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Guide to the Immanuel Bekker Papers 1806-1853



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.BEKKER
Title	Bekker, Immanuel. Papers
Date	1806-1853
Size	0.5 linear feet (1 box)
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Abstract Immanuel Bekker (1785-1871) Philologist. The Papers consist entirely of correspondence addressed to Bekker. Some are semi-official communications (Niebuhr, W.V.Humboldt); many are of a scholarly nature, occasionally with extensive Greek quotations. Those written by Bekker's closer intimates are often typical of the need felt in the Romantic era to open one's heart to a friend, while a few are no more than short invitations (Reimer). The letters cover the period 1806 to 1853.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

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Citation

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Biographical Note

August Emanuel Bekker (he chose "Immanuel" as his nom de plume on publication of his first scholarly papers) was born in Berlin in 1785, the son of a locksmith. He attended a local Gymnasium against the wish of his stern father who eventually withheld all support from his son. Bekker was subsequently taken into the household of the school principal, as an unpaid domestic servant. While this arrangement enabled Bekker to finish the Gymnasium, the experience may have brought about the bitterness and taciturnity that characterized him for the rest of his life (Schleiermacher once quipped that Bekker "could remain silent in seven languages").

In 1803 Bekker went to the University of Halle to study the new science of philology under Friedrich August Wolf (1759-1824). He soon won the recognition and esteem of this famous scholar who assisted him greatly. After he had received his doctorate, in 1806, Bekker was appointed Inspector of the Philological Seminary. He supplemented his income by writing reviews for the *Jenaer Litteraturzeitung*, which made his name known in scholarly circles.

At Halle, Bekker came under the influence of Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher, the great theologian and philosopher, who became his mentor and fatherly friend. At regular social gatherings arranged by Nanny, Schleiermacher's half-sister, Bekker met several fellow-students who became his intimate friends: Karl von Raumer, later professor of natural history and mineralogy at the University of Erlangen; Alexander von der Marwitz, a young Prussian nobleman and fervent patriot who fell in 1814 at the battle of Montmirail; R. von Przystanowsky, a Polish mineralogist; and Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, diplomat and soldier, whose wife Rahel was to preside over the most famous literary salon in Berlin.

When Napoleon closed the University of Halle in 1806 Schleiermacher obtained for Bekker a position as tutor in classical languages to the children of Herr von Wulcknitz, a rich landowner at Lanke in the province of Brandenburg. There, in rural seclusion, Bekker pursued his studies and wrote his famous recension of Wolf's edition of Homer, which states the scholarly principles upon which he later acted.

In April, 1810, on Wolf's recommendation, Bekker was appointed to a chair at the newly founded University of Berlin. He did not assume his new position at once, however, but, with Wolf's support, he urgently appealed to Wilhelm von Humboldt, Prussian minister of public

instruction, to be granted a sabbatical leave and a stipend that would enable him to travel to Paris.

In the wake of the victorious Napoleonic armies eager French scholars had removed all manuscripts worth taking from the libraries and archives of the conquered territories and sent them to Paris. There, in the *Bibliothèque Impériale*, lay a very large number of invaluable source materials. Bekker sensed the uniqueness of such an opportunity for examining manuscripts formerly dispersed all over continental Europe, especially at a time when travel was still a hardship, correspondence took a long time, and the owners of manuscripts were not always cooperative.

Although there was "no precedence of a stipend being granted to a 'traveling philologist'" (v. Humboldt's letter of November 3, 1809) Bekker eventually had his way and arrived in the French capital in May of 1810. What he found there far surpassed his expectations. For three and a half years he spent up to twelve hours daily copying and collating Greek manuscripts. Bekker also established contacts with French colleagues, most notably Nicolas-Maximilien-Sidoine Séguier, who became one of his close friends.

