



The Chronology of Vettius Valens' Anthologiae

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## THE CHRONOLOGY OF VETTIUS VALENS' ANTHOLOGIAE

1. In 1900 W. Kroll came to the conclusion that Vettius Valens lived under the Antonines.<sup>1</sup> Indeed one finds, scattered over the whole work, some forty references to specific dates as examples for the astrological methods under discussion, these dates ranging from Nero 1 (A.D. 54) to Antoninus 21 (A.D. 157).

2. Preparing a comprehensive work on Greek horoscopes in coöperation with Dr. B. L. Van Hoesen, I undertook the astronomical dating of all the horoscopes quoted (without dates) by Vettius Valens. The result is very striking. The two earliest horoscopes concern the years A.D. 37 and 50, the two latest, A.D. 173 and 188 respectively. All the rest, about a hundred examples, belong to the interval from A.D. 61 to 162.

3. In V,10 a series of thirteen horoscopes is quoted, the dates ranging between 102 and 153. In all these cases, events in specific years of the lives of the persons are quoted and explained as consequences of the horoscopic configuration. In no case is the death of one of these persons reported. If, however, we add the latest year quoted to the astronomically determined date of birth we obtain, following the arrangement in the text,

p. 227,28	134 (Nov. 4) + 23 = 157/158
228,15	111 (April 24) + 46 = 157
228,31	107 (May 8) + 51 = 158
229,6	135 (Oct. 27) + 32 = 157/158
229,13	112 (July 27) + 45 = 157
230,7	110 (Sept. 27) + 47 = 157/158
230,11	153 (May 8) + 4 = 157
230,14	102 (Dec. 4) + 45 = 157/158
230,18 <sup>2</sup>	120 (May 12) + 36 = 156
230,22	122 (Jan. 22) + 35 = 157
230,32	114 (Nov. 10) + 44 = 158/159
231,5	123 (Jan. 2) + 32 = 155
231,32	113 (July 1) + 20 = 133/134

<sup>1</sup> Catal. Cod. Astrol. Graec. II, p. 86; cf. also the preface to Kroll's edition p. VI (1908). All references in the following mean Kroll's edition. [Vettius Valens is an author of so much importance not only for astrology proper but also for 'mysticisms astral' and religious feeling that it is extremely welcome to have a precise dating. A.D.N.]

<sup>2</sup> In line 19 read: Ζεὺς [Ζυγῶ] ἠΑρης Παρθένω.

Thus it is evident that Book V was written in the years 157 and 158.

4. The last horoscope in the above list is used once more in VII,5, where events from the years 47, 48, 49 of the subject are quoted, i.e., events from A.D. 160 to 162 or 163. If we repeat the same procedure for the rest of chapter VII,5 we find the following dates: 161, 159, 160, 164, 142, 153, 161, 158, 154/155 six times, 160 twice. A few more years elapsed during the work on Book VI and VII and new material was steadily taken into consideration. Characteristic is the case of the horoscope p. 284,12 to p. 285,3. The child was born on Aug. 14, 158 as can be concluded from the planetary positions of its horoscope. But "because it was still an infant" Vettius Valens now asks for critical months instead of critical years as in the other cases. The reason is clear: this birth took place in the period of his working on these chapters. After the short span of 33 months of a much troubled life, the poor creature died in May 161, just early enough to have this fact properly explained by our author.

Another instance from this chapter is worth mentioning. It is easy to see that the data given in the horoscope on p. 282,16-27 cannot be satisfied astronomically for centuries before and after the time of Vettius Valens. But since 54 years of life are recorded in this case and since the latest date in this chapter is 164 we need only investigate the years close to 110. Indeed, computing the positions of the planets for 110 (Dec. 15) we find perfect agreement with all data of the horoscope except for Jupiter, and everything is correct if we read "Jupiter (and) Venus in Capricorn" instead of "Jupiter in Virgo, Venus in Capricorn." This also explains why Venus is mentioned out of order before Mars and right after Jupiter.

5. Using all cases where we find data from the life of a person whose horoscope can be dated astronomically, we obtain a neat chronology for the composition of the "Anthologiae." Books III, IV, and V up to chapter 10 were written in succession between 152 and 159; then follows Book VII, with dates up to 165. Book VIII furnishes explicitly quoted dates, the majority of which belong to the period from Trajan 6 (A.D. 102) to Antoninus 21 (A.D. 157), plus recorded events until A.D. 157 (in VIII,6) and A.D. 166 (in VIII,7).

The remaining books, as far as datable horoscopes are concerned, show a different character. Here we no longer have at our disposal information beyond the constellation at birth. Nevertheless the computed dates of about 40 horoscopes in Book II show a clear tendency. About half of them belong to the time from A.D. 50 to 100, the rest do not go beyond 120. It seems plausible to consider this as an indication of the

use of earlier records, though caution is necessary: in VII,2 a horoscope from II,21 for A.D. 74 is re-used, showing that this person lived 79 years, i.e., to 153/154.

A second early group, though unfortunately a very small one, is found in V,11 and 12. Here we have four horoscopes whose dates are A.D. 37, 68, 92, and 104. I do not dare to form an opinion as to whether or not it is significant that these chapters quote Critodemus.

6. There remain the very latest dates which may or may not be "additamenta vetustissima." In III,16 we have two horoscopes for 102 May 1 and April 30 (perhaps actually only variants) recording a death in 169. Similarly VI,5 leads from 132 to 185. In VII,3 we have a horoscope for 173 and finally, against all expectation, one for 188 in II,26.

7. I think it is clear from the preceding preliminary survey that one can safely conclude that Vettius Valens wrote the bulk of his work in the decade from A.D. 152 to 162, using earlier material in the earlier books and perhaps making a few additions in later years.

The mutual independence of the Anthology and the Tetrabiblos appears now in a new light. Ptolemy's own observations, quoted in the *Almagest*, range between A.D. 127 and 141. Since the Tetrabiblos, by its own statement, was written after the *Almagest*, one may well imagine that the two most influential astrological treatises were written practically simultaneously: Vettius Valens eagerly collecting material from his files of "case histories" to confirm and refine the ever growing doctrine, Ptolemy shaping a consistent theory of what appeared to him to be a universal science of life.

But more important than the question of priority is the problem of the early chronology of Hellenistic and Roman astrology. It is now clear that the direct sources of Vettius Valens do not lead back beyond the middle of the first century A.D. This, by and large, is the same limit which still exists for us today for actually preserved horoscopes on papyrus.

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