Ascending the Ladder: Editio Princeps of Four Poems on the Ladder of John Klimakos (Bodleian Barocciánus 141)

Renaat Jos John Meesters

Our unedited paratexts on John Klimakos in dodecasyllables are preserved anonymously in Bodleian Barocciánus 141. I provide here a short introduction to Klimakos and the Ladder, a description of the manuscript and of the poems, the editio princeps, a translation, and a brief commentary.

John Klimakos and the Ladder

John Klimakos lived as a monk on Mount Sinai from his teenage years. He was advanced in age, and probably already installed as abbot of the Saint Catherine monastery, when he wrote the Ladder, an ascetic guide to heaven in thirty steps. It is dated to the end of the sixth century or the first half of the seventh. Two letters which accompany the Ladder in the manuscript tradition give some details about its origin. In the first letter, John, abbot of Raithou, requests that Klimakos write a new spiritual guide. In reply, Klimakos humbly accepts the task and writes the Ladder, followed by a short treatise, To the Shepherd. In his letter, John of Raithou mentions Jacob’s


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ladder as a guideline. This refers to the passage in Genesis (28:12) where Jacob “had a dream: a stairway was set on the ground, with its top reaching to the sky; and angels of God were going up and down on it.” He asks Klimakos to describe such a ladder in order to enable those wishing to follow Christ to ascend to the gates of heaven. The image of the ladder dominates the reception of the work, to the extent that Κλίμακος even became part of John’s name. Also in the iconography, the work of Klimakos was clearly associated with a ladder. For example, in several manuscripts, the pinax is accompanied by an image of a ladder.

More than 700 manuscripts containing the works of John Klimakos have been preserved. As is often the case with widespread works, the immense popularity of John Klimakos paradoxically accounts for the absence of a critical edition. There are only three editions of the Ladder: by Radder (1633, reissued by Migne, PG 88, in 1864 and Trevisan in 1941), Sophronios (1883, repr. 1970), and Archimandrite Ignatios (1987, repr. 1994).

The Ladder in epigrams

In many manuscripts of the Ladder, the text is accompanied by metrical paratexts. In April 2016, the Database of Byzantine

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6 Johnsén, Reading John 12–14; Chryssavgis, John Climacus 234; Ševčenko, in Byzantine Art: Recent Studies 39 n.1; Pierre et al., Jean Climaque 227, 254; Zecher, The Role of Death 9–10.
Book Epigrams (DBBE) records 72 poems of variable length on Klimakos. Many of these poems refer to the ladder concept, for example: *inc. βαθμοὺς διελθὼν γεννικοὺς τρισσῶς δέκα*,\(^8\) *inc. κλίμαξς ἀνώ φέρουσα τοὺς ἐναρέτους*,\(^9\) and *inc. τρίδομος κλίμαξς, τρισδέκα βαθμοῖς πέλων*.\(^10\) Also long metrical summaries containing the ladder concept as a theme are found, for example: *inc. Πίναξ ὅστις τῆς παρούσης πυκτίδος* (92 vv.),\(^11\) *inc. Ψήγατα χρυσᾶ τοῖς Λυδοῖς αἱρεῖ λόγος* (226 vv.),\(^12\) and *inc. Στρουθὸς λογικὸς εὑρεθεὶ τῷ δεσπότῃ* (136 vv.) by Manuel Philies.\(^13\) The cycle of four poems found in *Barocc*. 141 is part of this broad tradition of book epigrams on the *Ladder*.

The manuscript

*Barocc*. 141 (253 folios) was written on oriental paper ca. the second quarter of the fourteenth century.\(^14\) Titles and initials are written in red ink. The manuscript contains the *Ladder* of

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\(^7\) The DBBE is an ongoing project at Ghent University, Belgium, which aims to collect all Byzantine metrical paratexts: see www.dbbe.ugent.be.

\(^8\) www.dbbe.ugent.be/occ/4605.


\(^12\) This poem is part of a cycle of four poems on Klimakos, totaling over 470 verses. The cycle is preserved in six manuscripts (in some cases partially): *Mosq.Synod.gr. 229* (Vlad. 192), *Mosq.Synod.gr. 480* (Vlad. 193), *Manchester Rylands Gaster 1574*, *Vat.Pal.gr. 120*, *Athos Megistes Lauras B 102*, *Paris.Cons. 264*, and *Athos Iveron 418*. An edition of this cycle is being prepared by Renaat Meesters and Rachele Ricceri.