In 1815 Bekker was elected to the Berlin Academy on whose recommendation he returned to Paris with a special mission. His duties were described to him by Barthold Georg Niebuhr, the historian, who was then a functionary at the headquarters of the allied sovereigns (letter of July 25, 1815). Bekker was to supervise the return of all manuscripts purloined from German libraries and archives and of all art objects removed from their previous locations. His stay in Paris was short this time. While the French were condescendingly helpful to the conquered on his first visit, they now resented the conquerors, especially their official representatives, and the friends at home were concerned for Bekker's safety. Schleiermacher, in his letter of October 20, 1815, exhorts him "to return home not later than the last Prussian troops, lest the wrath of the French be directed against one of the few remaining Germans."

When the Berlin Academy decided to publish a large, annotated edition of Aristotle and his scholiasts, Bekker was selected to visit the most important libraries of Europe to examine and copy source materials. His first station was Rome, where Niebuhr had been Prussian ambassador to the Papal Court since 1816. For the first time Bekker lived at Niebuhr's residence, where he probably became acquainted with Christian Karl Josias Bunsen, the ambassador's personal secretary and a distinguished scholar himself. While in Rome Bekker was introduced to Dorothea von Schlegel and met Henriette Herz, a previous acquaintance, who kept the other important salon in the Prussian capital. She was then the widow of Marcus Herz, a disciple and former student of Kant, who lectured in philosophy and natural sciences at the University of Berlin. Because of their frequent association for a year and a half in Italy and the growing intimacy between them, Bekker was moved to make her a proposal of marriage before they took leave in June, 1819, but was turned down because of their difference in age. They continued to be close friends.

In the fall of 1819 Bekker visited Paris the third time and subsequently carried on his research in the libraries of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge, London, Leyden, and Heidelberg. All this time Schleiermacher, as one of the secretaries of the Berlin Academy, kept in touch with Bekker and encouraged him in his work.

In 1825 Bekker married and founded his own household; the preceding years he had lived in the house of his publisher Georg Andreas Reimer. Schleiermacher had also lived in the publisher's house for some of that time.

Since his student days Bekker's favorite project had been the compilation of a large Greek lexicon. He soon had to realize, however, that without an adequate number of reliable texts such an undertaking would be impossible. In recognition of this urgent need, he devoted himself temporarily as he thought to the task of editing Greek authors. But the manuscript collations he had accumulated in the course of many years provided him with such an abundance of material that he never found time to return, as planned, to his work on the lexicon. Instead Bekker became one of the most prolific editors of ancient texts, not only Greek and Latin, but later also Provençal, Old-French, and Italian.

Bekker's importance lies in the fact that he was first to publish reliable editions of the classics in substantial numbers. It was his work in particular that put the study of Greek grammar and lexicography on a firm foundation.

Details on Bekker are to be found in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, and in an article written by his son, Ernst Immanuel, after his death in 1871 and published in the magazine *Presussische Jahrbücher* ("Zur Erinnerung an meinen Vater," Vol. XXIX, pp. 553-585 and 641-668). Several of the letters in this collection are quoted there.

All the German correspondents represented here, with the exception of Klein and Wülcknitz, are treated extensively in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, Séguier will be found in any French biographical dictionary.

Many were habitués of Henriette Herz' salon. On Bekker's role in this society, and especially on his relationship with Henriette Herz, useful information is to be found in Max J. Putzel's *Letters of Henriette Herz to Immanuel Bekker*, a doctoral dissertation (University of Chicago, 1965) based on part of this collection.

Scope Note

The Immanuel Bekker Papers consist entirely of correspondence addressed to Bekker; the content of the letters varies. Some are semi-official communications (Niebuhr, W.V.Humboldt); many are of a scholarly nature, occasionally with extensive Greek quotations. Those written by Bekker's closer intimates are often typical of the need felt in the Romantic era to open one's heart to a friend. A few no more than short invitations (Reimer). The letters cover the period 1806 to 1853.

