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Authors	CHINNICI, Ileana
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In *Decoding the Stars*, Ileana Chinnici offers an account of the life of the Jesuit scientist Angelo Secchi (1818–78). As well as providing an invaluable account of Secchi's life and work—something that has been sorely lacking in the English-language scholarship—this biography will be especially stimulating for those interested in the evolution of astrophysics as a discipline from the nineteenth century onward.

Despite his eclecticism, reminiscent of the natural philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Secchi was in many ways a very modern scientist: open to innovation and cooperation, and a promoter of popularization and citizen science.

Secchi also appears fully inserted in the cultural context of his time: he participated in philosophical and scientific debates, spread new theories and ideas, but also suffered the consequences of political events that marked those years and impacted his life and activities.

Ileana Chinnici is an astronomer at the INAF-Palermo Astronomical Observatory and works in the field of the history of astrophysics. She has published books and articles in international journals, exploring historical archives related to scientific projects and scientists of the nineteenth century.

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