John Klimakos, accompanied by the still-unedited commentary of Elias of Crete. The commentary is written in the margin and begins on f. 1, where it surrounds a preface, ascribed in the manuscript to Daniel of Raithou. The Life of John Klimakos, written by the same Daniel, begins at the bottom of f. 1 and is followed by the Letter by John of Raithou and the reply by John Klimakos; a table of contents of the Ladder; the same prologue as on ff. 9–10; a table of contents of the Ladder; the same prologue as on 9–10; a brief exhortation; and poems.

In comparing the table of contents on ff. 9–10 to the pinax given in PG 88.629 and to the one in Sophronios, it is clear that Barocc. 141 corresponds more to the one in Sophronios. The edition of Sophronios was based on manuscripts from the Dionysius monastery on Mount Athos, and Barocc. 141 seems thus to be more closely related to these manuscripts.

The poems

The four poems are written next to each other, divided into two columns. They are separated from the end of To the Shepherd by a simple red bar. The titles of the poems are in red ink, except for the title of Poem 2, of which only the initial is

15 Inc. Ἐξήγησις εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν κλίμακα.


17 Inc. Ἐσκόπησεν ὄντως ἀρίστως (PG 88.596–605).

18 Inc. Τοῖς ἐκ τῆς βίβλου τῆς ζωῆς. Cf. Sophronios, Κλίμαξ Ἰωάννου 11; see also PG 88.628C–D for the same prologue with a different closing.

19 Inc. Ἀναβαίνετε ἄναβαίνετε (PG 88.1160D).

20 Sophronios, Κλίμαξ Ἰωάννου 185.
red. The first letter of each verse is in red as well. The end of each poem is marked by three red dots. The import of this last palaeographical detail was not taken into account by Coxe.\textsuperscript{21} Coxe apparently assumed that the poems are to be read vertically, and hence has erroneously taken the second verse of Poem 2, 3, and 4 as the incipit.\textsuperscript{22} This mistake could have been prevented by a correct understanding of the three red dots.

The black colour of the ink in which the poems are written is different from the brownish one of \textit{To the Shepherd}. Interestingly, the comments in the margin on the previous folios are written in the same black ink. Moreover, the red used for the marginal scholia accompanying \textit{To the Shepherd} is the same as that used for the poems. The red used for the initials in \textit{To the Shepherd} itself is a slightly darker red. These palaeographical features might suggest that the poems were perceived as texts on a similar level as commentaries, as paratexts.

\textit{Poem 1}

\begin{verbatim}
Στίχοι ἰαμβικοὶ εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν κλίμακα
Ξένην φύσιν κλίμακος καὶ θέσιν βλέπω,
εἰς οὐρανὸν φέρει δὲ πλὴν ξενοτρόπως·
τὸν γὰρ τοσοῦτον ἀναβάσεως τόπον
5 βαθμίσι μετρεῖ τριάκοντα καὶ μόνας.
Τὸ χάσμα λοιπὸν τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν βλέπε,
アップα ἀνελθεῖν ἀσφαλῶς ταύτην θέλων·
καὶ γὰρ πολὺ κέχηνε, λανθάνει δ’ ὀμφα.
Εἰ γὰρ μεταξὺ βαθμίδων διαστάσεις
10 κρημνοὶ τελοῦσι καὶ πλανῶσιν ὡς βάσεις,
καὶ τοὺς παραρρίπτοντας αὐτάς τοὺς πόδας
αἵρεσις καταστρέφουσι εἰς ἄδου στόμα.
Δεῖ δὴ τολοιπὸν ἀκριβοῦς ποθηγῆτον
ὡς εἰς ἄληθείς τοὺς πόδας στήσῃ βάσεις
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{21} Coxe, \textit{Bodleian Library} 241.

\textsuperscript{22} Vassis, who follows Coxe, also makes the same mistake: I. Vassis, \textit{Initia carminum byzantinorum} (Berlin 2005) 206, 376, 647.
Iambic verses on the holy ladder

I gaze upon the strange nature and setting of the ladder.
Its stairs consist of virtues
and it leads to heaven in a strange manner,
as the ladder divides the length of such a long track upwards
into only thirty steps.
Also, take a look at the chasm between the rungs,
you who are willing to ascend this ladder safely.
Although it is yawning widely, this still goes unnoticed.
If the separations between the rungs
are abysses that deceitfully present themselves as steps,
then they suddenly throw down into the mouth of hell
those who risk placing their feet in such gaps.
This being the case, it is necessary to have a guide,
who places your feet on the true stairs,
and who calls you back from the delusion of the deep pit.
That way, you will escape the fall with much effort
as you transcend the earth and reach for heaven.