The letters are arranged alphabetically by the 28 correspondents. Within each folder a chronological sequence has been maintained wherever possible. A small group of letters by obscure persons and fragments is found at the end.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Bekker, Immanuel, 1785-1871
- Herz, Henriette de Lemos, 1764-1847
- Niebuhr, Barthold Georg, 1776-1831
- Philology
- Germany -- Intellectual life -- 19th century

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Christian Josias Bunsen (1791-1860), Prussian diplomat and scholar

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-001>

- June 16, 1819
- January 25, 1821
- November 2, 1821 (?)
- June 21, 1853

Box 1

Folder 2

Franz Christian Gau (1790-1853), architect and antiquary

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-002>

- May 21, 1818
- December 15, 1821
- December 30, 1821

Box 1

Folder 3

Henriette Herz (1764-1847), presided over an important salon in Berlin

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-003>

- August 6, 1817

- August 29, 1817
- June 20, 1818
- July 29, 1818
- October 7, 1818
- June 13, 1819
- June 13, 1819
- July 7, 1819
- August 18, 1819
- November 6, 1819
- November 23, 1819
- December 9, 1819
- January 4, 1820
- February 8, 1820
- February 23, 1820
- "beginning of June 1820"
- August 29, 1820
- May 9, 1821 (?)
- May 21, 1821 (?)
- May 29, 1821
- June 11, 1821
- July 18, 1821
- August 8, 1821
- August 18, 1821
- August 30, 1821
- September 4, 1821 (?)
- December 2, 1821 (?)
- May 19, 1822
- May 30, 1822
- June 13, 1822
- August 15, 1822
- August 20, 1822
- May 21, 1824
- undated letter
- June 7, 1824
- June 29, 1824
- July 17, 1824
- September 1, 1824
- May 13, 1825
- November 16, 1825
- November 3 (year unknown)

Box 1

Folder 4

Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), the famous naturalist and traveler

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-004>

- June (?) 11, 1831

Box 1

Folder 5

Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), philologist and man of letters, brother of the above
View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-005>

- November 3, 1809
- March 8, 1822
- September 12, 1822
- "18" (no month, no year)

Box 1**Folder 6**

Augusta Klein, friend of Henriette Herz.

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-006>

- undated letter

Box 1**Folder 7**

Alexander von der Marwitz (1787-1814), Prussian patriot and soldier

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-007>

- November 29, 1806
- April 18, 1807
- June 17, 1807
- June 23, 1807
- November 1, 1808
- undated (with remark "received April 6, 1809")

Box 1**Folder 8**

Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776-1831), statesman and historian, Prussian ambassador to Rome

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-008>

- July 25, 1815
- September 16, 1815
- March 26, 1817
- July 2, 1817
- August 29, 1817
- September 5, 1817
- March 18, 1820
- March 2, 1826
- May 29, 1826
- January 21, 1827
- February 25, 1827
- March 31, 1827
- August 3, 1827
- August 11, 1827
- August 26, 1827
- September 11, 1827
- December 7, 1827
- January 24, 1828 (2 letters)
- March 1, 1828

- March 22, 1828
- April 17, 1828
- May 15, 1828
- June 18, 1828
- November 13, 1828
- March 2, 1829
- July 27, 1830
- short, undated note

Box 1

Folder 9

R. v. Przystanowski

View digitized documents, part 1. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/src/md/bekker-0001-009a>

View digitized documents, part 2. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/src/md/bekker-0001-009b>

- August 6, (?)
- October 10, (?)
- April 14, 1807
- "middle of November, 1807"
- undated, remark "received December 24, 1807"
- April 21, (?)
- March 31, 1808
- February 9, 1809
- October 21, 1810
- undated
- April 18, 1811
- September 15, 1813
- undated
- November 28, 1813
- August 25, 1814
- undated
- November 30, 1817
- April 18, 1818
- May 24, 1818
- August 3, 1818
- September 23, 1818
- October 18, 1818
- December 3, 1818
- February 2, 1819
- July 3, 1819
- July 24, 1819
- March 19, 1821
- June 20, 1822

Box 1

Folder 10

Karl von Raumer (1783-1865), naturalist.

