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René-Just Haüy and the birth of modern crystallography

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In 1784, a small book entitled "Essai d'une théorie sur la structure des cristaux" was published, marking the beginning of modern crystallography.

A crystallography that releases from its first purely descriptive vocation using mathematics.

A crystallography that predicts shapes and reveals molecules that would be debated for almost a century.

Its author, René-Just Haüy, a French abbot living in Paris, began at almost forty years old into a scientific career focused on the crystal study. His successes made him one of the greatest scientists of his time.

To mark the bicentenary of his death, we propose to present the milestones of his uncommon career, in the troubled historic context of the end of the 18th century. We will highlight his work, from the birth of a myth to that of a theory that made crystallography and mineralogy real sciences as physics or chemistry.