Poem 2

"Ετεροι εις την αυτην βιβλον
Κλίμαξ προμθηκης καθορισται μοι ξενη,
ἐκ γῆς πρὸς ὑψος αὐτῶν οὐρανίων
βροτοὺς φέρουσα· καὶ τίς ἢ κλίμαξ λέγε.
"Οὐκ ἀσφαλῆς ἡ πεύσις." Ἀλλὰ ἔτι διασάψει.

Μὴ γὰρ κλίμακα τὴν Ἰακώβ μοι λέγεις,
τὴν κατάγουσαν ἀγγέλους οὐρανόθεν,
βροτῶν παλαιστὰς τῆς χοϊκῆς οὐσίας;
"Οὔκουν ἐκείνην, ἢν δ’ ανιστᾶ τεχνιτῆς
ἐκ τῆς καθ’ ξενιν μυστικῆς λεπτουργίας
τῷ τῆς ἐπιστήμης τε καθηδροσμένῳ
εἰς ἀκρότητα τῆς τεχνουργίας φθάσας,
ἧς τὴν κεφαλὴν ἑδράσας μέχρι πόλου,
This elongated ladder seems to me a strange thing since it leads mortals from the earth to the height of the inaccessible places in heaven. What is this ladder? Tell me. “It is risky to ascertain.” Come, explain more.

You do not speak of the ladder of Jacob, do you? The one which leads the angels down from heaven, those who wrestle against humans of material substance? “Of course not of that one. I speak of the ladder set up by a craftsman, who, with his experienced, fine, mystical workmanship, has reached the summit of craftmanship. He has placed the top of the ladder as far as heaven, fixed its fundaments most precisely, and has devised it to be passable for mortals, thus showing that its ascent is easy.”

Poem 3

A man who strove to arrive from the earth at the exalted heavenly height, has set up a strange ladder consisting of virtues, which extends even to the heavenly gates high in the sky, and which arrives close to God, a ladder having such unutterable steps.
Poem 4

"Ετεροί στίχοι εἰς τὸ αὐτό

"Ὑψος πρὸς οὐράνιον εἰ φθάσαι θέλεις
καὶ κατάδειν, ἄνθρωπε, τερπνὰ τοῦ πόλου,
χοροὺς ὀσίων, ἱεραρχῶν, μαρτύρων,
δήμους προφητῶν, πατέρων, ἀποστόλων,
τάξεις άγγελός, ἄρχαγγέλων
καὶ τῶν ἐκεῖσε συμμετασχεῖν ἡδέων,
ἀνέλθε τὴν κλίμακα ταύτην εὐτόνως,
τάξεις άγγελον, χειραγωγόν κατέχων.

Other verses on the same

If you want to arrive at the heavenly height
and to behold, O man, the delights of heaven,
the choirs of saints, of hierarchs, of martyrs,
the assembly of prophets, of fathers, of apostles,
and if you want to participate in the pleasures of that place,
then vigorously ascend this ladder,
with the cross as a leader and a guide.

Metrical analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binnenschlüsse after the 5th syllable</th>
<th>Poem 1 (17 vv.)</th>
<th>Poem 2 (15 vv.)</th>
<th>Poem 3 (6 vv.)</th>
<th>Poem 4 (8 vv.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>accent on the 3rd syllable</td>
<td>0/17 vv.</td>
<td>5/15 vv.</td>
<td>2/6 vv.</td>
<td>0/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accent on the 4th syllable</td>
<td>4/17 vv.</td>
<td>5/15 vv.</td>
<td>2/6 vv.</td>
<td>3/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accent on the 5th syllable</td>
<td>7/17 vv.</td>
<td>3/15 vv.</td>
<td>1/6 vv.</td>
<td>2/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>11/17 vv.</td>
<td>13/15 vv.</td>
<td>5/6 vv.</td>
<td>5/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binnenschlüsse after the 7th syllable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accent on the 5th syllable</td>
<td>6/17 vv.</td>
<td>1/15 vv.</td>
<td>1/6 vv.</td>
<td>3/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accent on the 6th syllable</td>
<td>0/17 vv.</td>
<td>1/15 vv.</td>
<td>0/6 vv.</td>
<td>0/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>6/17 vv.</td>
<td>2/15 vv.</td>
<td>1/6 vv.</td>
<td>3/8 vv.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall, the verses aim at prosodic correctness. Of course, as is typical for Byzantine verses, there are deviations concerning the dichrona. In comparing the position of the Binnenschlüsse and accent positions, we get the results shown above.