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-010>

- February 19, 1806
- November 18, 1806
- April 25, 1807
- June 7, 1807
- June 15, (1807)
- June 26, 1807
- July 23(?), 1807
- July 25, 1807
- October 8, 1807
- November 17, 1807
- November 30, 1807
- February 11, 1808
- April 15, 1808
- "on the first day of Whitsuntide 1808"
- November 16, 1808
- January 8, 1809
- August 19, 1809
- November 10, 1809
- October 20, 1810

Box 1

Folder 11

Georg Andreas Reimer (1776-1842), Berlin bookdealer and printer, Bekker's publisher, and members of his family

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-011>

- January 29, 1818
- January 25, 1819
- August 4, 1819
- December 4, 1819
- undated
- December 30, 1823
- undated
- October 27, 1834
- January 13, (?)
- January 23, 1835
- May 21, 1836
- by Karl Reimer
- undated
- by Sophie Reimer:
- undated
- August 27, (?)

Box 1

Folder 12

Dorothea v. Schlegel (1763-1839), wife of Friedrich v. Schlegel (1772-1829), German poet, critic and scholar.

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-012>

- short, undated note

Box 1

Folder 13

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834), German theologian and philosopher
View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-013>

- July (?) 22, 1812
- September 17, 1815
- October 20, 1815
- June 22, 1817
- September 22, 1817
- November 14, 1817
- May 16, 1818
- undated (1818/1819)
- January 9, 1819
- January 26, 1819
- February 9, 1819
- April 13, 1819
- April 24, 1819
- August 8, 1819
- September (?) 6, 1819
- March 18, 1820
- April 1, 1820
- May 18, 1820
- January 31, 1829
- by S- to his sister:
- August 6, (no year)

Box 1

Folder 14

Henriette Schleiermacher, wife of the above

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-014>

- July 24, 1821
- July 28, 1821
- undated short note
- undated short note

Box 1

Folder 15

Nicolas-Maximilien-Sidoine Séguier (1773-1854), French statesman and ancient philologist

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-015>

- June 3, 1810
- September 2, 1810
- November 21, 1810
- January 9, 1811
- January 31, 1811
- March 9(?), 1811(?)
- March 15, 1811

- May 26, 1811
- July 2, 1811
- January 18, 1812
- February 18, 1812
- June 5, 1812
- August 12, 1812
- August 25, 1812
- September 14, 1812
- October 20, 1812
- April 13, 1814
- August 8, 1814
- undated (1814?)
- September 23, 1815 (1819?)
- September 11, 1827
- February 27, 1828
- June 8, 1828
- January 27, 1829
- March 17, 1839

Box 1

Folder 16

- Karl August Varnhagen von Ense (1785-1858), soldier, diplomat, man of letters
View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-016>
- July 13, 1832

Box 1

Folder 17

- Otto and Lotty Wülcknitz, for whom Bekker worked as tutor after his graduation from the University of Halle
View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-017>
- undated (short note)
 - undated (short note)
 - December 10, 1812 (short note)
 - September 30, 1814 (short note)
 - October 7, 1814 (short note)
 - August 27, 1820 (1826?)
 - undated

Box 1

Folder 18

- by five obscure persons:
View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-018>
- Carl Beer, February 25, 1844
 - Ferdinand December, January 16, 1824
 - Anna Horkel (???), undated
 - R. Jocker, 2 letters; July 4, and August 27, 1814
 - S. Pobeheim(?), June 11, 1824

Box 1

Folder 19

Contains three letters which are either unsigned or signed with initials only. 1 unsigned 2. initial S. 3. initials J.C.

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-019>

Box 1

Folder 20

Contains four fragmentary pieces

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/bekker-0001-020>