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GUSTAVE REVILLIOD (1817-1890), UN HOMME OUVERT AU MONDE

ISABELLE NAEF GALUBA

Great collector, tireless traveller, learned man of letters, enlightened patron, and patriotic citizen, Gustave Revilliod was born in Geneva in 1817 and died in Cairo in 1890. His greatest achievement in life was undoubtedly the founding of the Ariana Museum, which he built to house his collections and especially so that all his objects could charm and educate the public at large. Today it is the Swiss Museum of Ceramics and Glass, but it was originally an encyclopaedic institution designed to display all the objects of the various arts and periods considered worthy of the collector's interest.

Including thirty essays by specialists in the field, this major publication provides a sweeping survey of Gustave Revilliod's life and passions. His extremely full and eventful life is analysed with great thoroughness, aided by numerous archive documents. The book delves into his family life, his acquaintances, his various properties, and the origins of his fortune, as well as his publishing ventures, his political opinions tinged with anti-colonialism, and his trips in Europe and around the world—with a special focus on Asia. The contributing scholars track down the objects in his collection—over 30,000, now housed in various public institutions in Geneva—and his monumental project to set up a museum. Revilliod's ideas, circumstances, and actions provide the raw data for a situational analysis in the context of a nineteenth century that saw the establishment of the first large museums and the craze for universal expositions, as well as the conspicuous consumption of exotic objects promoted by major department stores.

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