There are also some ‘real’ mistakes concerning prosody and metrics. In Poem 2, v. 4 has 14 syllables; it is the only verse in the cycle not having 12 syllables. One could, however, consider replacing the more common *compositum* διασάφει by the rare *simplicium* σάφει in order to get a metrically correct verse. Another solution would be that the author accidentally combined two heptasyllabic cola. This might be explained because each colon functions as a separate phrase in the dialogue, causing the Binnenschluß to be extra strong.  

Of course, given the limited number of verses, it is difficult to advance a concrete thesis. However, some tendencies can be noticed. The metrical structure of Poem 1 rather contrasts with that of Poem 2 and 3. Poem 1 has no deviating accent positions on the 3rd or 6th syllables and has, compared to Poem 2 and 3, a higher frequency of Binnenschlüsse after the 7th syllable. Besides, the number of prosodic mistakes regarding the dichrona is more limited in Poem 1. Poem 2 has the most metrical deviations: a verse of 14 syllables and a high frequency of deviating accent positions, especially on the 3rd syllable. The number of verses of Poem 3 and 4 is very limited and does not allow a complete statistical analysis. However, Poem 4, without deviating accent positions and a higher frequency of Binnenschlüsse after the 7th syllable, seems to correspond to Poem 1. These metrical results might have some implications for the question of the authorship of the cycle (see below).

**Literary comments**

**Poem 1**

1: In the first verse, an unspecified spectator is introduced. For the rest of the poem he will function as an authorial narrator.

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23 Personal communication with Mark Janse and Julie Boeten (28 January 2016).
Describing a ladder as having “a strange nature” is a motif that also appears in the description of Jacob’s ladder in the 12th/13th-century Konstantinos Stilbes, *Versus sepulcrales*, Poem 1.12–14: ὁ πατριάρχης Ἰακώβ ὑπνοὶ λίθῳ / πλὴν ἀλλ᾽ ὑπνοὶ, κλίμακα τὴν θειαν βλέπει / ἀνάβασίν τε καὶ κατάβασιν ξένην.24

The same theme appears in the poems of Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos (ca. 1256–ca. 1335), *Carmina*, Poem 4 stanzas 10.3–4: κλίμακα δὲ πάλιν ὁ Ἰακώβ ἐώρα, / καὶ γέφυράν σε ἄλλος ξένην διέγραψεν.25

2: Stairs consisting of virtues are a typical aspect of the *Ladder* of Klimakos. In some passages, it seems that he applied the ladder concept specifically to the steps concerning virtues. For example, on the first line of step 9, the virtues are compared to the ladder of Jacob, and the vices to the chains that fell from Peter.26 Klimakos indeed expands on virtues in steps 4–7 (fundamental virtues) and in 24–30 (higher virtues), whereas he deals with vices in steps 8–23.27 In step 28, he clearly refers to the ladder as “the whole ladder of the virtues.”28 The concept of a ladder consisting of virtues, however, was even older than Klimakos. It already appears in Gregory of Nyssa *In sanctum Ephraim*,29 referring to Ephraim the Syrian, who frequently refers to the ladder leading to heaven, but who does not yet use the expression κλίμαξ ἀρετῶν.30 V. 2 resembles a passage from

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28 PG 88.1132B. This and the following translations from the *Ladder* are from Archimandrite Lazarus Moore, *Saint John Climacus, The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Brookline 2012).
29 PG 46.828D.
Ephraim, bishop of Cherson,31

τῆς ἁληθοῦς κλίμακος, τῆς οὐ πρὸς γεώλοφόν τι ὑψος ἐπανα-
γαγούσης ἡμᾶς, ἀλλὰ ταῖς τῶν ἁρετῶν ἀναβάσεσιν, ὡσπερ τισὶν
βαθμίση, πρὸς οὐρανόν τε καὶ τὰ οὐράνια ἡμᾶς διαβαβαζόουσης
or from Gregory of Nazianzus.32

ἀλλ’ ἐπαινῶ καὶ τούτου τὴν οὐχ ὀραθεῖσαν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ
διαβαθεῖσαν κλίμακα ταῖς κατὰ μέρος εἰς ἁρετὴν ἀναβάσεσι.

John Chrysostom was also familiar with the concept of a ladder
composed of virtues.33

3: The fact that the ladder leads to heaven is its most typical
feature; it is a shared characteristic of the Ladder of Klimakos
and Jacob’s ladder. ἐξοντρόπως corresponds to the strange
nature of the ladder in v. 1.

