

# Tommaso Masini da Peretola

(c. 1488-1546)

Often referred to as Zeoastro or Zoroastro, Tommaso Masini was a renowned metalworker and alchemist, a natural philosopher and an astrologer; he is also said to have been a vegetarian. As a young man he was an assistant of Leonardo da Vinci, reputedly breaking a leg by jumping off Monte Ceceri above Fiesole to test one of Leonardo's flying machines, and grinding his colors for the unfinished fresco, *The Battle of Anghiari*, in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. While other researchers have surmised that he probably died before or shortly after 1527 - basing this calculation on a misreading of the Latin epitaph discussed below and the fact that an apprenticeship with Leonardo da Vinci in Milan would argue for an earlier date of birth - from the evidence of Cardinal Ridolfi's accounts, it is clear that this gardener's son from Peretola, outside Florence, was not only still alive in the years between 1537 and 1543 but working in the vineyard at Sant'Agata dei Goti. By February 1543 he may not have been well since the accounts record an entry for "biscotti alo speciale per messer Zeoastro." The lacunae in a seventeenth-century transcription of the Latin (which reads "Vixit An. LVIII. M. .D.XX) have now been correctly deciphered as "he lived 58 years ... months, 20 days". The exact date of Zoroastro's death is still not known, but it can now be said with certainty to have been in 1546, the date when the plaque copied by Fioravante Martinelli was erected. This would mean that Zoroastro was about seventeen when he worked under Leonardo on the fresco for the Hall of the Great Council in Florence.

## Sources:

Byatt, Lucinda; "Sant' Agata dei Goti on the Quirinal: An Early Sixteenth-Century Fulerum For Politics And Learning Under Cardinal Ridolfi"; Conference: Early Modern Rome 1341-1667, University of California Rome, 13-15 May 2010

[Wikipedia page on Tommaso Masini](#)