WHAT?

«Something extraordinary is witnessed each year [on the island of Thule]. In the summertime, at the time when we have our solstice, the sun never sets beneath the earth's surface, but shines continuously for a forty-day period. Six months later, in the midst of winter, it will not be seen anywhere on the island, so that a mighty night descends upon the inhabitants, and the nearly devastating darkness prohibits every kind of human contact between them. Having spent thirty-five days in continuous darkness, in accordance with ancient customs they dispatch scouts to the top of mountains to look for the sun. As soon as these catch sight of the sun from their elevated position, they notify the people staying underneath, that the rays of the sun will return within five days. Filled with joy by this news, the inhabitants celebrate solemn festivities. This is the most festive time of the year to the Thulites.»

PROKOPIOS, «History of the Goths»
ed. Hugo Grotius (my transl.)

ratum festum nec ullo alio fuisse peractum contendit Ol. Verelius *b*), suffragante antiquitatum Septentrionalium peritissimo Otth. nostro Sperlingio *c*).

Hoc si ita fuerit, & si quid fidei dictæ Hervorianæ historiæ contra supra allata, non minoris, si non longe majoris

x) *Mediæ ergo hyemis Sacrificia*, quæ & *Hofud-Blot*, primaria Sacra, dixerunt veteres.

y) Vid. Chron. Lib. I. in Leibnitzii Scriptor. Rerum Brunsvic. Tom. I. pag. 327. confr. etiam Ol. Wormii Fast. Dan. pag. 56. & J. Bircherodii Antiq. Jul. pag. 151.

z) Tunc temporis Sacra Jolensia etiam Regis Olai Skotkonnung ætate fuisse peracta, Islandosque Januarium simul & Februarium vocasse menses Jolenses, vult Ol. Rudbeck in Atlant. Tom. I. Utrumque sine dubio falsum.

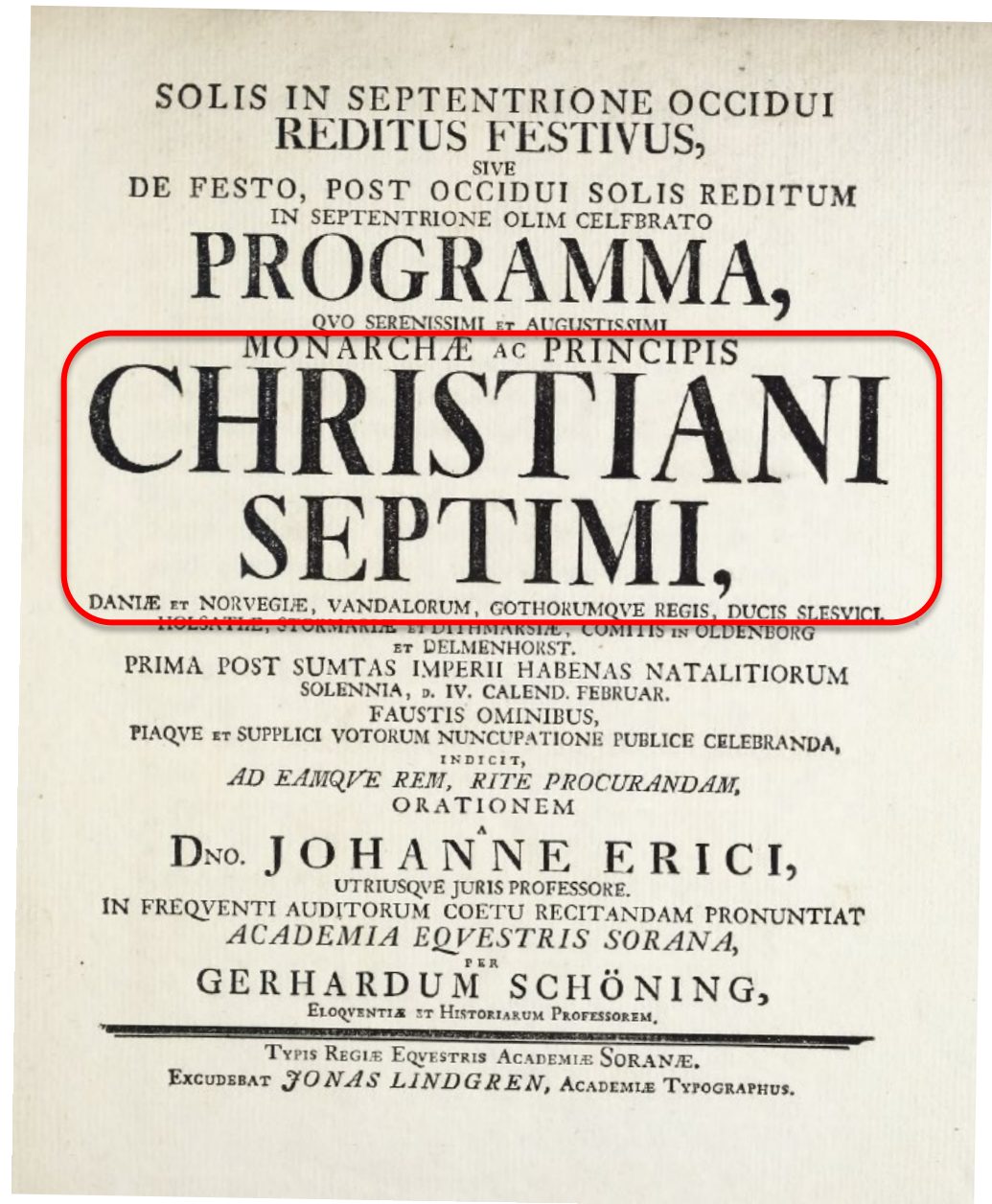
a) Hervarar-Saga, ed. ab Ol. Verelio. pag. 138.