4–5: The strange nature of the ladder is explained in these
two verses. The mystery is concealed in the paradox of a ladder
reaching as high as heaven with only thirty steps. At the end of
the Ladder, a brief exhortation explains that the number of
thirty steps refers to the thirty years Christ lived on the earth
before he was baptized: in these years he “fulfilled the thirtieth
step in the spiritual ladder.”34

6–8: Those willing to ascend the ladder are warned about the
gap between the rungs. Klimakos himself also warns about the
chasm, but he does not associate it with the gap between the
steps. For him the chasm is the burning pit of hell.35

9–12: These verses emphasize the dialectical aspect of the
Ladder.36 The steps of the Ladder form a tight unity. You cannot
reach heaven when missing one step, i.e. when stepping in the

dei matrem, VI 362, 364.

31 Ephraim De miraculo Clementis Romani (PG 2.636A).


33 John Chrys. In Joannem Homiliae (PG 59.454).

34 PG 88.1160A.

35 Step 7 (PG 88.804C).

36 On dialectics in Klimakos see Chryssavgis, John Climacus 12.

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chasm between two steps. Even someone who is well advanced on the ladder cannot be sure of reaching heaven. This is what Klimakos means when quoting James 2:10, “He who shall keep the whole spiritual law, yet stumble in one passion, that is, fall into pride, has become guilty of all.” The sudden fall is stressed by ἀἰφνῆς in v. 12. Contiguous to this idea in the Ladder as a whole is the notion that someone on a lower step cannot be perceived as inferior. He is still ascending, and someone who has already well advanced can still fall into sin. This is why Klimakos, giving advice on how to ascend the ladder, cites the famous passage from the gospels, “The last shall be first, and the first last.” In some manuscripts, this quotation sometimes appears next to the pinax represented as a ladder.

13–17: After the warning of the fall, advice is given about how to prevent it. Having a spiritual father is fundamental to the monastic way of living. It reminds us of the letter of reply of Klimakos to John of Raithou. In the letter, obedience is stressed as the argument because of which Klimakos accepts the task to write the spiritual guide. Obedience is also the theme of step 4 of the Ladder, which is an exceptionally long step because of its importance. It logically follows upon steps 1, 2, and 3 concerning the renunciation of the world. After leaving the material world, the first condition for ascending the ladder is submission to your superior; or as Klimakos puts it at the beginning of step 4, “As the flower precedes the fruit, so exile, either of body or will, always precedes obedience. For with the help of these two virtues, the holy soul steadily ascends to Heaven as upon golden wings.”

Poem 2

1: The content of this first verse is almost equal to v. 1 of

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37 Step 26 (PG 88.1065C).
39 For example Iveron 415 f. 193r, Mosq. Synod.gr. 229 f. 320r.
40 PG 88.625–628.
41 PG 88.677C.
Poem 1. In both, the ladder is seen by an unidentified first-person narrator, and its strange nature is stressed.

2: As in v. 3 of Poem 1, the most typical feature of the ladder, reaching from earth as far as heaven, is mentioned. The word ἀδύτων stresses the mystical character of the ladder: paradoxically, “the unreachable places in heaven” become within reach. The same paradox already occurs in a description of Jacob’s ladder by John Chrysostom: οὕτω γὰρ καὶ τὰ ἄβατα τῶν χωρίων, καὶ ὑψηλότερα, βασάνα γίνεται, βάθρων καὶ κλιμάκιον ὑποτεθειμένον ἡμῖν.⁴²

3–4: The concept of Jacob’s ladder being accessible to mortals is not yet explicitly present in Gen 28:12. It was, however, a widely accepted idea and formed the essence of the ladder concept as applied by Klimakos. In the second part of v. 3, a question is asked which initiates a dialogue with a second unidentified person. The evasive answer of the second speaker allows the first to interrupt him. A similar dialogue of someone asking an explanation about the ladder, in this case of Jacob’s ladder, is found in Theodoros Prodromos’ Ἐπιγραμματα ἐν Βετος καὶ Νεων Τεσταμεντα.⁴³

5–7: The first speaker continues. It seems that he is well acquainted with Gen 28:12. He immediately notices the difference between the ladder of Klimakos and that of Jacob. As already noted, in Genesis Jacob’s ladder is not used by mortals, but by angels. An interesting parallel is again in Ἔρωτα της Μωσαϊκου ερωτήματος Ἐρωτάτων καὶ Βιβλίων by Ephraim of Cherson:⁴⁴

