Mysterious life of Simeone Levi
the Egyptologist who challenged the clever Schiaparelli

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SIMEONE Levi, a beautiful head on a small body. Semi-paralyzed by a childhood illness. Of European notoriety at the end of the last century as an Egyptologist, as well as a mathematician, Schiaparelli's antagonist; author, among many other works, of a monumental *Coptic-Hebrew hieroglyphic Vocabulary*, still valid today; committed to the point of agony on a journey that arrives from the Carmagnola ghetto to the Accademia dei Lincei. But hitherto unknown as a man. One who in the world of culture had remained the "outsider" and who, out of proud reluctance, left only an autobiography of himself, but "encrypted" and with a language of his own invention.

Now found and decrypted. So his adventure can be told for the first time by two descendants, Giorgina Arian Levi, historian and former parliamentarian on the threshold of his active 89 years and Emanuele Viterbo international scholar in the field of coding and numerical transmission. And here is a character that «whoever reads this book will hardly forget», says Cesare Segre in his presentation.

Simeone was born in 1843 (married twice, three children, will die in 1913), five years before the Albertine Statute which frees Jews from ancient interdictions. It was only possible to find the roots of his family of very small bourgeoisie starting from the 18th century but that was enough to recreate, as in a tiny novel, a sort of Italian shtetl, that Jewish swarm of work and feelings, strong women, honest men from which the young Levi, thanks to emancipation, can get out. Fighting against an endemic poverty he will study at the Royal College of Moncalieri, he will graduate in mathematics in Pisa, he will keep until his death the passion for that Egypt so closely linked to the history of Judaism, a boundless universe in which he enters with an amazing knowledge languages, modern but above all ancient (he will also make his much appreciated contribution to the Egyptian Museum in Turin), without however ever loosening the deep and irreplaceable bond with "those" roots.

A belonging that justifies his recourse, without too much psychological delay, to the economic help of co-religionists and his not skimping on accusations of anti-Semitism "in large part right, to those who did not recognize what he thought he deserved". The judgment on Schiaparelli who, a man of establishment, had got the better of him in the course of a scientific dispute, "free hitter": "Schiaparelli was smarter than me, as a true follower of Loyola he knew how to praise me denigrate me ...": so Simone writes in the manuscript. But why encrypted? "Maybe for fun - is the conclusion of the great-grandson Viterbo - or for the desire to create an alphabet himself after having created many". Above all to freely name "my many enemies and very few my friends, all my lovers ...".

Giorgina A. Levi, Emanuele Viterbo
Simeone Levi. Unknown story of a well-known Egyptologist
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