b) In Annotat. ad Hervarar-Saga pag. 56.

c) De Nomine & Festo Juel. Cum his etiam facit Jo. G. Keisler in Antiquitat. Septentrion. & Celticis. pag. 159.

DEDICATION
– WHO, HOW?

(title page)



DEDICATION (*peroratio*)

Ad caput & summam rei nunc potius properandum. Quam supra recensuimus, cujusque conspectum, leviter adumbratum, oculis subjecimus, Procopii narratio, scenam nobis aperit, in qua nostri hujusque temporis viva velut imago oculis & menti præsens sistitur, & vivis quasi coloribus in tabula pingitur: **Occidit! heu! occidit Sol orbis nostri Septentrionalis,** tenebris feralibus & plus quam Cimmeriis involuti sedimus, metum inter spemque dubii; Quanto dolore, qua tristitia & quo luctu animos omnium dejectos fœdatosque vultus vidimus! Quam fœda miseriarum & calamitatum cohors in Septentrionem nostrum, ad invidiam usque felicem, lætum, hilarem, nobis minime expectantibus, sese effudit! Condidit se tantæ Majestatis fulgor! ad cœlestium

Ast abiit rediturum Solis istius in Septentrione occidui
fulgentissimum jubar. In eminentissima Reipublicæ duo-
rumque Regnorum borealium Specula positi Viri eximii
nova luce refulsurum nobis nunciarunt 1). Refulsit mox,
refulsit in clara luce ipso illo die, quo maximum inter mayo-
res nostros festum summa lætitia, summa festivitate & animo-
rum gaudio olim celebratum diximus. Tantæ fælicitatis me-
moriæ, hoc perennaturæ *Regiæ Stirpis* & familiæ omen at-
que augurium læta, *quanquam adhuc in tenebris*, recolet so-
lenni que Gratulatione, ut sibi Patriæ que ratum & firmum
reddat benignissimum Numen, supplex precabitur ad d.
IV. Cal. Febr. *Academia Equestris Sorana*, chorum ducen-
te, vota que pro orti jam, majori que semper luce effulsuri,
splendidissimi nostri Solis perennatura luce solenniter nun-

Sorø programmata by Schöning (1766–1773)

<i>Solis ... occidui reditus</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1766 Jan
<i>De anni ejusqve computandi ratione</i>	FREDERIC V burial	1766 March
<i>De anni ratione continuatum</i>	CAROLINA MATHILDA marriage	1766 Nov
<i>De anni ratione ... tertio continuatum</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1767 Jan
<i>[De anni ratione ... pars iv]</i>	CAROLINA MATHILDA coronation	1767 May
<i>Fundamenta narrationis Herodoti de Scythia</i>	CHR. VII birthday	1768 Jan
<i>[... de Scythia ... pars ii]</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1769 Jan
<i>[... de Scythia ... pars iii]</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1770 Jan
<i>[... de Scythia ... pars iv]</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1771 Jan
<i>[... de Scythia ... pars v]</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1772 Jan
<i>De fide et auctoritate monumentorum</i>	CHRISTIAN VII birthday	1773 Jan

VALUE OF SORØ PROGRAMMATA ? (THEN, NOW ?)

Expression of ideological education for young noblemen in 1760s and 70s

Education in History and Eloquence (and Classics!) in a Latin guise

Latinity still important, not something exclusively for the gymnasia and universities

Although Sorø Academy lacked disputations, *programmata* were important vehicles for academically ambitious professors

The printed *programma* consisted in condensed discussion of erudite subjects, like the average University *dissertatio*

A peculiar characteristic – at least in the case of Schøning – was the way in which erudite subject matters were linked to important occasions in the royal family = *APTUM*

VALUE OF SORØ PROGRAMMATA ? (THEN, NOW ?)

Content-wise, just as academically ambitious as *theses/dissertationes*

A bit more «alienating» in style (royal praise)

Schøning's programmata are examples of his well argued source criticism and expressions of the «freethinker» ethos characteristic of Enlightenment historiography

In sum,

just like Religion and Science were not necessarily opposites (secularism was *not* requisite in order to subscribe to Newtonianism, Linnean system etc.)

it was not necessary to give up on Royal praise in order to reach intellectual emancipation during the peak of the European Enlightenment