κλίμακος, καὶ τῆς Ἰακώβ ὀραθείσης σὺν ὑποδεεσθῆς, οὐκ ἄγγέλους δὲ σὺν ἀνιόντας καὶ κατιόντας ἡμῖν δεικνυόσθης,

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⁴⁴ PG 2.636A.
Ephraim here makes a clear distinction between Jacob’s ladder and the ladder of virtues, the first being used by angels, the second by humans. In a similar way, a distinction between the two ladders is made in Poem 2. The wrestling angels in v. 7 refer to the famous passage in Gen 32:25–33, in which an angel wrestles with Jacob.

8–15: The second speaker confirms the supposition of the first one and gives a longer explanation of the ladder. The craftsman mentioned in v. 8 is John Klimakos. He is praised as a skilled craftsman/author, who built the ladder/book. It is possible that this praise, an acknowledgement of the qualities of Klimakos, is an answer to his humbleness as expressed in two passages of his own works. In step 27 he mentions that he, “as an unskilled architect,” has constructed a ladder of ascent.45 At the end of the treatise To the Shepherd, he even rhetorically praises John of Raithou as if he were in fact the architect of the ladder of virtues, the one who laid its foundations and even completed it.46 V. 14 again stresses that mortals can ascend the ladder. ἐυχέρει in v. 15 contrasts with μόλις in v. 16 of Poem 1 and gives a more optimistic vision, which is in agreement with Matthew 11:30, “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

Poem 3

Ἄνθρωπος mentioned in v. 1 again refers to John Klimakos as the constructor of the ladder, without any specification. In fact, the whole poem is a collection of the various topoi on the Ladder, which are already mentioned in Poems 1 and 2. The ladder reaching as far as heaven (vv. 2, 4–5) is mentioned in Poem 1 vv. 3 and 17 and in Poem 2 vv. 2 and 12; the ladder consisting of virtues (v. 3) in Poem 1 v. 2; the strange nature of the ladder (v. 3) in Poem 1 vv. 1 and 3 and in Poem 2 v. 1. The only novelty is the expression τῶν ἀρρήτων βαθμίδων (v. 6),

45 PG 88.1105B.
46 PG 88.1205–1208.
which might be a wordplay referring to the **topos** of the κλίμακα ἀρετῶν and which underlines the mystical aspect of the ladder.

**Poem 4**

This fourth and final poem of the cycle is, like Poem 1, an encouragement to the reader, who is referred to by ἄνθρωπε (v. 2). In this poem, some verses explicitly deal with the desire to follow the example of many holy predecessors who ascended the ladder (vv. 3–5). As in Poem 1 vv. 13–15, the necessity of a guide is stressed, in this case represented as the cross (v. 8). Stylistically, the poet placed ποδηγόν next to χειραγωγόν, alluding to feet and hands as the physical parts of the body used when ascending a ladder.

**Authorship and cycle aspects**

As already mentioned, the four poems are preserved anonymously. Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether the four can be ascribed to a single poet. In the comments on metrics, Poem 1 and Poem 4 were described as having some distinctive metrical features. This might indicate that they were written by a different poet. It would, in any case, not be exceptional that book epigrams by different poets were placed next to each other. An example can be found in the Barocc. 194, containing eight poems on the Psalms (f. 48r–48v).\(^{47}\) In that manuscript, a certain Makarios compiles several frequently occurring poems, which he combines with some of his own creations in order to form a well-organized cycle. In contrast to the cycle of Makarios, the cycle in Barocc. 141 seems to lack such an internal structure. One could only state that the cycle starts (Poem 1) and ends (Poem 4) with an exhortation to the reader. This last encouragement would then be a parallel to the exhortation to the reader, *inc. Ἀναβάνετε Ἀναβάνετε*,\(^ {48}\) which in the manuscripts appears at the end of the Ladder.

**Barocc. 141** is the only testimony for the four poems. It is,  


\(^ {48}\) *PG* 88.1160D.

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however, possible that a compiler has found the poems in several manuscripts, now lost, and put them together as a cycle. As demonstrated above, there are many repetitions of content in the poems. It might be that the assembled poems were selected because they have the same topic: the ascent of the Ladder of John Klimakos. Given the lack of evidence from other testimonies, however, it remains possible that a single author was responsible for the whole cycle, whether or not the cycle was composed especially for Barocc. 141. Neither the option of a compilation nor the option of a unique composition can be proven with any certainty. 49

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